

“Things
Concerning
Himself”

July - August

1965

No. 28

"THERE IS NONE LIKE THEE"

In the consideration of the greatness, beauty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, every heart that has known and loved Him is agreed in the conclusion that

He is incomparable

The great servants and prophets of the Old Testament can only serve to typify some of the features that shine out in perfection in Jesus. But in His Person He is unique and must ever be regarded by His people with worshipping adoration and affection as beyond compare!

This was the lesson that Peter and his companions had to learn on the mount of transfiguration. Peter would compare Jesus with Moses and Elias, but the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." Great as Moses and Elias were, as servants, they cannot be placed on the same elevation with Jesus. One of the sad characteristics of today is the profanity that is in evidence as to the Person of Christ by placing Him on a level with mere men and overlooking the unique glory that is His.

God's beloved Son must ever fill the scene in which His glory shines. It was therefore said, "when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."

Millions of men have lived on earth, but never a life gave pleasure to the heart of God as the life of Jesus did. His perfect pathway filled heaven with delight.

Millions of men have died on earth but there was never a death like the death of Jesus. They have died on account of sin, having forfeited their right to live, but He laid down His life. No one but He could have brought men to God by dying for them. The redeemed will celebrate through all eternity the preciousness of the death of Jesus.

Scripture is full of His incomparableness. When Joseph, who is one of the most remarkable of the types of Christ, came into his glory. Pharaoh said to him, "There is none so discreet and wise as thou art." He thus prefigures Christ in

His unsurpassed wisdom

Alone Joseph solved the great world-problems and administered the food supply for the perishing world. Legislators and great men can never solve the great problems that confront the world today, but Jesus will do so and bring in a world of glory. So

Joseph could say, "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen." What a dignity and joy there is in telling out the gospel of the glory of Christ, for He alone could uphold the glory of God and meet the dire need of man.

The bride in the Song of Songs, in the expression of her appreciation of the beauty of her Beloved, began by speaking of Him as "the chiefest among ten thousand," but she concludes her description of Him by exclaiming, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." She is filled with

His incomparable beauty

as she adds, "this is my Beloved: this is my Friend!"

David was filled with the same Spirit when he said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." It was David who said as he sat before the Lord, "There is none like thee."

The incomparable glory of Christ is disclosed too by His words. He was "skilled in speech." They wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. Even the officers, who were sent to take Him, returned without Him, saying, "Never man spake like this man." For

His marvellous words

can never be compared with those of the greatest men on earth; they stand alone in their dignity and greatness. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification, but there is none like the voice of Jesus. As Shepherd, His voice had attracted and controlled myriads of God's sheep; the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear live. His words awaken consciences, cause hearts to burn and transform lives. The power of His "still small voice" when He said "I am Jesus" to Saul of Tarsus, converted and transformed him from the fiercest foe into the greatest servant of the Lord.

Then if we consider His Name, "God has given him a name which is above every name," and of

His peerless Name

it is said, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus alone can save!

Presently the whole universe of glory will praise Him, saying, "Blessed be his glorious name for ever."

It must therefore be that His glory is distinctive, for there shines from the face of Jesus "a light above the brightness of the sun." No created luminary could be compared with

His excellent glory

Presently the holy city will have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Every one who knows the love of Christ will gladly acknowledge that it transcends all other loves. Human love cannot be compared with

His love which passeth knowledge

He alone loved the church and gave Himself for it. Unlike every other, His love in its purity, intensity and constancy will abide eternally as the unique bond that will hold the responsive affections of the vast host of the redeemed.

May our Lord Jesus Christ so eclipse every other object that each may say with the apostle Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

F. S. Marsh.

HIS SYMPATHY

Matthew 9:36.

We see the loveliness of Christ in His sympathy. Perhaps in this respect His loveliness stands out most glowingly. He is never more lovely than when His face is turned in compassion toward those who look to Him for help. He is always being touched with compassion. Human suffering made deep furrows in His face and still deeper ones in His heart. The multitude without a shepherd, the sorrowing widow of Nain, the little dead child of the ruler, the demoniac of Gadara, the hungry multitudes—wherever sympathy touched Him, His heart went out in full sympathy. He need not have touched the leper but He did. Why? Because for years that poor wretch had been an outcast counted as the offscouring of the earth. He had almost lost the sense of being a man. It was defilement even to come near him and, horror of horrors—no one would ever think of touching him! But that is exactly why Jesus did touch him, and that touch made him not only whole, but human again.

So the compassion of Jesus continues to make Him lovely as His love is displayed in the lives of those who have come under the influence of this compassionate Christ.

H. W. Ferrin.

"I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK"

Christ has done it all. His presence on high declares that the whole work is finished. He would stand on the confines of this world, ready to take His departure, and in all the calmness of a conscious victor—though He had yet to encounter the darkest scene of all—says, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4.) Blessed Saviour! we may well adore Thee, and well exult in the place of dignity and glory in which eternal justice has set Thee. The highest place in heaven belongs to Thee, and Thy saints only wait for the time when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

C. H. Mackintosh.

GLEANINGS

To opened eyes His glory was most real, even though He was found in fashion as a man. At the marriage feast and at the feeding of the five thousand He was proclaimed as the divine Creator, able to produce food and drink for His creatures, either by the normal processes of nature that depended upon His sustaining power, or by the intervention of His sovereign will that dispensed with them at His pleasure. On the troubled sea and beside the tomb, He shows the majesty of an absolute mastery over every opposing thing. Neither the turbulence of the waves nor the corruption of death could thwart His word, or hinder His purposes of blessing. Furthermore, His voice was supreme in the unseen world, and brought back the soul to its dwelling in the body.

In His ministry He was seen in weariness, after much toil, sitting on a well at Sychar, and sleeping in a ship on the sea of Galilee. He was hungry when He fasted in the wilderness of the temptation, and when some days before His death He sought refreshment from the fig tree; usually, however, He shared the ordinary food of His people. At His kingly entry into Jerusalem, He wept as He considered the coming destruction of the guilty city, and in Gethsemane He sought comfort from His three disciples, saying to them: "Tarry ye here, and watch with me"

(Matt. 26:38). At Cana, He showed that He could rejoice with the friends gathered at the wedding feast, delighting in their day of gladness, and setting His approval upon it. Little children nestled in His arms, and the homes of Martha and Zacchaeus and of others made Him a most welcome guest, and found Him a loving and compassionate friend. In these and many other things, the Lord Jesus displayed a true manhood, marked by the features normal to the daily life of men, yet ever apart from sin.

To our Lord's humility there nevertheless attached unique and transcendent dignity. In Him alone do we behold the perfection of manhood. Throughout the history of our race there have been those who by God's enablement have shown outstanding traits of nobility, of goodness and of grace, so that we speak of the purity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the devotion of Mary of Magdala, and the sacrificial love of Paul, but all such qualities are gathered up finally and completely and in one glorious harmony in the Son of Man.

To our Lord, then, belonged humanity in the absolute sense. He embraced its every dignity, so that in Him, and in Him alone, we see realized in its completeness the divine ideal of manhood. No excellence of character could be added to Him. There were no virtues for Him to acquire, for all were ever His. In the garden of His soul there were no exotics; every fragrant plant was native to its setting.

When He presented Himself as the giver of rest, He said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). Here is the secret of His character selfward, and of the mind which sought not honour for itself. "I am meek and lowly in heart." None else could have spoken such words. Moses, the meekest among men would not have dared to use them, but would have felt instead his own unworthiness. Nor can we find other lips on which they would be true without qualification. Meekness is not lack of strength, but rather the presence of it, strength of character to accept the will of God in its entirety, without question, without dispute and without resentment. Lowliness is the recognition of man's true place before God, a place of humility befitting him even apart from the fall; in Christ it was the grace in which He, though Lord of all, lived upon earth in the acceptance of that complete dependence upon God which belongs properly to humanity. The Son of Man, and He alone, was essentially meek and lowly.

With the Lord in the glory that wrapped the scene (the

transfiguration) appeared two heavenly visitors, whose conversation gave clear evidence as to the mind of heaven. In the realms of light one theme has entire pre-eminence, one work alone is proclaimed, and one Man alone is exalted. As the Cross of Christ is the theme of Scripture, so is it the theme of heaven, and this was told forth on the mount as Moses and Elias talked with Him concerning His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. All honour must be His. The three disciples, awakened at last from the heaviness of sleep, saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Not the glory of the men, but His glory was seen, for that in which Moses and Elias appeared was derived, but the glory of Christ was intrinsic, shining forth from the depths of His illimitable Person. (See Luke 9:30-32.)

Knowing the Son we know the Father; not vaguely but in truth. Beholding the face wet with tears by the tomb of Lazarus, we see that the Father is compassionate; beholding the unsullied purity of the life consummated at Calvary, we learn that the Father is holy; beholding the sufferings of the Cross, we learn that the Father is loving. Nor is it otherwise when we see the embrace that folded the little children to His heart, and the intense longing with which He gazed on the weary multitudes. We listen to the voice whose words of comfort healed many a broken heart, and opened paradise to a dying thief. In these, as in the many other scenes which throng the memory with rich blessing we learn to know God, and our hearts are satisfied indeed.

With that tireless compassion for men there was linked an unbroken trust in the God who had willed the Cross. Not even in the words of intensest woe from an anguish which Deity alone could comprehend, but the trust of that pure heart faltered not nor failed. To the sufferer, God was still His God; His "Why hast thou forsaken me?" searched all the infinite dimensions of that most profound of mysteries, but did not question the righteousness and truth of the ways of God. When all was accomplished, and the victorious "It is finished" had gone forth to the universe the Lord Jesus gave to the Father the tribute of the last words that His suffering lips could speak, words that consummated all His confidence in the Father's care: "Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Man's guilty hands might nail the Lord Jesus to the Cross, but more than that he could not do; he might add to his sins, but could do nothing for their removal. The supreme sufferings

of Christ were not at creature hands. They were endured when "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all".

At the Cross the Holy One was made sin, and endured the judgment of God, but never was He more precious to the Father than at that very time.

When Thomas beheld the risen Lord, he was as emphatic in his homage as previously in his unbelief. He heard the gracious words that drew his gaze to the pierced hands and riven side. Then looking into the face that once had been crowned with thorns and into the eyes that once has glistened with human tears, he saw his God. The words of adoration burst forth spontaneously. In his devotion there could be no reserves. For him the Crucified was henceforth both Lord and God.

To be the effectual sin-bearer, satisfying for ever the claims of the holiness of God, to be the true Mediator, comprehending as well the depths of God as the need of man, to be the Revealer in whom God should be fully known, and to be the exhaustless Fount of eternal bliss to all His own, our Saviour must needs possess full Deity.

It is in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we learn supremely the character of God, and His grace to a rebel creation. There the glory of the Incarnate Word is seen by opened eyes, shining in all its fulness, and displaying its immensities of holiness and of love. Prostrate in the anguish of Gethsemane, standing amid the rejection of Gabbatha, and nailed to the tree of utmost suffering at Golgatha, the despised and weary Saviour remained all that He had ever been, and passed from depth to deeper depth of sorrow in the moral majesty which had marked His every step. In the darkness of the tomb He was still the Lord; even there we may discern the glory that was His alone.

Never in the study of the Word of God is there more need for deep reverence and for holy caution than when we ponder the mystery of the actual sufferings of Christ. Those who were witnesses of His agony impress us by their profound reticence of description. Yet beyond all that they could see was that which was veiled in the darkness. No creature gaze beheld the pains that were Christ's when under the judgment load.

Far from being part of creation, Christ was personally distinct from it, as is clear from the following words in the Colossian letter: "For by him were all things created". The creature life derived from its Creator: God's first-born has life in Himself, eternally. As to the creation, we read: "For in him (R.V.) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth,

visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him". Three phrases are worthy of special note—in Him—by Him—for Him.

The eternal majesty of our Lord shines out brightly in Hebrew 1. He is the Son who is thereby appointed heir of all things, and by whom the ages are made. He achieves redemption, and takes His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is inducted into His inheritance as God's firstborn and saluted as God. The heavens are the works of His hands, and though they perish, He remains, the same yesterday, and today and for ever. It is not alone that our beloved Saviour is the maker of the starry hosts, not alone that He upholds (i.e., bears on surely to the goal) all things by the word of His power, but also that when in the appointed time the heavens "shall wax old as doth a garment", and He shall "fold them up as a vesture, and they shall be changed", He Himself will abide, unchanged and unchangeable. What is the majesty of the Being who puts on a universe for the accomplishment of His purposes, and puts it off and changes it as we might a garment?

Throughout the changing manifestations of our Lord's glory, as even amidst the years of His humiliation and suffering, He remains the same blessed Person. Throughout the vicissitudes of His people's history, and midst their experiences of joy and of sorrow, of failure and of triumph, He remains the same. Through the long drama of things in earth, and things in heaven, their defilement by sin, and their reconciliation through the Cross, yes, and through that mighty change when the first heaven and the first earth pass away, to reveal the new heaven and the new earth, the Lord Jesus Himself knows no change. Though change and decay be the order of things around us, we look beyond them to the abiding One who fills both time and eternity.

In Christ all things are bound together by one power and one purpose, thus making the universe an ordered whole. Not only has He started creation on its journey, but He maintains it age after age. Never is it out of control. Never for one moment have the forces of evil been able to pass the limits set by His permissive will who says: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." And at last the goal shall be reached when every created intelligence shall own Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father, and the righteousness of His ways, both in mercy and in judgment, shall be vindicated before every eye.

As the Lamb, Christ was the rejected One, slain in unresisting

meeekness; therefore it is as the Lamb that He will be invested with universal rule, will know the joy of His marriage feast, will triumph over all His foes, and will reign for ever and ever. Men despised the beauty of His character; they must learn God's appreciation of it. Earth saw Him laden with dark dishonour and nailed to the shameful Cross; it must see Him on His throne of glory and weighted with eternal triumphs. The effect of this answer of honour to reproach is increased by the fact that in every instance in the Revelation it is a diminutive form of Lamb that is used. How little He was in the eyes of His scorners, and little they thought that the destiny of the universe rested in those pierced hands, and that a dying Man, the theme alike of priestly jest and of drunken song, would assume such sovereignty that of the increase of His government and peace there should be no end!

As we meditate on the unfading glories that adorn His once thorn-crowned brow, we recall the opening words of His last message through His servant John: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). We have mused upon the records of His greatness and of His dignity, but following them all is the voice that tells us that He is still the same beloved Saviour whom we have learned to trust and to adore. Instead of greeting us here with recital of His infinite majesty, and with mention of the titles of His eternal excellency, He takes the name Jesus, the Saviour-name that was written above Him on the Cross, the name that tells of His tender grace and of His dying love. He changes not. The shame of the Tree gives place to the honour of the Throne, but He Himself is the same. We wait for His coming, rejoicing that He has said: "Surely I come quickly", and glad indeed that we shall then be with the One who is even now the Life of our life.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

H. C. Hewlett.

FINDING CHRIST

Put your hand in Christ's, that as He leads you, other men, who have turned away from Him, may look and seeing you walking with Him, and learn to love Him through your love. I do not believe any man ever yet genuinely, humbly, thoroughly gave himself to Christ without some other finding Christ through him.

Phillips Brooks.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

If you look after your relationship with the Lord Jesus, He will look after your fruitfulness. If you keep close to Him there will be fruit from your life, even if you do not always see it.

Leith Samuel.

NO FOOL

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot.

THE LIVE COAL

“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, ‘Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.’ (Isaiah 6:6-7.)

“Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32.)

The expression used in Isaiah 6 “the live coal” is remarkable as directing our attention to our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who, in order to maintain the infinite holiness of God (see v. 3) endured at Calvary the consuming wrath of God against sin and all unholiness. We may contemplate Him, typically, as the Altar (in Hebrews 13:10, 15) and as the One who offered Himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:14). In this He is alluded to as both the Offering Priest and the Sacrifice itself. But beside all this there is the fire on the altar. We cannot contemplate Christ actually suffering at Calvary apart from the fire itself—the fierceness of God’s consuming wrath. The “live coal” refers to this. (The word is sometimes translated as “burning” or “glowing”).

It is a wonderful vision that Isaiah sees, and he is so impressed with the holiness of the Lord of Hosts, that he cries out and confesses he is “a man of unclean lips.” It is then that a seraph flies to him with a glowing coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and he causes this glowing coal to touch Isaiah’s lips, and proclaims his guilt is taken away and his sin forgiven.

So we perceive that the glowing coal reminds us of how Christ was identified with the fierceness of God’s wrath against sin. He

who knew no sin was made sin for us; He suffered the wrath of God vicariously; He endured it in its fulness completely. Think for a moment of the intensity of the heat required to reduce or consume the sacrifice to ashes. (Lev. 6:10.)

Notice that the seraph does not actually experience direct contact with the live or glowing coal. He takes it from the altar with tongs. But our Lord Jesus endured the fierceness of God's wrath directly. How affecting are the words "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). We may reverently say there were no tongs for Him at Calvary. He must suffer "in His own body", without any mitigating aid whatever, the searing, searching, consuming wrath of God against sin. He who personally was sinless was, at that time, "made sin" for us.

But there are times when the believer too must have to do with "the live coal from off the altar." He must understand in some degree, as a personal experience, not only as a matter of doctrine, what sin is in God's sight and what it meant for Jesus in bitterest suffering to make atonement for sin. Hence Isaiah's experience here—albeit in a vision. Hence, too, David's sense of the inevitability of God's judgment of sin and his distress at realising that he was the sinner. (Psalm 51.) We may be sure that Saul of Tarsus, in the three days of blindness and fasting (Acts 9) experienced something of this anguish. The godly remnant of Israel will understand something of the meaning of the "glowing coal" in the day spoken of in Zechariah's prophecy (see chapter 12:10-14). But in all these instances the action of the fire is indirect and not directly borne as by Jesus Himself—"in His own body."

But there is a further wonderful truth about the glowing coal. In Leviticus 16:12 we learn that the burning coals were used to ignite the fragrant incense beaten small. The high priest went inside the veil with both hands full of incense, which was put upon the fire before the Lord, and the cloud of incense covered the mercy seat. For sin, He endured the intense, unmitigated wrath of God, but at the same time that Perfect Offering yielded a cloud of fragrant incense. By the intense heat, the affections and sensibilities of the Lord were supremely tested, but the testing only brought out infinite fragrance Godward.

It is true our Lord cried out "It is finished" for the atoning work was complete and God was satisfied. But there is a glorious sense in which the fragrance covers the mercy seat and is there. The fragrance of the death of Christ will never disappear. So too, the fire of the burnt offering continues all night unto the

morning. Indeed, a continual fire was to be kept burning on the altar: "It shall never go out" (Lev. 6:13.)

In Luke 24, Cleopas and his companion were going to their village home and were sadly discussing what had recently taken place at Jerusalem. A heavenly Stranger joins them, enquires as to their grief, and then opens up the Scriptures about the sufferings of Christ. Little did they know they were in close contact with the "live coal from off the altar."

And as they drew near to the village where they were going, the Heavenly Stranger made as if He would go further. But they constrained Him to stay with them for the day was declining. So He entered in to stay with them, and it came to pass, as He was at table with them, that these two wondering pilgrims at that moment saw two hands stretch out to take the bread to break it. And as they gazed upon those hands, suddenly they knew, and their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him! But He disappeared from them, and their hearts were left burning within them. The "Live Coal from off the altar" had ignited an intense glow of divine affection within their hearts, and rising up the same hour they returned to Jerusalem.

The power and intensity of that same love has never diminished, for there ever remains the "Live Coal from off the altar", bringing Christ in all the intensity of His suffering, so intimately near to us.

C. Vautier.

"I HEARD THY VOICE"

Genesis 3:10

Ashamed before his Maker, filled with dread;
Guilt and disgrace on his dishonoured head.
Man speaks to God—"I heard Thy voice," saith he,
"And being naked, feared, and hid from Thee."

Revelation 22:20

Joyful before his Saviour, blessed through grace,
Man lifts to heaven a longing, loving, face.
The voice Divine he hears: with kindling eyes,
"Come, even so, Lord Jesus!" he replies.

Isaiah 6:6, 7.

See how the sacred Scriptures thus contrast
Man's first recorded speech to God, and last,
Think then how hot the Altar coal had been,
Whose touch could make such unclean lips so clean.

J. M. S. Tait.

DIVINE AFFECTION

In the Book of the Song of Solomon chapter 1 verse 2 a female soliloquist breaks the silence of that eastern scene, and the paramount desire of her heart is expressed in the words of verse 2 "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine."

I would draw attention to the change of the pronouns from "him" to "thy". This conveys volumes to the awakened soul. It is ever a blessed occupation to speak about one whom we love—that is relative, so she uses the word "him". There is something even grander than speaking about a person whom we love, there is the delight in speaking face to face with that one: a communion truly enjoyed: thus she says "thy love is better than wine".

One has written thus:—

"Kiss me Saviour: unto mine
Let Thy lips be pressed:
For Thy love compared with wine
Is by far the best.

See, my heart is seeking Thee,
Satisfied it will not be
Till from earth's ambitions free
Lord, with Thee 'tis blest.

Till the love that brought Thee
I, in full assurance, know,
Till it sets my heart aglow;
Lord I cannot rest".

You will find divine affection beautifully illustrated in John's Gospel chapter 11. There is a threefold allusion to that love there. In verse 3 there is Individual Love "He whom thou lovest is sick." In verse 5 there is presented Family Love "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Finally there is Universal Love in verses 50 to 52, signified in the words "One man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" and again "And not for that nation only . . ."

Individual affection

This love has its answer in Galatians 2:20 "I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." The Cross of Christ is the indubitable evidence of divine affection. There abides that monumental witness to God's love: and it is toward me, as if I were the only one who had sinned and rebelled

against God. Love is a giving thing! The apostle affirms this fact in the closing statement of verse 20 "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."

"Love ever gives, forgives, outlives,
And ever stands with open hands
And while it lives it gives:
For this is love's prerogative
To give, and give, and give."

Could Christ have given any greater? Nay! He gave Himself for me. Nothing less would ever do, for nothing less could have met the righteous requirements of a holy God whose throne sin had insulted. "This Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). The person of Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). The wonder of it all is that He loved me when I was verily unlovable.

Family affection

The family at Bethany was composed of two sisters and a brother. Have you noticed how the Spirit directs the writer John to omit at verse 5 the name of Mary by merely designating her "her (Martha's) sister." But we must not think for a moment that any thought of inferiority was in the mind of the narrator; for in verse 1 we are told that Lazarus was sick in the "town of Mary and her sister Martha". Were we to describe any township today we might readily state it is the place where the Duke of so-and-so lives: it is the town of Mary, and she takes precedence over the others in being mentioned first in verse 1. So every one in the family is distinguished and valued and each is loved by the Lord.

The individual affection does not cease because there is family affection. While we each revel in the thought that Christ's love was demonstrated on our behalf individually, nevertheless we all can appreciate the family thought by which we are bound together. This is clearly outlined in Ephesians 5:25 "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it". Again we have confirmed to us that love ever gives—Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it! Those who compose the church are in the family of God and are loved by divine and infinite love, and that love is the very atmosphere breathed by each individual member of that family.

Universal affection

The Universal aspect of Divine Affection is conveyed in John 11:49-52. Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, prophesied that "One Man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

This character of love has its counterpart in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is another evidence that love is a giving thing. Divine love has its abode in God Himself—for "God is love". But love requires an object upon which to centre. This verse tells us that the object upon which divine affection has concentrated is "the world". Not the material world, but the world of mankind. While we readily confess that "in me, that is to say in my flesh, good does not dwell", we marvel that ever divine love was demonstrated toward rebellious sinners.

"He saw me ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all:
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness O! how great."

Our text is worthy of an analysis, and the following may prove helpful—

"For God so loved the world"—**A Great Fact:** do we believe it?

"That he gave his only-begotten Son"—**A Great Gift:** have we received it?

"That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish"—**A Great Promise:** do we trust it?

"But have everlasting life"—**A Great Result:** do we possess it?

One Man has died for the people—and Peter's affirmation is worthy of note "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) The prophecy of Caiaphas has had its fulfilment in measure—"And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). As the Shepherd had sheep which were not of the Hebrew fold, so the Father had children who were not of the Israelitish family.

Need we say today "Kiss me!"?

Blessed hope still beaming in the hours of night:

Rays of glory streaming in that heavenly light.

In that place of nearness we shall see Thy face;

Taste the joy of dearness; held in love's embrace.

W. Fraser Naismith.

CONVICTION

"I remember no one sin that my conscience doth so much accuse and judge me for as doing so little for the saving of men's souls and for not dealing with them more fervently and earnestly for their conversion."

Richard Baxter.

"THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF"

Luke 24:13-53

Of all the walks and talks that have taken place on this earth since time began or man was formed, there surely has been nothing to equal, let alone surpass, that wondrous talk and exposition, recorded for our instruction in Luke's gospel. Who would not have given much, have given all, to be present on that occasion, to hear from the lips of the Lord Himself such a wondrous exposition of the 'things concerning Himself,' and from all the Scriptures! The distance they covered must have been about eight miles, a two hours' journey. What a journey having the company of the Lord of glory, Who had won the most stupendous victory of the Universe, having broken all the power of the great enemy of God and man in the garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross for God's glory and our salvation; still the same loving Lord and Master He ever was and is. Well might the two disciples (it has been suggested that they were husband and wife) say:—"Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" They might well be sad and show it by their demeanour, when Jesus in Divine grace drew near and went with them, for humanly speaking, their hopes seemed crushed, for had not He, in Whom they had believed, been crucified, whilst they imagined He was about to redeem Israel! But there was a ray of hope, for it was reported that the grave was empty and that He was alive, which astonished them. But, as the Lord told them, they should have known the Scriptures, which foretold Christ's sufferings, His death and resurrection, and the resulting glory. Had He not also told His disciples often of things to come 'concerning Himself'! So He calls them senseless and slow to believe (as indeed we often are!) and in wondrous grace opens up the Scriptures to them, and is later made known to them in their home when He broke the bread. On their return the same hour to Jerusalem to tell their astounding but heart-thrilling story to the assembled disciples, the Lord appears again and once

more expounds to them the Scriptures, opening their understanding, at the same time graciously calming their fears by eating before them, so demonstrating His glorious Manhood, whilst ever remaining God.

What a story! "Eternity will be too short to utter all his praise."

"For ever our still wondering eyes
Shall o'er His beauties rove;
To endless ages we'll adore
The riches of His love."

H. P. Thorp.

DOING GOOD

The death of Christ is the sole and only ground upon which mortal man can be just with God; it is the great act in which God's love has been perfectly revealed, God's claims fully met, a righteous ground laid for man's blessing, his sins atoned for, reconciliation made, guilt removed. We can neither over-estimate these matchless blessings, nor fully adore the grace which so freely bestows them, nor the purchase-price paid for them; for they call forth some of the sweetest notes in the song of the redeemed now, and will do so throughout eternity.

We cannot, by an "unselfish life" or "following Christ's example," earn these blessings; they are the fruit of His death, but, where His love, expressed in His death, is allowed to have its full power over the soul, it will effectually cure a life of selfishness. A self-centred Christian is an anomaly; Christ died for all, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). And to this the love of Christ constrains.

Our life is to be Christ centred, profoundly moved, ever controlled, by the greatness of His love. It was because the Son of God loved him and had given Himself for him, that Paul was constrained to live and labour for Christ; he sat under His shadow with great delight, his soul feasted upon Christ's love told out in death; and the effect was a life of hallowed service, unflagging toil, whole-hearted devotedness, and unselfish labour.

Our peculiarity is to show itself in good works; Christ not only died to redeem us from iniquity but to make us an unselfish people, zealous of good works; we rightly condemn dead works as a means of earning life, but have we not forgotten that life works are proof of life possessed? 'Show me thy faith by thy works!'

One pregnant sentence sums up the life of Jesus: "he went about doing good."

The needs of men—spiritual, physical, temporal—moved His heart with compassion, and His hands to relieve them. He is no longer here personally, but He dwells in His people; they live of His life—the life of patient grace and toil which marked Him when here—the life of Jesus is to be manifested in their walk and ways. It is a very practical life and will show itself in good works. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; in every good work we are to do God's will, we are to provoke one another to love and good works, glorify God in them, be fruitful in every good work.

Do you ask what is a good work? It is to spend the best you have upon Christ like Mary; it is to toil for the salvation of sinners, and the welfare of saints like Paul; it is to show hospitality like Gaius; to minister of your substance like Joanna; to labour for the poor like Dorcas; clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the feeble-minded, do good to all, especially to the household of faith.

Perhaps a hard-worked mother says, "I have nothing to give and no time to spare for service, how then can I do good works?" Open your Bible, read 1 Timothy 5, and you will see you need not go outside your own door. "If she have brought up children." This is a "good work"—rest assured it will not be unnoticed in a coming day; to bring up the children for the Lord is one way in which we may carry on a good work.

Perhaps you are a servant, and ask "How can I do good works?" Titus 2:9 tells us, servants are to be obedient to their own masters, seeking to please them well in all things, not answering again, and not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; whilst Colossians 3:22 enjoins them to walk in the fear of God, in singleness of eye, with the Lord only before them. Those who do this will get the inheritance as a "reward." This is a special encouragement to go on with God in difficult situations, and with inconsiderate masters or mistresses; your good works may not be manifest now, but the time is coming when they cannot be hid (1 Tim. 5:25) if you seek day by day to walk with God, doing all under the eye of your Master in heaven.

Nothing can be more sad in a Christian than a dissatisfied and radical spirit; what a happy contrast to such are those faithful servants who adorn the doctrine in their walk and ways, seeking to please their heavenly Master in all things by the way they carry out their daily duties; working as faithfully when the

earthly master's back is turned as when his eye is upon them.

Perhaps you are on a sick-bed, lamenting you are shut off from doing good works; but, is there not something you can do? Can you not be "patient in tribulation," can you not pray for all saints and all men? Your supplications and intercessions may range from the king on his throne to the beggar on the dung-hill; such prayers are good and acceptable to God, who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2). Nearly two hundred people were converted through an invalid's prayers in Scotland. May you be rich in such good works; your labour will not be in vain, pray on; remember your prayers ascend through Christ to God mingled with the perfume of His Person, the sweet incense of our Great Priest. Pray for all sufferers, all who are in sorrow, all your fellow-Christians; begin with those you know, pray for all Christians in your locality, rich and poor, old or young, and, if possible, pray for them by name.

There is no sphere in life, no condition in which a saint can be found, where, if he is under the constrainings of the love of Christ, he cannot pray for others; nor is there any one of the Lord's people who need be a drone, or a do-nothing; the rich can minister of their wealth; the servant of Christ can give up his time and his energies; the mother can serve in her home; the domestic in everyday duties, the solitary sufferer on a sick-bed, the lodging-house preacher, the tract distributor, the infirmary visitor, all may abound in good works.

Nor are these gracious activities to cease if there is opposition; we are to do good to them that hate us, pray for those who despitefully use us. So characteristic are good works of a Christian, that III John 11 tells us, "He that doeth good is of God"; and when the Lord describes those who will be raised at the first resurrection He says it is those who have done good who will come forth. How significant this statement is! In the light of it we may well challenge ourselves if our everyday life is so spent under the constraining of the love of Christ that doing good is characteristic of us!

Henry Nunnerley.

"THY SUN SHALL NO MORE GO DOWN"

(Isaiah 60:20)

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Dayspring and Morning Star but, blessed be His Name, He is the Sun of the one eternal day, and the clearer and brighter He is before our hearts, the

greater the ease with which we retire from all down here. All that is eternal and unfailing is on His side; all below and around us is in reality but sunset, the brightness and beauty are gradually but surely fading. If our poor eyes are turned there they are only on what is sinking below the horizon, but when they are fixed like the martyr Stephen on Jesus in the glory of God, how different all is!—then the outline, beautiful beyond all conception, of the eternal realities, unfolds itself before us.

“The Sun which, smiling lights us,
Is Jesus Christ alone.
And what to song incites us,
Is heaven on earth begun.”

W. T. Turpin.

IN CHRIST WE HAVE . . .

Love that can never be fathomed.
Life that can never die.
Righteousness that can never be tarnished.
Peace that can never be understood.
Rest that can never be disturbed.
Joy that can never be diminished.
Hope that can never be disappointed.
Glory that can never be clouded.
Light that can never be darkened.
Strength that can never be enfeebled.
Happiness that can never be defiled.
Beauty that can never be marred.
Resources that can never be exhausted.
Wisdom that can never be baffled.

Anon.

FROM DARKNESS TO DAWN

The following is a true story of how seven Reds went to heaven during the Finnish-Russian War. It shows how God can work in grace amidst the cruellest scenes of man's hatred. It is written by Nordenberg, an eminent engineer in Finland.

“I offered my services to the government, and was appointed an officer in General Mannerheim's Army. It was a terrible time, we besieged the town which had been taken by the Red Army, and retook it. A number of Red prisoners were under my guard and seven of them were to be shot at dawn on Monday. I will never forget the preceding Sunday. The seven men were kept in

the basement of the Town Hall, and in the passage my men stood at attention with their rifles. The atmosphere was filled with hatred, my soldiers were drunk with success and taunted their prisoners, who swore and beat on the walls with their bleeding fists. Others called for their wives and children who were far away. At dawn they were all to die.

"We had the victory, that was true enough, but the value of this seemed to diminish as the night advanced. Then something happened. One of the men doomed to death began to sing. 'He is mad,' was everybody's first thought; but I had noticed that this man, Koskinen, had not raved and cursed. Quietly he sat on his bench, a picture of utter despair. Nobody said anything to him; each was carrying his burden in his own way. Koskinen sang, rather waveringly at first, then his voice grew stronger and became natural and free. All the prisoners turned and looked at him as he sang . . .

'Safe in the arms of Jesus, Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'er shaded, Sweetly my soul shall rest,
Hark 'tis the voice of angels, Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of jasper, Over the crystal sea.'

Over and over again he sung that verse, and when he finished everyone was quiet for a few minutes, until a wild looking man broke out with 'Where did you get that, you fool? Are you trying to make us religious?'

"Koskinen looked at his comrades, with tear-filled eyes as he quietly said, 'Comrades, will you listen to me for a minute? You asked me where I got this song; it was from the Salvation Army. I heard it three weeks ago; my mother sang about Jesus and prayed to Him.' He stopped a little while as if to gather strength. Then he rose to his feet, being the soldier that he was, looked straight in front of him, and continued. 'It is cowardly to hide your beliefs: the God my mother believed in is now my God. I cannot tell how it happened. I lay awake last night, and suddenly saw mother's face before me, and it reminded me of the song that I had heard. I felt I had to find the Saviour and hide in Him. Then I prayed, like the thief on the cross, that Christ would forgive me and cleanse my sinful soul and make me ready to stand before Him whom I should meet so soon. It was a strange night, there were times when everything seemed to shine around me. Verses from the Bible and the Song Book came to my mind. They brought messages of the crucified Saviour and the Blood that cleanses from sin, and the Home He has prepared for us. I thanked Him, accepted Him, and since then this verse has been

sounding inside me. It was God's answer to my prayer. I could no longer keep it to myself; within a few hours I shall be with the Lord, saved by grace.'

"Koskinen's face shone as if by an inward light. His comrades sat there quietly. He himself stood there transfixed. My soldiers were listening to what this Red Revolutionary had to say. 'You are right Koskinen,' said one of his comrades at last, 'If only I knew there was mercy for me too, but these hands of mine have shed blood, and I have reviled God and trampled on all that is holy. Now I realise that there is a hell, and that it is the proper place for me.' He sank to the ground with despair on his face. 'Pray for me, Koskinen,' he groaned, 'tomorrow I shall die, and my soul will be in the hands of the Devil' . . . and these two Red soldiers went down on their knees and prayed for each other. It was no long prayer but it reached heaven; and we who listened to it forgot our hatred; it melted in the light of heaven; for here were two men who were soon to die . . . seeking reconciliation with their God. A door leading into the Invisible stood ajar, and we were entranced by the sight. Let me tell you shortly that by the time it was four o'clock, all Koskinen's comrades had followed his example and began to pray, the change in the atmosphere was indescribable. Some of them sat on the floor, some on the benches, some wept quietly, others talked of spiritual things. None of us had a Bible, but the Spirit of God spoke to us all. Then someone remembered those at home, and there followed an hour of intense letter writing. Confessions and tears were in those letters.

"The night had almost gone and day was dawning. No one had had a moment of sleep. 'Sing the song once more for us Koskinen,' said one of them, and you should have heard them sing, not only that song, but verses and choruses long forgotten. The soldiers on guard united with them. The power of God had touched all. Everything had changed, and the venerable Town Hall's basement resounded in that early morning hour with the songs of the Blood of the Lamb.

"The clock struck six. How I wished I could beg grace for these men, but I knew that it was impossible. Between two rows of soldiers they marched out to the place of execution. One of them asked to be allowed to sing Koskinen's song once again, and permission was granted. Then they asked to be allowed to die with uncovered faces, and with hands to heaven, they sang with might and main, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' When the last line had died out, the lieutenant gave the word 'Fire', and the seven

Red soldiers fought their last fight. We inclined our heads in silent prayer.

“What happened in the hearts of others I do not know, but as far as I was concerned, I was a new man from that hour. I had met Christ in one of His lowliest and youngest disciples, and I had seen enough to realise that I too could be His.”

Selected.

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

The One to Whom this question refers is none other than the Son of God. It was said to Mary (Luke 1:35) “the holy thing which shall be born shall be called Son of God.” He came to be the Saviour of mankind. Man in his sin had gone far away from God, but Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What a wonderful Saviour God has provided to meet the needs of all who will come to Him. Men did not want him, those He came to call refused Him; they said, “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” The presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world only brought to light the hatred of the wicked heart of man; but on the other hand displayed all the love of God, showing to man what God can be for him, and what man can be for God. Jesus the Saviour ever did that which was pleasing to God. His pathway was one of perfection. When He was reviled, he reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but gave Himself over into the hands of Him who judges righteously. The Bible gives a wonderful account of His worth and glories. Yet man took Him and crucified Him. They cried “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate had said, “What evil hath he done?” Oh! What a question! He had not done one thing worthy of death. It was on our account He was to die; the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He could not be held by death’s power. He has been raised by the glory of the Father. He has risen victorious over death and the grave, and is now seated at the right hand of God. Now God has given all things into His Hand.

“God has given all to Jesus,
All shall prosper in His Hand,
Every knee shall bow to Jesus,
All obey God’s blest command.”

The Lord Jesus is now in heavenly glory, but He is the same yesterday, today and for ever. The moral glories of this blessed Man will shine eternally. The hymn writer said, “No trait is lost, each beautiful grace we see, All brought through death to shine

eternally." He who has been into death, who was buried and rose again and who ascended to heaven, is the One who is coming for His own. He said to His disciples, "That where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. What a glorious answer to His sufferings and death! To have His own with Him, and to see the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Satan has scattered the church; he has sought to rob God in every way. How the power of God will be manifested when all believers shall be gathered to Him! He knows each one, as it is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." May there be the desire in the heart of every believer to walk through this world more pleasing to Him. May there be many more brought to know Him as the altogether lovely One; the Chiefest of ten thousand and the bright and morning Star.

R. D. Overton.

LORD JESUS—COME!

Lord Jesus—Come! Our love can wait no longer;
Our hearts are full, for they've been filled by Thee.
The Spirit's work soon, soon shall be completed,
Transformed by power, we shall Thy glory see!

Lord Jesus—Come! 'Tis not neglect of duty
That draws this shout from every ransomed saint;
We shall work on—our lives we've pledged in service,
Thy strength shall arm us, lest at times we faint.

Lord Jesus—Come! The whole creation groaneth;
God's word has reached the earth's remotest bounds;
It is enough, the world in sin travaileth,
Thy words, "I come," Lord, in our ears resound.

Lord Jesus—Come! So shall our prayer be answered
When on the cloud we see Thee face to face;
Then faith shall cease and love alone be reigning,
Dominion Thine—Thou mighty King of grace.

K. Godwin.

If anyone knows of any lovers of the Lord Jesus, anywhere on earth, who would receive free a copy bi-monthly, kindly send their names and addresses to Charles Nunnerley, High Down, Cokes Lane, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks., England.

Gospel tracts also available, without charge. Kindly state number required.



