

WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

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No. 1

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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SWEET was the hour, O Lord, to Thee
At Sychar's lonely well,
When a poor outcast heard Thee there
Thy great salvation tell.

Thither she came, but oh, her heart,
All filled with earthly care,
Dreamed not of Thee, nor thought to find
The hope of Israel there.

Lord, 'twas Thy power unseen that drew
The stray one to that place,
In solitude to learn from Thee
The secrets of Thy grace.

There Jacob's erring daughter found
Those streams unknown before,
The waterbrooks of life, that make
The weary thirst no more.

And, Lord, to us, in grace divine,
Thy gracious lips have told
That mystery of love revealed
At Jacob's well of old.

The Compassion of the Lord Jesus

AMONG the many attributes displayed by the Lord Jesus when on earth His compassion affords us matter well worth our consideration. There are a dozen different examples of it in the first three gospels but the four cases in the gospel of Mark will be the theme of this paper.

“There came a leper to Him . . . and Jesus, moved with compassion . . .” (Mark i, 40—45). We notice first that “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (ch. i, 1) was in Galilee, the despised neighbourhood from which no good was expected by the religious people of the day. He was there identifying Himself with the Galilaeans. A leper, type of a sinner conscious of his sins and uncleanness, taking the lowly place before Him, owning His power to cleanse, cast himself on His mercy. The Lord instantly responded, not only in power, but in *a lovely practical expression of compassion*. He “put forth His hand and touched him,” identifying Himself as it were with the leper. It is generally accepted that leprosy in scripture is a type of sin in its defilement, contagion, fatal result and other ways. But the One upon Whom the heavens had been opened and to Whom a voice from heaven had proclaimed “Thou art my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” was here in this world for the express purpose of identifying Himself, in sublime compassion, with sinners, and bearing their sins and defilement in His own body on the cross, tasting death, the due wages of *our* sins, for us. Leprosy not only debarred a man from his fellow men, but the leper could not enter or even approach the tabernacle, the Presence of God, for he must stay outside the camp. So sin, which leprosy typifies, would have shut us all out from God’s Presence for ever but for the compassion of the Lord. If leprosy was foul in man’s estimation, how much more so to the Holy Son of God! Yet moved with compassion, He touched him, and said unto him, “I will; be thou clean.”

“And Jesus . . . saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark vi, 34). If in chapter I the lesson is the compassion of Jesus for a convicted sinner, the lesson

here is His compassion for new converts. Taken absolutely literally of course the people concerned were not converted in the sense in which we rightly use the word now, but they had gathered around Him and He recognises them as such. He would not leave them without leadership nor fail in His character as the Shepherd of Israel foretold by the prophets. They needed instruction. He would not leave them in their ignorance to turn every one to his own way (Isaiah liii, 6.). *In His compassion He began to teach them many things.* Today He is no longer on earth, but the Father has sent down the Holy Spirit and the Lord promised "He shall teach you all things," "He shall testify of Me," "He will guide you into all truth" (John xiv, 26; xv, 26; xvi, 13 etc.). The Lord's compassion is still active towards those who have only recently put their trust in Him as their Saviour, as He is indeed towards us all, and in His compassion He has provided for our instruction in many things indeed. We have the Holy Scriptures in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We may regard these as the gifts of His compassion. May we take full advantage of such unmerited grace!

"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat" (Mark viii, 2). We now learn how He cares for those who devote themselves to Him. Converted, instructed, they now seek continuous communion with Him—to be in His company—Will they be the losers? His compassion forbids it. But His method of meeting their need is through the resources of His disciples. The latter feel how utterly inadequate their resources are. That is the attitude which opens the way for the Lord to display the divine power of His compassion. What encouragement there is in this for us who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour to be in communion with Him at all costs, knowing that He will undertake the supply of our needs. *His compassion is extended to the material needs of our bodies* as well as to the needs of our souls, and though we may well realize the feebleness of our own resources we may rely on His Power and Grace.

Finally, "if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (Mark ix, 22). This cry from the heart of a father

on behalf of his son is very touching. How often, in spite of all one's knowledge and experience, one has been so overwhelmed with distress and anxiety, especially perhaps in regard to one's nearest and dearest, that one almost doubts that the Lord can respond to one's heartfelt prayers. That matter of course had to be corrected, but the correction drew from the agonised father's heart the further appeal "help Thou mine unbelief." The appeal to the Lord's compassion was answered and we can take the lesson from it to bring our unsaved relatives to Him in prayer and appeal to His compassion however impossible their salvation may appear from the human standpoint, and surely we can extend the lesson to cover all matters where Satan's power seems to be triumphing.

Although the word "compassion" occurs elsewhere in Mark in the Authorised Version these four passages are the only ones where this particular Greek word occurs, so this article is confined to them.

The Lord Jesus has left us an example, that we should follow His steps, and the writer has it on his mind to draw a few further lessons from these passages. First, in meeting the state and need of sinners, it is necessary to have a deep sense of compassion towards them, not, as in the Lord's case, as One who is holy in Himself and identifies Himself with them in grace, but as one who is by nature (and but for the grace of God) every whit as unclean before God as they are. The preacher who speaks from a metaphysical platform or pulpit down to the lost sinner must get off his pedestal and, as it were get in touch with him if his message of salvation through faith in Christ and His atoning work on the cross is to reach the sinner's conscience and heart.

Again, in seeking to help new converts and to teach them and shepherd them it is essential to have a real sense of compassion towards them, not in any patronising or superior way, but with a deep sense that they are the objects of the compassion of the Lord's heart. Also, while we read that the Lord taught them many things, it is well to remember that the work of a shepherd is much more than teaching. In fact when the word "feed" is used in Scripture as to lambs and sheep it most often means "tend as a shepherd," and covers all the

various forms of care a shepherd shows for his flock as exemplified in Ezek. xxxiv, Ps. xxiii, John x. This shepherd care is much more difficult to practise than teaching, and both need a real contact and understanding, a real compassion for the lambs and sheep. Teaching flows from accumulated knowledge but shepherding needs both communion of heart with the Chief Shepherd and sympathy with, and understanding of, the needs of the flock. Each one of us, even young ones, can be used by the Chief Shepherd in this way in different degrees. May He help us in such a privileged and responsible service.

Servants of the Lord who seek to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those who are gathered around His Person, devoted to Him, must first have communion with Him in His compassion for His people, then a deep sense of their own inability to meet the needs. They can then count on His divine power to take their little resources, whether of a material nature or of spiritual things, and so bless them that they will meet the needs of the company. But the servants must await His time and His direction. All must be done according to the divine order, nothing on human initiative. “*He commanded the people to sit down*”; “*He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them.*” How blessed to serve the Lord’s people in the spirit of His compassion for them at His time and at His bidding, with the assurance that though our resources are in themselves so inadequate He will expand them by His power for blessing. Moreover, there is great encouragement here for those who give up worldly advantages for the Lord’s sake. In His compassion He will provide for all their necessities.

Lastly, we are all aware of some who no longer walk with us, but have been led astray by the wiles and snares of the enemy. It is not of course suggested for a moment that they are demon-possessed as the boy was in Mark ix, but it is always the *wolf* that scatters the sheep. I assume that we believe we are walking in the path which the Lord would have us walk in, both as individuals and as companies. What is to be our attitude towards those over whom the enemy has gained advantage? We should bring them to the Lord in our prayers,

in faith, pleading for His compassion. There are some, alas, who doubt whether the Lord is *willing* to deliver them from Satan's snares, but we may rely on the Lord's answer, in His infinite compassion, "I will." Still more solemn is it that some appear to say "If Thou *canst* do anything," and even to doubt whether He *can*. The situation in regard to the straying ones often seems to wring from our hearts the cry "Help Thou mine unbelief," but faith may rest assured that His great heart of compassion is unchanging. "His compassions fail not" as the Spirit of God led Jeremiah to say in circumstances of deepest trial.

May the Lord help us all to have fellowship with Him in His compassion!

J.C.K.

The Table of Shewbread

IN the holy place there were three vessels of service, viz.—the candlestick, the altar of incense, and the table of shewbread, or "bread of the face." On this occasion we purpose to consider one or two points in the typical character of the last of these (Exodus xxv. 23—30).

The table was made of shittim wood, and overlaid with pure gold. Around the top was a "crown," or moulding of the same precious material. Below the moulding was "a border," or frame of wood, which probably bound the feet together for security. This also had a golden moulding attached to it. Close to the framing, at the four corners, were fastened four rings of gold, through which the staves were passed for the purpose of carrying the table.

Upon the table were placed twelve loaves in two rows of six each. These unleavened loaves, made of fine flour, having pure frankincense put upon them, were in this manner presented before the Lord for seven days. Each sabbath the loaves were removed to make room for other twelve, and they then became the food of the priests.

Typically, all this speaks of Christ. The shittim wood and the gold point clearly to the all-important and vital truth that the Lord Jesus was God and man in one person. The bread of fine

flour presents Him in the perfection of His pure and holy manhood, as the "true," the "living" bread—the bread of God "which came down from heaven" (John vi. 33—51). The number twelve appears to signify administrative perfection in man, as twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates. Hence the twelve loaves would represent the administrative service of Christ as Son of man, especially in connection with Israel, though the principle is true for the believer today (Isa. ix. 6, 7; xi. 1—10; xlii. 1—4; lii. 13; John v. 26, 27). That perfect service of the Lord Jesus, both in humiliation and in glory, ever remains before God, fragrant with all the intrinsic excellence of His person.

But this bread on which God's eye rested with satisfaction for a complete period, became the food of the priests. They ate the "most holy" loaves in the holy place (Lev. xxiv. 5—9). This act was one significant of communion. They partook of that which had first been offered to God. The same principle may be observed in the New Testament in connection with the Lord's Supper. The apostle writes, "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. x. 16, 17).

But eating the shewbread may be considered as having a direct application to the everyday life of the believer. As bread is that which nourishes and sustains physical life, so the Lord Himself is that which refreshes and invigorates the new and divine life of the believer. Nothing less than the person of Christ can meet the requirements of the renewed soul throughout its spiritual life. Hence the Lord declares most emphatically, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (Jno. vi. 53). If then He is not appropriated by the sinner as the true Paschal Lamb, Who by His shed blood met all the claims of God's holiness, there can be no life at all. And further, where life is given, it must be sustained by the same glorious person. Therefore the Lord said again, "He that eateth me (habitually) even he shall live by me" (Jno. vi. 57). This feeding upon Christ consists of reading and meditating upon His life, especially as shewn in the Gospels. There His grace, compassion, sympathy, tender-

ness and love, His meekness and lowliness of heart, His patience and forbearance toward man, and His devotedness to God, His Father, are seen to have shone out day by day upon His pathway with a lustre not of earth. The record of this life imparts to us, through the Spirit, the purpose and strength to follow His steps. Again, in the Epistles the Lord Jesus is presented as the believer's example. Thus if I want to see perfect trust displayed I am exhorted to look "off unto Jesus, the Captain and Completer of faith." For the Lord Jesus is shewn as the most perfect example of a life of faith (Heb. xii. 2), and as to humility also, which is such an essential feature of Christian life. The believer is to cultivate the mind which was in Christ Jesus, Who stooped from heaven's highest glory down to Calvary's depths of woe. What an amazing proof this is of His lowly mind! (Phil. ii. 5—8; 2 Cor. viii. 9).

Thus we have in this type Christ presented as perfect Man, the perfect Servant, the One devoted wholly to God (frankincense), the giver and sustainer of eternal life, and the only source of grace and strength to meet every need of the soul by the way. Well may we sing, therefore—

"Oh! what a Saviour is Jesus the Lord!

Well may His name by His saints be adored;

The saints have a mountain of blessings in Him,

His grace is the fountain, His life is the stream."

W.T.H.

A Bundle of Myrrh

THE spiritual mind readily discerns the meaning of such words as these, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me" (Song of Sol. i. 13). Christ is here compared to an amulet, suspended from the neck and borne continually in the bosom, filled with liquid myrrh-gum.

Myrrh was used as a "principal spice" in the anointing of the sanctuary (Exod. xxx. 23). It was also among the gifts presented to the infant Christ soon after His birth. Nicodemus employed it in the burial of His body at His death. And in the

ivory palaces where He is anointed with the oil of gladness, all His garments smell of myrrh (Psalm xlv. 8). Myrrh signifies flowing or weeping, and is the living juice of the tree, flowing in drops through the broken parts of the bark, hence the term, "the bleeding myrrh." It is figurative of a sacred memento of the Lord's dying love. The bundle carried in the bosom is expressive of personal communion with Him, and the language of the heart was, "My well-beloved shall lie all night between my breasts." We may say that all through the night, which is now far spent, our Well-beloved shall be unto us as a bundle of myrrh, though unseen yet ever making His presence manifest.

For this the beloved apostle prayed, on behalf of the Ephesians, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 17). And again we read the exhortation, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10). If this be realised the fragrance of that precious name which is as ointment poured forth will pervade the scene about us, shedding forth its sweet odour as a testimony to Him who lies nearest our hearts.

It has often been observed that there is nothing in the universe so strong as the love of God, and on the contrary nothing so weak as personal communion. A look, a word, a thought even—if contrary to His will—and the link of communion is broken. Moreover, it is possible through unwatchfulness to get into such a drowsy state as is described by the words, "I sleep but my heart waketh" (Song of Sol. v. 2). In this condition of being neither asleep nor awake, the heart becomes careless about the things of the Lord. And what is it that arouses the slumbering one? It is the voice of the Beloved, saying "Open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." How patiently does He wait outside! How unspeakably tender are His words! How unwearied His love! We may well sing, "It passeth knowledge that dear love of Thine," when we find notwithstanding our changeableness that He is unchangeably the same.

Thus the restored heart after due confession (1 Jno. i. 9) can respond, "I rose up to open to my beloved, and my hands

dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock ” (Song of Sol. v. 5). These tokens were left there doubtless to assure the faltering heart of His unceasing love. Precious Saviour! may we nevermore keep Thee without “in the droppings of the night.” In the fond enclosure of the heart’s affections, may we enshrine Thee in sweet communion—the bundle of myrrh in the bosom—until the day break, and the shadows flee away. T.M.

Extract from a Letter

WHAT you have suffered, He knows, for He has suffered. Well may we at all times *remember* Him, for His sufferings have a voice to us, to which our ears should ever be open, and our hearts responsive.

When we are called to descend a little into the valley of the shadow of death, suffering is a reality. We know what it is; and we know, too, by grace, what it is not to be forsaken. His rod is not without His staff.

“Strength is promised, strength is given,
When the heart by God is riven.”

It is with the skilfulness of His hands He *guides* us, as surely as He *feeds* us according to the integrity of His heart. He does the good Shepherd’s part for each of the flock, and thus displays His love in various ways. He is caring for so many, and no two alike, and He would have us confide in His leading as well as in His feeding. Yes, through the valley as well as by the still waters.

Is it not sweet to think of *all* the saints of God, as thus His care, and to plead that we all may confide more in Him?

W.B.

On Tracts

TRACTS can go everywhere. Tracts know no fear. Tracts never tire. Tracts can be multiplied without end by the printing press. Tracts can travel at little expense. They run

up and down like the angels of God, blessing all, giving to all, and asking no gift in return. They can talk to one as well as to a multitude, and to a multitude as well as to one. They require no public room to tell their story in. They can tell it in the kitchen or the shop, the parlour or the closet, in the railway carriage or in the omnibus, on the broad highway or in the footpath through the fields. They take no note of scoffs, nor jeers, nor taunts. No one can betray them into hasty or random expressions. Though they will not always answer questions, they will tell their story twice, or thrice, or four times over, if you wish them. And they can be made to speak on every subject, and on every subject they may be made to speak wisely and well. They can, in short, be made vehicles of all truth; the teachers of all classes; the benefactors of all lands.—*Extracted.*

The Church

IN the Ephesian epistle we have the church presented to us on the heavenly side—what the church is in Christ's affections; He loved the church and gave Himself for it.

The epistles to the Corinthians give us the same church, but in her passage on earth, making her way through the world. Here she waits for Him and the moment when she will stand, not only in the presence of His grace, but also of His glory. She presses on through light and darkness, through favour and disfavour, treading very largely the same pathway that her Lord trod before her. Her portion is in the main His, certainly in character if not in degree, as she wends her way on to her eternal home through the hatred of a hostile world. The world does not want her; it has no place for her any more than it had for the One to Whom she belongs. Onward she goes seeking ever to keep her garments unspotted and her heart reserved for the One Who loves her.

I have read the Scripture in the Corinthians (1 Cor. xii. 12—31) because of the help this aspect of the church is calculated to give us today. We are all upon earth tonight while waiting for the Lord, and what makes these two epistles to the

Corinthians so exceedingly valuable is that they show the church functioning here. She is not left here for nothing. The Lord has a gracious purpose in her being here, and we shall see for what purpose it is.

It is here in this world she is called for the present to be for Him amidst all the difficulties of our day, and possibly of a still darker day than our own. One thing, however, is certain—there can never come a moment in the church's history, for which the Lord in the fulness of His grace has not provided.

The figure which is used by the apostle to bring before us the church functioning upon earth is that of the body, and that body was formed by God Himself on the day of Pentecost. Such had never existed before, and shall surely never exist again, it is altogether special to this day of grace. On the day of Pentecost something happened which had never happened before, and will never happen again. The 120 gathered together, not then much more than Jewish believers, were awaiting the fulfilment of the promise of the Father. The Lord Jesus, having gone back to heaven, receives the Holy Spirit, not now for himself, as when here, but for those whom He had left behind Him, the object of His love in this world. He had spoken of the sorrow which would fill their hearts, but He had also told them clearly what he would do for them when He went away. The Holy Spirit of God is sent down by our risen Lord and those lowly people, gathered together in the upper room in Jerusalem, were baptized into one body, made one, indissolubly one, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were formed into one body, no longer disconnected, no longer isolated units, but bound together in the indissoluble bonds of God's Holy Spirit.

It was an action done by God once for all, by which they were incorporated. This is what we read here: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Verses 12, 13.

Day after day since that day there have been additions to the body, but its formation was done once and for all on the day of Pentecost. They were formed into a society such as the world had never known and you and I in the great mercy of God are forming part tonight—humble people as we may be in the

world's estimation—of that society, which is immeasurably greater than any other on earth.

There are very special societies in all countries of the world, and people do anything in order to gain an entrance to, or become a member of, a distinguished society. But God has made us, in His grace—not by an act of our own, nor by a long process of toil or work on our part but—out of the goodness and love of His own heart and for the glory of the Lord Jesus, members of this unique body.

Consequently, it is most important that we should be body-minded. Satan is working today to break up anything that has the semblance of a holy unity. He is, therefore, bent upon breaking up the unity I have described only in order alas! to introduce a unity of his own, a unity of evil. So long as the church is on earth Satan will work by all means possible to draw us away from this truth, and the very divisions and heart-breaks we have may, unless we are careful, bring us to the point when we may say, "It is a very attractive ideal, but it is unattainable." Once this is admitted, we fall to the master-stroke of the enemy.

But more, we must recognize this not only as a beautiful ideal, but one that is attainable, to be worked out practically in our corporate life. That is why these epistles are so helpful to us. It is the church, not seen in Christ's affections, but functioning on earth, quite a different thing.

We have *all* been baptized into this distinguished body. Do not, therefore, think of yourselves as just dragging along as nobodies in this world. Christians are not a company of stragglers, much as we may look like it at times. Do not allow the thought of this into your hearts. God it is Who in His grace has made us members of Christ's body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles. The Jewish people were a most exclusive people: ordinarily you could not get among them. Very few exceptions were made. The Gentiles outside were another society altogether: they were in darkness. But this society, this association, to which God has called us is exclusive of every other; so that whether we be Jew or Gentile, we have now lost that status in Christ before God. That has gone for ever, and now I am a member of Christ's body in virtue of His indwelling Spirit.

(To be Continued).

Sparkling Gems

To confess openly that which we are in the presence of that which God is, is always the way to peace and blessing.

* * * * *

True service of love will seek to give according to the need, and because of their need, will never think of slighting the objects of the Master's love.

* * * * *

Some hearers who frequently complain, "There was no food for the soul," might more truly say, "There was no soul for the food."

* * * * *

The best way to live in the world is to live above it.

* * * * *

In Luke xv., the shepherd bears *all* the burden, the woman takes *all* the pains, and the father provides *all* the welcome.

* * * * *

If you look for God's blessing, do not fail to look up.

* * * * *

Deliverance from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1. 10); from the fear of death (Heb. ii. 15); from the power of darkness (Col. i. 13); from the law (Romans vii. 6); from this present evil age (Gal. i. 4); from the law of sin and death (Rom. viii. 2).

* * * * *

The Lord's coming is an intensely solemn truth for the present day. Everywhere among His people His coming is spoken of as near at hand. We talk of it; we sing of it; but *are we ready for it.*

* * * * *

It is of immense help to form the regular habit of reading the Word of God every day. We read that the Bereans were specially commended in that they searched the Scriptures "daily." You will have to overcome many difficulties in order strictly to observe this rule.

* * * * *

Do not forget that Christ is the key of the Scriptures.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

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IS there some problem in your life to solve,
Some passage seeming full of mystery?
God knows, who brings the hidden things to light.
He keeps the key.

Is there some door closed by the Father's hand
Which widely opened you had hoped to see?
Trust God and wait—for when He shuts the door
He keeps the key.

Is there some earnest prayer unanswered yet,
Or answered NOT as you had thought 'twould be?
God will make clear His purpose by-and-by.
He keeps the key.

Unfailing comfort, sweet and blessed rest,
To know of EVERY door He keeps the key.
That He at last when just He sees 'tis best,
Will give it THEE.

The Touch of Jesus

IN a recent article the incidents in the gospel of Mark where we read that Jesus had compassion were under our consideration. In the gospel of Matthew there is a series of incidents where we read of the "touch" of Jesus. It may first be helpful to consider what corresponds today with the physical "touch" when He was visibly here on earth. The touch made His words or actions a personal matter to the individuals concerned. How often His words today are accepted in a general way, not only by an unbeliever but by a believer too, without being taken home by the individual to his own heart. When a scripture is taken home to oneself in this way there will be an immediate result in one's own heart and also a corresponding result in one's practical life. From one aspect, that is the work of the Holy Spirit, but from another point of view it is the touch of Jesus. May God grant that we experience it more often!

In Matt. viii, 1-4, we read of the cleansing of a leper. It has often been pointed out, and is doubtless familiar to all readers, that leprosy is a figure of sin. The incident here teaches first the right approach of a sinner to the Saviour. The leper came and worshipped Him, simultaneously acknowledging the reverence due to Jesus, His power to cleanse, and his own uncleanness and unworthiness. How many today acknowledge these things in a general way as facts, who have not expressed them to the Lord Jesus in sincerity as individuals. The touch of Jesus was His response to the personal sincerity of this leper, and gave His words "I will; be thou clean" a direct personal assurance to him. Have you experienced the touch of Jesus yourself, giving you the assurance of forgiveness of sins, complete cleansing in the sight of God? That was the result in the man himself in figure for "immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Then there was to be a corresponding practical result. He was to be a testimony to those who had religion without faith in Jesus, and was to offer "the gift," so expressing his gratitude to God. There are many around you who have religion without faith. Are you a testimony to them? The "gift" to be offered (see Lev. xiv) spoke of the Person

and Work of Christ in figure. Do you extol in praise and worship to God the Person and Work of Christ? One other point about the "touch" in this case. To touch a leper was to contract defilement, if not to catch the disease. Nothing could defile Jesus, the Son of God, but in touching the leper there is an expression of the wondrous grace with which the Lord Jesus identified Himself with us sinners in our deep need, in fact He bore our sins in His own body. Praise His Name!

Further down in the same chapter (v. 14, 15) we read of Simon Peter's mother-in-law. She was "sick of a fever." It is, alas, true in practice that those who have experienced what the cleansed leper typifies as detailed above sometimes get infected with the restless, fevered spirit of the world around us. "Sick of a fever" conveys to me restlessness of spirit as well as of body, discomfort, incoherence, and even delirious wanderings of mind. Can my Christian reader say honestly he has never experienced this? In such circumstances it is our privilege that Jesus is ever at hand. We can turn to Him, feel His touch with immediate blessed result. With Peter's mother-in-law, immediately "the fever left her." So with us, a holy calm possesses our souls. Matters immediately fall into their right perspective. This is the result in our hearts. A practical result followed in her case. "She ministered unto them." This should follow in our case too—service to the Lord and to His own. Having experienced His touch bringing cleansing and worship, it is blessed also to experience the touch that brings calm and service.

In chapter ix, 27-30 we read of two blind men who followed Jesus, even into the house. Yet they were blind. This incident is often spoken of as illustrating the gospel, but may it not also be regarded as a continuation of the series? To those who are cleansed and worshipping, calm and serving, the touch of Jesus brings personal knowledge of Him and sight (intelligence) in spiritual things. Unbelievers all around us are perplexed at the way things are trending. Man's inventions are running away with him. What the future will be is the question engaging his anxious thought. Will the atom bomb or the hydrogen bomb bring about the end of civilization as we know it, or even of the human race and all forms of life on "this planet"? Doubts

and theories as to God, and the possibility or otherwise of His having given any revelation of Himself are widely prevalent. Christians are in danger of being drawn into this confusing whirlpool of speculation. Those who have lived among unbelievers, unwittingly imbibing all this uncertainty before conversion, although now trusting in the Lord Jesus and His atoning death on the cross for their salvation, and enjoying calmness of spirit, find that personal contact with Jesus, that blessed "touch" of His, opens their eyes to perceive the counsels of God as revealed in the Scriptures. The scope of their vision becomes so vast that it cannot be described in any detail here. It includes what God is doing now all around us, the immediate hope He sets before our hearts of the coming again of the Lord Jesus in the air for His own, the subsequent dealings of God with Israel and the human race in general, the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, the blessed eternal portion of all the redeemed—how vast the vista revealed to those whose eyes have been opened by the blessed touch of Jesus! Such is the immediate result in the believer's heart. What will follow in a practical way? "They spread abroad His fame in all that country."

In chapter xvii, 1-8 matters are carried further still. Treating the passage as a further continuation of the series, eyes that have been opened as in the preceding incident can not only see Jesus as He is made known to us in the four gospels, down here in this world, but can see Him in glorious majesty where He now is. Stephen's eyes were opened and he saw Him in the heavens standing on the right hand of God (Acts vii, 56). We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (Heb. ii, 9). We have also, as it were, heard that "voice from the excellent glory" (see 2 Peter i, 17) "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." The wonder and majesty of it all may overwhelm our hearts, as it did the disciples' hearts, filling us with awe and fear. It was then that Jesus touched them and said "Arise, and be not afraid." What was the result? They saw no man save Jesus only. So the personal touch of the Lord Jesus, the glorified One, opens up to us such a transcendent occupation with Him that He fills our wondering eyes, the

altogether lovely One, with Whom nothing and no one can compare. True, we have to come down from the mount like the disciples, but the revelation of Himself in glory abides in our souls.

Finally we have the two blind men in Matt. xx, 30-34. This, like the incident in chapter ix is generally regarded as a "gospel" story. There is much that is similar in the two passages but the sequel is different. Here, on receiving sight, they followed Jesus in His pathway, the road that led from Jericho, the place of a curse, to Jerusalem and Calvary, to resurrection, ascension and glory. We who believe in the Lord Jesus are called to follow Him in a world where He is still rejected, though not leading us to Calvary, following Him involves identification with a rejected and crucified Christ, but also leads on to glory. The apostle Paul wrote that he boasted in "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." (Gal. vi, 14). Nothing but the personal touch of Jesus will constrain our hearts to walk this pathway. Our eyes must be opened to see Him if we are to follow Him.

Beloved reader, in these five instances of the touch of Jesus in Matthew's gospel we have, for our own hearts, cleansing; calmness; spiritual intelligence; a vision of Christ in glory; and knowledge of the pathway He trod. We have too the practical outcome in each case viz. testimony to His saving power, and praise and thanksgiving to God; service to the Lord and to His people; testimony to His fame; the abiding sense of His glory; and the following His steps. May we each know, and know in a continually increasing way, the personal touch of the Lord Jesus which alone can communicate these things to us!

J.C.K.

A Path in the Wilderness

THIS world is a wilderness, a labyrinth, but God is guiding us through it. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, was there any path for them? None. "They wandered in the wilderness where there was no way." We read that Moses

said to Jethro, "he might be to them instead of eyes." No, says God, "I will be as eyes to you," for as Israel departed from the mount on three days' journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them to search out a resting place, not merely to bring them at last into the land. Now the place of the ark was in the midst of the camp and they were to keep the charge of the Lord; but when Israel journeyed from Sinai it went before them.

Again, God says of Israel, "Though I have scattered them amongst the countries, yet will I be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they dwell." Is God less than this to us? No, He is leading us through this world's labyrinth, where there is no path, no way but Jesus; for He is our only track in this wilderness of sin and sorrow. What an unspeakable comfort to have such an One; but we need perfect dependence that we may discern the perfect path that has in it the track of the Lord's footsteps; to this end, flesh must be mortified and the will subdued.

J.N.D.



The Church—*continued*

By consequence, the church is an unpolitical body. I know it is hard to go through the world just non-political, but that is what we are really called for; to wend our way in faithfulness to Him to Whom we belong. We do need to be careful not to become politically-minded, for that is to lose all spiritual mindedness. The Lord is heavenly, and His people are heavenly by birth, by destiny and by present character.

We do not become members of the body of Christ by an act of our own. It is God and He alone Who gives us a part in the body. There is no such thing as applying for membership. None becomes a member but by an act of God Himself. It is God's own blessed will concerning us, and this is emphasized throughout the chapter.

The body of Christ into which we have all been baptized is a distinctive body; and since it has privileges, it has also responsibilities. If we enjoy the former—and we do so gratefully—let us seek grace to answer to the latter, which never

exceed the privileges, but are invariably commensurate with them.

“The body is one . . . and all the members of that body being many are one body.” It is the body in its unity with its Head that is presented to us in this verse. And so we read ‘So also is (the) Christ.’ If we were writing this, we should probably say “So also is the church,” but that would not be correct. It is “So also is (the) Christ.” I wonder how many of us have really seen this thing of exquisite beauty, that which is entirely apart from everything around us. Christ the Head and the church His body, viewed in its completeness.

We need in our day to be church-minded, to be body-minded, so that we do the right thing, have the right instincts and know that which is comely and proper to us on every occasion. We need to renew in our day our hold on this very precious truth that we do form with all saints the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The distinctiveness of the body let me add, for it is important, is not due in any way to the constituents, so often poor exponents even of the grace that has reached them, but due to its all-glorious Head.

Those who most of all emphasize the unity of the body, and rightly so, because Scripture emphasizes it, may by the emphasis expose themselves to a very real danger. The apostle, who so clearly speaks of the unity, anticipates for us the danger and adds because of it “The body is not one member but many.” In the stress put on the unity we may overlook the diversity of the members. The body is not one member. The unity is one of diversity: the perfect unity is nothing but the lovely and complete harmony of the whole. It is a unity of diversity. God is a God of Unity, but not less a God of the widest diversity. Everything in creation proclaims His diversity—and when it comes to the church, which is His master-piece,—it is not otherwise. Not in creation nor in Israel, but in the church all intelligences see the varied wisdom of God in all its marvellous diversity. The church is His chief work, and it is there that this feature shines most brightly. He has crowned the works of His hand in those who are formed into one body, who abide in indissoluble union with their Lord in heaven. At the risk of repetition, it is because of this unity that there is

the danger that we should forget its diversity. There were those at Corinth who were guilty of pressing unity, forgetful of the diversity. That brings confusion and worse, and the apostle gives a pertinent illustration. Concerning the foot, for example, the apostle says: "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body." That is the practical denial of the body.

Now it is an extraordinary thing that the apostle speaks first of the less prominent members of the body of Christ, not that they are of any less value, but in the body there are clearly different members and the unity is the unity of the whole, not of a part. The beautiful unity of the human body is in the harmony of the whole.

In these verses—14-17—the apostle speaks of the absurdity of such a statement as this—"Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body." Yet, is not this what very often happens? It comes perhaps from the foot down below, which looks up to the hand and says "I am not the hand and therefore I am not of the body." How easily discontent can creep in, and discontent with the place the Lord Himself has given us! Oh! what a shame that we should cast back upon Him that which in His grace He has done for us. To be a foot in this body is an inestimable privilege! Oh! do not fret your hearts out desiring to be something you are not; do not allow the spirit of covetousness to empty your hearts. Value the place the Lord has given you and fill it out by His grace and in His strength. Supposing we here tonight were all eyes and could see what needs to be done and there was not a hand to do it. What an impasse we would come to!

The discontent is on the part of the less prominent member looking up from below to the hand which is above, with thoughts of envy. There are tonight many lives that are being spoiled and rendered unserviceable to the Lord Jesus because they are spent in longing to be something which they are not. What a shame that this should be so!

In verses 18—20 the apostle goes on to speak of another thing. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." It is God Who has set the members: it is not you nor I. God Himself sets the members in the body as it pleases Him, and if they were all one

member, where were the body? If you make the body to be all one member, if you rule out diversity, you make it virtually a body with one member, which is completely destructive. Each one has his own particular gift, and place. — *To be continued.*



Faith Looks Above

IN our Lord's reply to Martha in John xi, 40 we have one of the very finest utterances that ever fell on the human ear. "Said I not unto thee, that, *if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*" What living depth, what divine power, what freshness, sweetness, and comfort in these words! They present to us the very gist and marrow, the heart's core, the essential principle of the divine life. It is only the eye of faith that can see the glory of God. Unbelief sees only difficulties, darkness, and death. Faith looks above and beyond all these, and ever basks in the blessed beams of the divine glory. Martha saw nothing but a decomposed human body, because she was governed by a spirit of unbelief. Had she been swayed by an artless faith, she would have walked to the tomb in company with Him who is the resurrection and the life, assured that, instead of death and decomposition, she should see the glory of God.

This is a grand principle for the soul to grasp. It is utterly impossible for human language to overstate its value and importance. Faith never looks at difficulties, except indeed it be to feed on them. It looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It takes hold of the living God. It leans on His arm; it makes use of His strength; it draws on His exhaustless treasury; it walks in the light of His blessed countenance, and sees His glory shining forth over the darkest scenes of human life.

The inspired volume abounds in striking illustrations of the contrast between faith and unbelief. Let us glance at one or two of them. Look, for example, at Caleb and Joshua, in contrast with their unbelieving brethren, in Numbers xiii.

These latter saw only the difficulties which stood in their way. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land"—not stronger than Jehovah, surely—"and the cities are walled and very great;"—not greater than the living God—"and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." It is very clear that they did not see the glory of God; indeed they saw anything and everything but that. They were wholly governed by a spirit of unbelief, and hence they could only "bring up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and *all* the people that *we saw* in it are men of *great stature*"—they did not *see* a single small man, not one trifling difficulty; they looked at everything through the magnifying-glass of unbelief. "There *we saw* the giants" no doubt!—"and the sons of Anak which come of the giants." And nothing more? Nothing whatever. God was shut out; they could not see Him at all through the glasses they used. They could only see the terrible giants and towering walls. "And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight."

But what of Jehovah? Alas, He was shut out! Unbelief invariably leaves God out of its calculations. It can take a very accurate account of all the difficulties, all the hindrances, all the hostile influences, but as for the living God, it sees Him not. There is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, whether we listen to them in the wilderness of Kadesh, or, fourteen hundred years afterwards, at the tomb of Lazarus. Unbelief is always and everywhere the same; it begins, continues, and ends with the absolute and complete exclusion of the one living and true God. It can do naught save to cast dark shadows over the pathway of every one who will listen to its voice.

How different are the accents of faith! Harken to Joshua and Caleb, as they seek to stem the rising tide of unbelief. "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes; and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to search it is an exceeding good land. *If the Lord delight in us*"—here lies the

secret—"then He will bring us into this land, and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for *they are bread for us;*"—faith actually feeds on the difficulties which terrify unbelief—"their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not."

Glorious words! It does the heart good to transcribe them. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Thus it is always. If there is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, there is a glorious consistency in the accents of faith, wherever we hearken to them. Caleb and Joshua saw the glory of God, and in the light of that glory, what were giants and high walls? Simply nothing. If anything, they were bread for the nourishment of faith. Faith brings in God, and He shuts out all difficulties. What walls or giants could stand before the Almighty God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Such is ever the artless, but powerful reasoning of faith. It conducts all its arguments, and reaches all its conclusions, in the blessed light of the divine presence. It sees the glory of God. It looks above and beyond the heavy clouds which at times gather upon the horizon, and finds in God its sure and never-failing resource. Precious faith! The only thing in the world that really glorifies God; the only thing that makes the heart of the Christian truly bright and happy. C.H.M.

The Mind of Christ

WE *have* the mind of Christ. As true believers quickened to life by the Spirit of God through the word we enter into the mind of Christ. Not only or exactly Christ's thoughts—the exercises of His holy mind recorded in the Gospels, but that full intelligence as to God's purposes in Christ now revealed in all the New Testament scriptures.

We have been taken out of the world system of thought, man's philosophy of life which is tinged and coloured if not entirely governed by vain deceit and imagination, and translated

into the realm of the Son of God, and as thus risen with Christ are enjoined to set our mind on things above (Col. iii: 2); at the same time being exhorted in all our activities here below to let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. ii: 5).

The possession of the mind has naturally very great bearing upon all our conduct, character and conversation.

First, it gives us the balance of truth and enables us to see light in God's light and thus to preserve the true proportion in handling the word of God which guards alike from overstatement and misapplication.

Secondly, the mind of Christ operative in us, purifies our preferences and purges out our prejudices in the things of God. As to the former, it gives a single eye. If on account of some personal preference, I plead, "I can't see," then the mind of Christ causes me to understand my dimness of sight by reminding me that if the eye were single the whole body would be full of light, and thus I should be able to see. It was the mind of Christ expressed in speech when He said, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." As to our human prejudices, those things which tend so to warp sound spiritual judgment and to magnify trifles into matters of weighty importance in our sight, the mind of Christ has much to say. The streamlet of personal prejudice quickly becomes, if unchecked, the rushing torrent of envy, strife, self-seeking and censorious judgments which threaten to sweep away all the holy barriers of brotherly love, kindly consideration, lowliness and gentleness by which the Christian character is fenced from that of the worldling.

The mind of Christ which we are to allow as the intelligence from whence our activities spring is revealed as a mind of unselfish love and lowly service to God and man.

Would indeed that it more frequently and fully characterised us in our work too; for we wonder at His lowly mind chiefly on account of our own petty thoughts of what we imagine to be due somehow to ourselves, from those we seek to serve.

Finally, the mind of Christ when operating in us, leads to a clear course of simple straightforwardness of conduct. This

promotes at the same time a good conscience towards God and before man.

The pathway of true blessedness, trodden first by One Whose steps we are bidden to follow, is one of power, love and a disciplined mind. True liberty in entire obedience and recognised responsibility marks this holy highway, and the wayfarer finds the secret of deliverance from gnawing envy, inflated pride and a self-seeking spirit in the mind of Christ. It has been remarked, very aptly, "The true Christian rule of life is not scripture only, but scripture illustrated by the living example of the Lord Jesus." Looking upon Him as He walked here as man we learn the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Lack of the mind of Christ on our part is usually found to be connected with some secret failure in affection towards Himself. "My son, give Me thine heart."

There is no safety for the heart and mind of the believer except as they are closely engaged with the Person of the Blessed Lord. But walking in communion with Him, the believer finds the historical and typical story of Samuel the Seer reproduced in his own experience. "Now the Lord had told him, in the ear, the day before" (1 Sam ix: 15).

He who has the mind of Christ is under no illusion as to the future of the Church and the world. He knows what is going to happen in the tomorrow, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

The mind of Christ interprets history and explains prophecy.

W.G.T.

"A little while," and on the plains of everlasting glory we will sing together the new Jerusalem song, "Thou art worthy"; and oh! how sweet will be the melodies of that harp that is strung and tuned for eternity. Our white robes (resurrection bodies); our golden crowns (perfect purity); our triumphant palms (eternal victory); our green pastures and our still waters (God's perfect and changeless love); our Father's house of many mansions (the children's abode in His presence where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore); a kingdom which cannot be moved (the servant's place of reward). But to sum up all in one word—everlasting association with God's Son in the regions of endless bliss.

A.M.

Sparkling Gems

Resurrection settled everything in peace for the believer. Every cause for fear and unbelieving sorrow was buried in the grave of Christ. Every blessing overflows in Him risen. How much is made of this in the Epistles!

* * * * *

How little is all earthly greatness!

* * * * *

As the lark which soars and sings only in the light, as bees which are attracted only by the flowers that exhale sweetness, so are the possessors of that love which thinketh no evil but rejoiceth in the truth.

* * * * *

Our God is so gracious, He takes care of us and preserves us from a thousand snares. May we learn to trust Him and to praise Him.

* * * * *

Faith reasons from God to the difficulties: it begins with Him.

* * * * *

Knowledge without obedience is a sad and shameful reproach.

* * * * *

What do we find in the birth and life of our blessed Lord Jesus? God came to man in the person of Christ. And what appeared in the Lord's death? That man, believing man, can now come boldly to God.

* * * * *

When our Lord became the sin-bearer, He was surrounded by a supernatural darkness. It is notorious that on scientific grounds there could not have been an eclipse at the time. It was not then merely natural shadow; it was a supernatural darkness.

* * * * *

“I had utterly despaired” said Luther, “Had not Christ been Head of the Church.”

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FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

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IN MEMORIAM OF WILLIAM KELLY

Fifty years ago, on March 27th, 1906, while staying with Dr. Heyman Wreford of Exeter, William Kelly passed away to be with CHRIST. Mr. Kelly was a devoted servant of the LORD and among his many labours he edited the "*Bible Treasury*" for fifty years; he was also the Editor of the thirty four volumes of the "*Collected Writings*" of John Nelson Darby.

As an expositor of Holy Scripture Mr. Kelly was unsurpassed, bringing into use not only his profound learning but also his great reverence and regard for the written word of GOD.

In a review of one of his many books his Reviewer made the point that: "If it could not be found in the Word of GOD Kelly had no use for it"; surely a wonderful testimony to his implicit regard for and faith in, the revealed Word of the Living GOD! In a very real sense his works do follow him, it being a noteworthy fact that fifty years after his death his books are still being reprinted and are eagerly sought after, both at home and abroad. "Whose faith follow."

The Christian Life

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE is a life commenced in faith, continued in patience, and consummated by perseverance. It is a Divine life into which only those born again through the word of truth enter. It is an eternal life, for "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish", says the Good Shepherd. It is possessed by every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ simply because he or she is a believer in Him. It is not at all an attainment, but the gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not renovation of human nature but a new life ; not a mere reformation but a regeneration by God the Holy Spirit. Strictly stated the real Christian life is the life of Christ lived in the Christian.

Any attempt at delineating it must perforce include its four clearly marked characteristics ; each of these being distinct from the other, yet all alike necessary to a full orb'd presentation of the character of a true Christian life. These are, briefly stated : (1) **Devotional**, (2) **Mystical**, (3) **Practical**, (4) **Ecclesiastical**, none of which may be omitted from the consideration of the subject without doing violence to the whole.

The **devotional** side of the Christian life is really the heart of the believer occupied with Christ ; that is, the Christian having Christ as the one Object before the heart.

The **mystical** side of the Christian life is rather Christ occupying the heart of the believer—Christ dwelling in the heart by faith—Christ in you the hope of glory.

The **practical** side is clearly defined and emphasised by St. John, in the familiar words : "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked".

The **ecclesiastical** side of the Christian life finds emphasis and expression in the words of St. Paul, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"—that is the organ through which the ascended Head now operates and fulfils His ministry of grace in the world. The world sees Him no more, but we are His epistles known and read by all.

Let us deal with the first named of these—the **devotional**, for if this be lacking there is certainly cause to doubt the existence

of any of the other mentioned characteristics of the Christian life. The devotional side of the Christian life is evidenced by :—

- (1) **A personal knowledge of the grace of the Lord Jesus.**
- (2) **A growing attention to the words of the Lord Jesus.**
- (3) **An increasing appreciation of the Person of the Lord Jesus.**
- (4) **A whole-hearted recognition of the Mastership of the Lord Jesus.**

We select four illustrations from the Gospels of devotion to our Lord, which may be profitably meditated upon by all who desire to grow in grace in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. The first of these occurs in the seventh chapter of St. Luke, where in verses 44-50 the Evangelist portrays :

- (a) **A forgiven sinner,**
- (b) **Saved entirely by faith in Christ,**
- (c) **Conscious of having been forgiven much,**
- (d) **Clinging in gratitude to Him.**

She speaks no word, but here, as elsewhere, actions speak louder than words.

Gregory the Great said he could never refrain from weeping when preaching from this incident—so human—so tender—so divine.

“Forgiven **much** . . . loved **much**”. This is of the essence of a devotional Christian life.

As an old writer has said, “May we welcome Him not only with **water for the feet**—the cleansing of our souls from the dust and stains of daily sins, negligencies and ignorances ; not only with the **oil for the head**—the intellectual preparations and due appreciation of the nature of His service, but also with **the kiss**—the fervent, unstudied outpouring of heart affection—the clinging of the whole soul to One it loves”.

In the tenth of St. Luke a further element of this devotional side of Christian life finds illustration. In verse 42, “One thing is needful ; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” ; and verse 39 clearly defines what that good part was. “Sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word”.

This is the attitude of spirit which **ensures insight to the mind of Christ**. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart". It is well to note that it is the contemplative, listening, quiet side of the Christian life which gives tone and character to the disciple of the Lord Jesus. This takes time to develop, and needs to be as carefully planned as hours for recreation, meals and sleep are for the body. As with the noble hearted Elijah—nature in none of her varied moods could meet the need of his heart—only the voice of gentle stillness—so with ourselves, we need to be alone with our Lord long enough to become conscious of His Presence and thus to be changed by beholding the glory of the Lord.

As Whittier sweetly sings :

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease ;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy Peace."

Sitting at His feet, listening to His word, looking up into His face in quiet devotion of heart, occupied with Himself.

A third Scripture incident recorded in St. Mark xiv. 3-9 deals with a further development of our theme. This story is chiefly interesting from the fact that Mary of Bethany displays a spiritual intelligence beyond any of the Apostles and is so fiercely criticised by them for her devotion to their common Lord. She alone in spirit seems to enter in any measure into His entire rejection, death and burial. She is not found among the other women at the Cross a week later, having already in spirit passed through this when she anointed His body for the burial with her precious ointment. "Knowing the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformable to His death". Such devotion is always **criticised** by cold calculating spirits like Judas, and alas ! even by real believers also ; but it is always **commended** by Him who knows the heart and estimates perfectly the value of the motive. "**She hath done what she could,**" and can one possibly do more ? But **do** we do what we can ? That is the question which the honest disciple will face.

The criticism of the Apostles amounted to saying that some things were too costly to spend on Him, too good for the Master. Love, however, does not reckon in this way. Again we notice the devout soul is not here shown as **talking** but as **doing**.

A fourth Scripture bearing upon the subject of our paper is found in St. John xx. 16, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni ; which is to say Master". Here the Good Shepherd, calling one of His own sheep by name, evokes from her heart the glad recognition "My Master". Then with her heart comforted by His Presence she is commissioned by Him and goes out in obedience to His word in loving, blessed, helpful, uplifting service to others.

How far do we know the joy of this recognition of the Lord as Master ? We call Him Master and Lord, and we say well, **but do we do the things He says**, for that is surely better ?

Here then, briefly, we review the open secret of the devotional Christian life :—

- (1) **Forgiven much, to love much too.**
- (2) **Learning of Him, by listening to Him.**
- (3) **Counting nothing too good for Him.**
- (4) **Joyfully accepting His Lordship over the life.**

In conclusion, no harm, but great good will come to our hearts as we quietly and honestly challenge them in His Presence.

Take time for the interview with Himself, asking that the Holy Spirit may help as we seek to face the real facts of our inner spiritual condition.

Have I been forgiven **much** ? Do I love much ?

Have I **chosen** that good part ? Do I hearken **really** ?

Do I know ought of the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ?

Is His commendation more than all else to me ?

Do I practically own Him as Lord of my life ?

Do I **do** the things which He says ?

These are the questions which those who wish to know the joy of the Christian life must face for themselves. But let no

dread of Him alarm the soul ; no anxiety burden the spirit. Rather with simple sincerity of heart tell Him all the truth and count on Him to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

W.G.T.



The Church—continued

It may be safely said, I think, that all of us tend one way or the other. We tend very much either to unity, on the one hand, or to diversity, on the other. It is in the preservation and in the due balance of these two things, wherein our wisdom lies and our practical salvation is found. Instead of these two things being held co-equally—the one being the counterpart of the other—the tendency is that they are rent asunder and a wide gulf comes about between the two. While we treasure deeply the unity of the body, let us always see that it is a unity which displays itself in the most lovely variety. We cannot possibly, without terribly harmful consequences, try to shape up one another according to a certain model. First of all there would be immense difficulty in deciding to the satisfaction of all what the model should be. But the effort to crush diversity is not of God, and that is a serious matter. There is proper growth and proper development with each one of us and if we honour the unity, let us honour the diversity; if we honour the diversity let us also honour the unity, and you will find, I think, that one will preserve the other.

There are the two things. On the one hand, it is one body, one perfect whole: on the other, there is the body not of one member, but of many.

Coming to verses 21-23, we find that the apostle takes the opposite view. It is not now the foot looking up to the hand, but the eye looking down, and he says “The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee.” There may be discontent on the part of the lowly members, but what is even more serious is what the apostle speaks of here in more scathing terms. You cannot look down disdainfully upon any member of

Christ. Oh! how we sin, and how we have grieved and crushed many instead of leading them on sympathetically. We look down upon them and virtually say "I have no need of thee," and deeply displease our ever gracious Lord. He feels such treatment as if done to Himself personally. We must not look down upon any, however lowly, of Christ's members.

If a brother is gifted we may say "He is mine"—we belong to one another and we are co-members of the body of Christ. And we cannot do without one another. Certainly, therefore, we ought not to look down from a height either real or imaginary upon a lowlier member. Such an attitude quenches the operation of God's Holy Spirit among His people. It closes effectually all avenues of blessing, and the apostle says it is morally wrong.

However loudly we may profess the truth with our lips, we give the lie to our profession. We cannot treat any member of the body of Christ disdainfully, I will not say, contemptuously. There are many members of the body of Christ about us in whose hearts God is working and who are ready for help given in the spirit of Christ. We need to feel not only that they need us but that we need them. We are all interdependent and mutually contributory. There are many today whom we need, beloved members of the body of Christ, and if we get near to them and recognize their place in the body, we shall perhaps be able to win their hearts, not to ourselves only, but to the Lord.

Now those members which appear to be more feeble are more necessary. It needs only for something to go wrong to find out how necessary the member is. You need not lose your finger, but only the quick of the finger-nail, to find how put out you are. Those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary, but the apostle is not satisfied with that. He adds that those members which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow abundant honour, that is, if there is anything that is weak, that calls for care, we should exercise the more abundant care. The most vital parts of the body are tucked away. Think of the heart, upon which all turns. It is tucked away by God with extreme care, and other organs

there are which are encased in fat to withstand vibration, etc. The most vital parts are covered by God. But even the external uncomely parts are to be treated no differently. We do not cover our faces—unless it be with shame—for He says “Let me see thy face,” but there are parts which call for cover properly.

If there is one who is weak, uncomely, it is a wonderful outlet for the love of Christ. That is how His love went out. Wherever there were on earth the poor, the wretched, the weak, the sightless, these all had an irresistible attraction for our beloved Lord. I do feel we need more of His spirit, otherwise our Christianity is very poor. And is not such loving, intelligent consideration just that which so pleases the Lord? It is His own blessed spirit itself amongst His own. If there is weakness and special coverings are needed, we should be at hand to give them.

This is what is being put before the Corinthians, where there were all kinds of foreign bodies working disastrously. Their corporate life was a negation very largely of the one body. When a foreign body enters say, the eye, the hand immediately tries to remove it. That is the spirit which is needed in our gatherings, the spirit of removing all that is alien to the body and of taking away pain, such as we find so beautifully exemplified in the human body.

In verses 24-31 the apostle reaches the climax of what he has been setting forth. He says “Ye are the body of Christ,” even as he says elsewhere “Ye are the epistle of Christ.” That is a truly wonderful thing to say of a company of the Lord’s people. There they were for the expression of the grace and intelligence of the Head. We should express His mind, not our own. We should have His wisdom, His love, and His care. They should all flow out through His body here, the exponent of Christ in this dark world of sin.

—Just one more thought. “God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” I would emphasize that it is God who does it.

People think that we stand for something that we have hammered out ourselves on our own anvils, but it is wrong. This is the truth of God—"God has set." He is the One Who puts all in their places. It is not that it is a good theory. No, the whole thing in this chapter rests entirely upon the will of God. It is what God does. He has set some in the church in these various ways. The Corinthians were guilty of trying to put all the gifts into one person. It is impossible. The apostle says almost indignantly "Are all apostles, are all teachers, have all the gifts of healing?" God has widely distributed the gifts and they call for the recognition in love by one another.

You say, "Well, it does not appear much of an outlook for me. I am a foot, and I must always remain a foot." This is an entirely unfounded assumption. No, the apostle ends the chapter by saying "Covet earnestly the best gifts." In order to grow and expand, I have to exercise myself in that which I have, but the whole field is thrown open to me. Look at those seven men who were chosen to serve tables. Think of what heights they reached, at least, two of them. Philip became the great evangelist, and Stephen, that holy man so full of the Holy Ghost, became the first Christian martyr. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. Do not fret because you are not more. Fill your tiny sphere according to God's blessed will in His strength and by His grace, and you will find most assuredly that more will open to you. The word is "Covet," that is, "Desire earnestly." If the gifts the risen Lord has given were faithfully used even by us all here this evening, there would be a revival. There is so much which lacks fruitfulness, being either unstirred-up or neglected.

The apostle says "Covet earnestly the best gifts." All is laid open, not for our own glory, far be the thought, but for the glory of Christ.

And so we have in this chapter God's provision for the church, in her functioning here in this world. She is to be here for the expression of His gracious and lowly mind. It is a dark and difficult day—we all feel it to be so—but there is this precious provision, which is sufficient to see us to the end, and to keep us well pleasing to the Lord in the bright display of His truth and love.

J.P.B.

“Lord, To Whom Shall We Go?”

Lord, Thou art on the throne of God, to whom can a guilty sinner as I am go, save to Thee ? For Thou assurest me that Thou art the way, the truth, and the life ; and I want all these and more ; and none cometh unto the Father except through Thee.

I confess that all my life hitherto has been careless and self-pleasing, doing my own will, indifferent to God’s will where it crossed mine, ungodly yet claiming to be more or less religious, with a bad conscience which forced on me the dread of death and judgment. If judged according to my works as His word declares, what must my end be ? I have no life Godward, and all the worse, because I have never by faith made redemption in Him my own, never been truly brought to God through Christ once for all suffering for my sins.

All has been vague and groping in the dark between my soul and God, never owning my utter ruin as I am, nor His sovereign grace in Christ giving life eternal and divine righteousness before Him. How awful my state under the gospel not really received as a lost sinner repentant and believing ! The greater His grace, the fuller the light already shining, the more inexcusable my unbelief in not coming to God through Christ, in Whom God has both spoken His last word to man, and wrought His best work of atonement and the new creation—in Him dead, risen, and ascended to God’s eternal glory.

Yet have I not been living my weak and vain days of the flesh, in hopes and fears, and thoughts of my own or of other men, instead of receiving God’s testimony that He gives the believer life eternal, and this in His Son, and only there ? What “hope” otherwise can there be for a lost soul ? What folly to indulge my “thoughts” when God reveals His word ? Yet why “fear”, if I cast myself as I am, guilty and lost, on the Son of man Who came to save that which was lost ? Did He not declare “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out” ? Was it not written to embolden even me, and every other doubting soul to hesitate no more, to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth unto salvation ? Is it not the great reality of

grace for a poor sinner that bows to God ? "He that hath the Son hath life". But how solemn is the other side even now to weigh ! "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life". Think what it must mean for all eternity ! "the second death, the lake of fire". Lord, Thou hast the words of life eternal, that we believing now may have that life, and come not into judgment which Thou didst bear for us who *have* passed out of death into life.

W.K.

The One Thing To Do

FOR the completeness of the Christian character, as known and developed in the New Testament, Christ must be the object of our hearts. In Philippians iii, He is presented to us in a way which answers exactly to the new and heavenly relationship which is ours. From the moment that Christ in glory spoke to Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix, 4-6), he had but one object before him and was content to let everything else go. Religious training, legal righteousness, natural gifts, birthright privileges, everything that did not correspond with that glorious object, the heavenly Man, Who spoke to him in grace.

A glorified Christ at God's right hand is the proper object and hope of the church collectively as He is of the believer individually. And the apostle, devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ as he was, cared not how rough the path or how severe the suffering by which he arrived at the realization of his object. "If by any means I might attain," he said, "to the resurrection from among the dead," when his aspirations would be realized.

The confession of the church is to Christ in His glory as the Son of the living God (Matt. xvi, 16), and it is He Himself Who is revealed as the proper object and hope of all united to Him by the Holy Ghost. The glory and grace of the risen Christ so laid hold of the apostle's soul that it was no vain wish or momentary longing, but the one thing he did, viz.; to press forward to win Christ and to be found in Him. The power of this heavenly object acted upon the heart and bound it by the cords of love unto itself. How blessed to be delivered from

the many objects and influences of the natural man, and to be brought into this blessed unity of God wherein Christ is all and in all! May it be ours ever to know the glorified Christ of God, in this blessed way attaching our hearts' affections to Himself in heaven in the power of the Holy Ghost, Who unites us to Christ and leads us into communion with, and practical conformity to the blessed Son of God on high where we shall spend eternity.

G.S.B.

Ready for the Master

IS the thought of the Lord's nearness welcome, or ungrateful to the soul? Is the expectation of being with Him, without notice or delay, pleasant to the heart?

The true practical walk of a believer gives a right answer to these enquiries. "Let your moderation be known unto all men,—the Lord is at hand." "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Judge standeth before the door".

Moderation, or holy restraint in the use of present things, and gracious, liberal consideration of others, here approved as among the right ways of a saint, are such as would stand the light of the Lord, if He were at the moment to appear.

Are our ways, then, such as suit the thought of His nearness and would abide the light of His presence? Have they, or have they not, this voice in them, "Come, Lord Jesus"?

Could vanity, could uncleanness, could the desire of gain, could the lust of distinction? Has the haughty look that voice in it? Has carnal levity, or spiritual sloth? We know that these cannot desire the day of the Lord, for it is to them "a day of darkness, and not of light".

Our behaviour should be such as would introduce us to His presence without disturbance; for He comes, not to regulate, but to gladden us,—not to put us in a right path, but to close a right path in glory.

J.G.B.

Waiting for the Son from Heaven

IN the calculations of men, events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand to stamp each day with its character or sign.

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others; but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era, like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progresses may be more strongly marked than others. But all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary while others were full of incident. And so all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These "signs of the times," or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern, because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed current events are only "signs," as they are according to, or in fulfilment of, such previous notices. . . . And let me ask if every hour be after this manner bearing its character, or wearing its sign, what mark are we individually helping to put upon this our day? Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness at all reflected in us? or are we, in any measure aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment?

J.G.B.



"Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house (Deut. vi. 7).

When quiet in my house I sit,
 Thy book be my companion still;
 My joy Thy sayings to repeat,
 Talk o'er the records of Thy will,
 And search the oracles Divine
 Till every heartfelt word is mine.

Sparkling Gems

It is a lie of Satan that man is altered for the better during the last nineteen hundred years; the natural man's heart is always the same, though there may be times when it comes to a crisis.

* * * * *

A distracted heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have not heart or eye for the trash of the world.

* * * * *

That man hath nothing who wants Christ ; and that man who hath Christ wants nothing.

* * * * *

Never spare yourself . . . be very merciful to others.

* * * * *

Cease from self ; from your own endeavours after rest; from going after this teacher and the other, sink down like a tired child on the pillow of GOD's loving care. Lean back on GOD. GOD loves ; GOD cares ; GOD will interpose when the right moment is come. GOD will do the very best that can be done. He is waiting to do it, as soon as you will let Him. Trust and rest.

* * * * *

How careful ought to be our walk for the sake of others.

* * * * *

“LORD, and what shall this man do ?” You had better leave your brother alone was the LORD's reply. “Follow Me”. I believe it is a great principle.

* * * * *

On his knees the believer is invincible.

* * * * *

“Thus saith the LORD” is the end of discussion to Christian minds ; and even the ungodly cannot resist Scripture without resisting the Spirit who wrote it. To speak convincingly speak Scripturally.

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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In accepting the Publisher's invitation to become Editor of this magazine, some statement with regard to future policy would appear to be called for.

In addition to articles of an expository or devotional character which may appear from time to time, it is hoped (D.V.) to offer readers the ministry of writers now living, dealing with practical problems, either personal or collective, of the present day. It is not intended, of course, to provide a forum for the exchange of mere views, but rather to give an opportunity for those who are able to do so to bring to general notice any portion of Scripture which they believe has a timely message for the people of God.

The prayers of every reader are therefore sought that the magazine may continue to justify its title by providing "Words of Help" from the Scripture of Truth.

E. A. PETTMAN.

Lord's Day Reflections

I.—A WOMAN'S FINE LEAD.

(Read 2 Samuel xxi. 1-14)

Remarks after the Breaking of Bread at Tunbridge Wells, 13/2/49

OUR theme of meditation this morning has been the ransom which our Saviour gave to deliver His people from the penalty of their sins. He gave Himself a ransom for all, and it was this thought that suggested the scripture just read.

The people of Israel were suffering God's punishment for a sin committed years before when Saul had sought to exterminate the Gibeonites dwelling in their midst. In Joshua's time, these Gibeonites, by means of a trick, had secured a place in Israel, and had received God's pledge that they should remain there. Saul, however, giving way to his own feelings about them, had ignored God's word, and had led his people into a sin which they had found it convenient to forget.

God had *not* forgotten, however, and sent famine for three years, year after year. It was not a three years' famine, as though God had fixed this term for their punishment. God sent them famine for one year, and had the people enquired of God at once, the reason for it would have been given. But they did not turn to God, and so a second year had to be inflicted. Even that failed to stir them, and it was only when disaster overtook them for the third successive year that the nation turned to God to enquire why the chastisement had been sent. God at once explained to them that the sin of years ago remained unacknowledged by the people, and therefore unforgiven by Him. So David must approach the Gibeonites and ask what they wished done in order to put the matter right.

The Gibeonites replied that they did not require silver or gold; but that seven of Saul's sons should be handed over to them to be hung before the Lord. In other words, satisfaction was to be given, not by the payment of money, but by

the judicial execution of persons who should die in the place of the guilty parties. Needless to say, these seven men, being human, were in themselves sinners, but they were actually guiltless so far as the crime against the Gibeonites was concerned. Their death was therefore an instance of "guiltless" becoming a substitute for "guilty".

It is not difficult to see in this old-time incident yet another pointer to the death of our Saviour upon the cross as a ransom for us all. Not until the seven guiltless men—seven, the number which signifies perfection—had been slain could God's judgment by the famine pass. Thus the salvation in which we have been rejoicing this morning could not come to us until the Lord Jesus, the guiltless One, had offered Himself to God for us, the guilty. The Just suffered for the unjust, to bring us to God (1 Peter, iii. 18). For this may we never cease to praise His name !

But I wish to draw your attention to something which followed. Apparently the bodies of those who had died were left on the top of the hill where the execution had taken place—had they not in a sense been lifted up ?—for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field to devour. Once the sacrifice had been made, and justice met, no one seemed to bother about those whose lives had been given ; no one, that is, except Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, mother of two of them. But she cared, and the thought that would appear to have moved her was that something should be done to preserve the memory of those who had died vicariously. At the very least their bodies must be given decent burial, and if no one else was prepared to do anything about it, she would do what she could herself. So, suitably attired, she pitched her tent upon the hilltop, and suffered "neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night" to interfere with the bodies. She was a bold, brave, devoted woman, who realised the right thing to be done, and did not hesitate to do it herself.

What are our thoughts concerning the One who sacrificed Himself for us ? Do we not consider it fitting that some memorial should be raised to Him ? Surely we do. And the question arises as to what we shall do.

Happily the Lord has not left the answering of this question to ourselves, for us to do as we think fit. He has instituted a memorial feast Himself. Had it been left to man to arrange, something ornate and magnificent might have been chosen. The Lord Jesus, however, preferred to have it otherwise, and ordained something simple, in order that His own, whatever their poverty in this world's goods, might not find it beyond them to do what He asked. What our Saviour looks for is not something outwardly grand, in which man, even His own, might boast, but sincere devotion and loving obedience from those ransomed by His precious blood.

Surely those who truly love the Lord should be content to leave the memorial to Himself as unadorned as He Himself instituted it, and to partake of the bread and the wine in the simple way we have done this morning *because that was how He wished it done.*

The devotion of Rizpah, her bravery in the face of danger, and her single-minded purpose to keep alive the memory of those who had been slain, should serve as an example to us, so that we never allow any obstacle that could be overcome to keep us away from the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His death in His own appointed way.

E. A. PETTMAN.

A Subject of Great Importance

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

(Notes of an address at Bridewell Hall, London, 17th Dec. '55)

THERE is a general subject which occupies a very large part of the New Testament. We may rightly conclude, therefore, that the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the writers, attaches great importance to it. We also learn that it is very dear to the heart of Christ, and that it has a very prominent place in the purposes of God. It is essentially linked with the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have fellowship with the Father and the Son, the subject ought surely to have great importance to us and be of great interest.

Yet there is a general tendency in recent years to neglect it. Attention has been concentrated on the preaching of the gospel, and on exhortation to individual godly walk, both of which are also matters of great importance. But the truths, responsibilities and privileges connected with the "church", and its aspects as the house of God and the body of Christ, have been of late too much in the background.

The purpose of the gospel is not only that men may have their sins forgiven, walk uprightly and go to heaven, but that they may be added to the church, become members of the body of Christ, be built as living stones into a holy temple. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. He is the Head of His body, the church. The church is a habitation of God through the Spirit, and is growing into an holy temple in the Lord (Eph., v. 25-27 ; i. 22 ; ii, 20-22). It is by the church that the manifold wisdom of God is made known now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph., iii, 10).

Why has *the teaching of Scripture* on this great subject, so dear to the heart of Christ, been neglected ? One reason may be that it has frequently been handled in the past as if it were a group of dry and dogmatic doctrines, and the glory of Christ which it so closely concerns, the blessedness, assurance, and joy of heart of the believer instructed in these truths, have been obscured. Beloved reader ! there is food for the soul, encouragement for the path, enlargement of understanding of the glories of Christ and of the purposes of God in the study of the subject. It will not hinder your zeal for soul-winning. It will not make you less circumspect in your conduct. The very contrary will be the result, and moreover you will find your love for all the saints increased, and you will understand better than before how to put into practice your relationship with all other christians. You will also find your thanksgivings and praises and worship enriched.

The writer feels that perhaps another reason why the subject has not been prominent recently is that, under the disguise of "church truth", doctrines have been pressed which have resulted in divisions between christians. The very reverse should be the case. *Scriptural teaching as to the church should*

lead to unity, to a practical response on our part to the reiterated prayer of the Lord Jesus to His Father in John xvii. that "they all might be one". That this indeed may be the effect of this article through the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit is the writer's most earnest prayer.

A further reason for lack of interest may be the confusion caused by failure to distinguish things that differ. When considering the teaching of Scripture as to the church in its different aspects, it is important to note the distinction between passages which deal with (a) the body of Christ ; (b) the house of God ; (c) coming together in the "church" ; and (d) individual walk, respectively. Further, some of these subjects are dealt with as God's work in one place, and as our responsibility in another. There is undoubtedly divine purpose in the fact that these matters are dealt with separately in Scripture, although, when one of them is the main subject, others are referred to incidentally. The Holy Spirit has not seen fit to lead any of the apostles to write a single comprehensive epistle embodying every aspect of the truth of the church, and much confusion has frequently been caused by christians well acquainted with the letter of scripture endeavouring to cover all the ground. Let us acknowledge our incapacity to comprehend the whole range of the truth at any one time.

Has there not also been a tendency to use phrases culled from the writings of our predecessors, and even from the Scriptures themselves, taken out of their proper connection, and treated as if they were our exclusive property, and often quoted without any attempt at explaining their scriptural basis ? The writer has several such phrases in mind which have been misused and have proved stumbling-blocks to many young believers : For example, "gathered to the Name of the Lord" ; "gathered on the ground of the one body" ; passages such as 2 Tim. ii, 20-22, etc.

All these reasons may have contributed to the neglect and lack of interest as to the teaching of Scripture on the very important subject of the "church". Reverting to the theme with which this article commenced, the "church" is mentioned specifically over 100 times in all in 17 out of the 27 books in

the New Testament, besides frequent references to it as the body of Christ ; as His bride ; as the house of God, His habitation ; the temple of God ; and as the city, New Jerusalem.

May the hearts of all God's people be stimulated to learn more of their responsibilities and privileges as being included in the church, which is so dear to the heart of Christ and so closely associated with His glory.

J. C. KELL.

Sitting Down

(Matthew xxvi. 20 ; Hebrews x. 12)

SITTING down usually betokens a stage reached in relation to work in hand ; sometimes the end, when the task is done and toil can give way to rest. At other times it is only an interval, for looking either backward or forward, to consolidate, consider, or to gather strength for the next stage. In any case, sitting down indicates something comparatively prolonged, or even leisurely, as distinct from the normal movement and activity associated with service or work.

The two scriptures noted at the head of this paper refer to the completion of two stages in the pathway in grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, one previous to His death, and the other after.

The first refers to the time of a certain Passover, the last one to have the original significance of pointing forward to the offering up of the Lamb of God for sin on the cross. We read that when the hour was come He sat down with His disciples (Luke xxii. 14) ; an example alike of obedience and promptitude. Apart from the things usually associated with the feast, there were things about "this Passover" that were unique. For Himself it marked a stage reached in the planned pathway. The daily path of public service, entered upon about three years before, had come to an end. The service had been perfect, though in general the hardness of

the human heart remained unaffected ; but that part of His life had been fulfilled, and He sat down.

Apart from the necessities of the feast, His sitting down was for the benefit of His disciples, as we understand from the closing chapters of John's Gospel. Although they had kept Him company, and been witnesses of His words and works, they had failed to a large extent to grasp His meaning. It was therefore at this stage necessary for them to sit down with Him to be instructed as to the present and the future.

What a lovely scene that must have been in the upper room, though blemished with the defection of Judas, when He gathered His own around Himself to commune with Him in the place previously made ready for them. There He prepared them for His departure, and told them of that other Comforter Who would not only be with them, but in them ; and Who would make good to them what they had not understood of His teachings. The warnings, the helps and the encouragements ministered at this time are well known to all who love the Lord, culminating in that wonderful committal of all believers to the care of God the Father, found in John xvii.

Is it not wonderful, too, that to-day, according to the will of God (1 Cor. xi. 23-26), we may sit down to remember Him in the breaking of bread, but with a fuller understanding of the meaning of what we do than they had then, as being now indwelt by the Holy Spirit and able to look back on what was accomplished at Calvary? To them, in so far as they understood, they were contemplating the imminent loss of their beloved Master, and the need or reason for such an event was anything but clear to them. Whereas for us, the events themselves surrounding the death of the Lord Jesus are fully authenticated historical facts, and the need and doctrine connected with them are fully explained in the epistles of Paul.

Thus for today we have the joy extended to us in this life of sitting down with Him in the midst, whilst at the same time, according to Eph. ii. 6, we are already seated in the heavenlies in Him.

As to Christ Himself, however, having accomplished the work of redemption at the cross, He has sat down in heavenly

glory. This is a fact twice commented upon in the epistle to the Hebrews (i, 3 and x. 12). His sacrificial work finished, in direct contrast with that of the Aaronic priests, is dealt with at some length in the same epistle. Of these priests it is said that they stood daily, "offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins : but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat down*" (Heb. x. 11, 12). "When He had by Himself purged our sins, *sat down*" (Heb. i., 3).

A greater contrast could not be imagined. On the one hand continual offering ; priests standing ; work never finished. On the other, one offering, perfecting for ever ; and the work having been finished, the offerer sitting down : "no more offering for sin" (Heb. x. 18). Truly in this instance, sitting down betokens a work finished ; and on high He still sits awaiting the time when those for whom He died will be able to sit down with Him in His throne (Rev. iii, 21) ; and for the time, too, when His enemies shall be put under His feet (Psalm cx. 1). Our present privilege is to see ourselves by faith, seated in Him in heavenly places (Eph. ii, 6), as a result of His completed work, ready for display in the ages to come : and also in our present practice to sit down together around the memorials of His death, to remind ourselves that the work was His, that He completed it, and that in consequence there is no more to be done. How truly in this sense we already enter into rest, though rest in its fulness remains a future prospect.

A. A. TUNLEY.

Notes from a Bible Reading on Genesis i-ii. 3.

v. 1. The scriptural record of creation bears its own evidence of divine inspiration. All other ancient accounts of the origin of the world are childish compared with the dignity and authority of Gen. i. That a nation like Israel should possess such a document is itself a miracle. The object of the record is to reveal that God is the author of all, and that

man is the object of God's love. Hence much is omitted which would merely satisfy curiosity or describe what man can discover for himself. Without saying how or when, scripture ascribes the origin of all to God's creatorial power. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".

v. 2. The Spirit of God, the true Author of the Scriptures, without further reference to the heavens, here describes a subsequent condition of the earth. In the interval between v. 1 and v. 2, the successive ages revealed by the study of the rocks took place, each with its own suited animal and vegetable life, and all in the wisdom of God being turned to account for the man who would know how to use the hidden treasures of the earth, such as coal and oil. Scripture does not refer directly to this interval, though Is. xlv. 18 is referred to as showing that Gen. i. 2 must have been a subsequent development ("in vain" — "without form"). Jer. iv. 23 is, however, prophetic.

The Jews from early times have taught that there was such a breach. The unusual insertion of the verb "was" in the original of "the earth was without form, etc." may indicate that the verse is describing a new order of things, and is not an explanation of v. 1. The cause of the upheaval is not given us, but it shows that the earth had not yet been made a fit habitation for man.

The presence of the Spirit of God upon the dark waste of waters is the presage of the coming changes whereby the earth was to be made fit for man's habitation.

vv. 3, 4. Light is first introduced, and that before the sun was set in its place of rule. Light had "existed" before, but it had ceased to act for the earth, perhaps as a result of the upheaval. "Evening and morning were—one day", in the original indicate that the day should be understood as a period of 24 hours. An age seems out of the question for the first, fourth and seventh days, at any rate.

vv. 6-8. The "firmament" is the expanse, the atmosphere, which divides the clouds from the seas and rivers.

vv. 9-13. A double work is done on the third and sixth days. Here the dry land appears and the vegetable kingdom.

vv. 14-19. The ordered succession of seasons, days, and

years, and the supply of light for mankind are here attributed to God, who appointed the already created sun, moon and stars to that end. They are signs of His wisdom and goodness.

vv. 20-23. Fishes, whales and birds are now created. The power of the Creator is expressly mentioned the second time. In v. 1, it was material things ; now "living creatures" (or souls), that is, self-conscious beings.

vv. 24, 25. The beasts of the field appear at the word of God, but a two-fold work is done and the work of creation is completed by the making of man.

vv. 26-31. Note the third use of the word create in the chapter (v. 27) and the emphasis of its threefold repetition. Man alone can communicate with God, the Father of spirits (Heb. xii. 9). He was created upright and God speaks "unto them" (v. 28) alone of all created things.

What a contrast is the creation of man to anything that has gone before ! He is the subject of God's counsels, "Let us make man" ; he alone is said to be made in the image, and after the likeness, of God ; God has not said even of angels "Let them have dominion". Also of mankind but a single pair were made, though the lower creation was brought forth in abundance. "In our image" : man was to represent God on the earth and exercise authority. (Cf. the "image of Caesar"—not necessarily a likeness, but that which stood for and claimed allegiance to him. See Matt. xxii. 20, Dan. iii. 1). "After our likeness" : Man was endowed with moral qualities which were God-like. He is now a fallen god, and as such has some sense of beauty, order, righteousness, love, etc. (see John x. 34). The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God, but it could not be said that He is like God, for He is God (Col. 1. 15).

Ch. ii., vv. 1-3. God rests in view of the completion and excellence of His work. No evening and morning is mentioned of this day, but sin broke this rest. Scripture reveals an "eighth" day, of unbroken rest, wherein God does not act—He dwells. (See Lev. xxiii).

There are foreshadowings, even here, of Christ. The true Light dawned on this dark world when the Lord Jesus came (Luke i. 78, John i. 5), but He does not rule as the Sun until

later (Mal. iv. 2). The same thing is true for the individual believer (2 Cor. iv. 6).

In all that is said of the creation of man and his place on the earth we find that God has the Second Man in view, Who is worthy to have dominion and rule over all (Ps. viii., Heb. ii. 6-11). He, too, is to have a bride.

The seventh day is typical of the rest of God which the work of Christ makes possible, and which remains for the people of God (Heb. iv. 9, 10). The Sabbath given to Israel was directly linked with Gen. ii. 1-3 (Exod. xx. 9-11), but this was disturbed through Israel's sin (John v. 17).

God's way of establishing order is by dividing and separating (vv. 4, 6, 10, 14). Satan's aim is to break down the divisions between truth and error, etc., but at the end God will bring an eternal separation between "light" and "darkness".

Perhaps the work of the first four days shews the necessary conditions for sustaining the life which appeared on the fifth. Light, air, food and rule are provided, and these are given us in a spiritual way in Christ and His word.

What a contrast to the brutalizing theories of men is God's testimony to man's origin! He was given the highest place on earth, which was fashioned for his blessing and joy, but he owed all to God. The revelation of these things should lead to humility, gratitude and worship. The glory of creation awakens worship in heaven (Rev. iv. 10, 11). How sad that the discoveries which men have made of the vastness, order and beauty of creation should have been used by Satan to make them infidels!

LEONARD C. HOCKING.

Maker of earth and heaven,
 Whose arm upholds creation,
 To Thee we raise the voice of praise,
 And bend in adoration.
 We praise the power that made us,
 We praise the love that blesses;
 While every day that rolls away,
 Thy gracious love confesses.

(H. Ware—1794-1853).

God Everywhere

- WITH US** they shall call His name Emmanuel, which
being interpreted is, God with us.
Matthew i, 23
- FOR US** If God be for us, who can be against us ?
Romans viii. 31
- IN US** he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in
God, and God in him.
1 John iv. 16
- BEFORE US** The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee.
Deut. xxxi. 8
- BEHIND US** The God of Israel will be your rereward.
Isa. lii. 12
- ABOVE US** He sent from above, He took me.
Psa. xviii. 16
- BELOW US** Underneath are the everlasting arms.
Deut. xxxiii. 27
- AROUND US** The Lord is round about His people.
Psa. cxxv. 2

Sparkling Gems

Let us not forget that we are in the world to do God's will and to be witnesses for a Christ rejected on earth yet glorified in heaven.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

His love has no tides, no seasons ; it never ebbs and flows ; it knows no winter's chill or summer's drought.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Self-confidence was the secret of Peter's fall, and usually of all our falls. It is a great thing when the spring of self-confidence in us gets broken up.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Unqualified obedience to the word of God is the path to power.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

May our hearts and lives praise Him !

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We are feeble, but the Lord our God is mighty and the battle is the Lord's, rather than ours.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We are never free to give up anything that is of God.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Perfect Master ! "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever".

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

No matter what the work of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There is no trial but what He can turn to greater blessing than even if it did not exist.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Our strength is to know our own nothingness and have Him as everything.

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SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

MAY, 1956

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EDITORIAL NOTE

It is earnestly desired that this Magazine shall bring to its readers real help *from the Scriptures*. Comments and enquiries are therefore invited in respect of the articles published.

The editor will also be grateful for suggestions with regard to subjects suitable for the present time, and will be glad of the opportunity to consider for insertion any article offering help in the understanding of the word of GOD. Articles not used will be returned to the author.

A Timely Lesson from a Lovely Story

Read Genesis xiii. 1-18

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford, London, 6th June, 1953)

IT is surely not without significance that this lesson in how to deal with petty strife when it breaks out, or threatens to do, between the children of GOD should be given such early priority in the Scriptures. Compared with the great themes of creation, the fall of man, the flood, the confusion of language at Babel, and the call of Abram which had gone before, and the birth of Isaac and other momentous events which follow in the book of Genesis, strife between herdmen within a single family circle must appear of trivial importance. Yet instead of leaving the lesson over until weightier themes had been dealt with, as undoubtedly a merely human writer would have done, the Spirit of God takes this very early opportunity of drawing the matter to the attention of those who have an ear to hear. Acknowledging the perfect wisdom of the Spirit of God, we may rightly enquire the reason for this.

No man needs to live very long in this world to discover that although the beginnings of strife, whether between brethren, men or nations, may be small in themselves, the consequences can be far-reaching and overwhelming in an incredibly short time. The wise man of Proverbs wrote: "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water" (Ch. xvii. 14). And this may well be the reason why the problem is considered in the opening chapters of the first Book of the Bible.

It may be noted also that the example chosen by the Spirit of God concerns persons in close relationship to one another. As civil war has generally been fiercer than conflict between nations, so in the case of quarrels between man and man, those which involve relatives are usually the most persistent and difficult of solution, strife within the Christian church being the bitterest of all. It is incumbent upon everyone therefore to consider any practical method of approach to the problem that the Spirit of God has indicated in the Scriptures.

Without doubt Abram was superior spiritually to his nephew Lot. And the reader will observe that it was the more spiritually-minded man who was perturbed by what was going on, realised

the danger of the trouble spreading, was sensitive as to the name of God being dishonoured if the strife continued unchecked, and was foremost in proposing a practical solution of the difficulties. It is the way of wise and strong men to face facts squarely and promptly, and not to allow situations to deteriorate until desperate remedies are needed.

In verse 7 it is remarked that the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land—side by side in harmony, so far as the record goes. Abram did not overlook this, and his appeal to Lot to come to an understanding was based upon this consideration and the fact that they two were brethren. "What disgrace!" he seems to say, "what dishonour! what humiliation if two idolatrous peoples can dwell together, while we two, the servants of the living God, fall out with one another! United we can strengthen and help one another: at loggerheads, what a laughing-stock we become, and what an easy prey for any hostile neighbour who might decide to attack us!" It was sound common sense (cf. Eccl. iv, 9, 10), not to mention spiritual wisdom and proper regard for the honour of God's name.

It is not recorded that Abram made any attempt to investigate with Lot the merits of the herdmen's dispute, or to vindicate either himself or his servants. An enquiry into the precise facts might prove inconclusive and so serve no useful purpose. Abram walked before his God, and was prepared to leave the right and the wrong of the matter with God. Is there no lesson in this for believers today? Scripture exhorts the faithful to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) but never for personal reputation and supremacy. (How often has a struggle for power been cloaked under the guise of fighting for principle!) The servant of the Lord is specifically told that he must not strive (2 Tim. ii, 24). On the contrary he is to be like the Master Himself, meek and lowly in heart (Matt. xi, 29).

Abram's appeal to his nephew included the practical suggestion that they should separate from one another in order to avoid all occasion for squabbling between the herdmen. Whether Abram, and possibly Lot too, had previously instructed their respective servants to keep away from one another, we are not told. If they had, it can only be concluded that such mild measures had been ineffective. Matters had clearly reached the stage when Abram

decided that the only effective way was for himself and Lot to move further away from one another. Better be dispersed geographically than disunited in their witness for God! In making this suggestion Abram was in no way careless as to his nephew's welfare in the spirit of Cain's "am I my brother's keeper?" For only a little later, when Lot was in difficulty, Abram armed his household to go to his rescue (Gen. xiv. 13-16).

There is surely a counterpart to this in the New Testament where Paul and Barnabas parted company because contention between them over a matter arising in the Lord's service became so sharp (Acts xv. 39). These great men settled their differences by themselves without the church becoming involved. There is not a word to suggest that the two men found it impossible to take the Lord's supper together. It is small-minded and selfish to permit a personal difference of judgment, however regrettable, to involve the whole church.

It is important to notice however, that possible further disagreement was inherent in Abram's suggestion that he should go one way, and Lot the other. What if both wanted to go the same way? Which of them should have the choice?

Abram foresaw that pitfall, and avoided it by inviting his nephew Lot to do the choosing, and by making it quite clear that whatever Lot's choice might be, he, Abram, would accept it and go the other way. He would allow no consideration of personal convenience to enter into the matter. Nothing could have been fairer than that offer.

Abram's magnanimity towards Lot stands out vividly when it is borne in mind that, of the two men, Abram undoubtedly had the right of choice. It was Abram who raised the matter and made the suggestion: Abram was senior in the matter of age: to Abram the call of God had come away back in the land of Ur; truly Lot went with him but Abram was given the lead: and without doubt Abram was much the more spiritually-minded of the two; what a poor figure Lot made in comparison!

Abram, however, walked before God, and was prepared to leave the matter for God to overrule as He saw fit. He therefore invited Lot to make the choice. And Lot accepted the offer, apparently without demur and without reference to God, or even a request to the much older man for guidance, Lot chose for

himself and the results may be traced in ch. xiii. 12, xiv. 12, xix. 1, etc. On the other hand, what Abram did appears to have pleased God, for we read that God spoke to him afterwards, and confirmed His promises to His noble- yet humble-minded servant.

That Abram's wise move preserved the peace there can be no doubt for nothing further is heard of strife between him and Lot. On the other hand Abram became a great blessing to his nephew, both in rescuing him from the captivity of the four kings and by his intercession for the doomed city of Sodom when the hour of its judgment arrived.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” were the words of our Lord Himself (Matt. v. 9). Abraham was the first to qualify for this commendation so far as Scripture records. May we all follow in the footsteps of this great man and be willing to make such personal sacrifices as may be necessary for the preservation of peace amongst the people of God.

E. A. PETTMAN.

An Important Subject

II. The Church—its Unity

Readers will be aware that the “church” is referred to in the New Testament as the body of Christ, the House of God, and in other ways. The present article will however deal with passages in Scripture concerning the church as such.

Current usage in christendom uses the word “church” in many different ways, e.g. St. John's church (a material building); the Wesleyan church (the company following the teaching of John Wesley); the Church of England (a national church); a career (in comparison with the army or the navy). It need hardly be said that none of these senses of the word is found in Scripture.

In New Testament times the Greek word translated “church” in the Authorised Version was in ordinary use for the assembly of freemen in a city called together to deal with the city's affairs. It is used in this way in Acts xix. 32, 39, 41 for the concourse of citizens in Ephesus. Basically it may be understood as the freemen, called out (from their normal occupation) and called together.

Christ's church consists of those whom He has made free, has called out, and calls together.

We find the word used in the New Testament in three ways, viz:—

1. The whole company of believers from Pentecost (Acts ii) to the coming of the Lord for His own (1 Thess. iv. etc).
2. The company of believers in a town, city, etc. (e.g. 1 Cor. i. 2 etc.).
3. All professing christians (true and otherwise) in a town etc., regarded collectively (e.g. Rev. ii and iii).

In this article the word will be used in these three senses according to the context, and may be replaced by the word "assembly" in order to emphasize the fact that it does not have the meanings in current usage as referred to earlier.

The first mention of the church is when the Lord Jesus said "I will build My church"—not churches (Matt. xvi. 18). It is "by the church"—not churches—that the manifold wisdom of God is now being displayed to principalities and powers in heavenly places. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." He is sanctifying and cleansing it now, and will present it to Himself a glorious church (Eph. iii. 10; v. 25-27).

These and similar passages make the unity of the church very evident in the thoughts of the Lord Jesus before its formation began, and throughout its existence here on earth, until He presents it to Himself perfect in unity, a glorious church. Its unity, while the manifold wisdom of God is being made known in it, is realised by the principalities and powers in heavenly places. It is a blessed privilege and a triumph of grace that you and I, not by any merits of our own, but entirely through the efficacy of the atoning work of Christ, are included in this church which is a "pearl of great price" in Christ's estimation, the object of His love for which He gave Himself, His constant care. What thanksgiving and praise and worship are due from us to Him! It is humbling, and stimulating too, to remember that we are included in the church by which the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places. This demands watchfulness on our part that our conduct may be glorifying to God.

Bearing in mind that the Lord Jesus said “ *I will build My church,*” the formation of local churches as the preaching and teaching spread out from Jerusalem to Samaria, and then to the Gentile world, is very simply presented in the Acts. For instance, the believers in Jerusalem, except the apostles, were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word. Philip preached Christ in Samaria. Peter and John followed, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. Then (after Saul was converted) the *churches* had rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria. Nothing is recorded about any organization or formality. The gospel was preached and believed. The believers received the Holy Ghost. The church in the town or village became a fact (Acts viii. 1, 4, 14, 17, 25; ix, 31). There is a parallel series in Acts xiii. xiv. Paul and Barnabas preached the word in various places in what we now call Asia Minor, and as they retraced their steps they appointed elders in *every church*.

While Scripture uses the word “ church ” in a local sense, and refers to “ churches ” as above, the unity of the church as a whole is also safeguarded. The local “ church ” is not represented as an independent unity, but as the local expression of the whole church. The book of the Acts contains several examples of the links established and maintained between the different assemblies. The converts in Samaria (Acts viii) did not receive the Holy Spirit until two apostles had come from Jerusalem, had prayed for them, and had identified themselves with the Samaritan Christians by laying their hands on them. On the other hand the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles converted at Caesarea, plainly linking them with all other believers having the gift of the Holy Ghost, before they had even been baptized and without any “ laying on of hands.” If in the former case the link between believers in Jerusalem and those in Samaria was *by human agency* (Peter and John), in the latter instance the link between those converted from among the Jews and from among the Gentiles respectively was from heaven *without any human intermediary*. There are many other ways in which the essential unity of the church was manifested in the times of the apostles. The subject of unity will also be referred to, God willing, when considering the church as the body of Christ.

Before leaving this point, however, an example from the epistles

is helpful. At Corinth a man (apparently truly a believer) was guilty of gross immorality and was to be put away from among the company of believers, i.e. the local church. But the epistle is addressed not only to the local church, but to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" and the exclusion of this man was effective accordingly. This passage is not referred to here in connection with the subject of discipline, but simply as showing the bond of unity between the church at Corinth and the whole company of believers.

The writer feels the need of pressing this subject of unity. He has recently come across the following passage in an otherwise helpful book: "The New Testament teaches that while there is actually only one church there can be any number of local churches formed into various denominations and societies or councils. These local churches and denominational groups may be divided along racial lines, national lines, theological lines according to the temperament of their members." Emphatically, such teaching is *not* found in the New Testament. The denominations, societies, councils, groups and divisions according to temperament are the result of the activity of man's natural will in opposition to the uniting work of the Holy Spirit, and while the New Testament has many warnings against such things it has nothing to say in their justification. They are sadly dishonouring to the Lord. They have ruined the church's testimony to the unity so fully expressed in Eph. iv, to which further reference may be made, if the Lord permit, in a later article.

Nevertheless the Lord still sees and owns His church, comprised of everyone who has heard and believed the gospel that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day (see Matt. xvi. 18 and 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). Not one will be left behind when He comes in the air with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). All will be included in the church which He will present to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

From the various Scriptures already quoted it will be clear that the church has a distinctly heavenly character. Its future is heavenly blessing. Those who compose it have been given life together with Christ (Eph. ii. 5), a life that inseparably unites us

with Him, and in the purposes of God we have been raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. All this is in complete contrast with the earthly blessings promised to Israel, though all who died in faith before Christ will undoubtedly also have their place in heaven, a different, but none dare say less blessed, place than that enjoyed by those who compose the church.

As we dwell upon the place the church has in Christ's affections, the reality of its unity, and its heavenly character, we cannot fail to thank and praise and worship God that we have been brought into the church by His mercy and grace, and the "great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." May this be so, and may our ways and our thoughts be moulded accordingly.

J. C. KELL.



Lord's Day Reflections

II: AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER FROM GOD

Luke xxiii, 35—43

The demand made to our Saviour by the people and rulers, and later by the soldiers and the impenitent thief, that He should save Himself and come down from the cross involved two important challenges. In the first place it was implied by His enemies that, if He failed to save Himself, the Saviour would forfeit His claim to be accepted as King of Israel: and secondly, if He were unable to save Himself, no one would believe that He could save others. Foundation truths of the Christian faith were therefore being assailed.

It will be remembered that when the unbelieving nation demanded proof of the Lord's personal claims and authority, the sign He appointed was His own resurrection (John ii. 18—22). Not by escaping death, but by rising from among the dead, He would demonstrate to all men for all time that He was the Christ of God. The first of the two challenges had therefore to await the third day for its full answer.

In the meantime there were physical occurrences such as the hours of darkness over the whole land, the earthquake, the rending of rocks and the bursting open of graves, which wrought conviction, at least in the mind of the Roman centurion, that the One Whose crucifixion he had superintended was no mere man. God, it seems, would not permit the day of the Saviour's extreme humiliation and death to pass without unmistakable witness to the glory of the Person Who had laid down His life. Nevertheless, the final vindication of the Son of God must needs await the morning of His resurrection.

But what of the second challenge—Christ's power to save? What length of time should be allowed to elapse before any possible doubt as to the Saviour's saving power was removed? In a world where sinners were dying every day, every hour, every minute and even every second, how long must the way of salvation remain uncertain?

God's answer, in grace, was *immediate*. On each side of the Saviour as He hung upon the cross there was a thief, suffering crucifixion as the due reward of his sins. One of the two remained impenitent: the other repented and became the object of God's sovereign mercy. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," he cried. Swift and sure came the Saviour's answer: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise!" Can the Saviour who declines to save Himself and come down from the cross save others? He can indeed; and all the world should know it. Above the clamour and din of man's wickedness the sweet chimes of the gospel pealed forth to the ends of the earth! Blessed Saviour! how great was thy triumph over Thine enemies! To Thee be praise and glory for ever! Amen.

The way in which the wicked insinuation of placing the Saviour between two felons was defeated by the overruling of God on this occasion is very beautiful and comforting. Men put the thieves where they did to shame the Saviour; God availed Himself of their presence there to demonstrate the Saviour's power to save. God makes the wrath of men to praise Him; the remainder He restrains (Psalm lxxvi. 10).

E. A. PETTMAN.

Notes from a Bible Reading on Genesis ii. 4 — iii. 24

v. 4. God is here referred to throughout as Jehovah Elohim, whereas Elohim alone had previously been employed. "Jehovah" expresses God's unchanging faithfulness, and is therefore used when the subject is God in relationship with man. The distinction is seen clearly in Exodus vi. 2, 3. There God acts in the name of Jehovah towards His people Israel whom He chose to be in special relationship with Him, in contrast with "God Almighty" which was the character in which He had acted towards Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same is true here—it is God the Creator in chapter i, but in chapter ii, man receives from Him the breath of life, communes with Him, is placed on the ground of responsibility by Him and receives from Him his helpmate. The names by which God is referred to throughout Scripture are used with unerring precision in relation to the context of each passage. How fitting is the emphasis on God's faithfulness in chapter iii, where we have the promise as to the woman's seed! In Jesus (Jehovah, Saviour) we see the crown of God's faithfulness to His fallen creature.

vv. 5, 6—The creation of the vegetable kingdom is stated and that prior to rain or cultivation.

v. 7—In contrast with all else is the creation of Man. There is the distinctive act of communication of life to man by the breathing of God, and he must therefore be fundamentally different from the "beasts that perish." He is "spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess. v. 23) by the direct in-breathing of God. The word of God alone can divide between soul and spirit (Heb. iv. 12). The Old Testament deals primarily with man as he is on the earth in his natural ("soulish") body (1 Cor. xv. 44) and the New Testament emphasises the spiritual side. The spirit in man is, however, frequently referred to in the O.T. (Zech. xii, 1: Job xxxii, 8, xxxiii, 4, xxvii, 2,3: Isa. lvii. 15, 16, etc.).

vv. 8-17—God prepares a "paradise for pleasure" for man and introduces him into it. God is ever the Giver of good. The garden was the centre of blessing for the world, for thence the four streams flowed. For man it provided beauty, food and congenial occupation, and also a simple test of his obedience to the will of

God. To eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not in itself sinful, but rebellion against God was, and this discloses to us that the true nature of sin is lawlessness (1 John iii. 4, N.Tr.). The consequences of disobedience were revealed to Adam; he would thereupon become subject to death.

vv, 18-24—Adam's intellectual powers were perfect and God delighted in His creature's exercise (in the naming of the lower creation) of the dominion that he had been given, but man needed for the satisfaction of his moral nature an object for his affection, and God supplies this in man's "helpmate," formed of that which was nearest his heart. There are always evil results where the divine order is set aside. The creation of woman and her place is referred to in the N.T. as embodying important principles and as prophetic of Christ and His church (Matt. xix. 5, 6: 1 Cor. vi. 16, xi. 9-16: Eph. v. 25-33: 1 Tim. ii. 11-15).

Ch. iii, 1-8—This unique account of the origin of sin in man is undoubtedly to be taken literally and not figuratively. The N.T. references to it are conclusive (Rom. v. 12-21: 1 Cor. xv. 22: 2 Cor. xi. 3: 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14). Scripture makes it clear elsewhere however that it was Satan who acted through the serpent (see John viii. 44: Rev. xii. 9, xx. 2). He begins by raising a question as to what God had said, and emphasises the solitary negative commandment (cf. verse 1 with chapter ii. 16, 17). Eve adds to God's words, and Satan thereupon flatly contradicts what God had said and insinuates a doubt as to God's goodness. Contrast the temptation of the Lord Jesus; He, in such different surroundings, meets Satan's voice with the precise word of God.

Eve was deceived, and her heart now out of the place of subjection to God's word is swayed by her desires; she sees, desires, and takes, and then out of her proper sphere she acts as head and induces her husband to eat also. Adam was not deceived (v. 17: 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14).

The knowledge of good and evil was thus acquired, but with it a guilty conscience, and they hid themselves from God.

vv. 9-19—The first question in the O.T. is "Where art thou?" Contrast the first question in the N.T. "Where is He?" (Matt. ii, 2). Notice how deliberately God acts in judgment. There is the fullest enquiry of each in turn and then the suited judgment

is pronounced first on the serpent (from whom the curse is never removed, Isa. lxxv, 25) then on the woman, and lastly, the man. Mercy rejoices over judgment, and there is the promise that the final victory will not be Satan's, for a Deliverer will come born of a woman. (See Luke i. 31-33).

vv, 20-24—In spite of the sentence of death he had just heard Adam rests on God's promise and names his wife accordingly "living." Thereupon *God* clothes them through the death of others, thus introducing a principle of immense importance in the ways of God. But man is sent from the garden lest he should partake of the tree of life and thereby endeavour to defy the judgment of God. The cherubim are the executors of God's judgment; they are next referred to as gazing (in figure) on the mercy seat (Exod. xxv. 20).

The eternal life which is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ is of an immensely higher character than any that Eden's tree might have imparted (John xvii. 3). How that can be righteously given to sinful man is one of the great themes developed in God's revelation to us.

LEONARD C. HOCKING.

Note on Genesis iii. 15

Moreover, the Conqueror is the woman's Seed. We are apt to miss the force of this, just by our familiarity with it. Not yet had the mystery of human birth been accomplished upon earth. The lowliness of origin, the helpless weakness and ignorance of infancy so long protracted beyond that of kindred bestial life around,—this, by which God would stain the pride of man, was that through which Adam and his wife had never passed. The Seed of the woman implied all this. With what astonishment we may well conceive Satan to have contemplated the childhood of the first-born of the human race; and to have thought of the word, whose certainty he could not doubt (for Satan, the Father of lies, is no unbeliever), that the heel of One so born and nurtured was to be one day upon his own proud angelic head!

EXTRACTED.

Sparkling Gems

“ Jesus and the resurrection.” Does not time seem a more solemn stewardship and duty receive a richer stimulus and the life that now is appear but a light thing in comparison with the life that resurrection inspires ? Dwell in this comforting thought thou tempted and sorrowing believer, for it speaks encouragement and assurance for you.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Let us distrust the flattery of the world. A moment's reflection before the Lord would tell us that the world flatters to enfeeble us.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There is no food for the soul, no peace, no rest away from Christ.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We are not in the glory yet, but we are in the love that will bring us there. “ Keep yourselves in the love of God ” is therefore the Spirit's exhortation.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The waters of the Red Sea rolled between the camp and Egypt ; and the deeper and darker waters of the death of Christ roll between the Church of God and this present evil world.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Try the word of God as “ the cup of consolation ” it has never failed to cheer the despondent.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The life of the world is self-pleasing and self-exaltation. The life of heaven is holy, self-denying love.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The devil makes use of the world to entangle people, to excite the flesh, stirring up the natural liking of our heart for present honour and ease.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jesus is rest. God rests in Him. The redeemed rest in Him. Eternity is rest with Him.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Lord keep us simple, peaceful and subject to scripture.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

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FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

There are many of God's children who, through infirmity or other cause, are unable to attend meetings for ministry of the Word of God. One of the objects of this Magazine is to enable such persons to receive current ministry through the medium of its pages. This can be possible, however, only if what is given orally can be made available for reproduction in print.

It is too much to expect speakers themselves always to be able to perform the double duty of giving the spoken word and writing it out afterwards (or beforehand) for the benefit of those not present. This however provides an opportunity for younger folk who write shorthand and attend the meetings to take down what is said, transcribe it at their leisure and send the notes (or a précis of them) to the Editor for consideration. Such a service to others will surely be acceptable to the Lord, and highly profitable not only to the person doing it, but to the many who will read the results of their labours.

We trust this appeal will meet with a ready response.

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

III The Church—The Body of Christ.

THE aspect of the church as the body of Christ was specifically made known by revelation to the apostle Paul (Eph. iii). He speaks of it in the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians. The body consists of all who are truly Christ's from Pentecost (Acts ii), to the Lord's coming in the air (I Thess. iv.) and none else. The term is not used in a wider sense to include those who only profess to be christians. The unity of the church, referred to in the previous article, finds its most emphatic expression in the one body.

The term "body" is used in common parlance to-day for any company united by a common purpose, however much the individuals may be disunited in every other respect. Men talk of "the body politic", "the various Nonconformist bodies" etc. The word "member" implies membership of a *body*, but is applied very loosely to-day to an individual in an association or company of any kind—for example "a member of the Shipwrights' Union", "a member of St. John's church," "a member of our meeting," etc., etc. Most of us are guilty of using the word in a limited or partial sense. But in the Scriptures *a member is an intrinsic part of the body of Christ*, just as one's finger is an intrinsic part of one's natural body. It is not a part of the body in some respects or at certain times only, and a part of something else, or an independent unit, in other respects or at other times. So it is with members of the body of Christ.

It is also often forgotten that a body without a head is lifeless. The body which we are now considering is united inseparably to its Head, Who is none other than Christ, raised from the dead and seated in heavenly places at the right hand of God, the Father of glory (Eph. i. 17-23). *As one writer has said: "so intimate is the unity that the whole organic spiritual formation is described in 1 Cor. xii. 12 as 'the Christ'."*

As regards the term "church" it was previously pointed out that in Scripture it is used of the whole redeemed company from Pentecost to the Rapture, and also of the local company in a city or town. The term "body" is not used of the local company, as a body is not complete without *all* its members. I Cor. xii. 27 may seem to say otherwise, but the epistle is addressed to "the church of God which is at Corinth—with *all that in every place* call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord." The most that can be said of a local church from this point of view is that it represents the body of Christ in character.

The four epistles already named set out different lines of teaching about the one body. In Romans xii the Spirit of God instructs us that as one body in Christ we are members one of another, but all members have not the same office (function). Each should therefore think of himself soberly as one of many members, and should carry out his office diligently and effectively according to its particular character.

This subject is dealt with more fully in 1 Cor. xii. First, those who are saved are all baptized by one Spirit into one body (v. 13)—this is true of every believer in the Lord Jesus. It is not dependent on feelings or knowledge, but a fact, the work of the Holy Spirit. Each member has his own function in the body, and God has set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him (v. 18). Each member should recognize and honour the others, recognizing also that God has tempered the body together so that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another (v. 25).

The passage also shows the diversity of functions of the various members of the body of Christ, but reminds us that it is the Spirit Who has baptised us into that body, that it is God Who has determined the function of each member in the body, and it is God Who has fitted us together. No member should think he himself is unimportant, still less that another is unnecessary. The gifts that follow in verses 28 to 31 are cited, in the first place, as illustrating the variety of functions of members of the body, leading on to that more excellent way

than coveting even the best gifts, the love (charity) that *every* member of the body may have in activity one towards another.

In Ephesians the body is first presented as the "fulness" of the risen exalted Christ Who filleth all in all. The Greek word translated "fulness" is translated "that which is put in to fill up" (Matt. ix. 16), "piece that filled up" (Mark ii. 21). We may say therefore, with no irreverence, that the church which is His body is essential to the risen exalted Christ, its Head. How wonderfully the subject of the body is introduced in this epistle! In chapters ii and iii the grand truth that Jews who "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others", and Gentiles "having no hope and without God in the world", might be reconciled unto God in one body by the cross (ii. 3, 12, 16)—a mystery in other ages not made known but now revealed (iii. 5). It is the work of God "by the blood of Christ", "by the cross", and the expressions "in Christ Jesus", "through Christ Jesus", "by the Spirit" characterise these chapters. The power, mercy, love, grace, kindness, wisdom and eternal purpose of God have been manifested. What a subject this is for our contemplation, leading to adoring thanksgiving and worship, and to the desires expressed in the prayer of the apostle at the end of chapter iii, to which surely we may add our hearty amens.

A practical exhortation follows in chapter iv. Then the sevenfold divine unity, which includes the unity of the body, indestructible, eternal, is brought before us. *The development of the body follows.* Apostles and prophets were given to communicate the mind of God. Evangelists use the gospel so communicated to add to the body. Pastors and teachers build up the members of the body. There is growth, continuing until the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ is reached, when (we conclude) the body and the Head will be united in heaven. Meanwhile, from the Head in heaven, "the whole body (still down here) fitly joined together and compacted by that which *every* joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of *every* part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16).

In Colossians the references to the body are specially connected with the Headship of Christ. The Head is the Source of all nourishment for the body (ii. 19). Our responsibility is to hold the Head, and not to attempt to get nourishment, unity, or increase from ritual, the rudiments of the world, or the commandments and doctrines of men.

Thus in the four epistles, each of which speaks of the "one body", the Spirit of God brings before us the relationship of all the members to one another; the sovereign working of God, of the Holy Spirit and of Christ in the formation, development and full growth of the body; its place, united to the Head in His exalted supremacy; and the dependence of the members on the Head for the supply of all needed nourishment, knitting together and increase.

The passages referred to above have only been outlined. There is very much more to learn from them. Other points connected with this subject have been dealt with in recent articles on the church, which may well be re-read (Jan.—Mar. issues of Words of Help). It will also be necessary to refer to the unity of the body, if the Lord permit, when the "coming together" of believers in assembly character to break bread or for other purposes is under consideration.

Study and occupation with these wonderful truths ought to have four practical results in us, viz:—

- a. The evangelist will find increased incentive to spread the gospel in the knowledge that the Head is using him to add to the members of His body. The pastors and teachers will be encouraged to persevere in their service by the fact that they are being used for the growth and health of their fellow-members. The members not possessing such gifts will nevertheless be more zealous in carrying out their particular functions in the body as they remember that *God has set them in the body as it hath pleased Him*, and that "the whole body—according to the effectual working in the increase of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16).
- b. Each of us will have more respect, honour and love towards all our fellow-members.

- c. A more heavenly character will be reproduced in our daily lives by subjection to our risen Head in heaven.
- d. We shall find increasing matter for our thanksgiving, praise and worship to God the Father and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God grant that these results may be produced more and more in writer and readers.

J. C. Kell.



CONFIDENCE

Augmented Gleanings from a recent address in North London.

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.
(Phil. i. 6).

IN the days in which we live, when both churches and individuals are feeling the pressure and perplexity occasioned by the general declension from vigorous christianity, the removal of godly men without apparent replacement, the shrinking or complete dying out of local assemblies, and the internal strife that rends many that remain, we may with profit seek the source of that robust confidence which Paul's writings everywhere breathe. His letters are characterised by a deep-rooted and unassailable assurance which burns everywhere like a beacon, and communicates itself infectiously to the reader, so that their study is specially rewarding in modern times when both faith and confidence are so much at a discount.

It may be thought that when Paul wrote to the Philippians his circumstances were such that the confident tenor of his letter was but a reflection of his own happy state. Actually, he was a prisoner to Nero in Rome, his liberty for preaching the gospel and serving the churches he loved seriously curtailed. Some preachers were flaunting their liberty to add sharpness to his captivity. Though permitted to live in his own house, he was never allowed to forget he was Rome's prisoner, being

bound by chains to his guards. His future was calculated only to fill him with the darkest foreboding, for he could not tell how matters would go with him. Manifestly Paul's circumstances afforded no ground for confidence.

It may be suggested alternatively that the reason lay in the Philippians themselves. This was a church Paul had planted himself (Acts xvi), and perhaps its progress and healthy state infused him with confidence! But the evidence of the epistle is against this too. Paul's stay amongst them had not been long enough to establish them thoroughly, and there is strong indication of the development at Philippi of internal strife and high-mindedness which the second chapter of the epistle was designed to check, and which had resulted already in a breach between two named women (ch. iv. 2). Add to this the report that judaizing teachers, who had wrought such havoc elsewhere, were about to turn their attention to Philippi, and there would appear to be grounds for misgiving rather than for confidence. What would happen to the infant church?

No! it was despite, not because of, their condition and his own that Paul's confidence remained, and that confidence stemmed from nothing and no one but the God of grace and glory Who filled the apostle's life and vision! The work was not Paul's, but God's. He had begun it, He would sustain it; and He alone would finish it. This is blessedly true of the whole church of God as well as of each believer who forms part of it. Not the world, the flesh nor the devil; neither corporate nor individual failure; nor all the powers of hell, can negative that which God has purposed in Himself, and which He will bring to full and perfect fruition.

That good work begun in the Philippians was God's and His alone. And the same is true for us all. Every born-again christian is a miracle of God's own handiwork, and although it is a continuing responsibility to work out our own salvation (ch. ii. 12), we not only can do so, but we shall, because it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (v. 13). For each believer there is truly a daily conflict with the flesh. The world does not change in its open enmity or seductiveness, and much more difficulty arises from the

deliberate onslaught upon our spirits of "principalities, powers and the rulers of darkness" (Eph. vi. 12), than probably any of us suspects.

We may yearn for a cessation of trials and tribulations, but how then are we to learn what that God, Who is "for us" (Rom. viii. 31), is, or to know the blessedness of trust in Him when all is dark? Confidence is non-existent, or a delusion, whose spring is in ourselves or in our brethren, our prospering local church, or anywhere else than in God Himself. But He remains, unchanged and unchanging, when all these fail.

This lesson is surely one the people of God in all ages have had to learn. Habakkuk ends his prophecy on this sublime note, having learned to say, when every circumstance was utterly depressing: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places" (ch. iii. 18-19).

When work for the Lord that once flourished declines and dies, when prosperous times that have encouraged in the past fail and dissolve, there is strong temptation to give up and decline ourselves; to allow knees to weaken and hands to hang listlessly down. We need therefore the challenge of Pauline confidence. If the work is hard and long and unrewarding, if results are meagre, if preaching wins but few souls, if Sunday school and young people's work flames temporarily and then dies, leaving but little to show for the efforts made, what are we going to do? Shall the sower cease because the larger proportion of the seed is wasted and only the smaller fructifies (Matt. xiii)? Or is our eye truly upon God and not on 'things', and do we go steadfastly on, come rain or sunshine, believing implicitly that "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psa. cxxvi. 6)?

However it may be with us, the power to go on, despite every discouragement and disappointment, will be found only where Paul found his—in God. No weapon forged by man or devil can succeed against him whose sole confidence is there. After over twenty years of arduous and faithful toil, and in

prospect of bonds and afflictions and final martyrdom, the man whose trust was in God could say: "but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear" (Acts xx. 24). Less than ten years later, now Paul the aged (prematurely, perhaps, by reason of his manifold exertions) on the eve of execution, his life's work already being poisoned by apostate teachers, friendless and forsaken like his Master before him, his solitary companion Luke, that supreme confidence in God shines with undimmed lustre: "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me—and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. iv. 17-18).

Shall it be less so, reader, with us? Shall we not take fresh courage, assured that He Who has purposed and planned will perfect and perform. Infinitely to be trusted, perfect in all His ways, God will not forego His purpose, but will bring each one of His own by sovereign grace unto praise and honour and glory in the day of Jesus Christ.

The work which His goodness began,
 The arm of His strength will complete;
 His promise is Yea and Amen,
 And never was forfeited yet:
 Things future, nor things that are now,
 Nor all things below or above,
 Can make Him His purpose forego,
 Or sever our souls from His love.

L. A. Jones.

THE PATCH OF LENTILS

IT was only a patch of lentils (2 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12) and of barley (1 Chron. xi. 13, 14). But the Philistines, out on a foraging expedition, set their minds on stripping it before the faces of the people of Israel. The latter turned their backs on their foes and fled, except three resolute men, viz:— David the

outcast king, Eleazar the son of Dodo, and Shammah the son of Agee. These men of might stood firm in the midst of the plot of ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines. In result, Jehovah wrought a great deliverance for Israel through these heroes of faith.

We will not now concern ourselves with the cowards of Israel who were willing to surrender their crops without a struggle. But the valiant men who in the name of the Lord faced the Philistine host are noble examples of simple-hearted fidelity and unqualified reliance upon divine power for victory.

They had a very clear notion of what was at stake in this raid. They did not consider themselves involved in a personal quarrel with the Philistines. To them these enemies were the enemies of Jehovah of hosts. These uncircumcised warriors had defied the God of the armies of Israel (*compare* 1 Sam. xvii. 45). In His name therefore they fought, few though they were. In His name they conquered.

Heart to heart, shoulder to shoulder, the trio stood fast among the lentils and barley, assured within themselves of the impotence of their foes when matched against the omnipotence of the God of battles. Nor did this brave boast in the faithfulness of their God prove to be empty and vain. Nor, indeed, is such faith ever put to shame.

But what was the value of this little plot of cereals after all? On consideration, was it worth such a struggle against such odds? It was not a vineyard, nor an oliveyard, nor even a wheatfield; it was only a patch of lentils and barley.

But these truehearted men saw it to be part of the land flowing with milk and honey. The small plot produced its contribution of food for God's people, if only lentils. According to His promise to Abraham, God had given the territory and its fruits to their nation. Hence as the seed of Abraham, they undauntedly held fast their heritage against the robbers. The Lord was on their side, and the victory was theirs.

We believe this incident affords a practical illustration of a principle of faith and courage which is called for in our times. It may be exhibited on a variety of occasions, but we only refer now to one of the most important of these.

Satan is our tireless foe, who in one way and another is continually making devastating raids upon the children of God. One of his most violent and rapacious attacks in the present day is directed towards the word of God. The primary object of his hostility is to deprive believers of their spiritual food. To this end he schemes to destroy their faith in the verbal inspiration of scripture.

Let us not be ignorant of the cunning devices of the evil one. In the sixteenth century, he was making bonfires of Bibles and Bible-readers in all parts of this country. In the twentieth century, since he has failed to get rid of the whole book, he is equally busy in tearing out its leaves. But the latter work of destruction is not so widely recognised as the former was.

We wish, with the help of God, to write plain words on this subject for plain people, and we do not hesitate in reiterating to our readers the solemn warning that the men who mutilate the Bible under whatever pretext are engaged in the destructive work of the adversary.

Beware of being deluded by specious argument or pedantic assertion into making the admission that some parts of holy scripture are uninspired and unprofitable, and are, therefore, of no real value. Hold fast to its own statement regarding itself: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" (2 Tim. iii. 16).

The modern Philistine horde insist, for example, upon your giving up the six days of the first of Genesis; the story of the ark and the flood; the incident of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah; the narrative of the way opened for Israel through the Red Sea; the account of Joshua and the sun and moon; the record of Jonah and the fish; the description of occasional healing in the pool of Bethesda; and many other portions of the Old and New Testaments.

They allege that the parts whose surrender they demand are very difficult of understanding according to modern ideas, and they contain nothing of any spiritual profit, that nothing of any real value will be lost by giving them up, and that the great moral and doctrinal principles of the Bible are all the better for being cleared of all such "legendary lore", "mythic fables," "poetic fictions," etc.

In plain English, these enemies within our borders wish us to believe that the Bible contains a great many lentil-patches which are not worth the risk of a skirmish in defence. They flourish their weapons of Hebrew and Greek, of archaeological and scientific discoveries, and they expect us to be affrighted, to run away, and to let them take from us the lentils and barley anyway.

But King David fought determinedly for his plot of lentils, though only a couple of his followers stood at his side. He was clear that he had his feet upon a portion of the promised land, of God's land, of his land, and he refused to yield so much as a handbreadth to the foe.

In a similar spirit of stoutheartedness, christians are called to stand for the lentil-patches of the Bible. In scripture there is not a single unnecessary chapter, or verse, or even word. To give up so much as one iota is to mar the symmetry of the whole. What God has given must be perfect as well as necessary. If we fail to apprehend or appreciate the purpose and beauty of the word of God either in its unity or in its details, let us at least have the modesty to suppose the defect to be in ourselves and not in the holy scriptures.

We do not think christians view the Bible with sufficient clearness as a sacred deposit from God which they are responsible to hold in trust as good stewards. We should value it because of the Giver as well as for many supplementary reasons. We are bound to stand for the full inspiration of the early chapters of Chronicles, for example, not because of the delight with which we peruse the long lists of names. But God gave these portions in the first instance, and He has since preserved them as an integral part of holy scripture through many ages; and now when the enemy seeks to rob us of them, shall we be such recreants as to flee under the excuse that it is only a patch of lentils?

Nay, brethren, by the love that gave the Son of God to save you, be valiant, quit yourselves like men, and firmly resist the inroads of Satan upon the truth and sanctity of God's own word. The victory is bound to be yours, and your reward will be great.

W. J. Hocking.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

The solemn hush of midnight
 Is over land and sea;
 I am alone, Lord Jesus,
 Alone at last with Thee.
 My heart has been so restless,
 So fevered all the day;
 And now in this sweet silence
 I come apart to pray.

Forgive me, oh, forgive me!
 I trusted Thee so ill;
 And chafed and fretted sorely,
 Nor rested in Thy will.
 Forgive me, oh, forgive me!
 For all my faithless fears;
 I might have known Thee better
 After Thy care of years.

All, all that is around me,
 And all that is to be,
 Is in Thy hands, Lord Jesus,
 And they were pierced for me.
 Ah, wounded hands, and tender,
 They cannot lead astray;
 I put mine own within them,
 And follow, and obey.

Thou knowest all I hope for,
 Thou knowest all I dread;
 Thou seest, as I cannot,
 The hidden path ahead.
 Ah, wounded hands, and tender!
 Ah, loving, broken heart!
 How slowly am I learning
To know Thee as Thou art!

Sparkling Gems

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GOD's power is just fitted for the saint's weakness; and the saint's weakness is just fitted for GOD's power.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Our path through the desert is strewn with countless mercies, and yet let but a cloud, the size of a man's hand, appear on the horizon and we forget the rich mercies of the past, in view of this single cloud, which after all, may "break in blessings on our head".

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Nothing is more dishonouring to GOD, than the manifestation of a complaining spirit on the part of those that belong to Him.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The manna was so pure and delicate that it could not bear contact with earth. It fell upon the dew (Numbers 11.9) and had to be gathered ere the sun was up. Each one, therefore, had to rise early and seek his daily portion. So it is with the people of GOD now. The heavenly manna must be gathered fresh every morning.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Whenever we get into trial, we may feel confident that, with the trial, there is an issue and all we need is a broken will and a single eye to see it.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Oh for a heart to serve Him! A patient, humble, self-emptying, devoted heart! A heart ready to serve in company, ready to serve alone; a heart so filled with love to CHRIST that it will find its joy, its chief joy, in serving Him, let the sphere or character of service be what it may.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It is our happy and holy duty to submit to Scripture, to bow down, absolutely and implicitly, to its divine authority.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

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At this time of the year many make a point of checking up on the books they possess, with a view to getting rid of any surplus or copies not likely to be used or read.

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WORDS OF HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

JULY, 1956

VOL. XLIV

No. 7

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EDITORIAL NOTE

We are indebted to a correspondent for the following:—

“Words of Help” is not a book, but a magazine, and should be treated as such. It should not be read through at one sitting as though it were a continuous story. Reading one article at a time, with its Scripture, is the way of greatest profit.

It is our aim to provide readers each month (D.V.) with articles of varied character, i.e. devotional, practical, expository, prophetic, etc. These call for differing degrees of critical study and prayerful meditation, and we therefore commend our correspondent’s comment to our readers.

We shall welcome further helpful suggestions of this kind from our readers.

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS.

III. "The Lord Hath Need of Them"

(Read Matthew xxi. 1-11)

What a wonderful instance it is of the grace of the LORD JESUS, that such words as these should be spoken of Him, Who is Creator of all, "The Lord hath need"!

The LORD JESUS had come into this world. He had been seen and heard; and He had been rejected. Now the time has come for Him to be offered up. He is on His last journey to Jerusalem, and He is indebted to another even for the ass on which He rode into the city in fulfilment of the words of the prophet.

The evangelist quotes from the prophet Zechariah (ix. 9), but there is a notable omission in the words as he quotes them. The prophet had said, not only that the LORD JESUS would be "meek, riding upon the foal of an ass," but also that He would be "just, and having salvation." But the latter clause is omitted in the Gospel, because it still awaits its fulfilment.

The time will come when the LORD JESUS will appear in all His glory and power for the salvation of His people. But now He had come in all meekness and grace, and He is indebted to another! We think of Him as the Creator of heaven and earth, the One to Whom all owed their existence. What infinite grace, how far beyond all that the human heart could ever have imagined, is brought before us in these words: "The Lord hath need of them".

Beloved, there is another thing brought before us here. The LORD sends two of His disciples to the house of a man whom evidently they did not know, and He tells them what they would find there, and gives them directions how they were to act. The disciples would naturally anticipate difficulties. Might not the owner object to strangers leading away his beasts?

The LORD JESUS answers their difficulties. The nation might reject Him, but in that village there was one man upon whom He could count, He says, "You have only to say, 'The Lord hath need of them,' and he will not only permit you to bring the animals, but immediately he will send them."

How refreshing to the heart of the LORD JESUS at such a

moment! Men had seen His grace, and wondered, not only at His acts of power, but at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. He had fed the multitudes when hungry and healed them when sick; for three years they had looked upon Him, and now they were united in rejecting Him. How refreshing for the LORD JESUS to be able to count upon the love of this man.

It was not as though the disciples had gone and found a crowd of animals there from which some might easily be spared; these were the only ones, apparently, the man possessed. The LORD JESUS said, "It will be enough if you mention My Name; if you say that I have need of them, straightway he will send them."

Beloved, we often sing, "LORD JESUS, we love Thee." It is the hour of the LORD'S rejection now, when men hear of Him but, alas, are not attracted to Him. For how little, alas, does He count in the opinion of those around us, at the present day! What is the answer, at such a time as this, that *our* hearts make to the love and grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST? We may profess to know a very great deal of truth, a very great deal which is easy for us all to profess without challenging our hearts as to the reality of our heart's affection for Him.

It is not a day of persecution now; very few are called to leave home or family for the sake of the LORD JESUS. And we are familiar with the truth of scripture, and speak of it very often without self-judgement as to how far our hearts are touched by it. But though this is not a day of persecution, it is never possible, in any day of the church's history, to follow CHRIST without denying ourselves. You know the LORD JESUS puts self-denial first: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."

We know that when we feel that the LORD JESUS has a claim upon us, we find many other things put in a claim as well, many things that we count necessary, even if not essential. There is, therefore, a danger for us all, unless the truth of GOD searches our hearts, and exercises our consciences. There is the danger of allowing other things to come first.

We know the love of the LORD JESUS; is it not this that

brings us together each LORD'S day morning, not to hear about Him, not to hear a sermon, but to be in His presence? We owe everything to Him; His love is the attraction for our souls; and as those who have known and tasted His love we gather together around Himself. But, beloved, we all know the ready answer that our hearts would make, if we were challenged as to which has the greatest claim upon us—our business and our ease on the one hand, or the LORD JESUS on the other.

These gracious, wondrous words, "The LORD hath need of them," how they ought to touch our hearts! How desirous we should be to answer to the love that we have known and believed! And the LORD JESUS is coming again; how short the time is! None of us knows how short, but supposing we knew for a certainty that He would be here by the close of another week, what searching of heart, what earnest desire this knowledge would awaken in us! We would not speak of it as a mere doctrine. Nothing in all that engaged us would be considered by us of very much importance in comparison with the LORD'S coming.

But, remember, beloved, the saints of old waited and waited for the LORD JESUS, though the majority of the nation who professed also to be waiting had so forgotten their hope that His coming took them by surprise. May we be so on the alert that we may not be taken by surprise, as will be the case with Christendom today.

May the remembrance of the LORD'S love so operate in our hearts that we may be like this man, unknown by name to us, though his character is recorded in the word of GOD. The LORD said, "Say, 'The LORD hath need of them'"; and what then? Any questions? Any excuses? Any delay? "Straightway he will send them." So, in all our weakness may such be the response of our hearts today. What a call there is for love, for zeal, on our part! And how worthy is the LORD JESUS of it! May we so enter into the love of the LORD JESUS that He may be able to count upon us in this day of lukewarmness, even as He could count upon that solitary man in that day. The LORD had to be mentioned only, and there was an immediate answer from him.

G. F. COX.

THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF WAITING ON GOD.

(Judges xx to be read)

(Notes of an address at Bridewell Hall, London, 7/2/54.)

The reader of Judges xx may well ask whether such an obscure story can have any bearing on the problems of today. Remembering, however, the witness of the HOLY SPIRIT that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. xv. 4), it will not be wrong to believe that even such a chapter as this has lessons for ourselves, and to enquire humbly what these may be.

Judges xix-xxi form one connected story. They begin and end with similar words: "in those days...there was no king in Israel", chapter xxi. 25 adding: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes". The days were therefore characterised by indiscipline and weakness. Furthermore, there is little more than casual reference to the priesthood, whose duty it was to exercise judgement in Israel—divinely appointed leadership failing to function effectively.

It is not difficult to see a parallel between those days and our own. And we ought therefore to expect to find in this Scripture something helpful to ourselves.

In the town of Gibeah, within the territory of Benjamin, there was committed one night a foul crime. The details, which the HOLY SPIRIT has seen fit to record in chapter xix, are of too shocking a character to be read publicly. Apparently, however, the facts of what happened were never in dispute, nor the guilt of the persons concerned in question.

So revolting, however, was the deed itself, and the publicity subsequently given to it, that when the nation generally became aware of the matter they decided they must take drastic action against the culprits. Unfortunately they appear to have acted in the heat of indignation, without seeking GOD's guidance—maybe they judged the matter too straightforward to need reference to GOD!—with the result that a case for discipline which appeared to be without complication of any sort (the facts being clear and indisputable) came

to involve not merely the tribe of Benjamin, but the whole nation of Israel, the final upshot being civil war. Has anything comparable with this been seen in our time among the churches: an evil which should have been localised spreading until ultimately many others are involved?

Two attempts were made to bring the wrong-doers to justice, but both failed—so much so that for a long time it appeared that wrong would prevail. It was not so in reality; it only appeared that way until counsel from GOD was sought and obtained. For it was GOD Who, in His own good time, showed them how to bring the matter to a righteous and peaceful conclusion (Chap. xx).

Finally, to complete the outline, chapter xxi records the aftermath which Israel's ill-timed attempts to discipline the men of Gibeah left to be cleared up. In the heat of their indignation Israel went much too far when they vowed everlasting separation from their brethren, the Benjamites. Their oath, however, could not be abrogated merely because it turned out to be inconvenient. So details are given of the pitiful expedients to which Israel were driven to circumvent the embarrassment which their own lack of moderation in the first place had created.

Two questions arise. Why were Israel's first two attempts to exercise discipline unsuccessful? And what alterations had there to be in their behaviour before GOD intervened? Clearly to act righteously is not enough: the *way* and the *spirit* in which it is done are of prime importance.

From verses 12 and 13 it will be seen that Israel began by issuing an ultimatum to Benjamin, demanding, not that Benjamin should put the criminals of Gibeah to death, but that they should deliver the men over to Israel so that Israel could carry out the punishment. Did they not trust their brethren to do what was right? Why the lack of confidence? It would seem as though Israel were feeling proud of their own uprightness, and snatched at the opportunity to make an exhibition of it. How easy to rush forward to condemn someone else when we feel thoroughly righteous ourselves! (Cf. John viii. 2-11).

The outcome of this tactless approach was as might be

expected. Opposition was provoked in the very quarter from which it was most essential to have help. That false move by Israel cost no fewer than 65,000 lives (see vv. 21, 25 & 35), blood which, without any doubt, lay as much at the door of Israel as at that of the original wrong-doers. Had Israel not been so impulsive the whole matter might have been confined to Gibeah, or at least to Benjamin. It is interesting to note that after verse 13 of chapter xx, there is no further mention of the original cause of the trouble, nor of how, or by whom, the punishment of the wicked was eventually carried out.

How great a conflict the matter became! What should have been confined to Gibeah as a matter of local discipline had spread and brought division between the tribes. There is something sad, if not sordid, about the last words of verse 11: "so all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man". Do we read of the nation being knit together as one man to keep a passover or other feast to the LORD?

Is this type of thing unknown to-day? What degree of zeal is there to consider the progress, or otherwise, of the work of the gospel? to consider why churches are in such low water—some dying out? why prayer meetings are so poorly attended? or to mourn over the poverty of worship when believers meet together to partake of the LORD's supper? or to consider the needs of the poor, or the temporal needs of the LORD's servants? Is it the fact, that some unworthy personal quarrel, defiling everyone that has anything to do with it, has to arise in order to knit GOD's people together as one man?

Israel's initial approach to Benjamin achieved nothing, save to provoke opposition and bitterness, and to widen the conflict. So they proceeded with measures to enforce their will on their brother tribe. Israel were 400,000 strong in fighting men (ver. 17), and they calculated, very meticulously, that one tenth (v. 10) of their force, i.e. 40,000 men, would suffice to crush the opposition. A study of the figures given in this chapter is most revealing. Israel set aside 40,000 men for their self-imposed task: exactly 40,000 (vv. 21 & 25) were slain without anything being accomplished! May this not indicate that GOD brings to nought any fleshly methods His

people adopt even in the pursuit of righteousness?

Each side had its own particular source of strength on which it relied. Gibeah possessed 700 chosen men of superlative quality (v. 15). Between them Benjamin and Gibeah had 700 left-handed men who "could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss" (v. 16). What craft! Israel, with 400,000 footmen that drew sword, were stronger numerically. But GOD blew upon it all. The cream of the nation's strength was spent without their advancing one step nearer the solution of their problem!

It may be pointed out that before the beginning of the actual warfare, Israel *did* ask counsel of GOD. Yes! but only to the extent that they wanted to know which of them should go up first: should Judah, or Simeon, or Dan take the lead (v. 18)? Was there not something of a scramble to be foremost in the execution of judgement? However that may be, GOD showed His disapproval by permitting Israel to suffer decisive defeat at the hands of Benjamin.

Israel's fault may well have been their own smug complacency. They said to Benjamin: "What wickedness is this that is done among *you*?" (v. 12)—not among *us*, but among *you*? Were not they all, as well as Benjamin, member tribes of GOD's people? Israel's language was as much as to say: "*we* would not have been guilty of such an atrocity!" When dealing with one overtaken in a fault the exhortation is to do so "in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). This is the opposite of pushfulness to be first in the field.

So Israel were put to flight the first time they attacked Benjamin (vv. 20, 21). and we are told they "wept before the LORD until even" (v. 23). That certainly looked like contrition, but the sequel shows it was unsatisfactory. For they attacked a second time, and were again defeated (v. 25). Why? Was not GOD teaching them the lesson that a mere outward show of piety was not acceptable to Him? He looks for a genuine change of heart.

So Israel returned to GOD again (v. 26), and following this they were successful. What then did they do the third time that they had not done previously? If verses 23 and 26 are com-

pared, it will be seen that although, as before, they came to the house of GOD and wept, they did three additional things: (i) they *sat there before the LORD*; (ii) they *fasted until even*; and (iii) they *offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD*.

Previously they had been in too much of a hurry. This time they *sat* before the LORD, waiting quietly and patiently for the LORD to make His mind known. It is easy to talk glibly about waiting on the LORD, but how much do we really know of it? Anxious to be rid of our difficulties, we demand prompt action instead of *waiting patiently until God is pleased to make His mind known*, however long He should, in His wisdom, keep us waiting (Psalm xxvii. 14).

Then they fasted. What earnestness and sincerity that betokened: their legitimate appetites purposefully unindulged until the will of GOD was known! (Cf. Gen. xxiv. 33).

Lastly, they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. It is surprising perhaps that they did not offer sin offerings as being more appropriate to the circumstances. Nevertheless it should be remembered that a burnt offering was acceptable for atonement (Lev. i. 4), because it typified the death of the LORD JESUS. Manifestly such was acceptable to GOD on this occasion.

How is the spirit of meekness (Gal. vi. 1—see also 1 Cor. x. 12), so necessary when dealing with those overtaken in a fault, to be acquired? Only by contemplating the One of Whom the burnt offering and peace offering both speak, the One who, meek and lowly in heart, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This time GOD hearkened to Israel's cry, and instructed them as to the tactics they should adopt. The nation had once before experienced the bitterness of defeat—at Ai (Joshua vii. and viii.)—because of sin in their midst. But when this had been put away, they used the method of ambush, and were successful. Had Israel forgotten that? It looks like it. If so, how remarkable that GOD's way of helping them was, not to reveal something new, but *to remind them of something they had forgotten*. Is it possible that the people of GOD to-day are forgetting lessons their forefathers learned by hard experience?

The crowning statement is in verse 35, where we read that the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel. Means are effective *only when God uses them*. How simple when GOD takes matters in hand! It would have been well worth Israel's while to wait: at least 65,000 lives would have been spared if there had been less haste! May we all learn what it really is to *wait upon God*, and not to force ourselves to take any course until we are sure we have the mind of the LORD (Pro. xx. 22).

E. A. PETTMAN.

Note:

A valued correspondent, to whom the foregoing article was submitted, has written as follows:—

Though I am in some doubt about the figures personally, I am loath to question them because I so much like the inference you have drawn.

The 10% (v. 10) seems to be the proportion chosen, not to fight, but to act as supplying non-combatants—"to fetch victuals." The lot in verse 9 might refer to how the division was to be made between combatants and non-combatants, but more probably to which *tribe* should have the honour of chastising the tribe of Benjamin; or some may think the whole army of Israel was engaged, with the tribe on which the lot fell in the van. But 360,000 men committed against 26,700—and losing, is a bit much! The details, as often, are not easy to follow clearly; they may have been—

40,000 supply troops; 360,000 fighters:

The lot—to decide which tribe should go up, and Jehovah nominating Judah by lot.

(Israel made the same mistake at Ai, in underestimating the enemy).

After Judah's defeat, a second attack, perhaps by Judah, perhaps by the whole army:

The third attack, probably by the whole army.

After the first, or second, defeat, Israel probably realised that one tribe versus another was fatal, where the attackers were in open fields and the attacked had all the advantages of a fortified city from which to make damaging forays, and so finally committed large forces and used them to success by stratagem.



NOTES FROM A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS iv.—viii.

THESE chapters record the history of mankind from Adam's expulsion from Eden to the Flood, the period of about 1650 years referred to by Peter as "the world that then was" (2 Pet. iii. 6).

Their contents include :—

- i. An account of the development of evil in the world.
- ii. The characters and testimonies of God's witnesses—the line of faith.
- iii. Foreshadowings of Christ.

i. Development of evil.

Unlike Adam and Eve, who were originally in a state of innocence, Cain and Abel were born sinners.

In offering to God the fruit of the ground, Cain sets aside the word of God (Gen. iii. 17), and is rejected (iv. 5). Told by God that the way is still open for him to follow Abel's example (ver. 7), he despises grace; then hates and murders his brother who has been the object of it (ver. 8). When punished (vers. 11, 12), he despairs of forgiveness (ver. 13), turns his back defiantly upon God (ver. 16), establishes himself in self-will (ver. 17), and finds comfort in worldliness (ver. 21).

Man's wickedness proceeds from bad to worse, for Lamech seems to boast of his sin (probably manslaughter), and to assume God's protection from the consequences of it (vers. 23, 24) on the ground that Cain's wickedness was unprovoked and his own due to provocation.

In chapter vi. 1-4, there are the unholy marriages between the sons of God (i.e., angels), and the daughters of men—the mixing up of spiritual and carnal. Corruption and violence fill the earth (vers. 5, 11, 12). Evil reaches its height and God decides to purge the earth with a flood (vers. 13, 17).

ii. God's witnesses—the line of faith.

Abel. By the intelligence of faith (Heb. xi. 4) and remembering perhaps that God had clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of slain animals (Gen. iii. 21), Abel approaches God with the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof (iv. 4). No mention is made of blood-shedding, but death must have taken place for the fat to be separated. His sacrifice was "burnt-offering" in character. Under the Levitical economy the fat of the offerings was reserved for God (Lev. iii. 14-17). Thus Abel came to God and received testimony that he was righteous (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4).

Enoch. After the birth of his firstborn son, Enoch walks with God (v. 24). His whole soul's desire is toward God. For two to walk together they must be agreed (Amos iii. 3). God's thoughts are sovereign, but He chooses to share them with Enoch and makes him a prophet. Knowing God's thoughts as to the world around him, he learns the truth of coming judgement, but is himself taken away before it is sent (v. 24). In this respect he typifies the church. The testimony concerning Enoch was that he walked with God (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5).

Noah. The testimonies of Abel and Enoch are combined in Noah—he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Gen. vii. 1; Heb. xi. 7). He walked with God (Gen. vi. 9).

Warned of coming judgement (chap. vi. 13) and moved with fear because he believed, he obeys God's command to build an ark, a thing never heard of before (vers. 14-22); enters the ark when God tells him to (vii. 13); is shut in by God (v. 16); and does not leave it until he has God's command to go forth (viii. 15-16). On entering upon the new scene he builds an altar (first mention of an "altar" in scripture); offers burnt offerings of every clean beast and fowl, apprehending by faith the purpose of God in providing an unpaired seventh of each clean beast and fowl (viii. 20); receives God's pledge as to the future (vers. 21-22); and is blessed of God (ix. 1).

iii. Foreshadowings of Christ.

Abel. The one who was hated, rejected and slain typifies Christ in His life and death (1 Pet. ii. 21-24).

Abel's Sacrifice. An offering acceptable to God (Heb. xi. 4). "Firstlings of his flock" speaks of Christ's pre-eminence (Col. i. 18). "Fat" speaks of His excellence and inward perfection. As Abel was accepted because of the excellence of his offering, so God receives us because of His delight in the sacrifice of Christ which never loses its value in His sight. In Rom. v. 12-21, where man's sinful nature is dealt with, there is no mention of blood, but only of the excellence of Christ's Person in obedience.

Seth. The man of God's appointment. Typifies Christ in resurrection, the One who carries on God's purpose.

Eve had made a mistake—she thought Cain was to be the seed of Gen. iii. 15. When Seth was born, she had submitted to the will of God and so recognised that he was the one appointed of God in fulfilment of His promise. Seth could not be “the seed” himself because he was born in Adam’s likeness (v. 3) and died (v. 8).

The Ark. Typical of Christ passing through death; the One Who saves from judgement (1 Pet. iii. 20-21).

Noah’s Sacrifice. Fulness, its characteristic; typifies the death of Christ and provides the basis of God’s covenant of mercy (compare Heb. ix., x.).

E. A. Pettman.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mr. Editor,

The article in the May issue entitled “Lord’s Day Reflections—An Immediate Answer from God”, which deals with the reply given by the Saviour to the repentant thief on the cross, “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise”, prompts me to make one further observation.

Not only was the answer of the Saviour immediate, but, nailed as He was to the cross and to all appearances helpless, yet His word was so powerful that His very enemies were made to be the means of bringing it to pass. “To-day” *He* had said; yet it is well known that crucified persons ordinarily lingered for several days.

How then was His word fulfilled? The very hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, their pretence of caring for the holiness of the Sabbath, though their hands were stained with the blood of the Lord of the Sabbath, this it was which was made to fulfil His word!

John records their request to Pilate, as a result of which the soldiers were sent to break the legs of those who were crucified. The thieves were thus despatched—the Lord Jesus was dead already—and thus it was *that very day* that the saved malefactor joined his Saviour in Paradise.

Moreover it is worth noting that while Luke records the promise, John tells *how* it was fulfilled. John emphasizes that the Saviour’s legs were *not* broken, thus fulfilling Exodus xii. 46. Yet in what he writes, as it were by the way, concerning the breaking of the thieves’ legs, he shows us how the promise recorded in Luke was also fulfilled.

How wonderful are *His* ways! How wonderful His word!

Yours in His Service,

E. H. Chamberlain.

Sparkling Gems

Neither our feeble apprehension, nor our dulness, ever cause CHRIST to withhold His grace from us.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Most of our troubles and difficulties come from speculating *extra* to the Word.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If you are occupied with yourself you will judge yourself leniently.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The love which we are to manifest to one another, is that love which is above all the weaknesses and shortcomings; otherwise it degenerates into mere *feelings and preference*.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The term "pray" is *general*; "supplication" is *specific*; "intercession" is *for others*.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The works of *His hands* are mighty and wonderful; will the works of *His heart* be less?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Short views of GOD, mean short views of sin.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

If we were *seeking* the things which are above, we should *know* the sweetness of the "pleasant land", and taste the grapes of Eshcol.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

How striking that the "might" and "power" of Divine "glory" (Col. 1: 11) are to produce "patience" and "long-suffering with joyfulness"; things of which we so little think.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

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WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

AUGUST, 1956

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EDITORIAL NOTE

We are encouraged by the increased interest being shown in WORDS OF HELP, and would request the prayers of our readers for:—

- (a) THE AUTHORS OF ARTICLES
that, guided by the Spirit of God, what they write may be edifying and timely;
- (b) THE EDITOR
that he may exercise due wisdom in the selection of articles to appear each month;
- (c) THE PUBLISHER AND DISTRIBUTORS
that they may be prospered in their good work;
- (d) OUR READERS WORLD-WIDE
that all may be helped and profited by this ministry.

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

IV. The Church—the “House” etc.

IN considering the Church in its kindred aspects as the “Temple”, “House”, “Habitation” of God, it will be helpful to bear in mind constantly the detailed instructions given by God Himself as to the Tabernacle, the first exposition of what His requirements are if He dwells among His people. In particular, in Exodus xxv, vers. 8 and 22, God speaks of a Sanctuary, a Dwelling Place, and a Meeting Place. A Sanctuary is a place made holy and set apart for God Himself. It then becomes a place for Him to dwell in, and thirdly a place for Him to meet His people. These three should be borne in mind constantly. There is no doubt that the “tabernacle of the congregation”, which literally translated is the “tent of meeting”, degenerated in the Israelites’ minds from being the place where God in sovereign grace would meet His people to a place where the people met together.

Corresponding with these three aspects the church is referred to in the New Testament as “Temple”, and as “House of God”, and also as a meeting or “coming together”. It has previously been pointed out that the word “church” is used of all believers in the Lord Jesus from Pentecost to the Rapture collectively, of the company of believers in a city or town, and also of all professing Christians, including both true and false, in a place. The word “body” (of Christ) is only used of the whole company of true believers, and does not include mere professors. Strictly speaking “Temple” and “House of God” can only be applied to true believers—those who have truly believed in Jesus and have been born again, are justified, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The general subject is dealt with in I Cor. iii. and vi; Eph. ii. 20-22; I Tim; I Pet. ii. 4-10.

In I Cor. the emphasis is on the believer’s responsibility. The apostle says to the church in Corinth “Ye are God’s building” (i.e. built *for* God, not *by* God), and immediately speaks of the responsibility of those who build. Here it is plain that the evangelist, pastor and teacher may build into this building spurious material. The wood, hay and stubble seem to be those who have professed Christianity and come

among Christians without real belief of the truth, though nominally on the foundation of Jesus Christ. What care is called for in the presentation of the gospel and the truths of Scripture so that the hearers are not misled into thinking they are safe when they are still lost! There is much of this character around us to-day. Many think they are safe for eternity because they have been christened, confirmed, go to church, live upright lives, etc. They are Christians by profession, but a solemn responsibility rests upon those who have built them into what professes to be the church, "God's building".

The solemnity of this leads to the next point in I Cor. iii. The church in Corinth (and all who call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord) are "the temple of God", and the Spirit of God dwells in them. But defilement destroys the character of a temple—when defiled it ceases to be a temple. In the Greek, the word "defile" is here the same as "destroy", so completely are the two things regarded as one and the same.

If defilement is found to exist in the company of Christians—as in fact it did exist in Corinth—what then is to be done? In chapter v. the Spirit of God uses the disgraceful case in Corinth to teach the right way to deal with it. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump", so it must not be treated with indifference, but must be purged out. The last sentence of the chapter says concisely "put away from among yourselves that wicked person". To fail to do so would, according to chapter iii, destroy the "temple" character of the company of Christians in Corinth. But it is well known that "leaven" in Scripture is a type of evil. Are we therefore to scrutinize carefully all our fellow-believers, and to put away every one in whom we see, or think we discern, evil? The Spirit of God carefully guards against such a pharisaic thought by giving a list (v. 11) of the types of moral evildoers to be put away.

Bearing on this point is the matter of doctrinal evil which is similarly described as "leaven" (Gal. v. 9). The character of such doctrine is that "Christ shall profit you nothing" (ver. 2), "Christ is become of no effect unto you" (ver. 4). The particular instance was the teaching that it was necessary for a believer in the Lord Jesus to keep the law of Moses in order

to be justified in the sight of God. We should test the teaching we hear and our own "views" (for want of a better word) by whether they detract from the Person or the work of Christ, and one who maintains doctrines which do so should be dealt with on parallel lines to I Cor. v. Again, however, let us not expand this scripture to cover every form of teaching which differs from what we hold ourselves.

Both in I Cor. v. and Gal. v. the ultimate repentance and restoration of the man concerned is in view—see II Cor. ii. and Gal. i. 6. How easily we can overlook this!

Still dealing with the theme of a "temple", the apostle Paul, by the Spirit of God, addressed the Corinthians (and you and me) individually, for the state of the local company of Christians as a Temple depends on the state of the individuals composing it. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own... For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (Ch. vi. 19, 20). Bearing in mind that defilement destroys the temple character, this challenge might lead us to despair, for none can say they are free from defilement by evil thoughts and otherwise. We can well thank God that He knows all about us and our failures. He has given us a list of things which might bar us from inheriting the Kingdom of God, in an earlier verse, and has reminded us "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (Ch. vi. 9, 10, 11). This perfectly meets our need, so let us examine ourselves, seek to cleanse ourselves, and glorify God in our bodies.

It is clear from these chapters in I Cor. that discipline (i.e. dealing with evil in a godly way) is a necessity in the Temple or House aspect of the Church. The "putting away" of one "though he is called a brother" for stated forms of moral or doctrinal evil is scriptural, and is not, of course, inconsistent with the truths of the unity of the body, and of the relationship of all the members of the body to one another, which are dealt with in I Cor. xii, and were the subject of the preceding article.

In Eph. ii. 20-22 the Temple and Habitation aspects of the

church are presented to us as what God is doing, not from the point of view of our responsibility as in I Cor. Gentiles walked in time past according to the course of this world, under the power of Satan. They were without hope and without God in the world. Jews were by nature children of wrath even as the rest. Both Jews and Gentiles were dead in sins. Now, being saved by God's grace through faith, both are fellow-citizens, "and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ch. ii. 19-22).

Here, in the first place, the temple is foreseen in its entirety and perfection, composed of all the believers from Pentecost to the Rapture, a holy dwelling place for God. Secondly, the company of believers in Ephesus were, at the time the apostle was writing to them, a habitation of God through the Spirit. The building, whether regarded as the work of God, or of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit, is fitly framed together, and above all criticism. This work begun at Pentecost is still going on, and at any time until the Rapture the saints are a habitation of God through the Spirit both universally and in their actual locality. On the other hand, as we have seen, when the building is looked at from the point of view of our responsibility there is failure, and evil has to be dealt with. It is important to distinguish these two different aspects.

The apostle Peter (I Pet. ii. 4-10), by the Holy Spirit, brings before us certain other points. Those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Chap. i. 19) and are born again by the word of God (i. 23) are, as living stones, built up a spiritual house, the Lord Himself being the chief corner stone. Here we see a close parallel with Eph. i. 20. The apostle Peter then tells us we are a holy, and later a royal, priesthood—to exercise our priestly service of offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus, and to show forth the praises (better, "excellencies") of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Thus we are not only the

building of living stones, but also the priests who, in the building, have services to render to God and to man.

Finally in I Tim. instructions are given how we as individuals ought to behave ourselves in the House of God (Chap. iii. 15). Men, women, those capable of overseeing the saints, those who serve the saints, their wives, those who are dependent, the younger women, the older men and women, the slaves, the rich—all are dealt with from this point of view. Seemly behaviour in God's house is pressed upon us all.

It is wondrous grace that God should have a dwelling place on earth to-day, when we remember the evil state of the world around us. It is wonderful too that you and I, who were children of wrath, even as the rest, should be incorporated into a holy temple in the Lord. We cannot fully understand it all, but we accept what the Scriptures say. We know individually we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We know that, when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, He Himself is in our midst. We know too that collectively we are a habitation of God through the Spirit. Well may we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus, and show forth His virtues. May the Holy Spirit help us to do so for God's glory! May we also respond to our responsibilities to keep the "Temple" undefiled both as individuals and collectively.

In a later article, God willing, reference may be made to the "great house" mentioned in II Tim. J. C. Kell

What can be more valuable in its place, and for God's ends by it, than Christian ministry? It embraces rule as well as teaching, pastorship as well as preaching. There are those that can teach who have not the power of ruling; as, again, others who rule well, having great moral weight, who could not teach. Some again have the gift of preaching who themselves need teaching, and are not at all fit to lead on, clear, and establish the church of God. Nor does a gift for ministry in itself carry moral weight for rule. W.K.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF BALAAM

I. DIVINE OVERRULING

Numbers xxii. 1-35 to be read.

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 10/5/56).

THE story of Balaam, despite the fact that it is referred to in no fewer than eight books of the Bible, and that three separate warnings in the New Testament are taken from it, is seldom referred to in oral ministry. Yet the subject must be of great importance since the facts recorded were almost certainly communicated to Moses by special revelation from God.

The events took place when Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab, their eighth encampment after the death of Aaron (Num. xxxiii. 38-48), and a comparison of the ages of Aaron and Moses when they died shows that the interval between their deaths cannot have exceeded one year. So that what Moses records must have occurred during the last few weeks of his long life. It would seem highly improbable therefore that Moses would have gone in search of the information as to what passed between Balak and Balaam, including the visits of Balak's messengers to Balaam's home in far off Mesopotamia, or that the minute details given would have had time to filter through to Moses before he died. And the likelihood that God Himself gave the facts to Moses is consistent with the urgency and importance of the lessons which subsequent Scripture references to the story teach.

These lessons appear to concern the attributes of God Himself—His love (Deut. xxiii. 4-5), His delivering power (Josh. xxiv. 10) and His righteousness (Micah vi. 5). These Scriptures should be read and carefully pondered. This article is introductory to the story and has in view the overruling and faithfulness of God. Subsequent articles will draw attention to other great themes which are brought to notice as the story unfolds.

The story begins with the distress of Balak, king of Moab, when the people of Israel drew near to his land, because they

were so numerous, and because news had reached him of the defeat inflicted upon a neighbouring tribe. This was a fulfilment, firstly of God's promise to Abraham that He would multiply his seed as the sand upon the sea shore (Gen. xxii. 17), and secondly of what the people of Israel sang in their song of triumph after passing safely through the Red Sea (Ex. xv. 15-16). Fear and dread had indeed fallen upon the nations.

If Moab had but realised it, there was in their case no ground for alarm, because God had specifically told Israel they were not to distress Moab, nor contend with them in battle (Deut. ii. 9). But even if Balak knew about that, it was unlikely that he would trust God in the matter, but would seek means of his own to avert the danger which appeared to threaten him.

Now Balak recalled that he knew a man named Balaam, living some long distance away, who was reputed to have influence with the invisible world. And the idea occurred to Balak that it would be a good thing to enlist his services to curse the people of Israel.

From the Book of Daniel we learn that the spirit-forces which surround mankind, both good and evil, are highly organised, and have great influence. Balaam, therefore, if he were in contact with the spiritual world (i.e. a "spiritualist" or "medium"), might well be just the man Balak wanted. So Balak sent messengers to Balaam, with the rewards of divination in their hand, to procure his services.

Balaam appears to have had some knowledge of Jehovah. He could certainly talk very piously, and he told the messengers they would have to stay the night so that he could consult Jehovah with regard to Balak's request. It is doubtful whether he made any genuine attempt to do so, because we read that God came to him, and asked him who these men were that had come to him from Moab. God was watching from heaven, for the God that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. cxxi. 4). God knew exactly all that was going on, and He knew that Balaam was a man who would stoop to any depth of villainy for personal gain.

How wonderful to note that God's eye was thus upon His people! and that He was fully aware of what threatened

them! Though hatched in secret, Balak's plot was fully known to Jehovah. Scripture affirms (I Tim. iv. 10) that the living God is the Saviour (or, Preserver) of all men, but *especially of those that believe*. He knows whatever may threaten the feeblest child of His, and He is always on the spot to intervene swiftly on their behalf.

When Balaam explained the mission of the men of Moab, God expressly forbade him to go with them. "Thou shalt not go with them: thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (ver. 12). God will not allow the purposes of His grace to be thwarted by Balak or Balaam or by anyone else—least of all by Satan. God displays His power and wisdom for all His creatures to behold (cf. Eph. iii. 10; Col. ii. 15). Balaam therefore sent the messengers back home, telling them merely that God had forbidden him to go with them, omitting that God had forbidden him to curse Israel. So Balak sent another deputation of more honourable persons, and added to the reward the promise of honour.

At this point Balaam showed the sort of man he really was. Had he been a true prophet he would have known that God does not change His purpose, and would have sent the second delegation back at once with a firm refusal to consider the matter any further. But his covetous heart hankered after the reward, and he sought to find some way to procure it without having to do what God had expressly forbidden. He therefore bespoke a little further time to think matters over, and invited the princes to stay the night.

Did Balaam really wish to refer the matter again to God, or did he just go to bed? For we read that God came again to Balaam in the night. And seeing that Balaam was determined to go, God allowed him to do what he wanted, but added a very strict command that he was only to speak the words which God would give him to say. God would overrule the perversity of this evil man for His own glory, and for the good of His people.

So Balaam departed for the land of Moab. And because he went God's anger was kindled against him, as we might well expect. It was a serious matter for Balaam to oppose the will

of God. It could only lead to disaster. So far as we can see Balaam never reached his home again.

Now that led to the very remarkable episode of the opening of the mouth of the ass to rebuke the prophet. Ungodly men have poured ridicule upon this incident, but is anything too hard for God?

Balaam, in company with two attendants, was proceeding along the highway towards Moab when the ass on which he was riding turned aside from the way and went into a field. The ass had seen what Balaam did not see—the Angel of the Lord barring the way. So Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way again. A little later Balaam was riding along a narrow path amongst the vineyards, with a wall on either side, when the Angel of the Lord again appeared. Once more the ass saw Him whilst Balaam did not, and this time, in trying to turn aside, the ass crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. So Balaam smote his ass a second time. Then the Angel appeared a third time, when Balaam was proceeding along a passage so narrow that the ass could not even turn aside. All she could do was to collapse beneath her master. And this she did, with the result that Balaam lost his temper and smote the ass with his rod.

At this point, the ass opened her mouth and began to rebuke her master. And quite a conversation was developing when, suddenly, Balaam's eyes were opened, and *he* saw the Angel standing in the way. Balaam had wished that a sword was available so that he might have slain the ass, but the sword was in the Angel's hand, drawn against Balaam. The Angel had noted Balaam's cruelty to the ass, and rebuked him for it, pointing out that He had come to withstand him because his way was perverse in the sight of God. Humans use the ass as a symbol of stupidity, but it was the man Balaam who displayed that character on this occasion.

Let us learn from this example of divine overruling. Here was this wicked man Balaam lending himself to a conspiracy to destroy if possible the people of God, to thwart the purposes of God. But God keeps the man on the shortest rein, and

compels him to pronounce blessings instead of a curse. How safe the affairs of God's people were in Jehovah's hands!

The wonder of God's care increases as we bear in mind the unworthiness of the people themselves. Moses, the man who was "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3) described them as "a stiffnecked people", who "from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord" (Deut. ix. 6, 7). But how well we know that

Where once the Lord His love bestows,
He loves unto the end.

May we all rejoice in the faithfulness of our God!

E. A. Pettman.

(In the next article we hope to bring before our readers the subject of Divine Election).

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS VIII. 20-XI.

THIS passage shows us how, the earth having been cleansed by the Flood, God set up a new dispensation with the first laws, how sin soon manifested itself again, and how nations developed and were dispersed in spite of their attempt at confederacy.

viii. 21, 22.—"I will not again curse". There is no further curse, though the curse of iii. 17-19 is not entirely removed. Thorns and thistles, and the necessity to toil, remain. The same reason is given for refraining from further cursing as for sending judgment—"the imagination of man's heart is evil". There is also a sacrifice, a type of the Lord Jesus as an offering to God.

ix. 1.—"Be fruitful and multiply". Judgment by the flood might have made Noah afraid to re-establish mankind without God's command. (See Ch. i. 28).

2.—Terror is now to govern the relation of beasts with men (cf. i. 26).

3, 4.—The divine intention was to found spiritual lessons on the provision of flesh as food. Blood was not to be eaten: God's eye was on the precious blood of His own Son.

5, 6.—Cain was not punished with death (iv. 15); but now magistracy is set up (cf. Eph. i. 10). Fear enters here again (cf. Rom. xiii. 3). The value set on human life is explained in that, notwithstanding the fall, man is distinctly a being made in the image of God.

8-10.—This is one of the "covenants of promise" (Eph. ii. 12): all the obligation is on God, all the blessing on man.

12-16.—The rainbow is not spoken of here as for *our* admiration: God says, "When *I* look". A rainbow-like brightness in Ezek. i. 28, left Jerusalem exposed to judgment, and again in Rev. iv. 3, and x. 1, at the beginning and end of the judgments on the world, the rainbow is seen, showing that the Lord holds His covenant in remembrance.

20-23.—The heinousness of Ham's crime was in publishing what he saw, perhaps with impious glee, scoffing at his father's religion. Even among the witnesses of the deluge there was ungodliness. The other two sons, however, though by their action protesting against sin, respect Noah's faith. They cover his sin (cf. I Pet. iv. 8). So God recognises sin with detestation, but puts it away and covers it by atonement.

24-27.—Canaan was not necessarily present: the curse took effect in his branch of Ham's family, just as the blessing of Shem took effect in Eber's line (x. 21).

Chapter x.—We are given the descendants of Noah beyond the time of the confusion of tongues at Babel (xi. 8). This accounts for the mention of tongues and nations in vv. 5, 20, 31, 32. Most modern archaeological discoveries tend to reduce the dates previously assigned to prehistoric finds. Moreover, it is discovered that the most highly-cultured periods of Egypt's and Mesopotamia's history were the oldest. At Babylon the stone age occurred after the bronze and iron ages, showing that its inhabitants sank from civilisation to barbarism. Discoveries proving similar relapses have also been made in America.

There is a certain amount of evidence as to chronology in the genealogies in Genesis, and in such passages as Gal. iii. 17,

Acts vii. 6, xiii. 20, and elsewhere, but it is not possible to find dates exactly by their means. The Bible is not given to answer all the questions of an antiquarian or of a scientist; it is given to make us wise unto salvation. Yet it is not contrary to *sound* knowledge, though it will not support the wild theories of so-called scientists, the best of whose minds is at work, and the bias of the flesh—always against God. We should therefore test everything and hold fast that which is good.

x. 8-10.—The kingdoms of men were founded by a hunter—not a shepherd, like the men after God's own heart, David, and his greater Son,

25.—“In Peleg's days was the earth divided”. The land of Canaan was similarly divided between the twelve tribes before they possessed it (Josh. xiii.-xix). Deut. xxxii. 8, tells us that the Most High made this division to the nations according to the number of children of Israel.

xi. 8, 9.—The confusion of tongues was sudden, or they would not have left off building: moreover, a gradual change would not have been confusion. Babylon (Babel) founded by Nimrod (rebel) is, throughout, Satan's means of opposing God's plans. (a) Israel's downfall in Josh. vii. was brought about by the Babylonish garment. (b) Jerusalem was finally subjugated to Babylon: (c) the church is opposed by Babylon the Great. Babel was the earliest expression of the principle of confederacy to achieve the exaltation of man while leaving out God. (see Is. viii. 9-10). Before Christ comes to reign, the religious and political worlds will be similarly united under the leadership of the Beast and False Prophet to achieve a world of satisfaction without Christ. Man's sin at Babel consisted in the display of a vainglorious spirit and the desire to thwart the Divine design for the diffusion of mankind. The tower of Babel was not intended for idolatrous purposes, or for escape from another flood. “Tongues” are seen in connection with judgment (Gen. xi.); grace (Acts ii.); glory on the earth (Rev. vii). The effect of Babel was reversed at Pentecost.

Chap. xi. gives man's attempt to establish himself on the earth in independence of God, and God's calling a man out of this state of affairs for a heavenly portion.

W. S. Hocking.

BOOK REVIEW

“The Creation”—A Lecture on Genesis I and II.

by W. Kelly

The book of Genesis possesses a charm all its own, and the opening verses are of particular interest because they deal with truths which could only come to mankind by the revelation of God. Furthermore the chapters considered in Mr. Kelly's lecture have been under unremitting attack by Satan, acting through ungodly men who have misused their intellectual powers to deny the Creator His true glory, and have indulged in “foolish speculations under the garb of wisdom, but a wisdom that is as hollow as man himself without God”. It is therefore important that every believer should both understand, so far as he is able, what God has written, and prepare himself to contend earnestly for the faith.

Mr. Kelly's well-known book “In the Beginning” deals with this subject in great detail, but for those to whom the fuller treatise is not available, this Lecture should prove most helpful. Every would-be preacher of the gospel should read it for the strengthening of his own faith, and also in order to be able to deal wisely and adequately with questions raised by the more thoughtful type of listener.

Some have found the writings of Mr. Kelly “heavy reading”, but no fear of this should deter anyone from the careful study of this Lecture, as it is in the author's most lucid style.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

ONE object of this Magazine is to meet the needs of those who by reason of circumstances, infirmity or old age, are unable to attend meetings for oral ministry.

We ask our readers to consider whether there are any such persons within the circle of their acquaintance who would be glad to receive WORDS OF HELP each month if they knew it were available to them.

Some readers supply this need themselves by passing on their own copy when they have finished with it, or by paying the annual subscription of 5/- (including postage) direct to the Publisher, leaving him to despatch each issue to the address indicated.

Should there be cases of need, however, beyond the scope of such arrangements, the Editor will be very pleased to hear of them.

THOUGHTS ON MATTHEW XVIII. 18

WHEN a court of law sets out to interpret a document, one of the essential principles which guides it is always "What was the intention of the author?" In the same way, in seeking to interpret the word of the Living God we ought constantly to keep in mind His purpose, as abundantly declared in the Scriptures, to glorify His Son, and to bless His people, and hence to interpret any particular passage in accord with this intention.

Another principle of interpretation, simple and well known, but often forgotten by those who come to the Scripture with the aim of finding support for a particular doctrine, is to consider every passage, every verse, in the light of its context.

Let us look at this verse, Matthew xviii. 18, with these two sure principles in mind.

The Lord Jesus insists first on the paramount need for humility among His own, and then shows the dreadful danger of stumbling even the simplest and weakest of those who believe in Him. He reminds us of His own great love in seeking the lost, in order that we who are all so indebted to that same love, should share His desire for the recovery of those astray.

Next He speaks of a brother who offends. Perhaps it is well to say here that the Lord is speaking of a *serious* offence—anything less ought to be overlooked entirely in the spirit of Eph. iv. 32. But supposing a serious offence on the part of a brother in the assembly—how are we to go on? Shall we say, "He ought to have known better. Let him come and seek forgiveness, and I'll grant it. Nay, more, I'll pray for him"? No, this will not do for our blessed Saviour! He says, "Go and seek him, even as I have sought you." And if the first attempt meets with a rebuff, you are not to despair, but to try again with the help of others. And then the whole assembly is to be called upon to act. To what end? To sit in judgment on the case? No, not yet. On the contrary, the assembly is to endeavour in the name of the Lord for whom it is acting, and in accordance with His grace, and by the love which it bears to

one of its members (for we are members one of another) to rescue him from his own pride and selfishness.

Now if all that is rejected, then, and only then, the Lord says "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Note the words carefully. It is "unto thee." The assembly is not called in this instance to excommunicate him. But the person sinned against is to treat him *now* as his offence deserves. The time for grace is past. He is to treat him as an outsider, no longer extending to him that friendly Christian intercourse which is normal among the saints. The assembly, moreover, concurs in this. They bind the sin upon him. And the Lord says that this shall be ratified in heaven. For His own grace, working in the hearts of His own, has been rejected, and He who is Himself in the midst, gives His sanction to what is done for His glory; this also, though there be but two or three gathered "unto My name."

But because the Lord says, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," are we to conclude that this ratification is automatic, whether or not the preceding conditions have been fulfilled? If the offended brother, let us suppose, were to bring in the assembly immediately, would that not tend to stiffen the offender against repentance, and would the Lord approve, when His own word had been so flagrantly disregarded?

Let us ask the question: "Why is it that the Lord has seen fit to make such a tremendous promise to a company of fallible men and women?" Is it not because, if they have obeyed His word as here set out, and acted according to His own mind, their hearts will be so attuned to His that their action will be in accord with His will, and He can therefore set His seal upon it?

Now we may certainly conclude from the word "whatsoever" that Divine sanction of assembly action is not limited to the particular case that Matthew xviii. outlines. But it is equally clear, whatever case is considered, that their action must be entirely according to the word, entirely according to the truth

of God, entirely such as the Lord in the midst of His own can approve of, in order to be ratified in heaven. To argue otherwise is to make the Lord partaker of our failure.

Let us speak plainly about this. It is well known that errors have been made in this matter. So that either the idea of automatic Divine sanction to an assembly judgment is false, or else we must say, that when an assembly errs, it is no longer an assembly, and the scripture does not apply! But this would be to empty our blessed Lord's words of all meaning, of all comfort and strengthening to His feeble flock.

But let just the "two or three" own their weakness, their liability to err; let them be wholly cast upon the Lord; let them patiently seek the light of His word; let them avoid all hasty or fleshly action; then, when His will is plain, and not before, they may act, with the assurance that their decision, whatever it may be, is ratified in heaven.

Granted that the notion of an automatic Divine sanction to every assembly judgment gives a nice, tidy system of assembly action, easy to apply, rigid in its operation. But it is mere systematizing to read such an automatic sanction into verse 18. It leaves no room for the working of conscience, for once an assembly has decided, conscience is forbidden to work, lest it should question a Divine ratification! Even if a wrong has been done, it must not be mended!

But the consciences of saints can never rest in face of what is felt to be wrong, and the working of conscience is the result of Divine grace acting. The attempt to forbid it can only remind us forcibly of the Lord's words to the Pharisees "Is it lawful to *heal* on the Sabbath Day?" For *they* would have set the ordinance of Jehovah against His own working in healing power by His Son. They would forbid Him to work, lest an ordinance might seem to be infringed. Dare we ignore the whole spirit and bearing of Matthew xviii. in order to sustain a narrow view of verse 18? Dare we set, not an ordinance of the Lord, but a human system, against His own working in grace?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF BALAAM II: DIVINE ELECTION

Numbers xxii. 36 - xxiii. 10 to be read

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 17/5/56)

In spite of God's disapproval of his journey to Balak, and of the Angel's threefold attempt to bar his way, Balaam persisted in going forward, but with the most definite instructions from Jehovah echoing in his ears that he was only to speak the words which God would give him to say. This article will consider the first of four pronouncements which Balaam made, not indeed of his own volition, but under the constraint of Jehovah.

When Balaam arrived in the land of Moab, he was received by Balak personally. Neither man was in good humour. Balak was displeased by Balaam's reluctance to come, and Balaam was upset because of Jehovah's restraint upon him. Moreover he knew he would displease Balak even more before he had finished. At the conclusion of the reception formalities, Balak took Balaam to the cliff edge of one of the heights overlooking the plain of Moab from which to give him a view of Israel—not the whole of them, but the fourth, or hindermost part—and called on Balaam to utter his imprecations upon them.

Balaam asked that seven altars should be prepared, and after the offering of a bullock and a ram upon each, he went up to a high place where Jehovah met him and gave him the words he was to speak. So he returned and found Balak and the princes waiting to hear what he would say.

After recounting what Balak had asked him to do—as if to remind his host that if things did not turn out as expected he would have only himself to blame—Balaam continued “How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy (or, denounce) whom Jehovah hath not defied?” The confidence Balak had expressed in his visitor, “I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed,” was an admission of Balaam's greatness in his eyes. “But,” says Balaam in effect, “there is One who is greater than I,

against Whose word I am powerless." What a tribute to the greatness of God from reluctant lips! Man declares he can do as he likes; but it is a vain boast. God is greater than all: He alone reigns supreme.

Balaam continues, "from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him." No doubt he was expressing the fact that physically he was gazing down upon Israel from an overlooking height. May it not be also that his words were an acknowledgement that God was compelling him to adopt *His* point of view? In Balak's eyes the people were a nuisance and menace, and he had pressed this viewpoint upon Balaam. But Balaam had to see Israel from heaven's standpoint, and to recognise them as the people of God.

It will be remembered that when the Lord Jesus was here, He chose and loved His own, and He also referred to them as those whom the Father loved and had given to Him. The disciples were dear to Him because they were dear to the Father, and were the Father's gift to Him. In John xvii. we are permitted to learn something of the wonderful communion between the Father and the Son concerning the disciples. Here is the heavenly standpoint largely revealed.

Do we always consider one another from the heavenly standpoint? In the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle exhorts believers not to stumble one another, he says, "Destroy not him with thy meat, *for whom Christ died.*" (Rom. xiv. 15). The value set upon us by the Lord Jesus is to be the measure of the esteem and care we should have one for another.

Then Balaam goes on: "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Jehovah's people are a chosen and sanctified people; elected or chosen by God Himself, and called out to live in separation unto Him—not to be reckoned as just one nation amongst others.

Until God singled out one nation to be His own, by choosing a man and making him a great nation, did it really matter much to which of the nations of the earth a person belonged? All were far away from God. But once God had made His choice the position became different, and the blessedness of

belonging to God's chosen people is expressed in words that have yet to be fulfilled, "ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. viii. 23).

Even so it is in this present dispensation. God has called His own out from all that is unholy to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter ii. 9). And it is the duty of all to give practical effect to this in daily life.

Applicable to believers individually, the truth of God's election also has its bearing in connection with the church of Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of His church under the figure of the "pearl of great price," one pearl, for which the "Merchant Man" went and "sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. xiii. 45-46). The object of the Saviour's choice and particular affection, we read that "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27).

But there is more; Balaam goes on, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" It had been part of Balak's complaint that Israel were so numerous. Had Balaam himself tried to count the fourth part that he could see? What a testimony this was to the faithfulness of God in carrying out His promise to Abraham to make of him a great nation; that his seed should be innumerable "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Gen. xxii. 17). Here was a fulfilment of it—"who can count the dust of Jacob?" How truly every word that God speaks comes surely to pass!

It is delightful to see the way in which this evil man, who was an enemy in his heart, and would gladly have cursed a nation of millions for selfish personal gain, is made to testify to the faithfulness of God. This should afford comfort to each believer

for his own personal pathway where the effort of Satan is always against him. And it should bring comfort to us all, as we are confronted with the outward ruin of the church. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Then Balaam finished his first parable with some memorable words, frequently quoted: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It was all very well to want to die the death of the righteous; Balaam did not wish to live the life of the righteous—we are distinctly told that he loved the wages of unrighteousness.

At this time the people of Israel were about to enter the fair country of Canaan and to settle down in peace in that land. The plains of Moab where they were camping at the time when Balak and Balaam were together, were on the borders of Canaan. Maybe that Balaam, from the height where Balak had taken him, could look across to Canaan, and had he done so, he would doubtless have said to himself, "that is the glorious country to which the people of Israel are going, where they will enjoy rest at the end of their long and tedious journey." And, with possibly a dread premonition of the only possible end for one like himself who had so wilfully disobeyed God, he may have sighed the vain hope, vain that is for him and for every unrepentant enemy of God, that some such end as theirs might have been his.

The end for every believer is a glorious one—"mansions in the skies" (John xiv. 2, 3). Well may the unconverted envy the Christian his bright hope for the future. Listen to the words of one who knew little but trials and tribulations in this world, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17); and again, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory" (Rom. viii. 18, New Tr.). Here is no vain hope, but one which is sure and certain and glorious, and that maketh not ashamed. May we all with patience wait for it, filled meanwhile with ever deeper thankfulness for the privilege of belonging to the people of God.

E. A. PETTMAN.

(Next Article — Divine Justification)

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

V. THE CHURCH—GOD'S MEETING PLACE

PREVIOUS articles have considered the Church in its aspects as "The Body of Christ", "Sanctuary" (or temple), and "House of God". These will be referred to again in considering the third aspect of God's dwelling place on earth, namely the "Meeting Place" of God with His people. In view of the many different companies all claiming divine sanction for their churches, chapels and halls, what has Scripture to teach about this "meeting place" if there is one on earth to-day? The basic truth is found in the Gospels, practical examples in Acts, and teaching in 1 Corinthians.

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst" (Matt. xviii. 20). This is the foundation truth of the meeting place of God (in the Person of the Lord Jesus) and His people in the present dispensation. The meeting place (as is well known) is no longer a "temple made with hands", such as the tabernacle in the wilderness, or Solomon's, or Herod's, temple. Nor is it in a geographical position, i.e. the camp of Israel, or Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus meets with His people wherever and whenever they come together in His Name, whether they be "two or three" or thousands, and whether they meet as individuals for prayer etc., or come together "in the church" ("churchwise", to invent a word), the latter being the subject under present consideration. But the verse has become so familiar, and has been used so thoughtlessly, that it seems necessary to consider it carefully and in detail, using other Scriptures to reveal its deeper meanings.

First, "in My Name" has specific importance. One translator gives "unto" My Name as more accurate, and a comparison of other passages where the same preposition is used after the verb "gather" in the Greek confirms that "unto", "into" or "to" conveys the sense more accurately than "in" (see

John xi. 52; Rev. xvi. 14, 16). The disciples addressed would be familiar with the general idea of going *to* the place where the Lord had put His Name, for that is a frequent description of Jerusalem in the Old Testament (Deut. xii. xvi, three times in each, etc.). Moreover Jeremiah iii. 17 foretells the time when "Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered *unto* it"—to the Name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. From such Scriptures we gather that it was because the Lord had chosen to place His Name there that Jerusalem was exclusively the centre of gathering for Israel, and will be also for the nations in the millennium. It will be remembered that even when the kingdom became divided politically after the death of Solomon, Jerusalem still remained the one and only city "which I have chosen Me to put My Name there" (1 Kings xi. 36). The rival altar set up by Jeroboam in Bethel as a matter of expediency and convenience was disowned by God (Chap. xiii. 2). Correspondingly if Christians gather to the Name of the Lord they cannot simultaneously acknowledge any other centre of gathering.

Secondly, the Lord says simply "where...", i.e. wherever, no defined geographical location. He made it very clear that the temple and Jerusalem would be set aside as a centre when he told the Jews "*your* house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38), no longer owning it to be the house of the Lord, and He told His disciples that not one stone of the temple should be left upon another (Matt. xxiv. 2).

Turning to other Gospels for parallel lessons, in Luke xvii. 11-19, one of the ten lepers, instead of going to the priests at the temple, where he would have been required to offer sacrifice etc., according to the law, instinctively turned back to the Lord Jesus Himself, glorified God, worshipped at the Lord's feet, and gave Him thanks. The Lord accepted his worship and said "where are the nine?", implying that the man was right in ignoring the temple and coming to Him, and that the others should have done the same. This incident is recorded *after* the Lord had said "your house etc." (Luke xiii. 35). In the gospel of John (Chap. iv) the Lord said to the

woman at the well, "the hour cometh... when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father... the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth". These passages show how completely a material or geographical centre had been abandoned.

Further, the Lord says "two or three"—the minimum that could be gathered together. Nowhere else has He sanctioned any other way of gathering. This will be amplified later (D.V.) when considering 1 Corinthians.

It may be that the disciples failed to understand the meaning of Matt. xviii. 20 until the day of Pentecost. We read however twice in John xx that the disciples were gathered together on the first day of the week. Can we not say it was love and devotion to the Lord Jesus that had brought them together? Jesus came and stood in the midst, thus visibly confirming His promise. Again, fifty days later, the disciples were all with one accord in one place, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, God the Holy Spirit surely meeting them there. These three incidents have the character of fulfilment of the Lord's promise.

Immediately after the wonderful day of Pentecost, however, it seems clear that the meaning of Matt. xviii. 20 was understood. Those who believed "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers". "All that believed were together". "Breaking bread at home" (Acts ii. 41-46, and see margin of A.V., also Dean Alford, J.N.D. etc.). Here it may be pointed out that the expression "breaking bread" is used for the Lord's supper in Acts in distinction from "eating their meat" or "taking meat" which refers to ordinary meals. "At home" showed they no longer regarded the temple or any other particular building as an essential centre. Thus these early disciples acted simply in accordance with the Lord's words.

Subsequently, "churches" in Judaea, Samaria, Asia Minor and Europe, resulting from the preaching of the gospel, combined the character of Temple, Dwelling Place and Meeting Place. It is to one such (Corinth) that the apostle writes "ye are the temple of God etc.," "in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ". (1 Cor. iii. 16, v. 4).

In what building then should the church to-day gather to the Lord's Name with Him in the midst? The answer surely is—any building, anywhere, and at any time. We read of churches in the houses of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. xvi. 19); Nymphas (Col. iv. 15); and Philemon (Phi. 2). If a public building is used, that is merely a matter of convenience. The material building cannot claim to be God's house, and has no sanctity in itself. The important matter is whether the Christians who meet there gather to the Name of the Lord Jesus. If so, He is faithful to His promise, and His Presence makes the gathering a holy place.

The writer trusts the foregoing, especially the various Scriptures referred to, will throw further light on the basic truth as to where the Lord meets His people in this present day. Diligence is called for lest this true centre of gathering becomes displaced in our minds by custom, routine, the thought of meeting one another, or the idea that a particular church, chapel, or hall constitutes the meeting place. If it is not His Name alone which draws us together we cannot be assured of His meeting us there. We know Him as very gracious and compassionate towards our ignorance and weakness, but we have no right to presume upon His grace if we neglect His own words.

WHOM THE LORD COMMENDETH

IN 2 Corinthians x. 18, these remarkable words are written: "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, *but whom the Lord commendeth*". This verse follows another still more striking, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (ver. 17). Earlier in the chapter (ver. 12) comparisons one with another are declared to be "not wise". One may well ask: "Who am I that I should compare myself favourably with any one else?" Such self-occupation is far from edifying.

In the Old Testament Job was one whom the Lord commended. Unknown to Job himself, the Lord raised the question with Satan, who claimed to have come from "going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job i. 7). Said the Lord: "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth (avoideth) evil" (ver. 8)? Here the Lord Himself defines a perfect and upright man as one who fears Him and avoids evil. What a testimonial to Job! All that Satan was allowed to do to him could not change him, and at the end the Lord was able to say to his friends who compared themselves with him: "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job xlii. 7).

In Isaiah lxxv. 5, those who say: "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou", are said to be smoke in Jehovah's nose, "a fire that burneth all the day". Then in Chap. lxxvi. 2 the Lord states very plainly who are commendable to Him: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word". John the Baptist was such an one, and what a commendation the Lord Jesus gave him: "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. xi. 11; Luke vii. 28). Then the Lord declared, "notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he".

In Matt. xvi. 17, the Lord Jesus commended Peter for his answer to the question, "But whom say ye that I am?" He

answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". And Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven". Surely it is highly commendable to the Lord for one to bear witness to the truth. On the other hand it is a very serious thing for one to whom the Lord has revealed Himself to put anything before the Lord's honour, as in the case of Eli in I Samuel ii. 29, 30, where the Lord had to charge him with honouring his sons above Him. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed", said the Lord.

May we covet to be among those whom the Lord commendeth!
G. S. PURNELL.

Sparkling Gems

How much should we have to relate of the efficacy of prayer, if only we were thankfully to recall God's mercies.

* * * * *

Let us put away our own ideas and plans and let the Lord work when and how He will. Let us look away from difficulties, unlikelihoods, impossibilities and rest simply on the Lord. This honours Him; and He will honour us. How much faith has done! How much it still will do!

* * * * *

Practical holiness, though not the *basis* of our salvation, is intimately connected with our enjoyment thereof. If we are saved *by grace* we are saved *to holiness*.

* * * * *

Whatever Christ has commanded His people to do, He has promised them grace to enable them to do it.

(Selected by C. A. Hammond).

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EDITORIAL NOTE

A correspondent, writing from one of our Universities, has given his view that the brief "Notes from Bible Readings on Genesis" which are being serialised in Words of Help are of comparatively little value.

It is fully appreciated that articles of this character cannot be assimilated in the same ready manner as the "straightforward prose" which our correspondent would prefer. But, to be quite frank, it is not intended that they should be.

Notes of Readings—necessarily very condensed—are prepared to assist readers as they study the Scriptures privately, and are likely to be helpful only if the reader has his Bible open before him and is willing to ponder carefully what someone else claims to have learned therefrom. Reading of this kind may call for a higher degree of concentration, but the value to be derived should compensate for any additional effort involved.

We are grateful to our correspondent for raising this matter thereby giving us the opportunity of explaining the purpose of "Notes" of the kind referred to, and we shall be equally pleased to hear from other readers who may wish to offer comments on either the material or the form of what is published.

POWER IN SERVICE

WHAT an assembly that was in Corinth; "enriched... in all utterance, and in all knowledge... behind in no gift" (1 Cor. i. 5-8); and what a servant that was whom God sent amongst them, in "bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. x. 10)! Whatever could such a man be sent amongst them for, and how could he be expected to influence them for good or ill? He says, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3).

Alas for man! what seems to be his strength is his undoing: "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. viii. 1); what looked so fair outwardly was just the opposite. There were factions at Corinth each claiming to have a leader—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, even Christ—and each was endeavouring to show its superiority to the others. The result was a divided state, lack of cohesion: and so occupied were they with what was important to themselves that they overlooked the things that were important before God. What did it matter to them if a weak one were stumbled? They had liberty, and it was only his ignorance or backwardness that caused him to be stumbled. The fault was his, not theirs. Was there moral evil present? Let it be forgotten or overlooked: it was expected outside the assembly; no one outside would notice it, so why should those inside worry? Pride and learning mattered much more to them.

But what wrote the insignificant visitor? "Are ye not carnal, and *walk as men*?" (1 Cor. iii. 3). Yes indeed! walking as men, not as saints of God, though through divine grace they were that, and were so addressed by the apostle. But their walk did not agree with their profession. Paul had been amongst them as a very plain man, knowing nothing among them, he says, "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (Ch. ii. 2); and this declared, not with enticing words of man's wisdom lest they should trust in man and follow Paul as such. The real power he had with them was due to his ministry being "in demonstration of the Spirit" and of the power of God (Ch. ii. 4-5).

The apostle had been with them and had demonstrated the walk of a Christian before them. In writing his first letter to

them he called to mind the almost painful difference between them and himself, "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men... fools for Christ's sake... weak... despised... reviled... persecuted... defamed... the offscouring of all things" (1 Cor. iv. 9-13). The Corinthians considered themselves evidently amongst the world's wise men, and in so doing missed entirely the purpose of God in His people. How were they to be retrieved? What power could even Paul have with them? His ministry and example had not puffed them up, but had been the means of their deliverance from idols. But they were using his name for sectarianism, some saying "I am of Paul". Should he go back to them? Could he help them, or would he be received by them if he went back? How natural such reasonings and misgivings would be!

Have we ever been faced with a problem that seemed to demand our help? Perhaps we have been perplexed about it, thinking it to be something quite beyond us, or possibly, something just suited to our capabilities. How have we reacted? Paul says in such circumstances, "did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?" (2 Cor. i. 17).

Dear brethren, often in such circumstances dependence upon God and prayer to Him are much more necessary and effective than personal contact. For Paul to have shown himself then amongst them might easily have encouraged those who professed to be followers of him personally, and have consequently added to the sectarian troubles already in their midst. But, being away from them, his prayers could ascend to God for all, and none would feel either favoured or despised.

But how much that phrase must have meant—"did I use lightness?" Indeed not! it was no casual prayer; no flippant utterance, forgotten almost as soon as uttered. It was the effectual fervent prayer of which James speaks—"out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Cor. ii. 4). Here was a man who might be judged to be capable of dealing with any situation, just feeling unequal

to the case in hand because he looked beyond that which was natural and recognised Satan's hand in it, and realised that only the power of God could effectively deal with that.

There was therefore only one course to follow, whether in writing or visiting, and that was to commit the matter to God. And how effectual was the letter he wrote! The erring one was restored, and the tone of the assembly so vastly improved by their humiliation before God that they and he were all refreshed in the goodness of God. Indeed it could be said with the prophet Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but *by my Spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. iv. 6): to which the apostle adds, "thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 14); and again, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but *mighty through God* to the pulling down of strongholds" (Ch. x. 4). "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psalm lxii. 11).

Let us draw more fully and often upon this omnipotence available to every one of us. Personal visitation in contentious circumstances is not necessarily the best course, and may be dangerous; the way of power and safety is to seek the wisdom God has promised to those that ask of Him in faith (James i. 5, 6), and to act accordingly.

A. A. TUNLEY.

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(From "Christ is All," by Henry Law)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS**IV. The Love of Christ**

(Written at the seaside on holiday, June 1956)

Scripture exhorts us to love in deed and in truth (1 John iii. 18). It also shows how our Lord loves perfectly in this very way. From the beginning His delights were with the sons of men. In the fulness of time, the constraint of love brought Him into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. His deed of love above all was the laying down of His life for us, when, enduring the cross, He bore our sins, suffered for them, put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. He so loved that to save us He gave all, and every believer can say of Him "The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me." In that love is the deepest and the eternal joy of the soul.

Another thing which shows His love to be in deed and in truth is His desire to be with us.

Think of the third day after the cross. It was very early in the morning, we read, that devoted women came unto the sepulchre seeking His body, but earlier still He had risen from the dead and left the tomb. He was now the mighty Victor over sin and Satan and every enemy of God; the keys of Hades and of death are His by right; the place of the right hand of the Majesty on high is waiting for Him to occupy; the gates, the everlasting doors, are lifted up for the King of Glory to come in.

What is there to delay His glorious ascension? Only one thing, the desire of love to see His own again, to be with them, and to turn their sorrow into joy as He had promised. So He goes back to the tomb and shows Himself to those who loved Him best. He goes on the way to Emmaus to recall the wanderers. In the evening, the doors being shut, He comes and stands in the midst of the disciples and speaks peace to those He loves to be with. And for forty days He was seen of His disciples, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

This action of the Lord after His resurrection speaks eloquently to the attentive heart. Here verily is love in deed and in truth. There is more however.

Highly exalted as He is, and possessing all power in heaven and in earth as He does, the Lord's heart is still occupied with His own here below, and His desire is still to be with them. Recall the words with which Matthew closes his Gospel, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Although no longer with His own in bodily presence, the Lord will still be in spirit with those He loves, and very real His spiritual presence can be. More than a Visitor, His desire is to be a Dweller in the heart by faith, and we may know His presence in joy and sorrow, comfort and affliction, worship and service, and at the end we may have David's assurance, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me!" and that because of His timeless and changeless love.

One special promise of His presence is found in Matthew xviii, verse 20, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Perhaps this promise is one reason for the exhortation of Hebrews x, verse 25, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." We have His word that He will not forsake us, and we owe it to Him not to forsake the place of His promised presence.

Christians no doubt best enjoy His presence in the midst of them when they come together with the main object in view to eat the Lord's supper, as referred to in 1 Corinthians xi, verse 17 etc. His word is "Do this in remembrance of Me," and it surely develops the best affections of the heart as week by week (or as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup) we go back together in memory to the time of the Lord's betrayal and all that followed until He said "It is finished" and gave up the ghost. At such a time it is sweet and blessed to realise the Lord's presence in the midst as the One to Whom we offer praise and worship (though not excluding the access we have by Him to the Father), and from Whose hands we receive by faith His supper of bread and wine. He is in the midst because He loves in deed and in truth.

From the Gospels of both Mark and Luke we learn that the place where the Lord gathered His own and instituted His supper of remembrance was an upper room. One thought we may derive from this is that in going upstairs to meet the

Master, the disciples were raised above the ordinary level of human activity in the world, in order to be with the Lord, to eat and drink with Him, and to listen to His word. It is unthinkable that at such a time the disciples should have had thought for the ordinary every-day things of life. We may be sure there was for example no discussion between say Peter and John about the market price of fish. So those who gather today in His Name, whether they be few or many, have the privilege of counting themselves free from all else, to be occupied with the gracious Lord in spiritual elevation, not because we are superior in any way, but solely because of His elevating presence in love. In this however let us be simple and real and unaffected as we should be in all things.

The story of love reaches its final stage, its promised glorious consummation, in John xiv. It is as though the Lord says "My people shall not always be on earth, the scene for so long of man's sin and the power of Satan. The earthly inheritance is defiled and unworthy of those who are rich in faith, those who have not yet seen and yet have believed, those who have pre-trusted in Me. *They* must occupy the many abodes of My Father's house; nor can I be satisfied until they are with Me in heavenly glory." So we read His very words, "I go to prepare a place for you." And note what follows. It is not "and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and fetch you and put you in your place," but "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Unto Thyself? Is it really true, dear Lord, that this is how Thou dost love?" Yes, the Lord's love is such that where His own gather here below, *there He is*; and soon He will come in person to receive them to Himself above so that they shall be *where He is* for ever. This is love in deed and in truth.

May we be kept from disbelieving or forgetting the love of Christ, and so grieving His heart, but rather keep ourselves in the warm sense of that love which we are to know though it passeth knowledge, and from which nothing, praise God! shall ever separate us.

It is our greatest joy on earth
That Thou art with us here;
Our greatest joy in heaven will be
That we are with Thee there.

W. H. L. GRAHAM.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF BALAAM

III. Divine Justification

Numbers xxiii. 11 - 24 to be read

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 24/5/56)

It is remarkable that Balaam was given a second opportunity to speak. Balak, very indignant with him, enquired with surprise and disappointment, "What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." One would have expected him to send his visitor home immediately with a warning not to show his face in Moab again.

But the enemies of God and His people are very persistent, and Balak decided to make a second attempt to secure what he wanted. So he took the soothsayer to another vantage point from which he could view the people of Israel, in the hope possibly that a change of surroundings would induce a more favourable word from him. As before, Balaam instructed Balak to remain by the altars while he himself sought, not the Lord, but enchantments. The words in italics at the end of verse 15 should be omitted. Balaam had no wish to meet Jehovah again; he openly sought enchantments (Ch. xxiv. 1), hoping thereby to obtain some utterance which would enable him to secure Balak's reward.

God, however, comes to Balaam again. Is it not delightful to observe how Jehovah kept this evil man under the closest observation, because He intended that the man should bless His people? How truly the God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!

So Balaam received another message from God, and on his return found Balak standing by the altar, eager to know the verdict: "What hath the Lord spoken?" Perhaps this was said in sarcasm! Certainly he had no real wish to learn the mind of God. He merely hoped for a second pronouncement from Balaam more favourable to himself than the first.

Balaam, speaking in a much more aggressive tone this time, opens with another tribute to the unchanging character of God.

“God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” A man will boast beforehand of what he intends to accomplish, and, when defeated in his purpose, will resort to lies to excuse his inability to achieve his object. Or, seeing failure looming ahead, he may alter his plans to save face with his fellows. But God—our God—is not like that. He neither lies nor repents. What exactly did Balak expect that Jehovah was going to do? Did he really think that he might contradict Himself or change His purpose to suit Balak? God may in grace bear with ignorance and dullness, but He will not overlook effrontery.

God does not lie; God does not accommodate His plans to suit mankind; God does not fail in His purpose, nor will He allow any word that He has spoken to remain unfulfilled. His children rejoice that every blessing and triumph to which they look forward depends upon God’s unchanging grace, His almighty power, and His unswerving purpose.

Notice too how Balaam switched from the merely negative to what was positive. In his first parable he had said, “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?” Now he boldly says, “I have received commandment to bless, and He hath blessed”. It is true he adds, “and I cannot reverse it,” as though he would gladly have done so if he could. But, under God’s complete control, he announced specific blessing.

Then follow words which suggest that, although not particularly recorded, a conversation may well have taken place between the two men on the following lines. Balak, in the face of Balaam’s unwillingness to curse Israel, may have said to his visitor: “Balaam! I cannot understand why God should forbid you to curse Israel; they are a very unsatisfactory people, always grumbling and complaining: in spite of all that Jehovah has undoubtedly done for them, they are unthankful and disobedient. Are you quite sure God told you not to curse them, because that is what they deserve?”

Be it so, what was God’s reply. Said Balaam, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel”. What amazing words! How comforting for the people

of Israel! How overwhelming for Balak! What had happened? Had the people ceased to be sinfu!? Or had God ceased to be holy?

Please observe that the verse does not say there *was* no iniquity in Jacob or perverseness in Israel; only that God did not see them. But, of course, it is what God sees that matters.

To know the truth, read Moses' description of Israel, written probably about this very time: "Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you" (Deut. ix. 24, N.Tr.). If any man was in a position to know their true character, it was Moses; and such was his verdict. The people were everything they should not have been, despite God's kindness to them: they remained sinful.

Nor had God changed: He does not change, nor does He cease to be holy. Yet we might well be perplexed if there were no explanation of Balaam's declaration. But explanation there is: something was screening the sins of the people from God's holy eye. What was it?

It is suggested that the chapter preceding the story of Balaam—Numbers 21—supplies the key to the problem of how God could take up the cause of His people and declare that He beheld neither iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel. For it contains the account of the serpent of brass that was lifted upon a pole in order that those who looked upon it might have their sins forgiven and live. The Lord Jesus Himself declared that "serpent lifted up" to be typical of Himself, Who should be lifted up at Calvary to die that sinful men might live. He shed His precious atoning blood, and it is that which comes between the holy eye of God and the sins of His people. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus God is just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus. Calvary's atonement was unquestionably before God's eye when He commanded Balaam to speak the justifying word.

Then Balaam continued, "The Lord his God is with him". How can the One Who is holy remain amongst a rebellious people? Read some words in the New Testament which are parallel as regards believers to-day: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we

confess our sins, He is faithful (to Christ) and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John i. 8, 9). God perseveres with His people because of the abiding value of the work of Christ.

But he goes further still: "The shout of a king is among them". When a king leads his people to victory over their enemies, a shout of triumph rings forth. Balaam acknowledges that victory is Israel's because God is for them. The Christian shout of triumph may be found in Romans viii; "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; "all things work together for good to them that love God": "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The whole chapter resounds with the triumph of the believer over all his foes.

Then Balaam refers to God's accomplishment in bringing His people out of Egypt: "He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn". Some have thought that the animal referred to is the buffalo that frequents shallow rivers, bogs and swamps; and that where humans and other creatures become bogged down and find it impossible to progress, the buffalo, because of his exceptional strength, is able to proceed on his way. If that is correct, what an apt figure to set forth the One Who by His own strong right arm had brought His people out of bondage, and was leading them, surely and steadily, into the land of Canaan! Jehovah was not "bogged down" (speaking reverently) by the failures of His people. So that Balaam had to confess: "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, what hath God wrought".

Here is the secret of the progress of the people of God in every age—"what hath God wrought". Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". He himself completed a triumphant course, enduring incredible sufferings for Christ's sake, and he acknowledged that it was the power of Christ which rested upon him; that he strove according to the working of *Him Who worked in him mightily* (Col. i. 29). "What hath God wrought" will surely be the exclamation of each believer as he crosses the threshold of heaven.

Balaam closed his second parable on a note of further triumph still: "Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain". The lion is the all-conquering king of the forest. Balaam looked down upon the people of Israel and knew they would prevail against all their foes by the strength of Jehovah their God. So believers will be "more than conquerors" through Him that loved them. The reading of Romans viii. 35-39, will be a fitting close to this meditation.

E. A. PETTMAN

(Next Article—Divine Preservation)



NOTES FROM A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XII

AFTER the failure of Adam and his descendants in the old world and of Noah and his in the new, as recorded in chapters i-xi., God now begins again by calling out Abram *publicly* from the midst of idolatry (Joshua xxiv. 2) and by making an unconditional covenant with him and his seed. He becomes, therefore, the great O.T. instance of God's sovereign election by grace and effectual calling. The sovereignty of the call is emphasised by the fact that Melchizedek was already in the land. There was to be a new root and stock, as Romans xi teaches. It was on the same principle that Israel later and the church later still were taken up by God for blessing.

Probably the youngest son of Terah, certainly not the oldest (cf. Gen. xi. 32 and xii. 4, with Acts vii. 4), Abram was a man of no mean order. He was marked by great nobility of character, as is witnessed by his truly magnanimous attitude towards his nephew, Lot (Chap. xiii). He was a man of action, too, as we see in his subsequent deliverance of his nephew (chap. xiv). He was also a man of prayer and intercession (chap. xviii). But Abram was pre-eminently a man of faith, called many years afterwards the "father of all who believe" (Romans iv. 11) and "faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 19).

xii. 1-3.—It must not be understood from verse 1 that there were two calls. Firstly, there is no pluperfect tense in the original (see R.V.) and, secondly, Acts vii. 2-4, shows clearly that the call was made to Abram when he was in Mesopotamia. It is noteworthy that, having spoken, God does not speak again until his obedience is complete and he is in Canaan. It was the God of glory (Acts vii. 2) Who appeared to him. In the apostle Paul's case also it was the glory and the command (Acts ix).

The separation was a severe one. But God always encourages faith and rewards it bountifully. His biddings are His enablings. Abram was not only to be blessed, but to be made a blessing. What blessing has flown from the Jews!

4-6. In Haran, where apparently they stayed some years, Terah ("delay") dies (Chap. xi. 32). Nature, always a hindrance, can never respond to the call of God.

Abram, now free, sets out in dependence upon God with his childless wife to inherit the promises. Hebrews xi. 8-16 shows how faith appropriated from those promises a heavenly hope. Abram apprehended by faith the glory of that city for which he waited, and walked down here a pilgrim with the secret of it in his heart.

Faith having taken the lead, Canaan, type of our heavenly position and privilege, is reached.

Lot continues the journey with Abram, but never becomes the man of faith his uncle was. He walked with Abram and was, doubtless, influenced by Abram's faith, but Abram walked with God. He was the friend of God. (Is. xli. 8; 2 Chron. xx. 7; and James ii. 23).

7, 8.—Jehovah now appears to Abram again and the result is an altar. A further principle is, therefore, brought out, viz:— worship is consequent on, and based on, revelation. How true is this of the saints of God of our day, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth! It is God known and delighted in, as revealed, that at all times results in grateful praise and worship.

In verse 8 we have the pilgrim. Altar and Tent go together. They sum up the greater part of the experience of the

Christian. The more truly we answer to our character as pilgrims, the deeper and sweeter will be our joy as worshippers.

9-13.—God, Who holds nothing back—not even the failure of His beloved servants—that is needful for our admonition, gives here the failure of the man of faith. It is the strong man become weak. Abram, like Moses, failed in his strongest point. And all because he left in heart the path of dependence on, and confidence in, God. The feet follow the heart. Tested by the famine in the land, the trial becomes too great for him and he turns to Egypt, the granary of the ancient world.

Once there, the boldness, transparency and simplicity of faith give way to fear, disguises and untruthfulness. All moral power seems gone. Poor Abram, he is without guidance and guard of Divine power, although a faithful hand was all the time working behind the scenes. But Abram had no communion. No mention of altar here.

14-16.—Abram's fears come true. Sarah, separated from Abram, gets into the very arena of evil. Sarah stands for the covenant of grace, and, as such, is linked only with faith. The world has allied itself with the Christians, but it is because of their unfaithfulness. The world *will* not have Christ. The alliance cannot, therefore, last. Pharaoh gets rid of Sarah. She is restored to Abram. Is there not a foreshadowing of what will be the end as depicted in the book of Revelation?

Note that Abram prospers materially in Egypt, but at what a cost spiritually!

17-20.—Abram, who, according to God's promises, was to bring blessings to others, brings trouble on Pharaoh by his unfaithfulness, for Pharaoh is plagued. Nevertheless, we can see God working in it all for His servant, with the result that Sarah, preserved from all harm, is restored to Abram. Psalm cv. throws much light on this incident.

How humiliating for Abram, the man of faith, to be reproved by the king of Egypt!

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FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

NOVEMBER 1956

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EDITORIAL NOTE

SOME readers have been kind enough to draw attention to the fact that in a recent issue of Words of Help all the articles were expository in character, designed to help in the understanding of the Scriptures dealt with, but there was not one containing devotional ministry "for the heart".

These observations are quite understood and appreciated, and every endeavour will be made to introduce greater variety, as the Lord may enable. The Editor will be glad to have articles submitted to him as suitable for the "Lord's Day Reflections" series.

It may be well to mention that this series is designed particularly to assist the reader to meditate upon the Person, life and work of the Lord Jesus, when he is at quiet leisure to do so, and to stimulate a response of devotion and worship from the heart. What more fitting occasion for such holy occupation than the Lord's own day!

(Read Psalms xix. 14 and civ. 34)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

V. THE MANNA—SMALL . ROUND . WHITE . SWEET

(*Read Exodus xvi. 14, 31*)

THE MANNA WAS SMALL. It lay a little seed upon the bare earth. Pride would take up a ready-sneer. Can this mean mite proceed from heaven's store? Jesus appears. No royal state surrounds. No royal home receives. No royal retinue attends. In lowly guise, He seems the lowliest of lowly men. His highest station upon earth is in humility's deep vale. But meekness is His Majesty. Abasement is His glory. Believer, He puts on your flesh, that He may clothe you in His brightest glory. He sinks to nothingness, to exalt you above all greatness. He lives and dies in shame, contempt, and pain, that you may reign in all the honours of the highest heavens. Your blessings bud forth from His mean estate.

IT WAS ROUND. The hand, which handled, found no first and no last point. It was surface without beginning, without end. Behold the wondrous Jesus. Who can ascend to the spring-head of His birth? Who can stretch forward to the boundary of His life? Who can discern a limit in the circles upon circles of His being? Look through the ages of eternity past. In all He lives unchanged, unchangeable. Look through the ages of eternity to come. He still lives unchanged, unchangeable. Believer, is not this thought an ocean of delight, wide as your Saviour's breadth and length? He never was, but with your image on His heart. And while He lives, your image will be there.

IT WAS WHITE. It covered the mire of earth, a bright contrast to surrounding stains. Its spotless hue proved its descent to be from a pure home. Turn now to Jesus. His every look, and word, and step are dazzling, as the holiness of heaven. He was the righteousness of God embodied in the flesh of man. He trod this earth, perfect as God is perfect. He ever shone untainted, as the sunbeam from the mid-day orb. It could not be otherwise. Deity forbid. Impossibility of sin is Jehovah's essence. It must be so. Redemption needed it. He, who would save a soul from sin, must give the offering of a sinless soul. Reader, would you be blameless before God? Put on Christ Jesus.

IT WAS SWEET. The palate tasted, and delighted in the luscious savour. It nourished, and the nourishment brought pleasure to the lips. This is the Saviour's emblem. He is all sweetness to the feasting soul. Is it not heaven's own luxury to feed upon divine assurances, that all sins are fully and for ever pardoned: all guilt fully and for ever cancelled: all debts fully and for ever paid: all pledges of glory faithfully and for ever pledged? Is it not sweet to gaze with open eye on a reconciled Father's smile: to receive unmeasured comfort, instruction, strength, and guidance from the indwelling Spirit: to realise, that ministering angels encamp around: that good men love us—evil men serve us—and all things present and to come are our sure heritage? Jesus is this sweet Manna. Is it not sweet to be regaled all day at such a banquet: to repose all night on such a pillow: to walk through life in such green pastures? This is the believer's Manna. Wordling, is your repast thus sweet?

From "Christ is All,"
by Henry Law.



FELLOWSHIP

Scriptures to be read:

1 Corinthians i, 9. Philipians iii, 10. 1 John i, 3 and 7

WE often hear the question asked whether someone is or is not "in fellowship," and generally it means "Is he or she in communion at the Lord's Table?" or "Does he or she Break Bread?"

This question arises because of the condition of Christendom. The professing church is sadly leavened by the presence of evil doctrines, practices and associations, so that those who desire to show themselves "approved of God" (2 Tim. ii, 15-22) must walk in separation, if they have a sincere regard for the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, with those "that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." To maintain this separation due care has to be

exercised in receiving any who wish to follow with them, and so the expression "in fellowship" arises. The danger is that it may be narrowed down to sectarian application.

The word "fellowship" occurs in each of the Scriptures named above. Ordinarily it implies companionship in a common interest or purpose, and these scriptures unfold it in this way. They present it, of course, according to the mind of God, and not man's conception of it.

The first scripture states the fact that a fellowship has been established by God whereby every Christian is given the privilege of holy companionship with the Son of God. It is presented "objectively," so that each of us may lay hold of it by simple faith, and so reckon ourselves as being in this fellowship by the call of God Himself. The second brings home to us "subjectively" the implication of such companionship, which is fellowship with Christ in His rejection on earth. The last shows who are our companions, and what is our common interest and purpose.

The apostle Paul, before taking the Corinthians to task for evil allowed in their midst, encourages them. He reminds them of grace, spiritual riches and gifts given to them by God, with the assurance of being kept safely unto the coming of Christ, for he says, "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." It was to be expected, if they were in so blessed a fellowship, that they would be so endowed and kept. They had been called by God from the evil ways of the world to be saints, and from its evil associations to be the companions of His Son. Just as they became saints once and for all, so they were established in this fellowship once and for all; a fellowship set up sovereignly by God, which they had not joined of their own will, and from which they could not resign even if they had so wished.

It may be asked, "Is 1 Cor. i, 9 applicable to us?" The Epistle is addressed not only to the saints at Corinth, but to "all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Does that not embrace every Christian owning Him as Lord? It is a fellowship formed in the purpose of God for the joy and glory of His Son, and we should rejoice that we

have been called into it, rightly valuing our privileged position. Resigning from it, or contracting out, is impossible and should not be thought of.

Brought in infinite grace to have company with the Son of God, we should desire above all else to know Him more and more. Only in a person's company do we really come to know him, and only in this fellowship shall we truly apprehend the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Phil. iii, 8 Paul speaks of the knowledge of Christ Jesus as excelling all his other attainments. In fact he counted those things worthless in order to know Christ better. He desired to be completely occupied with his Lord so that he might know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. He wished to keep company with this Blessed One Whom once he despised and persecuted, but Whom he now knew to be at the right hand of God in glory. He realised that to have the uplifting power of the Lord's resurrection victory in his life, and in the hour of death, if need be, would involve sharing His sufferings also—the sufferings of rejection in this world. For there was no room for Him to be born in the inn, nowhere to lay His head during His lifetime, and the cries of "away with Him" harried Him to the cross.

On the way to Damascus, Paul had been miraculously introduced to the Lord Jesus in glory, and the words he heard were, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He had been persecuting the disciples of the Lord Jesus; now he learned that they and He were one! He therefore had an immediate introduction to this fellowship, and it made a great impression upon him. He saw that the Lord Jesus owned in a very intimate way those on earth who were sharing His rejection, even to martyrdom. Now he desired for himself that privilege of fellowship in his Lord's sufferings which he felt was proper to one who rejoiced in fellowship with that same Lord in glory.

If again it is asked, "Is this expected of us?" read verses 15 and 16 of Philippians iii, which should stimulate us all to be "thus minded" with the beloved apostle. We may be very glad to share the privilege of being called to the fellowship of God's

Son and yet be unprepared for its implications. May we, like Paul, desire to go all the way with our blessed Lord, in the sufferings of His rejection as well as in His "glory to follow."

In this fellowship, however, there is much joy, and we are in very good company, that of the apostles, as John tells us in his first epistle, which he wrote that his readers might have full joy. Moreover what the apostles had seen and heard was to be enjoyed together in fellowship with them, their fellowship being with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is the same fellowship as has already been considered.

The apostles experienced a foretaste of this fellowship in their companionship with the Lord Jesus on earth, for we read in Mark iii, 14, "And He ordained twelve that they should be with Him." Now that He was risen and glorified they entered into and rejoiced in the true realisation of it.

The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ had entranced them, and was enabling them to suffer here for His Name's sake. What they had heard, seen, looked upon and handled was very real to them. It was the manifestation or showing forth of the Word of Life, the expression by God of true life. It was with the Father, but shown to them, and it resulted in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. For the apostles nothing else was of any consequence. They gladly declared that they now knew that "God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all," God in all His perfection, righteousness and love being fully revealed.

They had heard Him that was from the beginning. The Deity of the Lord Jesus was before their eyes, and the voice they heard was the same that had called everything into being at the beginning. They looked upon Him, as John the Baptist had done, with awe and admiration. Yet this Eternal Person was in fashion as a Man in lowly grace, and they handled Him! They were full of the vision of His deity, His words, His acts, His authority (twice vouched for from heaven itself), His perfect manhood and yet His Eternal Person and His Sonship, a sevenfold presentation of the true God and Eternal Life which was henceforth theirs to delight in evermore. This was true light, and walking in it true fellowship was available to them here on earth.

The blessed truths unfolded in this scripture are the common interest of us all, and the more we apprehend them humbly and sincerely, the more we shall enjoy fellowship with one another.

What a blessed fellowship this is then to which all Christians are called! It was established by God to enable every believer on earth, whoever and wherever he or she may be, to have fellowship with His Son now glorified, but carrying with it the responsibility to share the sufferings of that Son in His continued rejection on earth, having withal the revelation in Him of true Life.

The experimental knowledge of these things will yield joy to the full in company with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ and call on Him out of a pure heart. Sectarian ideas of fellowship will find no response in us.

D. G. MILLETT.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF BALAAM

IV. DIVINE PRESERVATION

Numbers xxiii, 25—xxiv, 9 to be read

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 31.5.56)

HAVING suffered two reverses, Balak makes a last despairing effort to save something from the wreckage of Balaam's visit by suggesting he should adopt a neutral attitude: "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." It was a cunning manoeuvre, but as futile as his previous attempts to secure a curse.

So he took Balaam to the top of Peor, yet another height from which he could overlook the whole panorama of the camp of Israel, and behold it in its established order. Again the question arises, what will Balaam do?

On the two previous occasions Balaam had gone off by himself to seek enchantments; this time he merely turned towards the wilderness, hoping possibly to escape God's attention. But it was all to no purpose, for the Spirit of God came upon him and compelled him to speak the words which God purposed.

It should not surprise anyone to read that the Spirit of God came upon a bad man. He did not take up His permanent residence in Balaam in the way that He indwells believers today. He merely came upon him in power, taking temporary control of him for a particular purpose, and constraining him to utter God's word against his own inclinations and will. Having achieved that object, the Spirit of God left him.

After confessing that he now speaks as one whose eyes have been opened, Balaam says: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel." Looking upon God's people from the heights—from God's point of view still—he speaks of their exceeding blessedness. Though still in the wilderness, not yet having reached the promised land, the people of God are nevertheless blessed and favoured.

When Israel struck their camp and moved forward, or encamped again, they were not permitted to do so haphazardly. God is a God of order, and each tribe had its assigned place. This would appear to have been noticed by Balaam, and to be the basis of his pronouncement.

So it is with the people of God today. Each believer is called by his name (John x, 3), showing that individuality is recognised by the Lord. Not only so, but those who belong to Christ are members of His church—that wonderful society or organisation which is described in the Scriptures as "His body." And in that church they are not bundled together anyhow. Each believer has his or her own particular place, for God has "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor. xii, 18). Furthermore, this order is "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii, 10). As Balaam gazed down upon the children of Israel and beheld their order, so angelic powers now gaze down upon the church of God and behold (how marvellous!) the manifold wisdom of God.

Balaam then uses four similes to describe and elaborate the blessedness of Israel. He says they are:

- i. spread forth as the valleys;
- ii. as gardens by the river's side;

- iii. as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted; and
- iv. as cedar trees beside the waters.

“Spread forth as valleys.” The hilltop and the hillside are cold and bleak; the valley is the place of warm sunshine. The rain may fall upon the hills, but it does not stay there; it runs away down to the valley; in the valley it collects and lingers, spreading verdure all around.

Truly the whole world receives day by day the good gifts of a beneficent Creator, but God’s choicest blessings are for His people. He is said to be the Saviour (i.e. Preserver) of all men, but “specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. iv, 10). God’s people are spread forth as valleys. Paul writes that “all things work together for good.” Is that true for everyone? Certainly not. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. viii, 28). What a wonderful privilege to be entitled, on the authority of God’s word, to accept everything as it comes along in the sure knowledge that all things work together for our good. No wonder that believers may “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.” (Rom. v, 3-5).

And what about the people of God collectively? The church is the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. ii, 22), and where God dwells there must be blessing. Despite all the failure that has come in, the church is still the place where believers may find consolation and joy, and the comfort and graces of God’s Spirit. Should we not therefore value Christian fellowship very highly, and be diligent in assembling ourselves with God’s people (Heb. x, 25).

Next they were “as gardens by the river’s side.” A garden is distinguished from other fertile land round about by the fact that it has the particular care and attention of some person who cultivates it. Leave a garden without a gardener, and how quickly it becomes like any other piece of uncultivated ground! A garden remains a garden *only* so long as it has the personal attention and interest of the gardener.

The children of God are the objects of His own personal, tender, unceasing care. What responsibilities that entails, but what unbounded comfort! The apostle Peter tells us to cast all our care upon God because He cares for us (1 Peter v, 7).

But the figure seems to be even fuller than that. Balaam said, "as the gardens by the river's side"—gardens with all needed refreshment and enrichment for the soil ready to hand. Does this not remind us of the Lord's own words to the woman of Samaria: "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv, 14)? The Spirit of God is given to each believer individually to be in him, a Source of comfort, joy and refreshment. Believers should not be dependent upon favourable circumstances for their happiness. They very often are; but that is a mark of failure. Paul tells us that he had learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content (Phil. iv, 11). By what power could that be true? Only by the power of the Spirit of God dwelling within him—"as a garden by the river's side."

Applying this to the church, the church may not appear very beautiful outwardly today because of the divisions that rend her. But in the eyes of the Lord Jesus she is still the "one pearl of great price" (Matt. xiii, 46), for which He gave all that He had that He might possess it. Read also Eph. v, 25-27.

Balaam continues: "as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted." It has been said that the aloe tree, in the part of the earth where Balaam and Israel dwelt, was an "exotic", i.e. a plant brought from a foreign land because of its fragrance, beauty or usefulness, and planted in soil and surroundings not natural to it. Such must be planted with great care, by a person who knows well what he is doing, or they will not survive the transfer.

Christians are really out of place in this world; they belong to heaven; heaven is their home (Phil. iii, 20). How then can they survive the unfriendly surroundings of this world? They can do so only if and because they have been planted by the Lord.

Persons on the point of becoming Christians are sometimes deterred from taking the decisive step for fear that they will be unable to "keep it up." Young Christians are frequently timid

lest they should fail to "live the life," and let their Master down. How had the martyrs fortitude to brave the terrors of the burning stake? Surely it was because they had been "planted by the Lord." So the faint-hearted may take courage, knowing that "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i, 6).

And what about the church of Christ? Is not hers a heavenly calling? When Adam was placed in the garden of Eden he was not told that if he behaved himself he would eventually go to heaven. The Jewish nation never had any hope of prosperity beyond an earthly paradise, and such they will have in the millennium. But the church of Christ is destined for heaven. That is her own peculiar portion. She now waits for her Lord from heaven to take her there, to be there for ever.

Lastly, Balaam says: "as cedar trees beside the waters." One has said that cedar trees are amongst the stateliest things in nature. The few specimens in this land excite admiration: what must be the beauty of the cedars of Lebanon! Cedars beside the waters, with everything available to maintain their freshness and magnificence! What a grand figure to denote the dignity of God's calling!

How wonderful to be a child of God! How wonderful to belong to the family of God! What a bond of union, which nothing can destroy! Think upon these things reader, and glory in that which is the portion of every believer in Jesus!

Finally, before repeating words he had previously spoken, Balaam added: "he shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters." Is this not a reference to God's intention that Israel's blessing shall overflow to the whole world (see Gen. xxii, 18—following the offering up of Isaac)? God's people are not only to be blessed themselves, but to be channels of blessing to others.

Balaam's third parable ends with a blessing: "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Beware Balak, beware!

E. A. PETTMAN

(Next Article—Divine Glorification)

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

VI. THE CHURCH—GOD'S MEETING PLACE

(continued)

IN the preceding article on this subject Matt. xviii, 20 was under consideration as the basic truth about the "meeting place" of God (in the Person of the Lord Jesus) with His people in these days. Teaching concerning the church in this character of "meeting place" is given to us in 1 Corinthians.

The church (that is, the company of Christians regarded collectively) in Corinth resulted from the preaching of Paul. Many heard, believed and were baptised. Later they were much helped by Apollos, an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord (see Acts xviii). In their early simplicity they were truly a company *called out* from Judaism and idolatry, and *gathered together* in the unity of the faith. But various forms of error arose among them, and the apostle was inspired by the Spirit of God to write 1 Corinthians to teach them (and us) what ought to characterise those who gather together church-wise in order that such a gathering might be the place where the Lord is pleased to meet His people. The very same evils which were incipient in the church at Corinth are found in full activity among professing Christians today.

The early chapters of this Epistle deal largely, though not exclusively with the individual's state of soul, for the company cannot be suitable for God's presence if the individuals are not. Then chapters xi to xiv in particular deal with "when ye come together in the church (church-wise)," see xi, 18, xiv, 23 etc.

It is not the purpose of these articles to take up in detail the exhortations addressed to believers as individuals, but a brief (and imperfect) summary is as follows. There should be no thought of following man, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, to Whose fellowship we were called, should have the pre-eminent place. While profiting by the ministry, and recognising the servants whom the Spirit of God is using, the servants are not to be made, in fact or in thought, leaders of parties (Chapters i and iii). Natural intelligence is to be subordinated to the authority of the Holy Spirit (Chap. ii). Occupations, conduct and recreations are to be tested whether they are for God's glory (Chaps.

v, vi, vii and x). All conceptions of God not found in Scripture are to be rejected as idolatrous (Chaps. viii, x). These truths, and much more affecting each individual, are dealt with, and the reader's attention is drawn to "He that glorieth (boasteth), let him glory in the Lord." (i, 31); "we have the mind of Christ" (ii, 16); "let no man glory in men" (iii, 21); "ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (vi, 20). One who believes in the Lord Jesus with child-like faith would answer to these with simplicity of heart, but we live in a day when human reasoning, compromise and infidel doubts are thrust upon us and may awaken a response in our deceitful hearts. The teaching in these early chapters was consequently never more needed than today.

Resuming the subject of the local church as the meeting place of God with His people, it is necessary to point out that if the local gathering is to be a "meeting place" it must first be a Sanctuary or "Temple." That is the divine order in Exodus xxv, and also in this Epistle. If moral or doctrinal evil arises in the gathering it must be purged out in a scriptural way as taught in 1 Cor. v and Gal. v (see preceding article). The *power* of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge and deal with such evil is available for those gathered in His Name (Chap. v, 4). If these Scriptures are not obeyed the whole local company concerned becomes "leavened" by association with the "wicked person." It is appalling to assume for a moment that the Lord will meet His people (unless as Judge—see Rev. i) in a company where evil of this character is permitted: for defilement destroys the "temple" character of the company.

Again, the communion, or bond of fellowship, between all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ on earth without exception, which is involved in the unity of the church, is to be acknowledged and borne in mind. This matter has been dealt with in some detail in Articles II and III of this series, but is referred to because it has direct and important bearing on the characteristics of a local company of believers viewed as the meeting place of the Lord with His people. Consistent with this truth, a man put away as a wicked person according to chapter v would be excluded from all faithful companies of believers elsewhere. He

would not have an "epistle of commendation" (see 2 Cor. iii). If however he was truly a believer, he left an empty seat, as it were, until he was restored, as we learn in 2 Cor., and although he was put away, the company was still to acknowledge the truth of the one body, expressed in the one loaf at the Lord's supper (see Chap. x, 16, 17).

Detailed teaching follows in chapters xi to xiv as to coming together for the breaking of bread, for edification, exhortation and comfort, and for prayer, praise and thanksgiving. This teaching covers the conduct of women in the assembly (xi, 3-16, xiv, 34, 35), the conduct of all at the Lord's supper (xi, 18-34), the allocation of gifts by the Spirit "to every man" in the assembly, the purposes for which the gifts are given, the control and exercise of the gifts, etc. In order that all may be impressed with the authority of the whole passage the apostle wrote at the end of this section of the Epistle, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Can we assume the Lord's presence if His commandments are flouted? How important all these matters are in connection with the aspect of the local assembly as the place where the Lord meets with His people.

The first point to which it is desired to draw attention is the fact that this section of the epistle begins and ends with the conduct of women in the assembly. The two passages are so simple and clear that it seems unnecessary to enlarge upon them, but in practice today there is a growing tendency in many denominations to evade, or even to disregard, them on the plea that circumstances are different. Such a reason could be advanced to overturn almost any scripture, and is a denial of the eternal and settled character of the Word of God. A high ecclesiastical authority (in the eyes of men) has even recently referred to Chap. xiv, verse 34, as "a ruling of the apostle Paul," and has advocated the "licensing" of women to preach in "churches," in the face of verse 34. The reader must judge for himself whether a company gathered in such circumstances can assume that the Lord will meet His people there.

It is hoped, God permitting, to consider further chapters, xi-xiv in the next (and concluding) article of this series.

J. C. KELL

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WORDS^{OF} HELP

FROM THE
SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH.

DECEMBER 1956

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EDITORIAL NOTE

AS this last issue for 1956 goes to press, it is right to acknowledge God's goodness which has enabled WORDS OF HELP to appear regularly ever since the home-call of the late beloved W. G. TURNER.

The Editor wishes to express his thanks to contributors who have freely devoted their thought, time and labour to this service. He is appreciative also of the hearty co-operation of Printers, Publisher and distributors, without whose efforts the Magazine would not reach our readers.

For the new year we hope (D.V.) to introduce a new style front page which will give a little more room for our various articles. Much as we would like to increase the number of pages, we have not yet seen our way to do this because of the higher price that would have to be charged.

Production costs continue to rise, and we are indebted to our Publisher for agreeing to maintain the present price of 3d. per copy for another year. We hope that readers will so appreciate WORDS OF HELP in 1957 that they will increase the number of copies they order, and thus enable the low price to be continued. **WE ASK THE HELP OF ALL OUR READERS TO THIS END.** For subscription rates please refer to the last page of the cover.

WORDS OF HELP provides sound scripture teaching and counsel for the present day, and we ask our readers to pass copies on to their friends at home and abroad. Missionaries, Preachers, Christian Workers, Sunday School and Bible Class Teachers and others will find the Magazine a helpful means of increasing their own knowledge of spiritual things, and this will in turn enable them to enrich others.

Very best wishes for 1957 are offered to all our readers, near and far.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER IN COLOSSIANS I

THE climax of this chapter is the display of the glories of the Person of Christ in verses 15-20, but the earlier verses mention a variety of subjects for thanksgiving and prayer.

In verse 3 the apostle gives thanks to God for what the Colossians had already received, praying that their appreciation of their blessings might increase. Verse 4 speaks of their faith in Christ Jesus, and their love to all the saints. Faith, the gift of God, is mentioned first, for it was by faith they had received the word of God as it came to them, their hearts and consciences being affected thereby. How necessary that our preaching and teaching should not merely be scriptural, but incorporate the inspired words of Scripture, remembering that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the *word of God*. (Rom. x. 17)!

Furthermore the Colossians showed love towards their fellow-believers, all other members of the Body of Christ (see also Chap. ii. 2). If in our ministry we aim at being understood, so as to make it easier for others to believe, we should cultivate lovable ways in order to encourage the exercise of love, whilst seeking grace to love those who do not see the necessity for this.

In verse 5 there is mention of the hope laid up for them in heaven, of which also they had heard in the gospel. Formerly believers at Colosse, like those at Ephesus, had no hope, the special promises to Israel not being applicable to Gentiles. The gospel, however, was free of national limitations, offering all who had faith in Christ a part in God's inheritance on the heavenly side. The gospel carried "into the whole world" was bringing forth fruit in all places, everywhere similar in character, though varying in degree, but the grace of God in truth being responsible for the whole yield, whether an hundred, sixty or thirtyfold. Faith, love to the saints, and fruit-bearing all being capable of increase, how pleasing to the Lord Jesus, if, at His coming, His own are found increasing in these virtues.

Verse 12 continues the theme of thanksgiving, where the apostle exults in what the Father had done for all who had faith in the gospel, even though it were but yesterday they received

Christ. He had made them meet, fit, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Probably "light" in this verse refers to the actual glory and presence of God. If so, what a testimony that the receivers of the gospel have the assurance of being fitted to sustain the glorious blaze of that light!

In connection with no other news, however good, is such a result reached. How greatly it honours the word of the gospel of which the apostle was not ashamed! What a relief and joy to know that one's state then will be such that the light of God's presence will only confirm our fitness to be there!

Oh what shall keep me in that height,

And soften to my soul's delight,

The unclouded blaze of holy light?

The Saviour's precious blood.

John, too, in Rev. iv. 4, beheld the saints, under the figure of the four and twenty elders, seated on thrones (see New Tr. and R.V.) around the throne of God, wholly undisturbed by the lightnings and thunderings and voices proceeding therefrom. Also, in 1 John i, he declares that believers already walk in the light, assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth them from all sin. Thus John and Paul rejoice together concerning the truths of the gospel.

Verse 13 contains an added blessing, viz: that God has delivered believers from the power of darkness in which they were, and has translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son; in a spiritual way now, but in actuality at the time which Rev. iv. and v. portray. Note that Rev. v. speaks much of redemption through His blood.

The words kingdom, inheritance and redemption, convey the thought that we who have faith in Christ are to have part in the heavenly side of the inheritance. As Israel were redeemed out of Egypt and given inheritance in Canaan, so believers are delivered from this present evil world to have part, as joint heirs with Christ and co-heirs with one another, in that vast inheritance which Christ will receive and share with the objects of His love (Eph. i. 1-11).

Coupled with thanksgiving is prayer. In verse 9 the apostle desires that the Colossians should be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, having wisdom and spiritual understanding regarding it. Both Old and New Testaments bear their testimony to the Lord's knowledge of the will of Him that sent Him. Isaiah 1, 4-5, declares that while on earth, His ear was turned daily to learn His Father's will; and in John vi. 38, He says that He came down from heaven not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Compare also Luke ii. 49.

Paul himself sought to walk by this rule, and prays that those at Colosse might do the same. What a marvel of grace that persons once at enmity with God may know and rejoice in His will, and walk worthy of the Lord!

"Unto all pleasing" may derive light from the word spoken to the Son, "In Thee I am well pleased." If so, how wonderful if the Father should see in us ways that remind Him of what He saw so perfectly in His beloved Son when on earth! Being fruitful in every good work, and growing in, or by, the knowledge of God, would result from walking "even as He walked."

A son of a good father, observing his parent's nice ways and upright dealings, would grow up to be a good son through having seen such things lived before his eyes; he would grow by the knowledge of his father and his father's character. The written word and the Living Word acquaint us with God, and express His will for us in our time. The closer that acquaintance becomes, the easier it will be to know what pleases Him well.

Strength, might and power in verse 11 are bound together with patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Those persecuted for Christ's sake in other lands, many in adversity, some even in prison, may appreciate the force of these things more readily than ourselves. How earnestly such will seek the strength, might and power which come from God alone; how deeply they will desire to have patience and to suffer long with joyfulness; and how gratefully they will look forward to being in the Father's home of light and bliss assured to them in the gospel!

P. WHITE.

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT

VII: THE CHURCH—GOD'S MEETING PLACE

(Concluded)

IN the previous articles on this aspect of the Church the basic truth about the place of meeting (Matt. xviii. 20), the individual's state of soul suitable for meeting the Lord, the "temple" character of a company of believers that is such a meeting place and similar truths were considered briefly. It remains to consider the teaching connected with the purposes for which believers should gather in the Name of the Lord Jesus with Himself present in their midst. In 1 Corinthians xi. to xiv. these are threefold, viz: for the Lord's Supper, for edification, exhortation and comfort, and for prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is brought before us (Chap. xi. 20 to end) in the simplicity of its institution by the Lord Himself. It is to be kept reverently and after self-examination, but without ceremonial or ritual. There are passing references to the earlier part of the epistle, i.e. to "divisions" (verse 18), and to appropriate conduct (verses 27-34). Also the bond of communion, the unity of the whole church, which is expressed in the one loaf before it is broken, has previously been brought to our attention (Ch. x. 5-17). The occasion is not one for the exercise of gifts, which are dealt with later in the epistle. All is extremely simple in contrast with the ceremonial set up by so many companies of Christians these days.

The historical aspect of this simple memorial of the Lord Jesus is given in the Acts. The sequel to the preaching on the day of Pentecost, and the wonderful conversions, was that those "that gladly received his (Peter's) word . . . continued stedfastly in . . . the breaking of bread" (Acts ii. 41, 42). In Acts "breaking bread" is used for the Lord's Supper in distinction from "eating meat" which refers to ordinary meals (see ii. 46 and elsewhere). Later we read of Paul being at Troas (Acts xvi. 8-10) where he preached Christ's gospel (2 Cor. ii. 12). Subsequently certain companions of Paul preceded him to Troas where he joined them for seven days. There upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break

bread (Acts xx. 5-7). It can surely be concluded, from the simple directness of all these passages, that the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread was the happy privilege of all the converts. The need for the teaching in the first ten chapters of 1 Corinthians had not then arisen, but it requires little consideration of present conditions in Christendom to realise how much the teaching is needed today.

Before coming together in the Lord's Presence for "edification, exhortation and comfort" is dealt with, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle teaches us the diversities of gifts given to the various members of the Body of Christ (Chap. xii). This subject was under consideration in "Words of Help" for June, but it is now desired to draw attention to certain points not then dealt with. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given *to every man* to profit withal" (verse 7). All the gifts are operated by "that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing *to every man* severally as He will" (verse 11). Further, chapter xiii. is interposed between xii. and xiv. to teach us a more excellent way than coveting the best gifts. Love—not natural affection for one another, but that character of love which is the divine nature, for "God is love"—is to characterise all the relationships of the members of the body of Christ and the activities of their varied gifts.

Chapter xiv. exhorts us to desire "that ye may prophesy" (verse 1), and "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort" (verse 3). Prophesying is distinct from teaching. As is generally known it is not necessarily concerned with future events, even in the Old Testament. In the early days of the church, before the New Testament was written, the prophets received from the Holy Spirit Himself direct the messages they were to deliver to the saints (e.g. see Acts xiii. 1, 2). Today we have the whole of the Scriptures, but the distinction between prophet and teacher remains. A teacher speaks from his accumulated knowledge of the truth (he has the word of knowledge—Chap. xii. 8), and can teach as long as his reservoir of knowledge can be drawn upon. A prophet speaks the message from the Scriptures given him by the Holy Spirit for the moment, suited for the actual people present and

the actual circumstances at the time. How important such ministry is!

This brings us to a very important point. In chapters xi. to xiv. there is no suggestion of any humanly devised organisation or control of the exercise of the gifts given "to every man severally." The control is seen to be by the Holy Spirit of God. Each prophet for instance is to be so subject to the Holy Spirit that he has his own spirit under control, keeping silence when he should. Subjection to the Holy Spirit should be so real that if anything be revealed to another that sitteth by the speaker should be aware of it and should stop speaking (verse 30). If he speaks he is to use words easy to be understood, and to speak to profit. Two or three may speak (consecutively) on any one occasion (verse 29), but, far from the idea that speaking should be confined to one man or to certain pre-arranged individuals, the apostle writes "ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be comforted" (verse 31).

There was evidently disorder in Corinth which necessitated instruction. The apostle explains how he controls his own gifts so that they may only be exercised profitably (verses 6, 15, 19). Nowhere, however, is there a suggestion of organisation or ritual, one man ministry or a chairman, to prevent disorder. All chapter xiv. is in view of chapter xii, 4-7. All the gifts are given by the one same Spirit, to be used under the authority of the one same Lord, and the results are brought about by the one same God. God is not the author of confusion (xiv. 33). The right way to correct disorder is not to restrict the activity of the Spirit by human means, but to be fully subject to the Spirit's control.

The substance of these chapters does not only apply to those who speak. Every individual when the church is gathered together should be controlled in thought by the Holy Spirit, and if there is a failure, such as a speaker being active in the flesh and not in the Spirit, it may be that the Holy Spirit has been grieved and hindered by one or more in the company.

Among the characteristics therefore of the local church (or assembly) in its aspect as the meeting place of the Lord with His people should be that—

They are gathered to His name (Matt. xviii. 20);

They are undefiled individually and collectively by moral or doctrinal evil as defined in Scripture (1 Cor. v. 11; Gal. v. 2, 4);

They recognise in practice the truth of the one body (1 Cor. x. 16, 17 and xii.);

The Holy Spirit is unhindered in controlling the exercise of the gifts He has given to every man in the assembly (1 Cor. xii. and xiv.).

Looking around on Christian companies today, where are these things to be found? It is a day of failure and of small things, but the Word of God abides. It is still possible, though in a remnant way, to gather together in the Name of the Lord Jesus, to have Him in the midst and the Holy Spirit unhindered to use whom He will in prayer, praise and thanksgiving, and for edification, exhortation and comfort. But it is only possible if the "temple" character of the individuals and of the company is maintained, and the unity of the body of Christ is also firmly recognised. The blessedness of being so gathered is beyond comparison, and only in this way can the Lord Himself be offered the highest praise and worship of which His people are capable while here on earth.

In writing of the church in these various ways—its unity, its aspects as the Body of Christ, the House of God, His Sanctuary, His Dwelling Place, and His Meeting Place with His people, the writer has endeavoured to keep in mind the points mentioned at the beginning of the first of these articles (April, 1956), viz: the prominence given to this subject in the New Testament, the place the church has in the affections of Christ, the fact that the church is essentially linked with His glory, and the fact, too, that by the church the manifold wisdom of God is now being displayed to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. May God grant that the Christian reader may find in the study of the subject food for the soul, encouragement for the path, enlargement of understanding of the glories of Christ and of the purposes of God, increased zeal for soul-winning, increased love for all saints, a better understanding how to put into practice his relationship with all other Christians, and incentive to greater circumspection in his conduct.

J. C. KELL.

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF BALAAM V: DIVINE GLORIFICATION

Numbers xxiv. 10-25 to be read

(Notes of an address at Wildfell Hall, Catford. 7.6.56)

IT is not surprising that after Balaam's three rebuffs Balak's anger was kindled. In his first parable Balaam had declared that Israel were God's chosen people, separated from all the other nations of the earth; in his second, that they were justified in the sight of Jehovah, Who beheld neither iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel; and in the third he asserted that Israel were positively beautiful in the eyes of God. Without doubt Israel would arrive safely in Canaan because Jehovah was on their side, and would preserve them.

That was too much for Balak. He was furious, and smote his hands together, ordering Balaam to get off home. "I thought to promote thee unto great honour," he said, "but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour": to which Balaam's covetous heart murmured wistful agreement.

But although Balak had now finished with Balaam, God had not finished with Balak. Balak had had the first word; he was not to have the last. God would have that, as indeed He always must. And Balak was compelled to listen to a fourth parable.

That may seem a trivial circumstance, but it contains an important lesson. The last word on every matter is with God. An unconverted man goes his own way, believing himself to be master of his own fortunes. But he is mistaken. One day he will have to stand before his Maker to give account, and will hear the sentence imposed on every unrepentant sinner, "Depart from me!" To that word he will have no answer.

Consider also what happened at the cross. When men crucified the Saviour they believed they were having the last word. Having judged He was a deceiver, they were putting Him to a deceiver's ignominious death. But was that the end? On the third day God raised Jesus from the dead, seating Him at His own right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, and there was nothing more that men or devils could do about that. God spoke the final word.

So here, Jehovah, through Balaam, uttered the last word, proclaiming the future glory and triumph of His people, the ultimate defeat of Moab, and the destruction of all Israel's enemies.

The way in which Balaam refers to himself is pitiable. He confesses he hears the words of God, knows the knowledge of the Most High, and sees the vision of the Almighty. Yet he admits he is falling, and that with his eyes open (verses 15, 16 New Tr.). He has the vision of a Saviour Whom he can never come near. Compare Hebrews vi. 4-8 for a description of the solemn plight of apostates in the Christian age.

Oh Balaam! why did you not heed the voice of God when He bade you stay at home? Why did you not turn back when the Angel barred your way three times? You were determined to follow the dictates of your wicked and covetous heart: you defied God: your selfish heart sought honour from the wicked, and you were prepared to curse a whole nation to achieve your purpose. You have failed and you know it. As you fall, your eyes are opened to see others receive blessing which you yourself can never share. Good would it have been for your benighted soul if you had never been born! May God save all our readers from the disastrous fate of Balaam!

But, leaving Balaam himself, what was it he said? For his words were given him by God, and that gives them the highest value. Balaam spoke of Israel's future, "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." "Star" and "Sceptre" are spelt with a capital S. How appropriate! For they refer to the glorious Person of Christ Himself, Who will one day reign over Israel, and indeed over the whole earth. Balaam beheld the people stretched before him in the plains of Moab, and declared them to be exceedingly blessed because out of them Messiah should come. No higher honour can be enjoyed by any person or nation upon earth than that of having a link with Christ Himself.

What a miserable worm the king of Moab was when compared with the Star and Sceptre of Israel! Whom did Balak consider himself to be? And what were the honours within his power to bestow compared with the privilege of being a mem-

ber of God's chosen people from whom Christ would spring? In the epistle to the Romans, when reciting the glories of the Jewish nation to which he had once belonged, Paul crowns the list with this: "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." (Ch. ix. 4,5).

Honour of this character is accorded by our Lord to John the Baptist when He declared that among those born of women there had not arisen a greater than he (Matt. xi. 11). Why was that? Was he greater than Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Isaiah? He certainly was because the Lord said he was: *and the reason, because he was the immediate fore-runner of God's anointed King.* Notice too, how the principle held good in what followed: "notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The humblest believer in the Lord Jesus has privileges far beyond anything known to John the Baptist or his predecessors because of his intimate connection with Christ, by being a member of His body, His bride, the object of His own special affection, and sharer of His coming glory.

Balaam's proclamation meant that Israel had a hope for the future: a Star *shall* come, a Sceptre *shall* arise. The people might have had a murky past; they certainly had a glorious future before them. They might be little more than a horde of wilderness-dwellers at the moment, very unresponsive to all the goodness of God towards them; they were nevertheless on their way to occupy a land flowing with milk and honey. Their leader, Moses, might be a decrepit old man (though Deut. xxxiv. 7 must not be overlooked), about to die; the illustrious Leader Who was coming would have conquered death. What unbounded blessing and honour lay ahead!

The Christian faith is outstandingly one of hope. Objection is sometimes raised to preaching which makes much of the *future* blessings, and not so much of the *present* benefits, of the gospel. Perhaps that is because being a Christian today (in a so-called Christian land, at any rate) is comparatively free from hardship. But read the inspired record of the apostle Paul's life as given in 1 Cor. iv. 9-13 (please be sure you *do* read it): a spectacle to men and angels . . . weak . . . despised

... without food and clothing... made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things! It is this beloved man who says, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). Take the future away, and there was little left for Paul! Again he says: "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

Peter wrote in the same strain: believers are "begotten again unto a lively (or, living) hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven*" (1 Peter i. 3, 4). And John adds his testimony: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God"—there is something for the present—"and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that *when He shall appear* we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

Consider, too, the wonderful hope as it affects the body. Paul says: "our conversation (or, citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. iii. 20, 21). Outside of the Christian gospel, where is a like prospect to be found? What a hope! And it is one with which believers may well cheer one another, particularly in their declining years! What unspeakable comfort for those who are afflicted with loss of faculties, with weakness and infirmity! Well might Paul write to the Corinthians, "all things are yours" (1 Cor. iii. 21-23)!

Balaam announces the hope of Israel. Christ will arise, for them the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. A Sceptre is the symbol of personal sovereignty, of royal authority. Christ is God's appointed King (Psalm ii. 6); He will reign also as King of kings (Rev. xix. 16); and fill the whole earth with His glory (Psalm lxxii. 19).

The coming One would smite the corners of Moab. The nation which Israel were told not to distress nor contend with (Deut. ii. 9) became, by their attempt to have the people of God cursed, the enemy named first for destruction. Moab would rue the day Balak sent for Balaam (see Num. xxv. 16-18).

Finally Balaam looked upon the surrounding nations one by one and declared that they should become possessions for Israel. The Star should be in the ascendant, and the Sceptre have unlimited dominion. Even the Kenites, whose dwelling-place was strong, and put their nest in a rock, should be wasted and carried away captive by one of the weaker tribes of Israel.

So the interview between Balak and Balaam ended. Balaam rose up to return to his place (though it appears he never reached his home again—Ch. xxxi. 8), while Balak went his way, both confounded in their evil purpose. Once again, as ever, the Lord had triumphed gloriously.

E. A. PETTMAN.

(Concluding Article—Divine Warnings)

NOTES FROM A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XII AND XIII

(Concluded)

xiii. 1-4.—The opening of chapter xiii. gives us the brighter picture of Abram's restoration to his former character of pilgrim and worshipper. Tent and altar again appear here.

The restoration was brought about by Abram's returning to the point of departure. How important a principle this is! "Unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first."

5-13.—The strife, occasioned apparently by the bare production of the impoverished land and the over-zealous herdsmen, soon affected Abram and Lot personally. Abram, however, rises most beautifully to the height of his calling, a sure evidence of the reality of his restoration. His action is that of one who had learned to know and to trust God, Whose choice for those who leave the choice to Him, is always best.

Abram was a true peacemaker (Matt. v.). He had on this occasion the best of reasons for being so, for Lot and he were brethren (ver. 8). Then there were onlookers—the Canaanites and the Perizzites were in the land. How different would have been our testimony, not to speak of that of others, had we caught Abram's spirit and followed his example!

The true character of Lot also comes out here, in measure. His name means "concealed", and he was very largely true to his name all the way through. His true character is never completely disclosed. Outwardly with Abram, he is not with him in heart. Associated with the man of faith, who gives up what he might well lay claim to, Lot remains covetous at heart. In the plain of Jordan, he sees the "garden of the Lord". How well our hearts can find a fair excuse for anything we desire! Verses 10, 11 and 12 give four steps in Lot's decline.

At length Abram and Lot part company; the one to dwell in the land of Canaan, the other to dwell in the cities of the plain, to pitch his tent toward Sodom, type of the world in its open evil, and ultimately to dwell there (xiv. 12).

14-18.—Separated from Lot, God now hastens to show the man who had not chosen for himself, His choice for him. God delights to honour faith that honours Him.

Never had there been so large a gift. How sweet to Abram to receive it from the hands of God! He is bidden to enjoy it. Faith appropriates what love provides. How blessed is the response on Abram's part! He "came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre ("fatness"), which is in Hebron ("communion") and built there an altar unto the Lord".

J. PERCY BULL.

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