

THE
BELIEVER'S
PATHWAY.

DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO

The Great Truths of God's Word for His People.


EDITED BY A. J. HOLIDAY.

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I

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HENRY PICKERING, MANAGER.

THE BELIEVER'S PATHWAY.

EBENEZER.

“Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

WHATEVER thoughts may be suggested to others by the closing of the old year and the entering upon a new one, to the child of God they surely say, with a voice that cannot be mistaken, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom. xiii. 11). To some of God’s people the year that has just passed away has been an eventful one. Unlooked-for changes have come to them, and they find themselves to-day in circumstances that they little expected a year ago. The portion of some has been trial and sorrow, while others have had a full cup of joy. Some have been tossed hither and thither, and kept in continual uncertainty; while others have had a year of quietness and rest. But if we turn our eyes away from the passing circumstances of the moment to think of our Lord Jesus as the quickly-coming One, there is one bright and blessed prospect awaiting us all, that swallows up every other thought.

In the prayer at the end of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul asks that those Ephesian saints might know God’s purposes concerning them and His power towards them. God had chosen them for Himself (verse 4), that they should be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (ver. 6). So His purposes about them can only be understood and measured by what He Himself is; and the power that will carry out His purposes is the same by which He raised Christ from the dead, and so defeated all the hosts of darkness (verses 19-21). Now all this is not only true about saints at Ephesus long ago; it belongs to every child of God to-day. What wonderful thoughts with which to enter upon the new and unknown year. The love that gave Jesus to die for us has planned all our path. The Power that raised Him from the dead will fulfil love’s plan.

When Israel were gathered close to Jordan, with Canaan almost in view, Moses bade them remember all the way the

Maranatha.

Lord had led them those forty years in the wilderness. He had humbled them and suffered them to hunger, and then had fed them with manna, that they might know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut. viii. 2, 3). He suffered them to hunger first, and then fed them, that they might know where their food really came from. We soon forget to praise God for mercies that are never withheld for a moment. We take them as a matter of course. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," said the younger son in Luke xv., and never thought of thanking his father for what he received; and we are sadly too like him. So, it may be, our Father has suffered us to hunger during the past year. Bodily health, comfortable outward circumstances, some happy friendship; one or more of these things may have been withdrawn; but it was all "That He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deut. viii. 16). Is it not better so, than that outward abundance should have led to our hearts being lifted up, and to forgetfulness of God (see verses 12-14)? And while all the chastening and discipline of the past year have been to do us good, they have been bringing us day by day nearer to the moment of our salvation. Of course salvation is used here as in Rom. viii. 23-25. The redemption of the body, when the Lord Jesus shall come to receive us to Himself, is the salvation that is daily coming nearer. To us 1888 may never draw to a close. We are not concerned with the times and seasons, if we are waiting for the Son of God from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. May His last message echo more sweetly and clearly in our hearts than ever before. "Surely I come quickly: Amen"; so that our hearts may send up the response He loves to hear,

"EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS."

M A R A N A T H A

(The Lord is Coming).

FOR many centuries the people of God had gone to sleep, as regards the blessed hope set before them in such plain and simple words by the Lord Jesus Himself in John xiv. 3—"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am,

Maranatha.

there ye may be also." Some fifty years ago there was a blessed waking-up on the part of many believers as to this precious truth; and to many of God's children it has been once more a source of comfort and strength, as well as a stimulating and purifying power. But the adversary who for so long was successful in keeping this hope out of sight will not now allow us to hold it undimmed and real if he can prevent it. It is one thing to be quite clear as to the teaching of Scripture about the coming of Christ. It is quite another thing so to have this hope in (or "upon") Him, as to lead us to purify ourselves, even as He is pure (1 John iii. 3).

We need, then, to stir up one another's minds as to this matter, and to watch against every device of Satan by which he would seek to rob God of His glory and us of our joy in connection with "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him." One of the readiest weapons the enemy always resorts to in order to weaken the force of any portion of God's Truth is the introduction of division of mind about it among believers. Whenever any doctrine becomes the battle-ground for strife and contention, there is great danger that the life and power of it will be lost, and only the form retained. This is, perhaps, especially the case in regard to the truth of Christ's coming for the Church. We believe that many feel this so strongly that they keep silence about it altogether, rather than risk making it the subject of argument and strife. In this way we fear that the blessed hope is not having the prominent place in the ministry of the Word that it had twenty or thirty years ago; and we cannot but regard such a condition of things as one that calls for much humbling before God, and earnest prayer that He will graciously grant us a fresh reviving as to a matter so dear to Himself and so important to us.

We are disposed to think that one of the most serious difficulties, as to agreement about what the Word of God teaches us in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus, lies in the following question:—Do the Scriptures set anything before us that must be fulfilled before Christ comes for His people? Or, in other words, are we warranted in looking for the Lord Jesus to come AT ANY MOMENT to fulfil 1 Thess. iv. 15-17? We do not hesitate to express our own full conviction that we are thus warranted to wait for our blessed Lord

Maranatha.

day by day. And we would say, further, that we believe that any system of interpreting Scripture which puts anything between the saint and the expectation of Christ's appearing must needs take largely away from the power the hope is intended to exercise. While, however, we speak without reserve on this point, we desire to say, with equal plainness, that we do not for a moment look upon brethren who hold and teach otherwise, as therefore not loving the Lord's appearing. We do not believe that the *whole* value of the hope is gone if we are not looking for its momentary fulfilment. Still, we are quite sure that no truth can fulfil all its purpose, unless we have it just as God has given it. With this in view, we purpose, month by month, as the Lord may enable us, to consider some of the Scriptures, and the arguments based on them, which are relied on by those who believe that there are prophecies awaiting their fulfilment before ever the Lord Jesus can shout that blessed shout, which shall call us all up to be with Him for ever. For the present month, we desire to lay before our readers a sketch of the various epochs or dispensations, from the beginning to the end of time. We believe that a clear grasp of God's arrangement of these epochs will greatly help to remove difficulties. We shall find God beginning with a world that "was all very good," and man in innocence dwelling there. That, after man had sinned, God had a people, saved by His grace, but that they were strangers on the cursed earth, while those who did not know God made themselves at home there. From that time onwards God has acted alternately on two distinct lines. A period such as we have just described is followed by one in which God has again an earthly people with an earthly inheritance. This, in turn, is succeeded by another period when the people of God are strangers here, and so on. But at every change of dispensation it is the sin and failure of the earthly people that lead to their rejection; and, on the other hand, it is only by judgment on the earth that God again prepares it to be an inheritance for His saints. We trust that these few words of introduction will be sufficient to enable our readers to follow out the thoughts presented in the following sketch. We would ask for the special prayers of all who seek to know the power and joy of the hope, that we may be guided by the Spirit of Truth in the labour of love we have thus sought to take up.

THE DISPENSATIONS.

I.—God creates man innocent, and the undefiled earth is his proper habitation (Gen. i.).

Man sins, and the earth is involved in the curse of his sin (Gen. iii. 17-19).

II.—Hence, while Cain and his seed are finding a suitable dwelling-place in the cursed earth, and are making it pleasant for themselves, the godly seed of Seth's line are a heavenly people; and their only record as to this world is that they died (compare Gen. iv. 17-22 and v. 1-31).

God purges the world with judgment by the flood, and so fits it for habitation by Noah (Gen. vi. 13).

III.—Hence the conditions under which Adam was first placed in the world are renewed to Noah (Gen. viii. 15-17).

Noah's descendants depart from God, and first build Babel (Gen. xi. 3, 4), and then defile the world with idols (Josh. xxiv. 2).

IV.—Wherefore God calls out Abram, and, while promising him the land of Canaan for his seed, makes him a pilgrim and stranger there (Heb. xi. 8-16).

God cleanses the land of Canaan by the judgment of its wicked inhabitants (Num. xxxv. 33, 34; Deut. vii. 1-6).

V.—And so fits it to be a dwelling-place for Israel, and to put His own name there (Deut. xii. 1-11).

Israel close a long course of departure from God by rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. The land is defiled and Israel rejected (Matt. xxiii. 37-39).

VI.—And God gathers out, from among all nations, a people for His name, who are strangers here (Acts xv. 14; Eph. i. 3, 15-23; ii. 6, 7).

Having called the heavenly people home, He purges the earth by judgment upon His enemies, granting repentance to Israel (Deut. xxxii. 43).

VII.—And so re-establishes Israel in Canaan,—His earthly people in their earthly home,—while Satan is bound (Zeph. iii. 14-20; Rev. xx. 1-3).

Peace.

Satan having been let loose for a little season, rebellion once more takes place on the earth, and God visits it in final judgment with complete destruction (Rev. xx. 7-9; 2 Pet. iii. 10-12).

VIII.—God creates new heavens and a new earth (Rev. xxi. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 13).

PEACE.

A BIBLE READING.

<i>Promised,</i>	“His name shall be called The Prince of Peace,”	Is. ix. 6.
<i>Foretold,</i>	“On earth Peace,”	Luke ii. 14.
<i>The Way,</i>	“The way of Peace have they not known,”	Rom. iii. 17.
	“To guide our feet into the way of Peace,”	Luke i. 79.
<i>Personified,</i>	“He (Christ) is our Peace,”	Eph. ii. 14.
<i>Made,</i>	“Having made Peace through the blood of His Cross,”	Col. i. 20.
<i>Preached,</i>	“Came and preached Peace to you which were afar off,”	Eph. ii. 17.
<i>Possessed,</i>	“Therefore being justified by faith, we have Peace with God,”	Rom. v. 1.
<i>Spoken,</i>	“Jesus stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you,”	John xx. 26.

AS TO CIRCUMSTANCES.

<i>Bequeathed,</i>	“Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you,”	John xiv. 27.
<i>Deposited,</i>	“That in Me ye might have Peace,”	John xvi. 33.
<i>Available,</i>	“Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you Peace always, by all means,”	2 Thess. iii. 16.
<i>Kept,</i>	“Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee,”	Is. xxvi. 3.

THE GOD OF PEACE AND THE PEACE OF GOD.

<i>Present,</i>	“The God of Peace be with you all,”	Rom. xv. 33.
<i>Victorious,</i>	“The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,”	Rom. xvi. 20.
<i>Defensive,</i>	“The Peace of God . . . shall keep (or defend) your hearts,”	Phil. iv. 7.
<i>Reigning,</i>	“Let the Peace of God rule in your hearts,”	Col. iii. 15.
<i>Sanctifying,</i>	“The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly,”	1 Thess. v. 23.
	“Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,”	2 Pet. i. 2.

FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.

'Tis a quaint and ancient custom,
In a slow and measured knell,
To announce the year's departure
By the solemn passing bell ;
Then with clash and din and clamour,
To awake the sleeping earth,
And with merry peals of welcome
To proclaim the New Year's birth.

It is part of God's own order
That the knell precedes the chime ;
That a requiem must be sounded
O'er the things of sense and time ;
That the Cross must be uplifted
Ere salvation's bells are rung ;
That the grave must claim its victim
Ere redemption's song is sung.

This our Lord in figure teaches
(For the lesson is the same),
As we sink beneath the water,
When baptised into His name ;
There the dead "old man" is buried,
We have passed beyond his sway ;
And we rise to life eternal
On a happy New-year's-day.

For the way into God's kingdom
Is to fall before we rise ;
And the death of self comes foremost,
Then the mansions in the skies ;
The dark valley must be trodden
Ere the mountain-top's attained ;
And the "corn of wheat" must perish
Ere the harvest fruit is gained.

All man's pride and power and glory
Sink to ashes in the tomb ;
And his clearest, brightest morning
Can but lead to midnight gloom.
In God's blessed new creation
The night comes before the day ;
And the glory will be brightest
"When the clouds have rolled away." E. B.

“Why do you not use the Lord’s Prayer?”

WE are often asked this question ; and we must confess, in these days of lukewarmness, that we are glad of anything that indicates a conscience about carrying out the will of the Lord. Before, however, we attempt to answer this question, we would like to point out that, to our thinking, “the disciples’ prayer” would be a more suitable title, as the prayer we get in Matthew vi. 9-15 was taught to the disciples by our blessed Lord for their use, and we are never told that He used the form Himself. No ; if anything is to be called “the Lord’s prayer,” let it be John xvii., which contains that wondrous and beautiful prayer of our Lord for His people. But to return to the question. Our reply is, that we do not use this form because we do not believe it to be the mind of our Lord that believers of this dispensation should do so. Now for our reasons ; but, before we give them, we would quote Isa. viii. 20,—“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them,”—and refer our readers to the noble conduct of the Bereans of old, who searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts xvii. 11).

That a prayer may be suitable in one dispensation and yet quite out of place in another, is a truth none will deny. For instance, it was right of Elijah to pray for fire to consume his enemies (2 Kings i. 9-16), but wrong of the disciples to manifest the same desire, when the Samaritans refused to receive Christ (Luke ix. 51-56). It was right of Stephen to pray for his enemies (Acts vii. 60), and it will be right again for those saints, martyred after the taking away of the Church, to cry for vengeance (Rev. vi. 10). For the same reason, the fact that Christ taught His disciples a form of prayer before His death and resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, is not in itself any absolute proof that He would wish His followers still to use that form.

In John’s gospel, chapters xiii. to xvii., we find our Lord teaching His disciples from a resurrection standpoint. In type and by anticipation He has finished the work, and speaks and teaches as the great High Priest. From this standpoint He unfolds to them the work and office of the Holy Spirit, and their position generally when He shall no more be with them in bodily form. In this connection it is that He says (ch. xvi. 24), “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Can words be plainer ? Does He

“Why do you not use the Lord's Prayer?”

not repeal His previous instructions as to the use of the form, and for the future command all prayer to be in His name? Hitherto they had not asked in the name of Christ. No. They had used the words He gave them; but henceforth all prayer is to be in His name. In perfect agreement with this is the statement of Romans viii. 26—“We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” If they had possessed a form of prayer, it could not have been truly said, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” The disciples could not have used such language before the Saviour's death and resurrection, for our Lord had Himself taught them what to pray for. Jude (verse 20) speaks of praying in the Holy Spirit, not according to a written form; and surely it is not without significance that, though we get many prayers recorded in the New Testament, there is no instance given of any one using the words given by our Lord to His disciples.

But, it may be asked, are we to consider the prayer our Lord gave as serving no personal present, and only given for the benefit of a few for two or three years? God forbid; by no means. No scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter i. 20). Divinely given, it becomes a model of prayer for all time. Never do we pray more in the Spirit than when “after this manner.” While it met the special need of the disciples in the lifetime of our Lord, and will, doubtless, again be suitable to those who shall believe the “gospel of the kingdom,” in the interval after the Church is gone, and before she reappears with her Lord and Head, when He will set up His kingdom, its spirit and teaching remain for us in this period of grace.

What a contrast it is to what our prayers often are. Cold and formal, we begin with our wants and needs, and little by little get higher and higher, till our poor hearts are warmed up to ask something for God and His glory. But how different here. Three petitions concerning the glory of God before there is any mention of our need. *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* will, first; then our wants. It has been well remarked that daily bread suffices for the one who has asked so much for God. When the desire for God's glory fills the soul, what wonder if the desires for self fade and dwindle!

In this prayer we get seven petitions, each unfolding a distinct relationship of the saint, and in an ever-descending order, thus:—

Rule in the Family, the Church, and the World.

Title.	Our Father, who art in heaven,	-	-	Son.
Petition.				
1.	Hallowed be Thy Name,	-	-	Priest.
2.	Thy kingdom come,	-	-	Subject.
3.	Thy will be done,	-	-	Servant.
4.	Give us this day our daily bread,	-	-	Dependent.
5.	Forgive us our debts,	-	-	Needy.
6.	Lead us not into temptation,	-	-	Weak.
7.	Deliver us from the Evil One,	-	-	Sinful.

The words, "For thine is the kingdom," &c., are omitted in the revised version, as they are not found in the earliest manuscripts, and they certainly do not harmonise with the order that we have now noticed in the seven petitions, namely, God's glory first, our need next. Each of these short petitions is so full of teaching that we propose to consider them separately, month by month, and we trust our meditations will not be without profit and interest to our readers. Next month, then, we will, with God's help, consider the title or invocation—"Our Father, who art in heaven."

Rule in the Family, the Church, and the World.

NOTES IN A BIBLE CLASS.

V.

RULE IN THE WORLD.

GOD gave Adam dominion "*over all the earth*" at the first (Gen. i. 26-28). We know how he failed in the position God put him in. Sin entered; and, instead of subjection to the will of God,

LAWLESSNESS CAME IN.

The first instance of lawlessness after the fall was that of Cain, who would not submit to the will of God, but in the strength of an unsubdued, rebellious will, slew his brother Abel. As Jude tells us, there are those who have followed in the footsteps of Cain (verse 11). We see the spirit of lawlessness developing itself in the descendants of Cain. Lamech, who is a solemn instance of it, said to his wives, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt" (Gen. iv. 23, 24). We see in those early chapters in Genesis how God separated the light from the darkness. He separated the Seth line from the Cain line. But we see in Gen. vi. how they join together: they intermarry, and thus evil develops and deepens, until it is recorded that "The earth was filled with violence," and

Rule in the Family, the Church, and the World.

that "All flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth" (vi. 12). Man was, as it were, left to himself at this time. We know the awful result. God had to sweep him off the face of the earth in judgment—"The flood came and took them all away" (Matt. xxiv. 39). This state of things shows that when man is left to himself nothing but lawlessness and social disorder are the sad result, and this poor world cannot be truly blest unless it is divinely governed.

Genesis ix. 5 records the

INSTITUTION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

This was the Divine safeguard of the life of man. The beast that was so rapacious and wild that it would fly at a man and tear him to pieces, God said was to be slain; not on account of any moral evil in the beast, but for the safety of man. It was also appointed that the man that slew his brother man was to be put to death. After the flood,

GOD GAVE NOAH DOMINION OVER THE EARTH;

but it was soon seen that he was incapable of holding the reins of government, for he could not control his own desires, and was therefore overcome by his lusts. It is recorded that "He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine and was drunken." The one who cannot restrain his appetites is not fit to rule for God. This principle runs through the Scripture, that self-rule must precede the rule of others.

We read in chapter xi. of

MAN'S ATTEMPTS TO BRING ABOUT UNITY.

He wants to exalt himself and make himself a name. He says, "*Let us make*"; the very words God uses in Gen. i. in connection with the creation of man, as if man had an equal right with God to do what he pleased. We have in this a manifestation of the pride of man. God had commanded Noah and his sons to multiply and replenish the earth, but they sought to do the opposite; that was, to concentrate themselves. Thus we see the spirit of lawlessness manifesting itself again. God frustrates their purpose by confounding their language, so that they could not understand one another's speech. Again we see that man, when left to himself, goes contrary to the will of God, showing that what was needed to control, restrain, and guide him was Divine government and rule.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

God calls a man out of this condition of things, and gives him and his seed wonderful promises and blessings. Chap.

Rule in the Family, the Church, and the World.

xii. gives the call of Abraham. Right on to the end of the book of Revelation we have an account of the history of Abraham's seed and God's dealings with them. The central line of Scripture history is the people of Israel. Other things just come in by the way in connection with the working out of God's purposes towards that people. God's intention in connection with Abraham and his seed was to show the principles of *Theocracy*, that is, *the rule of God*; whilst *Democracy* is *the rule of the people*. At the beginning, God took His place amongst Israel as their King. He set Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, and others over them, to carry out His will; but He was ruling, controlling, and disposing all things through them.

ISRAEL DESIRES A KING.

Towards the close of Samuel's eventful life, failure set in. He appointed his sons to judge Israel, but they did not follow in the godly walk of their father. They turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment. The people saw this, and came to Samuel and said, "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now MAKE US A KING TO JUDGE US LIKE ALL THE NATIONS." Samuel was displeased at this, and went to God about it, and God told him to let them have their desire, for, He said, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. viii. 7). We have here an instance of failure on the part of Samuel. Evidently he had no sanction from the Lord to appoint his sons as judges over Israel. Samuel had put his sons in the place of responsibility, as if grace was hereditary.

After this,

SAUL WAS APPOINTED KING OVER ISRAEL.

Thus the people got their desire. We know how utterly he failed to rule for God. The root of Saul's failure was his want of subjection to the Word of the Lord. Samuel said to him, "Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, God hath also rejected thee from being king." All rule, to be effectual and a means of blessing, must be exercised in the fear of the Lord, and in perfect subjection to His will. Saul went from bad to worse, until he is found consulting a witch instead of God. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). The one who deceives is sure to be deceived. Jacob is a solemn example of this. He deceived his father Isaac and his brother Esau, and was in turn deceived by Laban and his own sons.

“TO WHAT PURPOSE IS THIS WASTE?”

(Matt. xxvi. 8.)

WE have the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself for saying that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke xvi. 15). But it is equally true that that which God accounts most precious men esteem very lightly. It is not surprising that it should be so, when we remember that the blessed Son of God Himself, who was the “tender plant” in the eyes of His Father, to the natural man was but a “root out of a dry ground.” And it is not only the unsaved who thus misjudge things. “He that is spiritual judgeth (or discerneth) all things” (1 Cor. ii. 15); but, immediately after writing these words, the apostle had to tell the Corinthian saints that he could not write unto them “as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal” (chap. iii. 1). For even saints may be in a carnal condition; and when they are, they will judge things by much the same standards as the world. Hence it was that disciples could ask the question at the head of this paper, about that which the Lord esteemed so precious, that He declared it should be told out wherever the Gospel was preached.

We hear a good deal of outcry now-a-days about “practical religion.” In reality there is nothing so practical as the grace of God, for it first brings us salvation, and then teaches us how to walk. But, in a great many cases this phrase, “practical religion,” is just of a piece with the thought of the disciples, when they set down as waste the woman’s anointing the head of Jesus with her very precious ointment. There is a great tendency to measure the value of everything by the question, “What good will it do?” But, however excellent the object we may be aiming at, this is altogether a false test. “This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor,” said the disciples. Now it is surely a good thing to care for the poor, and their suggestion appeared to be a very practical one. But all we do for the poor will never be a sweet savour to God, unless the love of Christ be the constraining power.

“What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both our state and our plan,”

we sometimes sing, and that is the very marrow of the whole matter. There is nothing too costly, too precious in the sight of God to be lavished upon His beloved Son. Once it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; but now, because He humbled Him-

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self, God also hath highly exalted Him. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands” (John iii. 35); and we need to be in fellowship with the heart of God before we can understand what is really practical, and what is only waste. Some Christians are so zealous about the Gospel that they cannot afford time for mutual edification, or even for the keeping of Christ’s commandment, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” To such it does not seem practical to devote the important hours of each Lord’s-day morning to the breaking of bread. “Think how many might be reached with the Gospel,” they will say to you. Or perhaps their thought of what is practical includes the teaching of the saints, and then they want their morning hour for that purpose. To those disciples who rebuked the woman for wasting her ointment on the Lord, instead of giving the cost of it to the poor, Jesus said, “Ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always.” Is there not a voice to us still in this? When the disciples were gathered together on the day the Lord rose from the dead, though the doors were locked, Jesus stood in the midst of them. His promise remains for the two or three gathered together unto His Name, “There am I in the midst of them”; and He still links together the Lord’s-day and the Lord’s Table. To carnal reasoning it may be waste for the disciples to come together each first day of the week to break bread (Acts xx. 7); but the comment of the Holy Spirit is recorded in 1 Cor. xi. 26, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”

It was her heart’s love that the woman in Simon’s house poured out, as she emptied her ointment upon the head of the Lord; and who can tell how sweet that offering was to Him? Not less sweet to Him is love’s offering to-day. But now, as then, the offering will only be understood by those who are entering into the purpose of God, that in all things Christ should have the pre-eminence. The moments can scarcely be wasted which are given to that which will blessedly occupy eternity. Love and worship will remain when our toil and labour have come to an end. So the toil and labour are only precious in the eyes of God, as they spring from love and form part of our worship; and if they do that, they will never be put before Himself, nor lead us to think that we cannot afford to do a thing because it will only be precious to Him, and nothing more.

MARANATHA

(The Lord will Come).

II.

AMONG the arguments brought forward to prove that we are not intended to be waiting in daily expectation of the Lord's appearing, one of the most common is as follows:—The Lord told Peter that he should live to be an old man, and then should be put to death. It is plain, therefore, that Peter could never have expected the Lord to come in his lifetime; nor could other believers, who knew of what the Lord had said, expect His coming while Peter was still alive. Up to this point we have not a word of objection to raise. But now we are asked to go a step further, and it is argued that if those disciples knew of something which prevented their daily looking for the Lord's coming, we cannot suppose that it is intended that we should be in a different position. Here we believe an inference is being drawn, which the Scriptures do not, in any way, warrant. We readily admit that the above-quoted statement of the Lord's, and one or two other matters (such as the later revelation to Paul that he was shortly to die, 2 Tim. iv. 6), would have to be fulfilled before Christ's coming for His saints; but these things were strictly limited to the lifetime of the apostles, and might receive their fulfilment at any moment. They are wholly different from prophecies about the gathering back of the Jews to Canaan, the development and rise to power of the anti-Christ, his seven years treaty with the Jews, and other connected events, all of which it is sought to put between us and the Lord's appearing.

Before the apostle Paul had been shown that the time of his departure was at hand, he had been wont to join himself with other living saints, and to say, "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15). These words were not used as implying that either he, or any of those to whom he wrote, would certainly remain to the Lord's coming; but they clearly show that he considered it to be the fitting expectation of the believer, unless some special personal revelation were given him to the contrary. It is urged that faith can over-leap all the intervening events, and so enter into fellowship with that which Christ is looking forward to, that it may truly look for His coming, though death and many other things must, of necessity, happen first; but in this passage there is no question of what faith can wait for. It is, "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," and

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refers to our being still in the body on earth when He comes. This passage is of immense weight in seeking to know the mind of God as to this matter. There are many scriptures about which we may not be sure where they come in, or to whom they apply; but there can be no question of the kind here. The apostle speaks as one with the Thessalonian converts, and says, "We which are alive, and remain," and it is impossible to interpret his words in any but their natural and obvious sense.

Moreover, the very statement of our Lord to Peter was accompanied by an important word about John, which must not be overlooked (see John xxi. 21-23). The incidents of John xx. and xxi. are illustrations of all that concerns Himself and His disciples in this dispensation. Accordingly he makes Peter and John to serve as examples of those who sleep and those who are alive at His coming. He does not say that John *shall* remain, though the saying went abroad that John should not die; but He does say that John *might* remain. There were no prophecies in the way; and, while the Spirit calls our attention to the fact that the Lord did not say, "He shall not die," this only makes more marked the words that showed that he might remain. As a matter of fact, John outlived all the other apostles. As long as the apostles were on the earth the book of the Scriptures was not completed. God was still speaking directly through them, and, if the presence of Peter on the earth stood, in any sense, between the saints and the coming of Christ, that was largely made up to them by the communications from God Himself, of which the apostles were the messengers. But Peter dies, and Paul dies, and there is nothing now waiting to be fulfilled. John remains, the man who was the representative of those who should be alive at the Lord's coming; and, for the last time, the Lord reveals Himself to His aged servant, and gives him the wonderful book that stands at the end of our Bibles. And His own last word at the end of that book is, "Surely I come quickly. Amen." John may pass away now. That last word shall be a better token to the Church than even the presence the man of whom the Lord had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come." There is nothing left *now* to postpone His coming by a single hour; so, whether the time be long or short, as man reckons it, that precious word remains with us, and claims from us the never-ceasing answer, "Even so, come,

“Holding Fast the Faithful Word.”

Lord Jesus.” How unspeakably sweet to be assured that God has put nothing between that last word of our blessed Lord, and the shout that shall call us all up into His presence to be with Him for ever.

“HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD”

(Titus I. 9).

IT cannot be doubted by any spiritually-minded person, that laxity in the things of God is a prominent characteristic of the religious teaching of the present day. It is quite a common thing to hear beloved saints of God speaking of truth as essential and not essential; inferring from this mode of speech that God only intended His people to attach importance to the fundamental truth of justification by faith, and that all other revealed truths were to serve for no other purpose than to separate Christians, and to be as so many bones of contention for sects and parties to wrangle over. Is it not, beloved fellow-saints, the fact that the elementary truths of separation from the world (civil or religious), the baptism of believers, the breaking of bread, and the coming of the Lord for His saints, are by tacit consent forbidden subjects for discussion at many meetings of believers? Seeing that it is indeed so, surely it is the solemn duty of every God-fearing one to bring this state of things to the test of the unerring and infallible Word of God, by which alone such weighty matters can be determined. In the epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul, after again and again exhorting his own son in the faith to be valiant for the truth, goes on to say—“*Continue thou* in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **ALL SCRIPTURE** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. iii. 14-17). “*I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ preach the Word reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and*

“ Holding Fast the Faithful Word.”

doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine BUT WATCH THOU IN ALL THINGS” (Ch. iv, 1-5). “I GIVE THEE CHARGE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND CHRIST JESUS that thou *keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, UNTIL THE APPEARING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*” (1 Tim. vi. 13, 14). “The things which thou hast heard of me the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. ii. 2). Similar exhortations were given to Titus—“Speak thou the things which become *sound doctrine in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing uncorruptness*” (Titus ii. 1-7). These few, out of many other such scriptures, and prefaced by such solemn adjurations as in the three charges to Timothy, prove beyond a doubt the deep significance attached by the Lord to the maintenance of the integrity of His Word from the time He spoke, and right on to the end; and taken in connection with the closing words of the book of Revelation (Rev. xxii. 18, 19), in which such terrible judgments are pronounced on those who add to or take from that Word, one might fairly be excused for speaking or writing strongly on such a subject. Is he a “faithful man” who would keep in the back-ground what the all-wise God declares to be profitable? What would be thought of a soldier or a servant who only obeyed those orders which he considered to be essential? Are we not, dear fellow-saints, both soldiers and bond-servants of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, we are; and if we do indeed love our Lord and Master, let us show our love by keeping His commandments; not determining for ourselves which are of primary and which of secondary importance, but holding fast the whole Word, unadulterated and intact, willing at least to do whatever He bids us, though there may be failure in carrying it out. Let us then, fellow-servants and soldiers, whom God in these dark days has “set upon the walls of Jerusalem,” hold not our peace day nor night, “but in season and out of season,” with all holy boldness and determination, yet with meekness, lowliness, and love, “STRIVE TOGETHER in one spirit and with one mind for the faith of the Gospel,” and “earnestly contend for *the faith* once for all delivered to the saints.”

"REST IN THE LORD."

(Ps. xxxvii. 7.)

My Saviour, I am weary, let Thine arm
Support my drooping head, and let me rest
Close folded to Thy tender, loving breast ;
With Thy right hand embracing me. No harm
Can reach me there—the thoughts and cares of life
Are hushed, and calmly in the secret place
Of God, most High, and in His blest embrace
I rest, and lose all sense of earthly strife ;
While o'er my wearied spirit steals the calm
Of God's own presence.

O the peace and rest ;
The perfect peace Thou givest, and the blest
Assurance of Thy love. The Almighty's arm
Keeps me from every ill.

Lord, let me learn
The fulness of Thy love—the height and depth
Of Thy exceeding love—the length and breadth
Of love, which, oft forgotten, will not turn
One of Thy erring children from Thy side ;
But evermore will draw them close to Thee,
And whisper to them, "O, abide in Me ;
"My love is changeless, and for thee I died";
And can I doubt such love as this, my Lord,
Or for one moment from Thy side depart ?
O, keep me near Thee, write upon my heart
Thine everlasting love ; guide me, O Lord,
Into Thy truth.

And if my heart should fail
In following after Thee, because of cares
Which throng my daily life, and the affairs
I may not disregard ; do Thou prevail,
And draw me by Thy love to follow Thee
More closely. Ever keep my hand in Thine,
On each step of the way let Thy love shine ;
Be Thou, O Lord, both Sun and Shield to me.

J. P.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

II.

“Our Father who art in heaven.”

OUR Father! Yes, this is how the Lord taught His disciples to address their God in prayer. The very title is an encouragement to pray. Who so free to ask as a child? Who so ready to give as a father? One has well asked, “What more sad than to kneel and say ‘Our Father,’ and then get up and live an orphaned life?” Our Father!—how slow we are to take in the glorious blessedness which these words tell out. In the garden, hard by the sepulchre, on that resurrection morning, what was the first message which the risen Lord sent to His loved ones by Mary? “I ascend unto My Father and your Father.” These words suggest: **RELATIONSHIP—PRIVILEGE—RESPONSIBILITY.**

RELATIONSHIP.—For we read in Gal. iv. 6, “Because *ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” And again, “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (or sonship), whereby ye cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. viii. 15). Abba is the Hebrew word for Father, and the joining it together with the Greek word makes it the more emphatic; while the use of two languages shows forth the union of Jew and Gentile in a common sonship. This relationship is not by natural birth, for we are “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. ii. 3). The Lord’s solemn testimony to the Jews remains true of every natural man—“Ye are of your father the devil” (John viii. 44). Hence the need of the birth from above. Gal. iii. 26—“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”—explains how a child of wrath becomes a child of God. Every other process, then, that claims to transform a child of Adam to a child of God is but a sham, and its dupes are counterfeits. This relationship is a reality, not a figure of speech. “Beloved, now are we the children of God” (1 John iii. 2, R.V.)

PRIVILEGE.—That is the blessing that flows out of this wondrous relationship. This is a theme which we may commence on earth, but an eternity will be required to reveal its fulness. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God” (1 John iii. 1, R.V.) Love, Divine love, is told out by

The Lord's Prayer.

this blessed word, Father. "The Father Himself loveth you" (John xvi. 27). As we know this love we are bold to ask, and then we know the Father as the Giver. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him!" (Matt. vii. 11.) "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17). We also learn our Father's care—"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of" (Matt. vi. 8). "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14). "This is the Father's will, which hath sent Me, that of *all* which He hath given Me I should lose nothing" (John vi. 39). "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, *even our Father who hath loved us*, . . . comfort your hearts" (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17).

RESPONSIBILITY.—The Lord Jesus came forth from the Father to reveal Him, and so perfectly did His walk and ways manifest the Father, that He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 7 and 9). So the Lord would have us, in our measure, act as the children of our Father who is in heaven (Matt. v. 9 and 43-48). Not only should we in our actions towards others rightly represent Him, as the sons of God down here, but our Father seeks from us worship and obedience. *Worship*; for now is the hour of spiritual worship, when those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth, and the Father seeketh such to worship Him (John iv. 23). Shall He seek in vain? The Son of Man seeketh the lost, but the Father seeketh worshippers. "When ye pray, say, Our Father" (Luke xi. 2). "For through Him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii. 14); "Giving thanks unto the Father" (Col. i. 12). *Obedience*; for our walk down here may be such as to be well-pleasing unto Him, so that He can look upon us with the love of complacency, as the Lord tells out in John xiv. 21-23. "When you are a naughty boy," said a father once to his son, "I love you with a love that makes me sad; but when you are good, with a love that makes me glad." May our conduct never need the rebuke contained in the question, "If then I be a Father,

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where is My honour?" (Mal. i. 6); but rather, like John of old, may we be able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father," and so shall our joy be full (1 John i. 3, 4).

One more thought. As children we need our Father's forgiveness when we sin. God, judicially, or as a judge, has dealt with our sins once for all at the Cross; but, as children, we can only have fellowship with our Father as our known sin is confessed and put away. Hence we read, "If any man sin, we (children) have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John ii. 1). And, therefore, the injunction, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any" with the added warning, "If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark xi. 24-26).

There cannot be real fellowship with the Father when sin has been allowed to cloud the conscience; but, blessed be God, the whisper of confession brings immediately the kiss of forgiveness. "Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13).

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NOTES IN A BIBLE CLASS.

VI.

DAVID

WAS soon after anointed king over Israel. It was said of him, in contrast to Saul, that he was a man according to God's own heart (1 Sam. xiii. 14, Acts xiii. 22). The world cannot understand how David could be a man according to God's own heart, and yet commit such terrible sins as are recorded against him. David was a man that loved and revered the Word of God. When he departed from the Lord, the Word led him to return to Him again. That gives its character to the life of David. Also, he did not commit idolatry; he was true to Jehovah and His appointed worship. Turn to 2 Sam. xxiii. 3-5—"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. . . . Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this

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is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow." David knew that he was not the man that was to be to this earth as a morning without clouds. That pointed forward to God's anointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom David was only a type: the one who, as SON OF MAN, is to have universal dominion. Adam, Noah, Saul, and David failed in their rule for God. Solomon came next upon the scene. He had a nearer approach to universal dominion than any of those exercising authority for God who preceded him. God gave him special wisdom and grace for the dignified and responsible position that He had called him to. The period of his reign was just like a little glimmer of sunshine on an April day. The glory of that kingdom was grand, but brief, and it closed in darkness.

Rehoboam succeeded his father. He was not permitted to reign over all Israel. Rebellion broke out, and the ten tribes revolted from Judah. Then Israel ceased to be the dominant power. We know the sad story of Israel's apostasy from Jehovah; how they went into idolatry, and as the result of this were carried away captive into Assyria; and none but God knows where they are. Judah also followed their idolatrous ways, and God permitted Nebuchadnezzar to carry them away captive into Babylon, and to take possession of their land, city, and temple, and to lay them waste. Thus the Word of the Lord was fulfilled.

"THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES."

In Daniel ii. 37, we read these words—"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." Adam, Noah, and Israel had failed to carry out the will of Jehovah in connection with rule and dominion on the earth, and He raises up Nebuchadnezzar, and gives him universal dominion. What does he do? He uses it all to glorify himself. Therefore God takes away his reason, and he is driven from his throne to dwell with the beasts of the field, in order to teach him that "The MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Thus, Nebuchadnezzar failed to exercise rule; the sceptre falls from his hands into the dust; he is not fit to wield it for God.

Turn to Daniel vii. 13—"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like unto the SON OF MAN came with the clouds of

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heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom . . . shall not be destroyed." This is the One of whom David spoke in 2 Sam. xxiii. 3-5, already referred to; the One who will rule "in the fear of the Lord," and who will be like a morning without clouds to this poor earth. This One is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ: He who shall reign according to the mind of God. From the time that Judah was put in subjection to Nebuchadnezzar till Christ shall reign is called by the Lord Jesus, "*The Times of the Gentiles.*" During that time the seed of Abraham will be scattered and trodden down.

Mark the difference between the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii.) and the one given to Daniel in chap. vii. In the vision given to the King of Babylon we have an image with its head of pure gold; the breasts and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of brass; and the legs of iron. All this represents the glory and strength of this world's governmental power. This poor world, deceived by Satan, as it looks at the grandeur and strength of the empires and kingdoms of the world, wonders and admires them. But mark the contrast in the vision given to the spiritual man. In his vision the same world's powers are represented as ravenous beasts; dreadful, terrible, and exceeding strong; one of them having great iron teeth, which brake in pieces, and trampled the others with its feet. The fourth beast, I believe, represents the Roman power, which, in fellowship with the Jews, put the Lord Jesus Christ to death. When He comes again, it will not be in humiliation and weakness as at the first, but in great power and glory to execute judgment upon His enemies. What a difference there is between God's thoughts and man's thoughts; between the thoughts of the carnal and the spiritual man, as they look at the world's governments. If that is their character, the question may arise in our minds, What is our relationship to them? You may say, "Is that the kind of government that I am to be subject to?" We say, "Yes." Rom. xiii. 1-7 shows that we are to be subject to the higher powers, because they are ordained of God. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."

THE PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART.

MOST of us have noticed what is said about Ezra when he was about to go up from Babylon to Jerusalem. "For Ezra had PREPARED HIS HEART to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra vii. 10). This is God's order, and it is the only right order. If we begin to act before we have sought the law of the Lord; if we try to teach others what we are not putting in practice ourselves; in either case there can be nothing but failure as the result. But more than this, our seeking the law of the Lord will lead to no profit, unless there has been first of all a real preparation of heart. We were talking recently with a brother who was desirous of being guided rightly in a path of service he believed the Lord to have opened to him. "Ah!" he said, "I find I do not so much need to pray to God to give me light, as to ask Him to make me willing to walk according to the light He gives." Again and again we have experienced the same thing, and we are very sure, accordingly, that this heart preparation needs to go before the *seeking* of the law even, if our seeking is to end in *doing* the will of God, and *teaching* the same to others. The revised version of Prov. xvi. 1 reads—"The preparations of the heart belong to man; but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord"—and this translation is confirmed by all scholars. How beautifully this agrees with Prov. xxii. 17, 18—"Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto My knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." This is where real ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit comes from, whether it be in preaching to multitudes, or in the humblest word by the way to a passing stranger. There is much preparation of sermons and addresses, but far too little of this preparation of heart. How pleasant and how profitable it is when words that have been kept within our hearts are fitted to our lips at the right moment. They are indeed "a word in season to him that is weary," such as ever came from the lips of the Lord's perfect servant, who began each morning with an opened ear (see Isa. l. 4).

TRIBULATION cannot separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; but the love of God will in the end separate you from tribulation, bring you out of it, and give you fulness of joy.

SPIRITUALISM.

WE feel constrained to speak a warning word about this awful device of the wicked one. It is nothing new, but it has had an extraordinary revival during the past thirty years, and now boasts of having 50 million adherents. Whether this boast be true or not, we cannot say; but there is no sort of doubt it is spreading on every side; and that wherever it gets a footing, it plunges its followers into the deepest, darkest midnight of unbelief, and hardens them to the most daring blasphemy.

We find that many believers regard the whole thing as either childish nonsense about moving and rapping tables, or else the trickery of conjurers who play upon people's credulity. There is no doubt that the devil intended that it should be so regarded. When this latter-day revival of an ancient abomination was brought in, it was presented to people's mind as a subject of curious speculation. Was it animal magnetism or electricity by which movements and sounds were produced? Was it the unconscious action of the sitters round the tables? Was it a trick which some of the sitters were playing upon others? Or was it, perhaps, really the work of some unseen power? Thousands of people who would have had nothing to say to it, if they had believed the last suggestion, have begun to examine into the subject out of mere curiosity, and have been led on, little by little, till they fell wholly under the power of the Satanic delusion. Not only so, vast numbers of Christians, who would earnestly have warned their fellow-believers, as well as the unsaved, to have nothing to do with its hellish wickedness, had they but understood its true character, have remained indifferent, because they imagined it was all frivolous nonsense and not worth consideration. In this way Spiritualism, so called, has gained a footing, and once fairly established, its author has not failed to use his advantage. In face of the rapid strides it is making, we feel called upon to speak out plainly for the warning of our readers, and, through them, of all they may be able to reach.

Spiritualism is not merely a display of remarkable manifestations. It is an organised system of religion, which, in every feature proclaims that it is born of the father of lies. In the town where we write, while it has public "seances" and places of worship, (!) these are but the smallest part of its machinery. By cottage meetings, by ceaseless visitation from house to house, and especially by its promises of help and restoration to sick persons, its devil-driven servants are pushing it in every direction.

Spiritualism.

It has now several regular weekly and monthly journals, and a very casual examination of any of these will show that there is a continual setting forth of a religious system entirely opposed to the Scriptures. To begin with, its constant claim is that it can offer far better foundation for faith than the Bible can ; for, while the Bible professes to speak from One with whom you have never had anything to do, Spiritualism will put you into direct communication with those who have passed into the unseen world, and who can tell you from personal knowledge all about it. Again, they are never tired of declaring that the Bible doctrine of atonement, of an Innocent One suffering for the sins of the guilty, is immoral and unjust and a wicked delusion. The following resolution, passed at a Spiritualist convention, at Bradford, in 1884, will sufficiently sum up their general teaching. "We do regret and condemn the practice of Spiritualists sending their children to be instructed at the various religious denominations, in the teaching of a vicarious atonement ; or salvation by faith and not by works ; an angry God, a personal devil, and a burning hell ; all of which are contrary to the teachings of Spiritualism, and are pernicious in their effects on the recipient's moral nature, because they blunt the perceptions of right and wrong, and dwarf the soul's holiest aspirations." Again, they deny the fall and sinfulness of man, teaching that error is only undeveloped good ; and they further declare that man must be his own saviour, and will presently be his own judge and weighed in his own scales. We do not need to quote Scripture to show the wholesale falsehood and iniquity of all this. We are writing for God's children, who will shrink with horror from its awful ungodliness. But we want to warn all such of the rapid progress this frightful system is making. For one convert that ordinary Unitarianism or avowed infidelity is making to the above views, Spiritualism is making scores, even women and girls speedily becoming fluent expounders of such blasphemies. It is the devil's counterfeit of the work of the Holy Spirit ; and by it, he is persuading multitudes to reject the Spirit's testimony about God's Christ, and to accept instead this other witness to all his own lying delusions.

We have sought this month briefly to declare the teachings of this system. Next month, if the Lord will, we propose to show, from the Word of God, the falsity of its pretensions to communicate with the spirits of the departed, and to prove that the power that works in mediums and others is that of unclean spirits or demons.

MARANATHA (The Lord will come).

III.

ANOTHER argument used to prove that the Lord Jesus cannot come back just yet, is as follows:—It says in I Cor. xv. 51, 52, “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Now if we are only to be caught up at the *last* trump, it follows that all other trumpet calls must be past before that time comes. But in chapters viii. to xi. of the Revelation we get seven trumpets, sounded by seven angels, and it is certain that the events of those chapters have not yet taken place. Is it not plain, then, that the *last* trump must be either the seventh there spoken of, or one that comes after the whole of them, and that all that is contained in those chapters must take place before the Lord can come?

It strikes us that a very little reflection will show that this argument, which sounds very plausible, perhaps, at first, has really no weight at all in it. The Apostle Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians more than thirty years before the visions of the book of the Revelation were given to John. No one at that time had heard anything about the seals and trumpets and vials of that book. Now, consider what it is that we are asked to believe. The Corinthian saints were being grievously led astray on the important foundation truth of the resurrection, and in this fifteenth chapter the apostle is setting them right. Is it to be supposed, for a moment, that he could refer to the symbols of a book that would not be heard of till most of the people he was writing to had left the earth? How could they possibly understand such a reference? In the previous chapter he had written, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (verse 8). It might as well be argued that that meant one of the other seven trumpets of the Revelation. All such references must be to things that the Corinthian Church would be able to understand. Otherwise there would be no “distinction in the sounds,” and how should they know what was meant? (see I Cor. xiv. 7). These verses of chapter xiv. will help us to catch the thought. In warfare the orders of the commanding officer are conveyed by means of trumpet sounds, or bugle call, as it is commonly named, and all through the din of the conflict they are heard and obeyed. When the day’s arduous work is ended, the last trump is that which calls the weary soldiers to their repose. If, afterwards, the general desires to

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speaking some words of encouragement and praise to his men for the part they had taken in the fight, it is not by trumpet notes, but face to face and with his own voice that he addresses them. Just so with the Lord. The precious scriptures and the Spirit-taught ministry of His Word are the trumpet sounds by which He directs and encourages us all through the time of conflict down here. But presently the blessed moment, blessed to Him as well as to us, shall come, when He will summon us up to His presence. It will be the last time that He will need to speak by trumpet call, for after that we shall be forever with Him. We shall see His face, we shall hear His voice, and we shall go no more out; so the trumpet sound shall be exchanged for the far better face to face.

It reminds us of the silver trumpets of Numbers x. If the children of Israel were to be called together in solemn assembly, if they were to prepare for the march, if they were to be warned of impending danger, the well-defined notes of the silver trumpets were heard all through the camp, making known to every man the will of Jehovah. Silver was the well-known type of redemption or atonement; and the use of the silver trumpets for conveying all the instructions of the Lord to His people, reminds us that God always deals with us on the ground of redeeming grace, making that the foundation of every exhortation and commandment. And what a mighty witness to the power of redeeming grace that last trumpet call will be. The sleeping ones shall be raised and the living ones changed in one moment, when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God" (1 Thes. iv. 16). Whatever faltering there may have been in our obedience to many an earlier command, there will be none then. Whoever may have been absent from the assembly of His saints before, not one will be missing that day. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

How simply and beautifully everything fits into its place. The angel trumpets that announce the coming woes on the world have no part in all this, and do not in any way make that blessed summons for which we wait anything else than the LAST TRUMP to the Lord's waiting ones. May the thought of that last trump, and all the untold joy it shall bring to us, make us daily more watchful for every note that comes from the same blessed source. The ear and heart that are truly waiting and longing for the last trump, will surely not fail to catch each previous word of command, of warning and of encouragement.

A REFUGE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

“Jesus Himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.”

THOU also, toiling on through life, art sad,
Thy soul is oft cast down, the way is drear ;
But now, O weary one, be glad, be glad,
Jesus Himself draws near.

He walketh with thee till the close of day,
And though unseen He never leaveth thee ;
Turn to Him when the night draws near, and say,
O Lord, abide with me.

What though thine eyes *are* holden, He has said,
Lo, I am with thee, even to the end ;
The One who for these many years has led,
Is thine Almighty Friend.

And will He now forsake thee? will He turn
And let thee walk alone life's pathway drear?
Ah, no! His tender love and grace now learn,
Jesus Himself draws near.

Draws near to thee, so near that His dear arm
Encircles thee, and will not let thee fall ;
So near that naught of terror or of harm
Can ever thee befall.

So near to thee, O weak and wavering one,
That He can make thy very weakness strong ;
Then trust Him wholly till life's day is done,
So shall it not seem long.

Thus trusting Him, thy spirit shall be blest,
And in thy heart shall be no room for fear ;
Until He brings thee to His promised rest,
He will be ever near.

J. P.

"SO HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP"

(Ps. cxxvii. 2).

THE margin of the Revised Version gives us the exact meaning when it says, "In sleep." The thought is not that God gives sleep to His beloved ones, but that He bestows His gifts upon His beloved ones even while they are sleeping. God has given the day for work, and the night for rest. If the farmer does not use the day-time for ploughing and sowing, and all the other operations of husbandry, he need not expect a harvest. But, on the other hand, God's gifts do not cease when the farmer takes his needed rest. The rainfall and the dew by night, as well as the brightest sunshine by day, are among God's gifts; and, whether we wake or sleep, the corn is growing in the field. But this is true in spiritual things as well as in natural. The work, the husbandry, is His, not ours. He uses us in it, because He delights to associate us with Himself in what He does. We may well be diligent, therefore, in all that He entrusts to us; but we do not need to be anxious and care-worn, or to suppose that the Lord cannot afford to let us rest, lest the work should stand still. The Lord builds the house; the Lord keeps the city. Has He called us to labour at the building of His house? Has He given us a charge concerning His Jerusalem? Then let us seek grace to show how highly we value the privilege. But whatever the urgency of the claims of the Gospel, or however the needs of His Church may press upon us, the moments are not wasted when He calls us apart to Himself to rest, for He giveth to His beloved even when they are sleeping.

OUR enemy watches us closely; he challenges and desires to have us that he may sift us as wheat—he knows he can easily shake us if we are left to ourselves; but we have a Shepherd, a Keeper, who never slumbers nor sleeps.

EVEN the bread which we eat, without the influence of our Father's promise and blessing, would no more support us than a stone; but His blessing makes everything good—gives a tenfold value to our comforts, and greatly diminishes the weight of every cross.

ONE great cause for our frequent conflicts is that we have a secret desire to be rich, and it is the Lord's design to make us poor; we want to gain an ability of doing something, and He suits His dispensations to convince us that we can do nothing; we want a stock in ourselves, and He would have us absolutely dependent upon Him.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

III.

“Hallowed be Thy Name.”

THIS is the first petition. Well may it stand in the forefront of the prayer; for if our chief desire is for the glory of God's name, everything else will fall into its right place. God's name tells out His character and His relationship to His people. Thus, in Genesis, before man was created, we simply read “*God* created”; but as soon as man appears on the scene, we read of the Lord God. The Lord God implies ownership, and tells out that the Creator claims obedience from the man whom He has made. But not only this, for ownership speaks of two things—responsibility as well as claim. The Lord God not only claims obedience from man but He also provides for man's every need. The garden with its delights, and presently the woman given, testify of His care, as the tree of knowledge of good and evil tell of His authority. Before long man utterly failed in his obedience, and we know the sad story of his ruin. But in his helplessness and shame, it is the Lord God who seeks him out and tells of a salvation of His own providing; while, as an earnest, He clothes the man and the woman with garments of skins.

Years roll on. Man as a whole has turned his back upon the Lord; God, therefore, chooses out one man from the mass to walk with Him and be a witness for Him. The God of glory appears to Abraham, the idol worshipper, in Mesopotamia, and calls him out to walk in a path of separation. He is to leave his kindred, his home, his country, for a land he knows not. To energise his faith for this, God reveals Himself by a new name, “The Almighty God” (Exodus vi. 3, Genesis xvii. 1). Nothing so strongly characterises the life of Abraham as his simple faith that God was able to perform, even as He had promised. Romans iv. 21 and Hebrews xi. 19 are two New Testament scriptures which bring out this prominent feature of Abraham's walk.

Again another interval of some four hundred years. God's earthly people, Abraham's seed, are in cruel bondage. Egypt's taskmasters afflict them, and their cry goes up to heaven. Has God forgotten His promise to Abraham? Has He turned His back upon His people? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Ah, no. “I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people, and am come down to deliver them,” He says (Acts vii. 34).

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Yet not at once is this deliverance to come. God for His own wise purposes deals first with Pharaoh, and then, only when Pharaoh is finally hardened, will He with a stretched-out arm and great judgments deliver His suffering people. To encourage them to wait for this final moment, God makes Himself known by a new name—Jehovah (Exodus vi. 3). The meaning of which is, the One who is, and who was, and who is to come. The truth this name reveals is most beautifully applied to our Lord Jesus in Hebrews xiii. 8, where we are told He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” This name declares God to be the Unchangeable, and therefore, the promise-keeping God. How precious this is. There is nothing in Israel to call forth God’s compassion, but the certainty of their deliverance is in the character of God himself. They failed. He cannot fail. The prophet Ezekiel reminds them that they had defiled themselves with the idols of Egypt (Ezekiel xx. 6, 7). But, though their departure was so great, yet God makes Himself known as “Jehovah,”—the One who remains the same—

“We change—He changes not ;
He ne’er forgets, tho’ oft forgot.”

The last of their prophets gives the same testimony, Malachi iii. 6, “For I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

Thus far we have seen how God’s name has answered to man’s need. With truer knowledge of man’s needs and ruin come corresponding manifestations of God’s purposes of grace in the fuller telling out of His name. When sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The lowest depth of man’s fall from God is seen in the murder of the Son of His love. And, as we saw in our last paper, it is consequent upon the rejection of that blessed One that the Spirit has come down to teach us the name of Father.

Do you wonder, if it cost so much to teach us this precious name, that the first petition is “Hallowed be Thy Name”? When is the prayer answered? Not when we think of the name as something high and afar off. Not when we wrap it round with awe, and think of it as only for those who are much holier than ourselves. Ah, no! but when we encircle it around with tender love.

The school-boy has to bear with many an unkind taunt and jest. His manners, his clothes, &c., may give occasion for joke;

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but there is one subject you may not speak of. He bears much, but will not brook to hear strangers speak of his mother. No ; he hallows her name too much for that. So may we, with greater love and deeper devotion, hallow our Father's name. Love it too well to bear to hear it named but with adoring love.

Most of all do we hallow it when, with adoring worship, falling before our God, we are able to look up into His face, and enjoy, in our own soul's experience, something of the wondrous love which that name reveals.

So may we, as a holy priesthood, offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. ii. 5). Through Him, then, let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually—that is, the fruit of lips, which make confession to His name (Heb. xiii. 15, R.V.).

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NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

VII.

LAWLESSNESS.

LET us now turn to a few scriptures which give us the moral characteristics of the last days. We may begin 2 Tim. iii. 1-5. These verses give us the lawless condition of things which characterises these last days. In the centre of the list is disobedience to parents, showing that God's rule in the domestic circle is broken up. The probability in most cases is, the parents not living in harmony together, their children become disobedient and do their own will. Look at another scripture in this connection, 2 Peter ii. 10—"Them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed." This despising of every form of restraint and authority is the spirit of the last days. Jude 8—"These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." You will always find that despising of authority is connected with the worst form of self-will. Those who despise God, and the authority He has ordained, generally become slaves of the vilest passions. Rebelling against Divine authority, they become the slaves of self and Satan. We shall get further help about this if we look at various scriptures where the word "iniquity" occurs. Matt. vii. 23—"Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." That word iniquity means lawlessness. You will find it again xxiv. 12—"Because iniquity shall abound, the

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love of many shall wax cold." It is the same word, lawlessness. 2 Cor. vi. 14—"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness" or lawlessness? Righteousness is God's great Divine law; lawlessness is the setting aside of Divine law. 2 Thess. ii. 7—"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." That is, the mystery of lawlessness. "Then shall that Wicked" (or lawless one) "be revealed," who was at work even as early as the time of the apostle. The mystery of lawlessness; that is, the casting aside of Divine authority. This is not merely taking the name of Christians, but working under the cloak of professed subjection to Christ. The very self-will and pride that is in the world has entered in among the saints. In the assembly of God men are rising up, drawing disciples after them. This lawless spirit has got inside the church, and there it is working, until in the end is developed this mystery of iniquity. The time is coming when this mystery shall be revealed—the lawless one shall be manifested, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." That is to say, the work of lawlessness goes on increasing and developing until it is headed up in the man who is called the "lawless one," "the son of perdition," "the Antichrist." So you see what things are coming to, and how dreadful is that spirit that won't endure authority; that spirit which says—"I will do what I like; my own will shall gain the day." And so man, in self-will, casts off God's will, becoming a slave to passion, working out his own destruction under the leadership of the lawless one.

Titus ii. 14—"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness." The circle of God's assembly is a little company that are redeemed from all lawlessness. When we hear of iniquitous persons, we think of those who get drunk, cheat, and steal. That is not the thought here; it is redeemed entirely from the spirit that does not own the authority of the Lord Jesus, in the family, the assembly, or the world.

Heb. i. 9—"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (lawlessness). Just connect that verse with Mark xv. 28—"He was numbered with the transgressors"—those who were lawless. The one who hated lawlessness was numbered with the lawless. 1 Cor. ix. 21—"To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ)" Being without law is lawlessness. Of

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course, Paul is speaking to the Gentiles, who had not the law as the Jew. In that sense they were without law ; but the sense in which it has been used in the other verses means without law because men will not submit to it.

Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered . . . by wicked (lawless) hands have crucified and slain." The lawless hands that would not have any authority over them whatever. 1 John iii. 4—"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law : for sin is the transgression of the law" (literally, "Whosoever is practising sin is practising lawlessness : for sin is lawlessness"). Utter lawlessness makes a man one mass of sin. If I will not own subjection to the authority of Christ, then my own will just makes me go on sinning. I am incapable of a good action, or even thought, except I am in subjection to the will of God.

God created and redeemed us, that we might be in the place of subjection ; owning His authority as Creator first, and doubly so as Redeemer. So that the very vital breath of the newborn soul that cries "Abba, Father" to God, calls Jesus Lord. That means, that from the very outset I am not my own, I am under the authority of Christ. When Paul was struck down while on the road to Damascus, the first words that came out of his lips were, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" That man was under the authority of Christ from that day to the end of his course. He was literally and practically one who was redeemed from all lawlessness. Self-will had received its death-blow in him. These passages show us that lawlessness is characteristic of the last days, not only in the world, but also in the sphere which, by profession, is Christian ; because many of the passages we have referred to speak of what is inside the circle of God's assembly. That is what we have to be on our guard about, and what we are open to on all hands—the spirit of the world creeping into the church.

ALL things that are within the compass of God's promises are within the compass of faith.

GOD often encourages the weak in faith by giving speedy answers to prayer, but the strong in faith will be tested by God's delays.

FAITH never expects to learn *deep* lessons without *deep* difficulties ; therefore she is not surprised by strange and dark providences.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

IV.

“Thy kingdom come.”

THIS prayer, divinely taught, shall be blessedly fulfilled. The great voices in heaven shall most certainly proclaim the joyful fact that “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Rev. xi. 15). Then shall the four-and-twenty elders, typical of the Church glorified, fall down in adoring worship before their God. Meanwhile, Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4), as to its religion; and its prince, as to political power (see John xii. 31, xiv. 30, and xvi. 11).

Now we are in the times of the Gentiles, and until they have run their destined course, Jerusalem must be trodden down (Luke xxi. 24). For Jerusalem is the only earthly centre from which Jehovah can dispense His authority.

Before considering how the petition will be fulfilled, we pause to notice that its very terms confirm the conclusion of our opening paper, that this prayer is not the cry of those saved during this time of grace. The Bride longs for a person, even the Bridegroom; the godly Israelite for the setting up of a kingdom. The Church is ever looking upward; the Jew eastward. One will be caught up; the other saved in the flesh, and gathered to the land of promise. The dying thief might ask to be remembered by the Lord when He came in His kingdom; but how gracious was the answer, “TO-DAY—WITH ME.” Not to wait well-nigh 2,000 years; but, to-day. Not to be only a subject of a great King, but brought into all the nearness and blessing which those words, “with Me,” tell of.

While, then, we wait for God's Son from heaven, even Jesus (1 Thess. i. 10), “looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus ii. 13, R.V.), let it not be supposed for one moment that we have no interest in the kingdom. Our cry is, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. xxii. 20); and, like the Greeks of old, we say, “Sirs, we would see Jesus”; yet we are deeply concerned in all that concerns Him, for has He not called us friends (John xv. 15)? We rejoice in every crown added to that brow, once wreathed in thorns for us. We are glad, as we read that His kingdom will extend from shore to shore; not only, or chiefly, because He will associate

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us with Himself in His reign, but because we love *Him*.
We sing—

“Thy sympathies and hopes are ours!
Dear Lord, we wait to see
Creation all, below, above,
Redeem'd and blest by Thee.”

When the glorious moment shall arrive for our Lord to take to Himself His great power and reign, we shall not be uninterested spectators of His triumph. In that day it shall be granted to us to sit down with Him upon His throne, even as He is now seated with His Father on His throne (Rev. iii. 21). As yet, Christ has not set up His throne. His kingdom has not yet come. But the heavenly Bridegroom, having first caught away His bride, will presently return with her in manifested glory (Col. iii. 4); and *then* shall He sit upon the throne of His glory (Matt. xxv. 31).

How will this be accomplished? Christ came to His own (dominion), and His own (people) received Him not. Men murdered Him; but God raised Him from the dead. Earth cast Him out; but heaven received Him. Yea, we read in Acts iii. 21 that the heaven *must* receive Him. Oh! what a reception the Son of God had when He returned to the right hand of the Majesty on high. As we look up, we see Him yonder crowned with glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9).

“The crown is His, and His by right
The highest place in heaven.”

Will He never return to this earth again? Oh, yes! The length of the time of His sitting at the right hand of God is fixed. How soon may it close? We read on—“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.” Till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, Christ cannot reign! Christ's kingdom can never be manifested as long as political power is wielded by Gentile hands.

It is the false woman who is supported by the world-power, and forms treacherous alliance with the kings of the earth (Rev. xvii.); the same false woman who put the deadly leaven in the three measures of meal (Matt. xiii. 33). The true bride, who becomes the Lamb's wife, has no part in such alliance (compare Rev. xvii. 3 and xxi. 9). The kingdom was Israel's, but, because of sin, God transferred it from them to the Gentiles; and, again, it shall pass from the Gentiles unto Christ. The dream of Daniel ii. does but proclaim the same truth. There we learn that for the Church to take

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part in world-government now is to frustrate the purpose of God (to speak after the manner of men). No apparent good which might result can justify such action. As the Lord Jesus told Pilate, His kingdom is not of this world, hence it is not for His disciples to interfere with its government (John xviii. 36).

His kingdom shall come, and then shall His servants fight (Rev. xvii. 14 and xix. 14). Further, we can fix the time when this petition, repeated so often in the ears of "Our Father," shall have its true and complete answer. When Gentile rule has passed through its last phase, in the revival of the Roman empire in its ten-kingdom form, then shall the moment come when God shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. Israel fails, Gentiles fail, but the Christ never.

But how will God bring this about? What will be the mode of operation by which the world is to be prepared for this mighty change? Man seeks after wisdom apart from God, and becomes a fool (Rom. i. 22 and 1 Cor. i. 20). Man doubts God's truth, and so is prepared to believe the Devil's lie, like Eve in the garden (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11). Man rejects God's Christ, and therefore bows down to the Antichrist. "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43). Those who will groan under the dreadful tyranny of the man of sin will best be able to say, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." The first visible result of Christ's claiming His kingdom, as shown by the opening of the first seal, is the manifestation of the Antichrist in political power (Rev. vi. 2). The first result of Satan's being rejected from heaven, full of wrath, because he knows his time is short, is to energise the man of sin to his last awful development, even the breaking of his covenant with the Jews, and the claiming worship for himself and his image.

Out of the seething mass of democracy shall this last and most wicked phase of Gentile rule arise. As human wisdom became foolishness, as the doubter of truth became the eager recipient of the great lie, so lawlessness shall bring forth the most cruel despot the world has ever groaned under. He who is in the secret of the Lord can exclaim, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Ps. lxxvi. 10). Earth's groans will call for the Prince of Peace, and when man's failure in government is apparent, then will the Blessed One come.

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The Antichrist, with his confederate kings gathered against Jerusalem, shall think to destroy the last vestige of testimony for Jehovah on earth, but that great array of human power becomes but the footstool, to be crushed by the foot of God's Christ. All things, even Satan's enmity and man's rebellion, work for the glory of God and the fulfilment of His purposes, and therefore for man's highest good.

The moment of the blasphemous triumph of the man of sin is the moment when the Lord our God shall come, and all His saints with Him; and then shall He destroy that wicked one with the breath of His mouth, and set up His own kingdom, of which there shall be no end.

At eventide it shall be light; and thus shall be graciously answered the cry,—oft mixed with tears before,—“Thy kingdom come.”

SPIRITUALISM.

II.

LAST month we were pointing out the character of the Spiritualistic doctrines. We now propose to show two things from the Word of God. *First*, That no communication with the spirits of the departed is really possible; but that those who attempt it are brought under the power of demons. *Second*, That God has absolutely forbidden any sort of dealing with the unseen powers.

With regard to the first point, God has not seen well to reveal much to us concerning the condition of those who have departed. The solemn narrative given by the Lord Jesus in Luke xvi. makes certain matters very plain, however. The saved are at rest, and are not allowed to re-visit the earth; and the unsaved are in torment, and are unable to escape from their prison. With this agree the other scriptures which touch on the point. In 2 Cor. v. 8 the apostle declares his willingness to be “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”; and in Phil. i. 23 he expresses a desire “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” Before Christ had come the condition of the godly Israelite who had gone to his rest was represented, in a figure, as being in Abraham's bosom. Now that Jesus has died and risen again, sleeping saints are said to be *with Him*. This is all that is told us, but it is quite enough. Enough to enable faith to say, “which is far better.”

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Enough, too, to give the lie to all the Spiritualistic nonsense that represents the spirits of the departed good as wandering about, trying to get some means of speaking to those they had left behind; but unsuccessful, unless their friends should happen to go to a medium. On the other hand, we read in 2 Peter ii. 9 that the Lord knows how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. This, also, agrees with what the Lord said in Luke xvi., and makes it equally sure that the spirits of the ungodly cannot come back to earth for any purpose whatever.

Before leaving this part of our subject, we may point out what a serious mistake is made by many believers who indulge in sentimental imaginings about their departed friends. It is no uncommon thing to hear Christians talk of the spirits of the dead as hovering over them and taking notice of all they do. Some even go further, and imagine themselves able to speak to those who have gone before. All this is mere sentimentality, seeing that it has no foundation in the Word of God; nay, that it is distinctly contrary to what that Word teaches us. It is only at the coming again of the Lord Jesus that we are there taught to look for a reunion with His people whom we loved on earth (see 1 Thess. iv. 14, 17, 18). This is the God-given comfort for those who sorrow at the departure of their beloved ones, and helps to draw out our desires and longings more to that blessed moment when He shall come for whom we wait. All such unwarranted imaginations as we have referred to above can only lead the soul away from God and prepare the way for the delusions that Spiritualism has to offer.

But we propose to show, not only that there is no such thing as communication with the spirits of the dead, but that those who seek after such intercourse really put themselves into the hands of wicked spirits or demons. And it may be well to point out that the Scriptures never speak of these spirits by the term "devil." Our translators have used that word, but without any warrant for doing so. The word "devil" (literally, the slanderer) is one of the names which the Spirit of God gives to the prince of the power of the air, and it belongs to him alone. The Devil, or Satan, is the chief of all the demons. He was so spoken of by the Pharisees when they said of the Lord Jesus—"This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons" (Matt. xii. 24). On every occasion where the real word

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“Devil” is used in the Scriptures, it is in reference to Satan (except in John vi. 70—“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”). On all occasions where Satan himself is not spoken of, the original word is “demon”; and this title of “demon,” as we saw from Matt. xii. 24, is a general name given to all the evil spirits, of whom the Devil is the prince or chief.

There is a very close connection between idolatry and that which now calls itself Spiritualism. In the list of the works of the flesh, in Gal. v., we find those of like character grouped together, and idolatry and witchcraft make one of the groups (see verse 20). Now, everywhere the Scriptures teach us that idolatry is really demon-worship, as the following passages will be sufficient to prove:—“They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods. . . . They sacrificed unto devils (demons), not to God” (Deut. xxxii. 16, 17). “They serve their idols. . . . Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils (demons)” (Ps. cvi. 36, 37). “What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice unto idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons), and not to God” (1 Cor. x. 19, 20). Now, just as those who professed and intended to offer their sacrifices to the gods of their own invention were really presenting them to demons, and so became demon-worshippers, so those who sought to work by the power of these supposed gods, or to communicate with the dead by means of mediums or familiar spirits, really put themselves under the power of these same evil spirits or demons, and received communications from them. It is for this reason that we find the Spiritualism of the heathen nations, in all its different forms, classed with their idolatry (compare Deut. xii. 29-32 with chap. xviii. 9-12). It will be well carefully to read on to the end of chap. xviii., and to notice the contrast between the ways of the Canaanite nations, who sought after charmers and diviners and consulted with familiar spirits, and the promise of God to Israel to raise up unto them a Prophet, into whose mouth He would put His words. The prophet who should speak in the name of other gods (verse 20) is evidently connected with the wizards and necromancers of the earlier part of the passage.

These abominations, then, are evidently all of one character and from one source. Every attempt to work by the powers of the unseen world or to consult with the dead, equally with the

"Thanks be unto God for His Unspeakable Gift."

worship of idols, puts the practisers of it, in an especial manner, into the power of evil spirits, and leads to the most awful blindness and hardness of heart.

We purpose, if the Lord will, continuing the subject next month.

"Thanks be unto God for His Unspeakable Gift."

THANKS be to God!
For by the Living Way,
With boldness we can enter in
The holiest, without spot or sin.
Thanks be to God!

Thanks be to God!
With heart and conscience purged,
We enter now within the veil;
The blood of Christ can never fail.
Thanks be to God!

Thanks be to God!
Upon the Bread we feed—
The Bread of Life sent down from heaven;
The Son of God so freely given.
Thanks be to God!

Thanks be to God!
Once more we take the cup;
We worship at His table spread,
We own Him as our risen Head.
Thanks be to God!

Lord Jesus, come!
We long to see Thy face;
We long for Thine appearing now,
As with adoring hearts we bow.
Lord Jesus, come!

J. P.

OUR faith is greatly strengthened when we are brought to see that no arm but God's can help, no wisdom but His can guide, and no love but His can satisfy.

THE Lord afflicts us at times; but it is always a thousand times less than we deserve.

Rule in the Family, the Church, and the World.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THERE is an aspect of the present dispensation which is called "the kingdom of God." We hear about the church, the assembly, the Body of Christ, and so on; but, as far as I remember, I do not think I ever heard an address connecting the many passages referring to the present age which speak of it as the kingdom of God. Look at John iii. 3, 5—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That is to say, this is the kingdom which cannot possibly be discerned or entered into by the flesh; it is only the spiritual man that can discern or enter into it. Rom. xiv. 17—"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are the characteristics of God's kingdom, whether it be in the renewed heart of the believer, or in the millennium when God's kingdom will be manifested in glory. Then Christ will be the King, and the kingdom will be characterised by three things. First, it will be a reign of righteousness; secondly, it will be a reign of peace; and thirdly, it will be a reign of joy. Melchisedec, king of righteousness and king of peace, shall reign. The reign of righteousness and peace shall be universal. "A King shall reign in righteousness." "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 1, 17). So it does not matter whether I am speaking of the kingdom in its present spiritual aspect or its future glorious manifestation; its characteristics will be the same.

Turn to Luke xvii. 20-24—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . . Behold, the kingdom of God is within (or among) you." This is one aspect of the kingdom; but the close of the passage gives us another. When Christ comes to usher in the kingdom in its glory, He will come "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, and shineth unto the other part under heaven"; it will then be public, manifested, and glorious. But in the words, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (that is, outward show), He is looking at the aspect of the kingdom which is to precede the manifested one. The Jews were looking

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forward to the kingdom being restored to Israel; but their King, despised and rejected, was among them. There were a few who had come to Him, like those who had gathered around David in the cave of Adullam. At that time there was Saul with his outward show; but, hidden in the cave, was David, the anointed of the Lord. So now, there were Herod and the Roman power, and here was God's King with a few true-hearted ones around Him. The time had not come for the kingdom to be manifested in glory; but Jesus is the King, and He had then, and has now, His subjects here, who know and own Him as their King. We know and testify that Jesus is God's rejected King; that is a part of our testimony. We are in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Acts xx. 25—"Preaching the kingdom of God." This is an aspect of the truth that we have too much lost sight of. We know there is a King; but there is also a kingdom. That King is rejected, but God's time is coming when He shall reign. Meantime, we know Him as the rejected King—our Lord. Those who gathered to David in the cave of Adullam knew him as Jehovah's anointed king. They gathered unto him, and he became their captain, and they were devoted to him. We know that Jesus is the King, and God has put Him in the place of authority; and those who have been saved by Him, who know His love, have been taught to acknowledge Him as the One who has entire authority over them. Turn to Acts xvii. 5-7—" . . . These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." That was the character of the apostle's testimony. We seldom, if ever, hear this aspect of truth preached by evangelists now-a-days. We know that the kingdoms of this world will yet become the kingdoms of *our God* and *His Christ*. In the meantime, we own Jesus as the rejected King, and we refuse to own Satan, the usurper.

John xviii. 36—"My kingdom is not of this world." It is very remarkable that this and the passage in chapter iii. are the only two references to the kingdom of God in John's Gospel. In chapter iii. we see that a man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom; and in this chapter the Lord confesses that He is King, but shows that His kingdom is not of this world—not established or maintained after the character of the world's kingdoms. "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from

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hence." But He is the King, and he has His servants who own His authority. The rightful King in the meantime is rejected, and "we are in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," waiting the time when He shall get His kingdom.

There are many other scriptures that we might refer to, but let us just turn to one important one in Col. i. 13—"Who hath delivered us from the power (or authority) of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." We sometimes hear the expression used, "The kingdom of darkness," but I do not know of any scripture for it; because what characterises a kingdom is rule and order. What characterises Satan's dominion is darkness and confusion; the characteristics of a kingdom are not to be found there. Rule, order, and liberty are what belong to a kingdom; but confusion, bondage, and misery mark all that are under the power of Satan. This is an important passage, for it shows there is a sense in which we are already brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

We may connect this with another verse in Col. iv. 11—" . . . These only are My fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto Me." I believe it is a possible thing to be workers in the Gospel and not workers "unto the kingdom of God." I believe it is a possible thing to be engaged in Christain work and testimony, and at the same time to be helping on self-will and lawlessness, and therefore not helping on the kingdom of Christ. Many give their attention to the preaching of the Gospel, but how very seldom their converts are taught all things that the Lord has commanded. Such would never be acknowledged by Paul as fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. To deserve such an honourable title we must begin with the Gospel, and go on to teach those who have been converted to observe all things that Christ commanded; baptising them in the name of the Lord, and gathering them to the place where Christ is owned as Lord, where there is no other will besides His, and where there is no other appeal but to His word.

I believe that this subject is an exceedingly important one, and we have a solemn lesson to learn from the fact that the testimony in connection with the saints in the kingdom of God is a thing that we so seldom hear mentioned. I believe it strikes at the root of sectarianism, for it springs from real heart-subjection to Christ.

MARANATHA (The Lord will come).

IV.

LAST month we were considering the last trump of 1 Cor. xv. 52; but that is not the only difficulty which some have found in this passage in connection with our subject. It is urged that the teaching of verses 51 and 52 seems to show plainly that the first resurrection will be the act of a single moment, when all the saints shall be raised. On the other hand, Rev. xx. 4-6 speaks of those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and who had not worshipped the Beast, as having part in that resurrection. These latter, beyond a doubt, were on earth during some portion of the great tribulation; how, then, can they share in the same resurrection with the saints of to-day, if these are to be caught up before the tribulation begins?

To answer this question, like many another, we need to rightly divide the Word of Truth. In 1 Cor. xv. the apostle is not giving a prophetic account of events about to happen. He is establishing the doctrine of the resurrection; and he does so by showing that the resurrection of Jesus and that of the saints must stand or fall together. "If the dead rise not, Christ is not raised" (verse 16). But Christ is risen, then His people shall rise too. This is, briefly, the apostle's argument; and then, in conclusion, he sums up the whole matter as follows:—"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Who are the "we" of verse 51? "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." Plainly, they are saints of the present dispensation, as in any other part of the epistle. "We, being many, are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one body" (chap. x. 17). "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (chap. xii. 13), and so on. The passage certainly settles one point. All the saints of this dispensation will be raised at one moment. There is no room for the various theories which would teach that only specially faithful ones will be taken at the Lord's appearing. That question is set at rest for all who bow to the Scriptures; but there is nothing in this chapter to contradict the thought that saved ones of a later day, those who confess Christ during the Antichrist persecution, and suffer for their testimony, shall not afterwards be raised up as well.

Maranatha.

Now let us turn to Rev. xx. 4. Here, after the Beast, or Antichrist, has been cast into the lake of fire, and the Devil has been bound, those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and who had refused to worship the Beast, are raised up. But in the very same verse we read of thrones, and of certain persons who were seated on these thrones, and to whom judgment was given. Who are these persons? We need to go back to chap. xix. 14, where we find them spoken of as the armies of heaven, who follow the Lamb, and share with Him in the destruction of His foes. A careful reading, straight on from this point, will show that those who come with Christ, to execute judgment upon His enemies, are the same who afterwards sit upon these thrones of judgment. This agrees with Jude 14, 15 and 1 Cor. vi. 2, where we learn that the saints of this dispensation shall come with the Lord when He is manifested in power, and shall also judge both the world and angels. Here, then, we have saints who had been raised and glorified previous to the raising up of the martyrs of the Antichrist time, though these latter shall share with them in the blessings of the first resurrection.

The expression, "the first resurrection," is not limited to a particular moment of time. It distinguishes those who are raised before the thousand years from those who are only brought up for judgment after the thousand years are past. It is a resurrection of just ones, who are blessed and holy, in contrast to the resurrection of the unjust. Those who are raised in Rev. xx. 4 are the last who partake in it, and the declaration, "This is the first resurrection," comes in with perfect fitness at that point.

Many have argued from Dan. xii. 2 and John v. 28, 29 that the saved and unsaved will all be raised at the same moment; and if those passages are taken by themselves, they would seem to countenance such an idea. But just as we learn that the Lord can speak of the whole of the period that covers His resurrection work, both before and after the millennium, as "the hour" that is coming, so we find that several distinct acts in the resurrection of saints are all classed together as the first resurrection.

TEMPTATIONS which find us dwelling in God, are to our faith like winds that more firmly root the tree (James i. 2, 3).

To do our Lord's will, and to suffer His will, should be our every hour wish and aim.

MARANATHA (The Lord will come).

V.

ANOTHER reason given for supposing that the Lord cannot come at any moment to receive His people is found in the words of Ps. cx. 1, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The thought is this, that it is only at the close of the great tribulation, when the nations are gathered against Jerusalem under the leadership of the Antichrist, that the enemies of the Lord Jesus will be made His footstool, so that He can come and execute sudden and complete judgment upon them. But if He is to sit at the right hand of God until that moment, how can He come before the great tribulation begins to receive His people to Himself?

Surely this argument shows great confusion of mind as to what is meant by *sitting* at the right hand of God. Is it possible that any one supposes that the Lord Jesus remains constantly in a sitting posture, since He ascended to heaven, and right on till He comes as Son of Man to take to Himself His great power and reign? The use of such an argument seems to show that they do. Yet the mere statement of the idea seems to be sufficient to prove how mistaken it is. Besides, we have the Lord Jesus presented to us in other attitudes during this dispensation. In Acts vii. 55 we read that Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God." Then again, in the opening of the Revelation we have the Lord Jesus *walking* in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. There is no contradiction, however, in these different statements. No one of these various expressions, sitting, standing, walking, can be treated literally, as expressing a bodily attitude, when applied to the Lord Jesus. Who would think of so treating them when they occur all together in Ps. i. 1 "Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful." In this case we understand them as expressing moral or spiritual position, and the same is surely just as true when they are applied to the Lord. When He describes Himself as *walking* in the midst of the candlesticks, he speaks of the activity and ceaseless watchfulness of His High-priestly oversight of the assemblies of His saints. When He was seen by Stephen *standing* on the right hand of God, His attitude plainly tells

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how He had risen up to receive and welcome His faithful servant.

What, then, as to the meaning intended to be conveyed by His *sitting*? We believe that many different thoughts are contained in this last expression, according to the circumstances under which it is used. In Mark xvi. 19 we are told that Jesus "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Mark's gospel presents the Lord Jesus to us as the faithful, unwearying servant of God. It commences with His baptism, when He began His ministry, and it goes on till this closing word expressively declares that His service was finished.

In Eph. i. 20, 21, we read that God "raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power." The subject here is the exceeding greatness of the power of God; and the triumph of that power is shown in raising up the one whom Satan had sought to destroy, and setting Him in the place of majesty and authority. In the case of Ps. cx. we have the patient waiting of Christ. In Ps. ii. 7-9, we have Jehovah, in the very moment of raising His Son from the dead, saying to Him—"Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." But between the giving of this promise and its fulfilment there was to be a long waiting time, which the patient obedience of the blessed Son of God accepts as willingly as He did all the sufferings of Calvary. That waiting-time is expressed in the words—"Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is no more interfered with by His coming, not to earth, but in the clouds (see 1 Thes. iv. 17), to catch up His own to Himself, than by His standing up to receive Stephen. He does not claim the promise of earthly rule until the Father's time has come. He once waited patiently till God should deliver Him out of the horrible pit; and He now waits patiently till God makes His enemies His footstool, and this is expressed by the figure of sitting at God's right hand till then.

God indeed, as our Father in Christ Jesus, does not blame us for indwelling sin, but He does require that we should contend against it.

It is the nature of sin to obtain great power by little beginnings.

Notes in a Bible Class on Romans xii. 1.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

GOD loves to beseech. When Israel had escaped from Egypt's bondage their whole thought was what they had escaped from. God's thought about them was to bring them *unto* Himself (Ex. xix. 4). They must be delivered from Pharaoh before they can serve God. No man can serve two masters. It needs freed men, not slaves, to serve God. Pharaoh sought to keep the affections of the Israelites in the land when he proposed that they themselves should go to serve God but should leave their children in Egypt. Parents who have borne much for the name of Christ themselves and separated from much that is contrary to His mind, often, for the sake of some supposed advantage, send their children under influences and teaching which they themselves have judged as wrong. Pharaoh, lastly, when he could not keep the children, attempted to keep their cattle, which meant their trade. God's children often let their business take them into wrong connections, and so hinder their wholly serving God. God would not let the Israelites leave anything behind that would draw them back to Egypt. They must go clean out (Ex. x. 26). God cannot share with Pharaoh. Then, when God has brought them out, He reminds them, "How I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself" (Ex. xix. 4). The same Red Sea that saved Israel destroyed and overwhelmed Pharaoh's host. Christ's call to sinners is, "Come unto Me." He sets us free, and gives us rest from toil of task-master. *Then* He gives us His commandments to keep. "Take My yoke, etc. (Matt. xi. 21). While we no longer belong to Satan, and have been delivered from his service, we still have the flesh *in us*; and only by taking His yoke upon us, by learning in everything to submit every thought of our hearts to Him, can we find rest to our souls. The *first* rest is experienced when a sinner no longer labours under a sense of sin, but has believed God's testimony about Jesus. The *second* rest is that which comes from no longer being under the power of our own fleshly passions and desires. Christ had perfect rest in His Father, and nothing done to Him could take it away; and nothing can take ours away if we are like Him (John viii. 28, 29). When God has brought us to Himself He gives us His commandments, and puts us in the same relationship to Himself as His Son was when on earth, and He desires that we should be able to say with Christ, "I delight to do Thy will; Thy law is within My heart." All this

Notes in a Bible Class on Romans xii. 1.

comes into those opening words in Romans xii. Who has ever measured those "mercies". The more obedient a child is, the more he knows of his father's love; but we can never tell how deep, how wide, how high, are those "mercies"; and He beseeches, not commands us, by them. But all are summed up in "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." No command comes amiss to one who has yielded his body to God. Christ was a dying as well as a living sacrifice. We may not be called to be *dying*, but we are called to be *living* sacrifices, to bear His yoke day by day, and this is "acceptable." No one can say he is not in a position to serve God, since bearing His yoke is acceptable to Him. The hardest member to yield is the tongue. "Set on fire of hell." *One* talks too much of himself, *another* of his neighbours, *another* of the affairs of the world.

Lastly, surely it is a "reasonable service," that, as He gave His life for us, so we ought to gladly give our lives to Him.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

V.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

MUCH of heaven's blessedness consists of this, that there is but one will there. Much of earth's misery, if not all of it, can be traced to the many wills at work here. How blessed, then, by faith to look forward to the fulfilment of this petition, when all shall be perfect peace and harmony, for one will shall regulate all things for God's glory and man's happiness. There shall be no more sea.

In heaven the doing of God's will is the rule; on earth it is the exception. The angelic hosts find their pleasure in doing the will of God. Scripture does not tell us much about them; but it is enough to know that willing obedience is their chief characteristic. When the Psalmist calls upon them to worship, he reminds them that they do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). But on earth how great the contrast. Man, blessed so greatly, sets up his will against that of the Creator, and hence confusion and every evil work. Children of disobedience becomes a characteristic name of the whole race (Eph. ii. 2; Col. iii. 6). All sin, then, may be traced to the fruit of the tree that the woman desired because it could make one wise (Gen. iii. 6). Wisdom, that is human wisdom (James iii. 15), is the parent of self-will, and

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self-will in turn begets disobedience. God's will is set aside, because we think our way is better. But in stretching out the hand to take the fruit, Eve was deceived (1 Tim. ii. 14), and thus became a fool. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. i. 20, 21)?

Do not all who are guided by their own wisdom, rather than God's Word, tread in the same path? Thus we read of Satan that he deceived the whole world (Rev. xii. 9). In the beginning it was a woman, but before the history closes we read, "the whole world." Sad fruit of God's will being rejected that self-will should reign. On the other hand, those who are willing to become fools now,—that is, to give up their own thoughts and ideas,—God makes wise. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1. Cor. i. 21); so we may say that God makes the wise fools, and the fools wise. Let us not forget that unto man God says, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (Job xxviii. 28). The fear of the Lord is not the soil in which that evil weed, self-will, is likely to grow.

How the truth of all this is illustrated in the pages of sacred history, as well as in the story of our own lives! Eve disobeyed and lost Eden. Moses disobeyed, and could not enter into the promised land. Saul disobeyed, and lost his kingdom. The old prophet disobeyed, and lost his life. And many other instances could be found of self-will setting aside God's will, only to bring in sorrow and confusion.

In contrast to all this shame and folly we find one blessed exception. Amid the shades of sad Gethsemane we see a prostrate form, and as we draw nigh and listen reverently, we hear the cry go up from the well-nigh broken heart, "Nevertheless, not as I will"; and again, "Thy will be done" (Matt. xxvi. 39 and 42). The blessed Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ever did the Father's will. As He stepped down from the throne to take the servant's place, He cried, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7), though well He knew that that will led only to the Cross.

But never let us allow the God-dishonouring thought a place in our hearts that God's will is in any way opposed to our best interests. True, that will led His Son down to the dust of death; but in resurrection God shall give Him such a harvest that He shall see the fruit of His toil and be satisfied. The eternal joy of bringing many sons to glory will make up for the Cross and shame which He endured. God's glory and our

The Lord's Prayer.

blessing cannot be separated, and the doing of God's will leads up to both.

"This is the Father's will," says the Lord Jesus to the Jews, "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing" (John vi. 39, 40). Again we get a threefold view of that will in the 1st of Ephesians. In verse 5 it is, "The good pleasure of His will"; in verse 9, "The mystery of His will"; and in verse 11, "The counsel of His own will"; and in each case that will is but love energised for our present and eternal good. As if, lest we should be unable to believe the marvellous things His grace has done for us, He would silence every doubt by saying, "This is My will concerning you." What a transformation when this prayer, divinely taught, shall be divinely answered. God's will done on earth! It was to this moment that God looked forward when He said to Moses, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers xiv. 21). A precious promise, caught up by the Psalmist (Ps. lxxii. 19), and repeated by the prophet Habakkuk (ii. 14), made at a time when Israel had sinned greatly; as if Jehovah, turning away from the failure of that time, looked forward to the moment when the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ (Rev. xi. 15). Then shall come those glorious times of restitution of which all the prophets speak (Acts iii. 21); the times when the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21, R.V.).

A King shall reign in righteousness (Is. xxxii. 1), and under His beneficent sway, greed, passion and oppression shall be unknown. Satan shall be chained (Rev. xx. 1-3), and man shall learn war no more (Is. ii. 4). "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, . . . the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Is. xi. 6). "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Is. xxxv. 1). Then shall the earth enjoy her true Sabbath, and it shall be known what is the full meaning of the prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

"This thou hast asked. And shall the prayer
Float upward on a sigh?
No song were sweet enough to bear
Such glad desires on high.
But God, thy Father, shall fulfil
In thee, and for thee, all His will."

THE GIFTS OF GOD.

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”—Rom. viii. 32.

THOU hast given me *peace*, Lord Jesus !
Eternal, unchanging, sure ;
For Thy blood was shed
In the sinner's stead,
That Thou mightest *my* peace secure.

Thou hast given me *hope*, Lord Jesus !
A hope which will never die ;
But must brighter grow,
For I surely know
I *shall* see Thee by-and-bye.

Thou hast given me *joy*, Lord Jesus !
That nothing can take away ;
And my glad heart sings,
As each moment brings
Still nearer the dawn of Day.

Thou hast given me *rest*, Lord Jesus !
It comes to my soul as balm ;
Not a transient gleam,
Like some passing dream,
But a holy, abiding calm.

Thou hast given me *life*, Lord Jesus !
'Tis hidden with Thee above ;
And I know the source
Of its ceaseless course
In the infinite God of love.

GLENVAR.

W. A. G.

LIKE Enoch, walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road. You have infallible wisdom to direct you, inimitable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you.

M A R A H .

Read Exodus xv. 22-26.

THE children of Israel had gone only three days' journey into the wilderness when they came to Marah. Three days before they had seen the mighty hand of their God stretched out to save them and to destroy their enemies; and, as they stood on the shore of the Red Sea, which now separated them for ever from Egypt, they had sung with triumph their redemption song.

It was easy to sing then; but now things looked very different. For three days they had travelled through the hot desert without finding any water, and now when they had found some they could not drink it, for it was bitter.

And what did they do in this their first trouble? Alas, they showed at the very beginning that unbelief and want of confidence in God which were so grievous and dishonouring to Him, and which so frequently brought much trouble and sorrow upon themselves. They murmured against Moses, and in murmuring against Moses they were in reality murmuring against God (see Ex. xvi. 8). They had got occupied with their circumstances. They were looking down at the bitter waters, and round about upon the weary desert, and they had forgotten to look up to where that pillar of cloud stood above them as a faithful witness that God was with them.

He was guiding them. He was as ready to help them at Marah as He had been at the Red Sea, when He divided it for them and made them go through on dry land. But they had forgotten all this and only saw their present trouble, so that murmurs had taken the place of the song of praise. But we may gladly turn from the sad picture of their unbelief to look at the faith of Moses (v. 25).

Moses did just what they should have done. He knew that the One who had led them to Marah was the only One who could help them at Marah; so in faith he cried to God, and God heard and answered his cry, and rewarded his faith by using him in the healing of the waters. Thus the people were enabled to drink of those once bitter waters, now made sweet by the loving hand of their God, whose love they had doubted.

And now we get God's reason for bringing Israel to Marah, for we read, "*There* He proved them" (v. 25). God had a special object in leading them there. He wanted to teach

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them how entirely dependent they were upon Himself in all things, and how infinitely able and willing He was to supply their every need. He wanted to see if, after all the mighty proofs He had given them of His love and power, they could yet trust Him. But how sadly they failed in all this, and how it must have grieved His heart to see that, in spite of all He had done for them, they did not *yet* believe in His love.

God knows the end from the beginning. He saw beforehand what Israel would do at Marah; but He led them there that they might learn something of their own evil heart of unbelief, and so might be ashamed and humbled at the same time. He was manifesting His heart of love towards them, and was leading them to trust in Him at all times.

All through the wilderness He was thus proving them (Deut. viii. 2). And while He was proving them they were proving Him. He proved them only to find them fail; they proved Him to find Him the ever faithful promise-keeping God—

“ Whose love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.”

We are told that these things were “written for our admonition”; we do well, therefore, to ponder them deeply, not simply as incidents in Israel’s history, but as the lessons written for us by our Father’s hand. God took Israel, His earthly people, to Marah to teach them a lesson, and He would take us, His heavenly people, to the record of Marah to teach us the same lesson.

We, too, are in the wilderness, with its Marahs to be met; but we, too, have our God to go before us, and to be with us in the trials; and blessed be His name, there is *no* Marah too bitter for Him to sweeten. But how often since we started on our wilderness journey, with joy in our hearts and our redemption song on our lips, has that joy been changed to mourning and that song to murmuring. We read Israel’s history, and we marvel at their unbelief; but what about our own? We can look back on a mightier deliverance than theirs; we have been freed from a more terrible bondage than that of Pharaoh; we have been brought into a fuller liberty than ever Israel knew; for Christ has redeemed us from Satan’s cruel slavery, and has brought us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Therefore our unbelief and murmurings are all the more sinful. When rebuking Israel for their unbelief God always took them back to what He had done for them at the first, in

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saving them from Egypt; and He would ever remind us of that first and greatest proof of His love, even the gift of His well-beloved Son (Rom. viii. 32).

It is just in the measure that we are realising and delighting in the love that gave Jesus to die for us that we shall be enabled to cease from doubting about God's dealings with us, and in simple childlike faith to look to Him in every trial, content to wait His time, be it long or short, for the sweetening of the bitter in our lot.

SPIRITUALISM.

III.

LAST month we sought to show from the Scriptures, that there is no such thing as intercourse between the living and the spirits of the departed; but that the communications received by mediums, really come from the demons or evil spirits, of whom Satan is the prince. In opposition to this, spiritualists are very fond of quoting the case of the witch of En-dor. She was a medium, they say, and she brought up the spirit of Samuel to speak to Saul. The fact is that she did nothing of the kind; and a careful reading of the narrative will make it very plain that the bringing up of Samuel was the direct act of God Himself, to the utter amazement and terror of the medium.

Let us turn, then, to 1 Sam. xxviii. In verse 3 we learn that "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land"; and on this account, this woman, the witch of En-dor, was in hiding. We find that Saul had gathered all Israel together and had pitched in Gilboa, while the Philistines were also assembled in force, and a decisive battle was imminent. Under these circumstances Saul was anxious to enquire of the Lord, but the Lord had departed from him because of his disobedience; and although Saul enquired, he was not answered. In his intense anxiety to know what the issue of the battle on the morrow would be, he bids his servants seek for a woman with a familiar spirit, that he might enquire of her; and directly they tell him of one, he disguises himself and goes to her. We will just read the few verses that describe what took place—verses 11 and 12: "Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast

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thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." Now what does that show? That the woman got something she never expected. She undertook to bring Samuel up, but she never expected really to see Samuel. She intended to practice her old trick, and to lead Saul to believe that what was spoken to her by her power of witchcraft was the utterance of Samuel. But on this occasion, God stepped in and actually brought Samuel up, that he might give a last message to Saul; and when the woman saw Samuel she was filled with terror, for she knew that this was something quite different from what she was accustomed to. The reality of the appearance of Samuel made her sure that for no one less than Saul himself would one from the dead have thus appeared. "And the king said unto her, Be not afraid, for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth." This word "gods" in the plural does not imply that she saw more figures than one. The plural is often used in Hebrew to give force or emphasis, and Saul's reply shows that he did not understand her to mean more than one person; for he says "What form is *he* of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel." Then follows a conversation between Samuel and Saul, in which the woman has no part; and this is wholly different from what takes place in connection with spiritualistic manifestations. In those, the spirit of the departed one is supposed to speak through the voice of the medium; but here, God is sending a message by His servant Samuel, whom He has brought up for the purpose, and the medium has no further part in the matter. The whole narrative, then, only confirms the truth we have learned elsewhere, that while mediums may ordinarily receive demoniacal communications, they have no power to interfere with the spirits of the departed, who are in the hands of God, whether for blessing or for judgment.

We must not leave this subject without referring to some of the passages in which God has absolutely forbidden any seeking after mediums, or persons with familiar spirits. We will only quote a few out of very many. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them" (Lev. xix. 31). "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people" (Lev. xx. 6). "There shall

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not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer" (Deut. xviii. 10, 11). This last passage especially forbids every kind of attempt to consult with supernatural beings, or to be associated with those who do so. Then, again, in Isaiah viii. 19, 20, we read—"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We see here how God sets the two things in contrast. On the one hand there is the endeavour to get knowledge apart from Himself, and on the other the seeking unto God and to the law and the testimony which He has given. To go after the dead for knowledge is to turn away from God and His truth, and to be shut up in darkness. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. xxix. 29). Spiritualism is but one of the many forms in which the old deception practised by the father of lies in Eden is repeated. He promises light and knowledge that God has withheld, just that he may the more effectually get his dupes into his power.

We need only add that there are plenty of sham spiritualists, who perform tricks with special arrangements and apparatus, to extract money from the credulous. But quite distinct from these, demoniacal possession, with all its accompanying delusions and blasphemous doctrines, is a solemn reality; and it is well that the children of God should be put on their guard against it.

HE goes not amiss who goes in the company of God.

WE are travellers; we go "from strength to strength." No weakness in the pilgrim-journey of those who are one with "the mighty God."

LET Christ keep the heart, and the heart shall keep the life.

THE Lord withers the flowers we have, that we may always come to Him for more.

To take God at His word is the business of faith.

MARANATHA (The Lord will come).

VI.

PERHAPS there is no objection more strongly pressed against the precious hope that the Lord Jesus may come for His people at any moment, than one drawn from the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel. "Here," say the objectors, "we have instructions given by the Lord Jesus to His disciples in regard to all the circumstances connected with the great tribulation and the persecution by Antichrist. If the Lord is coming again before that time, to take all His people to Himself, to what purpose are these instructions? Who will there be to profit by them?"

Those who ask this question evidently take it for granted that the Lord was speaking to His disciples in the character of Christians as belonging to the present dispensation of God's grace. Though at that time this dispensation had not commenced, and the disciples were still Jews, there is no doubt that the Lord frequently spoke to them, by anticipation, of that which would belong to them after His death and resurrection. But it is equally true that He also spoke to them in the character they then bore, of a believing remnant of Israel, who clave to Him, though He was rejected by the nation as a whole. It needs godly care, then, and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, to discern in which character the Lord is regarding His disciples. In Matt. xxiv. there can be no difficulty whatever in deciding the point. The instructions given are for the use of Jews dwelling in and about Jerusalem (see verses 15 and 16), and in a time when the law, as given by Moses, is being enforced (see the reference to the Sabbath-day, ver. 20). Further, the people to whom these words are spoken will be expecting and anxiously awaiting the coming of Christ, and they need to be warned against the delusions of false Christs that will present themselves (ver. 24). But they will be expecting Him to come to them on the earth, and not that they shall be caught up to Him in the clouds. How meaningless to us to say: "Wherefore, if they shall say to you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not" (ver. 26). That which would make it impossible for believers of this dispensation to be moved by any such delusions, is the fact that, before ever Christ comes to earth, the dead saints are to be raised, and the living ones are to be changed and caught up with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the

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air. That, and not the assurance that His coming will be like the lightning flash, would be the argument, if argument were needed, to satisfy the believer of to-day that he need not go either to the desert or to the secret chamber to look for the Lord. Another important point, in this connection, is that the Lord speaks of His coming as the "coming of the *Son of Man*." Now that is a title that is never used of Him in connection with the Church, but only in relation to His earthly judgments and reign.

It is quite plain that this chapter is given for the use of people who will own Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and who will give heed to His words. But it is just as plain that they will not be belonging to the Church, which is His body, but will be Jews, dwelling in Judea, and looking for Christ to come and save them in the flesh (ver. 22), and not to catch them up into the air. That there will be such people is borne witness to by many other scriptures. The prophet Zephaniah tells of an afflicted and poor people, who trust in the name of the Lord at a time when Jerusalem is filthy and polluted (compare verses 1 and 12 of chap. iii.). And this will be shortly before the gathering of the nations about Jerusalem, that the Lord may pour out His fierce anger upon them (ver. 8). Malachi tells of a waiting people, whose delight is in the Lord, and on whose account He owns the temple of their day as His temple (chap. iii. 1). It is of them that He says, in verse 17: "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I do make even a peculiar treasure" (R.V.).

In Matt. xxiv. the Lord speaks of the temple as "the *holy place*" (ver. 15); while the reference to the abomination of desolation, which will be set up there, tells us that the time is that of the Antichrist and the great tribulation. In 2 Thess. ii. 4, this temple is again owned as the temple of God, and this acknowledgment of it leaves no room for doubt that there will be a believing remnant of Abraham's seed who will worship and offer sacrifice there, and for whose sake God counts the temple as His house. In Dan. xi., too, we read of a people who do know their God, who are joined to Him in a holy covenant, and who have understanding (verses 28 to 33). Here, as in the other passages referred to, the people in question are Jews in Jerusalem, and the time is the time of the Antichrist, who presently takes away the daily sacrifice and sets up the abomination that maketh desolate (verse 31).

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These are the people, then, for whom the instructions of Matt. xxiv. are given, and to whom they will be perfectly applicable. It is these very instructions that will give them understanding, and enable them to escape in time; while the many, who have trusted to the Antichrist, and made a league with him, will fall by fire and sword, when he breaks that league and begins to persecute them.

But perhaps it will be asked, If the directions of Matt. xxiv. are intended for believing Jews, who will be in their own land after the church has been taken away, why did the Lord address them to His disciples as though they belonged to them? And this brings us back to the question that we started with. In which of these two distinct characters was the Lord speaking to His disciples on this occasion? Was He addressing them as a little company of believing Jews, who owned Him as the Christ, while the bulk of the nation were rejecting Him? Or was He speaking to them, by anticipation, as representatives of the saved ones of this present dispensation? The chapter itself, as we have seen, furnishes abundant evidence that it was in the former character that the Lord was addressing them. The closing words of chapter xxiii. had told how the day was coming, though it might be far off, when those who now rejected Him would hail His coming again to save them from their hour of anguish. Upon this the disciples had asked about His coming again and the overthrow of the temple, of which He had also spoken, and chap. xxiv. is His reply to their questions. These questions were asked by them as Jews, personally concerned in all that concerned their nation, their land and their city. The Lord did not hesitate to answer them fully; and His answer, thus given, remains on record for those who shall occupy a precisely similar position in the days after this dispensation has closed. But let us compare the Lord's answer on this occasion with one given by Him to a question of very similar character, put by the same disciples a little later. In Acts i. 6 they asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They still spoke as having part in all that belonged to Israel; for they had no knowledge yet of the mighty change that was about to take place in their position and character. But the Lord will no longer reply to them on that ground. Instead of a full answer to their inquiry, such as He had given on the previous occasion, He tells them that they have nothing to do with times and seasons, but that they

“One Accord.”

are shortly to receive power to be His witnesses throughout the world. So much valuable instruction may be drawn from this part of our subject, however, that it may be well to renew the consideration of it next month.

“ONE ACCORD.”

THERE is often much instruction to be gained by taking note of the use the Holy Spirit makes of a particular word. We have sometimes been greatly surprised, when studying the Scriptures in this way, to find that some word, which we had expected to meet with in various parts of the Bible, was only used in some one or two of its books. In this way a special character is stamped on these books, which will greatly help us to understand them rightly.

An example of this may be found in the words at the head of this paper. The Greek word which is translated “with one accord” occurs eleven times in the Acts of the Apostles, and, with the exception of one occasion in Rom. xv. 6, nowhere else in the New Testament. Let us look at these various places, and take note of the circumstances connected with them, and we shall not fail to see how it is just as long as the disciples were acting in obedience to their Master’s commandments that they were kept *of one accord*.

In chap. i. 4 we read that the Lord “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.” This word of His they obeyed implicitly, and so we find in verse 14 that “these all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication.” There was an interval of ten days between the ascent of the Lord Jesus up into heaven and the day of Pentecost; and the natural impulse would have been to go out and begin to preach long before those ten days had passed away. But they had been told that their testimony was not to begin till after they had received power by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all *with one accord* in one place.” Being all of them entirely subject to the word of their Master, they were all still *of one accord*.

And now, the Spirit being given, the time for their public testimony had arrived. And we find that there was the same scrupulous obedience to the commandments of the Lord in this testimony that there had been in their previous waiting.

"One Accord."

Before He left them He had said, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 18-20, R.V.) And Acts ii. 41, 42 tell us how faithfully these instructions had been carried out. The message delivered that day had not been spoken simply with a view to the sinner's salvation ; the claims of God and the honour due to His blessed Son took the first place ; and yet remission of sins for the guiltiest of all was shown to flow from the death of the One, whom they had crucified, but God had raised from the dead. The converts under such preaching were not of the sort who, being assured of their own salvation, are indifferent to the commandments of the One who had saved them. Neither were the preachers slow to carry out the whole of their Lord's commission. Consequently, we are not surprised to be told that those who gladly received the word were baptised ; nor that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The believers had suddenly increased from "an hundred and twenty" (chap. i. 15) to three thousand ; but the same obedience marked the new-born babes as the older disciples. Hence, the *one accord* is still unbroken, and verses 46 and 47 show us how they continued "daily *with one accord* in the temple . . . praising God." The obedience that had kept them with one accord in prayer, led now to the same blessed one accord in praise.

We now turn to chapter iv., where we read how the bitter, persecuting spirit of priests and rulers had broken out again. Nothing daunted, Peter and John were able to meet their threatenings with the God-honouring appeal, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Then, being let go, they returned to their brethren and reported the whole matter to them. "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God *with one accord.*" Continued steadfastness in obedience went hand in hand with continued unity ; and God could still behold on earth that good and pleasant sight in which He so much delights (Ps. cxxxiii. 1). But we must put off till another month the examination of the remaining places where these words are found.

THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM.

“Labourers together with God” (1 Cor. iii. 9).

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Luke viii. 10).

Entrance into the Kingdom—

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John iii. 5).

Divine Commission to Workers—

“Occupy till I come” (Luke xix. 13). Parable of the Talents.

The Manner of the Work—

“A sower went out to sow his seed. . . . The seed is the Word of God” (Luke viii. 5-11). Parable of the Sower.

When to Work—

“Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. iv. 2).

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand” (Ecclesiastes xi. 6).

How to Work—

“He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor. ix. 6).

“Always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. xv. 58).

Interval between Spring-time and Harvest—

“Praying always” (Eph. vi. 18).

“Now He that ministereth seed to the sower . . . multiply your seed sown” (2 Cor. ix. 10).

“God that giveth the increase” (1 Cor. iii. 7).

The Harvest—

“Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season *we shall reap*, if we faint not” (Gal. vi. 9).

“Your labour *is not in vain* in the Lord” (1 Cor. xv. 58).

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing *precious seed*, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, *bringing his sheaves with him*” (Ps. cxxvi. 6).

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also *reap*” (Gal. vi. 7).

The Reward of the Labourer—

“The labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke x. 7).

“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. xxv. 23).

“ I have redeemed thee, . . . thou art Mine.”

(Isa. xliii. 1.)

THOU sayest I am Thine, Lord,
For ever bound to Thee,
With ties which nought can sever
Through all eternity.

Then take this heart, my Saviour,
Won by Thy loving grace ;
And let no other rival
Usurp Thy rightful place.

My will too, blessed Master,
I'd yield to Thy command ;
To bend it howsoever
Thy wisdom may have planned.

My time is Thine, Lord Jesus,
Its moments and its days ;
That each might be, henceforward,
Made fragrant with Thy praise.

My life is Thine, my Saviour,
Redeemed and owned by Thee ;
Oh, consecrate me wholly,
And live *Thy* life through me.

All, *all* I have is Thine, Lord,
Completely Thine alone ;
Even what I hold most precious,
I dare not call my own.

Teach me, in full surrender,
To own Thy grace divine ;
That none but Thee may, henceforth,
Bear sway o'er me and mine.

GLENVAR.

W. A. G.

EVERY wound our Lord inflicts is more deeply felt by Him than by us ; but love will wound even the apple of the eye.

Is it not precious to lie down, wearied, tired, at the feet of Jesus? When the music of “It is finished” breaks on our ear, we cease from our own works and enter into rest.

FOR the utterly self-condemned sinner, there is nothing but encouragement in the whole compass of the Bible.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

VI.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

THE place that this single petition for our temporal need occupies in this divinely-ordered prayer, with its seven requests, is at once suggestive and comforting. The first three petitions are for God's glory; His name, His kingdom, His will: and the last three for our spiritual needs; our forgiveness, our protection, our deliverance. But this middle one is for our temporal need, our daily bread.

One single request is enough to meet all the temporal needs of those who are strangers on earth and pilgrims to heaven. When the heart is full of desires for God's glory, there is little craving for the gratification of self. David could say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 4). Paul declared, "One thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13); and when we can say the same, then life is wonderfully simplified. That a simple petition should suffice for our temporal needs, suggests that the child of God should not seek great things for himself. On the other hand, that this request occupies the place it does, tells us that our needs are our Father's care. We are not to think for a moment that there is a want of spirituality in making known to our Father our every-day needs. He loves to hear our cry, and nothing can be too small or common-place to bring to the throne of grace. We make sharp divisions between holy and common things, which God has never done. "What God has cleansed call not thou common," was the word to Peter. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31), is a commandment which we never obey, save as we see in each meal the loving care of our Father, and take the bread as the gift of His providing.

This may be more apparent to the one with no store, who, like Elijah at the brook, waits for each meal to come fresh from the hands of God, than to him whose daily supply seems to need no special providence; though more apparent, yet it is not more truly the case with the one than with the other. Of each it may be said, "That Thou givest them they gather" (Ps. civ. 28). In different ways, but each in his special way, they are dependent on a Father's love. The strength, mental and physical, to keep the situation, the health to enjoy the food, are God's gifts; as needful and as real as the bread itself.

This prayer, then, is the assurance to our hearts that our

The Lord's Prayer.

temporal needs are our Father's care ; but there is a limit and a qualification. A limit ; for it is this day's need, and not to-morrow's, for which we are taught to ask, and for which faith may expect an answer. To-morrow's need will call for renewed prayer on our part, and will bring forth fresh grace from our Father. Take no thought for to-morrow, that is, no anxious thought ; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. vi. 34). Then the qualification. It is *daily* bread for which we are to ask ; and this, we take it, means that we may ask and expect the supply of those things which are in accordance with the position in which God has placed us. We often hear Isaiah xxxiii. 16, "Bread shall be given him ; his waters shall be sure," quoted as the only promise applicable to the believer. "You may expect bread and water," they say. Prison diet for a King's child ! We do not believe it. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). "Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy," is written concerning temporal mercies. Scripture recognises differences in social position, hence the exhortation, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1 Cor. vii. 20) ; and in that position faith may look for the corresponding supply. The exceptions, and there are such, do but prove the rule. Sometimes the Father allows His beloved children to learn how to suffer hunger (Phil. iv. 12), that so He may call them up to a higher class in the school of faith. But, nevertheless, we may surely gather that the very instruction thus to pray, is the guarantee that the cry will be heard. Divinely taught, it shall also be divinely answered. We know it is God's will, remembering the exception already hinted at, hence it is the true basis for child-like confidence (1 John v. 14).

Again, these sweet words are the acknowledgment on our part, that all the supply of our daily needs comes from our Father who is in heaven, the giver of every good and perfect gift (James i. 17).

How blessed to look past the instruments, away to the loving Father. Who but our Father placed the coal in the bowels of the earth, stored away so safely all ready for our use, thousands of years before we needed it ? The seed corn and the herb for food and medicine, the very variety of it all, as well as the flower with fragrance and beauty, all tell out how He delights to give, whom we call Father, and who for us spared not His Son, His only Son.

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

Thus shall all life be sweetened, as we take each temporal mercy that gladdens our daily path as a gift from our Father. Let us also remember that these temporal gifts are earnestings of the eternal mercies which He has prepared for those that love Him (1 Cor. ii. 9), and who, as strangers here, are content to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread," because they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. xi. 10).

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

I.

THERE is a distinction between *law*, as a principle, and *the law*, as given by Moses to Israel. God is a great law-giver; He regulates all things on the principle of law. We speak of "the law of gravity" and "the laws of nature." These are merely names of great principles upon which God acts. He operates through laws in all departments of His great universal government. When, however, we speak of "the law," we refer to a special thing that God has revealed in the Scriptures, given at a specific time, to a special people, and for a special purpose. So there is a great distinction between law as a principle, and "the law" as given by God to Israel from Mount Sinai. We shall now turn to a few scriptures in connection with our subject. Look at Romans v. 13, 14—"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Adam's sin was the breach of a definite commandment. But, as we read here, from Adam till Moses, God did not promulgate any law; therefore there was no such thing as the breaking of any commandment. Though there was no such thing as sin against law, there was sin against conscience, or sin against a certain measure of light that God had given. Look at Gal. iii. 19—"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." The law came in as a separate thing, 430 years after the covenant with Abraham. Unto Israel were committed the oracles of God (Romans iii. 2). "To whom pertaineth . . . the covenants, and the giving of the law," &c.

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(Rom. ix. 4). These were some of the peculiar privileges of the seed of Abraham. "The oracles of God" included more than the law; it included the whole canon of Old Testament scriptures. "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law." That refers to the Jews; but the next part of the verse embraces the whole world:—"That every mouth may be stopped, and that *all* the world may become guilty before God." It is most profitable for us to see God's purpose in giving the law. It was not given to Israel merely that *their* mouth might be stopped and that *they* might become subject to the judgment of God; but it was given in order that the whole world might see their helplessness, and with shut mouth accept of sovereign grace. We see from Rom. ii. 12-15 that the poor ignorant Gentile was not without law; he had a certain measure of light given to him as to right and wrong. Every religion and every idolatrous service and rite, whereby the poor, deluded, blind idolater seeks to pacify his conscience, is a witness to the fact that God has made, as it were, a transcript of the law in the heart of each man. It may be very faint in some, almost obliterated, but, in some degree, it is still there. There is the witness within every unconverted man, that makes him conscious that he is a sinner. All religions bear witness to this solemn fact, that man is a guilty sinner before God. The infidel is seeking by his ingenuity to deceive others with the thought that sin is merely an accident, and that there is no such a thing as moral guilt. The Word of God testifies, and experience confirms the testimony, that man is a guilty sinner. So that there is a condemning power within him, although in a dispensational sense, the Gentile has not the law and never had it, because it was only given to Israel. Rom. v. 12 shows that the whole human race is guilty before God, and that those who have sinned without the law, just as much as those who have sinned under the law, shall be condemned by the law. In connection with almost all the commandments we find the words, "*Thou shalt not.*" These words presuppose a tendency to evil which the law brings out. The law first shows that God knew what was in the heart of man, and He gave commandments that brought this out. The law was not given in order that sin might be restrained, and that man might be made better. "The law entered that the offence might abound" (Rom. v. 20). "That sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. vii. 13). God had created man, and sin

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entered; and in order to test man, and manifest what was in him, the axe must be laid to the root of the tree. Man was fully tested and shown to be incapable of doing any good thing, and God saw that nothing would avail short of a new creation. He therefore selected a certain people, and put them under certain laws, hedging them round with ordinances, and so disciplining and educating them, that it would be manifested in them, proved to a demonstration, that nothing could be done for man in the flesh, to make him better, and that there was nothing for him but death, and a new life in resurrection. We speak sometimes of the law as referring only to the ten commandments; but they were only a part of the whole system of social and political law and order, together with the ceremonial observances, regulations, and worship of Jehovah, which was given to Israel. The ten commandments had a particular purpose to fulfil in the wisdom of God. They were given amidst the thunderings of Sinai, so that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. xii. 21).

Now turn to Luke xviii. 20. The first table of the law applies to man's duty to God, and the second to man's duty to his neighbour. The object that Christ had in view in telling this young man to keep the commandments was to work conviction in his heart. It was the law being brought to bear upon his life, to show that he had never kept it, in order that he might come with a closed mouth and submit himself to God's judgment.

THE MERCY-SEAT.

THE mercy-seat was a slab of pure gold which exactly covered the ark. Each was two-and-a-half cubits long and one-and-a-half cubits broad, and on this mercy-seat the blood of atonement was sprinkled. This speaks of the Lord Jesus in resurrection. His precious death met all the claims of God against the sinner. Even His obedience, perfect as it was, could not do more than satisfy the righteous demands of God; but, blessed be God, it did not fall short of them. The mercy-seat was not larger than the ark, but neither was it anything smaller.

At the two ends of the solid mass of gold which went to make the mercy-seat were to be made two cherubim. Between these cherubim God dwelt, for this was His throne. "He sitteth between the cherubim" (Psalm xcix.). A throne of grace established in righteousness.

“ONE ACCORD.”

II.

SO far we have seen nothing in the church at Jerusalem but what was pleasing in God's sight; and there has been, therefore, no break in the “one accord.” But in Acts v. we have the record of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, and the judgment of God swiftly following upon it. Yet, just because the believers were walking in the fear of God, this sin was promptly brought to light and dealt with by God Himself. The consequence was that the people of God were once more “all of one accord,” while “of the rest durst no man join himself to them.”

The next mention we find of these words is in chap. vii. 57, where the infuriated Jews rushed upon Stephen *with one accord*, to put him to death. And again, in chap. xii. 20, we read how the men of Tyre and Sidon came *with one accord* to make peace with Herod. These two passages help to remind us that when the power of the Lord is made manifest Satan is stirred up to work in a corresponding way among his servants. It was so when God gave Abram the victory over the four kings who had taken Lot prisoner. Isaiah xli. 2-4 tells us of his victory, and how God had brought it about; but the following verses show us how the idolatrous nations were stirred up to more unity, so that “they helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.” In the same way the manifestations of God's grace in His beloved Son led to that extraordinary banding together of the enemies of God, when Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were all gathered together against the Lord and His Christ.

We may notice, in passing, that the people of Samaria *with one accord* gave heed to the preaching of Philip (chap. viii. 6); and we all know the happy fruits of his labours among them. There had been a great scattering of the church at Jerusalem, owing to the persecution which followed on the death of Stephen. But though Satan was *in* the persecution, God was *over* it, and the *one accord* among the listeners to the Gospel bare witness to the power of God with those who preached it.

But we pass on to chap. xv. Satan, who had before stirred up persecution from without, was now seeking to bring about discord within. Certain men, coming from the church at Jerusalem, had gone down to Antioch, and had caused much trouble by insisting that the Gentile converts must be circum-

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cised and keep the law. At first there was “no small dissension and disputation,” but at last it was decided to send Paul and Barnabas, and certain others, to Jerusalem, to confer with the apostles and elders about this question. This was done, and the happiest results followed; so that a message of peace was sent back to the church at Antioch from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem. In this message they declare how they were assembled *with one accord*; and when the message was delivered at Antioch, the saints there rejoiced at the consolation it brought them.

But, alas! this is the last time we meet with these precious words in connection with the people of God. Not many days after these things, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should visit again the scenes of their former labours; and Barnabas *was determined* to take Mark with them. Paul did not think this wise, and there arose a sharp contention between the two, which ended in a separation. As far as we know, they never met again; and after this we have no further mention of *one accord* among the people of God to the end of the Acts. We find the words in chaps. xviii. 12 and xix. 29, but on both occasions it is the enemies of the truth who are of one accord.

In conclusion, let us turn to the only occasion where this expression is used outside the Acts of the Apostles. We find it in Rom. xv. 6—“That ye may with one mind (*with one accord*, the same word as that we have been considering) and one mouth glorify God.” It is just what the apostle desired to see among the saints at Corinth, when he besought them all to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind (1 Cor. i. 10). But how is this to be attained to? By individual subjection to the Word of God, and by patient forbearance one with another. When the apostle prays that God will grant to the saints at Rome “to be of the same mind one with another” (Rom. xv. 5, R.V.), he speaks of Him as the God of patience and comfort; and we need not hope to be used of God in leading others to oneness of mind unless we have learned to exercise something of the patience of God ourselves, and are able in measure to comfort and build them up. But, on the other hand, the one accord which is so precious in the sight of God can never exist where there is not subjection to the revealed will of God. If some authority than the Word of God is acknowledged, the commandment of God becomes of none effect. It was oneness of mind, “*according to Christ Jesus,*” that Paul prayed to see produced among the Roman

Maranatha.

believers; and the foundation of all such oneness of mind must lie in unquestioning obedience to the Word of God. We may "all speak the same thing," we may have the "one mouth," on a united platform for a special occasion; but what is that worth in the sight of God if it is not the result of being all of one accord? If the Word of God is honestly owned as the one absolute authority, then we can look to God for the grace and patience that shall lead to our being *of one accord*. But the attempt to act together with believers who have not discerned the sin of allowing human traditions to over-ride God's commandments, can only lead to disaster.

M A R A N A T H A (The Lord will come).

VII.

WHEN we left this subject last month, we were noticing how different was the way in which the Lord spoke to His disciples, before and after His resurrection, in answer to questions very similar in character. In Matt. xxiv. He addressed them in their character of believing Jews, sharing in the national promises and expectations, though for the time suffering persecution at the hands of the unbelieving portion of the nation. But in Acts i. it is quite different. The disciples, it is true, were in no way aware of the true character of the Church, or that any such distinct body, of which they were to form a part, was about to be formed. The thought of the two brethren in Luke xxiv. 21, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," was no doubt common to all of them; and it was in accordance with this thought that they put the question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But the Lord had quite other thoughts concerning them now. Through them, on the previous occasion, He had addressed important words of encouragement and instruction to the believing remnant of Israel who shall presently be called upon to suffer for His name during the reign of the Antichrist. But now He speaks to them as bearing quite a different character. As Jews they had everything to do with times and seasons. The prophetic scriptures had measured out, with unerring accuracy, the days that were to elapse between the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" and the final reconciliation of Israel, with the end of their transgression and the anointing of the Holy of Holies (see Dan. ix. 24, 25).

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All this belonged to Daniel's people and city, the Jews and Jerusalem; and when the Lord, long after, is addressing the disciples as belonging to the same people, He treats fully of times and seasons, and of the signs that shall go before His manifestation in glory upon the earth.

Now every one who has ever considered that wonderful prophecy in Dan. ix. knows that a remarkable break has come in, so that the continuance of its fulfilment has been arrested. Seventy sevens, or 490 years, the angel told Daniel, were to be accomplished in bringing about the final blessing and restoration of his people. These 490 years were to date from a certain decree to rebuild Jerusalem, which was afterwards made by Artaxerxes in the twentieth year of his reign (Neh. ii. 1-8). Seven sevens and sixty-two sevens, or 49 years and 434 years, were to see the building of the wall and the cutting off of the Messiah accomplished; and that has been literally fulfilled. But what about the remaining seven years, and all that they were to bring to pass? Nothing of all this has been fulfilled. The nation still remains unreconciled, and their transgression unpardoned. What has become of that last seven years, that remainder of the times and seasons? The answer is very plain. In judgment upon the guilty nation, for their rejection of His Son, God has set them aside altogether for a time, and has taken the opportunity, if we may so express it, to call out the heavenly people, the Church of the present dispensation. He has told us nothing whatever as to how long this period shall last. We look back to Calvary and we look forward to the coming again of our blessed Lord. Our attitude is that of waiting for the One whom God raised from the dead, and not of counting up dates. But the nation are intensely interested in times and seasons. The day is coming when they will enter into a seven years' covenant with the Antichrist king; and, while the bulk of the nation will no more understand that they are fulfilling prophecy than their fathers did when they shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," there will be a believing remnant among them, made wise by reading Dan. ix. and Matt. xxiv., who will be counting the days till those seven years shall have run, knowing that then the coming One will come.

But in Acts i. the disciples are looked upon by the Lord as belonging to the heavenly people of this age, who will be called away before the times and seasons, broken off after sixty-nine of the sevens, can be taken up again and completed during the seven years' covenant we have referred to. It is on this account

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that when they ask, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" the Lord answers, "It is not for you to know times and seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 7, 8, R.V.).

This contrast between the Lord's action in Matt. xxiv. and that in Acts i. helps to make it very plain that while He was speaking to the same disciples in each case, He spoke to them as representatives of two distinct bodies. If we confound His instructions to them in the one character with the words addressed to them in the other, we are landed in utter confusion. Not only so. The precious words of guidance and encouragement, given for the help of the faithful, suffering remnant in the hour of Jacob's trouble, are actually wrested to put a lengthened period between our souls and the blessed hope for which we should be looking in daily expectation.

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NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

II.

LET us look next at an important passage in 2 Cor. iii.—
 "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (verse 6).
 In verse 7 you will observe that the special allusion here is to that which was "written and engraven in stones," plainly referring to the ten commandments. These ten commandments are called here "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation." That was God's description of what the law was, and what it must be to the flesh. It first condemns, and then it kills. That is all the law can do. That is the object for which it was given. You see that there is a special character attaching to these ten commandments. They are, as it were, the kernel of the law's condemning power. Read now in 1 Cor. xv.—"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law" (verse 56). Just as the strength of a man's guilt is seen in his laying hold of that which belongs to his neighbour, so the superior strength of the law is seen in its representative, the policeman, laying hold of him and committing him to prison, for trial and judgment. The mighty condemning power of sin is this—

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God is a great Law-giver, and the claims of His throne must be maintained. Because God is the Creator, He has a right to govern what He has created. And when sin comes in, God must vindicate the righteousness of His throne ; His law must be upheld and honoured. Sin, through the law, brings condemnation and death down upon the head of the guilty one.

God did not merely gather Israel around Mount Sinai and give them the ten commandments. He did much more for them than that. Along with the ten commandments He gave them the whole system of social and ceremonial ordinances. He gave them instructions applicable to every department of their life. In reading the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, I have been struck with the variety of instruction that Jehovah gave to His people in their relationship to Himself and their brethren. It manifests the great care of God over His people. What nation under the sun had laws so wise and perfect as we have in these books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy? They are full of perfect wisdom for man in the flesh and on the earth. God will never be able to form anything better suited for man on the earth. When Christ reigns, the glory of His kingdom on earth will be that in His government the laws of Moses will be carried out. What I want to bring before you is this—When God chose His people Israel and brought them out to Himself, and put them under that which was the ministry of death, He did not leave them with that alone, but He hedged them round about in the most gracious way. He calls them His vineyard. Just as a man takes a piece of ground and hedges it round about, and digs, and dungs, and waters it, and bestows care and toil upon it, and watches over it night and day, and lets nothing hurt it. That is a little picture of the care that God had over Israel. Do you see the object that God had in view in giving, along with the law, all those ordinances and instructions, the priesthood, and, most wonderful of all, the glorious manifestation of His presence in their midst, in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night? It was to test man in the flesh under the very best circumstances. God says, in Isaiah v. 4, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” He offered to be everything to them, and to deliver them from all their enemies, if they would only keep His commandments. How did they treat God for His care over them? They broke His commandments and despised His laws; and when He sent His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, they put Him to death.

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There is man in the flesh. God chose a special people, and dealt with them in a special way, brought them to the foot of Mount Sinai, gave them the law, cared for them, watched over them, sent His prophets to them, dealt with them in judgment, and brought them back from Babylon ; yet, in their blindness and hardness of heart, the very lawyers that read and meditated upon the law of the Lord, the very priests who offered sacrifices on God's altar, all banded themselves together to murder God's Son. You see how that by the law, sin, instead of being repressed, was brought out in all its hideous blackness and filthiness. It showed that if man was to be blessed, it could only be through death and resurrection. It must be through the putting to death of the old sinful nature, and the imparting of a new life, through faith in Christ crucified and risen from the dead. So you see the deep purpose of God in giving the law. With that in view, look at Rom. iii. 19, "That all the world may become subject to the judgment of God." What is the meaning of that? Just this—That there is no use in my trying to work out a righteousness of my own, after Israel has so utterly failed. What is the use of my trying to get righteousness by keeping the commandments? What is the use of my ever hoping to obtain righteousness by law-keeping, when God has proved man to be absolutely corrupt and sinful? There is nothing for man but to be born from above. By this trial, during the period of law, all the world is condemned and brought under the judgment of God. When the sinner submits himself to the judgment of God, Jesus is revealed as the ONE in whom God's righteousness is established, and pardon and life are imparted through faith in Him.

RATHER let us look by faith to Christ at God's right hand, than at the mountain of difficulties before our eyes.

GROWING acquaintance with Christ makes Him more and more precious to our souls.

WE should *always* be in our Lord's presence, in garments of glory and beauty befitting such a place ; when we leave His presence we are less careful.

IF Christ will not be satisfied with His present glory at the right hand of God without having His Church—the members of His body—with Him, how can we be content without Him in this valley of the shadow of death—this present evil world?

BIBLE STUDY—WORKS.

WE would earnestly commend to the serious attention of the beloved children of God, the following Bible study on a subject of deep importance. Why are so many of us in an unhealthy condition of soul? Is it not through neglect of the plain commandments of the Lord as to godly living, and a want of diligence in showing forth to the world our living faith by living works? May we all, relying on the mighty power of God working in us, henceforth seek to be disciples, followers and imitators of Him who always went about doing good, seeking the glory of His God and Father, and who could say, "I do always those things that please Him." The time for discipleship is indeed short, and a godly, consistent walk, along with activity in teaching and spreading the glad tidings of the kingdom, according to our different abilities and opportunities, is both pleasing to our God and Father, and must yield a rich harvest to His glory!

May He whose words they are apply His message by His Holy Spirit to the heart and conscience of the reader.

God's purposes concerning us:—

"That He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works.*"
—Titus ii. 14.

"We are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"—Eph. ii. 10.

THE PAST. Works (before Salvation) Dead and Wicked:—

"You, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by *wicked works.*"—Col. i. 21.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from *dead works?*"—Heb. ix. 14.

"Who hath saved us . . . not according to *our works*, but according to His own purpose and grace."—
2 Tim. i. 9.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith . . . *not of works*, lest any man should boast."—Eph. ii. 8, 9.

THE PRESENT. Works (after Salvation) Good and Living:—

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."—1 Cor. xv. 58.

"Rich in *good works.*"—1 Tim. vi. 18.

"Be not weary in *well-doing.*"—2 Thess. iii. 13

Bible Study—Works.

- “The Gentiles . . . may by your *good works*, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”—
1 Peter ii. 12.
- “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may *abound* unto every *good work*.”—2 Cor. ix. 8.
- “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to *good works*.”—Heb. x. 24.
- “I will therefore . . . that women adorn themselves . . . with *good works*.”—1 Tim. ii. 8-10.
- “In all things showing thyself a pattern of *good works*.”—
Titus ii. 7.
- “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain *good works*.”—Titus iii. 8.
- “Put them in mind . . . to be ready to *every good work*.”—Titus iii. 1.
- “Well reported of for *good works*.”—1 Tim. v. 10.
- “Prepared unto every *good work*.”—2 Tim. ii. 21.
- “Thoroughly furnished unto all *good works*.”—2 Tim. iii. 17.
- “Fruitful in every *good work*.”—Col. i. 10.
- “Faith, if it have not *works*, is dead.”—Jas. ii. 17.
- “Now the God of Peace . . . make you perfect in *every good work* to do His will, *working in you* that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.”—Heb. xiii. 20, 21.
- “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us . . . stablish you in *every good word and work*.”—2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

THE FUTURE as to the Believer's Works:—

- “God is not unrighteous to forget your *work and labour of love*.”—Heb. vi. 10.
- “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from *their labours*; and *their works* do follow them.”—
Rev. xiv. 13.
- “Every man's *work* shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it . . . the fire shall try every man's work of *what sort it is*.”—1 Cor. iii. 13.
- “I know thy works.”—Rev. iii. 15.
- “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”—Rev. iii. 22.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

VII.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. vi. 12).

THIS is the only petition in the prayer upon which our Lord makes any comment. As if to enforce and emphasise its meaning, he adds a kind of foot-note in verses 14 and 15, thus—“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.”

At the very outset, it is well to be quite clear what is the character of the forgiveness which His disciples are here taught to ask for. Forgiveness, in the abstract, is the same, however looked at and by whomsoever granted; and yet, in its scope, it is after all a matter of relationship. The disobedient son and the rebellious subject both need forgiveness, but the pardon of the parent and of the king bring very different results. The believer can never have to do with God as a Judge, but always as a Father. For him the sin question was for ever settled at the Cross; so, with Toplady, he may sing—

“The wrath of a sin-hating God
With me can have nothing to do;
For Jesus, the Lamb, by His blood,
Hides all my transgressions from view.”

But though the penal question is settled once for all, the filial one is not. As children of our heavenly Father we can only enjoy His smile as we walk in the light. The link of relationship is so strong that all the powers of darkness cannot break it; but the link of communion is so tender that an angry look will dissolve it. Christian, this should make us watchful. But, praise the Lord, it may be formed again, and this should keep us from despair. “If we confess our sins” (is the word in 1 John i. 9), “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. lxxvi. 18). And the confession cannot be real if I allow hard, unforgiving thoughts in my heart concerning even those who have wronged me.

To insist upon one's rights might be allowable under the law, when man was, as it were, upon his trial; but now that the verdict of guilty has been brought in, it ill becomes the pardoned sinner to indulge in such talk.

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An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was all very well for those who sought for righteousness by the works of the law; but how shall those who confess that they owe everything to pardoning grace speak thus? Now, in free grace, God offers pardon to the guilty. On this platform only may the sinner meet God, and this gives a special character to the present dispensation. How can the one who has had his ten thousand talent debt forgiven begin to talk of rights? If I take my brother by the throat, it is because I forget how much I have been forgiven myself. Eph. iv. 32 gives the extent to which our forgiveness to others should go—“*Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*” Matt. xviii. records the sad and solemn history of the forgiven slave who went out from his master's presence to take his fellow-servant by the throat. How miserable! Do you wonder his lord was wroth with him? Don't let us only be indignant with the servant and then pass on. No, we must remember the words, and not try to soften them down—“*So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses*” (Matt. xviii. 35).

Another thought the words suggest, that all the time of our wilderness journey we shall have occasion to forgive. Forgiveness is a plant that only grows in the wilderness; *it is never found on the other side.* Oh, my brother, forgive now; for in a little while the opportunity will have gone for ever!

The joy of exercising forgiveness is a joy quite unknown in heaven. Anger, malice, and unkindness are a mist which shuts out the sunlight of a Father's smile. Then, oh, let it not gather round our soul!

The blessed Lord, when surrounded by mocking enemies on the shameful Cross, cries, “Father, forgive them.” The noble Stephen kneels as his murderers hurl the cruel stones at him, and prays. What for? For their destruction? No; for their forgiveness. The apostle Paul, left alone to face the wicked Jews, does not rail at those who had deserted him, but prays for them. Not once or twice, but many times, in a Christian course, through our dulness and misunderstandings, as well as because of the awkwardness of others, we shall have occasion to forgive. The flesh in us so often brings out the flesh in others; therefore, let us be ready to forgive. We know not ourselves fully, still less can we guess at the hidden depths in others; therefore, let us forgive. Let us make up our mind for this, that we shall often be

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called upon to forgive ; and if we do it for Christ's sake, and in His strength, we shall be enabled to do it from the heart with joy.

Again, this prayer shows us that we are weak ones. How much more have we to be forgiven than to forgive ! Sins of commission and omission ; things done, and things left undone. Yes ; we need again and again the sweet sense of the forgiving love of our Father. Forgiveness is a God-like grace, and while we may exercise it in measure, it is only in God Himself that its perfection is seen to shine out. Well might Micah the prophet exclaim, as he saw in vision a restored and pardoned Israel before him (chap. vii. 18), "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage ? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He *delighteth* in mercy."

How blessed then to know that He will indeed forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, *and much more*. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so is His mercy greater than man's. Nay, as the Creator excels the creature, and the Divine the human, so do His mercy and His forgiveness transcend those of the most devoted of His children.

THE troubles of the way do us good service if they raise the eyes of our mind to look at things unseen and eternal.

THE forgiveness of God is like the God who grants it—everlasting, all-comprehensive, immeasurable.

As a vessel takes its shape from the mould, so should our will be formed in the mould of the will of God ; then shall we have everything our own way (John xv. 7).

IF unbelief prevails in saints, they slight the assemblies of God's people ; but let us who diligently frequent them be able to say, "We have seen the Lord,"—that will be the best rebuke for the negligent.

THOSE who know what it is to deal much with God know that their hopes and desires must, as it were, be buried, and that they must leave it with Him to bring about a resurrection in His own time and way.

THE man of God must be content to walk alone with God. He must be satisfied, because God knows, whoever else may misunderstand.

"THE DAY OF BATTLE."

"The children of Ephraim, *being armed*, and carrying bows, *turned back* in the *day of battle*."—Psalm lxxviii. 9.

BACKSLIDING begins with a thought, which, being indulged in, leads to acts of disobedience. Terrible results followed from the one act of disobedience of Adam and Eve (Rom. v. 12-19), far-reaching and overwhelming in its effects. This one act had its rise in a thought, followed by a look (Gen. iii. 3-6). Israel in the wilderness remembered the fish, melons, and cucumbers, of which they had freely eaten in Egypt (a figure of secret backsliding, known only to the Christian and the Lord), and the onions, leeks, and garlic (strong-smelling vegetables—a figure of open declension seen by all). These thoughts were quickly followed by a mutinous act; for they said, "Let us make us a captain, and let us *return into Egypt*." God had said concerning Egypt, "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." And as we trace the history of man in the Holy Scriptures from age to age, we see that his pathway through life is characterised by self-will and disobedience. For example, the downfall and failure of King Saul commenced in an act of disobedience, when he spared Agag, king of the Amalekites, although God had distinctly commanded him to utterly destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv. 3, 9, 26). Solomon's departure from God had its origin in disobedience, for the Lord had said of Israel's king, that "he shall not multiply horses, . . . nor cause the people to return to Egypt, . . . neither shall he multiply wives unto himself, . . . neither shall he greatly multiply unto himself silver and gold" (Deut. xvii. 16, 17). But, alas! Solomon, who commenced well, turned back in the day of battle. He acted in each of these three cases contrary to God's express command; for it is written of him that he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, which he brought out of Egypt; that he made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones; and that he loved many and strange wives. This was the commencement of his departure from God, and was followed by the erection of idolatrous temples for the worship of heathen gods; God "was angry with Solomon because he kept not that which the Lord commanded" (1 Kings x. 26-29, xi. 1-10). Israel imitated this king, for "they kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works"; and, as the result of this dis-

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obedience, “ Ephraim, *although armed, . . . turned back in the day of battle.*”

“ Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning”; and the victories and failures of Israel are faithfully recorded for our encouragement and warning (1 Cor. x. 6-11).

The Lord Jesus says to His disciples, “ If ye love *Me*, keep My commandments.” “ This is the love of God that ye keep His commandments”; and a special manifestation of His presence and power is promised to the obedient in John xiv. 21. And surely, beloved, this is the day of battle, and victory depends, as it ever did, on our lowly, obedient walk in this scene of conflict. The principalities, powers, and hosts of darkness are drawn up in mighty array against the children of light; but our Commander, who leads the way, has provided for us the armour of light; and, like Ephraim, we shall be fully armed with helmet, breastplate, shield, and sword (Eph. vi.), but not to turn back in the day of battle, but rather, like Caleb and Joshua, to fully follow the Lord. “ If any man *draw back*, My soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb. x. 38). “ No man, having put his hand to the plough, and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke ix. 62). “ *We* are not of them who *draw back* unto perdition” (Heb. x. 39). God has sworn that He will have war with Amalek (a type of the flesh) from generation to generation (Exodus xvii. 16). Let us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, fight against the flesh, making no provision for its lusts (Rom. xiii. 14), giving it no quarter, abstaining from fleshly lusts, which *war* against the soul (1 Peter ii. 11), and “ enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” for “ No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4).

Many around us who had gone forth to the battle, apparently fully armed, have already turned back, led away by the passing trifles of this world, and overcome by the fiery darts of the wicked one. They ceased to watch and pray, and, like Israel, they set not their heart aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God, and they kept not His covenant. Let us take warning and keep ourselves in the love of God; so will *He* keep our feet from stumbling. Let us not be high-minded, but fear; for *by grace* we stand. “ Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” The voice of our Commander is heard above the din of battle, “ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. xvi. 13).

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Let us remember, beloved, that strength for conflict and victory lies in obedience; and the knowledge of our Father's will is only to be obtained by a prayerful and diligent study of His Word. So shall we be imitators of that meek and lowly One, whose heart was ever full of tender compassion for the erring; and our path, like His, will be one of separation to God from the world. So shall we be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, “holding fast the form of sound words,” and “earnestly contending for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints.” “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. vi. 12). These are formidable foes, but the same God who gave Israel the victory over the seven nations of Canaan—greater and mightier than themselves—is our God too, and on our side. Who then can be against us? The weapons He has armed us with in this day of fierce conflict are not “carnal,” (for, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh), “but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. x. 3-5). The Lord estimates our service in a liberal manner, for “he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. xvi. 32). The battle against Amalek must go on till the weary soldier is “put to sleep by Jesus,” or till the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel bid us cease from strife. Then, caught up into the presence of the Lord, we shall sing aloud the song of triumph and of victory, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the praise, . . . for Thou art worthy to receive glory, honour, and power.” Let us seek that the one aim of our life may be expressed in the words, “*To me to live is Christ.*” Then, like the aged apostle in view of the glory, we shall be able humbly to say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John v. 4).

THOUGH Christ can be grieved at a thousand things in us that no eye but His can see, yet none so easily pleased as He by our little endeavours of love.

MARANATHA (*The Lord will come*).

VIII.

ANOTHER objection commonly raised to the distinction between the Lord's coming to receive His people to Himself, and His manifestation in glory to overthrow the Antichrist and to set up His own kingdom, is as follows:—
 "If you put an interval of time between these two," it is argued, "you make a third coming of Christ. Now we read in Hebrews ix. 28 that He shall come a second time; but where does it tell us that He will come a third time?"

A very simple, but a very complete, answer to this objection, will be found by turning back to the Old Testament, and carefully noting what is said there about the coming of the Messiah. Where does it state in word that He will come twice? Passages that contain the most distinct reference to both comings speak as if there was only one. Look, for instance, at Isa. lxi. 1, 2. When the Lord Jesus commenced to read this scripture in the synagogue at Nazareth, He stopped in the middle of the second verse, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears (Luke iv. 21). Up to the point He had just read, that was strictly true. The Gospel was preached, and all its blessed consequences were declared; but what followed; "the day of vengeance of our God," had not come then, nor has it even now, for it belongs to the second coming of the Lord. Yet there was nothing in the passage to mark the distinction; and it was not till Jesus, after His resurrection, expounded to His disciples all the things concerning Himself, out of the Scriptures, that they were at all able to realise that there was to be an interval between His coming to accomplish our redemption and His coming again in Glory.

In the Old Testament, then, the coming of Christ is regarded as one. But after His death and resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses in the earth, and, having assured them that He would come again to receive them to Himself, He was taken up into Heaven. This leads us to await His second coming that He may accomplish all that is yet unfulfilled of the prophetic scriptures. But that second coming may—nay, must—include many separate stages, many separate acts of the great drama. The taking up of the Church, the judgment-seat of Christ for His saints, the destruction of the Antichrist, the Millennial reign, the Great White Throne; all these belong to His second coming, but they are spread over a long period. The first coming, as opened up to us by the New Testament, was in weakness, as the self-emptying and dependent One, to die. The second

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coming, with all its various stages, is in power to put down His enemies, to execute judgment and to reign. Every incident of His lowly life and ignominious death belonged to His first coming, not the mere moment of His birth. In like manner all the acts of His power and triumph belong to His second coming.

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.—III.

WE have seen how the law has brought in man guilty; how, as it has been illustrated, it is like a plumb-line held to a wall that has gone off the straight. The plumb-line shows that the wall is off the straight, and how far it is off; but it has no power to set it right. That is just like the law toward man. It had power to bring him in guilty, but could not set him right. Look at Rom. viii. 3, "For what the law *could not do*, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." The law could neither justify, nor set free from sin and death; it could neither give life nor righteousness. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. iii. 21). "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). "For the law made nothing perfect, but it was the bringing in of a better hope" (Heb. vii. 19). "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God." There were two things that we stood in need of as guilty sinners; life and righteousness. In the sight of God every man by nature is guilty and dead, and what we needed was righteousness and life; but the law could give neither the one nor the other. The law could only condemn and kill me. "The law was weak through the flesh." The law answers the purpose for which God gave it, and that never was to make a man righteous or impart life to him, but to bring him in guilty, and leave him without a word of excuse.

The conviction that the Holy Spirit now works in the soul is upon a different ground from that which the law brings about. The law works conviction upon the ground of natural conscience. A man's mere natural conscience condemns him for getting drunk, or for similar sins; he knows that these are wrong by his natural conscience. The Holy Spirit's ground of conviction in John xvi. 9 is, "Of sin, because they believe

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not on Me." So that God's great controversy with the world is not so much the law question as the sin question. It is, Have you believed on the Son? God's controversy with the world by the Holy Spirit is not so much, "You have broken the law and committed great sins." That is all true, and men will be punished in hell for the sins they have committed; but there is something blacker and fouler; and that is, they do not believe on God's Son, and that is the Spirit's ground of conviction. Let those who seek to preach the Gospel never forget that there is the double ground of conviction. When we begin to think what the love of God is, and what He has done for this poor, blind, deluded world in giving His Son, does it not seem infinitely worse than all other sins that man should treat with indifference the gift of God's love? That is the principal burden of the Holy Spirit's testimony, convincing the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ.

We have seen what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. What is God's way of delivering you and me from the curse, and condemnation, and guilt, that pertain to us as law-breakers? Gal. iii. 13—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." In the wondrous, infinite love of our God the law is vindicated, upheld, and magnified by Christ's bearing the curse for us. The precious truth of substitution, the just suffering for the unjust, is the foundation truth of the whole Gospel.

Did the death of Christ annul the law? Read Rom x. 4—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." It has been said that "the end of the rope is the end of the law." When a man is hung, that is all the law can do against him; that is the end of the law concerning him. This illustrates how God reckons the believer to be free from the law. It is not only that Christ died for him; it is more. It is that God reckons the believer to have died with Christ. Then, is the law dead? No, it is alive and as ready to condemn as ever. But the believer is dead; he is reckoned by God to have died with Christ. Romans vii. shows this. We have, at the beginning of this chapter, the believer's relation to the law set forth under the figure of the two husbands. Then the spiritual application of the illustration is given in verse 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." Mark, it is not the law that is dead, but the believer in Jesus becomes dead to the law by the dead body of Christ; I became dead to the law, in the person of

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the One that took my place and died for me. "That ye should be (become) married to another." The believer is thus set free from the first husband—the law—that he might be married to another husband, "even to Him who is raised from the dead," that we should bring forth fruit to God. We never could bring forth fruit to God by the law, because of the weakness of the flesh. I read of the "works of the law," but I never read of "the fruit of the law." The law could only produce dead works, it could never produce fruit. It is only by being married to Him who has been raised from the dead that fruit can be brought forth to God.

IN THE MIDST.

(Matthew xvii. 20.)

WHERE they're gathered together, His own two or three,
 In the Name of their blessed Lord,
 Made clean by His blood, by His Spirit set free,
 And trusting His faithful word ;
 He is still in the midst, where His people meet,
 As with His disciples of old,
 To show them His piercèd hands and His feet,
 And His wonderful love unfold.
 And so they remember the path that He trod ;
 The Garden, the Cross, and its shame ;
 The price that He paid when He satisfied God,
 Ere they ever could meet in His Name.
 The infinite love of that sorrowful heart,
 The billows of death have not drowned ;
 Oh ! the bliss that that wonderful love can impart
 To a lost one whom Jesus has found.
 Despised and rejected by children of earth,
 No beauty in Him they perceive ;
 But He's fairest of fair, He's of infinite worth,
 Yea, most precious to those who believe.
 Like the Queen of the South who to Solomon came,
 His wonderful wisdom to prove,
 We found, when He led us to trust in His Name,
 We had not heard one-half of His love.
 And when the long wilderness journey is o'er,
 And faith has been changed into sight,
 As the Lamb in the midst, we shall see Him once more,
 And praise Him with endless delight. W. H. M'L.

“A Good Report of them that are Without.”

(1 Tim. iii. 7.)

WE often meet with a spurious kind of spirituality that makes a great boast of caring nothing what *men* think. “I have a clear conscience before God,” say these people; “He knows my heart, and it matters nothing to me what others may say.” We are always very suspicious of this kind of talk. In some cases it may be the result of ignorance more than anything else; but, in nine cases out of ten, it is downright hypocrisy, and the persons who speak thus are simply trying to stop the mouths of those who seek to point out the evil of their ways to them.

It is quite true that when it becomes a question of pleasing God *or* men we must not hesitate. But in that case, though they may speak evil of us, as of evil-doers, they will be put to shame in their hearts, when they falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ (see 1 Peter iii. 16). But we are not speaking of this sort of case at all. It is when believers, to please themselves, persist in doing that which, to say the least of it, has a bad look. It is then that this sham pretence is so often paraded. Sometimes the one who uses it actually deceives himself with it; but it is no less a sham. If he had honestly desired to glorify God, he would never have been deluded with so palpable a false pretence.

Those who are really concerned to please God will always seek to commend themselves to the consciences of men. “Let your light so shine before men,” said the Lord Jesus, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. v. 16). The apostle Paul, when charged with being a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition, could answer, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men.” Also, in writing to the Corinthians, he could say, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor. i. 12). He exhorts the saints at Colosse to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without” (Col. iv. 5); and he bids the Thessalonians to study to be quiet, and to work with their own hands, that they may “walk honestly toward them that are without” (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12); while in the next chapter he exhorts them to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (verse 22). In 1 Tim. v. 14 and Titus ii. 5, the younger sisters are specially instructed so to behave themselves that

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enemies may have "none occasion to speak reproachfully," and that "the Word of God be not blasphemed." The scripture at the head of this paper refers to overseers in the Church of God, one of their necessary qualifications being that they must have "a good report of them that are without." But the many other passages referred to show plainly enough that the principle is one that applies to all saints, though, of course, very especially to those who are to be guides and examples to the flock.

Let us give no quarter, then, to this God-dishonouring notion, that it matters not what the world may think of us. We are not to give up that which God commands us to do because the world speaks evil of us. But we are to remember that even lawful things are not always expedient. Paul gives two reasons why he may feel called on to abstain from lawful things. One is lest he should be brought under their power (1 Cor. vi. 12); the other, that they may not be for edification (1 Cor. x. 23); that is to say, that his example might not be good for others. Those who boast that they only care what the Lord thinks about them, have certainly forgotten this last reason, at any rate, and are very plainly showing that, in reality, they are only caring about pleasing themselves.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

VIII.

"Lead us not into temptation" (Matt. vi. 13).

ONLY as we know ourselves shall we be hearty in this prayer.

Because we are weak, we have need to fear temptation. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). What need to walk softly, when we remember there is that within each one of us that answers to the temptations that beset our wilderness path! The old Adam nature still makes itself felt, although not for one moment should it be yielded to, or, still less, made provision for (Rom. xiii. 14). Victory in the power of the Spirit should be our daily experience; but, then, this can only be by the crucifixion of the flesh. To triumph daily means to die daily. Oh! let us be afraid of nothing so much as sin. Let us

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dread nothing so much as bringing dishonour to the worthy Name by which we are called. Then, with all our hearts, shall we send up this cry, "Lead us not into temptation."

It has been thought by some that the words of the apostle James (James i. 13), "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man," appear to contradict the passage we are considering. If, say they, God does not tempt any man, what need is there to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"? But is not the meaning of the request this? Owning God as the One who overrules all our path, we ask Him not to allow us, either by our own wilfulness or by Satan's craft, to be brought into temptation.

Our Saviour's words, uttered on a most momentous occasion, come ringing down the ages, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). When we think ourselves most secure, then is the time we most need the warning note. How often, alas, the Ai defeat follows the Jericho victory!

It is well to bear in mind that there are two causes of our being suffered to come into temptation. 1st. To increase our faith. 2nd. To humble us about our backsliding state, and then restore us from it. We doubt not that our petition is particularly in relation to this latter cause. As to the first, we have many bright examples and glowing promises in holy writ. Our blessed Lord, our great example, was, we remember, "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1); and we know how the severe trial did but manifest the perfectness of His heart. Then we may call to mind Abraham, the father of the faithful, on that memorable occasion recorded in Gen. xxii., when God bade him offer up his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved. Also Joseph, in the house of Potiphar; and many others, of whom time fails to tell, who endured trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and were tempted, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection (Heb. xi. 35-40). Of such it may indeed be said, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (see James i. 12, Rev. ii. 10). And such will realise, in their own experience, the meaning of the scripture, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be

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found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 6, 7).

But, as before stated, we do not judge that this prayer has reference to such experiences, but rather to the temptations that a believer falls into as a result of a soul departure from the Lord. Consequently, the real answer to the prayer would be that restoring grace, which leads the soul afresh into communion with the Lord. On the highway of holiness there is no lion; but once we get into a by-path, even ever so little a way, and we shall soon hear the growl of our old enemy. We cannot be out of communion long without a fall; and it is well that it is so; for it makes us want to be back in the safe place again. So we still cry, "Lead us not into temptation." Blessed Lord, do not let me leave Thy hand, lest I fall! Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.

Small beginnings make big endings. It seemed a small thing for David to stay at home at the time when kings go forth to battle, but it ended in adultery and murder. It may seem a small thing to give up the Sunday-school class, the tract district, or the open-air meeting; but take care! It may be giving the adversary his opportunity, and he will presently come in like a flood. In David's case God allowed the temptation, with all its terrible results, that so David might learn the sinfulness of his own heart. Thus we find that after he was restored he could say, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest" (Ps. li. 4). Knowing now his own utter weakness, he could value, as never before, the keeping grace of God; and so, in reference to this very matter, he says, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place" (Ps. xxxii. 6, 7).

Some time ago the writer was staying in Guernsey, and one morning the whole place was stirred with the news that a lady visitor had been drowned. She had been gathering shells and sea-weeds, and some fishermen had warned her that the tide would come in quickly, and that she had better return. She took no heed of the kind warning, however; and, being busy with her occupation, she did not notice the quickly returning tide, till all hope of escape was cut off by the treacherous waves. Then, doubtless, she did her best; but of

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what avail could all her efforts be against the mighty sea? No; we do not blame her for not being able then to resist its power; but we do ask, why was she there at all? Child of God, if the floods of temptation threaten to carry you off your feet, be sure you are away from the Master; for, hidden with Him, the floods cannot, will not, reach you. Yet, if you are in that evil case, and, like Peter on the sea, you are afraid that you will sink, cry out like him, "Lord, save me!" (Matt. xiv. 30); and then tell Him out everything. Do not smother things over with unmeaning words, asking forgiveness in a general way; but confess the whole to Him. Drag out each sin into the light of His presence, and you shall know the value of the blood to cleanse, and the power of His grace to pardon and to keep. Does not this explain the passage in 2 Tim. ii. 26, which has seemed so difficult to some? "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by the Lord's servant (that is the devil) into the will of God" (R.V.).

Speaking of some who have acted in self-will, God allowed them to fall into Satan's snare, that they might know how they had fallen, and thus be led to repentance. Satan is God's dog to drive the sheep home. Secret sins allowed and enjoyed lead often to open falls. Ephesus, the first of the seven churches written to in Rev. ii. and iii., had left her first love, and was told to remember from whence she had fallen. She was, therefore, in some measure able to judge of her state. But Laodicea, the last of the seven, was altogether insensible as to her condition. When it comes to this with the individual, he can be no longer guided with the eye, but needs, like the horse or the mule, the bit and bridle (Ps. xxxii. 8, 9). Often the bridle the Lord uses is that He allows His child to be led into temptation, and the bitter shame and sorrow of the fall drive the erring one back to the God of all grace. Nevertheless, God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Praise His holy name!

WE must have fellowship at all times, either with "the spirit of the world," or with "the Spirit of God."

THERE is virtue in the name of Christ to make this vale of tears a fruitful, pleasant place.

The Patience of Power and the Power for Patience.

WEAKNESS is always impatient. It cannot afford to wait, for it fears its opportunity may be lost, and it makes a snatch while it can. But with power comes patience. The Almighty God is the God of patience, while feeble man is full of impatience. But faith links our weakness to God's power, and the weak one who believes becomes "strong in faith." That is why faith also is able to be patient, for it acts in the power of him on whom it rests. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

After man had sinned, and God had unfolded the purpose of His grace as to man's redemption, He suffered 4000 years to elapse before that purpose was carried out. All that time Satan seemed to be triumphant; but God could afford to wait till the fulness of the time was come. Then look at the patient waiting of those thirty-three years after Jesus had been born at Bethlehem. In the first thirty no one even guessed who He was, and though His soul was straitened till the awful baptism He had come to undergo was accomplished, He never sought to anticipate by a single moment the appointed time. Think again of the patience of those three days when the body of Jesus lay in the grave. Who can fathom the infinite patience of God as He waited for the moment when He should say to His beloved One, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts xiii. 33)? And even then, when He had raised Jesus from the dead and given Him glory, His patience was not ended. Hear Him saying, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (Acts ii. 34, 35). And to this hour the Lord Jesus, ever the patient One, is keeping the place thus appointed Him.

But God knows His own almighty power; and while rulers and kings, Jews and Gentiles, conspire to cast off His authority, the answer of His power is simply this—"Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6). When the time appointed has come, the same Power that raised Jesus from the dead will subdue all things under Him.

In Col. i. 11, the apostle prays that the saints at Colosse may be strengthened with all power, according to the might of God's glory (see Rev. Ver.). What was this to fit them for? Surely some mighty work to be done was before his mind when he prayed such a prayer. And so indeed there was. Let us read on—"Unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." That was what they needed the might of His

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glory for. “I am the Almighty God,” said the Lord to Abram; “walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1). When we can perfectly delight in God’s will, and are perfectly confident that His will must surely be accomplished, we shall have learned the secret of patience.

“ He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost ;
God’s will is sweetest to him, when
It triumphs at his cost.”

This patience will not extend merely to outward circumstances. God claims from us that we shall exercise patience one towards another, and we need the might of His glory to enable us to do it. The greater the advances we have made in knowledge and experience, the greater God’s demand upon us to walk in patience towards our brethren. “We that are strong are debtors (so it is literally) to bear the infirmities of the weak” (Rom. xv. i). And the “God of patience” alone can give us thus to be like-minded one toward another.

Amidst all the confusion by which we are surrounded, nothing but the certainty that God is surely fulfilling His own purposes will enable us thus to act. We soon forget how patiently He bore with us, and find it hard to extend the same patience to others. Nay, more than this, we are often not prepared to show the same patience to-day that we did ten years ago. Each fresh generation of saints will need the same patience and forbearance and long-suffering in our dealings with them, and past experience ought to have fitted us the better to exhibit all these. But, alas! it is often quite otherwise, and we rebel at the necessity of going through the same thing again and again. Let us be very sure that this is the sure evidence of our own weakness, that has failed to lay hold of the power of God. We shall do well to pray over again, diligently and constantly, Paul’s prayer for the Colossian saints.

“FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL.”

WHEN Paul prayed for the Philippian saints, his heart was full of joy, for he remembered their fellowship in the Gospel from the first day, right onwards. He could look back to those quiet hours by the river-side, when the Lord opened Lydia’s heart. He could call to mind the ready obedience with which she, and others who believed, submitted themselves to be baptised. He did not

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forget the mingled joy and sorrow with which they welcomed him after he was released from the prison, and, soon after, speeded him on his way. But their fellowship did not end there. “Out of sight, out of mind” was no true proverb in their case. While he was yet at all within reach, they ministered once and again to his necessity; and if, when he was further away, they did not send to him as they had been wont, it was not for lack of will, but of opportunity (Phil. iv. 10). No wonder that the apostle gave thanks upon every remembrance of them; and that, not because he desired a gift, but because he rejoiced that fruit should abound to their account; for that which made his own heart full was also “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (ver. 18).

Now it is well to be diligent in any service that God has entrusted to our own hands; but it is not well to be so occupied with it that we have no heart to care for what He is doing through others. It is good to think and labour much for the perishing ones close at home; but we need to take care that our sympathies are not limited to them. If it is the Lord’s work that we are really concerned about, it will not fail of its interest for us because we have never seen either the workers or those among whom they are labouring. Paul could write to the Colossian saints of the great conflict that he had for them and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh; but we find it hard enough to remember even those whom we know well.

Now there is a question that has much pressed itself upon us of late, and we should like to invite all our readers to weigh it well over too. May not the lack of power and blessing on our labours in the Gospel close at home be closely connected with our want of real, sustained fellowship in the whole work of the Gospel?

In order to give a proper answer to this question, we shall need to consider carefully, and in the presence of God, what are our responsibilities in regard to those whom the Lord has called to serve Him in the Gospel. Perhaps we have been zealous and diligent in trying to convince others how unscriptural the man-appointed and salaried minister is. We are convinced that there is no warrant for an official person who absorbs in himself all the duties of evangelist, pastor, and teacher, to the exclusion of others. We have found nothing in the Scriptures of missionary societies collecting money from believers and unbelievers, and engaging men, under the

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directions of a committee, to go and preach at the bidding of their paymasters. So far so good. It is always well to cease to do evil, but it is not less important to learn to do well. If we can no longer contribute to the minister's salary, nor to the funds of the missionary society, has God no longer any claim upon us to help on the Gospel with our substance? We think we have known assemblies of God's people where there would have been a tremendous outcry if a box had been placed at the meeting-room door for contributions towards a society or mission. Yet, somehow, the saints have been able to bear it with wonderful equanimity, when, from one year's end to another, there has been no attempt to care for servants of the Lord who have given themselves to the work of the Gospel.

It is often much easier to pull down than to build up; and what if God does but regard as an empty show our great zeal for scriptural order, when it stops short with that which costs us nothing, and even helps to ease our pockets. We are not pleading for carelessness as to godly order and scriptural practice; but, oh! we do feel the deep and solemn importance of reality about these things. That which boasts itself as grace, while truth is disregarded, is not grace at all. It may be natural affection, or just an easy-going turn of mind, but it cannot be the grace of God. Just in the same way, vaunted zeal for truth that ignores the claims of love has no more reality about it.

Do we fall back on the thought that God will care for His own? That should ever be the sustaining assurance to keep His servants from leaning upon their fellow-saints for help; but, woe to us, if we think to excuse ourselves from our responsibilities thereby. We may call to mind what Mordecai said to Esther in the hour of their national trouble—“If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther iv. 14.)

Do we wonder why our prayers for the salvation of sinners in connection with our own efforts in the Gospel seem to be unanswered? It may be, then, that God is pressing upon us the same solemn question that once He bade the prophet Malachi put to the Jews—“Will a man rob God?” If, indeed, we have been keeping back what we owe Him, by our failure to care for His servants and His work, the continuation of

“Therefore My People Shall Know My Name.”

Malachi's message will be a word from the Lord to us—
“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and
prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not
open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing,
that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. iii. 10).

“Therefore My People Shall Know My Name.”

(Isaiah lii. 6.)

I KNOW Thee, Saviour, by Thy Name ;
I know that Thou hast died for me ;
I know Thou knowest whence I came ;
I know Thou knowest what I am.
I long Thy loveliness to see,
For, oh, I know Thee by Thy Name.

I know Thee, Saviour, by Thy Name ;
I know Thy constant watchful love ;
I know Thou knowest all my all ;
I know Thou knowest every fall.
I see Thee pleading there above,
And, oh, I know Thee by Thy Name.

I know Thee, Saviour, by Thy Name ;
I know that Thou wilt come for me.
I look to yonder Judgment-seat,
Where I shall stand before Thee yet,
And fear to be reproved by Thee ;
But, oh, I know Thee by Thy Name.

I know Thee, Saviour, by Thy Name ;
Jesus, my own Almighty Friend.
Yes, constantly the same Thou art,
So, Saviour, take and keep my heart,
That I may take what Thou dost send,
Because I know Thee by Thy Name.

I know Thee, Saviour, by Thy Name ;
And, knowing, long to love Thee more.
So unto me Thyself reveal,
And with Thyself my poor heart fill,
That I may prove Thy grace and power,
And know Thee better by Thy Name.

A. W. M.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

IX.

“But deliver us from evil” (Matt. vi. 13).

THE Revised Version has it—“But deliver us from the Evil One”; and we believe this gives us the correct meaning of the passage. In order that the prayer may be real, we need to know something of Satan’s unrelenting hostility to the sons of men in general, and the children of God in particular. His character, history and future are traced in the pages of Holy Writ. If, then, we would not be ignorant of the devices of our great enemy, we must study the sacred oracles. There we shall learn that he is the implacable enemy of Jehovah, and ever seeks to strike at his Creator through God’s other creatures, particularly man.

Satan never succeeds so well as when he can persuade his dupe that he has no existence. When he has got man to deny his personality, the battle is more than half won. To look upon the Devil as a myth, as but the fabled personality of evil, is indeed to lay yourself open to his wiles; for in such case you cannot pray to be delivered from him. The Scripture reveals Satan as a dread personality, an antagonist of no mean power, ever on the alert to lead men to sin, and so to ruin; that thus he may mar God’s handiwork, and, if possible, frustrate His beneficent designs.

First, we read of him as deceiving the woman; but as the chapter of human history on this present earth closes, we read that he deceives nations (Gen. iii.; 1 Tim. ii. 14; Rev. xii. 9, and xx. 8). Thus we gather that he does not fail to gain experience in his unholy arts by the efforts of six thousand years.

Notice, again, his audacity. Does Jehovah place the man and the woman in the garden of delights, putting all creation under them? Then, even there will Satan enter, to ruin, spoil and destroy. Nay, does the Eternal One stoop down from heaven’s heights and take upon Himself our nature? Then even that Holy, Blessed One will Satan approach, and seek to allure by his vile arts. How utterly he failed, we know; yet it was not till three times he had tried, and three times had been baffled and defeated, that he left the Lord, and then only for a season (Luke iv. 13). Was Peter the first to confess Christ? Then Satan desired that he should also be the first to deny Him (Luke xxii. 31). Was David a man after God’s own heart, and was Israel the nation which God had chosen?

The Lord's Prayer.

Then we read that "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. xxi. 1). Did Corinth, as a church, come behind in no gift? (1 Cor. i. 7.) Then did they need to be warned that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14).

The first time we read of him, he takes the place of a serpent; but later on in the Divine record we are warned of him under the guise of a roaring lion. In this way his two methods of opposition to the truth of God are symbolised—first craft, then violence.

Often, if not chiefly, the order is reversed. He seeks to crush; but if not successful in that, he will beguile. Like Balaam, he fain would curse; but if he cannot prevail in that way, then he will seduce. Thus our Lord depicts him in John viii. 44—first as a murderer, and then as a liar. But we pause to notice that he is a murderer because he *abode not* in the truth; for that, we take it, is the force of the passage. Like Cain, he first loved not the truth, and then hated those who did.

This gives us some clue as to his past history—"abode not in the truth." There was a time, then, when he was in the truth, and there came a moment when he left it, for he abode not in it. In the light of these words, so suggestive, the prophecies—in Isaiah xiv. 4-20, concerning the king of Babylon, and in Ezekiel xxviii. 11-19, concerning the king of Tyrus—are lit up with a new meaning, and are seen to tell out, under the figure of these two despots, the awful fall of him of whom they are but types.

What a magnificent description of his previous beauty and glory does Ezekiel give. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. . . . Every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub. . . . Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." Satan's fall through pride (1 Tim. iii. 6) does but illustrate the saying of our Lord—"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased"; while His own history tells us how "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11). No longer in the truth, knowing no more the pure joys of God's presence, going to and fro in the earth (Job i. 7), or appearing before the Most High to accuse the brethren (Rev. xii. 10), he finds his only satisfaction in seeking to thwart the purposes of Jehovah. But this will not always be. Presently no place shall any more be given him in heaven, and, cast out to the

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earth, he may no longer accuse the saints. Bitter will then be his wrath, for he will know that his time is short. At the close of Daniel's 70th week, the angel (notice, a single one) will come down and cast him into the bottomless pit or abyss (Rev. xx.), and there shall he be chained during the glorious thousand years' reign of our Lord on earth. For a little season must he be loosed again, to do his dire work in rebellion against God; and yet, oh strange mystery, at the same time to carry out God's will and purpose. Thus does He make the wrath of man, and of the Devil too, to praise Him. 'Tis but for a little while, and the Devil who deceives shall be cast into the lake of fire at the word of Christ and His Church. And so shall the promise be fulfilled—"The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20). What a fall! from "the truth" to the lake of fire; from being the anointed cherub, full of beauty, to become the Devil and Satan.

May this brief outline of his terrible career and end lead us prayerfully to consider the many scriptures which instruct us concerning our great enemy; that so, knowing somewhat of the depths of Satan (Rev. ii. 24), we may not speak lightly of him, but ever pray to be delivered from his power and grasp.

We need the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 11) to enable us to withstand the wiles of the Devil. But let us take courage; with that heavenly armour on, we need not fear, for the apostle James declares (chap. iv. 7)—"Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."

HOW TO KNOW GOD AND BE LIKE HIM.

"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image."

THE apostle prays in Col. i. 10 that the saints "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and INCREASING in *the knowledge of God.*" And, as an antidote to the evil of the latter days, the apostle Peter, after praying that grace and peace might be multiplied unto the saints "through the *knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,*" exhorts them to "GROW in the grace and *in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" "*That I may know HIM,*" should be the one absorbing desire of the Christian!

How to Know God and be Like Him.

God has in love and grace manifested His glory, or His character, in such a form as we can look upon and study in our present condition in this world. "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . . the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person" (Heb. i. 1-3). "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). In answer to Philip's inquiry, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," the Lord Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." *Growth in the knowledge of God* is alone to be obtained by a diligent and *meditative* study of the sacred Scriptures, wherein God has left a record of His character and ways as they were expressed by that Holy One whose supreme delight it was to honour and glorify God, and to declare to a guilty world the deep secrets of His heart of love. The intensity and reality of all this was proved at the Cross, where "Christ died for the ungodly." And as we trace the meek and lowly Jesus from place to place, and from scene to scene, and observe Him alone with the sinner speaking words of peace, pardon and comfort, we are looking upon the mighty, living God, who thus, in human form, revealed Himself to poor, needy ones. When "Jesus wept" at the grave of Lazarus, and over cold-hearted Jerusalem, He exposed the tenderness of God's heart. As one has expressed it—

"Those tears were for rebellious man ; their source the heart of God :

With love and tenderness Divine these crystal cells o'erflow ;

'Tis God that weeps, through human eyes, for human guilt and woe."

Again, on the night of the betrayal, God is seen washing the disciples' feet. Marvel of grace and humility !

"And we behold, as in a mirror broad,

That God serves man much more than man serves God !"

And, beloved, it is only as we walk with God, and learn His character thus, that we shall in any measure fulfil the purpose for which He has left us in this dark scene—to be reflectors of His character and glory. The world around us won't study the Bible ; but they will and do study the Christian ; they can only know what God truly is, as we faithfully represent Him. Let us remember that we are "living epistles, known and read of all men" ; God's letter of commendation to a

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guilty world. May we be imitators of the Lord Jesus, who, by a consecrated life, fully glorified God! He could say, “I am the Light of the world.” But now that the great Light is hidden from the sons of men, let us, the lesser lights, shine forth, for we are children of light. “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

“NEITHER BE YE OF DOUBTFUL MIND.”

(Luke xii. 29.)

HOW many beloved children of God experience suffering and loss from yielding to the “doubtful mind” here spoken of. The Lord says, “Neither be ye of doubtful mind,” or as it is in the margin, “Live not in careful suspense.” In the previous part of this chapter we read (verse 6), “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” And now, when Christ takes up the question of food and raiment for every child of God, He says, Live not in careful suspense, for “your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things” (verse 30). How slow we are to trust the watchful care of our faithful God. He has undertaken to supply all our needs (Phil iv. 19), but we have doubtful minds and anxious thoughts. We find ourselves in some difficulty or trial. If it is a great one, we are more likely to come to God about it and seek help, than if it is a small one. In the latter case we are often tempted to think we can undertake for ourselves. Sometimes we consider the matter too trivial for God to notice; but if we have never tried Him in little things, we do not know Him. He will meet our smallest needs as richly and as abundantly as our great ones. He will delight to fill our hearts with wonder at His loving sympathy and present help. But our God is a Sovereign, and He will come to our aid in His own way and at His own time. Let us seek to be patient in our waiting for Him, not dishonouring Him by a doubtful mind, not rackingly anxious, but casting all our care upon Him who is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. iii. 20). Oh, for more practical enjoyment of our privileges, as saints redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. We should daily test the promises that are “ours in Christ Jesus,” and seek to realise that our daily needs, our occupations, our

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business and its cares, the dress we wear, the books we read, are all watched over by the eye of God Himself. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers"(1 Peter iii. 12).

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

IV.

LOOK at another passage in Galatians ii. 19—"I through the law am dead to the law." The law condemned and killed me. How? The next verse tells me—"I am crucified with Christ." Romans vi. 6 teaches the same truth—"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (made of none effect). In what sense are we here taught that we are crucified with Christ, and in what sense are we freed from sin? Look at Romans viii. 2, 3—"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." We see from Romans vi. how we are set free by death, and from Romans viii. how we are set free by life. Chapter vi. speaks of my being set free through having died in the person of Christ, and chapter viii. speaks of my being made free through Christ's life—two perfectly different things. The former shows that I am legally justified from sin through having died with Christ. That is the only way God has of justifying any one. I am justified by the death of Christ for me, because God reckons that death to have been my death. When Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ," he refers to the great fact that God reckons that he was put to death on the Cross where Christ died. We, who have believed in Jesus, have suffered the penalty of our sin, we have been put to death in the person of Christ; therefore the law has no more claim upon us. Christ is the end of the law for justification to every one that believeth. This is very forcibly illustrated in the case of a man who had got into debt, and his creditors determined that he should be imprisoned. The servant of the law came to the house where he lived, and asked to see him. He was shown into a room, and there, on a bed, the man lay dead. He came to apprehend a living man, not a dead one. Death

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had freed the poor debtor from the condemning power of the civil law. Now that illustrates Romans vi., but it will not give me the victory over my old corrupt nature. I need the life of Christ for this, and this is what we have in Romans viii. 2—“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” We read in Romans vii. 23 of “the law of sin which is in my members,” that is, in every man by nature. But here comes in a new law, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” It is in the power of that new Divine life that I am to overcome “the law of sin in my members.” What the law could not do for me is done by the living Christ, so that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in the man that walks according to the Spirit of life. “Love is the fulfilling of the law,” and whilst I am delivered from the law, I am not to be lawless. On the contrary, I am brought into fellowship with the will of God. Some people take up Romans vi., and say, “I am dead to sin. I am like the dead miser beside the bag of gold. He has no desire for it, because he is dead; and I have no desire to do anything wrong now, because I am dead.” But when you begin to test such by the Word of God, you often find them acting contrary to the simplest commands of Christ. Let us beware of this high profession. The death of Romans vi. is Christ's death for me, and my death with Him. Now God says—“Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, having thus reckoned myself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God, *in* Christ Jesus, I am not to let sin reign in my mortal body, nor to obey it in the lusts thereof. Shall the one that is set free go and voluntarily put himself under bondage to that wherein he was once held? We are now to yield ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, having been judicially set free from the judgment due to our sin in the person of Christ our Substitute; after which comes the practical exhortation following upon that. Then in Romans iii. 2, I find the power for freedom from sin; the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

THE Bible is always a new book to those well acquainted with it.

OUR circumstances are what we make them. If they be not by faith kept under our feet, they will by unbelief become our masters.

“Therefore, Brethren, we are Debtors”

(Rom. viii. 12).

AN unjust steward once put the following question to each of his master's debtors—“How much owest thou unto my lord?” It was not, however, with the view to obtaining for his master what was due to him. Quite the contrary. He went on to arrange a conspiracy by which his master was to be defrauded, while the steward himself and the debtors were to be dishonest gainers. The steward cut down his master's claims, and the debtors were only too pleased to fall in with his plans.

Now, this is always the way of the flesh. The grace of God, that meets the sinner in his ruin and helplessness, and saves him with an everlasting salvation, leaves no room for boasting. When we have come to the conclusion that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” boasting is excluded, and God must have the glory (see Rom. iii. 27, 28). The preaching of the grace of God is, therefore, always displeasing to the natural heart. People do not expect to be told that they owe God nothing; and if they were told so, they could scarcely deceive themselves into believing it. But they are very willing to have God's claims upon them considerably cut down, and the steward who reduces the hundred to fifty, or even to fourscore, is sure to make friends. But when the grace of God has laid hold of the heart, when the love of Christ constrains us, we have no relish for the teaching that diminishes our indebtedness, by robbing God of His glory.

“Now thanks be to God,” wrote the apostle, “who always carries about in triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. ii. 14). This is the real sense of the words. It is not that we are made to triumph, but that we are trophies of His triumph. The thought is that of the Roman general returning from victory, and leading about the prisoners he has made, as part of his triumphal procession. Paul in chains, to the eyes of men, was a prisoner of the Roman authorities, but he does not so describe himself. “The prisoner of Jesus Christ” was the honourable title that he ever delighted in (see Eph. iii. 1). “Whose I am, and whom I serve,” was his glad acknowledgment that he was not his own, for he had been bought with a great price.

Perhaps an illustration may help to make plain why that sense of indebtedness which the natural heart so revolts against becomes so sweet to the saved sinner.

“How Much Owest Thou?”

A young man, the son of a rich father, has got into the clutches of a merciless money-lender. He has pledged his present allowance and his future prospects, and he is wholly in the power of the man into whose debt he has got so deep. How he loathes the thought of the man; how he writhes with misery at the sense of his inability to clear himself from the hated claims that he cannot meet. But the father hears of his son's position, and pays off the whole of his heavy debt. Is the son less a debtor now than he was before? Surely not. But how different is the sense of his indebtedness. Before, it was the hated creditor's grip on his throat, from which he vainly struggled to free himself. Now, it is something which has enchained his heart's affections, and from which he would not, if he could, be free. He can no more clear himself of what he owes his father, than previously he could shake off the claims of the cruel creditor; but he loves the one bond as much as he hated the other.

As long, then, as the sense of what the grace of God has done for us is kept fresh in our souls, we shall delight to own ourselves debtors. The question will not be, “Why need I do this?” “Why must I give up that?” but simply, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” But just in proportion as the realisation of that grace gets dim will the claims of God become irksome to us.

“HOW MUCH OWEST THOU?”

WOULD it not be a good exercise of soul to put this question to ourselves? Of course, we are not supposing that we can possibly measure our indebtedness, or put any limit to it. Many a time have we joined in singing—

“Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all”;

and never without the consciousness that no words could express our sense of what we owe. But our thought was rather that we should apply the question as a test to our hearts, in regard to the circumstances God has placed us in, and to His claims upon us that we should glorify Him in the place where He has put us. Whenever trial of any sort would lead us to shrink from the doing of His will, while the flesh tries to find an excuse for our neglect or disobedience, it will be well to ask ourselves once more—“How much owest thou?”

Perhaps there are no circumstances that more call for the

“How Much Owest Thou?”

application of this test, than when a brother or sister has wronged us, or falsely accused us. How big the sense of injury grows as we think over it. If they are very penitent, and make an ample apology and full reparation, we may be prepared to forgive them, but they will certainly have to come and humble themselves first. But what if it is written, “If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”? The Lord did not say, “Wait till he comes to thee,” but “go.” But why should I go? He has done me a wrong, and it is his business to come to me. Can we not hear a still, small voice whispering in our consciences, “How much owest thou?” Not, “How much owest thou to thy brother?” but “How much owest thou to Me?” My behaviour to my brother must be my answer to the question. Of what use is it to sing—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an off’ring far too small,”

if I so little acknowledge my indebtedness to Christ that I will not, at His bidding, go to try and gain my brother? The whole realm of nature has never been entrusted to me, so it is easy to sing about giving it away; but my real sense of how much I owe will show itself in my willingness to go to win the one who has wounded me.

Then, again, when our service for Christ in the Gospel, or in seeking to care for and help fellow-saints, seems to yield little but disappointment and trial. “I think I shall give up my Sunday-school class,” says one; “I can’t keep them in order, and I never see any conversions. I think someone else had better try.” “I really cannot go on with that cottage meeting,” says another; “when I began it, brother so-and-so shared it with me, but now he has gone away, and it is too much for me by myself.” We might easily multiply such cases, but to every one our test question is most applicable. Did not the Lord entrust you with this service? Was it not as His servant that you entered upon it? Then, by your diligence and steadfastness in it you may tell Him what is your estimate of your indebtedness to Himself.

Or, perhaps, there is a difference of mind between those who are acting together in some service for the Master, and neither is willing to give way. We do not refer to cases where principle is at stake, and we must needs seek grace from God to stand firm for the truth. We are speaking rather of differences as to details of service, involving no question in

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themselves of right or wrong. How many a time far less serious matters than the dispute of Paul and Barnabas over Mark have been allowed to sunder those whom God had called to fellowship in labour? Is it hard to give up, not merely what we like best, but that which we believe to be the best way of carrying on the work? But what would the Lord Himself say about it? Do I really think in my heart that I am making glad His heart by the determined stand I am taking? Perhaps I never thought of this at all; and now that it is suggested to me, I can scarcely listen to the suggestion, because it would be so hard to give way after having been so determined. Here, then, the test question comes in once more—"How much owest thou?" And what is our answer to be in each case? As we said before, if the sense of the exceeding grace and goodness of God is being maintained fresh and powerful in our souls, the appeal of this question will not be made in vain. But if the love of Christ is not gladdening our own hearts day by day, the mere acknowledgment of the understanding that we owe Him everything will be barren and powerless, and we shall do our own will instead of His. "We love Him, because He first loved us." But there was a time when we did not love Him, although He loved us. That was when we did not know His love, and had no conscious enjoyment of it. Just so to-day, we must be abiding and increasing in the knowledge of His love to us, or there will be no increase in our love and obedience to Him.

FROM GRACE TO GLORY.

WE recently had occasion to take a journey to the town of Homburg, in South Germany. Before starting, we procured a through ticket for the whole distance. This ticket was in reality a small book, each leaf of which covered one section of the various lines of railway in England, Holland, and Germany, by which we should have to travel, as well as one for the steamboat passage. On the different leaves, or coupons, as they are called, were printed the sections of the journey for which they were available, thus:—"London to Queenboro," "Queenboro to Flushing," and so on. But on the cover of the whole book, and also on the top of each coupon, were the words, "London to Homburg."

All this set us thinking, for we saw in it a striking resemblance to the opening verses of Romans v. We all remember how

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the chapter begins—"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." There is the complete thing. We are justified by the great price that has been paid; and now we can look on from our present standing in grace with confident expectation of the glory. When we received our book of coupons, it was not the separate sections that first occupied our attention, but the statement on the cover, "From London to Homburg." The whole fare was paid; the journey was guaranteed right to the end. And so it is when the sinner receives Christ. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." That which begins with grace shall surely end in glory. But that is not all. Turning back to Romans v., we read in verses 3-5, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Here we get the details of the pathway; but every one of them is stamped with the hope of the glory, for they are all parts of a perfect whole. We noticed a warning on the cover of our book, that no single coupon would be accepted unless the passenger could produce the book. Even so with the passengers on the heavenly journey. Justification by faith covers the whole distance. And while the promises of God are available for every step of the way, all of which is known to Him beforehand, they are all stamped with the through stamp, "From Grace to Glory," and are not available for any but those who carry the through pass.

LIKE Enoch, walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road. You have infallible wisdom to direct you, inimitable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you.

IT is a sweet service, the service of the Lord; because His smiles are sweet—His very frowns are frowns of love. The more we look to Jesus, the more blessed we are.

OUR joy in Christ speaks a language that all hearts can understand, and is a testimony for Him such as mere knowledge and utterance can never give.

“There shall be no night there”

(Rev. xxii. 5).

FULL soon above yon changing clouds,
Our changeless joy shall be
To sing, amidst adoring crowds,
Of Thee, dear Lord, of Thee.

There, to the Father's bosom pressed,
No parting shall we see ;
But find it everlasting rest
To dwell, dear Lord, with Thee.

Still as each precious line we trace,
Yet more we long to flee,
And see its Author face to face,
In Thee, dear Lord, in Thee.

Thou wait'st with us the glorious morn
(The glory all Thine own),
When Thou shalt gather Home at last,
The seed in sorrow sown.


Oh ! quickly come to end our strife,
To crown Thy victory ;
That we may enter into life
With Thee, dear Lord, with Thee.

And then above yon changing clouds,
Our changeless joy shall be
To sing, amidst adoring crowds,
Of Thee, dear Lord, of Thee.

P.

“AND BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES”

(1 Thess. v. 13).

HERE is some important instruction to be gained by noticing the connection between this exhortation and the words that go immediately before it. Let us read the whole of the twelfth and thirteenth verses—“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” In this way the Spirit of God connects peace in the assembly, peace among the saints, with subjection to godly rule. And we do not need to have had a very wide experience to prove that where godly oversight is

“And be at Peace among Yourselves.”

wanting, or where a lawless spirit among the believers refuses to recognise such oversight, there is very little peace.

As in the earthly kingdom, as in the family, so it is in the Church of God. Without government, there will be little but strife and disorder. But there may be a kind of government which, while it appears to have succeeded in maintaining peace, has in reality only driven discontent under the surface, to break out again when occasion offers. Those, therefore, who would act for God in the oversight of the assembly, need continually to seek grace from Him, that they may so manifest the truth, as to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The apostle's entreaty to the Thessalonian saints was that they should know them which *laboured* among them; and he further bids them to esteem such very highly in love for their *work's* sake. It is in this that the true overseer is manifested. We fear that with some, attendance at a weekly or fortnightly “oversight meeting” is the chief qualification possessed. Is it to be expected that the believers will recognise as God-sent shepherds those who have simply assumed an office? It may be that little is said for a time; but when trouble of any sort arises, the lack of power to act for God becomes apparent. It is at such times that the guiding voice of a proved and trusted shepherd is needed to keep the sheep from being scattered. But for lack of confidence on the part of the sheep, he who seeks to guide speaks in vain. Some plausible, self-seeking, vain talker gets the ear of the saints, and carries the day against “the oversight.” It is not so much that they believe him to be right in what he says; but they have long revolted in their hearts against the assumption of rule on the part of brethren, whose calling of God had never been manifested by the profit of their labour among the flock; and they are glad to have an opportunity to show their disregard of the authority of these brethren.

Then comes assertion of the rights of overseers, and the saints are soundly rated for not submitting themselves. But matters cannot be mended in that way, and there must be a humbling before God, and a bringing the whole difficulty to Him, to be dealt with by Himself, before peace can at all be restored. Doubtless God allows such troublers of the flock to gain a measure of success, in order that the real source of weakness may be brought to light. Sometimes there will be brethren, really diligent in their labour and ready to

“And be at Peace among Yourselves.”

make great personal sacrifices, but for want of a little more humility, a little more grace, they have failed to win the love of those they would serve, or to gain their confidence. It is a very difficult attainment in lowliness of mind to be ready to esteem others better than ourselves; but the brother who has in some measure made such an attainment, has learned much of the secret as to what carries weight with the saints. Attainment of this sort is only to be made by much keeping by the Cross of Christ. It is there that we learn to think little of ourselves, and to know the evil of our own hearts; and it is there that we learn God's estimate of the worth of our fellow-saints. Thus, as we continually think more highly of them, and less highly of ourselves, we are learning the difficult lesson; and where this is being truly learned, the effects of it will be manifest. Even when we have to rebuke wrongdoing, there will be the trembling of one who is taking heed lest he fall himself. When we are restoring one who had been overtaken in a fault, it will be in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. This will help to disarm resentment, whereas the opposite kind of behaviour only provokes it. There will be less scolding of the saints, and more of taking our place alongside of them, and speaking of what we all need. Perhaps we can little imagine how much value this will add to our labours; but when the time of trouble comes again, the fruit of it all will be seen. Mischief-makers, who would readily have got a following before, will be left to themselves now, and will probably soon be glad to cut themselves off (see Gal. v. 12, R.V.).

Yet another word. It may be that even true, untiring and humble labours will not always be appreciated. Saints may get into a carnal state, in which they will gladly suffer those who bring them into bondage, and devour them, while they exalt themselves (see 2 Cor. xi. 20). What then? The man who had learned to count himself as chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints, could say after it all—“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Cor. xii. 15).

WHICH of us can be kept near to Christ without some thorn in the flesh?

IT is no great matter where we are, provided we see that the Lord has placed us there, and that He is with us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

X.

CONCLUSION.

WE have now considered each of the seven petitions into which this prayer is divided; petitions so full of meaning, suggestive rather than exhaustive; and we trust the study has not been without profit. It remains to gather some lessons from the prayer as a whole; and this, with God's help, we will seek to do in this our concluding paper.

The prayer is recorded in two of the gospels, those of Matthew and Luke, and was given evidently on two separate occasions, a special lesson belonging to each.

In Matthew it forms a part of what is known as the sermon on the mount; but in Luke, at a later period, the form was again given in answer to a request of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke xi. 1). The special thought in Matthew is the spirituality of prayer; in Luke, our dependence.

In Matthew the Lord teaches that prayer is only of value as we lay hold of God. Prayer in itself is of no merit, but as a means

"To move the hand, which moves the world,
To bring deliverance down."

Who can tell its power? Prayer, that is the mere uttering of words and stringing together of sentences, avails nothing; hence, avoid vain repetitions, lest you become like the heathen, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Prayer as a display is an abomination; therefore, enter your closet and pour out your heart to your Father in secret, lest you become like the Pharisee, who wishes to be seen by man, and who verily has his reward. "Prayer is the wing wherewith the soul flies to heaven," as one old writer has it. Another says, "Prayer is a living heart that speaks in a living ear, the ear of a living God." Prayer is speaking to God from the heart, and the Christian should only be at home, as certainly he can only be healthy, in the atmosphere of prayer. Here, we believe, is a principle of the utmost value, as it helps us to distinguish between things that differ. Prayer made as a religious exercise, and exalted as that which in itself is of merit, is one thing; the cry of a needy heart is another. It is true that "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," and that to them He says, "What hast thou to do . . . that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" (Pro. xv. 8, and Ps. l. 16.) Many other scriptures also testify that

The Lord's Prayer.

the Most High has no delight in the formal utterances of those whose hearts are far from Him, yet He has ever respect unto the cry of need. The failure to perceive this difference has led many dear children of God to conclude that the unsaved should not pray; and some have gone so far as to forbid their children to pray till they gave evidence of conversion, and to exclude from family prayers unsaved members of the household.

It is well then to be clear that prayer, in itself, has no more merit than the cry of the beggar for bread, and yet we may add that it is only of value when it comes as a beggar's cry, for

“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed.”

To turn now to the occasion when the prayer was given, as recorded by Luke, we find that the circumstances were very different. Instead of speaking to His disciples, the Lord was engaged in prayer Himself. As He finished, one of them said—“Lord, teach us to pray.” Here is the sense of nothingness. Doubtless the disciples had been accustomed to pray, but what a difference between their prayers and that of the Master. The contrast was so striking that it brought home its own lesson, and they asked to be taught to pray.

It is good for us when we also feel our poverty and weakness; for it is when we have learned that we know not what we should pray for as we ought, that we have the comforting assurance of the mighty help of the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 26). When the apostle has concluded that he is not sufficient to think anything even of himself, then he speaks most boldly of his sufficiency being of God. It was in answer to the disciples' petition that the Lord gave them this wondrous prayer, and when we yield ourselves to the blessed Holy Spirit, He most richly indites our prayers. When wordy eloquence and orthodox phrases are discarded, because in our felt poverty we can only groan out our needs, then it is we pray most in the Holy Spirit. Self-esteem kills prayer, but felt need feeds prayer.

Oh to be men and women of prayer! All God's mighty ones were men of prayer. Pre-eminent amongst them all stands our great Example, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose life down here was indeed a life of prayer (Heb. v. 7); and now, though crowned with glory and honour, and seated upon His Father's throne, yet still of Him we read, “He ever liveth to make intercession” (Heb. vii. 25).

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v. 17), “Praying always” (Eph. vi. 18), “In everything by prayer” (Phil. iv. 6), are still unrepealed commandments of our Master, in the keeping of which, like all others, we shall find great reward. We may take it as true that no act is of God about which we cannot honestly ask God’s mind. We should be suspicious of anything that must be done first, and prayed about afterwards. We may well doubt whether we are being led of God, if we are required to take some important step about which there is no time for seeking our Father’s face in prayer. Many and precious are the promises given in Holy Writ to encourage us in prayer. Gurnall wrote, many years ago, “Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty as the praying saint. Some prayers indeed have a longer voyage than others, but then they come with the richer lading.” But better still to faith are the words of our Saviour, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. xxi. 22). Therefore “Pray ye.”

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

V.

THE next passage to which I would call your attention is Col. ii. 10-15. It begins with—“Ye are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power.” Then we read of “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” by the judgment of Christ for us on the Cross—being put to death in the person of Christ on the Cross; then, “buried with Him in baptism.” Observe that here, and in Rom. vi., we are buried because we died. Christ died first, then was buried, and then rose again the third day; that is the Gospel that Paul preached (1 Cor. xv. 1-4). I am buried with Him in baptism, and raised with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Christ from the dead. God enables me to live by the power of Christ in resurrection life. As it is put in Rom. vi.—“Walk in newness of life.” Just as Christ laid down His life, in the faith that God, in resurrection, would bring Him into all He had promised to Him. Then in chap. iii. we are exhorted, as those who are risen with Christ, to set our affections on things above, and to mortify or put to death our members on earth. It is our responsibility to live for

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Christ, and it is also our highest privilege to do so. Our obedience to the ten commandments is one thing; and our obedience to the will of Christ, through the power of the Spirit, is another thing. Let me illustrate it, as in Rom. vii., by one under the law. The relationship to the first husband is brought to an end by death. Now she becomes married to another, and she has to own the law and will of the new husband.

We will turn next to 1 Cor. ix. 21—"To them that are without law, as without law." Mark where he stops. In case anybody should think that he was encouraging lawlessness, he says—"Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." Paul never forgot that he was married to the new husband; that he had been put under law to the new husband, Christ. There is the old law, the ten commandments, "Thou shalt not steal," &c. I am not to be looking now at the ten commandments, but I look to Christ, the new husband, who says, "Let him that stole, steal no more." My new husband just echoes the law; but He gives it as was never said before. He does not want me to be looking at one time to Him, and at another time to the law. I am delivered from the law, and now I am to listen to His Word. Our relationship to the first husband has been severed by death. It is a terrible delusion and mixing up of the truth of the Gospel with law, to see in any so-called "church," the two tables put up on the wall, and the people hearing the commandments read out every Lord's-day, and answering, as each one is read, "O Lord, incline our hearts to keep this law." It is going back to the old husband, the law. Thus people try to bring in the law to dovetail with the Gospel, but it spoils both. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." What a sad departure from the apostles' doctrine, when in Acts xxi. we read of Paul, in order to please the several thousands of the Jews, uniting with four men who had a vow upon them, "purifying himself with them and entering into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification" (verse 26). Let us take care lest we put ourselves under the law, and bring ourselves into bondage thereby.

(To be continued.)

GOD shelters the weak in faith from many a storm, whereby the strong in faith must be proved (Gen. xxii).

THE child of God proves the strength and grace of his heavenly Father only as he walks in the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GOD OF JACOB.

WE do not feel surprised that God should call himself the God of Abraham, or even the God of Isaac. From the time that He appeared to Abraham in the land of Mesopotamia, as the God of Glory, Abraham had let go all besides to take God as his portion. Isaac was not called to make the same sacrifices as his father, giving up home and friends at the beginning and an only son at the end of his course; but the glimpses of his course that we get in the book of Genesis show him to have been a man of prayer and faith who walked with God. But how different was the career of Jacob, and how wonderful was the long-suffering that bore with all his waywardness; and then, most wonderful of all, that God should join the name of such a self-willed, faulty child of His with those of Abraham and Isaac, and call Himself the God of Jacob also.

We once heard it said that the expression, "the God of Jacob," in the Old Testament, exactly corresponds with the words, "the God of all grace," in the New; and we were greatly struck with the truth and sweetness of the thought. Anything that has cost us a great deal, and about which we have taken immense pains, has a very special value in our eyes quite apart from its own worth. So when God calls Himself "the God of Jacob," the words carry the remembrance of how infinite love could take infinite pains; and how, at the last, God could delight to connect His own name with that of the one who was the monument of all that painstaking and love.

The note of praise, with which Jude's precious epistle concludes, can only rise from a heart that enters in some measure into such thoughts on the part of God. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Who can sound the depths of that "*exceeding joy*"? God will write His name on each of His redeemed ones; and though we have been Jacobs indeed, He shall receive endless glory and honour as the God of such Jacobs.

We all remember how, in Hebrews xi., the Spirit of God calls attention to the distinguishing acts of faith of many of the Old Testament saints — Abel's offering; Enoch's God-pleasing walk; Noah's building the ark and entering into it; Abraham's going out, not knowing whither he went, and, afterwards, his offering up of Isaac, are all dwelt upon in turn. But what can be said about Jacob? What did he do by faith? He

The God of Jacob.

took advantage of his brother's need to rob him of his birth-right. Later on, he tricked his brother out of the blessing that belonged to the first-born. But there was nothing of faith in this. He toiled hard in Syria for wives and flocks; he practised all sorts of devices to increase his wages, and outwitted Laban, his father-in-law, at every turn. But the Scriptures refer to none of these things as being the outcome of faith. No; we have to travel on and on in Jacob's history; till at last we come to his dying hour. Then only is it that the Spirit of God can tell of something that he did "by faith." "By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21).

Do we think it strange that these should be singled out as acts of faith? When, by faith, God's servants stopped the mouths of lions or quenched the violence of fire, there seemed a reason for mentioning such things. But why tell us that dying Jacob blessed his two grandsons, and worshipped upon the top of his staff, and say that this was by faith? If we look at the words in which he blessed them, and compare these dying words with the character of all his long life, we shall not be at a loss for a reply.

Let us first take a rapid glance back at Jacob's life history. From the beginning he had been a man of schemes and plans, showing great ingenuity and remarkable natural resources. When he had to leave home through fear of his brother Esau's anger, God met with him at Bethel, and made him wonderful promises. All God's promises are precious because of what God Himself is; and what more could God say to give weight to his promises, than to remind Jacob that He was the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac? After declaring that He would give Jacob the land on which he had been lying, and make his seed as the dust of the earth, God went on to say, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. xxviii. 15). To this Jacob answered with a vow, and his vow began with an "if." Unlike Abraham, who believed God's word when he had nothing else to lean upon, Jacob says, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God" (ver. 20, 21).

“Preserved in Jesus Christ.”

What an answer to give back to God; and what abounding grace it was, on God's part, that undertook to teach this unbelieving heart, till at last it should really know and rest in God Himself.

(To be continued.)

“PRESERVED IN JESUS CHRIST.”

(Jude 1.)

OUR TRIUMPH.

“*Kept* by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation”
(1 Peter i. 5).

OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR US.

“Holy Father, *keep* through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me” (John xvii. 11).

OUR CRY.

“*Keep* me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings” (Ps. xvii. 8).

OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

“*Keep* yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21).

OUR RESOURCE.

“The Lord is thy *keeper*” (Psalm cxxi. 5).

OUR DOXOLOGY.

“Now unto Him that is all to *keep* you from falling, . . . be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24, 25).

“HE RESTORETH MY SOUL.”

(Psalm xxiii. 3.)

WHEN a child of God has grown cold in heart, and has wandered far away, Satan always seeks to hinder any thought of return by making it appear that the way back will be long and difficult. But what is it that we want to get back to? The strayed sheep in Matthew xviii. had got a long way from the fold and from the other sheep, but it had

"He Restoreth my Soul."

not got a long way from the shepherd. How was that? Because the shepherd had followed it all the way, and was close at hand; and all the long journey back to where the other sheep had been left was made on the shepherd's shoulder. As to the state of our hearts, as to any experience or enjoyment of the love of Christ, it is quite true that many have got a long way from Him. But while we are far off from Him, He is very close to us; and when our hearts turn back to Him, it needs no long and weary search before we find Him, for He is waiting to restore and to rejoice over the wanderer.

In the parable the ninety and nine could do nothing towards sharing in the shepherd's loving care for the wanderer. But no parable can illustrate all the truth; and, in reality, we are not merely sheep, but are called to be shepherds also. There is no more Christ-like mark of shepherd character than the grace that will keep us close at hand to those who have wandered far away. And can there be any higher joy than that the Lord Jesus should use us to make known to the broken-hearted wanderer how near He is to restore and to bless?

It is true that there are things to which the backslider cannot be restored in a moment, and we are not overlooking this. The power and fitness for service may have been lost for a time, especially where there has been any open fall before the world. To hurry the one who has been newly delivered from backsliding into any position of prominence would be a great mistake, and sure to lead to sorrowful consequences. The shepherd did not bring all the circumstances and surroundings of the pasture land up on to the mountains, but he did come himself. What, then, we want to aim at, is to act in fellowship with the Lord Jesus in going after the wanderers. The first matter is that they shall be restored to the Lord Himself; but, if that restoration is real, it will lead on to something more. After the shepherd had found the strayed sheep on the mountains, and had taken it on his shoulders, it could not possibly be brought any nearer to himself. But his work was not ended, and he did not stop till he had brought the sheep back to all that it wandered from. This is always the way of the Great Shepherd, and it should be our way too, when we are seeking to care for the flock which He has purchased with His own blood.

ARE we content to leave our cause in the hands of God? Job should have done this at the first; but by justifying himself he increased his trouble.

"TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE."

(1 Samuel xv. 22.)

MOST of us are willing to mourn with Milton—
 "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

In the abstract, we vie with one another in the condemnation of this first sin. Yes, we all believe in the principle of obedience; but it is in the practice that the shoe pinches.

When some particular precept is singled out and brought home to us, all seems so different; and all at once so many things seem to come between us and the doing of it. Be it so; these difficulties should but prove the warmth of our love, the reality of our purpose. Or, again, there appear so many good reasons why I need not be so very particular to keep this particular commandment. To illustrate:—A lamplighter was converted, and it was not long before we told him of his privilege to confess his Lord in baptism. At first he was delighted with the thought of being able to do something for his Saviour, but afterwards it came home to him that this would cost something. "The church" with which he was connected by no means approved of such things. Would he have to give it up, and with it the temporal emoluments it brought? While he was dead, being a "member" brought no trouble, but directly there was life the trouble began. Presently the thought came to him, "Why need I be baptised? Our minister is a good man, and yet he has not been baptised. I can't expect to be better than he." The next time we saw him he gave us this excuse, which for the time had quieted his conscience. We asked him to read Nehemiah viii.; indeed, we read it together. At first he did not see the connection. "You see," we said, "Israel had not kept the feast of tabernacles since the days of Joshua; that is, hundreds of years had gone by since they had obeyed the Lord in this particular. Yet when they found it written in the book, they gladly did it, and the result was great joy. They did not say, 'David was a man after God's own heart, and as he did not keep the feast there is no necessity for us to do so.' Nay, though it was true that many devoted men of God, as Samuel, Josiah, &c., had failed in this particular, yet they did not find in this failure an excuse for their disobedience, but gladly carried out the mind of God in this matter, to find, as all must, that in keeping His commandments there is great reward" (Psalm xix. 11). Our brother

"To Obey is better than Sacrifice."

saw the force of this, and not long after went down into the waters of baptism, and thus showed his love to the Master.

Again, we often say about some plain commandment, "If I had seen this when first I was converted, I should have been glad to do it, but it has been left so long undone that I can hardly be expected to do it now." Another illustration from Old Testament history may help. Jehovah had said that every man-child amongst his people should be circumcised when eight days old (Gen. xvii. 12). Long after, Israel was about to enter into the promised land. After forty years of waiting, they have now only to go forward and possess. Yet one thing must be done ere the captain of the Lord's hosts can lead them on to victory and Jericho's walls fall down before their triumphant shouts. They must be circumcised. Forty long years of disobedience must not be unnoticed. Jehovah's appointment must be kept. But, surely, if in any case delay might be pleaded as an excuse for not doing the appointed thing, this was one. They might say, "But this was only for those eight days old, and many of us are now mighty warriors. It is but a sign after all of God's covenant, and we, who have been fed from heaven and led by God's own hand so manifestly, do not *now* require such a sign." But no, these cavils were not heard in Israel's camp. Obedience late, better than obedience never, seemed their motto.

We might continue; but, alas! to slay the ill weeds of human excuses seems but to make room for others of the same evil growth. Rather let us seek that which shall destroy the very root of them all. To cultivate the state of heart that can cry with the Psalmist, "I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem *all* Thy precepts concerning *all* things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalm cxix. 127, 128), is the best way to clear the ground. May it be ours to seek this for ourselves, before we apply the edge of the sword to our brethren, not forgetting that the Lord commanded us "to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, *for our good always*" (Deut. vi. 24).

God's purposes of grace are a golden chain; not a link must be missing.

THE ark of God at Jordan went before the people, was in their midst, followed after. Christ is the leader, the reward and the glory in the midst of the Church, their life and bond of fellowship.

“Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.”

(John i. 17.)

THE days are quickly passing, the hour is surely nigh,
When God's own Holy Spirit, descending from on high,
Shall fall on the disciples, who wait that Spirit birth,
To take the name of Jesus and sound it through the earth.

Their orders are to tarry and wait the promised gift,
Then, clad in heavenly armour, Christ's banner to uplift.
So, in high expectation, they meet with one accord,
And in one place are waiting the promise of their Lord.

Without one note of warning, while stillness reigns around,
As by a mighty tempest the house is filled with sound.
And tongues of lambent glory crown every head with flame.
Thus, on the Church's birthday, the Holy Spirit came.

Now every mouth is opened, now words of joyful sound,
In every tongue and language, amaze the throng around.
In every tongue that's spoken by Adam's fallen race
They hear the wondrous tidings of God's redeeming grace.

But though the tongues are varied, the subject is the same.
One only name is uttered, 'tis Jesus' mighty Name.
Jesus on earth rejected, of earth and heaven now Lord ;
Despised of men, exalted by the right hand of God.

The “many tongues” have vanished—the Spirit still remains ;
He dwells in all believers, in loyal hearts He reigns.
And, led by Him, disciples gather “with one accord,”
Unto our blessed centre, the Name of Christ, the Lord.

The place may be a hovel, a barren mountain side,
A dungeon or a palace, a pathless desert wide ;
Wherever we are gathered, oh ! miracle of grace,
Through Jesus' blood we worship within the holy place.

The Lord Himself is with us—what else can we desire ?
We need no priest or clergy, no incense and no choir,
No sacerdotal vestments ; our Priest before the throne
Presents our prayer and praises, and links them with His own.

Oh, brethren, holy brethren, beloved of the Lord,
See that no “burning question,” see that no jarring chord,
Scatter where He has gathered. Our watchword from above
Is “grace and truth”—truth only—but only truth in love.

E. B.

"THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN."

(John x. 35.)

"**Y**E shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it," said Moses to the children of Israel, when he was delivering to them a second time all the judgments and statutes and commandments of God (see Deut. iv. 2).

"The Scripture cannot be broken," said the Lord Jesus, when declaring to the unbelieving Jews of a later day His oneness with the Father (John x. 35).

We live in a day of widespread and unblushing infidelity, and the most solemn feature of this infidelity is the firm footing it has got among the professed children of God, and most especially among those who claim to be ministers of Christ. The testimony of men like Mr. Spurgeon and others, who mourn over the condition of things they describe, is abundantly borne out on every side. We have no need, therefore, to bring proof of what we refer to, for it is too well known to need it. But we would seek to inquire as to the cause of a state of things so terrible.

Whenever we begin to tamper in the smallest degree with any part of the Word of God, we are directly undermining the authority of the whole. This tampering may be of the nature either of adding to or of taking from God's Word; indeed, the one is sure to lead to the other. The scribes and Pharisees had added a host of traditions of men to the law which God had given. They never professed to disbelieve or to set aside God's Word, but they added to it, by "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9).

Now it is impossible to give equal honour and authority to God's Word and to man's; to the Scripture and to the added tradition. So we find the Lord Jesus saying to these scribes and Pharisees, "Full well ye *reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition*" (Mark vii. 9). This is certain to be the case whenever additions are made to what God has spoken. The addition soon leads on to the diminishing, for the two things cannot hold together; and unless grace is given to perceive and confess the sin of the addition, the clinging to the tradition will lead to the rejection of the commandment.

When Satan first sought to bring about man's ruin, he began by altering and obscuring what God had said. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" was his question to Eve. We know that God had not said so

“The Scripture cannot be Broken.”

at all (Gen. ii. 16), and Eve attempted to correct Satan's version of the matter ; but she did not keep to God's exact words herself. God had said, speaking of the tree that was in the midst of the garden, “In the day that thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die.*” But the woman changed this into “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, *lest ye die.*” This prepared the way for the next step, and Satan boldly gives God the lie, saying “Ye shall not surely die.” Let ever so little uncertainty be introduced into the sure Word of God, which is “settled for ever in heaven” (Ps. cxix. 89), and there is no stopping-place till the whole is cast aside.

It is this that makes implicit obedience to every word of God of such immense importance, and declares the Satanic origin of the principle that permits of the addition of human devices and traditions. Baby-sprinkling and confirmation by the so-called bishop cannot exist along with the baptism commanded by the Lord Jesus of those who have confessed their faith in Him. A humanly-administered mass, sacrament or ordinance, in which the official person who administers it is an absolute essential, cannot possibly stand side by side with the simple breaking of bread by which the disciples show His death till He come. The human ordination of anyone who has chosen the ministry as a profession, and has gone to a college, cannot agree with the Divine calling and qualifying of His servants by God Himself. And neither can any of the various human arrangements, by which the man-made minister is appointed to his sphere of service, consist with the commandment to elder brethren in each assembly to feed the flock and take the oversight thereof. In all these cases, and, alas, in many more, the commandment of God has been rejected, because men have been determined to keep their own tradition.

But our object in referring to these things is not merely to show that they are wrong in themselves. We would point out their further consequences—consequences so disastrous that, if God's children could only be brought to realise them, they would shrink from all fellowship with these things, just as they would from the blasphemy of the avowed infidel. It is by these things that the hearts of believers even are prepared for the questioning of the most solemn and important doctrines of the Word of God. And it is by these things that the mass of professors have been brought into a condition to accept with delight the teachings of barely disguised infidels. The consciences of multitudes of Christians are not shocked by the

“The Scripture cannot be Broken.”

mere suggestion that anything in God's Word may be set aside as found wanting, either by the superior wisdom or the altered circumstances of these days. Ask any believer to find you in the New Testament a mixed congregation of believers and unbelievers, who unite to pay one or two official persons to conduct their worship, to shepherd the congregation, and to administer ordinances—a congregation in which every mouth is peremptorily closed when they come together, except those of the officials above named. Any one, with the least knowledge of the Scriptures, must at once admit that such a thing is not to be found. But in how few cases is the admission accompanied by any confession of the sin of having introduced and carried on a system so wholly contrary to the Word of God. On the contrary, it is commonly justified on the ground that times are changed, and that the old order of things would be quite unsuitable to the present day. Consequently, when the time comes for Satan to begin to assault the foundations of the truth, the same argument is successfully made use of. The advance of education and general enlightenment makes it necessary that the doctrines of religion should be revised and adjusted to suit the times. Mark, it is not the doctrines of the Word of God, but the doctrines of religion. If there were any real acknowledgment of God, and that God had spoken, how would it be possible to talk of revising and correcting? No; the rejection of the commandment is the rejection of God Himself, and with the surrender of one jot or tittle of the Word of God, we lose our hold upon every part.

When such a subject as this is touched upon, there are many ready to cry out that love should keep us from saying such things. We believe that many who speak thus are thoroughly sincere and honest in what they say. But they have never had their eyes open to the true character of the evil, and hence they look upon all faithful dealing with it as making far too much of matters of secondary importance. We would earnestly commend what we have written to all such, and we purpose, if the Lord will, to come back to the subject next month.

JESUS should not be unto us a friend who calls upon us now and then, but one with whom we walk evermore.

OUR trials are needful now for the exercise and growth of faith, and no less needful for our joy and glory at the appearing of the Lord.

“THOU ART MY PORTION, O LORD.”

(Ps. cxix. 57.)

(Extract from a letter to a young believer on first going to reside among strangers.)

IT is good, at each fresh stage of our journey, to remember that we are about to enter upon fresh opportunities for serving the Lord, to meet with fresh calls to witness for Him, and to encounter fresh forms of temptation. But how good, in connection with each of these thoughts, to realise that the God whom we do know will be enough for us in the difficulties which, as yet, we do not know.

In the prospect of untried circumstances, it is so sweet to be able to sing—

“ He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.”

But, then, how important it is that we should really be purposed in heart to walk with Him.

I have so often experienced the immense importance of a right beginning. A very little false step at the first, the failure to confess Christ when the first opportunity was presented, makes everything so much more difficult afterwards. It is very sure that Satan is on the watch to take us unawares at the earliest possible opportunity, and, doubtless, he prepares his plans beforehand. We, too, want to be prepared beforehand; but it cannot be by some counter-plan of ours. Our preparation is to enter upon the new scene with a deep sense of our weakness and sinfulness, and with a corresponding assurance that all the wisdom and power of God are for the help of the one who trusts Him.

While it is specially important to bear all this in mind when we are entering upon some wholly new circumstances, it is in reality just what we want for every day. Each day brings its *own opportunities, and each day will have its own temptations.* So each day needs to be begun with a fresh learning of the humbling, but soul-strengthening lessons of the Cross. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in Him*” (Col. ii. 6). God had taught us that there was nothing good in us, and that there was all-sufficiency in Christ. That was the way in which we received Him; and it is by the daily renewal of that blessed two-fold lesson in our hearts, that we shall be enabled to walk in Him.

WHOEVER is in our company, we ought to keep company more with God than with them.

The Law, and the Christian's relation to it.

NOTES AT A BIBLE CLASS.

VI.

NEXT let us read Eph. vi. 1—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Notice how the commandment is brought in here. It is only brought in by way of reference, showing how the law says the same thing as the Lord. God made it the first commandment to which He attached any promise. So the apostle, in the New Testament, by referring to the law, points out how the Lord says the same thing. The apostle again and again refers to the Old Testament in that way. There are many things in which the law is most valuable as a book of reference. It is from the law that the law of our land is formed in relation to marriage, &c. In the New Testament we are distinctly told of certain things in connection with the ceremonial law which are abrogated, such as things clean and unclean. Paul says, "I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Rom. xiv. 14). We are taught in the New Testament that there are certain parts of the law that are beneficial to man as a social being upon earth; whilst there are other things, purely ceremonial and typical, which we are not responsible to maintain in the present dispensation. I would make an observation in connection with Acts xv. 19, 20, where the Gentiles are instructed to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." After the flood, then again under the law, and here once more, in the Christian dispensation, we are forbidden to eat blood. It is unnatural to do so; it was never meant for human food. Then, regarding abstaining from pollutions of idols, &c., we have to bear in mind that amongst those early Christians were Gentiles, who were converted from amongst the abominations of idolatry and heathendom; and it was therefore important that they should be instructed to keep clear of any thing, which might bring them once more into association with those heathen abominations.

[It will be seen that these notes conclude somewhat abruptly. This is in consequence of the discontinuance, for a time, of the Bible Class, before the subject was completed.]

LET us be skilful to make God's matters ours; then shall we see that He makes our matters His.

“How Precious are Thy Thoughts unto Me.”

(Psalm cxxxix. 17.)

WHAT a touching scene is that last supper which the Master had with His disciples. How His wondrous love shines out in every incident of it. And in what sharp contrast the dulness and selfishness of those disciples rise up. Surely they were slow of heart to believe. Yet how in deeds, as well as in the letter, we find that having loved His own He loved them unto the end.

Little did they enter into that great desire of His to eat the supper with them ere He suffered. Still less did they share those glowing anticipations of future glory, when it should have its uttermost fulfilment in the kingdom of God.

In this the night of His betrayal, His thoughts are how He can best serve His people. Though the dark shadows of the Cross are gathering round Him, and the awful hour of darkness draws near, yet, thinking not of Himself, He will use these very moments to leave behind something that shall bless His Church all the days of her pilgrimage. These sacred hours shall hallow in His people's affection the simple feast, which shall be the Divine memorial of His death of shame, His life of sorrow; in a word, of Himself. Can we ever prize it too highly?

But *they*, alas! unable to share His all-gracious purpose, fill up these holy moments with contention as to who should be greatest (Luke xxii. 24). How tenderly does He rebuke them; how graciously does He instruct them; till, as we read the story, we feel how ashamed they must be under the gentle reproof. And then, that they may not be cast down above measure, He adds, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations” (Luke xxii. 28). The Revised Version begins the sentence with “but,” and Rotherham has “notwithstanding.” The latter may help to give us the meaning best.

The Master will give them all the credit He can. Whatsoever good thing there is about them He is sure to know it, yes, and value it too. What a Master we have. Let this encourage us, that there is none so quick as He to discern the mark of grace, the impulse of love, the purpose of the heart to please Him (1 Cor. iv. 5). Gideon was surprised, it may be, to be called a mighty man of valour, ere he had done aught for his people (Judges vi. 12). Lot would hardly expect credit for his distaste of Sodom ways, whilst within its guilty walls. And, in after days, with what chastened memories would those disciples remember these loving words. Would they not say, “Though so unworthily engaged; though, as He so well

“The Scripture cannot be Broken.”

knew, about to forsake Him; yet He remembered at least what we had done for Him—He knew and owned that in heart we were true to Him”?


Their Master is our Master. The same loving estimate is put on any act of self-denial we may be enabled to do for Him. May this assurance draw out our love, and in the hour of trial nerve us for the battle.

Again, let those who would restore others take heed to own what is of God in the erring one, and so gain the conscience; otherwise they may seem, though only fellow-servants, to use the Master’s rod without the Master’s grace, and so harden rather than restore.

“THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.”

(John x. 35.)

II.

N returning to this deeply-important subject, it may be well to take note of the fact that it is quite possible for men to make the loudest boast about strict observance of the letter of Scripture, while they are at the same time the enemies of the Cross of Christ. The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints as they style themselves, and the so-called Christadelphians are remarkable instances of this. Few people, who have not come into close contact with these Satanic systems, have any idea of the pretensions they make to an exact carrying out of the commandments and church order of the New Testament; yet all the time they are using their apparent obedience to blind people’s eyes, so that they may lead others to the adoption of their own abominable doctrines. But we must not think that it is only among such deceivers as these that great zeal for the letter of truth may exist, with little heart for Christ Himself. We are always in danger of going to one extreme or another. Some of us, in our desire to press the importance of a right condition of soul, make little of obedience to all the Word of God. Others, again, with a genuine zeal to re-establish neglected commandments of God’s Word, are sadly lacking in the patience and grace which alone will commend these commandments to those who have neglected them.

It is well, then, to bear all this in mind, so that we may be on our watch against the danger, and may seek grace to be delivered from it. But all this does not in any way take away

“The Scripture cannot be Broken.”

from the truth of what we started with. For centuries professing Christians have been trained up from infancy to suppose that they may lawfully set aside portions of God's Word. In some cases they are told as much in plain words; in others, it is seldom said openly, but they see practices carried on systematically, of which the New Testament contains not a trace. When they ask what authority there is for these things, they are told that some such organisation is necessary in these days, and that the primitive order is quite unsuitable to the condition of things in which we find ourselves. It may be useful to give a definite example of what we refer to. In a pamphlet by Mrs. Booth, on “Female Ministry,” the authoress is endeavouring to evade the force of 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, and thus writes:—“If anyone still insists on a literal application of this text, we beg to ask how he disposes of the previous part of the chapter where it occurs. Surely if one verse be so authoritative and binding, the whole chapter is equally so; and, therefore, those who insist on a literal application of the words of Paul, under all circumstances and through all time, will be careful to observe the apostle's order of worship in their own congregations. But, we ask, where is the minister who lets his whole church prophesy one by one, and himself sits still and listens while they are speaking, so that all things may be done decently and in order? But Paul as expressly lays down this order as he does the rule for women, and he adds, ‘the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord’ (ver. 37). Why, then, do not ministers abide by these directions? We anticipate their reply—‘Because these directions were given to the Corinthians as temporary arrangements; and, though they were the commandments of the Lord to them at that time, they do not apply to all Christians at all times.’” Mrs. Booth accepts the answer, but contends that it is just as applicable to verses 34 and 35 as to the rest of the chapter, and she concludes as follows:—“Until, therefore, learned divines make a personal application of the rest of the chapter, they must excuse us declining to do so of the 34th verse.”

Mrs. Booth's argument is unanswerable by those to whom it is addressed, the upholders of human traditions as of greater authority than the Scriptures. To the simple believer, who can say from his heart, “I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Ps. cxix. 128), it is utterly without force. But can we not see in all this, the most painfully convincing evidence as to how skilfully Satan

“The Scripture cannot be Broken.”

has prepared the way for his assault upon the whole truth of God? By such arguments as the above, Christian teachers have justified practices not to be found in God's Word, and the people have become willing to have it so. Who is going to fix a limit to the use of such reasonings? Where is the line to be drawn beyond which there must be no trifling with that which is written? It is easy to answer that we must at all costs maintain the fundamental truths. If we surrender the outworks to the enemy, we have ourselves to blame when he makes a successful assault upon the citadel itself. The mind that has long been accustomed to see certain portions of the Scriptures set aside as out of date, is suitably prepared for repeating the process again and again. Hence it is that we have the appalling spectacle before us of professedly Christian preachers, from hundreds of pulpits, dismissing the great verities of the Cross as only fit for an unenlightened past; while many of God's children listen with very little concern, and the religious world applauds with rapture.

It is no use denouncing the evil fruit and ignoring the root from which it springs. We do not question the sincerity of many who have been speaking with no uncertain sound of late of the existing condition of things; but in faithfulness to God, and in love to fellow-saints, we are bound to go further. Having sought out the reason of the widespread and ever-increasing infidelity among the professing churches, are we not responsible to take a stand for God and the truth, and to seek to show our brethren where the only sure foothold for faith still remains?

While God's children are submitting themselves even partially to human traditions, they may deceive themselves even as to the things in which they are acting according to the Scriptures. In Is. xxix. 13 (R.V.) we read—“And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto Me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them.” The test of our obedience is not when God's Word and the human authority speak the same thing; for, though we do the thing that God commands, our fear of Him—our apparent obedience—may be nothing more than a commandment of men which has been taught us. But when God says one thing and tradition another, then it is seen whether our obedience is given to God or not. “Concerning the works of men,” wrote the Psalmist, “by the word of Thy

“Perfect Peace.”

lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Ps. xvii. 4); and this is our way of safety to-day. Eve thought herself capable of choosing what was best, instead of confiding in God and gratefully accepting what He gave. To disbelieve His solemn warning as to the consequences of disobedience easily followed, when the heart had gone astray from Him. Even so now; believers may begin with choosing for themselves about the order and ordinances of God’s assembly, instead of thankfully accepting the gifts bestowed by the ascended and glorified Christ. Presently they consider themselves competent to judge the doctrines of God’s revealed truth, and again they choose the cleverly-devised substitute, and reject that which is from God. One false step leads to another; and if we would be delivered ourselves, and desire to help to deliver others, we must needs seek grace to judge the whole of our departures in heart from God, so that we may be able to pray in truth—
 “With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments” (Ps. cxix. 10).

“PERFECT PEACE.”

SELDOM has a child of God been placed in more painful circumstances than those in which David found himself, when fleeing from Jerusalem, pursued by his own son, his favourite son, Absalom, who sought his life. Many years before, Nathan had uttered the solemn prophecy, “The sword shall never depart from thine house,” and that prophecy was still being fulfilled. Yet amid all the sorrow of such unspeakably painful circumstances, his heart was kept in perfect peace; and Psalm iii., written at that very time, tells how confidently he rested in God.

David had sinned grievously, and he was enduring the punishment of his sin; but David had experienced the blessedness of the man whose sin is forgiven, and he was walking with God. Psalm ii. tells us how deep were the exercises of soul he had passed through, and the humbling effect of these exercises had never passed away. A half confession, leading only to a half restoration, leaves the soul without settled peace in time of trouble. But a deep, real dealing with God about our sin, such as wholly condemns self and justifies God, removes every hindrance to communion, whatever the circumstances may be.

COMMUNION.

How swift the golden moments glide,
When we together, side by side,
 Show forth Thy death, O Lord ;
While notes of praises sweetly ring,
Thanksgivings unto Thee we bring,
 According to Thy word.

We seem as if, for one brief hour,
Transported by the Spirit's power,
 Like him of Patmos' isle,
To scenes in which earth has no place,
To living founts of love and grace,
 Our joy and peace Thy smile.

Faith backward turns her piercing eye
Once more to view Gethsemane,
 And weep beneath the Cross ;
Remembering in the bread and wine
Thy love, unsearchable, divine,
 And counts all else but loss.

Hope points us onward to the day
Wherein, together caught away,
 We'll meet Thee in the air.
What joy shall fill our souls when we
Thy face in righteousness shall see,
 And Thine own image bear.

Love, like a mighty ocean-tide,
Thy love, O God, so vast and wide,
 The same from age to age,
Has won our hearts and sealed us Thine ;
O may it brightly in us shine,
 And all our thoughts engage.

THE GOD OF JACOB.

II.

JACOB'S "if," in answer to the promise of God, showed how little his heart really relied on that promise. Our confidence must either be in God or in self, and the great purpose of God's gracious training of us is to teach us the two wonders which the Cross reveals—

"The wonder of His glorious love,
And my own worthlessness."

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness," was the precious lesson which the thorn in the flesh was to teach the apostle Paul; and when he had learned the lesson, he was able to glory in infirmities, so that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

This, then, was the lesson that God was teaching Jacob all his life through: but Jacob was a much slower learner than Paul; and he not only needed to be taught, line upon line, precept upon precept, but, after he seemed to have mastered the lesson in some measure, he had to be taken back to the beginning again. And how little the character of God's dealings with Jacob seems to be understood by many believers. Hymns are written about "wrestling Jacob"; in our very Bibles, the headings to the chapters read—"Jacob wrestles with an angel." Yet, the point of the whole of what took place that memorable night at Peniel, was that God wrestled with Jacob. God's difficulties in fulfilling His promises to Jacob were not in circumstances, or in Jacob's enemies, but in Jacob himself. It was Jacob that needed to be broken down; and that long night in which God wrestled with him, gives us the key to all God's dealings with His self-sufficient child. God is infinitely gracious. If a gentle chastening will accomplish His purpose, He delights to stay His hand; if a thorn in the flesh will teach us our weakness and His sufficiency, He will not inflict anything heavier; but if we still think we have some strength, some wisdom, some sufficiency of our own, He must needs go on wrestling, even if He has to put a thigh out of joint, and so reduce us to utter helplessness. Then the helpless one will cling to Him, the almighty God, and there is room for His strength to be made perfect in weakness.

That night God gave Jacob the new name, that belonged to him as the one so utterly broken down that he could only

The God of Jacob.

cling to God. Yet the lesson of that night was often forgotten afterwards, and the Jacob character displayed itself again and again. And so we are led on to the close of his life, when, at last, the Spirit of God can call attention to an act that is the genuine outcome of faith. Let us turn to Gen. xlviii. Joseph had been told that his father was ill, and he took his two sons to receive their grandfather's blessing. And what has Jacob now to say? What is it that shall make his blessing to have a special value? He does not recount anything that he has accomplished himself; but he goes back to that night when God appeared to him at Bethel, and blessed him (verses 3 and 4). There is no "if" now. True, Jacob's seed were not in possession of the promised land, for he and all that belonged to him were strangers in Egypt; but the blessing that Jacob is going to bestow on his grandsons has the promise of God for its foundation, and not merely that which his eyes have seen.

The life lesson has been learned at last, and Jacob, who had so often leaned to his own understanding in the times of his own need, now lays hold upon God for Ephraim and Manasseh. "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk." He does not claim to have walked before God himself; but he knows now that God never forsook him, however he may have forgotten God. "The God which fed me all my life long, unto this day." The word for "fed" is really shepherded. It is much more than the mere feeding, and includes all the guarding and succouring of the shepherd for the sheep; indeed, it is the twenty-third Psalm in one word. Who can tell how sweetly that confession of Jacob's sounded in the ears of God? All His grace and goodness are recognised and owned at last, and He is counted upon to fulfil that which is yet lacking of His promise. "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." The Angel is still his Shepherd-God. The expression, "the Angel," seems to speak of God's manifested presence, and doubtless refers to the night of wrestling. How precious that makes it. The One who put out his thigh is the Angel that redeemed him from all evil. This expression corresponds with the one in Isaiah lxiii. 9—"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

It matters not what the particular act may be, whether

"Let God be True, but every Man a Liar."

stopping the mouths of lions or the worship of a feeble old man. God is honoured when we believe His Word and count upon Himself; and it is then that the Spirit of God can say of what we do "BY FAITH." This is what God brought Jacob to, as the result of all His patient, unwearied love towards him; and this is what Jacob's God is accomplishing in us with the same infinite patience and grace.

"Let God be True, but every Man a Liar."

(Romans iii. 4.)

YOU seem to think that you are right and everybody else is wrong," said a Christian woman to us the other day when we were pleading for a full and whole-hearted obedience to the commandments of the Lord. We have the same thing said to us so often, under similar circumstances, that we do not doubt that most of our readers will have had a like charge laid against them. It may be helpful to some, therefore, to consider what weight there is in such an accusation, and how it should be met so as to reach the conscience of the objectors. Perhaps, also, some into whose hands this paper may come will themselves have used such words, and thought, as they used them, that they were a sufficient reason for not paying much attention to the truth that was being presented to them. Should such be the case, we would entreat their patient and serious consideration for a little while; for many who once talked in this way have been brought at last to acknowledge that they had been fighting against God.

In all such matters it will be well to remember that the natural heart is unchanged, even in the believer, and that our own reasonings will be of the same character as when we were unconverted. Let us apply this thought to the present case. When putting the Gospel before some unsaved one, how often we have met the reply, "Well, you seem to think yourself a great deal better than anybody else. I could not say that I am saved, for I don't feel nearly good enough for that." What a perversion of all we had been saying to them. We had endeavoured, in the simplest language we could find, to show that *all* had sinned, and come short of the glory of God; but that Christ Jesus had come into the world to save sinners, and that it was not good people, but sinners who

“Let God be True, but every Man a Liar.”

believed in Him that were saved. And yet they tell us that we evidently think ourselves much better than other people, or we could not suppose we were saved. Now, how is it that they so utterly pervert our words? Of course, sometimes it is deliberate and wilful perversion, but by no means is this always the case. The truth is that the natural heart, whatever profession it may make, does not really take God into account. It knows nothing of simple reliance upon His Word. Hence the “I know,” which is the humble utterance of a simple faith, sounds like utter presumption to the natural man. “Of course I have always believed in Jesus,” says the unbeliever; “what do you take me for?” Yet with the very next breath he will tell you that he does not believe anyone can know that his sins are forgiven.

In this case we see clearly enough that the professed belief in Christ and in the Word of God has no power whatever to bring peace to the conscience, and that what God says is not really taken into account. The soul in such a condition cannot understand that the one who says “I have peace with God; I have redemption through the blood of Christ,” says so, not because he thinks himself good, but because he has been made to know that there is no good in him at all, and has been brought to find a full salvation in the blessed Son of God. The declaration of what God says, and the soul’s simple confidence in His testimony, are mistaken for thinking oneself very good and for setting oneself up above other people.

The same thing holds good when the Christian has been following human tradition about any matter, and is confronted with the Divine testimony in regard to it. However much people may be prejudiced in favour of some human system, it is not often that the child of God will venture to speak of it as a perfect thing, commanding the entire submission of all God’s people. It is *their way*. They think it a very good way; indeed, they doubt if there is any other as good. “But, of course, we all have our own way,” they will say, “and no doubt there is good in all.” To the soul in such a condition, the claim put forward for the absolute perfection and authority of the Scriptures sounds like professing that we ourselves are something very remarkable. In theory the claim is admitted. “Of course,” they say, “we believe everything that is in the Bible”; just as the unconverted man said that of course he believed in Christ. But, as in his case, he looked in quite another direction for salvation, and considered the man who took God

“Let God be True, but every Man a Liar.”

at His word as extremely presumptuous ; so in this instance, the Christian who has never been set free from the bonds of tradition says he believes all the Bible, but goes elsewhere for his instructions about numerous matters, and tells us we think our way the only right one, when we try to show him that God has spoken and ought to be obeyed.

The natural heart, when dealing with the question of salvation, says that any way will do to be saved, so long as we are sincere, and in earnest, and do our best. The Word of God sets forth the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and declares that “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12).

The natural heart thinks that any way of ordering the house of God will do, so long as we are trying to do good and to save souls. The Word of God proclaims Jesus to be Lord as well as Saviour; invests Him with *all* authority, and makes it a test of our spirituality, whether or not we bow to the very least of His instructions, as the commandments of the Lord, not to be taken from or added to (1 Cor. xiv. 36-38).

In the one case, the natural man thinks it charity to believe that other people’s ways of being saved will answer the purpose, though he may prefer his own for himself. In the other case, the natural heart, even in the believer, in like manner counts it charity to think all ways are good, while personally he may prefer the one he is in. But in both cases the claims of God are overlooked. God’s ways are always foolishness to the natural heart, and we shall be sure to treat them as such, as long as we allow ourselves to be guided by our own thoughts, instead of by the Word and Spirit of God.

When once the conscience has been aroused to a perception of the sin of substituting something else for Christ, we shall surely find that in Him God has made a full and abundant provision for all our need; and that we are setting Him aside when we accept the human tradition, whether for the soul’s salvation or for any part of our after-walk.

THE Lord’s jewels need grinding, and cutting, and polishing. It ought to be a grievous thing to us to have a wish, however slight, contrary to the mind of Christ.

It is well for us to shut up our desires within the compass of trusting and pleasing God.

TO OUR READERS.

IT is now five years since we undertook the conduct of this little paper, in the hope that the Lord would be pleased to use it for the building up and establishing of His own dear children. We have been much cheered from time to time through testimony that has been borne as to blessing received through its means; and we desire to express our deep sense of thankfulness to God for help granted in this service. We would also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of all who have contributed to its pages, as well as the not less valued help of those who have borne us up before God in prayer. We are also grateful to all who have had fellowship with us in our service for Christ, by promoting the circulation of our paper; and we would invite the further co-operation of our readers in this respect.

It is our purpose, if the Lord will, to commence a series of articles next month on the "Feasts of the Lord," to be continued through the whole year. By way of helping to make the subject clearer, we purpose presenting a coloured diagram, illustrating these feasts, with every copy of the January number; and we think the interest that should attach to this deeply-instructive subject might be the means of considerably increasing the number of our subscribers.

We have been frequently asked to devote a portion of our space to the answering of questions; and as we believe some matters may be better dealt with in this way than in any other, we propose to carry out the suggestion. We shall therefore be glad to receive questions, the answering of which may be for general edification. As the space we can give to this department of our work must necessarily be very limited, we would ask indulgence beforehand, if many questions have to be passed over. Our aim will be, as the Lord may help, to answer those which will be of the widest profit.

That glory may be brought to the name of the Lord through the edification of His people is the desire of our heart, and into His hands we seek to commit the whole undertaking.

THE EDITOR.

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