

THE
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

PAPERS FOR THE COMFORT AND EDIFICATION
OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

“Hold fast the form of sound words.”—2 TIM. I. 13.

“Exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”—HEB. X. 25.

“Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.”—JUDE 20.

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THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

1 KINGS xix.

A GREATER contrast between Elijah in the preceding chapter and Elijah in this can scarcely be imagined. It affords a striking illustration of the possible contradictions and inconsistencies in the life and walk of a believer. In chapter xviii. the prophet, borne along by power from on high, boldly challenged and overthrew the whole array of Baal and his followers. Undaunted by the fact that he stood alone, and with the indomitable courage which only confidence in God can impart, he had fearlessly defied the power of Satan in his own stronghold; and for the moment he had rescued the people from his influence and thralldom. In this chapter he flees at the threat of wicked Jezebel, filled with fear lest he should lose his life! The strong man of yesterday is to-day possessed with the spirit of cowardice; and consequently he retires from his post of duty, and seeks to hide himself in the wilderness.

How can this strange spectacle be explained? It must be remembered that the time of greatest danger to a servant is the moment after conflict. The channel of the Spirit's energy while before the foe, the prophet, exhausted by the strain, prostrated by the

sense of his own weakness and solitude, began to measure his difficulties by himself, instead of by what God was on his behalf. Moreover, it is often the case that in the stress of conflict a servant is led out beyond his spiritual power. Reaction follows, and then comes, what is the servant's greatest snare, unguardedness; and the companion of unguardedness is weakness. The armour is off, and without the divine panoply it is impossible to meet the smallest of Satan's emissaries. We thus learn that the man of power to-day, because walking in dependence, may become the laughing-stock of his enemies to-morrow, because he is no longer drawing from the source of all his sustenance and strength.

Turning now to the other side, it is beautiful to see the Lord's tender care over His servant in his dependency, and the way in which He dealt with him to prepare him for further service. Elijah had now but one desire, and that was to die. With darkness within and without, he moaned out his request, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Not yet will the Lord reply to the prophet's prayer; but rather, in His infinite tenderness and compassion, He will minister to the needs of His poor servant to enable him to receive His correction and instruction. An angelic messenger came where Elijah was sleeping for very sorrow, "under a juniper tree," and "touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat." In like manner the Lord Jesus, when about to probe the heart of Peter, said to him, and to the other disciples with him, "Come and dine." He would give him a proof of His tender love before He laid bare the

cause of his failure. So here; and when Elijah, after having eaten and drunk, laid him down again, the angel of the Lord came the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." The prophet, obedient to the heavenly voice, arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

So far we have the preparation of the prophet for what was to follow. Having arrived at Horeb, and taken up his lodging in a cave, he is instantly encountered by the word of the Lord, putting the searching question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" There are seasons when the Lord says to His servants, "Come . . . apart into a desert place, and rest a while"; but if they betake themselves into the desert, without a word of command from their Master, they must expect to be challenged. The whole question raised is this: Is apparent want of success a justification for abandoning the post of duty? The answer is: The Lord alone has the title to determine the place of service and the time of the servant's withdrawal. It is helpful to remember this, as it aids in keeping the eye of the servant "unto the hand" of his Lord. Elijah, no longer "standing before" the Lord God of Israel, had forgotten this principle, and consequently he pleaded his failure in service, as sufficiently accounting for his presence at Horeb. He had been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; the children of Israel were all transgressors, had cast down Jehovah's altars and slain His prophets, and Elijah only was left, and his life was now in danger! What a picture of de-

spondency and unbelief! In his darkness of soul he had forgotten that the mighty power of God had so wrought with him that he had slain Baal's prophets, and that the people, awed if not convinced, had confessed that Jehovah was the God. When doubt and fear master the soul every ray of light is extinguished, and difficulties are magnified a thousand-fold.

The Lord alone knew how to reach the root of His servant's failure and state. He therefore commanded him, first of all, to "go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." Then, "behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind"; nor, as we read, in the earthquake and the fire which followed. All these three things—the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire—are symbols of the power of God displayed in devouring and destructive judgment; and they were evidently exhibited before Elijah because he had been longing for the interposition of God in this judicial way in the midst of Israel, to back up his own mission and to vindicate the name and authority of Jehovah. But he was now to learn that the Lord was not in these things, and thus that he in his zeal (which so easily becomes carnal) had drifted away from communion with the Lord's mind and heart. The moment this happens (and how often it does!) the servant becomes totally disqualified for his work.

But this is more fully brought out by the "still small voice" which came after the fire. It does not

say that the Lord was not in it ; on the other hand, the effect on Elijah proved that the Lord was there, and that the still small voice was His. When Elijah heard it, " he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave." Unmoved in the presence of the displays of God's mighty power, because they were in harmony with his own mood of soul, he was evidently touched by, and brought under the constraint of, the grace exemplified in the tender and gentle voice he had heard. Again, therefore, the question is borne in upon his inmost soul, " What doest thou here, Elijah ?" Once more he was thus invited to challenge the cause of his flight, and to discover the root of his desertion of his field of service. True, he answers the question in the same words as before, but assuredly not in the same tone, for light from God had entered and disclosed to him the unbelieving workings of his own heart. He could scarcely have failed to learn from what had passed before him, that instead of counting upon God for His people, and of understanding that grace was still waiting upon them in longsuffering mercy, he had been looking for some fiery judgment to consume his adversaries. He *knew now* that he had been out of communion with God's mind and heart.

The proof of this is seen in the fact that the Lord recommissions him for service. Having restored His servant's soul He sends him back to his work. His new directions are very precise : he was, first of all, to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria ; then Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel ; and, lastly, he was to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel-

meholah, to be prophet in his room. It is not here necessary to remark upon these commissions, further than to point out, that they had reference to judgment, which, if delayed in the Lord's tender consideration for His people, would surely fall upon the backslidden nation. But if judgment must come, it would be in the Lord's time, and His servant must not anticipate it. Finally, the Lord adds, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Elijah was further to learn, that there was still an election of grace, that the Lord had not left Himself without a testimony in the midst of apostate Israel, and that if he, the prophet, had been dwelling in the sanctuary, in the secret of the Lord's mind and counsel, he would also have known of this hidden remnant, and at the same time have been preserved from his foolish apprehensions and forebodings. How gracious of the Lord to cause His beloved servant's failure to be recorded for our guidance, admonition, and instruction!

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

NOTES OF A LECTURE ON 2 PETER i. 1-9.

WE cannot rightly judge of any truth apart from the knowledge of God Himself. We may know certain truths correctly, but nothing gets its true and proper place in our souls apart from knowing Himself. However much I may think I know of truth, if it has not been learnt in connection with God I shall have to go over it again if it is to be really mine. God speaks to

us in our own language, but He always has His own meaning in the words of scripture. Thus, when God uses the word "love" I ask myself what He means by it. It is a simple word, which we all use, but when He speaks of His love there is infinite fulness in the word. Whatever truth He may bring before us at these meetings, may He give us to consider it as in His own presence and in communion with Himself.

In Paul's salutations to the saints he begins at God's side, so to speak, and desires for them "grace . . . and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ"; while Peter looks at these same things from our side, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Here Peter desires grace and peace for the saints through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. So that not only do grace and peace come to us as given of God (as Paul puts it), but they are multiplied to us by the knowledge of God. Thus Peter looks at the place they have in the soul, being multiplied there. What an important point then this knowledge of God is. All I seek to indicate is the importance of each getting it for himself. Of course there must first be the new nature; apart from that there is no capacity to perceive divine things. In John iii. Nicodemus came to the Lord as a rabbi, as one acquainted with divine truth and knowing the scriptures. He came to talk with the Lord about divine things, as one competent to understand them, and the Lord meets him at once with the statement, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The things of God are foolishness

to the natural man. How apt we are to think when any question arises that we must of necessity know all about it, but it is not so unless we are in communion with the mind of God. We need to get into His presence and ask Him what His way is in it.

We read at the end of John ii. that the Lord knew what was in man. He knew what their thoughts were as to Himself. He knew who they were that believed in Him merely from outward miracles. He knew that Nicodemus was interested, and He says to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see"—that is, perceive—"the kingdom of God," by which He means a sphere of things where all is morally according to God. One must know God to know what is of God. The children of Israel never had an idea of what God took them up for. They saw His mighty acts and sang His praise, but immediately after it is added, "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness." I often wondered why that verse, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. xiv.), came in just where it does, till I saw that God took Israel up as a people to know Him, and from whom His glory should flow out into all the earth; but they had no knowledge of it, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt. Then God says, as it were, Though Israel has failed, I will have My purpose fully carried out. They have not known My ways; they shall fall in the wilderness, but I will yet have a people (their children) who will answer to the desires of My heart, and the earth shall yet be filled with My glory. We see they utterly failed in the knowledge of God. Now the Christian is not only

born again, but we read here (2 Peter i. 3), "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through *the knowledge of Him* that hath called us by glory and virtue." People have the idea, "I am converted, and going to heaven when I die, and that is enough"; but can such people enter into the present enjoyment of the call of which Peter speaks here? Do you see the sphere of things to which you now belong? That the Lord Jesus Christ has gone out of this world, and sits at the right hand of God in heaven, and that everything for you, as belonging to Him, has been transferred from earth to heaven? Colossians iii. speaks of the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Everything we expect will come out from heaven now the Lord is there. Here He was in humiliation; now He is at the right hand of God in the glory, and we are to seek the things that are there. We have to walk here as belonging there. The apostle speaks to Timothy of the mystery of godliness; God has been manifested in flesh. It is in Christ walking as a man in this world that we find the first secret spring of piety. Look at Him! See how He walked down here, ever doing His Father's will. Now, that once humbled man has been received up in glory; that is the other great point in the mystery of piety. Man is in the glory of God, and that is the place for man according to the counsels of God for you, for me. And we are to take our character from those two truths—God manifested down here in flesh, and man in the glory of God. I do not say that Peter rises to the height of Paul. He is more the apostle leading up to where Paul begins. Paul begins with Christ in glory.

Perhaps you say, "I am not quite familiar with that point—a Man in the glory of God." Well, have you got this point—that He has called us by glory and virtue? Every moral excellency that can be displayed in man (that is what virtue is) is in the Lord Jesus Christ who is now in the glory. Now that He is there, God says, "I can call a people by that glory," and God sees everything in connection with the glory of His Son. In Acts vii. we read that the God of glory appeared unto Abraham. No doubt Abraham did not fully understand all that was meant by the God of glory calling him out from his country, kindred, and father's house. But see what moral effect the call had upon him. In Genesis x. the whole earth was divided, and each family and nation had their part in it; but God calls Abraham out of it to that which He would give him. Abraham had another scene altogether before him from the moment he responded to the call of "the God of glory"; he could look at the cities of men and say, "That is not the city God has given me. I look for a city whose builder and maker is God." He could look upon the well-watered plain and not desire any part in it, or in the cities there—they were all characterized by man, not God. Abraham had such a knowledge of God that he knew how to refuse what was not of **Him**.

How this knowledge of God would settle all difficult questions for us, just to know what is of God, not what is of men, which always brings in conflicting opinions. You remember the old prophet who dwelt at Bethel. When God wanted a witness to go and testify against the idolatry practised there, He sent a man of God out of Judah to cry against the wickedness

practised in the place. He was neither to eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way he went. By the word of the Lord he cried against the altar, and really stood for God in the presence of the wicked king. For a man of God is, as you know, one that stands for God when all is going wrong. According to the word of the Lord, the altar was rent and the ashes poured out, and more, the king's hand withered in seeking to lay hold of the man of God. It was restored in answer to prayer. The king said to him, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself"; but he refused. He said "*no*" to the king's invitation. He left the place, returning by another way. The old prophet who dwelt in Bethel overtook him and found him sitting under an oak: it is dangerous to loiter till we are thoroughly clear of the place testified against. "Come home with me," said the old prophet. It is no longer an idolatrous king, but a prophet, a prophet who had a home in Bethel. He said, "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with thee.'" Now here were two conflicting statements. How could the man of God decide? Two words were before him, the second being put forward as the word of the Lord (compare Gal. i. 8); how was he to know which was really the word of the Lord for him? The knowledge of God and what is due to Him would have decided the question in a moment. He would have said, "What! you, a prophet of the Lord, dwelling here with the calves and the idols, and so at home in the midst of idolaters, to whom God has to send me to lift up my voice against them, and carry a warning of coming judgment." How

the knowledge of God settles the whole thing in a moment. When you know God you know what is suitable to Him. And in the measure in which you know Him will you feel what is really at work in any question, and be able to reject what is not of Him. Like Abraham, as he looked over the cities of the plain, he felt not one of them would suit him, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

So far it is negative—the knowledge of God enabling us to refuse what is not of Him. But there is the positive side. If I know Him that has called me by glory and virtue, I shall have a divine sense that what He gives is according to Himself, therefore we have, in verses 3, 4, “*exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.*” This does not mean being born again, but far more, even being brought into communion with what is of God; and what I understand by “partakers” is, not getting a share, but being brought into it. 1 John iv. 12, 13 is the nearest to it, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.” We have received His Spirit. It is not a question here as to our having received the Holy Ghost as personally indwelling, but as characterizing us, and so bringing us into what is of God. Having received of His Spirit, we abide in Him, and escape what is of this world. Being made partakers of the divine nature, we have the capacity, and “we dwell in God and He in us.” “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in

him." What an ocean we touch here. Who can fathom it?

Verse 4. "Exceeding great and precious promises." What are these promises? Certainly not those God had made to the fathers. They were great indeed; but the promises here spoken of are "*exceeding* great and precious." We must go back into eternity to find out what they are, and they come to us that we might be partakers of the divine nature. Doubtless they include all that God purposed in His own mind to bring us into, all He has promised us in Christ Jesus. (Ephes. iii. 6; 2 Tim. i. 1.) As you understand these things you are formed by them; it must of necessity be so. To illustrate what I mean. Suppose I take a child who has been born in the slums of a great city, and has never seen the country, with its green fields, flowers, and trees. I tell him about them; he is charmed, but can form no idea as to what they are really like. Now suppose, further, that I wish to wake up a desire in that child's mind to know something of the beautiful things I have told him about as belonging to another sphere, where all is so different from that by which he is surrounded. I could shew him a picture of the country and the objects in it; and in like manner the Old Testament saints had the word of promise—the patterns of heavenly things and pictures in the types. And suppose I say to that child, "I will come in a few days and take you there, to dwell in that very place I have been telling you of." The sense of such a promise would make him long to escape from the surrounding corruption, and he would be formed by his knowledge of the place to which he was going. These exceeding

great and precious promises are given *to us* in connection with One who is already entered into glory. Hence He said to His disciples, "Whither I go *ye know*, and the way *ye know*"; and He prepared the place for them by entering there. Thus we become partakers of the divine nature. We are formed according to the mind of God expressed in the promises, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The "precious faith" of verse 1 has been received through the righteousness of God. It is here that Peter is side by side with the truth given to Paul. The righteousness of God is by faith with Paul; while with Peter faith is through the righteousness of God. Peter leads those who have it, as we said, to the point where Paul can carry us on in the knowledge of God. (Ephes. i. 17.) He prays to the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Lord Jesus Christ is here looked at as a man; of course, He was God too), the Father of glory—that is, He is the blessed source of all glory—that He would give to the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *full knowledge* of Him—of God. The eyes of your understanding, or heart, being opened, that ye may know what is the hope of *His* calling, and what the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of *His* power to those *who believe*. What God Himself is as the Father of glory gives the character to the hope of the calling—the inheritance and the power by which all is accomplished according to His own counsels. The knowledge of God enables us to enter into the things given to us of Him, and to escape what is not of Him.

THE UNCHANGING CHRIST.

HEBREWS i. 10-12.

IN this epistle everything, so to speak, passes away but Christ. Before the glories of His person and offices all else fades and disappears. Whether angels, Moses, Joshua, or Aaron, they are all alike eclipsed by Him who is the brightness of the glory, and the express image of God's person. Everything, moreover, for the believers to whom the epistle was written was in transition. Even the temple ceremonial and the sacrificial services, which had been divinely given and ordered, were now to be surrendered, connected as they were with the first covenant which was made old by the new; and "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Chap. viii. 13.) In a word, God, according to His promise, was shaking, morally, both the earth and the heaven; "and this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken . . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (chap. xii. 26, 27); and the things that remain are all connected with "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Chap. xiii. 8.) It is indeed one of the characteristics of this epistle, that every thing which is introduced in connection with Christ and His finished work of redemption is eternal. We have thus eternal salvation, eternal redemption, the eternal Spirit, eternal inheritance, and the eternal (everlasting) covenant. The eternity of His person attaches to all that He

secures through His death and resurrection. In the passage at the head of this paper, His eternal being as Creator is presented in contrast with creation; but whether here or in the other scriptures cited the abidingness of Christ is ministered as a sure foundation for souls to repose upon in the midst of mutation and change. The immutable Christ is the unshaken confidence of the soul, while passing through a scene of unrest, decay, and death.

It may be a difficulty with some that, while all redemptive blessings are unchangeable, the works of Christ in creation should be but transitory. Why is it, it may be enquired, if the eternal nature of His being characterises His redemptive work, that His creation work is not more permanent? The answer is found in the fact that the old creation is connected with the first man. Nothing imperfect could come from the hand of the Eternal Word; but Adam, who was constituted head of this creation, fell through disobedience, and the creation in the midst of which he was placed has come under the consequences of his sin. God bore long with man after he was a sinner; for while He revealed, even in the garden of Eden, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and thus showed that Christ was ever the Man of His counsels, He yet patiently, and with much long-suffering, tested Adam and his race in every possible way. He tried him without law, and under law, in the wilderness, and in the land, as a pilgrim, and in the splendours of the kingdom, through Moses, Joshua, the judges and the prophets; and last of all He sent His beloved Son. The issue was one and the same under every form of trial.

With ever augmenting intensity man proved the wickedness and rebellion of his own evil heart, culminating in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. Therein it was demonstrated, in the face of the whole universe, that the carnal mind was enmity, and nothing but enmity, against God. But even this incurable evil was used, in the grace of God, for the accomplishment of His purposes; for through the death and resurrection of Christ the righteous basis was laid for the salvation of every poor sinner who should receive God's testimony concerning His beloved Son.

On this very account, however, the cross of Christ was the end of God's trial of man; for He therein passed judgment upon all that man is, and has consequently set him aside for ever. Adam, using the name as expressive of his race, is gone for ever under judgment from the eye of God (though it is blessedly true that God still waits upon him with His messages of grace); and Christ as the second Man is now God's object, the Head of a new race, every one of whom will be conformed to the image of the Head. For Christ and His redeemed there is a new creation; and just as Christ has for ever displaced Adam, the new creation will displace the old. So true is this, that the apostle can say of believers even now, "If any man be in Christ [there is] a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) This is for faith; but when the Lord returns He will take His people actually out from the old things, and introduce them into the new, to which they already belong.

This will explain to us the striking language of our scripture: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast

laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." For if it be true that Christ will return to this creation, establish His kingdom, and reign until all enemies are put under His feet, in order to make good God's character in government, and to bless His earthly people, this creation, defiled as it has been and is through man's sin, is no longer suited to Him who is the second Man out of heaven, the divine and heavenly Man. He never made these heavens and this earth for His eternal abode, but simply as a scene for the revelation of God, in and through His own person and work, for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes of grace and blessing in redemption.

The transitory character of the heavens and the earth is, however, stated here, as before said, in order to enhance the eternity of Christ's own being. This will be even more strikingly seen if we turn for a moment to the 102nd Psalm, whence the citation is made. Leaving the reader to pursue the details of this wonderful psalm for himself, we only call attention to the fact that Messiah is here looked at as rejected by those to whom He had been sent. In verses 8-10 He says, "Mine enemies reproach Me all the day; and they that are mad against Me are sworn against Me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled My drink with weeping, because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath; for Thou hast lifted Me up, and cast Me down." Then, after the expression

of entire confidence in Jehovah's purposes of blessing for Zion, He adds, as concerning Himself in His rejection, "He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days: Thy years are throughout all generations." It is in response to this cry that God addresses the Messiah, His own beloved Son, in the sorrow of His humiliation and rejection, and says, in the language of our Scripture, "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," etc. What a sublime contrast! Messiah is seen as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as pouring out His grief in His cry to God; and then, on the other hand, God addresses Him as Creator, and says, "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." It is the mystery of His person; for, as has been often noticed, the Hebrew words which are translated "Thou art the same," are in reality a divine title, indicating the unchangeable character of the divine existence. Faith alone can embrace the apparent contradiction, that the One who said in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," is really the unchangeable God; but as faith receives the revelation thus made, the heart bows in His presence with adoring gratitude and praise.

A twofold application may be made from this scripture. The Hebrew believers, as pointed out, were in a painful period of transition. Like Peter, they were called to leave the earthly accommodation of the boat—their visible ceremonials—and to walk on the water to go to Jesus—to go to Him, in other words, outside the camp. What wonder that they shrunk

from the prospect! Unless, indeed, faith were in activity, they might well be daunted, for they had now no visible thing to sustain them—nothing but Christ and His word, though that was everything. It was to meet this state of soul that the apostle ministered to them of the all-sufficiency of Christ in the eternity of His being, the immutable rock on which they might safely repose, though the earth should be removed, and though the mountains should be carried into the midst of the sea. And this ministry is needed by us no less than it was by them. In another sense we are also in a time of transition, and surrounded by transitory things, and if we are not building upon Him, the Unchanging One, outside of this scene of dissolution and death, we may easily be overwhelmed by our circumstances—our wilderness circumstances. Other aspects of the ministry of Christ will be found in the succeeding chapters; but in whatever way He is presented, whether as to His person, His priesthood, His sacrifice, or His example, it is all associated with the fact that He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Surely then our souls may rest in Him without a single fear or anxiety!

The second application may perhaps reveal the hindrance to this unspeakable blessing. The tendency of our hearts is ever to cling to what is seen; yea, it may be added, to what God has done with. These Hebrew believers, for instance, were tempted to cleave to the Jewish rites and forms—shadows of that which is realised in Christ. Even the apostles, including Paul himself, were not free from this tendency. It is the same with ourselves, both in respect

of religious forms and of the things of this creation. The delivering power will be found in communion with God's thoughts concerning both the one and the other. Receiving first His thoughts concerning Christ, we shall then estimate at its proper value everything that is not of, and not suited to, Him. Christ remains ever unchangeable, and He, by the grace of God, is our indestructible foundation and our eternal portion. Knowing this in our souls, we shall not be affected either by the rapid revolution of the seasons or by the knowledge that the heavens and the earth are soon to perish and disappear. We shall rather, if Christ Himself possess our hearts, be all the more drawn up to the place where He is; and, "in spirit there already," we shall dwell before Him amidst His unchangeable things.

CONVERTED CHILDREN AND THE LORD'S TABLE.

WITH regard to converted children, my conviction entirely agrees with that of some trusted brethren I have consulted. First, one should be quite clear as to the conversion of the child, because children are without hypocrisy; so sensitive are they, and subject to the influence of impressions, that they sincerely believe they feel all, and do indeed *feel* what is at work around them. But if they have been actually and apparently converted, we should by no means persuade them to break bread. Let that arise naturally in *their* hearts, and if they desire to do so, ascertain if they are capable—of course, as a child—of discerning and acknowledging in it the body of the Lord; not to drive them away,

but that they may do it with spiritual insight and true faith and understanding. It is not to be expected of them that they should explain everything like theologians, but that they should understand it is with you a matter of faith from the heart, and realisation of the broken body. If they are actually in the care of believing parents, there is not so much danger. If they have much intercourse with the world, it is well to be assured of their firmness. One must remember that they have not yet been tempted and tested by the allurements of the world; and there lies the danger, supposing that they are really in Christ. It often happens, that what they have longed for while subject to influence exercised over them without feeling the check, becomes subsequently a hateful check and nothing else, and they abandon what later on perhaps they would have longed for. Hence the importance of that of which I have already spoken—that they should be in the company of Christian parents, by whom they may, as time goes on, be guarded and brought up before the Lord, that they may be cared for in a Christian way. Invariably, so soon as they are in active life, the world and lusts come in, besides the hope of a future in the world to tempt them. But if the work is deep, *conscience* secures their apprehension of the Lord's supper, especially if the parents are faithful, and the children are accustomed to care of every kind. Or if there is proved faithfulness in the child, then nothing hinders their breaking bread. It is by no means a question of right, but of that which is altogether best for those that according to the will of God are under the government of others.

J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW xviii. 19, 20.

IN connection with a recent exposition of verses 15–18* two questions have arisen concerning these verses—first, as to the “character” of the gathering; and secondly, as to the period of the fulfilment of the words, “There am I in the midst of them.” It is of primary importance to notice that in this scripture the Lord’s absence is pre-supposed. Two things show this—first, the gathering together “unto (εἰς) My name,” the term “name” being expressive of all that He is as the Lord Jesus Christ; and also the words “*Where* two or three are gathered”; that is, wherever in the whole world two or three may be gathered, there Christ would be. Of necessity this refers to the time after His resurrection and ascension. The gathering consequently must be by the Spirit of God to Christ as the only Centre, and on the ground where His authority as Lord is owned, and where the truth of His person and work is maintained. Such is the condition on which alone His presence in the midst is assured. It should be observed in this connection that there is consequently a wide difference between the building in chapter xvi. and the gathering here. When the Lord says, “Upon this rock I will build My church,” He includes all believers from Pentecost to His return, and hence all believers at any given

* See p. 306 of the volume for 1892.

period are built "upon the rock," inasmuch as He regards "My church" from His own divine side, and thus in its perfection. The "gathered," on the other hand, is a much smaller circle, for it is necessarily limited to those who are on the ground above described. It is, alas! but too manifest that, while the gathering and the building should be coincident and co-extensive, many real believers meet on human ground, where man's traditions and authority are accepted; where there is not even the show of guarding the truth either of the Person or of the work of our blessed Lord, and where even the full inspiration of the Scriptures has been openly surrendered. The question as to the period of the Lord's presence in the midst of His gathered people has now to be answered. The first allusion to this special presence is undoubtedly found in the words "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (Psalm xxii. 22); and since this follows upon the statement "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren," we may well conclude, from the Lord's message through Mary to the disciples, that the first fulfilment of this announcement is found in John xx. So far the disciples, in the midst of whom He appeared on that first day of the week, did not form the church. Whatever the special revelation made to them of their new place and relationship in association with their risen Lord, and notwithstanding they received on that occasion the life abundantly in the power of the Holy Ghost, it was not until Pentecost that they lost their Jewish-remnant character, and were formed into the House of God, the Church. Still it must be borne in mind that the scene in John xx. has a special

significance, and contains a shadowing out, in a most marked manner, of the ground of the assembly. It may well, therefore, in respect of the Lord's presence in the midst, be included in the church-period. It only remains to ask if the Lord will be in the midst of His people, as here described, in a future dispensation—in other words, will He be in the midst of the millennial saints? If we turn for a moment to Ezekiel xlvi. the answer, we judge, will be found. We have in this scripture the most precise regulations for what may be termed the worship of the Jewish saints when the Temple shall have been rebuilt and its services restored; and we read that "when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts . . . the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth." (vv. 9, 10.) This prince is undoubtedly the Lord's representative, and not the Lord Himself, so that, whatever the special manifestations of the glorified Messiah to His millennial congregations, there will be nothing then to answer to His presence now in the midst of those gathered unto His name. We thus conclude that this scripture finds its application during the time of the Lord's absence only—in fact, to the period of the day of grace. Into the varied applications of this precious truth we do not here enter, as the object before us is simply the explanation of the two points named.

II.

1 PETER iv. 6.

To the questions forwarded concerning this scripture the answers will be given in the order in which they

have been put. (1) "*What is the Gospel in this passage?*" Inasmuch as Peter wrote his epistle to the Jewish converts among the dispersion, especially to those who were scattered through the provinces of Asia Minor, it seems tolerably certain that in speaking of those "that are dead," he refers to Jews of former generations. If so, the "gospel" would be the glad tidings of God's promises to the Jewish nation, in connection with the advent of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom; and consequently it is the gospel of the kingdom. (Compare Hebrews iv. 2.) (2) "*Those that are dead—is this spiritual or bodily death?*" The answer given to the first question shows, if correct, that it is of those who are dead as to the body that the apostle speaks. The context points also most plainly to the same conclusion, for in verse 5 Peter declares that the sinners to whom he has been alluding (verses 3, 4) "shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." The two classes—the living and the dead—are here specified who will be amenable to judgment at the appearing of the Lord (see 2 Timothy iv. 1), though an interval of a thousand years will separate the judgment of the latter class from that of the former; and "the dead" in verse 5 are undoubtedly "the dead" in verse 6. (3) "*What is it to be 'judged according to men in the flesh,' and to 'live according to God in the spirit'?*" This question is best answered by considering the object of the proclamation of the gospel. It is that men, on receiving the glad tidings, should be brought out from under the condemnation in which they lie (for "he that believeth not is condemned [judged] already"), and, through the efficacy of the death and resurrection of

Christ, receive the forgiveness of their sins, together with a new and divine life, so that henceforward they should not be "in the flesh, but in the Spirit," if so be the Spirit of God dwells in them. (Romans viii. 9.) They thus, in the language of Peter, "live according to God in the Spirit." If they, on the other hand, refuse the gospel preached to them, they are left in their condition as sinners, and remain for judgment before the great white throne, "according to men in the flesh"; that is, they will be dealt with then on the ground of their responsibility, judged "according to their works." (Rev. xx. 12.) What Peter, therefore, sets forth is the consequence, on the one hand, of receiving, and the consequence, on the other hand, of rejecting the gospel. The question as to whether this twofold description could apply to one and the same person has already been answered, for those who "live according to God in the Spirit" can never be judged "according to men in the flesh."

III.

MATTHEW vii. 7-11.

It would be a mistake, in our judgment, to adduce this Scripture as urging importunity in prayer. It is quite true that the same exhortations are found in Luke in another connection (chapter xi., 5-13), but even there they only flow out from an illustration of importunity. The difference of dispensation has also to be remembered, for since Pentecost it would not be according to truth to pray for the Holy Spirit, as in Luke, seeing that He now dwells in believers, and is bestowed upon all who receive the forgiveness of sins through faith in the efficacy of the finished work of Christ. It will be

observed that in Matthew "good things" are what are sought, and not the Holy Spirit; and these "good things," we cannot doubt, especially in their application to Christians, are heavenly blessings. Taking it thus, it will be at once seen that importunity is out of the question; that it is rather the expression of an ever-increasing energetic confidence in the Father for the blessings on which, through grace, the heart is set. Knowing, that is, that it is His mind to bring us into the enjoyment of all that Christ has secured for us, the soul will wait on with purpose and energy until the prayer has been answered. There is, perhaps, even more than this as implied in the terms used; for after the exhortations and their connected promises ("Ask, and it shall be given," etc.), the Lord adds as encouragement, "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Asking then for heavenly blessings, they are received, in the sense of being made good to the soul; seeking for them with true purpose of heart (compare Psalm xxvii. 4), they are found, they are sought for and discovered, the true heavenly portion of the saint is apprehended; and, lastly, to him that knocketh it shall be opened; the heavenly door is, as it were, opened, and the soul enters into its proper sphere, the sphere where Christ is, where He is everything, and where His glory fills the scene. If, therefore, this Scripture goes down and begins with the first desires of the believer, it also rises up to and includes his most exalted blessings. It indicates, at the same time, the royal and only pathway into heavenly enjoyment.

ELIJAH IN THE VINEYARD OF NABOTH.

I KINGS XXI.

AFTER the call of Elisha, and the statement that "he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him," there is no further record of Elijah's activity until we come to this chapter. The Spirit of God fills up the interval with the development of Ahab's wickedness, and of his utter inability to profit by the goodness of God in His intervention to succour Israel once and again from the hands of the Syrians. The effect of grace upon the natural man is but to render him more and more obdurate. Thankful for a present deliverance, Ahab availed himself of it for his own aggrandizement, and to make friends with a man whom Jehovah had appointed to utter destruction. Having thereby brought himself anew under the judgment of God, "he went to his house heavy and displeased"—displeased because he was met at every turn by One who held him accountable for his sins, and One from whose grasp he could not escape.

It would almost seem that Ahab never learnt a single lesson from the many warnings he had received; for our chapter opens with an exhibition of unbridled lust—the lust of covetousness. Naboth, the Jezreelite, had a vineyard hard by the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. Ahab well knew that an Israelite was not permitted to sell the inheritance of his fathers. (Numbers xxxvi. 7.) But what of that? Was not Ahab "king of Samaria"? Why, therefore, should

he be deprived of gratifying his desire by an old divine law? The vineyard, moreover, was very conveniently situated, and he was willing to make a fair exchange or to pay the price demanded. Why then should he be balked in his design? Simply because Jehovah had prohibited the sale of the land; and hence the pious Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Chagrined and thwarted, the king once more went to his house "heavy and displeased," "and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread." Utterly weak and irresolute, he wailed and sulked because he did not dare to commit the sins which would enable him to gratify his cupidity.

Jezebel now again appears on the scene. She has been well described as "the wife of responsible Ahab," and consequently the height of his offence was, as we learn from the use of Jezebel's name in Rev. ii., in suffering her to take his place, and to act by his authority. More wicked, if possible, than her husband, as resolute as he was timid, untroubled by any scruples, neither fearing God nor regarding man, she would soon obtain for Ahab the coveted vineyard. "Dost thou now," she asks, "govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." Then, having secured the death of the obnoxious Israelite by a series of infamous and diabolical acts, she returned and said to the king, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth . . . for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Nothing reveals more fully the wicked perversity of Ahab's heart than the fact that, in obedience to the command of his wife, he went immediately down, without a question as to the cause or manner of Naboth's death, to take possession of the vineyard. At last his desire could be gratified! So thinks many a sinner as he plucks the coveted fruit from the branch, and puts it to his lips; but he forgets that he cannot escape from the eye of God. While Ahab was lying upon his bed, irritated by Naboth's refusal to sell his vineyard, and while the wicked Jezebel was devising the means of compassing Naboth's destruction, God was watching. If He is not in all the thoughts of the sinner, the day of reckoning will none the less surely come. Already Jehovah had instructed Elijah to go down and meet Ahab: "Behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone to possess it." Jehovah had once more lifted up His hand in judgment; and who can stand in His sight when once He is angry?

Obedient to the divine word, Elijah went and found the king in the midst of his newly-acquired possession. And what a message it was he had to deliver! "Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? . . . Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Observe, that though Jezebel had procured the death of Naboth, Ahab is held responsible for the crime. Allowing another to act under his authority, and willing to profit by her iniquity, Jehovah arraigns him for the murder committed. Thus the guilt of the act was tracked home to Ahab, to the

lust of his own heart, which he had allowed to draw him on to covet his neighbour's possession. Hence the severity of the sentence which Elijah was sent to pronounce, a sentence demanded by all that Jehovah was as revealed to His people Israel. Innocent blood had been wantonly shed, and God looked upon it, and required it from the guilty monarch. Smitten to the heart, if not conscience-stricken, by the scathing words that fell from the lips of the prophet, Ahab exclaimed, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" In his moral blindness, it was always Elijah, and only Elijah, who confronted and thwarted him in his evil designs and practices. The God of Elijah he knew not, and thus it was the man of God whom he deemed to be his inveterate enemy. "I have found thee," answered the prophet, "because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." Yea, who can hide himself or his sins from the all-searching eye of God?

Remark how that Elijah, having thus briefly answered Ahab's question, passes at once to proclaim the coming judgment upon Ahab, his house, and Jezebel; and, as if to increase the solemnity of his words, he speaks now directly in the name of the Lord. It is no longer even, "Thus saith the Lord;" but, as energised by the Spirit, he becomes the living channel of Jehovah's voice. "Behold," the Lord says through the lips of Elijah, "I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity," etc. Sentence upon Ahab had already gone forth (*v.* 19), and now the doom of his house is uttered (*vv.* 21, 22, 24), and the special judgment of Jezebel. (*v.* 24.) Immediately upon the description of the stroke of justice which

was about to fall upon Ahab, his house, and Jezebel, the Spirit of God in a short parenthesis (*vv.* 25, 26) interrupts the narrative to give, in a brief summary, the grounds on which the sentence had proceeded. The murder of Naboth was the occasion of it; but even this foul crime was but the consummation of a long guilty course. There was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. He even equalled the Amorites in his wicked enormities—those whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. In such a way the Lord, for our instruction, will condescend to justify His dealings with Ahab and his house.

For the moment Ahab was bowed to the dust, and he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. Jehovah's judicial rod smote him to the quick, for when he "heard those words . . . he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." That this was not a genuine repentance towards God is proved in the issue; and yet nothing could more strikingly reveal the tender grace of the heart of God than the notice He took of these signs of Ahab's sorrow. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" he said to Elijah; and then He revealed to the prophet that because Ahab had humbled himself, the sentence upon his house (not the sentence upon Ahab or Jezebel, but upon the king's house and posterity) should be postponed till after Ahab's death—till his son's days. What could more conclusively prove the yearnings of God's heart over the wickedest of men? or that He

desireth not the death of a sinner? "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" saith the Lord God, "and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

As a last observation, it may be pointed out that there may be a semblance of repentance which is not, after all, a real work of the Spirit of God. Fear of coming judgment may often so affect the natural man that he will clothe himself for a season in sackcloth and ashes. But if the conscience be not reached, and if there be not repentance *towards God*, all such feelings will speedily pass away like the morning dew when the sun arises. God is never deceived, but in His government in this world He can take account of feelings like Ahab's, even though they stop short of real self-judgment. It is, indeed, by the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering that He would lead men unto repentance.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL AND FRUIT-BEARING.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON COLOSSIANS i. 13.

I DESIRE to speak a little about the knowledge of His will (v. 9) as connected with fruit-bearing. The apostle had never seen these Colossians to whom he writes, but he had heard that they were specially characterised by two things; viz., faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the saints. The same thing is said of the Ephesians. (Eph. i. 15.) We get them also joined together in 1 John iii. 23. "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love

one another, as He gave us commandment." John putting both as commandments of the blessed Lord. Believing here does not refer to the soul's salvation. He is not writing to sinners, but to saints, and as such the commandment comes to us. You have believing spoken of in the same manner in John xiv., "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," which is evidently not believing for salvation. The great thing before Him was, that He was going out of the world, and would no longer be here for them to see; but in heaven He would be the object of their faith. I may believe that Jesus died for me; but the question is, Have I got Him as the *object* for my faith outside this world? In the end of John xiii. the Lord says to His disciples, in view of His going away from them, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Why new? Because the teaching was quite new to them. As Jews they loved their neighbour, and hated their enemies, and rightly so, because their enemies were the enemies of God. But now, instead of finding the circle for their love in Israel, they were introduced into circle entirely outside this world, and they were to love one another, as in that new circle of affections; or, according to Paul, they loved the saints as belonging to a glorified Christ.

Can we start here? and do I find my affections and interests outside this world with those who belong to Christ? The truth we get in Colossians all goes on this line. They had received the gospel, which bore the blessed fruit of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints, but they were deficient in the apprehension of the hope, and the apostle stirs them up about it. If Christ in heaven is faith's object, then

the hope must be there also. It is thus described (v. 5): "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." The gospel was bringing forth fruit in them since the day they heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. The apostle could thank God for this; besides Epaphras also had declared unto him their love in the Spirit. Here their love to the saints unfolds and develops; they did not know Paul in the flesh, it could only be in the Spirit they loved him. I might know a brother, and be drawn to him because of something attractive in the flesh, but love in the Spirit is because he belongs to Christ. Now love in the Spirit takes in "all saints," as we have it in verse 4. It is a blessed thing when the heart gets linked up in some way with what is of Christ. It is real fruit-bearing, and it is from this point that the apostle desires to lead them on. You know the apostle had a double ministry; to him was committed the ministry of the gospel for the wide world, and of the church to unfold the mystery. He wants their souls connected with the chief interests of Christ now that He is glorified. Therefore he takes hold of the point they had reached—faith in Christ and love to the saints—and seeks to lead them on as the Spirit of God would certainly do with us to-day, and first he would establish them in the hope of the gospel.

In the epistle to the Philippians Paul says, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." He was the mighty champion for the truth. But this man is now in bonds, the devil having succeeded in getting the great champion into prison. Satan gained no real advantage; "for," says the apostle, "I know that this shall turn to

my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He is like a man going into conflict assured beforehand of victory. He is in touch with Christ as to all the circumstances and sufferings in his path. He was set for the defence of the gospel, and he thanks God and prays with joy for these dear Philippians, because of their fellowship in the gospel. Now they had sent him a little money, which he speaks of as fruit acceptable, and well-pleasing to God, because given to him in the interest of Christ's gospel. So he says to them, "Ye have me in your hearts." "Ye are all participators in my grace." It was a great thing to say of them—they shared *in his grace*—as the one set for the gospel, through sending help to him. They might not be able to understand all the apostle's teaching, many of them did not (chap. iii. 15, 16), but their fellowship in sending some money to him enabled the apostle to connect them with the grace which wrought in him for the furtherance of Christ's interests on earth.

Some here may not understand all the precious truth we have had before us, but the Spirit of God can take up the measure of the grace of Christ in each in order to lead us into the sense of being connected with the whole circle of His interests. What an encouragement when the grace of God gives us to know something of this, and we can each say, "I want to know more of it." The apostle saw what was defective in the Colossians, which if not corrected would carry them back to human wisdom and ordinances. And I would say to young Christians, Remember, you have been brought into connection with Christ, and all that is of Christ; you may only be able to pray for the saints, or send a little

money, but the Lord will enlarge the interests of Christ in your heart. (v. 3.) "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Paul had heard of their faith and love, and this leads him to desire that they may go on to the full knowledge of the will of God. In connection with this I would refer to Eph. i. 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *knowledge of Him.*" I do not think the Colossians had got as far as the Ephesians in the knowledge of God. If I want to know God's will about me, I must begin where He does, and that is with Himself, I must know Him. This puts us on God's side of things. Paul says to the Corinthians, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world." Thus when we speak of the full knowledge of His will, we find ourselves in a region where all is connected with God, and into which man as man, no matter how wise he may be in other matters, cannot enter. You find a person converted, and his first thought is, "Now I must serve the Lord." A very right desire if properly directed. Look at Christendom and the various systems in it. All serving the Lord, as they call it; but how much of their so-called service is after the will of man! and there is little or no thought as to their doing it according to the word and will of God. To get into God's circle of service I must understand His will. Now Christ is the wisdom of God, and from Him and in Him we get all the hidden wisdom of God, and knowledge of God's will, which can never be attained

by human intellect. In Christ I learn my position, my standing, my wealth, my hope, and much more. Taking my place at the feet of Jesus (like Mary of old) as being nothing, and of myself knowing nothing, then He unfolds the full knowledge of God to my heart, because His word reveals to me what He Himself is.

Again we see the same effects produced in Paul; all he had and was he counted but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. What do such effects show? That there must be surpassing power and excellency in Jesus. Paul found in Christ the opening out of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He had been brought as a dead man to His feet, and when once Paul's eye rested on a glorified Christ he could say, "That I may know Him." That is knowledge indeed. Now the will of God is in connection with the Christ whom He has glorified.

As to fruit, I am to "walk *worthy of the Lord* unto all pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit." It is not merely that I am not to disgrace the gospel, but to walk worthy of the Lord, the One who is the wisdom of God, and who, when down here, always did the Father's will. He said, "I do always those things which please Him"; and, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and finish His work." The will of God is necessarily connected with Him who came to do it, and in proportion as you get into the knowledge of it will you walk worthy of the Lord, and bring forth fruit in the most ordinary details of life. We are to walk as He walked. No matter where the Lord has set us, or what our circumstances may be, it is our blessed privilege in all the details of our every-

day life to bring forth fruit. You see this illustrated in Joseph. He was in prison, but the wisdom of God was with him there, so that when the chief baker and the chief butler dreamed dreams, he could interpret them, and became, so to speak, to the one the saviour of life, and to the other of death; and yet Joseph was faithful in prison as before when a slave in Potiphar's house; in both he bore fruit, and had the secret of God with him. Do not think that serving the Lord is by doing some great thing, but as those in wisdom's secret seek to be faithful in little things, then the Lord will give the increase. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," and, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's" (*i.e.*, what God has committed to you to be used for Him), "who will give you that which is your own?" It is in our ordinary occupations that we prove ourselves to be either faithful or unfaithful.

When we speak of service or fruit-bearing, the heart naturally turns to John xv., where the Lord says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Apart from me ye can do nothing." The blessed Lord was just going out of the world, and He says, as it were, to His own, whom He leaves in it: I want the Father to be glorified in you. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," but in order that it may be so ye must abide in me, which gives us the thought of the disciples being in present communion with the mind of Christ. Thus we see that fruit-bearing now is not merely connected with the gospel which saves me (the gospel had produced fruit in the Colossians, *v.* 6), but with the Lord Jesus

Christ, who has gone out of the world, and with the wisdom and spiritual understanding by which the walk is reproduced in us of Him who is now in the glory of God.

There is another figure of this fruit-bearing in the priestly robe, which was all of blue, and had round about upon the hem of it a golden bell, and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate. This was to be upon Aaron to minister, that his sound should be heard when he goeth into the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out. Thus we get fruit and testimony connected with the presence of Aaron in the holy place. When the Lord Jesus Christ took His place at God's right hand, having accomplished eternal redemption, the Holy Ghost came out in testimony. The testimony of divine righteousness being in the presence of God, the Holy Ghost can be here on the ground of that righteousness; and fruit is produced by the Holy Ghost in us which God can accept, and which delights His heart, fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. But remember the bell and the pomegranate went together, and were never detached from the hem of the priestly robe. "Apart from me ye can do nothing." Fruit is not only for God, but from God by Jesus Christ. As He said to Israel, "From me is thy fruit found." Now that divine righteousness is established in the Holiest, the fruits of righteousness are to flow out in the saints. If you know your place in the Holiest as having divine righteousness in the presence of God, you learn that all fruit-bearing flows from your having been brought into that place, and thus it will be after a new order.

“JUDGE NOT.”

THE words “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain path of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I know by the word of God to be wrong, I must judge that he is walking wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself lest I also be tempted—think the best I can of him; but I cannot put evil for good, nor good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong to do—a thing contrary to God’s will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong. Woe be to me if, for any personal consideration, I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify his submission of heart and conscience to God’s judgment of good and evil. As regards the church of God, the scriptures plainly declare we are to “judge them that are within, but them that are without God judgeth.” This is no inputation of motives, nor habit of forming an opinion on other people’s conduct, which is an evil habit, but the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God. It is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judging whether people are Christians, but this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are supposed to be

Christians unless proved to the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing, and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass a judgment on the point whether such or such an one is a Christian. The person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian *is judging* that he is so of course, which is quite false. The apostle says, "*The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.*" Believing this, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment; it is the rejoicing of the heart that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of a child of God. It is a most horrible principle, that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples; *it destroys all godly affections*. If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge, who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom this love is to be exercised? We must know each other to love each other as children of God—to love "as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children objects to the love of the brethren; he is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and Scripture so much insist.

There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others, and expressing an opinion of them; if in questionable cases I ascribe, even in my mind, wrong motives; nay, if I do not hope in such cases that the right motive is at the

bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment, and away from God. If severity of judgment on the person, when I am bound to judge he is faulty, possesses my soul, this is not the Spirit of God.

But to weaken the plain, unequivocal, and avowed estimate of right and wrong, under the pretence of not judging; or to deny the knowledge of one another and mutual love among the saints, under pretence that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy, and a mere cover to a man's conscience to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If I am to maintain a divine standard of right and wrong I must judge those who do wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them—then, if volunteered, the spirit of judgment comes—but if I am, I must judge according to the word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, the “brotherhood,” I must know who they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work. J. N. D.

A SPIRIT OF POWER.

2 TIMOTHY i.

GREAT blessing may be derived at the present time by the consideration of certain truths in 2 Timothy, and the words of the inspired apostle come to us with as much power and reality as in the time of Timothy himself.

It has very often been noticed that things were going wrong amongst the mass of Christians and professors at the time when Paul wrote the second

epistle. Outward order in the church was lost, and many were openly giving up the special heavenly testimony of Christianity: there was a general turning away from him who preached the gospel of the glory.

Two things at the very beginning of the first chapter are worthy of all our attention. First of all, the promise of life in Christ Jesus, the endless resources of the God of glory, when everything apparently seemed to be lost; and, secondly, a certain character of godliness—true God-fearing piety which should be found in those standing in the breach under the enemy's fire.

It is not scientific knowledge or theological exactitude that is required (it is good to be exact in the truth), but a pure conscience and unfeigned faith (such as had characterized the two men in the breach before us, Paul and Timothy); and I have no doubt of the design of the Holy Spirit in bringing forward this moral character at the very beginning of the epistle. What is needed, in order to occupy so critical a place as that to which Timothy was called, is not a bold, reckless courage (Timothy was naturally timid), but "faith, prayers, tears," the true signs of dependence upon God in an evil day. Boldness and profanity very often go together; but here is a broken will and true godliness, an habitual walk with the Lord.

We recollect, as an illustration, the true story of an officer in the Crimea rebuking a corporal for ordering a sapper to stand in an exposed position in the trenches, *in which he dared not stand himself*. Paul did not act thus; he exhorted his beloved son Timothy to stand well in the breach, setting first of all the glorious example.

Now comes a part of the passage which applies to us all (it might be said that the sixth verse applies especially to Timothy, though surely the word to him to stir up the gift of God is a word to all who have received such); I allude to the seventh and following verses. God has not given us a spirit of fear; that is, one might almost render it, of *cowardice*; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The godly dependence being there, the tears for the church of God, the deep, true exercise in the sense of the utter inability to meet the storm, this character being in the man of God, there follows that "God hath not given us a spirit of cowardice." Our minds go back to poor, trembling Jeremiah, who had to meet the haughty faces of the pretentious Jews, and we compare with this the difficult position of such an one as Timothy (nothing is harder to bear than the scorn of those who oppose on religious grounds), and the assurance rejoices our hearts. Be not afraid of their faces! There is nothing to fear! The position is a difficult one, impossible to hold but in dependence; but, being in it, there is not one single enemy to be dreaded. This is true liberty and confidence—being in the breach for the Lord, a peculiar service, but none the less secure.

But there is that which is positive. God has given us a spirit of power; we know the victorious Christ and His might: and whilst all strength resides in Him, we are given so to know Him that, by the Holy Ghost, His power is ours. Oh, wonderful gift! How many of those who sing—

"Lord of all power and might!"

have any real understanding of it? There is with this,

love, and a sound mind—that love which works without seeking a recompense or worthy objects, and the sober sense, wise and godly, which is the very reverse of rash fanaticism. Thus equipped, we may be able to stand in the most difficult position in the whole line, though the breach be wide and the fire well sustained, and though many, who ought to be defending the rampart against the enemy, be principally occupied in trying to throw down their friends into the ditch.

That which follows will help us to understand our subject. The spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind being there, the exhortation follows, not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of the apostle who was in prison for His sake. It needed divinely given courage *not to be ashamed* of a man who was in prison; we shall not be tested perhaps in this way, we shall not probably have the privilege of going to visit in prison some faithful witness to the Lord; but it is nevertheless true that there will always be more opprobrium to bear as we go on, and I do not think that there can be true faithfulness even to-day without the faithful ones being traduced and thoroughly despised. We are called upon not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, at the very time when opprobrium is connected with it. I once heard of a routed army destroying or hiding the regimental colours for shame; but however much the enemy may seem to have triumphed, this is never to be our case.

It is here that I wish to call attention to the power of God, and the context will lead us into a deeper sense of the "spirit of power" in connection with the present struggle between good and evil.

“Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

This needs our attention; for again it is not here a rude and bold spirit that can go into the fray without feeling the blows, but one, dependent upon God, which meets afflictions *according to His power*. This is developed with great precision: “According to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.”

The power of God is connected here with His purpose and grace, and the accomplishment of His counsels by the death and resurrection of Christ. His own purpose and grace! This is entirely outside of anything in man, and the manner in which this was accomplished is worthy of all our attention. Apparently the enemy had triumphed; as we sing—

“By weakness and defeat
 He won the meed and crown,
 Trod all our foes beneath our feet,
 By being trodden down.”

So, in a small measure, the principle is true for us, that it is just where defeat and weakness are felt that God intervenes in His power to deliver and bless. Of course, all will understand that I am not comparing our blessed Lord's expiatory sacrifice with our difficulty or suffering, but merely noticing the fact that where apparently the enemy gains the

victory, and the cause is lost, *there* the power of God shows itself superior to all.

His mighty power shone out in the resurrection of Jesus; and there, when death had done its utmost, the Victor rose, who hath abolished death (destroyed its power), and brought to light life and incorruptibility through the gospel. It is here that God's power is known, for we are already brought spiritually into that place where life and incorruptibility are fully known. It is an order of things where all is light and vigour, and where no serpent can enter with corrupting poison. Once in the realization of such glorious truths, we begin to see the true force of the "spirit of power." It is connected with a risen, glorified Christ in an incorruptible sphere of splendour, and is known and manifested in the deepest experiences of sorrow and weakness here. In speaking of sorrow, I do not mean our own private difficulties, but such sorrow as called forth the tears of Paul and Timothy, the heart-felt grief at the state of things in the church of God, and true desire that the saints might retain, in dependence on the Lord, the true Christian calling.

If we feel more and more the weight of the state of things in Christendom, and our own utter inability to meet the need, or to open doors, the more shall we understand the apostle's words in this passage, where the spirit of power, and the participating in the afflictions of the gospel by the power of God, are brought before us.

May we know daily more and more of His might, who hath abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.

E. L. B.

THE SIGNAL.

"WE shall be like Him." Christian friend, this is your signal. Note—there is no doubt about it—there is nothing left for you to do as to it. It is His purpose for all that are His. Does it not cheer the heart? "We shall be like HIM; for we shall see Him AS HE IS."

Blessed testimony to the love of his heart! But it is very real to our hearts. The heart that in any way grasps its meaning is not easily turned aside. Grace would have us keep straight on, because we clearly see His purpose for us. Waves may toss around me, and to the distraction of all that is human. But I see the signal. I am not HOPING to see it, and because I see it I go straight on. (See 1 Cor. xv. 58.)

Now supposing that no end of trial and difficulty should be your individual lot in this world. Or, suppose that the Church of God be ever and anon distracted by the will of man rising up *within* it, will all these alter the blessed words you have read? A *through* train has to take heed to many a warning signal on the road, but nothing alters the fact that it is a *through* train. It may have to go at times slower than at other times, and it may have to pass over many a dangerous "point"; but there is *its own* signal, "*all clear*," high above every other. And a Christian is like that train. The Holy Spirit is the power.

The Holy Spirit is on earth to carry me through. (John xiv. 16, 17.) I must remember that I have no power apart from Him. I am not the power, and the train is not the power, but I am *using* the power. A

turn of the hand, and the power no longer moves the machinery; the train feels it, and slackens speed. Things are too much for me here without the ministry of the Spirit of God. I must remember this; we all must remember it, that *we are responsible*. And what is this great responsibility? It is *not to sever the connection of the power with the machinery*.

I see the signal, and I have the power. What a wonderful thing it is for a poor thing like I am to say this. Yet it is true. "We shall be like Him," is the one; and "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit," is the other. "Therefore we are *always* confident." Blessed confidence of FAITH! I am going to enter into the glory where Christ is as man—to see Him there, and to be like Him.

It must have a formative effect upon us if we believe it. God grant that it may upon us all, for I see that every Christian is started by God as a *through train*. The effort of Satan, who uses his signals all along the road, is to stop that train, or to turn it on to some side line. But let us remember that this very day the line is *clear*, the machinery is *divinely fitted* for the road, the power is *effective*; and let us keep our eyes upon the signal, and then never shut off the steam (Eph. iv. 30), for thus only can we make true progress.

H. C. A.

THE truth of risen life in Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost are distinct; but, now that both are fulfilled, the divine order is the knowledge of the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Ghost, and thus the two are inseparable.

EVERLASTING LOVE.

OH! let us magnify the grace
 Of Him who sits upon the throne,
 Who left the glories of that place
 To claim such wanderers for His own.
 By Satan led, by sin defiled,
 In nature lived each earth-born child.

With what a cost that Blessed One
 Accomplished all His heart's desire!
 He would not reign in bliss alone—
 To save the lost He would aspire,
 In depths of God's fierce wrath to prove
 The depths of Everlasting Love.

Thus was the Father's blest design
 Fulfilled completely by the Son,
 Whose glories shall resplendent shine
 In us—the trophies He has won.
 E'en now we share with Him above
 The stores of God's exhaustless love.

To that bright home where He has gone
 Let every heart directed be,
 Into whose chambers light has shone
 With His life-giving brilliancy,
 In unison with Him to prove
 The heights of Everlasting Love.

G. E. G.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

LUKE xvii. 5 ; 2 COR. x. 15.

A GREAT difference may be apprehended between these apparently similar scriptures. Both speak, it is true, of an increase of faith (though the word rendered "increase" is not the same in both), but the connection and context widely vary. After the Lord's instruction concerning the unlimited character of grace in forgiving a brother who might trespass against them, and perhaps with the sense of need produced by what they had heard, "The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." The word "increase" might here mean "add to" our faith, or "give more" faith to us. The Lord's answer would seem to teach two things ; first, that the smallest degree of faith is sufficient, when in exercise, for the achievement of the greatest things ; and, secondly, that faith is strengthened by exercise, that the feeblest display of confidence in God tends, through His grace, to beget more, for it is faith, whatever its degree, whether small or great, that brings God in, and, when He is brought in, the soul learns that as all things are possible with Him, so are they possible to him that believeth. To justify this interpretation it may be added that verse 6 should read, If ye have (not *had*) faith ; for if the reading of our translation were correct, it might convey the thought that the apostles had hitherto no faith.

The second scripture may be best explained by a

contrast. When the Lord was down here, we read that on one occasion He was limited by the unbelief of the people, and so much so that it is said, "He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief." (Mark vi. 5, 6.) The apostle, on the other hand, had hope, on (we give a more accurate rendering) "your faith increasing to be enlarged amongst you"; meaning thereby that his liberty in service, and the display of power amongst them in preaching the word, were greatly connected with, and influenced by, the faith of the saints. This truth needs to be remembered by God's people; for if the blessed Lord was hindered in His labours by the unbelief of those around Him, how much more are His servants? Nothing can be sadder than the fact that preachers of the word may be received by those to whom they are sent, almost without any faith or expectation. It was because the apostle understood this that he looked for increasing faith in the Corinthian saints ere he returned to labour in their midst.

II.

ROMANS v. 15 ; 1 TIMOTHY iv. 16.

MUCH confusion arises from inattention to the meaning of the words "saved" and "salvation" as used in the epistles. Excepting two or three times where God's eternal purposes are introduced, salvation is always looked upon as future, having its consummation at the coming of the Lord, when all the redeemed will be conformed to His own image. Salvation therefore may be spoken of in three ways: as an accomplished thing, if we think of the soul or of our perfect place of

acceptance in Christ; as a continuous process day by day, being saved through all the perils of the wilderness and through all the machinations of Satan; and, lastly, as completed at the Lord's return. Scriptures abound in which the last two senses are used, and among them are the two at the head of this "note." In the beautiful passage in Romans the apostle is deducing what God will do from what He has done. The soul, especially when governed by legality, reasons from itself and its own state up to God, deeming that God's attitude towards it depends upon its own condition. The apostle meets this tendency by showing that we should build upon what God is as revealed in the gift of His Son, and that inasmuch as He commended His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, we are justified in concluding that He will never let us go, but will save us all the way through, on to the end. As He says, "Much more then being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." For if God took us up, and testified His love towards us, when in wicked enmity, He will not allow us to perish now that we are justified; and hence the apostle proceeds, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"—His life out of and beyond death, as risen from the dead and glorified at the right hand of God. As, indeed, He Himself said, in another aspect, when speaking to His disciples of the time when the Comforter should have come, and when He would make Himself and His presence known to them in a much more intimate way, "Because

I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) We are thus saved daily by the life of our blessed Lord.

Turning now to the scripture in 1 Timothy, our attention is rather directed to the instrumental means of this daily and progressive salvation. First, the apostle says, "Take heed to thyself [that is, in the manner enjoined from v. 12], and unto the doctrine [or the teaching]; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." We have then the divinely appointed means by which Timothy himself and his hearers might be preserved from the snares around on every hand, and by which their feet might be kept from stumbling. On his part there was to be incessant watchfulness over himself, and over his own state of soul (v. 12), as well as diligence in meditation upon the word of God, and in service. He was, moreover, to be wholly occupied in these things for manifest personal profit; and he was to take heed to his teaching, as well as to himself, having regard to its accordance with what he had received, and to its suitability to the needs of the saints, so that he and they might be kept in the presence of God, walking in the power of the Holy Ghost in subjection to the word. In this way they both would be "saved" continuously while waiting for Him who will "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

"I THINK I see that Christ is presented in glory as One who leads us on in energy, conforming us to what He is according to the glory; and that when the question is of nourishing the inward life, and the affections and character, it is the humbled Christ on whom we have to feed."

CALLING FIRE DOWN FROM HEAVEN.

2 KINGS i.

IN about two years the judgment pronounced upon Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth was executed, and in the place and manner described by Elijah. Ahaziah, his son, reigned in his stead; and he walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin (1 Kings xxii. 52)—that is, he combined in his worship every form of idolatry practised at that time in his kingdom; and thereby he provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done. And yet he had known Elijah (see *v.* 8), and must therefore have heard of his warnings and of his mission from Jehovah. But he had not profited by what he had seen and heard, notwithstanding the fact, of which he must have been cognisant, that judgment was suspended over his own head. It was to be verified in his case that “he, that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

The manner however in which he was dealt with did but reveal the Lord's tender pity, while unveiling, at the same time, the desperate hardness of Ahaziah's heart. He had, as men would say, an accident, and as a consequence was ill. Opportunity was thus vouchsafed to him to examine his ways and to turn to the Lord. Instead of doing the one or the other, he sent

an embassy into the land of the Philistines to enquire of their god Baalzebub ("lord of flies") if he should *recover of his disease*. He thus proved that he had no confidence in his own gods; and yet he would not (for the carnal mind is enmity against God) turn to the only Source whence succour could be obtained. How foolish and perverse is the sinful heart of man!

The eyes of the Lord were upon this wicked sinner, and He sent His angel to direct Elijah to go up and meet the king's messengers. His message was brief and decisive: "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." It is much to be observed, as illustrative of God's judicial ways, that, while it had been said during the reign of Ahab that the Lord would bring evil upon the king's house in his son's days, Ahaziah is dealt with on the ground of his own wickedness and apostasy. With this record before us, it is not open to any objector to maintain that Ahaziah suffered because of the sins of his father. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" is God's own declaration, and hence the sentence passed upon Ahab's house was not executed until his son had himself incurred the anger of the Lord God of Israel by an act of apostasy, which equalled, if it did not transcend, the worst deeds of his father. God is always justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges.

The messengers of the king returned, and reported to him what they had seen and what they had heard;

and, in answer to their master's question, they described the man whom they had met. He was, they said, an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. The son of Ahab instantly knew that it was Elijah the Tishbite, revealing thus that he had not only heard of his deeds, but that he was also acquainted with his appearance and person. A less hardened sinner might have been terrified by the reappearance of the prophet, but Ahaziah was only provoked to more daring impiety. He knew well that Elijah was Jehovah's messenger, but what of this? Was not Ahaziah the king of Israel? And thus beguiled by Satan, he determined to arrest the man who had dared to send him such a message. Accordingly he sent a captain of fifty, with his fifty soldiers, to apprehend the prophet and to bring him before the king. This was a deliberate challenge given by the idolatrous monarch to the God of Elijah.

In obedience to the royal command, the captain took his soldiers, went, and found Elijah sitting on the top of a hill. (*v.* 9.) It would almost seem that the officer recognised Elijah's true character. "Thou man of God," he called him, adding, "The king hath said, Come down." Was Elijah to be obedient to the king's summons? It is true that believers are to be subject to the higher powers, and that to resist the power is to resist the ordinance of God (Rom. xiii.), as long as the power is exercised within its own appointed domain. But if that power seeks to penetrate into the sphere which God has reserved to Himself, then as Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego, and as Peter and John, refused to comply with the commands they respectively received,

so ever the power has to be resisted. Elijah had acted under a divine commission, and he was still in the divine hand, and hence, at whatever cost, he must be obedient to the word of the Lord.

It would be a strange misinterpretation to suppose that Elijah, in calling fire down from heaven to consume the captain and his fifty, was prompted by fear for his own life, and a desire for self-preservation. He, who had fled at Jezebel's threat, was fearless in the presence of the king's soldiers, because, having been restored again to communion with Jehovah's mind, he was the willing vessel of Jehovah's power. He was therefore Jehovah's servant in what he did; for the time had now come for judgment to commence. Ahaziah had dared to stand up as an adversary of Elijah, and of Elijah's God; and God stepped in to vindicate His servant, and to warn the king and his misguided people of the consequences of persevering in their present course of apostasy and open hostility. Judgment swift and rapid descended upon those who were sent to take the prophet, to arouse, if possible, the insensate people from the stupor of their folly and sinful condition.

' The king's unrepentant state is sufficiently revealed by the fact that he despatched, even after such a warning, a second captain with his fifty to the prophet; and increased urgency is implied by the addition of the word "quickly" in the second captain's address to Elijah: "O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly." It is as if the king could brook no

further delay. The same result followed, for the fire of God (the reader should notice that it is now called the fire of God) came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. The Lord God of Israel was thus as a wall of fire round about His servant for his protection, and as "fiery indignation" to devour his adversaries. It is a principle running through both the Old and New Testaments that God ever identifies Himself with His messengers; and Ahaziah was thus, even if he knew it not, assailing Jehovah Himself in the person of His servant, and at a time too when he himself was under the just judgment of God. (1 Kings xxii. 53.)

Insensible to the significance of these divine manifestations of warning and judgment, and determined at all costs to secure his end, he sent a third captain with his fifty. This officer was either a worshipper of Jehovah, or he had been impressed by the fate of his two predecessors. His whole attitude betrayed a different mind and spirit from the first messengers of the king; for he "went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight." Three things mark his humble address: he assumed the place of a suppliant; he acknowledged the judgment of God upon the previous captains; and he owned that his life was in Elijah's hands as Jehovah's servant.

God heard and answered his appeal, and directed Elijah, through His angel, to go down with the captain, and not to be afraid of him. With that prompt and unreasoning obedience, which ever characterised Elijah in his service, "he arose, and went down with him unto the king." The knowledge that he was in the Lord's path imparted courage, and the consciousness that he was overshadowed by divine power assured him that neither the king nor the king's officer could harm him; and he therefore went fearlessly into the palace, and to the bedside of the enraged and wicked monarch. But what had the king gained? Simply the repetition of the message of judgment which had been first delivered to him by those whom he had sent to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover of his disease. It was now uttered again over his bed by Elijah himself, and it contained the king's irrevocable doom; for the next verse tells us that the king "died according to the word of the Lord."

Many reflections might be made; one only is given. Attention has been called to the prophet's unquestioning obedience, and it may also be pointed out that his fidelity in delivering his message is no less conspicuous. The message he received he gave without enlargement or addition. He was careful only to convey it in the form in which it was communicated. It might be well for the servants of the Lord to ponder this feature, and to ask whether the power of the Holy Ghost would not more frequently accompany their ministry if Elijah's example in this respect were more studiously followed.

THE TABERNACLE.

SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES ON EXODUS—REVISED.

CHAPTERS xxiv. ; xxv. 1-9.

INTRODUCTORY.

WE have seen in the former part of this book the actings of God on behalf of a people who were in bondage in what is to us the Egypt of this world. He acts *from Himself*, but, nevertheless, according to their wretched condition. “*I have heard* their groanings, and am come down to deliver them.” In order to effect this deliverance in righteousness—for they were sinners equally with the Egyptians—He sheltered them by the blood of the Passover lamb from the judgment which fell upon the firstborn. The tenth plague differed from the others in that it was no longer by the rod of Moses that the Lord smote the Egyptians, but, as it were, God was Judge Himself. “*I will pass* through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn.” Having sheltered them as sinners by blood from His own righteous judgment, He can now be their Deliverer, and as such He opened a way through the Red Sea, thus delivering them from Egypt that He might bring them *to Himself* in the power that redeemed and delivered them. This was fully effected when they encamped at the mount of God, and we have seen that up to this point all had been grace in the actings of God on their behalf. The history is entirely a record of this grace. Their wants and

murmurings only brought out what He was for them. The question of what they were, who were recipients of such favour, had not yet been raised.

Then we have considered the giving of the law, which not only raised this question, proving what they were, and that man had no righteousness for God; but also, could man have received it, there was contained in it the communication of the will of God for a people whom He had brought to Himself. There was thus an intimation of what was in the mind of God—to have a redeemed people for Himself to whom He could communicate by His word that which was of Himself. (Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.) Thus they would have been formed for Himself to shew forth His praise, had there been in them such a heart that they would fear Him and keep His commandments. It will be so when the law is put into their inward parts, and written in their hearts.

Let us dwell a little on this intimation of the purpose of God for His people in communicating to them His revealed will; because we shall see that besides raising the question of responsibility, He wanted, in bringing them to Himself, to form them by His word according to His own will. Till the question of responsibility is settled, a sinful people never could enter upon this great privilege. In the cross it has been settled. Nor can the word of God as to the privileges of Israel fail. (Rom. ix. 6.) When they turn to the Lord they will know how their unrighteousness has been met; and the law, magnified and made honourable by Christ, and presented to them in Him, will be written upon their hearts.

But in order for this thought of God in forming a

people for Himself to be *fully* accomplished, so that they should be to the praise of His glory, Christ is formed in those who, now believing in Him, have the forgiveness of sins and acceptance in the Beloved. Christ is written on the fleshy table of the heart by the Spirit of God. It is by the word on the principle of love, "If ye love me keep my commandments." God is known in love that has been manifested in Christ, and not in the way of requirement. Hence it is said, "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

Chapter xxiv. brings us to the climax of the first part of Exodus. The representatives of the people who have been brought to God by redemption, and to whom His will has been communicated, go up into the mount of God. The covenant had been ratified by blood. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered, but no sin-offering. No provision had been made for transgression, for it is not contemplated. The people undertook to keep the law, not to break it. Whole-hearted devotedness to the will of God, and consequent communion with Him, are figured in the sacrifices offered, whereupon Moses and the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, and ate and drank in His presence. We see how this thought of being with God in communion, figured by eating and drinking before Him, completes the circle of truth connected with the actings of God to bring a redeemed people to Himself. I do not speak here of the break-down, but of what was in the mind of God as intimated to us in these chapters.

All is so far complete, and we are prepared now for the details of the tabernacle. In it we shall find that a primary thought is the manifestation of God, not in

Godhead glory which is unapproachable, but in such a way—really in Christ—that the creatures He had made might know Him in the manifestation. He takes His place, as it were, figuratively in His own creation, and the manifestation is in man. He was going to dwell in a tabernacle with men on earth. Hence we are no longer engaged with the work of God *for* His people, blessed as that is, but with that people called to enter into *His interests*; for the tabernacle was *His* house where every part and vessel spoke of what He is, the manifestation of Himself in man. There is nothing so great and wonderful as the only-begotten Son unfolding to us what is of God. “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” therefore it is at once added, “We contemplated *His glory*.” We are not here engaged with *our* deliverance, but with *His* glory. We must be redeemed to enter into what the apostles contemplated, and this redemption we have had before us in figure in the early chapters of Exodus.

The last verses of chapter xxiv. are important, as leading to the subject of the tabernacle. The cloud of the Lord’s glory covered the mount. In the sight of *Israel* it was like devouring fire; for though redeemed out of Egypt, they stood on the ground of responsibility as to the flesh. Whatever was in the mind of God as to bringing a people into communion with Himself, His glory was as consuming fire. To us it now shines in the face of Him who in the fire of judgment has perfectly glorified God in respect of sin. Moses was not only called up into the mount, but he went into the midst of the cloud. He was called up to receive the tables of the law, but in the midst of the cloud he was shewn the figurative representation of things in

the heavens, and received instructions for the making of the tabernacle. The very place where he was instructed in the details of God's dwelling-place amongst men (comp. Luke ix. 34, 35) suggests to us the character of what is unfolded in the tabernacle—God displaying Himself in His own creation, and a place of nearness and intimacy, though as yet the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. It was ever in His mind to be known by His creatures, and to have His glories and excellencies displayed to them, even to the most exalted intelligences. Into the inaccessible light where He dwells it is impossible for the creature to enter. If then Divine Persons were to be known, it must be by the manifestation of what is divine in the ranks of creation. God has been manifested in flesh. He who created all things came as the Firstborn into the ranks of creation. The Son of God has brought what was divine into manhood; He has also brought Sonship into manhood; but into this I do not enter here.

Bearing in mind what has been said, we learn, from Hebrews iii. 4, that the tabernacle was a figure of the universe as builded by God, to be the sphere of the manifestation of Himself in Christ. All things in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him, and He is the appointed Heir of all things. Thus we may further seek in it for figures of Him in whom the manifestation is made, and consequently of Israel and the church; the one being the earthly, and the other the heavenly people, through whom the glories of Christ will shine out. The congregation of Israel were in one sense God's house, as identified with the tabernacle where God dwelt. It was the place where they gathered together—the appointed tent of meeting.

Now it is said (Hebrews iii. 6) of Christians, "Whose house are we"; and again (Eph. ii. 22), "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." The bearing of this will become apparent as we examine the details of these chapters.

I have alluded to the making of the tabernacle as being engaged with the interests of the God who redeemed them, and it is a blessed thing. The people were to bring an offering to the Lord. "Of every man that *giveth it willingly* with his heart ye shall take My offering." When the heart is set free with God, in the sense that His grace has provided for all my need, then it can go out willingly in regard to the details of His house as He makes them known. I do not think we could carefully read chapter xxv. without being struck with the immense privilege of being the recipients of such communications, of knowing these unfoldings of Himself. The more so for us, because we belong to the inside place, where we can apprehend the fullest revelation of Himself as taught by His Spirit, and from whence we are able to survey as strengthened by the same Spirit the whole range of His purposed glory in Christ.

The business of Israel was now with the sanctuary. We too are sanctuary people—"a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." First, they are occupied with the construction of its parts and vessels; then, they either kept the charge of the Lord when the cloud rested on it (Numbers ix. 19), or they carried it as the testimony of God through the wilderness. It was a happy moment for them when engaged with making a sanctuary for the Lord, a response given of the Lord to their song, sung at the moment of their deliverance, under the

leading of the prophetic spirit in Moses, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation."

There is only one more remark which I make now, that all was to be according to the pattern shewed to Moses. How otherwise could it have represented what was in the mind of God, who ever had Christ before Him? He was the great original in the mind of God. All that was given to Israel was but a shadow of the things to come, but the body (or substance) is of Christ. Any departure from the pattern shewed to Moses would have falsified the representation of the ordered scene where God was pleased to dwell and manifest Himself. It would have been as building in wood, hay, and stubble, where only gold and precious stones should have a place.

T. H. R.

THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

As a sequel to the gift of a spirit of power, we may look at the peculiar encouragement given to Timothy in the part of the epistle immediately following.

We noticed that Paul would not have exhorted another to stand in a place of danger in which he dared not himself remain; and in looking a little into this part of the Word of God, we may consider the character of the encouragement given to us in an evil day, rather than the especial and official position of Timothy. We understand that we are in no such position, but we *are* called to stand for God in a time of trouble; and hence it is that the special instructions to Timothy will be of use and blessing to our souls.

It is easier to lead a victorious army than to conduct a retreat; and I once heard it remarked of Napoleon

(to use an illustration), that when the fatal epoch of the retreat from Moscow had come, the man who had been more than successful with victorious troops shewed a sad lack of generalship in deserting the great army at the time of its need and peril. Which is the greater general, the one who is glorious in victories, or the one who can lead out of danger a broken and suffering army? Paul was not one to desert his post when all they of Asia had abandoned him, and in great suffering could speak in simplicity of his personal and intimate knowledge of the Lord, as the One who thoroughly understood His servant's life, work, and present attitude, when so many had turned away from him.

It might be well, in passing, to remark the exhortation as to the "form of sound words," for had we been more familiar with the scope of Scripture teaching, and its form, we should have been kept from many a deceit of the enemy where a lack of familiarity with Scripture expressions exposed the soul to trouble.

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

There had been men of God in the Old Testament who had been faithful in evil days—they had known the patience and the goodness of God to sustain them. Men such as Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, had learnt in much sorrow the true character of the heart of God; but they could not know grace in its peculiar expression as we find it here—"the grace *which is in Christ Jesus.*" To be strong, and to be able to take one's share of the suffering, worse than the disastrous retreat from Moscow (for moral suffering is more severe than physical), Timothy must know more and more of the grace which is in Christ Jesus. It is no slight thing to

know the resources of the grace of God, and that in Him who (Himself God for ever blessed) enters divinely, and yet with a human heart, into every difficulty of His poor feeble servants in a time of great trial. The true secret of all service is to be strong in the unfailing grace which is in Christ Jesus, whatever shape things may assume in Christendom; and however disheartening the desertion and turning away of the many, there is the infinite grace of the heart of God, known in the glorified Christ at His right hand.

There is no difficulty, no sorrow, in which we cannot directly have to do with Him; who, Himself the perfect servant, knew what sorrow and ingratitude were as no one else could know it, and who could say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." The very fact of the difficulties with which our path bristles calls forth energy of soul in an upward direction—the strengthening oneself in the grace (the unwearied, unchangeable, and active love) that is in Christ Jesus. Our talent may be small (according to the Giver's will), but to use it and to make it productive we need the knowledge of the Master's heart, and to be kept in full communion with Him, who surely is acting in grace until the very end of the Christian testimony.

It is a severe school to be in—I mean that of Christendom in its present state; and we need to be strong in *grace*; that is, to have the heart and mind so stayed upon Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, that one may act by Him in grace to all, whilst not relinquishing the truth. "Yet in Thy love such depths I see." It is a great thing to act so as

to turn the left cheek to the aggressor when one has received a blow upon the right.

And surely the life of Paul had been characterised by the grace which is in Christ Jesus. He had known what it was to labour on, suffering at every step of the immense work of laying the foundation—often going forth from one town, beaten or stoned, to go cheerfully into another to begin there the work of God. At the very end of his active career, before his captivity, going up to Jerusalem with intense love to his nation, cast out and condemned (more than forty Jews, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, binding themselves with an oath to kill him); and then being able before Agrippa and a mocking Roman pro-consul to say, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." The patient, laborious life, spending and being spent for ungrateful Corinthians, or exasperated Jews; the absence of self-seeking, the carrying out of the Lord Jesus' own words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; all this bears witness to the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Oh! beloved brethren, we are not called to the sufferings of Paul or Timothy; we have never known stripes or stoning; but we are called, in our measure, to be strong in this grace, in a day of many tears and sorrow, when the Lord has called out a few to be faithful to His word and name.

There are principles connected with this which, though they have a special application to Timothy, are very important for us. There is care in the work, and sound teaching; then the taking one's part or share of suffering (2 Tim. ii. 3), enduring as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ. There is, I suppose, a special word to one in such a position as Timothy in verse 4; then the striving *lawfully*, keeping between the ropes of the race course, so that the whole course may be owned by the just Judge at the end.

Then the patience in work; for the sixth verse should be read thus: "The husbandman must *labour first*, before partaking of the fruits." It is steady labour, and we cannot, by any human effort, hasten on the harvest. Souls must be exercised, and a real work carried on in them, even as Paul laboured night and day with tears in Ephesus. We are naturally impatient, and I recollect, as a child, having planted some little orange trees, pulling the leaves to make them grow more quickly, and spoiling the plants. A patient work with souls, looking to the Lord to give the increase, even in a day such as this, will certainly bear fruit to the Lord's glory, and the faithful labourer rejoices, and shall rejoice still more, in that which has been produced by the power of God in the souls amongst whom he has worked.

We are stimulated to more active and careful service as the days grow darker, and the ingratitude of the soil only causes us to be more and more strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. May it suffice us to be approved of Him, looking to Him at every step of the way for grace to continue our course and to finish it with joy!

E. L. B.

WHAT a thought! To be so one with Christ, so living Christ, that we have to put as a test to everything, "Would my Lord like *this* or that? The Christ of God, who has made me one with Himself, what does *He* think of it?"

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

PSALMS LXIII. AND LXXXIV.

I READ these two Psalms with the hope of bringing before you the difference there is in the character of the blessing and enjoyment of God expressed in them. Both are most blessed, and in one way complete, each in itself; but there is a marked distinction between them, the former expressing perfect enjoyment in God Himself, and in Him alone; the latter, the enjoyment of Him in the midst of blessings with which He in His mercy surrounds us, and in the fellowship with them.

As saints we must realise God in both these ways, though in His mercy His general way of dealing with us is rather that of Psalm lxxxiv., that is, granting us the assistance, the help, and the comfort of outward blessings, and communion with fellow-Christians.

Psalm xxiii. is just proof of this. That opens with what we may call the natural condition of a saint, the quiet, peaceful enjoyment of the green pastures and still waters of the Great Shepherd of our souls. But that does not continue always, and it is not the only experience we get; sorrow and trial and failure come in, and then we learn that He *restoreth the soul*, and by His strength made perfect in weakness, and the table spread before our enemies, we gain the knowledge of God which says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And our hearts need this sort of discipline, that we may not merely, as in the

first moments of our salvation, rejoice in the love that has redeemed us, but that we may know with what a God we have to do, and learn apart from all extraneous helps what our portion is *in Himself*.

I examine a little more closely the Psalms before us. We may notice the opening of the 63rd ; it begins with the address—"O God," not "O Lord of hosts," as in the 84th. It is not His title in covenant with Israel, but the individual apprehension of what He is in Himself. "O God, thou art my God." "My . . . soul longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." *This is the land where God is learned as our God, and where there are no springs of refreshment by the way, no outward comforts, perhaps even no sources of spiritual help and strength, no "courts of the Lord," no "tabernacles."* True, we may have seen and rejoiced in God's power and glory in these at other times ; so we should, for they are divinely appointed means of grace and help for us ; but the psalmist in verse 2 longs to see these—"as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary;" to see them thus "in a dry and thirsty land" is by no means so easy. They are not so evident there, and the heart sometimes finds it hard to say—"Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life"—is better than what ministers to life, than all the blessings and enjoyment in which life consists, *and which are, whether spiritual or temporal, the offspring of the very same lovingkindness of God.* But we must realize the lovingkindness itself to be better than all the blessings it gives, and find it our joy when they are all withdrawn. . . . If we have once really tasted it, we never enjoy it so much as when we have nothing else to enjoy. The Lord Jesus was, of course, the perfect illustration of this trusting in God, and

finding joy in Him too, in a dry and thirsty land. We know in what sanctuary He had seen God's power and glory, and His life proves He saw them equally in this "land," which was to Him how far more dry and thirsty than to us! He could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," and pray that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," this too in the same circumstances of barrenness and dearth.

What a contrast between the actual position and the joy which the faithful saint derives from the presence of God! The 6th. verse is just another expression of the loneliness and absence of all external sources of help and support. The light of day even, and the presence of others all gone, still the experience of what God has been gives confidence and joy and peace in the shadow of His wings; and the dry and thirsty land, the place of death to the natural man, becomes a place of blessing, and of proving the Lord's right hand upholding us.

The 84th Psalm is quite another thing as to circumstances, though of course all the joy and blessing in it spring from the same source. It is the full confidence in and desire after a God that has been known and loved, expressed in Jewish language, as the "tabernacles," "courts," and "Zion" show, and having an application to Israel of course, though I take it now in the spiritual bearing. The "tabernacle" is to us the heavenly places where we enjoy God's presence, and which are the home of our heart, just as the nest is the home of the swallow, and the place where she finds rest and joy. It is perhaps as especially assembled together, and privileged for a while to shut out all save our heavenly

home, that this psalm regards us in this sense. "They that dwell in Thy house shall be still praising thee." Praise is here the one legitimate object of our souls and employment of our lives. In secret with God conflict and petition and the like have all their places; in His house our one occupation is to be still praising Him who is our strength there, and the object of all our desires. These desires will never be satisfied till we are for ever in His house, till we get to our God in glory, and therefore till then the way thither must be the thing that fills our hearts. "Blessed is the man . . . in whose heart are the ways." These ways may be rough, they lead through the valley of *Baca*—the place of tears; but what matters this if they lead home? If my heart is set on the *end* of my journey, the roughness of the way little matters—it brings me where I want to be, and a smoother, pleasanter path in another direction will not even have an attraction for me, it does not lead home; it gives great decision and firmness to the Christian character to keep this simply before the mind; and, after all, the valley of *Baca* is turned into a well to us, and we often find a deep source of spiritual blessing in the very things that cause the trials. They are not pleasant, of course; but they are the means of breaking down these miserable fleshly hearts, and making us fit to receive the blessing our God designs to bestow; and then "the rain also filleth the pools," streams of heavenly blessing come pouring in upon us, and making our path a continuance of refreshment and help. Thus a rough road and His strength and help along it is our portion, and then we are led from strength to strength, the strength ever tried by the needs of the way, but ever renewed by the

grace of our God, till we appear before Him in Zion. *The only thing for a Christian in this world is the path towards glory*, that leads out of the world. In that path we can never fall; the cause of tears becomes to us means of grace and of the powerful refreshings of the Spirit, and the living waters from above divinely reanimate our courage, and all this because the Anointed is there. God looks on His face, and so all is secure to us. Nothing shall separate us from His love; neither height nor depth nor any other creature (prone as our hearts are to let any creature do it now) shall ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Well, beloved friends, we must all learn God in these ways—learn Him in the midst of His blessings, and in a measure by them, perhaps first, and some time or other have our hearts settled by being cast over on Himself and nothing else, being brought into a position where nothing helps God to make us happy, if I may use such an expression, and where we must find in Him alone our all—our joy, our strength, our peace, our hope—find Him such too in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

Still, blessed be His name, He has given grace, and will give glory, and will withhold no good thing from us. Well may we say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." J. N. D.

HAS the secret been revealed to you that Christ is the bright and morning Star? And are you practically waiting for Him? Before the sun rises, before the light of day, He will come and take us up to Himself. There I get my rest in everything, because I know that He is coming.

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

INSTABILITY marks everything that is of man, and stability is found only in what is of God. It is a mercy that this is so. Instability is connected with SIN, and hence all this world's present moral system must go and must give place to what is enduring. God remains the same, and the Christian is connected (not with the present shaking and ready to vanish away system, which takes its rise from sin, but he is connected) with God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

I do not know any portion of the word of God which treats more clearly of "*stability*" and of "*instability*" than the epistle to the Hebrews. The two are put again and again in this epistle in the most vivid contrast the one to the other. Thus in chapter i. we read, with reference to all that first creation which sin was allowed to taint, "They shall *perish*; but *Thou remainest*; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but *Thou art the same*, and Thy years shall not fail."

The whole argument of the epistle (and indeed one may say that it is a marked characteristic of Christianity) is that the believer belongs to, and is only interested in, *the stable things*. That which was of God had not come fully out until Christ was here, but His presence on earth tested what was in man, and it also brought out into prominence what was in God; that is, the "*stable*" and the "*unstable*" things stand

now *fully revealed*. In this epistle the believer has done with sin and sins because Christ has. This is no question of attainment, it is simply Christian truth. Christ has done also once and for ever with the *system* introduced by, and on account of, sin. The world has gone on *without law, under law*, and, when Christ was here, *under grace*, and in each has been proved incapable of producing anything for God. Then comes the cross, and everything unstable must go, to make room for all that which "cannot be shaken." Now God has come down to establish eternal stability, founded upon the work of Christ. The Holy Ghost is here. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These latter are all *stable* things, which will stand when all here goes, so that in the joy of them "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews xii.)

It is a great mercy that the believer should be now connected by God with all that on which his soul can *rest*. REST is the great problem put before man to attain, and God has worked that problem out, for only He could do it. God does not overburden the believer with things here, because there is unrest in them. Things here have their place, but if withheld they are not good enough for the child of God, because they are all passing away. Hence in very many cases the believer finds himself as to earthly things lacking, and suffering need. It is God's wisdom for him, and happy is he who so sees it.

H. C. A.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

REVELATION xxii. 19.

No doubt now exists that the "tree" of life should be substituted in this verse for the "book" of life. The words "and from" should, moreover, be omitted from the last clause. That is, "the things which are written in this book" are the tree of life and the holy city; and these two things, when interpreted, signify Christ (who as risen from the dead is the tree of life), and the church as the bride of Christ. (See chap. xxi. 9, 10.) The penalty therefore incurred by "any man" who "shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy" is exclusion from Christ and the church. But the question put is, Could this in any way apply to a real believer? This is to confound what is said with the question of salvation, and consequently to lessen the solemnity of the warning here given. From many scriptures we learn that the Lord will never lose one of those given to Him by the Father; that no one is able to pluck one of His sheep either out of His or out of His Father's hand; and that no one can ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We also learn as unmistakably, that there are rewards bestowed in the kingdom for service, that some will have different places of exaltation. (Matthew xix. 28; Luke xix. 7-9), and that some will suffer loss. (1 Cor. iii. 15; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 John 8.) If therefore the words "God shall take away his part out

of the tree of life," etc., mean eternal severing from Christ and the church, it could only refer to one who had part in Christ and the church by profession; and this, as we judge, is the right interpretation, as taking away from the words of the prophecy of this book implies will and hostility. It must also be remembered that it is John's characteristic to speak of things in their absolute nature, and hence there are no modifications adapted to special cases and conditions. This fact in no wise alleviates the solemnity of the case of one who is a child of God acting as here described, although deceived and in ignorance. It is a very bad sign when believers are tempted to turn aside the warnings of God by a reference to the truth that they cannot be lost. The question may well be raised with such, whether they have ever been brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Assuredly it is a very serious thing to reject any part of the word of God, or to be associated with those who are seeking, in every possible way, to undermine, if not destroy, its authority. Such a scripture as this, therefore, should always possess its full force in our consciences.

II.

PSALM cxxxii. 6.

The meaning of this scripture must be sought for in the context and in the subject of the Psalm. As has been written, "The Psalms of degrees are the progress of Israel in the land, out of sorrow and through sorrow, to the full blessing in Zion, which forms the crowning result, Jehovah being there"; that is, they represent or embody the experiences of Israel after their restoration to the land until their glorious Messiah has taken up

His abode in Zion, and the destruction of their last Gentile oppressor. A striking indication of the period is found in Psalm cxxvii., where it is said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." The reference is most probably to the temple which will be erected in unbelief, after the restoration of the Jews; and concerning which faith says, as it rises, knowing that the Lord Himself will build His own temple for the kingdom (Zech. vi. 12), "They labour in vain that build it." In Psalm cxxxii., the true temple is built, and ready for its divine occupation, as seen from the prayer in verse 8, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest: Thou, and the ark of Thy strength." The consummation of Israel's hopes has therefore arrived; and the remarkable thing is, that the establishment of Messiah's temple is connected with, if not looked upon as the fruit of, David's first desire to "find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (v. 5.) The allusion is not so much to his thought of building the temple (a thought he was not permitted to realize), as to his bringing up the ark, and setting it "in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it" (1 Chron. xvi. 1) in Mount Zion. The ark was thus prominent in David's mind, the ark as identified with Jehovah as the place where He dwelt between the cherubim; and it is of the ark, we judge, that the remnant speak in verse 6, as they look back and identify themselves with David's earnest purpose of heart to establish a dwelling-place for Jehovah in the city which He had chosen. (v. 13.) When they say, therefore, "Lo, we heard of it (the ark) at Ephratah," they speak of Bethlehem (the city to which David belonged), where David must have first heard of the cap-

ture of the ark by the Philistines; and their language shows, at the same time, that David, even at that early period of his life, had identified himself with the ark in its sorrowful experiences through the sins of Israel. The last clause of the verse refers to another period, but one doubtless connected in David's heart with the former. After the Philistines had sent the ark back to Bethshemesh, it found a temporary resting-place, in consequence of the judgment visited upon the men of Bethshemesh for daring to look into the ark, at Kirjath-jearim (1 Chron. xiii. 5, 6); and it was from thence David fetched it, on the occasion when God made a breach upon His people in the death of Uzzah, because they sought Him not after the due order. (1 Chron. xv. 13.) It was thus at Kirjath-jearim that David "found" the ark. The word "Kirjath-jearim" signifies "city of the woods;" and there can scarcely be a doubt that "the fields of the wood" refer to this, and hence that the remnant also identify themselves with the act of David in searching out the ark in order to bring it up to Zion. If this interpretation be correct, David's love for Jehovah's dwelling-place was begotten in early life, was nourished through all the years of his adversity, and at last found expression as described in this Psalm. The Lord's presence, in the midst of those gathered to His blessed name, is what now answers on earth to Jehovah dwelling between the cherubim, though its fullest correspondence and realisation is in the holiest in the heavenly sanctuary; and happy are those who are characterised as David was by intense affection for the place where the Lord displays Himself in all His power and glory to the hearts of His people. (See Psalm lxiii. 2.) •

ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION.

2 KINGS ii.

WITH Elijah's visit to Abaziah, as recorded in the previous chapter, his mission ended. Amid all the darkness that prevailed in Israel during Ahab's reign, the testimony of the prophet was the only light, whether for guidance or for warning. It is true that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and, if Elijah had not been too much occupied with the evil around, he might have found in this faithful remnant a comfort and support in his arduous service. Still he was left alone as *a witness*, and, though he had failed when he fled from Jezebel, a more notable or faithful servant is not found in the Old Testament. Along with Moses he stands conspicuous as one whom God especially honoured with His favour and approbation. He enjoyed moreover the special distinction, accorded only to Enoch besides himself, of not seeing death; and when the Lord was upon the earth, Elijah with Moses was chosen to appear in glory on the mount of transfiguration, and both he and the lawgiver were permitted to speak with the Lord concerning His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke ix. 30, 31.)

The event of this chapter therefore is highly significant, every one of its details being fraught with deepest instruction. The key of all is found in verse 1: "And it came to pass, when the Lord would take

up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal." Three things should be observed. The time is marked as that when Jehovah was about to take His servant up into heaven—the end, fruition, and recompense of his laborious path! Then, the prophet has Elisha as his companion. Until now Elisha, though Elijah had cast his mantle upon him, had not been seen. He had followed Elijah, and ministered unto him; but his existence, so to speak, had been merged in that of his master. Now he is seen rather as Elijah's companion, for he was about to become prophet in his room (see 1 Kings xix. 16, 19–21), and to receive his qualification for his work. Lastly, it is from Gilgal that Elijah, with Elisha, commences his journey before he is caught up to heaven; and this is a most significant circumstance.

Gilgal was the place where the children of Israel were circumcised, where the reproach of Egypt was rolled from off them, and where they were therefore set apart through death, through the application of death, to the service of Jehovah, and brought, figuratively, into moral correspondence with their position. Hence it was, moreover, that they were directed to return thither after every conflict. Gilgal, it will thus be seen, is the true starting-point for heaven, even as it is the place of power for the believer while waiting for the Lord. Of Elijah at this moment, another has strikingly said, that "he attains the mind of God with respect to the people, as separated from evil and consecrated to God. He sets out with this. He thinks with God; this is faith." When he fled from Jezebel other thoughts, even his

own, filled and depressed his soul; but now on the eve of his departure, led of the Lord to Gilgal, he sees with "the vision of the Almighty," and the people are beautified according to the counsels of God.

From Gilgal he went down to Bethel, with the faithful Elisha still as his companion. Bethel had become practically, like Gilgal, the home of all the abominations of idolatry. (See Hosea ix. 15, x. 5-8, xii. 11; Amos v. 5, 6.) From the house of God, Bethel had changed into "the king's chapel," and "the king's court" (Amos vii. 13), where the word of God was no longer tolerated. But Elijah travelled back in spirit to the Bethel of the beginning, where God had appeared to Jacob, and made him in His grace the depositary of His earthly promises—"the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." Bethel became thus to Jacob the house of God and the gate of heaven, and thenceforward the symbol, for all His believing people, of God's unchangeable faithfulness, inasmuch as He had bound Himself to Jacob and to his seed by His unconditional and absolute promises. To understand His thoughts, whether concerning Israel or the church, it is always necessary to go back to the commencement, to the original revelation of His purposes, knowing that what He has promised He will surely perform. That Elijah did so on the eve of his rapture reveals that he was now in fullest communion with the mind of God.

From Bethel, Elijah was sent to Jericho, expression of the enemy's power, the walls of which had fallen down before Jehovah's host, but had now been rebuilt

spite of the curse pronounced on the builder. It was therefore the city of the curse, and death rested upon it; for the water was naught, and the ground barren. And Israel by transgression, indeed through apostasy, had now brought themselves under the curse of the broken law. There Elijah could not remain; and he said to Elisha, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." Elisha still clave to his master and they went on until "they two stood by Jordan." Elijah was chosen to ascend to heaven without dying, and yet he typically passed through death; and it was as if in the power of the life on which he was entering that he smote the waters of the Jordan, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. Elijah traversed, as has been well remarked, all that had to do in type with God's relationship with Israel, even death itself (and that dryshod), up to heaven.

The place whence he ascended to heaven is much to be remarked. Across the Jordan he was outside the limits of the land of promise, and he thus was now beyond the sphere of Israel's responsibility, thereby declaring indeed that all had been forfeited on that footing. "The law having been broken, and prophecy—which set before the people their relation to God on earth, and His blessing on that earth—having been proved powerless for restoration, the faithful prophet, forsaking a land which had rejected him, had taken his place outside a blind and ungrateful people. . . . Up to Jordan Elijah demanded, by his ministry, that the righteous claims of God upon His people should be

satisfied. He sets these claims before them. He must withdraw, and God takes him away from a people who did not know *Him*."

If God, however, acted thus in regard to Elijah, it was only because He still had, in His longsuffering, thoughts of grace towards His guilty people. If they would not hear Elijah, He would yet send Elisha, as it were in the power of resurrection, as a new channel of blessing in the midst of Israel. Accordingly Elijah, as soon as they were over the Jordan, divinely guided, even if he did not fully know the purport of his words, said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha, as distinctly guided in his answer as Elijah in his question, said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." It was an endowment he would surely need for the mission on which he was about to be sent; and Elijah—surely in this an adumbration of Him who, after His ascension, baptized with the Holy Ghost—said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

All was now finished, the path of service and sorrow was ended; and Elijah was at last to enter upon his eternal recompense. "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psalm lxxviii. 17), and we

may therefore conclude that the chariot and the horses of fire are the expression of angelic power. And, as it is added in the psalm, "The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place," we may also gather, that the Lord Himself was in the midst of this display of His power, and the more certainly in that the whirlwind is often used in scripture as a symbol of His presence, though in judgment. The fire also speaks of judgment, but we know that the holiness of God, which must ever assume the aspect of judgment to His people when not walking in His ways (Heb. xii. 29), is nevertheless their eternal security and blessedness. In such a manner Jehovah rapt away His faithful and precious servant from the scene of his testimony to be for ever with Himself, thereby exhibiting in a most signal way His appreciation of his service, and bestowing upon him an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

Elisha saw Elijah ascending, and exclaimed, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Faith being in exercise he connected the chariot of God with Israel, and saw therein the promise of the display of God's delivering power for His people. Moreover, as he lost sight of Elijah, "he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him." His past history was closed, so to speak, with the departure of his master, and, together with Elijah's mantle, he received, according to promise, a double portion of his spirit, as the endowment for his new service which he was to carry on, in the power of resurrection and grace in the midst of Israel.

THE HOLY VESSELS.

EXODUS xxv.

BEFORE considering the details of the holy vessels contained in this chapter I would revert for a moment to the offerings which the children of Israel were to bring. They were to offer *willingly* such materials as were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle and its vessels. These materials were used in shewing forth the varied moral glories and characters which by faith we can now see in our Lord Jesus Christ. They are here looked at in detail, but were about to be formed into a completed whole. *Gold* represents the righteousness which takes its character from the very nature and glory of God—that which could be in His presence in the holiest—hence, as often said, divine righteousness. *Silver* perhaps is more difficult to understand, but I believe it will be found to represent the grace of God according to His own truth and faithfulness. It is thus connected with His righteous *ways* (there was no silver in the construction of the temple), as also with a present standing in His favour. The word of God is compared to silver refined (Psalm xii. 6), and the trumpets which announced the testimony and mind of God were of silver also. In Christ, the Yea and Amen, grace secures every promise of God according to His own truth and faithfulness. *Brass* is righteousness according to the claims of God upon men, maintained in the first instance by the discriminating judgment of good and evil. Evil judged and condemned, and good accepted in Him who

loved righteousness and hated iniquity; this was by fire on the brazen altar, and secondly, by the searching power of the Word in the laver.

Of the other materials I will say little until we come to the way they are used. *Blue*, it is generally admitted, denotes what is heavenly in character; *purple*, kingdom glory; *scarlet*, earthly glory. I think it will be found that as silver is placed in moral order between the gold and brass, so is purple placed between the blue and the scarlet—the kingdom will have a heavenly and an earthly glory. *Fine linen* denotes the perfect purity of human nature in Christ—that which was pure and perfect inwardly, while the *goat's hair* represents that which is more outward—a holy, separate life, such as could be seen by men. *Rams' skins*—consecration to God; this again is inward. *Badgers' skins*—outward; the watchful, guarded walk of one so consecrated. *Oil*—the power of the Holy Spirit; and *precious stones*—the perfections of Christ, in which His people are set.

Here, then, we have the materials to be embodied in that which is to be the sanctuary of the Lord, where all speaks of His manifesting Himself in man and to man, but not yet fully in glory, for the tabernacle is set up in the wilderness, and hence the silver comes in.

We now come to the description of the vessels. God begins with the ark. We do not learn the precious truths which are here figured in the order in which they are presented. We necessarily begin at the door of the tabernacle, where was the brazen altar. God begins in the very holiest, where His own glory dwells. This shows us the place which the ark has—it being the fullest type of Christ—in the details of the tabernacle.

There Jehovah dwelt between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat. Though made of shittim-wood it was covered with gold within and without. It represented that which was human, but seen only in the perfection of divine righteousness. It would seem, from Deut. x. 1-5, that Moses made a preliminary ark of wood only (no gold is mentioned), in which to put the second tables of the law after the first were broken—a gracious provision, but not the full embodiment of the mind of God here presented. The ark was not only the depositary of the testimony of God, such as could only be in Him who said “Thy law is within my heart.” This was the perfection of *man's* righteousness for God; but the shittim-wood covered with gold speaks of One in whom God's holy nature and character were perfectly glorified, as He said, “I have glorified Thee on the earth.” All was suited to the holiest, to the very glory of God who dwelt there, and whose presence must judge everything according to what He is Himself. Above the testimony was a mercy-seat or propitiatory of pure gold. There Jehovah dwelt. There the blood of the bullock for Aaron and his sons, and the blood of the goat—the Lord's lot—was sprinkled on the day of atonement. In the holiest it was more than the question of meeting the responsibility of man; there the character of God Himself, in respect of sin, was vindicated by the blood on the mercy-seat. Hence, not only does God justify the sinner who believes in Jesus, but Christ (in whom all the glory of God centres and is declared, and who is in that glory in the excellency of His own person) having glorified God about sin, the believer looked at as in Christ becomes the righteousness of God in Him. We must remember that the type could not

set this forth fully, it was only shadowed at best; but we have in Christ and His work that which has been fully estimated in the holiest of all, according to the glory of Him who dwells there.

Then of one piece with the mercy-seat two cherubim were made, at either end. They are symbolical of judicial action by God in righteousness. In Gen. iii. 24 they are thus seen in connection with the responsibility of man. In Ezekiel they form part of the chariot-throne on which the glory of Jehovah sat when He came to judge the city of Jerusalem; so, in Psalm xviii. 10, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly" when He executed judgments on behalf of His anointed. Here too we see the responsibility of man in the tables of stone that were in the ark. It is maintained according to the judicial estimate of God's righteousness in the holiest. *We* can say it has been perfectly met in Christ—the mercy-seat on which the glory of God now rests. The cherubim looked down on this mercy-seat of pure gold. They *were of it*. Every question of good and evil has been eternally solved in Him, and God has been glorified. In the cherubim we have the judicial estimate of this according to the attributes of the divine glory. Their faces are toward the mercy-seat, the throne of God in divine righteousness, but the place of the sprinkled blood.

Further we see (*v.* 22) that it was the place where Jehovah met with Moses to commune with him, and there he received the divine communications for the children of Israel. Aaron, after the breakdown and death of his two sons, was debarred access into the holiest, save on the day of atonement once in the year. There was no such prohibition given to Moses. He is

thus the Apostle of Israel permitted to have direct communication with the mind of Him who dwelt within the veil. (Compare Numbers vii. 89 ; xii. 8.) We have thus a foreshadowing of those blessed communications which are not merely connected with the people's need, but also with the glory of God in His own sanctuary. In Christ we have more than could be shadowed here. He was the sent One of the Father speaking the words of God. This He ever did, not, as Moses, going in to receive the communications. He was ever, so to speak, in the holiest, and yet Himself the holiest, the dwelling-place of God. Yet more, He was always the Son in the bosom of the Father, ever speaking as from thence. "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself."

We must not think that this direction as to Moses' place at the mercy-seat comes in here accidentally. Its very place shews us its importance. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with God speaking in the Son, and then we have the unfolding of the whole system of things connected with the heavenly calling of which Christ is the Apostle, and which is brought in consequently on His taking His place within, at the right hand of God. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the counsels of God in Christ are made known, we see the important place of apostleship. The apostles and prophets are the foundations, as communicating these counsels according to the hidden wisdom of God, on which the saints are being built up, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building is being fitly framed together ; and in chapter iii. the apostle speaks of the administration of the mystery in grace committed to him, to the intent that the manifold wisdom of God

might be known by the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The unsearchable riches of the Christ were, so to speak, the treasure-house of this manifold wisdom.

We see then what an important place apostolic communication holds, and how fitly the peculiar privilege accorded to Moses, of Jehovah communing with him from the mercy-seat, introduces the details of the other parts of the tabernacle. But while considering the full and blessed revelation of God in Christ, we must remember that no figures can portray the fulness. By the death of Christ, the veil has been rent, behind which the ark stood. God has come out in grace, where before He sat in judicial character upon a golden seat, and a new and living way has been opened for man to go in. The holy place is now filled with the glory of redemption, and Christ Himself appears in the presence of God for us. We can be before God—blessed place!—in virtue of the blood of Christ and according to His perfections. It is true humility to accept our place within the holiest, because we enter through the veil where nothing of self can have a place, for all is filled with Christ. Besides *our* place, it will be possible for *Israel* to have a place according to the new covenant to be made with them. God has been glorified in respect of sin for them as for us. The law which they had violated, and which was then deposited in the ark, will be written in their hearts. They will learn how it was magnified and made honourable in their Messiah, the true Ark of the Covenant, by whose Spirit they will be instructed in it.

We come now to the table of shewbread and the golden candlestick—sustenance and light—the one characterised by the number 12, the latter by 7. If we

take the various ways in which twelve is used in Scripture, it will be found to be connected with the order of God's administration by or in man. This is seen in there being 12 tribes of Israel, and in the use of this number in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Lord also appointed 12 apostles to be with Him and to preach. On the table of shewbread 12 loaves, representing the 12 tribes, were set in order before the Lord. The candlestick had 7 branches. It is the well known number of spiritual perfection and completeness. This is seen to be the case even in a bad sense in Matthew xii. 45, as well as in a good one. (Revelation i. 4.) In these two vessels, then, we have the witness of divine order and sustainment, and that which makes manifest—light in the completeness of its diverse beauty.

T. H. R.

THE GREAT HOUSE.

It would be well, before looking at the subject at the head of this paper, to notice the two things that Timothy was to call to remembrance in the eighth verse of chapter ii.; for without these there can be no perseverance in that which is (apparently to men) a losing game, but which shall end in victory.

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel,” says the apostle; and here we have the two grand truths mentioned in Romans i. 3, 4. God has acted in resurrection power in raising up Jesus; and those who in the early morning visited the tomb in Joseph's garden, beheld the terrible sepulchre—that sealed stronghold of death—broken open, and its power gone!

The only epitaph that could have been put upon that gravestone would have been, "He is not here, but is risen." It is good for us to remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, for God is acting by that very same power which resuscitates the dead, in all that He is now doing for the glory of His Son. We need to know this power, and to depend upon Him who is using it amidst all the present confusion.

There is the second point; that is, that Jesus Christ came of the seed of David; and we know that this refers to the faithfulness of God, who, if He makes promises—as He did to David and to his seed—will most surely accomplish them. He does not make promises, as we do, and then break them, but performs what He has said.

So that we have these two great facts to rest upon even in the present day:

1. The power of the resurrection;
2. The faithfulness of God;

and they form a wonderful ground of action.

Remember thus Jesus Christ! This is necessary, for the Holy Spirit speaks in what follows of patient work for Him, and of identification with Him in His death and life, in His sufferings and glory. There is this most blessed service and personal knowledge of Him with whom we have to do; the present confession of His name and hearty service, or the reverse; and disputes about words to be judged. This is a very solemn passage.

And now our subject is introduced. Timothy was to study to present himself to God, a workman not ashamed, expounding rightly the Word of God; one must be in God's presence to be able to cut in a straight line. Evil

was developing, and error coming in rapidly, but nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; and much has been said of the two sides of the seal attached to this.

“The Lord knoweth them that are His” is the upper side, and this assurance gives great rest to the spirit of a workman: it will keep him from hiding under a juniper-bush, and from complaining that he alone is left.* The other, or lower side of the seal, must govern all our conduct; it is the first step to be taken by the faithful on to the ground of true testimony at the present time, and must characterise the walk up to the end. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Now comes the illustration of the great house, and I conceive that no one who reads this has any doubt as to the meaning of the figure. All Christendom is taken in here; all that professes to own the lordship of Christ, the Master alluded to in the 21st verse. The house is His; that is, His name is owned in it, and the vessels belong to Him, at least nominally. (The most ignorant bigot in the Neapolitan States will at once recognise Christ as the Master and Judge of all, at least as an outward profession.) There are vessels of gold and silver—vessels to honour, and these the Master uses, *when they are in a fit state for use*. There are vessels of wood and earth—vessels to dishonour; it is not said that such are used of the Master. The great point is the being *fit* for His use, and this can only be by a true separation from the vessels to dishonour. Here it is that exercise must come, for one cannot by any means get outside of

* See the description of Elijah's flight in the *Christian Friend* January, 1893.

the great house. It is not merely a question of having a different religion to Jews, Turks, and pagans, but of being morally separate from that which is dishonouring to Christ in Christendom.

This is of the very highest importance, for the question will really come to this: Is it possible to be separate from evil, and, without being a Pharisee, to be standing apart from what is not of the Lord in the great house? Again: Can such a testimony be sustained? Is there such a thing now, or has everything come to such a point, that there is positively no real testimony to Christ in Christendom?

The first question is answered at once by the 21st verse: "If a man therefore purge himself from these [vessels to dishonour], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." There is no pharisaism here, but true separation from evil, and a consequent moral fitness for that which is good; the vessel can be now employed by the Master as being useful, prepared for what He is doing in the midst of all that goes on in the great house. A testimony such as I have spoken of cannot be carried out without the Lord's own sustaining power and intervention, and here we find an answer to the other questions; the next verse speaks clearly of this. There is the recognition of the Lord's authority as the One who alone is Son over the house of God; there is the pursuit of justice, faith, love, and peace with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

There is no attempt on the part of the faithful to re-arrange the great house (many have tried this and utterly failed), but real individual exercise and purifying oneself from evil, then identification with those who

are subject to the Lord, and the pursuing of what is good, beginning with righteousness and ending with peace.

Notice that it is not "peace at any price," but that justice, faith, and love come first.

It will be said that there has been terrible failure, and this we may well confess, to our shame; but the question is whether there be any true testimony to Christ and any true Christianity in the midst of the great house, and I am bold to say that I believe that the Lord will sustain a few to the very end, in the position described in verse 22. Though the failure may have been great in the pursuit of justice, faith, love, and peace, yet the Lord has not given up the feeble few who sincerely call upon His name, and who acknowledge His lordship in the midst of all that is foreign to His thoughts in the great house.

May the thought of His faithfulness sustain us! May we be kept from every attempt at building or forming things anew! But, understanding our place, as subject to the Lord, in the midst of the pretentious edifice that shall soon be judged and end in ruin, may we be found morally fit for His service, and pursuing that which is good. All that is not of Him in Christendom must be judged, and He alone can sustain a feeble and broken remnant which trusts in His name, and calls upon it still.

E. L. B.

AFTER we have learnt the blessedness of having the Lord with us in our circumstances, He leads us on to the higher joy of fellowship with Himself in His interests. He first sups with us, and then we with Him.

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

WHATEVER may change, God's purposes and counsel are stable. Everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth has been from the beginning (and is now) contributing to the display of these purposes; that is, to the setting up of eternal things. Two things are before a Christian. One is, A whole creation in ruin, and God coming in to recover. The other is, Purpose and counsel. To me the latter is the greater.

I think we must admit that the angels, in their connection with man, came in after the ruin of man was there. I have already remarked that all that came in through sin belongs to what I may call the "*unstable*" things. Hence the ministry of angels, as between God and man, must pass away. The fall of man, which separated him from God, introduced this ministry—a temporal, not an eternal state of things, because purpose and counsel are for eternity, and were long before all this that sin introduced. To these we have to look in faith now. Angels were never the objects of purpose and counsel. *But man was.* (Eph. i. 4, 11.) "Chosen . . . in Him before the foundation of the world." "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." As a system of service under God—with man as its object—the angelic race gives place to God Himself, whose counsel and purpose are to find His own delight in man without their intervention. I have no doubt of the ministry of angels going on now, but the saints have something greater than this, *i.e.* they have communion

with the Father and with the Son. This, I believe, is why angels are first brought before us in Heb. ii., in order to show their setting aside as to man, "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

However much the superiority of angels may be in a sentimental way (Col. ii. 18) insisted on; they are here set aside in order to bring man, according to God's purpose and counsel, upon the scene. We are at the end of the days in Hebrews ("these last days"), and God is about to establish in permanent display the desires of His heart. We find that those desires are not concerning angels, but concerning men. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." We are in this verse transported to the ages that rolled away *before* Adam's creation. It is similar to Genesis, i. 1, which no doubt was true ages before the second verse could be said of the earth. The purpose of God respecting man is to find His pleasure in him; for if the foundations of the earth were laid, it was in view of man. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him; Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands." (Heb. ii.) Moreover, God's purpose and counsel are to have man in nearness to and happiness with Himself. I think this is clearly indicated in such a passage as Genesis ii. 19, where (before sin came in) God and man are in free and happy intercourse respecting the names of the animals. It is an accomplished fact when we turn to Revelation xxi. 3, 4: "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He

will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Purpose and counsel include more than is here revealed as to God finding His pleasure in the race of Adam, and refer to the Son. Truly every word of God is pure, and the redeemed are to know God Himself dwelling with them, as the passage states; but when it is a question of "THE SON" there is more." There is to be the Bride taken from Adam's race, and displayed in union with Christ in heavenly glory. What have the angels to say to this? I believe they herald it, and desire to look into it. They echoed the delight of God in the first creation. "When I laid the foundations of the earth all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job xxxviii.) So when the dawn of the accomplishment of God's purpose and counsel drew nigh, the angels were there to introduce it. "On earth peace, good pleasure *in men.*" (Luke ii.) The Son had come, in whom the Adam race was to be blessed in communion with God, and by whom all these purposes and counsels were to be accomplished. Having heralded this fact they must retire. God founds the establishment of all, not on their ministry, but on Christ's *death*; and in the glory to which He ascended from the grave He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost who was sent down to the earth to carry on this work, from Him, who is the Head and Source of all. (Eph. iv. 8-13.)

I turn for a moment to purpose and counsel. In Proverbs viii. the Lord speaks as Wisdom. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." We are carried back

beyond creation into that far-away eternity to learn that HE who speaks in Proverbs viii. was then daily GOD'S DELIGHT. Who is He? When we come to creation and the formation of man on the earth, He is there as one in counsel. "Let us make man in our image." (Genesis i.) "Without Him was not anything made that was made." (John i.) "All things were created by Him, and for Him." (Col. i.) Then further in Proverbs viii., Wisdom says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Evidently men were there before they were the objects of His delight; that is, man was created and living on the earth, and with such are His delights. Who then is He? He is undoubtedly the One who brings into actuality all God's purposes and counsels respecting MAN. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x.) He taketh not hold of angels, but on the seed of Abraham. Man is His object, and He has condescended to call Himself the "Son of Man." (John i. 51.) It is a wonderful story. He began the work of recovery for God in *death*; He carries it on now by His ever-living work on high, and by the presence of the Holy Spirit, sent down by Him to dwell in the saints on earth. It is a story of GRACE, "which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter i. 12.)

I think that it is of much importance for Christians to see that they are now in association with God without any intervention, and for them to be willing to let the Holy Spirit have His place and power; and to see that God Himself has drawn nigh to men, and is with them and they with Him, on the ground of redemption, and that this is soon to be displayed in glory both in the heavenly company *i.e.* union with Christ, and in the earthly company, *i.e.*, God's presence here in the eternal

state. (Rev. xxi. 3-5.) But it is when we come to the first (union with Christ in glory) that we see how purpose and counsel place men above angels, and that these are the stable things with which even now the soul is connected. May we by grace enter into them, and we shall see the wisdom of such words as we find addressed to the saints in Colossians ii. 18. People sentimentalize on angels, and a common idea is that some (especially children) become angels after their death, and Roman Catholics pray both to angels and to saints.

H. C. A.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

NEWS FROM HEAVEN.

As you are so far off, I tell you more of the news of different parts; but what we want always is news from heaven, to be at home there, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. I find the Word richer and richer daily. This has brought us news and blessed news from heaven, and in the person of Him who is the fulness of them, and is gone back there after accomplished redemption, and, think of it! as our Forerunner. And we must not think these things are not revealed—what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor is entered into the heart of man to conceive. “But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” All the other names of God—Almighty, Jehovah, Most High, Adonai—have to do with this world, and God shines but through the cloud. But the Father is seen in the Son; this is not

dispensational ; it is the sun breaking through them, and God known in His ways of perfect grace, Himself known. Christ, the only begotten Son, has declared Him—what a blessing!—and brought us into His own place with the Father, soon in the glory itself. In that name of “Holy Father” we are kept ; and this is what we have to seek, to walk according to this place as dear children, as sons. May we remember that we are set in Christ before God ; that is perfect ; but, if so, He is in us, and we are set before the world to represent Him. (See John xiv. and Rom. viii.) And to do it, “of His fulness have all we received.” We must learn experimentally our own nothingness to be there, but it is a blessed (but a very responsible) place ; and we must be full of Christ to do it at all—converse with Him for His own sake, for our delight in Him gives us, if we keep in mind our dependence, His presence and wisdom and strength for all through which we have to pass ; and men and the world and the saints should meet Christ in us as they did in Christ. I have no need to say how infinitely and constantly perfect He was, and whatever we are it is still Him and of Him ; but then so far weakness is not a hindrance, because God does not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, and then His grace is sufficient for us, and His strength made perfect in weakness. The secret is to keep the sense of that weakness and look entirely to Him. Man lives by every word ; it, and He in it, ought to be the source of every movement, as well as the rule of it, in us ; and that is a great secret. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” But I must close. The Lord keep you near Him, and guide your heart within and your ways without. My loving remembrances to all the brethren.

J. N. D.

THE SOUL'S ENQUIRY.

DRAW near to God, beloved soul,
 And let Him hear thee tell
 The secret workings of thy heart,
 Though known to Him full well.

Is Jesu's love to thee as fresh
 As when, in days of yore,
 Thou drewest near, in trembling,
 His pardon to implore ?

As when the healing fountain of
 His mercy poured on thee
 The streams of grace and boundless wealth,
 He earned on Calvary's tree.

When He in patient agony
 And meekness bore the rod,
 That dealt the punishment for sin
 Between thy soul and God.

Or has thy love grown cold and faint,
 And wandering thy desires,
 Not fed with ardent, glowing zeal,
 As by the Spirit's fires ?

Or has thy knowledge of Himself
 But deepened day by day ?
 Until thine over-flowing heart
 Can rise, and praise, and say,

"Thou altogether loveliest,
 Chief of ten thousand Thou ;
 In wondering adoration, Lord,
 Before Thy worth I bow !"

Ah ! well for thee, my soul, if such
 A blessed state be thine ;
 If, drawn through His perfections now,
 Thy love can brighter shine.

For when, in unveiled glory, soon
 Thine eyes behold Him there,
 And Thou in all His loveliness
 And deep affection share—

Thy spirit undistracted then,
 A purer song shall raise
 To Him who brought thee home to God,
 And trained thy heart to praise.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

JOHN xviii. 5.

IN explaining a scripture it has to be remembered that it is not what can be put into it, but what is its mind and intention; what, in other words, is its divine meaning. The question, therefore, whether the "I am" of this passage is a direct assertion of the Lord's Deity, of the same character as chap. viii. 58, concerning which there cannot be a doubt, must be carefully weighed. In the first place it need not be, grammatically considered, more than the simple statement as given in our translation, that the Lord was Jesus of Nazareth; that is, "I am" (the one you are seeking) Jesus of Nazareth. Two examples of this usage will make this evident. When the disciples were crossing the sea of Galilee by night, and "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea," they, when they saw Him, "were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I (literally, 'I am'); be not afraid." (Matthew xiv. 25-27.) So also in John ix. we read concerning the blind man, that "some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am (he)." (v. 9.) These two cases will suffice to show that in the ordinary forms of speech "I am" does not of necessity contain more than an affirmation of identity. On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that the Spirit of God

has caused this idiomatic language to be recorded three times in John xviii. 5-8; and that it is expressly stated that "as soon then as He had said unto them, I am (he), they went backward, and fell to the ground." Construing this in the light of the presentation of Christ in this gospel as the eternal Word and as the eternal Son, it does seem as if there might be the flashing out of His divine glory and power through these words on the minds of His enemies, which for the moment awed them, drove them backward, and caused them in their terror to fall prostrate on the ground. That He was the "I am," the self-existent One, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, we all know: the only question is whether the Lord meant to affirm this by the words we have examined. However this may be, it is beyond contradiction, that He manifested His divine character in this scene, and that even His enemies were made to feel that they had to do with One who was above and more than man. Unconsciously they testified that He whom they were with wicked hands about to take (only with His permission) was no less than the One whom they professed to know as their God.

II.

MATTHEW XXI. 23-46

It is most instructive to notice the different ways in which the Lord dealt with the various classes with whom He came into contact. In this scripture His opponents are the chief priests and elders, and these latter appear to have been of the sect of the Pharisees. (v. 45.) Their attempt was evidently to discredit the Lord with the people by the insinuation that He was an

unrecognized teacher and acting without authority, whether human or divine. The Lord in His reply is seen as Divine Wisdom (acting as light) confuting the folly of men's thoughts and reasonings, and thus exposing their moral condition. First, He forced His adversaries to confess that they could not tell whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men; and yet, as we learn elsewhere, they had rejected the counsel of God "as to" themselves, and had refused John's baptism. (Luke vii. 30.) These blind leaders of the blind had taken upon themselves to reject the Lord's forerunner, and now, in the presence of their Divine Interrogator, they are condemned out of their own mouth. In the following parable the Lord proceeds a step further. Still probing their hearts, He asks, Which of the two sons did the will of his father, the one who at first said, in answer to the command, "Go work to-day in my vineyard," "I will not; but afterward he repented, and went"; or the one who responded, "I go, sir: and went not?" Utterly ignorant of their moral state, they replied, "The first." Again they had condemned themselves, for the publicans and harlots, on the preaching of John, repented, whereas these men, while professing to walk in obedience to the law, never took one single step in the path it enjoined. Another parable is given, containing a short summary of Jewish history until the advent of Christ; and the culmination of the sin of the nation is depicted in the conduct of those existing when Christ was among them: "When the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him."

(*vn.* 38, 39.) The chief priests and Pharisees must themselves make once again the application; and hence the Lord put the question, "When therefore the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" In their answer they pronounced their own judgment, as the Lord proceeded to say, after reminding them of a solemn prediction of His own exaltation, and of their conduct in regard to Himself, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Moreover He warned them of the certain consequences of their opposition, and of the swift and destructive judgment which would finally be their portion.

To sum up, these wretched men, seen to be helpless and ignorant when handled by Him who is Divine Wisdom, were made to confess the folly of their unbelief, the wickedness of their conduct, and also to declare the character of their own righteous judgment. What a striking foreshadowing of what will take place before the great white throne, where every one will be self-condemned and self-judged! But their eyes were at length opened; for when they had heard the Lord's parables, "they perceived that He spake of them." And what was the effect? Only further and more pronounced enmity. "They sought to lay hands on Him," on the One who had convicted them of their guilt: and they were only restrained from the attempt by fear of the people. Such is the incurable heart of man: the carnal mind is enmity against God, and the fact is strikingly revealed in this wonderful narrative.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

ACTS ix.

IN one sense Saul of Tarsus is the first convert presented to us in the Scripture. Souls were saved on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards; and they were added to the company of believers, who had now been formed into the house of God by the descent of the Holy Ghost. But beyond the fact no particulars are given—whether of their exercises of soul or of the method of their great change, save that it was through the testimony rendered by the apostles to the resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God of the Jesus who had been crucified in their midst. The testimony, moreover, was addressed, up till the death of Stephen, rather to the Jewish people, the nation, than to individuals. As Peter declared before the council, when charged, together with John, with filling Jerusalem with his doctrine concerning Christ, “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel [that is, the nation], and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts v. 31, see also chap. iii. 19, 21.)

From Pentecost until the death of Stephen, the long-suffering of God waited on His ancient people, in answer to the Lord's prayer on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” But when they rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, through the apostles, even as they had refused the

testimony of Christ, and slew Stephen, God broke off His dealings in grace with the Jewish nation, and began to unfold the secret of His eternal counsels, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Ephes. iii. 5.) On the day of Pentecost the church was formed, though presented in the narrative as the house of God. The truth of the body of Christ was not yet revealed, albeit every believer who received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was thereby united to Christ, and thus became a member of His body, of which He as glorified was Head. The knowledge of this was not yet communicated. As soon however as Stephen had been stoned, God began to disclose His eternal counsels as to the church, and the vessel chosen to proclaim them was Saul of Tarsus. Accordingly he is first introduced in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen. "The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

To understand the grace displayed in the conversion of Saul it is necessary to consider his previous character. Materials are abundantly supplied wherewith to instruct ourselves on this point. As we gather from Phil. iii., he had everything to exalt him as a man in this world, whether derived from birth, education, religion, or moral character. In his own words, he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is

in the law, blameless." (Phil. iii. 5, 6; see also Acts xxii. 3; xxvi. 4, 5, etc.) He was in truth a model man according to the natural judgment, one who would enjoy the respect and esteem of those amongst whom he lived and moved, and one at the same time on whom it would be thought, by all who did not know that the carnal mind was enmity against God, the favour of heaven rested in a special degree. So contrary are the thoughts of men to the thoughts of God!

It was this very man, Saul of Tarsus, who was the champion of Judaism, yea, of Satan, against Christ. A zealot in the Jews' religion, he was the foremost in the manifestation of bitter hostility to Christ and to His followers. "Young man" though he was when Stephen was being stoned, he stood calmly by, "assisting" at his death, endorsing in his wicked zeal that outburst of religious frenzy which, setting aside all legal forms, slaked its thirst in the martyr's blood. He would seem to have been a member of the Jewish council, before which all such heretics were tried and sentenced; for he said, when before Agrippa, "When they were put to death, I gave my voice [vote] against them." Commending himself thus to the Jewish authorities by his energy and zeal, he received authority from the chief priests to act against the saints in Jerusalem, and he shut up many of them in prison; and, to quote his own language, "I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts xxvi. 10, 11.) This will explain the statement in chapter viii. 3, that

Saul "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison"; and again, that he breathed "out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (ix. 1.)

Such was Saul, one whose whole soul was in his deadly work; a man of resolute and unbending will, with all his natural energies urging him on in his mission of relentless persecution of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, determined as he was to blot out their, and their Master's, name from the face of the earth. His own moral estimate of his doings in these days is found in 1 Timothy. He says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"; and further he tells us that he was the "chief" of sinners. Once more he writes, in 1 Cor. xv., I "am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." There cannot therefore be any misconception of the moral condition of Saul before conversion; for while it must not be forgotten that the same possibilities of evil lie in every heart, and that the flesh in all is utterly corrupt, it is yet true that there are degrees in the exhibition of hostility to Christ, and in this no one ever surpassed that shown by Saul of Tarsus.

His conversion may now be considered. The very atmosphere in which he lived was, as already seen, that of inveterate enmity against Christ and His people. Outwardly blameless in walk, punctilious in his

attention to the ritual of the law, he cherished in his heart the bitterest feelings of revenge against those who had accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and Christ. Thus actuated, he obtained letters "to Damascus to the synagogues" from the high priest, "that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." He was consequently in the full career of his determined opposition to Christ as he journeyed to Damascus. As far as revealed there had not been a single misgiving as to his course; or if it be supposed that conscience had been uneasy from what is said in verse 5,* he had attempted to silence the inward monitor by a more resolute pursuit of his object. It is certain, in any case, that he had never sought Christ.

This brings out the distinguishing feature of Saul's conversion. "Light from heaven," neither prayed for nor sought, suddenly shone round about him, "and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Herein the whole character of grace is displayed; for, just as when the Lord was here on earth He said that the Son of man was come to seek and to save that which was lost, so it still abides true that in the gospel God is seeking sinners. The Father seeketh such, as the Lord also said, to worship Him. Saul was therefore taken up as a pattern convert, a pattern convert of the day of grace, even as he afterwards wrote, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all ['the whole'] longsuffering, for a pattern to

* These words, if omitted here, are unquestioned in chap. xxvi. 14.

them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 16.) That is, as we understand this language, our blessed Lord exhibited towards Saul of Tarsus, as the chief of sinners, the whole of His longsuffering, that His heart of grace might be known in all future ages, and that the worst of sinners, as men speak, might be encouraged to put their trust in Him. Saul is thus lifted up before the eyes of men as an illustration of the Lord's ways of grace with poor sinners. The Lord went after Saul and sought until He found him, and when He had found him He laid him on His shoulders rejoicing.

It will be instructive, before proceeding further, to observe the divine order unfolded in verses 3-5. The first thing noted is that light from heaven shone round about Saul. It is ever so in conversion. Until light from heaven enters, the soul is in complete darkness; and Paul himself afterwards wrote, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) This light, as explained in connection with this scripture, is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. (v. 4.) In the case of Saul, the light streamed in upon him from the actual glory of Christ, who had gone forth to seek this chief of sinners; now it is brought to souls by the word of the gospel. If received, it exposes their whole condition (for that which maketh everything manifest if light), and the consequence is that they are convicted of sin. So here, following upon the shining of the light, which caused Saul to fall to the earth, a voice came to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul had thought that, in persecuting and killing the

saints, he was doing God service (See John xvi. 2); and now he was convicted of persecuting Him who revealed Himself as the Lord of glory.* Next we have the presentation of Christ to the convicted soul. "Who art Thou, Lord?" Saul cried in his bewilderment and amazement; "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," was the calm, solemn, and startling response.

The first stage of the work of grace in Saul's soul was completed. The effect of the presentation of Jesus in glory to his soul, and as the One against whom he had dared to lift up his hands in his fanatical zeal, was to subdue his proud and rebellious heart, to humble him at the feet of Jesus, and to compel him to cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"† Saul was now, if not yet in the liberty of grace, converted. From a bitter and determined enemy he had been changed into a submissive captive. Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had hated with all the energy of his strong and religious nature, was now accepted as his Lord. He had been drawn to the feet of Jesus, and was finding it to be the place of all blessing. He has yet much to learn; and He who had taken him in hand will provide the instruction. For the present the Lord bade Saul to arise and go into the city, adding, "And it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Altogether it is a blessed picture of grace, one much to be pondered both by evangelists and also by anxious souls.

* The full significance of these words, as containing the truth that believers are united to Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost, is left for consideration at another opportunity.

† These words, if without authority here, are given in chapter xxii. 10.

THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD, THE CANDLESTICK, &c.

EXODUS xxv.

IN the last lecture we touched upon the table of shew-bread and the candlestick. In tracing out the details connected with them we must refer to other scriptures. In this chapter we have only the description of the holy vessels, and the intimation of God's first and great thought in their construction; when we come to the ordering of them we learn many instructive details. As to the table, it was of the same materials as the ark—shittim-wood and gold; another representation to us of the person of Christ. It had to support, as we have seen, twelve loaves. This was for God's eye, for the table was *before the Lord*. (Lev xxiv. 6.) They were consequently at first set in perfect order by Moses, the mediator, and afterwards were to be ordered by Aaron, the priest, continually. Pure frankincense was put upon them, and this was burnt as a sweet savour to the Lord. It represents that perfection in Christ which none but God could delight in and appreciate, but it was put upon the loaves—His people—for a memorial. In the eye of God they are ever seen as in those perfections. The word "shewbread" means bread of manifestation, or setting forth. Israel is the people in whom the Lord will display Himself in government upon the earth. They may have completely broken down and be "scattered and peeled," but before the Lord they are ever maintained in the order of the pure table, according to

God's design in its construction and use, by the great Priest. They are thus seen by the Lord with the memorial upon them of the perfection of Christ. Faith thus reckons as in Acts xxvi. 7; James i. 1. All was ordered upon the Sabbath-day, and was thus connected with rest for man upon this earth, because all was according to the mind of God in perfect order, seen in the perfections of Christ and secured by Him as Priest. The principle of this is true for the Church in its responsible character, though it has failed in this. It is the vessel of heavenly administration, in which the principalities and powers in heavenly places learn the manifold wisdom of God. The holy city Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God shews us that whatever may have been the breakdown, God's design in the assembly will in no wise fail, and that in and from it shall be manifested the fulness of heavenly blessing and glory. There were twelve loaves to represent Israel, but the unity of the assembly is represented by the one loaf in which Christians participate. Whatever the broken state of things may be, the whole assembly of the saints is for faith contemplated in the one loaf, though all are not actually in the fellowship of that one loaf. Faith sees that all is secured in the Head on high.

There is a second idea in the shew-bread. Aaron and his sons ate it in the holy place. The food of God's table belongs to the whole priestly family. All Christians are priests, and partakers of the Lord's table, but we have no figure of the broken loaf in the shewbread. It would be rather Christ as the bread come down from heaven. Only we have to remember *now* that we must feed upon Him in death in order to

have any part in the living bread. The side of the table of shewbread manward is that it was the vessel of the administration of God's bounty through Israel for the earth. In John vi. we see how Christ's ministry in feeding the multitude by means of the twelve apostles is connected with the truth of the Bread come down from heaven to give life to the world. The Church feeds on Christ, and it is only as we feed upon Christ that we can minister Christ. We cannot really communicate to others unless we have appropriated Christ ourselves. The heavenly city will be the vessel of the ministry of a heavenly Christ, but in it is the Tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits. The saints of the assembly are formed in what is of Christ through feeding upon Him. Israel will be the vessel of ministry upon the earth, but they will have a lesson-book in the heavenly saints, by which they also will learn Christ. Thus the earth will be ministered to from heaven, the heavenly saints then occupying the place of Aaron and his sons, the priestly family, who have fed upon Christ.

The candlestick was entirely of gold; signifying what was wholly divine—the divine nature, for God is necessarily light. Light is not exactly display or manifestation, but it is what makes manifest. (Eph. v. 13.) It represents to us what in itself is spiritually perfect, there is no human element here. We are speaking of what light is in itself, its intrinsic character. Israel should have reflected this light, as having the presence of Jehovah among them, and His word and Spirit with them; but when the true Light came into the world, it only shone in a darkness which comprehended it not; yet Israel will arise and shine for God in the earth,

when the vail is taken away from their heart, and the glory of the Lord arises upon them. *Now* it is said of believers, Ye are "light in the Lord," not merely that ye have light, but ye *are* light. No doubt it manifests the true character of the unfruitful works of darkness, but it has its own fruit in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Hence, when the lighting of the lamps is spoken of (Numbers viii. 1, 4) nothing is said of its making anything manifest. It is to shine in its own intrinsic beauty, and immediately the beautiful work of the candlestick, from which the light shone, is set forth—of beaten gold, with its flowers and knops—the vessel for the shining forth of the light in its spiritual perfection by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is what is true in Christ and in us. The new Jerusalem is a vessel of light. It has the glory of God, and her shining is like to a stone most precious as a jasper and a sardine stone. The glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. Nothing of natural light is needed there, neither sun nor moon, nor was there in the tabernacle any other light than this candlestick of pure gold. We have seen that believers are light in the Lord, and that the character of the light is divine, hence it must shine in the characteristics of the divine nature, and God is love as well as light. Grace and truth came in Jesus Christ, and the love of God is perfected in one who keeps His word, because the word is the revelation of what Christ is to the soul. The Church was set to be the vessel of this light (Rev. ii. iii.), but the light waned when it left its first love, and the removal of the candlestick is at once threatened. It is beautiful to see, in chapter xxii. 17, how the love is revived. It

is by a renewed apprehension of the person of Christ. She arises, as it were (Eph. v. 14), from among the dead, and Christ shines upon her.

We have so far been looking at what was in the tabernacle, and this is important for us, because God puts it first. We have seen that it is connected with the purpose of God to manifest Himself in and by man. Christ is the centre of this purpose. All is to be sustained and ordered by Him in the dispensation of the fulness of times, but others, redeemed men, are associated with Him in it. Hence, when He began His public ministry, He called the twelve to be with Him in it. Everything also will shine in the light of God Himself—God as light and love—and this by the power of the Spirit. We now come to the tabernacle itself. It is, as we have said, a figure of the universe, and it is to be a universe of bliss, because it will be filled with the fulness of God, and Christ is that fulness. When we look at the failure of everything that has been entrusted to the hands of men, it would be difficult for us to understand how all that is shadowed in these figures is to be accomplished, did we not see that in Christ is the Yea and Amen of every promise of God, and for glory to God through us. The first thought in the tabernacle is that it is the dwelling-place of God; secondly, it is the place of approach for men. Both these aspects are verified in Christ.

There were four coverings to the tabernacle, but divided into two and two. Two formed the tabernacle itself, the other two were simply coverings. The inner one of the first two was composed of ten curtains of fine-twined linen, and worked into these were blue, purple, scarlet, and cherubim. This is called in our

translation (xxvi. 1) "the tabernacle," but the Hebrew word means "the dwelling-place" or "habitation." It is a cognate word to "the shekinah," the name given to the cloud in which Jehovah dwelt. These linen curtains figured pre-eminently the dwelling-place of God. They represent to us the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus ("The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us"); but in connection with the heavenly, the royal, and the earthly glories which attach to Him. Besides these, the judicial authority of the throne of God centres in Him for making good these glories. All judgment is committed to the Son, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The veil afterwards described, was of the same material as these curtains, and it is stated (Heb. x. 20) that it is His flesh. These curtains could not be seen outside. It was the privilege of the priestly family to go inside and behold these glories. God has been manifested in flesh, but justified in Spirit. If we had lived when Jesus was upon earth we should not have justified, that is, rightly judged about, the manifestation of God in that lowly Man; we should not have known Him as out of heaven, or that He was a King, much less that God was there, save by spiritual discernment (John i. 33); and though in these figures we have no shadowing forth of what He was with the Father, yet it was in this manner alone that the apostles could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

Over these linen curtains were eleven curtains of goat's hair. These are called "the tent." (xxvi. 7.) Our translation says "covering," but it is more accurately "a tent upon the habitation." (See verse 12, and xl. 19.) It is the outer aspect of the dwelling-place of

God, as the tabernacle was the inner. These curtains gave to the tabernacle the designation of "the tabernacle of the congregation," or, more correctly, "the tent of appointed meeting." Its aspect therefore is towards the people. A prophet's garment was made of hair, and the prophetic office was to communicate the mind of God. This was true in Christ—the Word—for He *was* what He spoke. This tent was also called the tabernacle of witness or testimony. If we look inside, God was there; outside, it was a holy testimony of God to those who assembled. Another thing marked the garb of a prophet—separation to God whose mind he communicated. (Mark i. 1-6.) So Christ was ever holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. It is marvellous grace that we should have the testimony of God in a world of sin, but it must necessarily be in separation from it. It centres in Christ, for He not only bears witness, but is the subject of all testimony. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Thus in the "tent" we have two leading thoughts, it is the place of assembly where Christ declares the mind of God; and this is necessarily in separation from the world.

The other two curtains were simply coverings. They were not, so to speak, part and parcel of the tabernacle itself. They represent to us two characters seen in Christ, and here again we have the outer and the inner. The ram was the victim of consecration. Hence in the covering of rams' skins died red we have figured the perfect devotedness of one entirely consecrated to God. In the badgers' skins we have had that which repelled everything that would have interfered with that consecration. Outside things never affected the inward

devotedness. He moved in the midst of a world of evil untouched by it; Himself the testimony of sovereign love, giving Himself in love *for* men, but as a sacrifice of sweet savour *to* God. We see in these coverings the two characters which become the dwelling-place of God,—consecration and holy vigilance. We see these also in the new Jerusalem. His servants serve Him, and nothing that defiles can enter. There the very purity of the city is repellent of all evil. Here we need the exhortation “Be vigilant.” What a contrast to Christ do we see in His disciples, when man’s hour and the power of darkness came upon Him in Gethsemane. He prays while the disciples sleep. Peter smites with the sword, when He says, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” All is perfect there. He is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

T. H. R.

JANNES AND JAMBRES.

WE are now come to a part of the epistle which needs great attention, for “perilous times” are precisely those in which we are living; the danger is that of treating things as though we were *not* living in times of great difficulty, that is, of walking as though there was nothing particularly diabolical in the atmosphere.

The *last* days are the very last in the story of Christendom, and the expression is a different one to that in 1 Timothy iv. 1. Here all the darkest passions of men are indulged under a name of Christian civilization, the love of self and of pleasure being at the root of every action. It is what is commonly called *utilitarianism*,

for in these last days people call evil things by fine names. "This is æsthetic," they say.

What a terrible picture of man, unchanged by the outward varnish of Christianity—of that same incorrigible man whose lusts and crimes were developed under Gentile mythology and paganism, and who now appears again in his true colours, though outwardly "Christianized!" What, the same passions and vices in Europe now as when men were said to be under the influence of Pan, Bacchus, or Venus? The same; man has changed his collection of idols, but *he* is the same! Lost, degraded, a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, the terrible features are here set before us, beginning with "lovers of self" and "lovers of money." It is a terrible and divinely-drawn picture of the age, and we all feel, alas! how deeply we are influenced by it.

But we are called to bear witness to a power that has brought us out of it, and however much we have failed let us not sacrifice the position. There is a call to turn away from those who, in the state mentioned in the first verses, have a form of piety but deny its power; and now comes a peculiar operation of evil, and a special snare to those who shall have dared to make a stand for the Lord and for His truth in the midst of modern Christendom. The enemy has tried, is trying, and will try to *imitate* that power of God which he cannot withstand, and to lead away souls by what may seem to be the truth.

The sixth and seventh verses show us the material which he has to work upon, and his mode of working; it is a faithful picture of the state of things. The "silly women" are not necessarily female in a literal sense, but signify those persons who are bereft of true

manly vigour and judgment in the things of God; they are morally feminine, deficient in the virtue indicated by Paul when he says to the Corinthians, "Quit you like men." (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) I said that the picture here is, alas! a faithful one; for these *non-masculine* men abound in the present day. Insidious teachers, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" describes the situation. Never was there such a day for religious books, sermons, and teaching; but "the truth" is unknown, and the Lord Jesus is outside knocking still at the door, unheard by the mass. The truth of Christianity, and of the present position of Christ in glory, is refused, and though many "truths" may be taught, and novelties sought after, yet the learners are as far from it as ever.

Having this clearly before us, it is well to see how the enemy is acting, and how his work shall end. The Holy Spirit takes up the two Egyptian professors of magic as examples of those who are now misleading souls; and the great point is that they *withstood* Moses, the man of God, who was standing for Him before Pharaoh and the whole array of Egyptian gods. These two men represented the power of darkness at a very critical period, and their system was that of imitating divine power. Cheating, trying to make black appear white, crafty play of words,* have always been the method of Satan; but here we have him boldly imitating the power of God, and making a decided stand against divine might and intervention as seen in Moses. Thus the truth is resisted in Christendom, the

* Notice Ephesians iv. 14, the dice-playing method of cheating souls. Sleight of hand is in vogue, though people pretend not to believe in Mercury, &c.

enemy is making his last efforts to counteract and destroy the feeble but true testimony to the blessed Lord and to the power of His name. It is an opposition of a very peculiar kind, and any one who has met with it must confess that he has been met by a power and ingenuity that are superhuman, and which can come but from one source.

What then should a faithful Christian do?—one who has turned away from what we saw in verse 5, and who begins to feel the great power of the arch-impostor. Give up? Never! but persevere with steady purpose and constant prayer, holding to the word of God and to the blessed Lord in glory. Thus did Paul, as we shall see (D.V.) in examining the power by which he acted and was kept through all his perilous service. Thus he desired for Timothy, and we may well say for us too, weak though we be.

A moment shall come when the representatives of this audacious imitation shall be suddenly checked and stopped, and their folly manifested to all, as was that of Jannes and Jambres. They were allowed by God to keep pace with each step of Moses, till the very simplest fact showed that their power had come to the full length of its tether, and *they could not go on*. They could no more acquire life-giving power than Simon Magus could buy that of the blessed Spirit.

So it shall be in the present struggle—the enemy will be stopped. God may allow him to go up to the line which He has drawn, but *no further*.

It cheers and consoles the heart of every faithful saint to think that the power of Christ by the Spirit is infinitely above that of Satan, and that this very power is for the feeblest believer. The limit is fast approach-

ing, and opposition to God shall end in certain exposure; in the meantime may the God of all grace give to His own to be walking with Him, and persevering, in patience and dependence, in that path which shall end in glory and honour to the blessed Lord who protects and strengthens them all through the conflict.

E. L. B.

"REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

LORD JESUS, we would think of Thee,
 And on Thy sorrow dwell
 When prostrate in Gethsemane,
 (Who can those sorrows tell?)
 When Thou didst to the Father's ear
 Tell forth Thine agony;
 When Thou didst say, with holy fear,
 "Let this cup pass from me."

Lord Jesus, we would think of Thee,
 Thine agony behold,
 Uplifted on the shameful tree,
 Where billows o'er Thee rolled;
 For us made sin, Thou did'st endure
 The whole of wrath divine,
 There for Thy saints Thou didst secure
 A place with Thee to shine.

Lord Jesus, we would think of Thee,
 Now seated on the throne,
 God glorified—Thy people free—
 The praise be Thine alone.
 Thy death, Lord Jesus, we record,
 While hearts within us burn;
 We worship Thee with one accord,
 And wait Thy sure return.

G. W. F.

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

TURNING away from angels, and from all that marked man as having to do with God on the ground of law, we come to the Son. Here we touch stability, and Christians are on this ground with God. Christ is put before us to be considered in two aspects, as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. As Apostle He is the Sent One, as High Priest He maintains our association with Himself in heavenly blessings, while we are wandering here and subject to infirmity. Moses represented Him as Apostle, Aaron as High Priest—though He is not of Aaron's order, thus maintaining His *superiority* to, not His *succession* from, Aaron. He is "after the order of Melchisedec." As Apostle, Moses was sent to lead them out, and to bring them in. (Exodus iii. 8, 10, 12.) He failed, but Christ does both, and in the meantime as High Priest He has gone in to maintain us now in association with our true place of blessing, and in all the value of the blood, as God estimates it, until we are put into actual possession, by His coming again. (Heb. ix. 18-x. 37.)

If, then, we are called to consider Him as Apostle, it is as sent to lead out and to bring in. Jews and Gentiles, through faith, are now being led by the Lord out of that system connected with law, which was once set up of God on the earth, into heavenly associations with Himself, and these are for eternity. I take it that before actually in them, "body, soul, and spirit" (as we shall be when He comes), faith is to get the benefit of them even now.

In the house of God, firstly angels, then Moses and Joshua, are displaced to make room for the Son. In the house Moses was not a son, but a servant. Hence stability could not be connected with that order of things, because "the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever." All that system passes away to give place to Christ, and to those He brings into this new place. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." It is as having to do with "the Apostle of our profession" that faith drinks into the fulness of the heavenly blessing to which it has come. (See chap. xii. 22-25.) I have come to these things in the company of the Son. He unfolds them, and I am exhorted not to turn away from Him that speaketh now from heaven. All that is connected with the Son is for eternity, hence the immense value of Christianity, as compared with anything that God has ever before made known for the blessing of man. God has purposed it from the beginning, and on the mount of Transfiguration He declares it. Moses and the law disappear, to leave Christ, *and man with Him*, on the ground of grace alone. (Matt. xvii. 1-8.)

Faith is made much of in the epistle to the Hebrews, and its need for us is insisted on. Unbelief was the hindrance to the entering in under Moses, and of that the writer speaks in chapter iii. All was ready for them on God's part. So also is it now. "*They* could not enter in because of unbelief." *We* are exhorted also, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Then it was entrance upon a state which was

only temporal, now it is for eternity. Then it was for earth, now it is for heaven. What hinders any of us entering on eternal things? Faith is lacking. Unbelief finds a home in our hearts. We cling to what is visible, but not ours (see Luke xvi. 11, 12), and what we cannot retain, and we refuse what is "our own," and what will stand for ever, though we know that all here shall vanish away. God is going "yet once more" to shake everything, in order "that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

Failure was connected with all until the Son came. Angels ministered to man, but even angels He could charge with "folly." (Job iv. 18.) Moses did not lead them "in," for he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Joshua did not give them "rest," for long after we read of "another day." (Psalm xcv.) But now the Son is come, and entrance, stability, and rest, for eternity, are ours (I mean, are the portion of *all* believers) in association with Christ in heavenly blessing. But this portion—REST—is not only to be enjoyed in the individual soul for ever, God is also going to display it on earth. "There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God"; that is, it shall be displayed on earth in actuality. The sabbath is for the earth. (Gen. ii. 3.) Meanwhile, we are led into it *before* its display, by Him who has gone in. Christ leads the willing soul now into what will only be fully known and enjoyed in heaven. It is an overflowing cup. How can Christ do this? He can do it, for He touches both God and man in being the "Brightness of glory," and the "Purger of sins." He is the beginning and end of God's ways. He is greater than the angels, for He is the Son; greater than Moses, for He has power to lead in;

greater than Joshua, for He ministers *rest*. GOD RESTS IN CHRIST, DISPLAYED AS MAN IN GLORY. This is the key to all. He has passed through the heavens up to the highest point, and we, as called to heaven, "consider Him" saluted "High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec." It is not with us as it was with the Old Testament prophets. When they had received a communication from God, and spoken it, they had to learn that the things of which they had spoken by the Holy Ghost were not for themselves. But with us we get the enjoyment of them first, and, individually, before we can speak of them. We can only learn our present portion in heaven from Him; that is, from the company of the heavenly Christ, who is in it. "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you," refers, I believe, to Christ's *present* portion there as Man.

But we are also called by the Spirit to consider Him as "the High Priest of our profession." We are thus regarded as a people subject to infirmities while on the earth and yet belonging to heaven. In this He is no successor to Aaron; He is superior. Those priests were not allowed to continue "by reason of death." He was saluted of God, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." He has gone into that new scene, "in the power of an endless life," and gone in "*for us*." There is nothing unstable there. His *work* is done for God and for us; He hath appeared *once* "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." His priesthood is unailing. He "hath an *unchangeable* priesthood." He liveth for evermore to maintain the saints, though in all their "infirmities," in the full value of His own work before God. His perfection as

our Priest is the point (not our imperfections to need Him) until we are with Him in His own scene and circumstances.

It is as a believer that, when I am considering Him as "the Apostle and High Priest" of my profession, I am *affected by Him*. Hence the value of being thus occupied, for it is with what is stable. A work is then going on within, and things which cannot be shaken are assuming a tangible form (so to say) in the soul. Eternal things are becoming more and more its enjoyed portion. In these we can rest. This is what I understand the apostle refers to when he says, "Let us go on unto perfection." The soul cannot rest short of what is perfect. In Christ I have it, for all is perfect that He touches. He has touched *me*, the believer can say, and by that touch "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In the meantime there is a word to us, for daily faith is necessary in us, and it is this, "To-day if YE will hear His voice, [He speaks *now* from heaven] harden not YOUR hearts." H. C. A.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

HEBREWS ix. 28.

Two things have to be borne in mind in considering this passage; first, that it applies to Christians; and, secondly, that it is the appearing, as indeed is plainly stated, and not the coming of Christ, as for example in 1 Thess. iv., to which the apostle refers. Both of these

points demand a few words of explanation. As to the application of the scripture, it is very evident that those—the “many”—whose sins Christ was once offered to bear, are those who are described as looking for Him. The question put is, Whether they might not be the Jewish remnant after the rapture of the church? The answer is, That while the saints of a coming age may not be wholly excluded, the appearing of Christ the second time without sin unto salvation could not, in the connection of these words, apply to any but Christians. When Christ first appeared He had to do with sin (*v.* 26), and in His death He was the Substitute for His people, bearing their sins; when He appears the second time it will be “apart” from sin, having nothing more to do with it, because every question concerning it was taken up and settled once and for ever on the cross. He will therefore appear the second time “without sin” for the salvation of His people—“salvation” being here used in its full and complete sense, as including all that has been secured for us by the death and resurrection of Christ. If it be thought, however, that all Christians are not looking for Christ, the answer is, that it is a characteristic description. Many believers may have lost the expectation of the appearing; but they are on the ground of waiting for His return, and the Spirit of God thus speaks of all as in this attitude. Concerning the second point, it should be always remembered that the appearing of Christ is the goal of the Christian whenever he is looked at as under responsibility, or indeed as a pilgrim journeying on through the wilderness to his eternal rest, as in this epistle. The hope of the church is the coming of Christ to receive

His people (1 Thess. iv.); but whenever believers are seen in any aspect of responsibility the appearing of Christ in glory with His saints is the "blessed hope," for then the full issue of our course through this world will be displayed, when the Lord "shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10; see also Colossians iii. 4, 1 Tim. vi. 14, Titus ii. 13, 1 Peter i. 7, etc., etc.)

II.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 25-27.

IN the interpretation of scriptures referring to the millennial period, it has sometimes been hastily assumed that the condition and status of saints then will be the same as in the case of the Old Testament believers. That the saints of the church period differ from those who went before and those who follow after is clearly taught in the word of God; but it by no means follows that those who will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of Christ on earth will be exactly in the same position as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, or David. There are two things which characterise saints now, which will not be known, as far as revealed, in the future, even as they were not known in the past, namely, heavenly relationship and union with Christ. At the same time, while they will be both alike in this respect, in not sharing in these special privileges of the day of grace, they may yet differ, the one from the other, in their special characteristics. It is needful to bear this in mind in reading the scripture at the head of this "note." The question then is, What is the force of the words, "I will put My Spirit within you"? Let it be remembered,

first of all, that our Lord most probably referred to this scripture in His conversation with Nicodemus. "Water" and "the Spirit" are used in it, and in the same order as in this passage. Thus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We are justified therefore in concluding that Ezekiel prophesies that when Israel are gathered and restored to their land (*v.* 24) they will be born again through the Word (the water) and by the Spirit, and will consequently possess a new nature. This may well be included in the words, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (*v.* 26.) The question however is, whether the new birth includes all that is here promised. The words are certainly very strong, and it has been thought by some that the change wrought is so great that the flesh is altogether eliminated. It must not be overlooked, in considering this point, that Ezekiel is not speaking of all the millennial saints, nor of all Israel throughout the whole period of the millennial kingdom, but only of the remnant brought back at the period of the introduction of Messiah's reign. Doubtless the remnant in the land before the regathering of Israel will share in this blessing (see Isaiah liv. 13; lx. 21); but nothing of the kind is said of the descendants, whether of the former or of the latter. Confining our attention then to those we have specified, and admitting to the full the strength of the language employed, we doubt whether the thought alluded to has a sufficient foundation in this prophecy. At the most, without further evidence from scripture, it can only be a conjecture. It may be

that Isaiah lxx. 17-25 has a bearing on the subject; if so, it is not a little remarkable that there should be mention, in the midst of a wonderful description of the blessedness of that day, of a sinner of a hundred years old being accursed. Be this as it may, the magnitude of the change wrought in restored Israel cannot be for one moment doubted, and in addition to this, all the influences of the scene, the heavens and the earth being morally new (Isaiah lxx. 17), and Christ reigning in person, will be altogether in favour of His people. The wind will be no longer contrary, as when His disciples were toiling in rowing across Gennesaret, and hence they will have every possible incitement and encouragement to tread with constant steps in the path of holy subjection and obedience to the laws and statutes of their God. Moreover, Jehovah will put His law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts. He will be their God, and they will be His people. (Jer. xxxi. 33.) Lastly, as before indicated, God will put His Spirit "within them." That this does not go so far as the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, seems clear from the fact that the revelation of the Father is confined to the present period, and that consequently the Spirit of adoption will not be possessed, still it would seem to teach that the Spirit will then work more mightily in the hearts of God's people than in any dispensation previous to the church, and that He will be their all-sufficient power to enable them to walk in God's statutes, to keep His judgments and to do them. (v. 27.) More than this could scarcely be said; but the whole subject may be commended to the careful study of the reader.

LEARNING DELIVERANCE.

ACTS ix. 8-19.

ALTHOUGH Saul had been subdued at the feet of Jesus glorified, the Jesus of Nazareth whom he had so relentlessly persecuted, he had yet much to learn before he could understand his new relationships. The rebel had been conquered by grace, and he was now a willing captive, having surrendered himself to the will of his Lord. A revolution indeed had been wrought in his soul by the mighty power of God, but it was a revolution which filled him with amazement, if not with terror. (*v.* 7.) In response to his enquiry as to what the Lord would have him to do, he received the command, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." He must wait for further instruction and for more deepened exercises before he could be brought into the enjoyment of peace and deliverance. The one who was to be a chosen vessel for the ministration of the truth of God, must learn from his own experiences the difficulties of souls in their passage out of darkness into light.

The condition of Saul at this moment is described with the utmost minuteness. In obedience to the command he had received, he "arose from the earth," but "when his eyes were opened, he saw no man." As he explained in after days, he "could not see for the glory of that light," which had shone round about him, and into his soul, from heaven. It was, without doubt, literal blindness, but a blindness which expressed

at that moment the state of his soul. Until he had been encountered by his glorified Lord he thought he saw clearly, for he had thrown himself into the path of persecution with all the energy of his resolute will, and was convinced that he was doing God service in hunting out the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Now everything was changed; the light which he deemed he possessed had proved itself to be utter darkness, and hence he could see nothing. Moreover, he was helpless, and dependent upon his own servants for assistance: "they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus." The man whose name struck fear into the hearts of timid disciples arrived at his destination as helpless as a babe!

One more particular is given, and that the most significant of all, and one therefore which will demand especial consideration. "He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." Not only did darkness still reign in his soul, but he found no sustenance nor refreshment. As will be perceived, we take the outward circumstances of Saul as representing his inward condition; and it may be said at once, to afford the reader the clue to this part of the subject, that, in our view of the case, Saul was learning deliverance during those three eventful days. It is to our loss to conclude that deliverance cannot be known till after conversion. That this is the order generally is freely conceded; but where there is deep and heart-searching exercise in connection with the entrance of light into the soul, where there is real and profound repentance towards God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, there is often the discovery of

the nature of the flesh as well as the detection of guilt. When this is the case, peace with God and deliverance may be reached at the same time.

Assuming then that it was so with Saul, we are justified in putting the experimental process of Romans vii. into this period of three days; and we may accordingly enquire briefly, What were the lessons he then learned? Trusting that the reader will carefully ponder Romans vii., we will confine ourselves to the main points of the chapter. The case supposed is that of one under law, having a new nature (for he delights in the law of God after the inward man), but not knowing redemption. First sin is brought to light, and into activity, by the application of the law; and accordingly he says, "The commandment, which [was ordained] to life, I found to be unto death." (*vv.* 7-10.) Next, after affirming that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good, the question is put, "Was then that which is good made death unto me?" The answer is, "God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." In other words, the true nature of the flesh was thereby discovered and detected.

This discovery brought out the absolute contrariety between the flesh and the one who delighted in the law of God after the inward man. Spite of all his desires, efforts, and struggles he was compelled to admit that, if the law was spiritual, he was "carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that

do I." (*vv.* 14, 15.) Passing through this painful experience, and worsted at every turn, he now acquires the knowledge of the two natures. "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" From this point he treats the flesh as an enemy; it is not himself; and for him the "I" is the inward man of verse 22. Together with this, he learns that the flesh is utterly evil; in it there "dwelleth no good thing." (*v.* 18.) Next he is made to confess his entire powerlessness—"how to perform that which is good I find not," etc. (*vv.* 18, 20.) Then, after once more distinguishing between himself and sin that dwelleth in him (*v.* 20), and stating the abiding antagonism between the desires of the inner man and those of the flesh, he proceeds to say, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (*v.* 23.) All his struggles have seemingly ended in hopeless defeat.

But the moment of defeat, if not of despair, is the turning point of his deliverance, for he has now learned his last lesson. In the anguish of his soul he cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This point would never have been reached if the previous lessons had not been experimentally acquired; but, having now discovered its own helpless condition, the soul, ceasing from all self-occupation and effort, looks outside of itself for succour. It is not now, How can I do the good that I would? but, *Who shall deliver me?* And hence no sooner has the cry escaped its lips than the answer is

found, "I thank God [I am delivered] through Jesus Christ our Lord." (v. 25.) The eyes have been opened to discover that deliverance is not in self, nor in self-efforts, but in Christ; that in Christ the believer has passed out of the region of sin, death, and judgment into a place where there is no condemnation; "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death," &c. (Chap. viii. 2-4.)*

If correct in our interpretation it was while Saul was going through these profound exercises that the Lord appeared in a vision to Ananias, and commissioned him to be the bearer of light and blessing to Saul's soul. The Lord's eyes had followed him as he was led into Damascus; He had watched over him as he entered "into the street which is called Straight;" He had seen him take up his abode in the house of Judas; He had observed the agonising character of his spiritual conflict; and He had heard his prayers. (v. 11.) What encouragement is here given to troubled souls as they perceive the tender interest the Lord took in all the experiences through which Saul was passing! And what instruction is afforded to all who seek to help and guide the anxious, and what warning also against prematurely attempting to minister consolation and peace! One of the perils indeed of the present moment is the effort, so frequently made, to shorten, instead of deepening, the exercises of the newly-awakened. The Lord's method in this instance may therefore claim our special consideration.

* Those of our readers who desire to pursue the subject may consult *God's Way of Rest, Power, and Consecration*.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the holy intimacy in which Ananias appears in this scene before the Lord. As if the Lord did not know all the past actings of Saul, Ananias ventures to describe his hostility and heretical zeal. "But," having permitted His servant thus to speak, "the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (vv. 15, 16.) Ananias was a true servant. "Go thy way," said the Lord; and this word of command sufficed to still every doubt, and to settle every question, which had arisen in his soul, and he "went his way, and entered into the house," honoured in being sent on such a mission to one who had been chosen of the Lord for the new testimony which was about to be proclaimed.

If Ananias had at first hesitated, his action and address to Saul plainly show that he had been brought into full communion with the mind and heart of his Lord. He put his hands upon him and said, "*Brother Saul*"; and he then declared the object for which he had been sent. Saul must first know that the Lord who had sent Ananias was Jesus who had appeared to him in the way, as he came to Damascus; and that He had sent Ananias "that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." He had been three days without sight, but now the period of darkness was ended, and the fact that he was to be filled with the Holy Ghost shows incontestably that, together with the falling from his eyes as it had been scales, and his receiving sight, he had now reached

deliverance. *None but a delivered soul could be filled with the Holy Spirit.* At once Saul arose and was baptised—baptised unto the death of Christ. (Rom. vi. 3.) He could now moreover receive food and be strengthened. At liberty from self and self-occupation, he could now in the power of the Spirit, whom he had received, begin to feed upon heavenly food, and thus be strengthened for the new path on which he was entering.

THE BOARDS OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE VAIL.

EXODUS xxvi. 15-37.

IN further considering the structure of the tabernacle, we must still keep before our minds that the first and great thought of God was to have a place where He would dwell, and in which He would display Himself according to His purpose. This must necessarily be in Christ; hence we do not look first for the means of our approach, or participation in the blessing consequent on the display or manifestation of Himself, but for that which is verified in Christ, as the centre of His purpose.

The boards of the tabernacle were made of the same material as the ark and the table of shewbread—shittim wood and gold. It is a figure of Christ as the righteousness of God. Nothing but the gold was seen, the wood being covered with it. Everything in the sanctuary, though brought out in man, must be according to God; all is upheld in the power of divine righteousness. Adam's place in the scene that God created was that of

an *innocent* man, not knowing good and evil. Here is the intimation of another scene—the dwelling-place of God—where all subsists in the power of divine righteousness, and Christ is it; there will yet be a new heaven and earth wherein righteousness will dwell.

Thus we have foreshadowed a creation suited to God, where He would dwell. No longer a fair creation made and committed to the hands of an innocent man, and become subject to vanity through sin entering into it by that man, but a creation characterised by Him who is its beginning. Already the saints of this dispensation are created anew in Christ Jesus; the new man is created according to God in holiness and righteousness of truth. In order for this, Christ must go into death, where we were under the judgment of God, that we might be quickened together with Him out of it. We are not here considering the question of man's responsibility to God as man, and set in the earth which He had made. All that must indeed be met—and it is most blessed to think of the fact that the Lord Jesus did not take the actual place of "the beginning of the creation of God" until every question of good and evil had been settled for eternity on the cross. Evil came out fully there, but perfect good was there also, and God was perfectly glorified. There was no passing by of evil; but divine righteousness (ever regarded as subsisting in Christ, whether in purpose or actually when He took part in flesh) was established after in His cross evil had been proved to be evil and had been judged there. Thus believers can now have a place in the holiest as the righteousness of God in Christ.

Under these boards were sockets of silver. Nothing is here said of whence the silver came. We learn afterwards (chapter xxxviii. 25-27) that the sockets were made of the money taken from Israel as atonement money, and appointed for the service of the tabernacle (xxx. 16) to be a *memorial* for them before the Lord. This may show us that a people numbered by God have their memorial in His sanctuary as a ransomed people according to His grace, but in this chapter we have the simple fact that the sockets were of silver. Silver sockets gave stability to the boards. We have thus a definite use of silver. We have seen too that there was no silver in the construction of the temple; the foundations there were large and costly stones. Gold, silver, and brass, each set forth what is according to the holy nature and character of God, but seen in Christ. The work of Christ is needed to give any a place in the holy sanctuary of God; but *our approach* is not yet the subject, but *His dwelling-place* and the manifestation of Himself therein. If we let the glory of God be first with us, and perceive that it centres in Christ, our sense of the work which has made us suited to it will be greatly enhanced.

Now the tabernacle was the figure for the time then being of the purpose of God for a universe of bliss, and it was placed among men while they yet stood before Him upon the ground of creature responsibility. While thus a witness of God's future, it was on the way to it, and hence His ways of grace and faithfulness come in. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The words of the Lord are compared to refined silver (Psalm xii. 6), and this in contrast to faithfulness failing among the children of men. No purpose will

He ever give up, though we might think that our failure and sin would lead Him to do so, nor will He alter the word that has gone out of His lips. If He pitched His tent amongst those who sinned and provoked Him, the establishment of His purpose must be secured apart from their conduct, and this is done in Christ. Whatever are the promises of God "in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for GLORY TO GOD," that is the first and great point, but then it is added "by us" (2 Cor. i. 20), for *grace* gives us a place there, and immutably secures it in Christ. Israel through the atonement money had their memorial in the tabernacle of God, it was a memorial of a people redeemed from Egypt, who would have forfeited everything if God's ways had not been based upon grace. It is a blessed thing that grace gives an unchanging character to the ways of God while working out through those ways the accomplishment of His own glory in Christ, and wonderful that we can say "in us."

The vail divided the holy place from the Most Holy. It was made of the same material as the inside curtains called "the tabernacle." There is this difference, that in the description the fine twined linen is mentioned *after* the blue, the purple, and the scarlet. In the curtains the fine twined linen is first, because we have there the great fact that the Word tabernacled in flesh; but in the vail (and the vail was His flesh, Heb. x. 20) we have His mediatorial glory, hence the glories that He alone could take up *for God* are seen first, but they are taken up in *a Man*. Cherubim are there. All judicial action is vested in Man. It is committed to the Son because He is the Son of man. God will judge the world in righteousness by that *Man* whom

He hath ordained, but then He judges for God and according to God.

It is not the rending of the vail which we have here, but the hanging it up. (*v.* 33.) Behind it God dwelt. It is called, in chap. xxxv. 12, "the vail of the covering," for He was hidden behind it. He could not fully reveal Himself until it was rent, but in hanging it up He indicated to us this mediatorial character of Christ. There is "one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." If any system of blessing is to come out from God to men it must be mediatorially; nor could man in an earthly standing, even as reconstituted in the millennium, be established in blessing save through a mediator. Now the vail is rent, and God is fully revealed, and the way into the Holiest opened, so that believers should enter in by a new and living way. This is man, no longer in an earthly standing receiving blessing mediatorially from God, but man brought into the very place and blessing of the Mediator Himself. In bringing many sons to glory, it became God to make the Leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. The death of Christ has opened the way for God to come out in the full revelation of His own glory, in order to take the sanctified in. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. This now is the place of believers before Him.

The pillars on which the vail hung rested on sockets of silver, while the hooks were of gold; but besides this there was another hanging made to divide between the holy place and the court. This hung upon pillars of shittim wood and gold, as did the vail, and was suspended by golden hooks, but the sockets were of brass.

Cherubim are not here—taking cognizance of and maintaining the holy character of God according to divine righteousness; but the brazen sockets give us the idea, that in entering into the holy place there must be the judgment of evil, and this was, as we have said, by the brazen altar in the first instance, and then by the water of the laver. This hanging was of the same material as the veil, setting forth Christ's mediatorial character. He alone is the door through whom any place of relationship could be entered, either earthly or heavenly. In hanging up the veil, it was based upon the immutability of God's purpose in grace, while the hanging of the holy place was based upon responsibility having been fully maintained and met in Him who loved righteousness and hated iniquity. The entering in of the sons of Aaron to accomplish their service, either at the table of administration or in the lighting of the lamps, was through the door which stood upon the ground of the holy judgment of evil. It is well for us to bear this in mind. May there be with us in our priestly service this sense of the judgment of evil. If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged of the Lord.

T. H. R.

THE APPLICATION OF THE CROSS.

THE moment there is a turning from the cross (death to everything), our Lord says, "Get thee behind Me," for that is all He has. The cross makes me afraid of following Christ; but He says, If you do not take it up, you cannot be My disciple. The Lord judges man totally and utterly; we cannot go too deep. He brings us to this, "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no

good thing." Then we see that before we take up the cross for ourselves, there is the cross *for* us. *There* my sins were put away, and the old nature judged. I have died, and my life is hid with Christ in God. I am alive to God, not to Adam. That separates me from the world. Christ is my righteousness and my life up there. He has given me His Spirit, and I look down from there, in grace being an object of His favour, at what is of His hand in the creation. When I have got out of it I can look at it. . . . Either you are letting your mind go after what the flesh likes, or you are applying the cross to it. If you *admire* a flower you see, all right; but if you *care* for it, all wrong. I can see the hand of God in its beauty; but if I am thinking of the thing, it is not the beauty, but my own will and inclination.

* * * * *

Christ has been rejected, and I am dead to the world, sin, and the law, and alive to God. Our steps are feeble, but He shews us the way, and we delight in His love. Of course the Spirit reproves us if we are grieving Him. . . . How far have our hearts believed this voice of the blessed Son of God in such love, when He puts forth His own sheep, going before them, meeting the dangers and leading them in the path? How far are our hearts in truth and simplicity disposed to follow Him, to think His love not mistaken in the path He has marked out? It is real deliverance from the flesh, but we must trust His love. When my heart thoroughly trusts Christ, it is *His* cross, and *His* reproach, and it has the sweetness of Christ, and all is sweet (we may be cowards in it), and we judge everything that hinders His leading us in the path.

J. N. D.

"FOR EVER."

"The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away : but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."—1 PETER i. 24.

THE beauty of summer has faded,
The leaves and the blossoms are gone,
The cold and the darkness of winter
Seem stretching before me alone !

I think of loved faces long vanished—
My heart is bowed down with its pain,
Till, sweet come the words of His promise,
"Look up ; thou shalt meet them again."

Ah ! yes, though earth's flowers may wither,
The word of the Lord is secure—
I look for a land that is *deathless*,
And know that my portion is *sure*.

My home and my treasures await me,
Unfading, unchanging, and bright ;
What matters the wilderness journey,
The *end* is all gladness and light !

My God in His love has prepared me
Delights which the world cannot know,
Far sweeter than earth's fleeting blessings,
Far better than all things below.

For ever and ever with Jesus !
To dwell in the light of His love,
To find all His dear ones He gave me
Far nearer and dearer above.

For ever to *rest* in His presence—
No sorrow, no trial, no sin !
From all things shut *out* that could harm me,
With Christ, in His glory, "shut *in*" !

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST."

THRICE in his writings does the apostle Paul use the above expression. To him the love of Christ was a bright reality. It was no momentary idea, no passing emotion. It was a living and all-operative fact in his soul. It gave a colour to all his life, and a charm to all his ministry. Without that spring his oft-tried heart must have speedily failed, and the energies of his soul have withered. But, under the potent spell of that everlasting love, he retained his freshness and confidence and devotion to the very end.

How much depends on the daily enjoyment of the love of Christ. It is our starting-post as Christians. We learned its sweetness when first grace opened our hearts and led us to God. It will be our eternal theme when the sorrows of our desert journey are a thing of the past. It may well sustain our spirits to-day in the path of true testimony here. The loss of the sense of it is practically the loss of everything in that path. Activity, zeal, accuracy, love for souls, self-denial, and so on, become but a shell, a carcase, a form without it. Ephesus (Rev. ii.) left her "*first love*," and left, in point of fact, all that made the Christian life worth living. No doubt she maintained much separation from all kinds of evil, and was peculiarly jealous of the truth and of doctrine; but withal the precious mainspring was wanting, and hence the seriousness of the Lord's rebuke, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen."

To leave the "first love" is regarded by Him as a

"fall," a sad and serious and irretrievable loss, which is in nowise compensated by zeal, or devotion to certain forms, doctrines, or practices. Nay, what He primarily seeks is the chief place in our affections. Granted that (through His grace), then all else will of necessity assume its proper place. Love first—"the love of Christ"—and its fair sequel will assuredly follow.

And so, in writing to the Romans (chapter viii. 35), exposed as they were to persecution and hatred on all sides on account of their Christianity, the apostle says, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" Could he have furnished better cheer or kinder comfort to them? Impossible! "Killed all the day long" for Christ's sake, living a chronic death, so to speak, on His account, pursued by peril and sword, losing all things here, to them the love of Christ remained. It was their security, their sun, their shield, their everlasting arm, their unfading treasure when everything failed.

What a portion! Theirs and ours too, beloved, though to-day we may not suffer as they did, or feel the exact form of Satan's power that displayed itself then. The *separations* of to-day, though not by fire and sword, are sore and keen as then, but from the love of Christ separation is impossible. He loves to the end, but with a love as careful of our good, and as true to our weal, as it is eternal. It is a holy and perfect love. Who would have it otherwise? It is the stay, the strength, the pure and blessed home of our hearts. It is the source and measure of our security.

Then again, in his second epistle to the Corinthians (chap. v. 14), where, with a heart set free to unbosom

itself to his children, now repentant and cleared before God of the evils referred to in the first epistle, and dwelling as he does with much fulness on the nature of Christian ministry, he says, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" What a motive! and how constant! On the wear and tear of that sacred but arduous ministry every other motive proves ineffectual. Confronted by the subtle and multiform opposition of Satan; the unbelief, superstition, and crookedness of men; the deplorable activities of a perverted nature and much carnality in the saints, no motive power less than the love of Christ could sustain day by day and year by year the true servant of the Lord. But the apostle knew that mighty influence, and was its bright resultant. When mere actual activity or zeal must have given up in despair, the love of Christ still constrained. It was the love of One who had *died for us and risen again.* (v. 15.) And what can touch the heart more deeply than the blessed fact that He died for us? Again, I must say, it is our happy wisdom to take our stand daily in view of the cross of Jesus. We learn there that which we can learn nowhere else. To place ourselves on that spot, made green and fertile by the united streams of sorrow and love that flowed mingled down, and let our proud and foolish hearts be melted and broken, and our souls pervaded by a divinely-given sense of the infinite grace of our precious Saviour, so that we may come away possessed of a new spring and motive, will assuredly enable us to face the combined evils of the world in our little path of service in it. There is nothing like the cross, like the love of a crucified Christ, for wooing and winning, purifying and keeping our renewed affections.

Beloved, may we all know that love much better, and be led to live to Him who is now our risen Lord.

"I suffered much for thee,
More than thy tongue can tell;
Of bitterest agony
To rescue thee from hell.
I suffered much for thee,
What canst thou bear for Me?"

This is His tender *appeal* to each of His blood-bought people, and an answer to that appeal will express itself in a "ministry" that is unselfish, uncovetous, lowly, pure, devoted, and for the glory of God. The love of Christ is the only motive for Christian testimony.

Finally, the apostle prays (in Eph. iii. 16, 19) "that He would grant you . . . to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." But do we not know it? Are we quite ignorant of it? Nay, it is our security, it is our motive, it is indeed our portion. It has cast out fear. But who can say he knows that which passeth knowledge? The brethren of Joseph thought, perhaps, that they knew his love for them. But the test came, and how they wounded his heart by their fears and suspicions as to it! Christ's love for His people passeth knowledge. The manger, the garden, the cross, the throne, all bear witness to its fulness and eternity. But who can fully know its everlasting strength?

From surveying the glories—those illimitable glories to which none the less he attaches a breadth and a length, a depth and a height, and which are to be comprehended by the faith of the saints, the apostle returns to present to us that which is beyond all measurement, but which is to be known (though truly beyond all ken), and realized, and enjoyed, and made the very food of

our souls. It is the communion of the love of Christ. The bright rays of that eternal sun fall upon and illumine and maintain in constant health our poor little hearts. What a spring in a dry and thirsty land where no water is—yes, and in one where the rivers flow, and where all is fair and vernal. It turns earth into heaven, and heaven itself would be a desert without it.

“Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” “Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” The love of Christ passeth knowledge, therefore learn, and learn, and learn, through all eternity.

Oh, what security! what a motive! what communion!

J. W. S.

THE SACRED LETTERS.

THE contrast between Paul and those who deny the power of godliness, whilst retaining its form, is very striking.

“Thou hast thoroughly known my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith,” wrote the apostle, and his whole life shewed the power of his doctrine. His teaching was that of the present position of Christ in glory, and the grand truths which are connected with it; and his conduct, purpose, faith, corresponded with it. His life bore witness to his doctrine, and the power of godliness was shewn in enduring persecution and suffering to the end. The Lord had said, at the call and conversion of Saul of Tarsus, “I will shew to him how much he must suffer for My name”; and it is in suffering that true power is manifested. It is so in its far smaller measure for us. All who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus

will be persecuted, and it is always more difficult to bear pressure than to labour actively. We shall refer to this again.

And now we come to a most important part—where the Holy Ghost insists upon the value of Scripture—of the sacred letters given by God to men.

The character of the day in which we are living makes this exhortation more than ever important, for the true value of the inspired Word is denied by most of the teachers in Christendom. It will be said that this is too sweeping a statement, but, without going out of England, I believe that any sober-minded and well-informed person will admit that it is not merely Rationalism and Materialism that deny plenary inspiration, but that the so-called Church herself is sadly in doubt as to how far she can admit the blessed truth that every scripture is divinely inspired. Unbelief in the perfect canon of the Word has got into the very seat of the Pharisees; and they have added this to their sins, that they have listened lately to the Sadducees.

Let us look at the passage. Paul foresaw by the Spirit that things would get worse instead of better. Wicked men and impostors* shall go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Jannes deceives Jambres, and Jambres deludes Jannes with nefarious arts; and all this is going on. What safeguard has the man of God? Now comes the answer, and the unspeakable value of the written Word—the Book given to us of God, by which, in the very darkest times, we shall be guided to His glory. Praise be to His name for ever!

* The word means wizards, professional cheats. What a terrible thing that such should have their field in Christendom!

Timothy was to abide in those things which he had learned, and of which he had been fully persuaded, knowing of whom he had learned them; there was the revelation of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God committed to a chosen instrument; he had not learned these things from any doubtful source. Then, from a child, he had known the *sacred letters*. It is what God has caused to be *written* here upon earth that is before us. There are a number of written books, forming one complete whole, able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

It is this very Book that is attacked in the present day, and of whose integral fulness we are called upon to be jealous. "Every scripture is divinely inspired." Timothy, no doubt, as a child, knew only the sacred writings of the Old Testament; but the point here is the whole written revelation of God. It is not possible, in a brief article, to study the wonderful way in which the New Testament scriptures set their stamp upon those of the Old, and upon one another; but the point before us is, "Every scripture is divinely inspired." Overwhelming proof as to the authenticity of the various parts of the Word has been given over and over again; but what is needed, in order to recognise and understand God's blessed word, is faith.

I should recommend every Christian to look into the blessed subject of revelation, but exhort him at the same time not to stop at any mere outward recognition of the divine oracles.* The simplest saint, walking by faith, will at once know the difference between God's

* The excellent little work, "Have we a Revelation from God?" (J. N. D.), is worthy of all study.

inspired dictation and man's writings; it will not be necessary to point out to such that "Bel and the Dragon" is not scripture, or that the false gospels are not worth reading.

God speaks to us in His blessed Book, making known to us all the glories of His grace in Christ Jesus; and we find in the *sacred letters*—that is, in the Bible (the Christian's library)—that which answers to every difficulty, no matter how trying the times may be; and we are made wise unto salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work."

Much has been said as to the effect of the Word according to this passage. I only wish to notice that we have here an action on the conscience, heart, and understanding of the saint, which *no human writing will ever produce*. The word of God is quick and powerful, and alone can divide soul and spirit, and reveal God's thoughts.

A word as to the man of God, who is thus formed by the sacred letters. A man of God is one who represents God's interests in an evil day. Thus, when Eli, the high priest, was allowing evil in his house (as many indulgent fathers do) and in Israel, he received a visit from *a man of God*, who proclaimed the judgment which should follow the violation of Jehovah's rights in Israel. (1 Samuel ii. 27-36.) Such visits are not always well received.

The man of God is placed here in the midst of all the ecclesiastical evil of the present age, in the midst

of the growing infidelity and materialism; and he is called of God to stand for Him, bearing witness to the truth when error flourishes. For this he needs the inspired writings. It is the want of spiritual study of, and submission to, the sacred letters that explains why so many of us are *not* complete,* and are *not* fitted to every good work.

It is a question here of knowing for oneself the written word of God, and surely we cannot read the passage without feeling how much we have failed in this. May we pay full attention to it, so that the knowledge of the Scriptures—as necessary to us as it was to Timothy himself—may be found in us in our measure!

God has called us to bear a remarkable testimony in these days of infidelity; we are to be developed and fitted for every good work, and for this we need to be formed, taught, convinced, and corrected by the sacred letters.

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ISAIAH xxvii. 8.

GENERALLY speaking, this scripture has been understood to teach the tenderness of God in moderating the trials of His people. Taking the "east wind" as a figure of discipline or tribulation, God is represented as "staying" or "holding back His rough wind," in order that, as we read in another scripture, His people might not be tempted beyond endurance. That this expresses

* Well developed, as we say physically of one whose articulations are perfect.

a blessed characteristic of God's dealings might be abundantly shown; but it is exceedingly doubtful if it be found in this scripture when rightly translated. Premising, as admitted by all who have carefully examined it, that the passage is not easy to render literally, the following translation may be given as the most approved: "In measure, when Thou sendest her away, Thou dost contend with her. *He hath removed her with His rough blast in the day of the east wind.*" (See the *Revised Version*, and compare J. N. D.'s *French Translation*.) Attention to the context will help us to understand the language employed. In *v. 6* the declaration is made, that "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." The contemplation of this glorious consummation of God's dealings with Israel leads to a review of the past; and, contrasting the judgments that had fallen upon Israel with those that had fallen upon his enemies, the prophet exclaims, "Hath He smitten him, as He smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?" The next verse (8) contains the answer to these questions: "In measure, when Thou sendest her away" (the change from "him" to "her" is a reference to *v. 2*), "Thou dost debate with her." Jehovah undoubtedly had a controversy with His people, and had caused His rod to fall again and again upon them, but it was still "in measure," not for their destruction, but for their restoration for the accomplishment of His counsels of old, which were faithfulness and truth. And then the prophet adds, "He hath removed her with His rough blast in the day of His east wind." Wind is a symbol of judgment (see *Rev. vii. 1*, etc.), in the form of disturbing influences, per-

mitted of God to arise in a providential manner, for the accomplishment of His purposes in the government of this world. We are thus referred, by these words, to the way in which Jehovah dealt with Israel for her sins through the surrounding nations. Through Assyria and Babylon especially He smote His beloved but guilty people, and removed them from the land of their inheritance which He Himself had bestowed upon them. But if He had done this, it was, as we gather from the next verse, that the iniquity of Jacob might be purged. If, therefore, we cannot sustain the usual interpretation of this Scripture, we yet learn the precious lesson from it, that the fruit of all God's ways with His people, whether in discipline or in judgment, is pure and unmingled blessing.

II.

ISAIAH xxvi. 19.

DIFFICULT as this passage may be to translate, the sense is tolerably clear. The insertion of the words "together with" in the second clause has only increased the confusion. The term "body" moreover (in the phrase "my dead body"), it is generally agreed, should be rendered "bodies." Taking account of these alterations, the passage will read, "Thy dead men shall live, my dead bodies—they shall arise." The change of pronoun from "thy" in the first clause to "my" in the second is very beautiful. From verse 8 to the end of verse 18 the prophet has been pouring out his soul to the Lord. In verse 19 Jehovah responds, and assures him of the certainty of the future blessing of His people. He says, "Thy dead men shall live," and then, claiming these dead as His own, He adds, "My

dead bodies—they shall arise.” A further question arises as to whether the resurrection predicted is literal or figurative. As far as the language is concerned it might be taken as literal; but when other passages, speaking of the same event, are considered, passages which use the same illustration, and in which it is manifest that the resurrection spoken of is symbolical, the conclusion is forced upon us that here also it is figurative. For example, in the vision of dry bones (Ezekiel xxxvii.) it is expressly said, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts”; and then in the next verse the promise is made, “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” (v. 11, 12.) Such language cannot leave a doubt as to its symbolical import. Of the same character is the statement in Daniel xii. 2; and likewise the words of the apostle in Romans xi. 15. With these instances before us we cannot but believe that the scripture in Isaiah also speaks of the moral resurrection of Israel in connection with their future restoration and blessing.

III.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 14.

WITH regard to the laying on of hands, it would seem to have been of several distinct kinds. In the first place, the Holy Ghost was given, on several occasions, in connection with the apostles laying their hands on believers. (See Acts viii. 17, xix. 6.) Secondly, persons were in this way designated, or rather set apart,

for some special office. In Acts vi., for example, the seven who were selected to "serve tables" were "set before the apostles," who, when they had prayed, laid their hands upon them (*v.* 6); and Paul directs Timothy not to "lay hands suddenly" on any one; that is, as we understand it, Timothy was not to appoint any one to be an elder or a deacon without first satisfying himself as to the possession of the requisite qualifications. Next we find that gift was bestowed on Timothy through the laying on of the apostle's hands. (2 Tim. i. 6.) In all these cases it will be noticed that the laying on of hands is either by the apostles or by Timothy, who was an apostolic delegate, and who therefore acted under Paul's direction and authority. In none of these instances consequently could it be now practised, unless "apostolic succession" were claimed; for which there is not even the shadow of a proof in the Scriptures, but which rather is easily disproved by them. The contention for it indeed rests upon ecclesiastical pretensions and presumption, and not upon the word of God. There are, however, two other kinds of laying on of hands to be noticed. When the Holy Ghost had said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," those who were gathered together with them "fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them," and sent them away. (Acts xiii. 2, 3.) This could in no sense be said to be an appointment to an office; for it was not an office they were called upon to fill, but rather service on which they were sent. The Holy Spirit had designated His servants for their mission. The laying on of hands here was rather of the nature of identification, expressive of entire fellowship, with Barnabas and Saul in their work. This significance of laying on

of hands is seen in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrifices. By putting their hands upon the head of the ram of consecration, Aaron and his sons were identified before God with all its sweet savour when it was burnt upon the altar. (Exodus xxix. 15-19, etc.) An instance of the same meaning may be found in 1 Timothy. As we have already seen, gift was bestowed on Timothy *through* the laying on of Paul's hands. In the first epistle, referring to this, Paul alludes to the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (Chap. iv. 14.) But the very words he uses show its character. Here it is not *through*, as in the second epistle, where he speaks of the laying on of his own hands, but *with*, teaching plainly that they were but associated with him in the act, and that thus they were identified with what was being done, as well as with Timothy in the service to which he was being called. Such laying on of hands is simply an act of fellowship. The only other kind to be mentioned is in connection with healing the sick. The Lord Himself laid His hands on the sick (Luke iv. 40), and He commissioned His disciples, after His resurrection, to do the same thing. (Mark xvi. 18.) But while "gifts of healing" were found in the assembly at Corinth, there is no sign of the commission entrusted to the disciples being extended beyond themselves. Enough has been written to aid in the investigation of the question; and the reader, by referring to all the cases mentioned, with their context, will be enabled to apprehend the truth involved, and to estimate at their proper value presumptuous ecclesiastical claims.

SAUL AFTER CONVERSION.

ACTS ix. 19-30 ; GALATIANS i. 15-18.

A COMPARISON of these two scriptures shows unmistakably that it is not the object of the Spirit of God to give in Acts a chronological narrative. There is no mention there, for example, of the visit to Arabia of which Paul speaks in the Galatians; and hence it is impossible now to ascertain whether the plot of the Jews to kill the apostle took place before going to, or after his return from, Arabia. Nor is it of the slightest consequence that we should do so, as it is the spiritual teachings of the narrative which demand our attention. At the same time, it is exceedingly interesting to notice and to weigh every detail given, for we may be sure, even if we cannot always grasp its importance, that everything recorded in the Word of God is worthy of our attention. The Bible, indeed, would become a far more absorbing book—we commend the remark to young believers—if this were more fully understood; if every clue, for instance, to Paul's life and activity were devoutly seized and followed.

Two things are especially noticed as following upon Saul's conversion: first, that he was immediately found in identification with the disciples (*v.* 19); and, secondly, that he proceeded at once to testify in the synagogues that Christ* is the Son of God. The importance of these two things could not be over-rated.

* According to the best authorities it would seem that "Jesus" should be read here instead of "Christ."

It is God's mind that all that believe should be together, and wherever the Spirit of God is acting in energy it is always the case. (See Acts ii. iv., &c.) It is also a necessity of the new nature, when on the ground of redemption, even as another apostle declares, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us," &c. (1 John i. 3.) The character of Saul's testimony in the synagogues must not be overlooked. As has been well remarked, it is not here the commencement of his public mission, but it is rather the outflow of a heart devoted to the One who had appeared to him—of a heart constrained by His mighty love to proclaim that Jesus, Jesus whom he had persecuted, and whom the Jews hated with all the intensity of their Pharasaic pride, was the Son of God. Peter had proclaimed Him as Lord and Christ, but it was reserved to Paul, who had seen the Lord of glory, to declare the divine glory of Jesus of Nazareth.*

Let the reader pause and meditate upon this wondrous exhibition of the power of the grace of God. We have seen Saul as the ardent zealot, the chosen champion of Judaism in bitterest enmity against Jesus of Nazareth and His followers; and now we behold him standing boldly up in the midst of the synagogues to confess his past blindness and error, and to declare that this Jesus is no other than the Son of God. We can only exclaim, What has God wrought! But let us also remember that the same divine power was needed for our conversion; that but for that grace which

* The word "Son" in Acts iii. 26 is a wrong translation; it should be rendered "Servant."

visited the heart of Saul of Tarsus we should have remained in our evil condition of enmity against God, blind to our own state, and blind to the glory of His beloved Son. Not all are called to be such chosen vessels as Saul was, but we all, equally with him, have been the subjects of divine grace, and objects of God's mercy, in pursuance of His eternal counsels in Christ before the foundation of the world. To God alone be all the praise!

The effect of Saul's preaching is given with great precision. At first it was amazement that possessed the souls of his hearers. They had heard before of this preacher; they had been told of his destructive energy against the disciples in Jerusalem, and of the object of his mission to Damascus, and lo! this very man had become the advocate of Christianity, and they now heard him asserting that Jesus was the Son of God! Their astonishment may be easily understood. But Saul, in nowise hindered in his testimony by the thoughts of his hearers, increased the more in strength, fruit, we may be sure, of his being much alone with the Lord (for it is they that wait on Him who renew their strength); and he "confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ"—or, better, that this (Jesus) is the Christ, the Messiah for whom the Jews waited. Alas! for the perversity of the human heart. Saul proved—from the Scriptures (see chap. xvii. 2, 3)—that Jesus was the Christ; and the Jews could not resist the evidence, for they were confounded, but they did not, would not, receive the testimony. Their *will*, as ever, was concerned in refusing the rejected and glorified Christ.

An interval may perhaps be supposed between verses 22, 23; and if so, it is possible that Saul's visit to Arabia took place at this time. He that is much before men in testimony needs to be much before God in retirement. How many a witness has suffered shipwreck as to his testimony because he has forgotten this principle. Full of zeal, and marked too by fidelity at the outset, many a servant has gone on giving out more than he has received and living on the manna of yesterday, until, emptied and strengthless, because no longer living in the secret of God's presence, he has become inwardly the sport of Satan, and, losing his Nazariteship, he has speedily fallen into one of the many snares which had been subtly concealed around his path. Saul therefore was sent away into the solitudes of Arabia, that there in quiet before the Lord his soul might be strengthened by the truth communicated to him, and that his heart might be possessed and dominated by the One who had snatched him as a brand from the burning, the One to whom he was now to be devoted as a willing bondman for service. May the lesson be well pondered by all the Lord's servants.

The opposition of the Jews increased as time elapsed. Not having been able to answer the arguments of Saul, they now took counsel to kill him. This has been one of Satan's commonest methods from times immemorial. When Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and had thus become such an irrefutable witness to the person of Christ, the chief priests consulted that they might put him to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus. (John xii. 10, 11.) It was no matter to them whether

the testimony rendered to Jesus were true ; but hating it, even though true, they determined, if possible, to destroy the witness. Nor has this plan of getting rid of unwelcome testimony ceased. It has ever been practised in the professing church, and the result will be that in Babylon will be found "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. xix. 24 ; compare Matt. xxiii. 34, 35.) The Lord watched over His chosen vessel, and the Jews were consequently powerless in their efforts to accomplish their designs. Their lying in wait became known to Saul, and, notwithstanding the vigilance of his adversaries, he escaped, through the help of the disciples, out of their hands.*

Saul having escaped from the hands of the Jews came to Jerusalem.† Having arrived "he assayed to join himself to the disciples," just as in Damascus he was with the disciples there. He, led of the Spirit of God, must go to his own company, for the believer's heart must be where the heart of Christ is ; and it was of His people He said, "In them is all my delight." (Psalm xvi.) It is a bad sign therefore when any of God's children are satisfied to be apart from His people. When Saul was last in Jerusalem he had

* It is clear from 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33 that the governor of Damascus aided and abetted the Jews in their desire to destroy Saul. Much discussion has been raised concerning the fact Paul mentions that Aretas exercised at this time sovereignty over Damascus. The matter is of no moment, but any desirous of examining it will find a full and interesting presentation of the subject in *Conybeare and Howson's Life and Letters of Paul*.

† Some are disposed to put Saul's sojourn in Arabia between these two events, rather than between verses 22, 23. It is impossible now to decide the question positively.

consorted with the religious leaders of that city, the implacable adversaries of the disciples; and it was he, as we have seen, who had been their chosen instrument in the relentless persecution which they had initiated. It was only natural therefore that the disciples should now be all afraid of Saul, and that they did not believe that he was a disciple. Evidently they feared that it was a new scheme, on the part of their former foe, to compass their destruction; and until adequate testimony was forthcoming they were not prepared to acknowledge Saul's title to their fellowship.

The required testimony was at hand. Barnabas (a name he had received from the apostles), a Levite by birth, and of the country of Cyprus, and withal "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (chapters iv., xi.) came forward, introduced Saul to the apostles, and explained to them the manner of his conversion, "how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." The testimony rendered was accepted, and Saul, recognised as a true believer, entered into the fellowship of the disciples. Such a witness however as Saul was could not be silent; for, though his stay in Jerusalem on this occasion was very brief (see Galatians i. 18), he at once commenced to speak "boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus." Moreover he "disputed against the Grecians," the "Hellenists," a term under which were comprised the Greek-speaking Jews, and proselytes from the Greeks, etc. In the same spirit as the Jews at Damascus "they went about to slay him." "The brethren" thought it wise that Saul should retire for a

season, and, doubtless, having the Lord's mind, "they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus." This closed the first stage of Saul's Christian life. The Lord had now withdrawn him from public activity to prepare His servant for the special and arduous service to which He had called him—to bear His name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (v. 15.)

THE BRAZEN ALTAR AND THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.

EXODUS xxvii.

THE closing verses of ch. xxvi. shew the arrangement of the holy and most holy places (vv. 33–35), with the hanging for the door of the tent. All the figures of the manifestation of God *in Christ* were thus enclosed. Aaron and his sons alone could serve in the holy place, but the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. There was yet a further manifestation of God in the brazen altar, not exactly in this case in the *person* of Christ, yet not apart from the person, but rather in the work wrought by that blessed Person through sacrifice. The altar was the great place of sacrifice; for this it had its grate and firepans. It was also the place where man, as man, could approach, drawing near to God by virtue of a sacrifice accepted for him, and in virtue of which he was accepted. It had horns on which the blood that made atonement for the offerer was placed. This was for the eye of God, witnessing before Him that His righteous claims on the sinner had been met. Directly man became a sinner, and was driven out of Paradise by God, the only possible ground of approach

to Him was by sacrifice. This was witnessed in Abel's offering. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." In Noah's sacrifice we have a further development. For the first time there is the record of an altar built to the Lord, and the sacrifices are called burnt-offerings giving forth a sweet savour to the Lord. Sin had brought in the judgment of God by the flood, and though judgment may prepare the way, yet there was no rest for God in judgment—it is His strange act—but from Noah's altar of burnt offering the Lord smelled a savour of rest. This laid the basis for God's renewed dealings with men and the earth. In virtue of the rest which God has found in the sacrifice of Christ, He can even now deal in providence with this earth, and eventually both man and the earth will enjoy His sabbath. Later on, when Noah's world had departed from God into idolatry, another principle is developed in Abraham—God's calling. He calls a man out from his surroundings to be with Him in a land which He would shew him. Here, then, on the one side is the call of God; on the other, separation from the world. In the land the Lord appears to Abraham, and he builds *there* an altar *to the Lord*. He had no altar when he went down into Egypt to sojourn there; he could not draw near to the Lord there; but on his return to the land, he returns also to the place of his altar. (Gen. xiii. 4.)

This will prepare us for the consideration of the position of the altar. It was in an enclosure, formed by hangings of fine twined linen, called (*v.* 9) "the court of the tabernacle," and its position was "before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." (Ch. xl. 6.) Another moral feature of its position

is given in Lev. xvi. 18: it is "before the Lord." There could be no drawing near to God in the world outside, as Abraham could have no altar in Egypt. We are not now considering the blessed fact that Christians have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ, nor of being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; but that the first approach to God must be on the ground of bloodshedding indeed, but also of the savour of rest which He has found in the sacrifice of Christ, and necessarily also in separation from the world of fallen man's lust and will. "I, if I be lifted up *from the earth*, will draw all men unto Me." The altar was not inside the tabernacle, nor was it outside in the camp, but in an enclosure which we have yet to consider.

We have spoken of brass as setting forth God's righteousness with respect to good and evil; judging evil, and maintaining and accepting good. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." In the cross evil in man was fully manifested, and goodness in God fully displayed, and there God made good His righteousness with regard to both. Hence in Rev. xvi. 7 the utterance of the altar* itself is, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." Though the altar was the place of sacrifice, and we must necessarily so regard it, yet in this chapter we are not engaged with the offerings upon it, but with the altar itself. It has its own voice. In the sacrifice we can easily see the expression of God's judgment of sin, and His love of righteousness in accepting that which so perfectly answered to the demand of His righteousness; but the altar expressed the same, for of

* The correct reading is, "I heard the altar saying."

Messiah it was said, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." The answer to every figure is found in Christ. He is the Altar as well as the Priest and the Victim. It is well for us to consider that the sacrifice of Christ was not a mere act of compassionate grace to free us from God's judgment of sin, but that He hated the sin which He died to free us from. The altar and the victim were in accord. He loved the righteousness which He vindicated in His cross, maintaining it at all cost. Now from God He is made to us righteousness. The utterance of the altar, speaking of the love of righteousness and the judgment of hated evil, makes apparent that approach to God must be in a place of separation from that world, which, having the knowledge of good and evil, has accepted evil and refused good. It is in the cross that this has been fully manifested.

This leads to the consideration of the enclosure called the "court of the tabernacle." It is evidently a place marked off from man's world, the place of first approach to God for those desiring to draw near to Him. They drew near at the brazen altar upon the ground of atonement made, and of the question of righteousness as between man and God having been settled thereon. It was thus a place of privilege distinct from the outside world, but it did not embrace the privilege of drawing near in the sanctuary. It is the latter which is peculiarly the Christian privilege, only that *now* there is access to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way through the veil; while of old the priestly company could only enter the first part of the tabernacle, called the holy place. The special privilege of Christians is that they have been "called

unto the fellowship of *His Son* Jesus Christ our Lord." Their place is with Him according to the call of God. In the court of the tabernacle righteousness was established and maintained at the brazen altar as between man and God, but in the holiest it has been established between God and His own blessed Son our Lord Jesus Christ in virtue of His estimate of the work which has glorified Him—a work done in respect of sin, but which has brought infinite glory to God Himself. It was the righteous answer of the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness (Psalm xi. 7) to the work in which He was glorified, to glorify the Son of man in His own glory. We have been called unto the fellowship of His Son, and consequently our place and portion are determined by the place in glory in which He is now as Man. Hence we have liberty by the Spirit to behold the Lord's glory, and thus to become transformed into the same image.

In Hebrews, Christians are looked at as companions of the Christ, for "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," and therefore have their place inside with the great Priest who is over the house of God. The Spirit gives us the present realization of it, while we are on the way to its actual enjoyment in heaven. We cannot insist too much on this great Christian privilege of being called to the fellowship of His Son, and that we have our place with Him according to the righteousness of God which has glorified Him, and according to the love which is the fountain and source of all that love has called us to in Him.

But though by the Spirit we realize our place in association with Christ inside, yet actually we are still upon the earth in the place of responsibility, where we

have to discern between good and evil, but where we can discern with exercised senses if we have learned the word (or doctrine) of righteousness according to perfection—that is, according to the glory in which Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Thus in the place of responsibility can we approve the things that are excellent, and be filled with fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, *to the glory and praise of God.* (Phil. i. 10, 11.) The earthly people (Israel), had they had eyes to see, could only have estimated righteousness according to the declaration of it at the brazen altar, but there are fruits of righteousness which flow from our knowledge of Him as gone within the Holy place.

It is as being still upon earth in the place of responsibility (while our proper Christian privilege is within), that we have a place which answers to the court of the tabernacle. The fine twined linen hangings which surrounded it formed the boundary between the people of God as privileged to approach to Him and the outside world. While on God's side the death of Christ has severed His people from the world in which they still are, yet subjectively the wall of separation is formed by the character of Christ in the saints. They have been redeemed from all lawlessness by Christ, that He might purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The fine twined linen sets forth the purity of Christ as a man. And here we may notice that the whole length of the hangings of the court corresponds with the total length of the ten curtains which formed the tabernacle—in each case 280 cubits. It is as we are formed inside with Christ that His character can be maintained in the place of our responsibility here. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth

not"; nor is there any righteousness save that which is of Christ, not only before God, but also practically. "If Christ be in you . . . the Spirit is life because of righteousness"; and again, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, *even as He is righteous.*" The character of Christ formed in His people is the true boundary of separation between the clean and the unclean. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed *by the renewing of your mind.*"

The hangings of the court were sustained by pillars of shittim wood fastened in sockets of brass. The wall of separation—the line of demarcation between conformity to the world, and proving what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God—rests on the foundation of the holy judgment of good and evil as learned in the cross. This is maintained by the cleansing of the Word, but this we shall consider in its place when we come to the description of the laver. The fine twined linen hung upon hooks of silver, and the pillars were filleted with the same. If the holy judgment of good and evil is the foundation, yet all hangs upon grace. It is according to grace that God secures His people as separated from the world, for through grace there is a distinction between the feeblest saint and the outside world; but in order fully to manifest the character of Christ we need also to be adorned with His grace. Of Him it is said "the grace of God was upon Him," while His devoted servant could say "by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

This completes the description of all in the tabernacle which was specially connected with God manifesting Himself in the midst of His people.

T. H. R.

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

THE Spirit of God has brought before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews angels, Moses, and Joshua, and has shewn the Lord as superseding them all. He then brings the Lord before us as superseding Aaron in a new order. He is "High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." The exercise of His priestly office, as we learn in what follows, has in view two objects. First, it is exercised on account of my infirmities. Second, it is that I may receive from a new scene apart from the question of my infirmities altogether. The first is temporal. This last will go on when I have no infirmities. Infirmities being connected with my time state, therefore it is as passing through the wilderness that I need the support. But there is the ministry of Christ as to heavenly things, which is apart from wilderness circumstances entirely, and it is this which will continue toward us for ever. Herein is stability. Thank God that even now this ministry goes on, as we see here in the reference to Melchizedek's blessing and supply, to which the apostle is drawing the attention of the Hebrew brethren. As to its *permanence*, the language used is precise. It is all in view of Christ, and we have reference made therefore to the "*immutability* of His counsel." He who is also the subject of the Spirit's testimony here is "Priest for ever." He "*abideth continually.*" "He hath an *unchangeable* [intransmissible] priesthood." He is "a *great Priest.*" He has "*sat down in perpetuity,*" and

by His "one offering He hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified."

These Hebrew Christians needed to be better instructed in the two aspects of our Lord's present ministry to us; for as in all the value of the Lord's victory over "him that had the power of death" I am looked at as in the wilderness (Exodus xv.), where I am subject to infirmity (infirmity is not sin), and where the Lord is sufficient for me, whatever be the exigencies of the path. It is as in all the value of Christ's death that we sing, "He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." That is, I am in the consciousness of Christ's victory. I am over the Red Sea, and therefore in the wilderness. But then there is my own moral victory over the world. Not only the physical, but it is Abraham's own moral victory that we have before us in Genesis xiv.—the Melchizedek type. And consequent upon that there is the ministry of strength and joy, bread and wine; full blessing from Christ, the true Melchizedek, and from His own side of things.

Christ then ministers in two ways. 1st. He is the One who meets me in all my infirmities here. 2nd. He is the One who ministers strength and joy from His own scene. In the one case He supports me in *my* circumstances, in the other He takes me into *His*.

The world comes before all who are Christians in two forms—in its gross aspect, and in its refined aspect. Egypt, with all its idols, with its magicians, its soothsayers, and its *slavery*, gives me the one; and Sodom, with its honours, its ease, and its luxury, gives me the other. Both have to be refused. "And this is

the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? When Abraham met Melchizedek he had for many a day refused both Egypt and Sodom. But the latter had only recently again made its appeal to him. He met the king of Sodom before he met Melchizedek, and what was the result? "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take *any thing that is thine*, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." The language of faith is, "I want nothing from you, and I will receive nothing here except from God." (John v. 41.)

Now Lot had given up Egypt, as Abraham had. (Genesis xiii. 1.) *Lot never gave up Sodom.*

I consider that our portion in heaven—as united to Christ—and our interest in *eternal* things, is not ministered to the soul, but in the measure in which by grace we give up the world; that is, the rejection of the one and the reception of the other go on at the same time. This moral system, the world, is the great hindrance both to the communication and to the reception of all that side of the truth. All the truth is contained in the Word, and the Holy Spirit is on earth for the blessing of all the saints alike, and to unfold to us these things, so as to make them the known and enjoyed portion of the soul. But the world is in possession, and by the individual soul in the power of the Spirit the battle must be fought, and fought out there—*within*. The enemy must be dispossessed and routed out there. In his heart, as a natural man, Abraham was just as

fond of the honours and ease and luxury of Sodom as Lot. We are all alike in this, but it is fatal (if not judged) to the ministry of the Spirit, who would lead us into heavenly things. And this was the character of Sodom in her day. "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ezekiel xvi. 49.)

This world is a moral scene which has sprung up outside the garden of Eden. Its works are characterised by its heart. In the midst of such a scene God has a clean place for His people, where He can bless them. But to occupy it they must be with Him, according to the desire of His own heart (as a jealous God) to have them separate from it all, and for Himself alone. Do we not see the proof within us, and all around us, that if we have judged the world in its gross form it is not enough? Many have judged it as Egypt who have *not* judged it as Sodom, hence the lack of an apprehension of their true place here, and of the new and heavenly order of blessing that Christ desires to minister to us. That which marked Abraham did not characterise Lot. I think that we shall find pilgrim character, communion with God *as such*, and heavenly supplies to all stand or fall together. Lot was no pilgrim and stranger on earth. No doubt that Lot sought the Lord amid all his anxieties, and the worry of his spirit in Sodom. His righteous soul we read was "vexed from day to day," and he would naturally turn to the Lord in that distress. And no doubt also that the Lord helped him, but *that* is not what I understand by *heavenly supplies*. I take it that heavenly supplies are independent of circumstances. Many may mistake the Lord's sustain-

ment in distressing times for heavenly supplies, but I think they must be distinguished.

Looking abroad upon the world in its garb of outward morality, refinement, comfort, ease, and honour, we see it offering them all to the Christian. One is in danger of forgetting, as Lot did, that we are not looking upon "the garden of the Lord" in these things. Eden is gone, and my supplies now must come from heaven. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even as the garden of the Lord*, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." It was a delusive look and a false appearance, from which, through grace, Abraham was kept, while Lot fell into the snare. "He chose." Abraham said, "I will not take anything that is thine."

H. C. A.

(*To be continued, if the Lord will.*)

THE GOOD FIGHT.

IN the first part of 2 Timothy iv. (up to the 8th verse) the apostle speaks as one who had fought the good fight, and as being anxious that Timothy should continue, to the very end of his course, in a life of active service to the Lord. Paul had no rest nor truce with the enemy from the very beginning of his career, and as the well-known hero who, in drawing his sword in a righteous cause, flung away the scabbard, so did the apostle begin the fight. The end of it is described here, and the passage is solemn.

The charge is given before God, and before the Lord

Jesus Christ as Judge; His appearing and kingdom are the great term of all responsible service. It is not merely a magnificent struggle before thousands of spectators, such as the Roman world used to delight to behold, but the standing for God and actively proclaiming His grace when all the weight of the trials of "the last days" are pressing upon the servant, and all the power of the enemy is laid out against him. Hence the command, "Preach the Word." It is not merely to go on preaching, but the Word is the word of God—the full revelation given to us of His mind. There must be more activity than ever; in season and out of season seizing every opportunity to set the grand truths of Christianity before souls. There is the assiduous ministry of the man of God—"Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." It is not a theologian pronouncing dogmas *ex cathedra*, but the patient application of the word of God to the need of souls.

And the result? Timothy would never be a popular preacher. The time would come when sound doctrine would no longer be endured, but men should have a fatal desire to hear new and flattering sermons, and should heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts. Certainly the market is overstocked with preachers now, but not with those who preach *the Word*. It is one thing to preach *about* the Word, and another to preach the Word itself; and there is surely a great danger of trying to please the popular ear. The people's ear is about as false as its voice is uncertain. Happy the man of God who shall go on preaching the Word to the end, when the mass have turned away and given heed to fables.

Then sobriety and endurance are needed. It is not every one who is so free of exciting influences that he has really sound views and a clear judgment. Endurance—active work in seeking souls (the work of an evangelist), full proof to be made of the ministry. It is a wonderful career, to be finished with energy and vigour supplied by the Lord through the Spirit.

It is now that Paul speaks of the end of his own course, and we may contemplate the man who had fought the good fight.

Paul was about to serve as a libation; a precious ending to a devoted life, and a wonderful privilege. The close of his earthly history had come, and before leaving the arena whence his very life went up to God in sacrifice he could say that he had fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith. He had received his commission from the Lord of glory, and had fulfilled it. The struggle had been severe, and all Asia Minor had been turned upside down during part of the conflict. Now the term approached when he should rest from his labours, and the very sword of Nero should give him repose. It is a wonderful passage, and should wake us up to ask if each one of us is finishing his course according to the Lord's mind. I mean not merely "finishing one's time" as an exile in a Siberian mine, but finishing one's *course*, in which the active love of God works in the vessel upon earth, and the result is true devotedness and fidelity.

Of course the apostle had a special service, and that belonged to him alone; but I think that the fact of each one of us being upon earth for the Lord of glory will not be denied, and it is just as this place is taken

in faith that the fight begins, and will go on to the very end. The danger in these days is for saints to be tired of warfare, and of what may seem to be a hopeless struggle if faith be not in exercise, and for them to hang up the sword upon the wall and wait in ignoble ease till the battle be over. But this is wrong; and, through the Lord's grace, there are some who are fighting the good fight.

Paul had kept the faith: the great and precious responsibility confided to him of the Lord (involving the glory of His blessed person and the effects of His present position in heaven) had been kept to the end, notwithstanding all the attacks of the enemy and his attempts to corrupt.

This passage should stir us up to more diligence, for the apostle in speaking of the Lord's appreciation of his faithfulness associates us with himself. The crown of righteousness should be given not only to him, but to all who love the Lord's appearing.

It is a happy thing for us that we have a righteous Judge. He makes no mistakes in the administration of justice, whether to saints or sinners. We have seen so much injustice that it is rather difficult to imagine a just judge. But the righteous Judge shall give a crown of righteousness to Paul, and to all those that love His appearing. The setting up of that kingdom, when the glorified saints shall reign with Jesus, is looked at as the end or term of the warfare; and all who are for Him, and who have been fighting loyally for Him during His absence, shall receive the honour and glory due to their fidelity in that day. It is thus that a true Christian loves the appearing of Christ. As being associated with Him, he looks forward to the

moment when He, with all His saints in light, shall take His great power and reign.

It will be as a grand and magnificent spectacle after the battle when the Lord comes to reign with His saints gloriously, and when the sun shall be ashamed and the moon confounded before His majesty. The very thought of His appearing fills us with courage to fight the good fight until the end. It is not that the days will improve or the difficulties be less, but that He is sufficient for us, and takes notice of every attempt even to be faithful to His blessed name.

The battle is still raging, and there is as yet no command to cease firing; and all that we have to do is to continue in our position before the enemy, looking to the Lord Himself to sustain us and to keep us so under the power of His grace by the Holy Spirit, that we may in our measure finish our course with joy, and resist to the very last the pretentious attacks of the enemy.

E. L. B.

THE written, or spoken word, if true, is a revelation of that which is true of Christ, and of Christ Himself; so that while it is the divine power of the Spirit by which we are quickened, it is the revelation of Christ to the soul which is objectively that which quickens me, what the Spirit brings to my soul; so that it is faith, faith in the "report," which is the outward means, while it is the thing contained in the word which is life, Christ. The word in itself is merely the outward means or instrument, and by itself, though all truth be in it, produces nothing—unless to leave us without excuse.

J. N. D.

THE SONS OF KORAH.

THERE is something peculiarly sweet in the songs of the sons of Korah, and few more precious than Ps. lxxxiv. But who are these sons of Korah? Many of our readers will say, "Sons of Korah; why, did not the sons of Korah go down alive into the pit when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed those wicked men Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their wives and children?" Let us turn to the Scriptures and read Numbers xvi. How terrible is sin in the sight of the Lord! "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side." Now mark in the next clause Korah is omitted. In verse 25 there is no statement that the sons of Korah went down with their father; but in Num. xxvi. 11 we read, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Yes, in the riches of sovereign grace they were saved from going down alive into the pit. And this was not all. As part of the family of Kohath they had given to them the cities of refuge, of which Hebron is named first. (1 Chron. vi. 54-67.) Oh, how our God delights in mercy! Grace spares them from the pit, and gives them the place of Abraham; for Abraham dwelt in Hebron. (Gen. xiii. 18; xviii. 1.) Have we been saved from the pit, children of wrath, even as others, brought in sovereign grace to dwell in the heavenlies, not with Abraham, but in Christ? Oh, blest city of eternal

refuge, Jerusalem on high! Saved from the lowest depths of the pit, these very sons of Korah "were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle . . . had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord . . . and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God." What a stewardship! "All the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices." (1 Chron. ix. 19-32.) What types of instruction to us! Saved from the lowest depths of hell, and brought to dwell in the eternal refuge of the presence of God by the blood of Jesus. And now what a stewardship—all the riches of the glories of Christ committed to us, who were children of the pit.

Is Christ thus precious to us? And does not all this tell out the varied ministries of the redeemed children of God? All these precious treasures of Christ are committed to us. How great the responsibility! how rich the privilege! Strength was given to these sons of Korah. They were "mighty men of valour," "strong men," "able men for strength for the service," and each had his appointed service. (1 Chron. xxvi. 1-20.) The royal guards of the hidden king, guards of the house, and guards of the foundation. (2 Chron. xxiii. 3, 4, 5-19.) Saved from the pit, we are called to be the royal guards of the hidden but coming King of glory—guards of the house of God, guards of foundation truth. One more privilege of these sons of Korah with their brethren—sanctified in holiness, they had the happy service of distributing the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things.

Oh for more whole-hearted devotedness to Him whom we shall soon meet in the air! J. G. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

1 PETER iii. 7.

Two things are very clear from this scripture: that husbands and wives are contemplated as praying together; and, secondly, that the exhortations addressed to husbands are given with the object that such prayers should not be hindered. It shows what great importance the Holy Spirit attaches to the habit of prayer here supposed. The exhortation is very simple: husbands are to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge"; that is, in the recollection of the fact as knowing that the wife is the weaker vessel, and accordingly, with all tender consideration and care, to maintain the practice of giving honour to her as such; and, secondly, they are to remember that, in the circle of grace, husbands and wives are on equality, "as being heirs together of the grace of life." Keeping these things in mind, and being governed by them in their conduct and demeanour, would tend to preserve that spirit of harmony and fellowship in the marriage relationship, without which praying together would become impossible. The slightest friction, or even absence of tenderness between husband and wife, may very readily become an effectual obstacle to fellowship in prayer. Hence it is said "that your prayers be not hindered." The question however is put, *Does it mean that wives, in such prayers, are to be the mouthpiece of their common*

wants as well as the husbands? No certain answer to this question could be given, in our judgment, from this scripture, nor have we any precise directions on this head in any other epistle. Nevertheless, with the instructions given as to the relative place of the man and the woman before God in 1 Cor. xi. 1-15, and also as to the relation of the husband to the wife in Eph. v. 23, 24, there will not be much difficulty in discerning what is the Lord's mind on the subject.

II.

1 Cor. vii. 20-24.

The mind of the Spirit being so fully expressed in this scripture, very little is needed in the way of exposition or application. Liberty is distinctly given to the believer, who when called was a slave, to accept emancipation; although, if the opportunity of freedom be not presented, he is not to make his condition a matter of concern or anxiety. If a slave, he is the Lord's freeman; and if free, he is Christ's slave. Every position in life, whatever its character, should be viewed in relation to Christ, so that "bought with a price," and therefore, belonging to Him who paid it, the believer, whether a bondman or otherwise, will ever regard Christ as his Master and Lord. The apostle could thus remind Christian slaves, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 24.) The conclusion consequently is, "Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." In applying this principle, we understand it to mean that as long as we can go on in our calling with God; that is, as long as we can maintain a good conscience before Him in our daily duties, it would

not be according to His mind to seek to change it. (Compare Heb. xiii. 5, 6.) To ascertain the cause of the irksomeness of any calling, and the motive for desiring another, would enable us to comprehend without difficulty whether we were in conflict with the spirit of these instructions. It would also greatly help to remind ourselves that our position, calling, and circumstances have been ordered for us by divine wisdom, and hence to seek to alter these, unless in the exceptional case in which it is impossible for us to abide therein with God, is to arrange for ourselves, if not to act in self-will. The realisation of our entire dependence, and consequent waiting on God, is the antidote to all restlessness, as well as the cure for the desire "to better our circumstances."

III.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 26.

Attention to the context of this scripture, as in many other cases, will speedily remove all doubt as to the correct interpretation. It has been contended that every one of the brethren, in being gathered together, should come prepared with a psalm or a doctrine, etc., so that each should contribute, as the Lord might lead and give the opportunity, to the edification of the saints. Is this the meaning of the language employed by the apostle? In the first place, the fact that "an interpretation" is included in the list (v. 26) shows that the reference is not to a time before the saints were in assembly, but to the time when actually gathered together. For how could a brother receive an interpretation in his own house, for example, of something which had not yet been uttered? "A revelation" is

also specified; and that certainly might be made at any time. But when we come to v. 30 we read, "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace"; and this affords a plain proof that the assembly was the sphere of the revelations. It must be borne in mind that when the apostle wrote this epistle there were but very few New Testament Scriptures in existence. Because of this, God, in His care for His people, met their need by direct and inspired communications when they were assembled. This might be through a tongue which would need an interpretation (v. 27), or by a revelation through a prophet. (vv. 29-31.) We conclude therefore that the apostle in verse 26 indicates the variety of the actions of the Spirit of God *in the midst of the gathered saints*; that there is no foundation for the thought that each brother is to bring with him something for common edification, but that he simply means, not that *every one* has either a psalm or a doctrine, etc., but that every one who does receive anything from the Lord is to be governed in its communication by the directions here given. (vv. 26-33.) To maintain the contrary would open the door to all kinds of abuse, tempt to idleness in preparation, tend to the ignoring of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of those gathered to His name, and lead to forgetfulness of present dependence upon the power of the Holy Ghost.

CHRIST is the truth, and the humble simple soul, taught of God, has it perfectly; he may not have realised it, but he has it all there—"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" in the mystery.

SAUL'S MISSION.

ACTS xxvi. 16-18.

IT may be said, without fear of contradiction, that there are no mere repetitions in Scripture. There are three accounts, for example, of the conversion of Saul, but it is patent to the most superficial reader that the object of each is entirely different. That in Acts ix. is the actual narrative of what occurred, written with the pen of inspiration, and thus giving facts as history; that in xxii. is Paul's own description of the change which had been wrought in his soul, when addressing the Jews in Jerusalem; and in giving it, the apostle, it is easy to perceive, sought to win his adversaries by viewing his conversion from a Jewish rather than from a Christian standpoint. (See *vv.* 12, 14.) The one we have in this chapter is also given by Paul himself—when standing before Agrippa. In this there are fewer details concerning his conversion, but a very full and precise account of his mission. Ananias therefore does not appear in this, for Saul's mission was from the Lord Himself, even as he says, in writing to the Galatians, "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." (Chap. i. 1.)

In the first place he was to be made "a minister and a witness." For this purpose the Lord had appeared to him. The word here translated "minister" is not that often so rendered in other passages (see 1 Cor. iii. 5), and which signifies one who acts or waits in service

(Rom. xii. 7, &c.), but means really, according to its usage in the New Testament, an appointed official servant. The apostle uses it in 1 Cor. iv. 1, although it is rendered "ministers." The Lord, who appeared to him, did give Paul an official place as His servant, inasmuch as the mission on which He was about to send him was personal to the apostle, and one therefore that could not be accomplished by any other. He was also to be a witness. Every believer is a witness, if not in the special sense of Paul. It belongs to what we are, and is bound up with our very profession of Christianity, so that in no place or circumstances can we divest ourselves of this character. Paul was to be a witness in a pre-eminent way, and hence the special appearances of the Lord and the revelations made to him on different occasions.

His service and testimony were to be in connection with "these things which thou hast seen," and with "those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Just as Moses in his mission to build the tabernacle was confined to the pattern shown him in the mount, so Paul was limited in his preaching to what he had seen and heard—to the things which he had received from the Lord. Even the Lord, as a witness in this world, placed Himself under the same conditions: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." (John iii. 11.) So with every servant and witness (see Acts iv. 20; 1 John i. 3); and thus Paul was never, on any occasion whatever, to be cast in his service on his own resources, on his own thoughts or wisdom. Everywhere, and at all times, he was to be faithful to his commission and its contents,

never permitting himself for one single instant to travel beyond. If he had no revelation from the Lord on any subject brought before him, he would have to be silent; for a divine messenger must be able to guarantee the truth of his message with the assurance "Thus saith the Lord."* The principle abides; for if any man speak, he should speak as "oracles of God." The least admixture of human thought or imagination will only corrupt the divine Word.

Another important qualification for the apostle's mission is found in verse 17. It is, as we read it, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." A preferable translation is, *Taking thee out from among the people and the Gentiles*; that is, while the apostle had been a Jew, he was now, for the purpose of his service, set apart from, taken outside of, both Jews and Gentiles, because he was about to be sent equally to both. His mission was from heaven, and in its performance he was to remember this, owning no distinction between people and people, or nation and nation. That Paul, on more than one occasion, forgot the full import of these words, is only too apparent; and it was his failure in this respect towards the close of his free activity (though graciously over-ruled by the Lord for the accomplishment of *His* purposes) which surrounded him with entanglements, and led him to be taken to Rome as a prisoner, instead of visiting the imperial city as an apostle. But, alas! we all know, in our

* The passages in 1 Cor. vii. (v. 25 for example) do not contradict this statement; for Paul wrote his epistles, as inspired, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (See 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.)

smaller measure, the difficulty of remembering that we have lost our nationality through association with Christ in His death, and also of living in spirit in that sphere "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all."

The object of his mission as here given is fully stated in verse 18. Remark, first, that he is distinctly sent. This is a principle of the first and abiding importance. How many run without being sent, and would be entirely unable to show the credentials of their mission! *Every servant, whatever may be the character of his service, must be both called and sent*, and in this Paul is pre-eminently a pattern. The prime object then of his mission was to open the eyes both of Jews and Gentiles. What a revelation of the state of men is thus made! For if their eyes had to be opened, they must hitherto have been fast closed in darkness; and how well Paul knew, from his own experience, that such was the sad condition of all! But how, it may be asked, was Paul to open blind eyes? His part was to proclaim the gospel of the glory of Christ, to be thus, in fact, a witness of what he had seen; and he received power to carry on this blessed work. (Compare Col. i. 28, 29; 1 Thess. i. 5.) God's part was to cause the light that streamed from the message of His servant to shine into the benighted souls of those that heard the gospel. The apostle could thus write of himself, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Man's part, for which however he was entirely dependent on God, was to receive, bow to,

accept the message proclaimed; and hence all blessing was to come, as in the last clause of the verse, "by faith that is in" Christ.

To have the eyes opened may be taken as the foundation of all the other blessings named. Some indeed render the passage thus: "To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins," etc. When the eyes are opened to discern their real condition in the presence of God, when a real divine work has thus commenced, souls must turn, as Saul himself did, from darkness to light, to Him from whom the light has come, and consequently from the power of Satan (for his kingdom is limited to, yea, is darkness) unto God. That all this needs divine power at every step every one who has trodden the path knows full well. And in every conversion, as has been pointed out in Saul's own case, the object God has in view is to break down all self-confidence, and to teach the soul that, guilty and lost as it is, it has absolutely no claim upon Him—except indeed for judgment on account of manifold sins. In no other way could grace be apprehended; and it is only through pure and sovereign grace that any sinner can be saved. But He who sends His servants to proclaim the gospel makes adequate provision for all the sinner needs, and that according to the estimate and requirements of His own glory. Paul could consequently write, after telling us what he had been, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. i. 14.)

It will enhance our conceptions of grace if we observe the character of the blessings which are bestowed on those who are turned from the power of Satan unto God. The first mentioned is the forgiveness of sins, and this is because the sense of God's forgiving love in clearing from guilt is the first need of the awakened soul. Nothing will relieve the conscience but the knowledge of forgiveness—forgiveness ministered to the soul on the ground of the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. (Compare chaps. x. 42, 43; xiii. 38, 39.) Let it be remarked, moreover, that souls are turned to God *that they may receive* forgiveness of sins. This is pure grace, showing as it does that forgiveness is waiting for those who come with repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, there is "inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." They that are sanctified are those who are separated from the world, and set apart for God through the reception of His testimony concerning His beloved Son; and the inheritance among them is an expression to indicate all the blessings in which every believer will share with Christ and with His redeemed. It is an inheritance indeed; for, as Paul afterwards taught, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The words "by faith that is in Me" may be taken to qualify the whole verse; that is, it is through faith in Christ that blind eyes are opened, that deliverance from darkness and the power of Satan is experienced, as well as that forgiveness of sins and inheritance among the sanctified are received.

Such then was Saul's blessed mission in this dark world. He who had been the chief of sinners was to

go forth with light from the face of a glorified Christ in his soul, himself forgiven and delivered, commissioned by the Lord Himself to proclaim to all alike, whether Jews or Gentiles, the gospel of the glory of Christ; and He who sent His servant qualified him for His work, gave him his message, sustained him in his service, and glorified Himself in His servant's devotedness and activity.

A GOSPEL ADDRESS—REVISED.

MATTHEW xxvii. 50; LUKE xv. 17 to end.

YOU cannot understand the Gospel if you do not understand what is the matter with you. I believe the great lack of souls is that they do not know the nature of their distance from God. If that is not removed there is no true happiness; therefore it is a very important point to know the nature of the weight and of the distance which sin has created between God and man. What is the nature of the distance? All admit that there is a distance. Even heathen admit it. Cain admitted it. As eldest born he recognizes that there is a distance between God and man; but Cain's mistake was that he did not know the nature of the distance. That is where many a religious man is to-day. He is trying to make terms with God in order to remove the distance. But, beloved friends, he effects nothing but his own confusion, because he does not know the nature of the distance. Such an one is like a physician trying to cure a disease that he does not know. If I know what was the matter with me, and I know that it is removed, I am at peace. But this is the great lack. Now Abel says, "I will show you the right way." He sets forth that

there must be a victim, not chargeable with your offence, bearing the judgment of your offence, and, at the time of bearing it, having a personal excellency. The end could not have been obtained without death. Many have received the gospel as far as that Christ died; but they are not in liberty. They are saved, but have not peace. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." I desire to keep very distinctly before you the nature of the distance. If you turn to Genesis iii. you find there, when God's voice was heard in the garden, Adam hid himself, and as soon as God came near him he was conscious that he had lost his body in the sight of God; that is, that he was naked. Adam tried to hide himself among the trees of the garden. God said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" I believe that is the first sense of the soul near to God—fear. As the thief said, "Dost not thou fear God?" Why did he fear? Man has the sense that he is under the judgment of God. "I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" The devil did not. Nearness to God made him sensible of it, and then he tried to hide himself among the trees of the garden. Man likes to conceal himself from God amidst the glories of this world. The judgment is, "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That man in whom sin is must go in death. It is not enough that another should die for sin, there must be also resurrection from the dead. I trust that you understand the nature of the distance.

Now I come to the fact that you could not remove God's judgment yourself. It is impossible for a man to save himself. "Ah!" you say, "now you put me in a

corner." I am very glad of it. Is there no door open for you? Yes, mercy. Mercy is your only door. I do not know whether you remember that there were four lepers at the siege of Samaria, and they said, "If we stay here we shall die here, and if we go into the city we shall die there." Is there no door then open for these wretched men? Yes, there is—mercy. Mercy from their enemies. "Let us go to the Syrians," they say. "If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." Only mercy is open. They trusted to mercy, and what did they find? When they came to the camp of the Syrians no one was there. The Syrians had left their tents and their horses and asses in the camp, and fled for their life. The lepers ate and drank and made a fortune, and then became evangelists. They went back to the city and told what they had found. Mercy is the door for you the moment you see that your distance is irretrievable, for I need not go into works of supererogation in Romanism, doing good works to make up for bad ones. Generally a man will own himself to be a sinner, but he is not aware that death is on him, that he has lost his body in the sight of God. Hence, we read in 2 Cor. v., "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked," that is, without a body. That is the judgment of God, "the wages of sin is death." It is not made a question of bad works. Some pious people think that Christ's righteousness can be a set-off for their unrighteousness. You have not met the judgment of God there. You must be found before God in another Man, and not in the one who offended God. It is plain that death is the judgment of God on man. "The wrath of God" abides on the unbeliever. It is *on* him.

Next I come to the fact that you cannot save yourself, but God tells you in His Word that His own arm hath brought salvation. How has it come? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He came to do the will of God, He says. "A body hast Thou prepared Me," and "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Now I come to most marvellous grace; that is, that God, the One who was offended, is the One who removes the offence from His own side. He is offended by man's sin. Your body must go in judgment. You have lost it as it is for ever. It is consistent with the holiness of God that you should lose it. The creature who sets up his own will against God cannot continue now in grace. God undertakes to remove the distance. In John i. 29 we read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Do you think a pious Jew would understand that? He would not see that God could require a Lamb, appropriate the Lamb; he would be himself thinking of his salvation, but not of the One who was offended. The One who was offended is the One first relieved, to His own infinite satisfaction and glory. You have offended against God, and God Himself (for you could not have removed the distance), God in His most marvellous grace Himself removes it. I sometimes explain it by the example of a child who has broken a clock. He has to go to his room, and stay there till the clock is mended. He stays there for weeks. At last the father says, "He frets so much, I will mend it myself." See the effect on the child. If he has any

sense he is deeply touched with the father's love, and also with respect to the removal of the offence. If the father mends it himself he cannot find fault with the way it is done. God has provided a Lamb Himself, and He has removed the distance Himself.

Now I turn to Matthew xxvii. 50, and what do you get there? "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." As we read in Genesis iii., the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Christ dies. He has borne the judgment. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He cried "with a loud voice." His strength was unimpaired. It was not that He was worn out. He gave up His life of Himself. What was the effect? "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." The distance is gone from God's side. God has found the Man who was typified by the golden ark in the Holiest. Nothing could be more marvellous. The offence is gone from God's eye in Christ. He had found a Man who could remove it, and hence we read, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The testimony is that the distance on God's side is gone, and He can "be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." How wonderful grace is, that God can come forth, the distance having been removed, and embrace the returning prodigal. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Now I turn you to Luke xv., which I

also read, and you see how the One who was offended receives the offender. Nothing can be plainer. If I read a gospel sermon, I am told how a man finds relief. I say, and insist on it, that the One offended has been first relieved. The God whom sin hath offended has been relieved. The offence has been removed from His side by Christ. As He says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." When did He say it? When Judas had gone out; when man was at his worst. Man then, as Judas, was at his worst, and "now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Where? In the most distant spot—in death. As another has said, and truly, "God was indebted to a man for glory, but that man was His own Son." "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him."

Now I want you to understand what grace is. It is wonderful that when the sinner turns, God is for him. He has been relieved of all the offence, and He can receive him joyfully. Is it to put him back to the place he had before the fall? A man in innocency in the garden of Eden? No; but something infinitely higher. People say the need is the measure of the grace. It is not true. The grace is infinitely beyond the need. The greatness of the grace roused the jealousy of the elder brother. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends"; but your son, who has spent all you gave him in riotous living, you welcomed to the highest festivity. He did not begrudge that his brother should be forgiven, but that he should be feasted in this great way. The fatted calf was kept for the chosen guest. The guest had come, and that guest was the prodigal son. Many do not

believe it, but here it is. Because God's heart has been relieved, and now He can satisfy His breast, because the MAN who removed the judgment at the same time glorified Him. I will not add much more, but I just turn to Luke xv. There are three parables in the chapter. One was the shepherd. If Christ had not died God could not have come out in righteousness to receive the prodigal, and the prodigal could not have turned to God. The light works in his soul, and he comes to himself. He is led to go and see what he can get from his father. "The goodness of God" leads him to repentance." It is important to bear in mind that he goes the contrary road to his mother Eve. She said in act, "I can do better for myself than God acts." She took of the tree, and did eat it. She walked in independence. Now this poor prodigal son, when brought to the lowest point, is reduced to a state of misery. Everyone is in a state of misery before he is converted. I know it, because I was there myself. Saul of Tarsus, who thought that he was the pink of everything good, had to fall to the ground.

Now it is here where the sinner is. The prodigal comes to himself. He says, "I will arise, and go to my father." He believes that there is good in his father. There is good in God; and, believe me, it will be terrible misery to the lost when they find out for the first time that there is goodness in God. "Make me as one of thy hired servants" was the prodigal's gospel. Now he comes, and what is his surprise when his father falls upon his neck and covers him with kisses! Most unexpectedly, the prodigal found his father was on the best of terms with him. How could he be so? If you turn to Matthew xxvii. you will understand

how God can "be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Here we get the feelings of the Father, the joy of the finder. How little we take in the fact that God has removed the distance by His Son, and that there is delight of heart in God in receiving the returning sinner. Christ said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." God has an interest in the gospel. Hence our need is not the measure of His grace. God's heart is the measure of it. The prodigal knows that he is not fit for his father. The father replies, "I will make you fit." The moment the best robe was on him he was fit, and he went in. The father says, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." I do not dwell on it. The Lord alone can fix it in your heart.

If I speak to one thoughtless person here to-night, I ask you, When you are brought to God what will you find? You will find that God has to His own infinite and entire satisfaction removed all that was against you in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will never revive it, because man under judgment has been judicially terminated there, and He delights to receive you returning to Him. You are brought back to share in the festivities of the Father's house. The one fact I desire to lay upon every heart in this room to-night is, that God can "be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"; that is, that He has removed the distance on His own side. He has removed in the cross the man under judgment, and now He has the

Man who bore the judgment risen from the dead. There is only one passage more—Luke xxiii. 39—that I will say a word about. The thief goes into paradise from the most degraded position in which a man could be found in this world. “To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Not a paradise of man, but the paradise of God—in the same nearness as Christ—in company with Him. If you look at Matthew xxvii. there is the point. The door to God Himself is thrown open. And now the thief by divine grace goes in with the Son of God into the paradise of God. Nothing can be more marvellous.

J. B. S.

SERVICE, WORSHIP, AND THE PRIESTHOOD.

EXODUS xxvii. 20 ; xxviii.

HAVING considered the structure of the Tabernacle and its vessels, we now find in this portion its services and worship, with the position and character of those who served in it—the chief and central figure being the person of the high priest. The subject is introduced by a command to the children of Israel to bring pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn *always*. This command revealed another detail of the great privileges accorded at that time to the children of Israel. They were associated with the giving forth of the light which God ordained in the sanctuary which He had pitched among them. We are not now considering the vessel of the light, but *the giving it forth*. It shone *then* in connection with *the shadows* of good things to come. Nowhere else could the light of God have been found among men but in Israel.

The action of the Spirit of God in testimony was in the midst of that people, and had they treasured the privilege, the testimony would have been light to the nations around. (See Deut. iv. 6.) We have only to read what is written in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms, to see that Israel was the depositary of every testimony of God, and of every revelation of Himself and of His purposes and ways, by the Spirit in His word. This testimony was necessarily in measure then, for it was only when He came who was the Son, the sent One speaking the words of God, that the Spirit was given without measure. When Israel will have received this One, then this purpose of God for the giving forth light upon earth will be accomplished in them. It is when the Redeemer has come to Zion that Jehovah's covenant with them will be established in the words following: "My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." This is immediately followed by the prophetic summons, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." (Isaiah lix. 21; lx. 1.)

But the light is here introduced in connection with a feeble though privileged people; hence we now read of the light being maintained through the service of the priestly family. The service of the children of Israel was to bring the oil to cause the lamp to *burn always*, but the speciality of the care of Aaron and his sons was to order it from *evening to morning* before the Lord. The next chapter will open out to us the character of the priest on whom after all (see Lev.

xxiv. 3) the maintenance of the light in Israel, and so for all nations (looked at as such), depended during the darkness of the night. That is, during the dark night of Israel's history, the ordering of the light is the care of the priestly family, but in reality depends on the High Priest, that is, upon Christ in the heavens.

Whatever analogy there may be in the great Priest maintaining the light in connection with a failed church, so that in spite of the failure the testimony of God has been recovered to the church with something of its original lustre (not that its own lustre fails, it is dimmed, alas! by the vessels), yet the Christian position to which we have been recalled is that we walk in the light as He is in the light—that we are light in the Lord. Let us trace this light in connection with Christianity. First, in John i., we have the declaration as to the word. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." True, the darkness did not comprehend it; but there it was in its own intrinsic character. It was the light *of life*, and that *for men*. So the Lord speaks in ch. viii., "I am the light of the world." It could not now be confined to Israel. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He was the Word, and yet a man, the Son, the sent One upon earth, speaking the words of God. The Spirit also was there without measure, and (as another has said) the words of God were realised in the life of a man. The light of life was there; His words were Spirit and life. As long as He was in the world He was the light of the world, but the darkness closed in upon those to whom He specially came, until it culminated in His being delivered up by Judas, and

night was there. (John xiii. 30.) And now in the glorifying of God in the cross, and Christ's consequent place in glory, we have the full revelation of God in light. The Christian is in the light of this revelation, and the effect of it is that being the word *of life* to the believer, he is now a child of light. (Comp. John xii. 36.) He is light in the Lord, for what the word reveals is true in Him and in the believer. Thus the true light now shineth, the Spirit of God who abides with us being the energy by which the light is given. It is really by means of Christ and the saints as the priestly company (Aaron and his sons) that the light is ordered and maintained during the darkness of Israel's night; but we can go further (for the great purpose of the lamp was *to burn always*), and see how the ordering of the light when Israel's darkness is past is still connected with Christ and the church as the vessel of light (Rev. xxi. 23, 24), for the holy city will be the shekinah of glory that will arise upon Israel.

The purpose in separating a priestly family to Himself is here described in the words of the Lord to Moses. First, that Aaron might *minister to Him* in the priest's office (*vv.* 1, 3, 4), and, secondly, that his sons might be joined with him (*v.* 41) in this ministry to the Lord. We have to notice here that "ministering to Him" is not the question of a soul drawing near for acceptance to the place of meeting provided for a sinner at the brazen altar, but of the privilege of drawing near, according to the desire of the Lord Himself, into the sanctuary, according to the glory and perfection of His own presence. The sanctuary was thus not only a witness in its construction of what those glories and perfections were, but also the place of

service of the anointed priest, according to the same glories and perfections. In the administration of the fulness of times the will of God will be accomplished in the heading up of everything in heaven and earth in Christ, and the universe of bliss will be filled with the glories of the anointed Man. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the Lord seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He is thus seen as occupying the place of dignity and power as the appointed Heir of all things; but in His priestly character He is first presented *to us* as the High Priest of *our profession*, able to succour the tempted and to sympathise with *our* weakness. (ch. iv.) In chapter ix. we reach the great truth that He appears *in the presence of God* for us, and in chapter x. that He has come to do *the will of God*, and also that He is a great Priest over the house of *God*.

In order that the glories of such a Priest should be figured in Aaron, it was necessary to clothe him with garments that were made for glory and beauty. What is personally and officially true in Christ was thus set forth. The first and chief garment is called the ephod. Like the veil, it was made of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen; there was also gold, while cherubim are absent; for in the priest it was not the question of maintaining by judicial action that which was due to the Lord in His own sanctuary, but of ministering to Him therein. In the ephod then we have first, gold—God's righteousness, suitability for His presence according to His holy character. The other beautiful materials were wrought with the gold into the garment of fine twined linen, which figured the person of Him who said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me."

The embroidered girdle was of the same materials, and bespeaks the great characteristic of the garment we are considering, indeed the word "ephod" has the sense of being "girded on"; we can thus understand how ministry to the Lord was therein portrayed, finding its accomplishment in Him who also said, "I come to do Thy will, O God." The blessed Lord emptied Himself, taking a servant's form, becoming in the likeness of men. Thus He took the place in which He could be the girded servant of God's glory. In the majesty of the heavens He now sustains in His own person the varied glories in which God is to be displayed according to His own righteousness; and also in blessed love He sustains the people of that love, in whom the display of the same glory is to be made good.

Two precious stones set in gold were placed on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod and fastened to it with chains of gold. The names of the children of Israel were graven therein *according to their birth*. Their birth was their title. In the dealings of God with each He might distinguish one from another, either in His sovereignty or His government, as Ephraim was set before Manasseh, or Judah given the royal place, or Levi the priesthood. Here all are borne, according to their birth, on the shoulders of the high priest for a memorial before the Lord. In addition, there was another piece of embroidered work, likewise of the same materials as the ephod, and inseparably connected with it, called the breastplate of judgment. In this were settings of twelve precious stones, with the names of the children of Israel also engraven in them, each several gem bearing a name. We notice, that as with the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces, so here, the names

of the precious stones alone are given, the names of the tribes are not mentioned. Each name was in a gem, but the name is lost in the gem, and the gem alone is seen. It is thus in the heavenly city. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are in the foundations, but their names remain unmentioned, and they are seen alone in the beauty and value of the costly stones with which the foundation was garnished. The breastplate was attached to the ephod above the embroidered girdle with a lace of blue that it *should not be loosed from the ephod*. The high priest could not be in the presence of God without bearing on his heart the names of the people of God before Him. Whether it be power or love, both alike are good to the feeblest heart.

The breastplate is called the breastplate of judgment. We might have thought that it would be called the breastplate of love, but it is in this that love is made perfect with us, that we might have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world. What can the holy judgment of God say to those who are only seen as written in each precious stone? Connected with this holy judgment, Moses was to put into the breastplate the Urim and Thummim—lights and perfections—that is all we know as to the meaning of those words. They shone in the breastplate, and made manifest the beauty and perfectness of the setting of the names according to the judgment of God. When the saints are manifested before the judgment seat of Christ in bodies conformed to His body of glory, the judgment-seat can only declare the divine satisfaction with each saint who appears in that glorious likeness. Other details as to works will come out, and everything come into manifestation,

but the brighter the light that shines there, the more will be manifested the perfection of Christ in which each saint appears. What will be actually true in the saints then is realised here as faith looks at the breast-plate of the High Priest.

We refer to one other subject connected with Urim and Thummim. By these enquiry was made of the Lord for the guidance and direction of His people. (Numbers xxvii. 21.) If all our conduct is to come into manifestation at the judgment-seat of Christ, it is well for us to know, that present direction as to it is in accordance with the light of God's holy judgment as to the position in which grace has set us before Himself in Christ.

Thus far we have considered the garment which specially characterised the office of the high priest. Another garment called the robe of the ephod was worn beneath. This was entirely of blue, and designated that which was personal, as the ephod that which was more official. It brings before us the person of the Lord as the heavenly Man. It is blessed to look beneath the glories and offices of Christ and see the heavenly nature and character which were His—He that came down from heaven, and who has ascended up where He was before. On the hem of this robe were golden bells, and pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet alternately. The fruits which flow from the glories of Christ, and the testimony of divine righteousness, were connected with His heavenly character. The robe was upon Aaron *to minister*, so that his sound should be heard when he went into the holy place, and when he came out. The testimony of divine righteousness is first heard on the entrance of Christ

into the holy place. He is there as Jesus Christ the righteous, but the bells being upon *the hem* of the robe of heavenly blue would show that the sound is for those upon earth, but in the first instance by the Spirit in the church. Now that Jesus has gone into heaven the Spirit has come from thence to those who now form the assembly, and bears witness as to righteousness, because Jesus is with the Father. (John xvi. 7-10.) When, as the High Priest, He comes out, and the sound of divine righteousness is heard by the earthly saints, it will still be made manifest that righteousness has been established in the heavens in the person of Jesus, and from thence it will look down upon the earth. (Psalm lxxxv. 11.) Fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God are inseparably connected with the sound of divine righteousness testified in the heavenly Man. The curse pronounced on the fig tree—"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever" (Matt. xxi. 19)—teaches us the solemn fact that the first man, even under the cultivation of God as in Israel, is now under the sentence of God as a withered and worthless tree. It is from the heavenly Man that fruit-bearing must come (John xv. 4), and it is now by the Spirit that fruits are produced (Gal. v. 22), which are to the glory and praise of God. When the time comes for Israel to revive, they will blossom and bud and fill the earth with fruit, the testimony of divine righteousness in Christ will have reached their ears, and they will know that the source of their fruit-bearing is no longer to be sought in their ability to keep the law, but in the Jehovah who has received them in grace, Jesus their Saviour, who prophetically has told them, "From me is thy fruit found." (Hosea xiv. 8.)

A SOUND MIND.

THE ending of the second Epistle to Timothy is full of interest, in that we discover the character of a sound mind in the apostle where an unbeliever would see nothing but commonplace remarks. "Would the Holy Spirit," says the infidel, "record Paul's request to have his cloak brought to him?" Yes, indeed; for it shews care and order; even in worldly affairs it is no sign of power to ignore little things whilst one is occupied with great ones; and in God's ways nothing is too great or too small. It is a wonderful thing that after the miracle of feeding the thousands the fact of gathering the remains is recorded; wonderful, but very blessed, for God does not squander, though He gives to all richly to enjoy. Can a man, whose life was employed in teaching the highest truth and God's deepest counsels, think of a cloak and books? Certainly. Paul was not a fanatic, whatever Festus and others might say.

It is a very important passage for us; for if God in His grace has given us the highest and most blessed truths, and a spirit of power and love, there is the ballast—the spirit of a sound mind. (Chap. i. 7.) This character is seen all through the passage, from the 9th verse to the end of chapter iv. Demas had abandoned Paul, having loved this present age. The two things could not go on together; that is, following Paul and loving the world; and Paul was given up. The apostle's judgment is simple and clear as to this.

His appreciation of the change in Mark (who had given up and left Paul many years before) is also to be noticed.

Now come the cloak and the books. A cloak is not to be thrown away; and I have no doubt it was as cold in a Roman prison then as it is cold in Rome now in winter; and the man of God can call for the useful covering. Many have thought that the "parchments" may include some of the inspired epistles; it is very likely, and the care taken should be a lesson to us in any work where writing is in question.

The discrimination of the apostle is a further proof of the sound mind. In that which follows we have an example of this; that is, in the distinguishing between the guilt of Alexander, who opposed the truth, and that of the poor Romans, who had not sufficient courage to stand with Paul. Alexander is an enemy of the truth, and there is nothing to be said but, "The Lord reward him according to his works!" The Roman converts were afraid to stand by the champion for the truth, and, at his first answer, left him standing alone. I recollect a sergeant, who had been in the Crimea, telling me of a battery composed of young soldiers who all ran away from the guns when the first Russian shot roared over their heads, and left only the captain and one or two old soldiers at the embrasures. The case here is similar; but there is a great difference between the coppersmith (the enemy) and the Romans, who were rather cowardly recruits. "May this be not laid to their charge!" says the apostle, very different to that which he had said in the other case. It is an important thing to distinguish between those who are opposed to the truth, and those

who are afraid to stand for it; and this is what Paul does in this case. It would be well to-day to bear this in mind.

It has often been remarked that the epistles to Timothy do not treat of the mystery or of the church as the body of Christ; but this second epistle begins, as we noticed with God's resources, "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," and the Lord's faithfulness to those who are standing for Him, when many have given up the true testimony. Whilst suffering patiently the faithful apostle is an example of the calm spirit and sober judgment which should characterize the man of God; there is no exaggeration here, but true discrimination. With those who oppose and withstand the truth we have no authority to use violence; the Lord will reward them according to their works. When courage is needed mercy can be looked for from the Lord for the weak.

The simple confidence in the Lord, and the sense of His presence, are very blessed. "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me." There must have been a striking answer to Nero—"that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." It is no stretch of imagination to see Paul standing before the scowling emperor, and giving a full account of the gospel confided to him from heaven.

The Lord was with His servant, and the lion was tamed for the moment: He can subdue the most terrible. May we so walk in our little service, that He may stand by us in all trial!

This was not all; there was a confidence in Paul that carried him on in spirit to the heavenly kingdom; that is, to the time when, far from Roman prisons and

prætorian injustice, he should be crowned and acknowledged by the Lord—by Him who, unjustly condemned Himself and rejected upon earth, is waiting for us in His heavenly kingdom. He should deliver His servant from every evil work, and preserve him, as He delivers and preserves us, and shall keep us to the end. The *preserving* [saving] is the very essence of this epistle; it is a question of our serving the Lord amidst all the influences of evil, and of His protecting care all through the course.

“Guarding us through the deadly fight.”

We can join in the apostle's tribute of praise: To Him “be glory for ever and ever!” It is a wonderful and blessed thing to find saints upon earth of sound mind (no fanatical enthusiasts) calmly counting upon the Lord's presence and the intervention of His divine power, knowing His full protection whilst they are in the very territory of the enemy. Praise be to the Saviour God!

The apostle's wish for Timothy, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit,” is very blessed. May it be so too for us, that there may be more simple and full communion with our blessed Lord, as we discern His way in the present evil time.

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTE.

LEVITICUS v. 11, 12.

It is only God Himself who can fully estimate the value of the sacrifice of Christ; but every believer, whatever the degree of his apprehension, comes under the efficacy of the sacrifice according to God's own

estimate of its value in His sight. This is an immense comfort as showing that it is only our enjoyment, not our acceptance, which is affected by the feebleness of our apprehensions. If this principle be understood the difficulty in the above scripture as to a sin-offering without blood will be removed. The following words of another will explain this more fully: "Let one be ever so dull in the apprehension of sin, or, consequently of atonement, still guilt was there if evil was touched. On the other hand, if truth of purpose was there in owning it, and owning it in such sort that the need of atonement before God was felt, which alone consequently is recognised as owning sin, the poverty of apprehension does not hinder the perfect forgiveness that rests on the value of the sacrifice; only Christ must be seen as a sacrifice for sin as one rejected, a sin-bearer for us. The fact of its being fine flour without blood hardly affects the principle of blood-shedding. It comes where blood-shedding is universally required for sin, and is only an exception in view of poverty to show that, in no case, without a sin-offering, is there forgiveness, and carries, as an exceptional case, the character of blood along with it as the principle. It is not that one kind of sin requires blood, and another not; but incapacity by poverty puts this in place of a bloody offering, and it is so accounted. Only if a real sense of needed atonement be there, the want of apprehension of the full import of sin and death, that is of Christ's death and blood-shedding, will not prevent the getting the benefit of that death and blood-shedding."

SAUL AT ANTIOCH.

ACTS xi. 25-30 ; xiii. 1-3.

It should ever be borne in mind that, while Saul had been converted in a most remarkable manner, and declared to be a chosen vessel for the Lord's service, his entrance upon his life's work was brought about by the interposition of Barnabas. A time of meditation, and of preparation through the knowledge of the Scriptures, is of all moment, that, to use his own words, "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16.) Such a season was provided for Saul in his retirement from Jerusalem to Tarsus. Of the character of his sojourn there, his habits and occupations, nothing is revealed. The Spirit of God never occupies us with the private lives even of the holiest of His people, lest they might come between our souls and Christ. Admiration of man is more easy to the natural heart than admiration of Christ. A veil therefore is drawn over the whole of Saul's stay in his native place, so that we do not even know whether he was engaged, during this time, in the preaching of the Gospel.

While, however, he was at Tarsus the Spirit of God had begun to work in a marked and most unexpected manner. So accustomed were even the first converts at Jerusalem, through their Jewish training and education, to confine their thoughts of the grace of

God to those of their own race, that, when they were scattered abroad "upon the persecution that arose about Stephen," they preached "the word to none but unto the Jews only." But there were some belonging to Cyprus and Cyrene, who, "when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians,* preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." (*vv.* 19, 20.) Communion with the mind of the Lord as to the people to whom the message is to be proclaimed is thus as important, as communion with His mind as to the message itself—a fact much to be pondered by every preacher of the word of God, for it is indeed the absolute condition of securing His presence and blessing.

News of the work at Antioch was transmitted to Jerusalem, and Barnabas was sent forth to ascertain whether it was the genuine result of the activity of the Holy Spirit. Free from all prejudice, he discerned its real character, rejoiced when he saw "the grace of God," and, throwing himself earnestly into the movement, he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord." The Spirit of God seizes the occasion, with all tenderness, to give a divine estimate of Barnabas's Christian character: "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." What a picture it is! It was undoubtedly the high tide of the spiritual life of this devoted servant. His labours moreover were greatly owned, for "much people was added unto the Lord." In some

* These were Greeks, not Hellenists, Jews, &c., as in chapter ix. 29.

way—in what is not said—Barnabas was made to feel the need of help in dealing with so many converts, and he was led, in connection with it, guided undoubtedly by the Lord, to think that Saul would be the suited labourer. At once he departed to seek him, “and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.” (*vv.* 25, 26.)

That bringing Saul to Antioch was his introduction to his mission may safely be assumed. We may learn from the manner of it that there is no necessity to thrust ourselves into the Lord's work, but that if there be quiet waiting on Him, together with the desire to know nothing but His will, the time will come when our path will be unmistakably indicated. Saul had waited, even though Christ in glory had appeared to him, and now his directions reached him, not according to the extraordinary method of his conversion, but through the invitation of a fellow servant—an invitation which came to Saul, being in communion with His Lord's mind, with the force of a divine command. Not a word is given of the conversation between these remarkable servants, meeting again after such a significant interval, for the Spirit of God is occupied not with the servants' interests, but with the Lord's interests in His work. We are therefore only told that Saul responded to the invitation of Barnabas, and returned with him to Antioch.

Three things are recorded in connection with Saul's first visit to this celebrated city. First, together with Barnabas, he for “a whole year” was “gathered

together in the assembly,"* and taught much people. He commenced, as he ever afterwards continued his course, with incessant activity, that activity which was the fruit of the energy and power of the Holy Ghost. Secondly, it was at this time, and in this city, that the disciples were first called Christians. It is quite possible, as often contended, that this name was given in contempt by their adversaries; but the Spirit of God has adopted it (see also 1 Peter iv. 16), and it served to mark the disciples off from the Jews and other sects, as well as to betoken their relationship to Christ. If He is *the* anointed One, His people, through His grace, are also anointed with the Holy Ghost, and this truth is well expressed by the term "Christians." Thirdly, Barnabas and Saul were sent to Jerusalem to express the affection of the Gentile saints for their brethren from among the Jews by ministering of their carnal things to them in a time of dearth. They felt their oneness in Christ, and proved that they were common disciples by the exhibition of their love.

No information is given us of what transpired in Jerusalem on this visit. The fact only is stated. The Spirit of God was still occupied with higher interests—with the progress of the word of God in the face of the deadly opposition of the enemy. Herod dared, about this time, to set himself against the people of God; "he killed James the brother of John with the sword," and, to ingratiate himself further with the

*There has been considerable discussion as to the exact meaning of the words so rendered; but the sense is evidently that Barnabas and Saul were continually "gathered together" with the believers in Antioch with the object of teaching and edification.

Jews, he also proceeded to have Peter arrested. Peter was rescued from his power by angelic interposition; and very soon this enemy of God and of the disciples, on the occasion of his accepting divine honours from the populace of Tyre and Sidon, was smitten by "the angel of the Lord, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." (Chapter xii. 20-23.) Satan raged, but the word of God, spite of Satan's enmity, grew and multiplied. Whether Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem during Herod's persecution cannot now be ascertained; but it is not without significance that we are told, immediately after Herod's death, that "Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." (v. 25.) How little could they foresee, at this moment, the influence John Mark would exercise upon their future relationships!

At the commencement of chapter xiii. a new scene is introduced. The assembly comprised, amongst others, both prophets and teachers, of whom the first-named is Barnabas, and the last is Saul. They were gathered together, for it is said that "they ministered to the Lord and fasted"; and from what follows it would seem that they were waiting on the Lord for special instruction and guidance. For while they were occupied as described, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me *now** Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The word "now" shows that this divine intimation was given in response to the prayers of the Lord's servants. How given, whether mediately or otherwise, whether through one of the prophets

* It is generally agreed that it should be so rendered.

present or in some other way, is not stated. It was given, and its source was acknowledged; for steps were at once taken to render obedience to the divine direction. They sought further help and qualification for the work by still fasting, and the brethren expressed their full fellowship and identification with Barnabas and Saul in the work to which they had been appointed by laying on them their hands.

It is not our purpose to follow Saul in what is termed *his first missionary journey*; but we may call attention to two or three important particulars. In company with Barnabas, he was sent out with the full fellowship of his brethren. Moreover, they were sent forth, as well as called, by the Holy Ghost. Surely this is to be regarded, not as exceptional, but as the pattern of all true service. "Yes," it may be replied, "but how is it possible to obtain now the same guidance, certainty, and power for our path?" By adopting the same means of waiting on the Lord, in spirit outside of the influences of this world, that, brought into the secret of the Lord's presence, and enabled thus to hear His voice, the intimation of His will may be as distinctly received. It is to be remarked also that a change took place almost immediately in the relative positions of Barnabas and Saul. Up to this moment Barnabas is always named first; but after the striking display of the Spirit's power (for Saul is here said to be filled with the Holy Spirit) through Saul in conflict with "a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus," who sought to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith, Saul is divinely given the lead in service. Henceforward it is Paul and Barnabas, and the reason is, that whatever

the devotedness, faith, and grace of Barnabas, Paul was the Lord's chosen vessel.

It was in connection with this same event that the name of "Saul" was dropped, and that of "Paul" was adopted. It is possible that he had been known by both names,* or, it might be, as others think, that he here receives the name of "Paul" because of his victory over Satan's craft and opposition, and the rescue of one of his captives in the person of Sergius Paulus.† However it is to be accounted for, Saul of Tarsus becomes henceforward Paul.

THE FAR-SPENT DAY AND THE FAR-SPENT NIGHT.

"Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."—LUKE xxiv. 29.

THERE is something peculiarly solemnising and expressive in the fall of the night, wrapping the earth in its deepening shades until all is lost in darkness. Light is pleasant to the eyes. By it we are naturally gladdened. It casts its radiance on all around, and causes earth in its beauty to minister its joys to us. We seem to be the centre of all its fragrance and sweetness, as though all things were made for our enjoyment. But the sun declines, and shadows of night fall, blotting out gradually all that has gladdened us, until at the last all is gone, and we are left in the solitude of darkness.

* "Saul" would seem to be the Hebrew, and "Paul" the Roman form of the same name.

† Compare Judges vi. 32; vii. 1, where Gideon was called Jerubbaal in connection with his throwing down the altar of Baal.

Not that *all* days are sunny. Days have their clouds, which are sometimes dark; yet in the darkest day there is not the intense solitude of the night.

The day of man's four thousand years' history was far from being bright. Thick clouds hung over it from first to last, only occasionally relieved by temporary gleams of brightness. Yet the gleams, transient as they were, sustained hope. Who could tell but that the clouds might pass away, and even yet there might be bright shining?

Luke's gospel opens with the account of a band of men and women who had doubtless long ago lost all hope connected with reformers and doctors of the law. But they looked for redemption at the coming of the Lord's Christ. How were their hearts gladdened at His birth! They trusted that it was He who should redeem Israel. Through the tender mercy of their God, the dayspring from on high had visited them. Now should pass away the dark clouds of man's sin and folly, and there should be the bright shining which should fill their hearts with peace and joy.

Who can tell the deep anguish of the souls of those men and women as the dark shadow of His rejection and cross fell over them! Though a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, yet the chief priests and their rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. Their last hope was gone. On the third day after His crucifixion, as the day wore away, two disciples set out from Jerusalem to go to their own home. Darkness had fallen upon their spirits by the ending of their fondest hope, and then they turned to the shelter of their own home. It is true that certain women of their company had

astonished them by news of His being alive; but they were slow to believe, for they could not understand it.

While they walked in their sadness and talked another joined them whom they knew not. Though He seemed to them a stranger, yet they could so confide in Him that they told Him all their heart, speaking of expectations formed and sadly blighted and done away. He talked with them, and opened to them the Scriptures, making their heart burn within them. It was not that He revived the day. He turned not back the shadow upon the sun-dial, no, not so much as by one degree. He commanded not the sun to stand still. The day still declined, but they had found One who could comfort them amidst the shadows, so that when they reached the point where their ways seemed to divide (for He made as if He would go further) they could not part with Him, they must retain Him as their solace in the darkness of the night. They constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." He graciously yielded to their constraint. He sat at their table, the unknown comfort in their sorrow, the One to whom their hearts clung when all else was gone. He took their bread into His hands, He blessed, He brake, and gave to them. In that significant action He was made known to them. It was His own inimitable style; it was HIMSELF. No wonder now that He gained their confidence, relieving their heart, and making it to burn by His own communications. They had regained Him in whom had centred all their hopes which had been broken. But not for *earth*, not for *their own circumstances*; He vanished out of their sight.

The gloom of night still rested upon the earth, but the light of another day had dawned upon their souls, a "morning without clouds." They could not have explained it, for as yet they understood it not, but they caught the impression of it. There was One, and He the object of their hearts, alive out of death, the beginning of a new order of things. What glorious unfoldings remained to be made of that new order, that new day connected with His resurrection! They had but caught its very faintest impression in their souls, yet such was its power that out again they went amid the dark shadows of this world to the spot where the resurrection of Jesus was known. They found the disciples gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed."

How many in spirit have trodden a similar path to that which led from Jerusalem to Emmaus! Their hopes have been connected with the earth and with flesh, and they have seen them broken one after another, until they felt they could only retreat into the little domain which they called their own, there to nurse their grief. But in retreating there has drawn near to them One who so asserted His place in their hearts that they could not spare Him; so that, as all darkened, their yearning language has been, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me."

But how great has been the change when eyes have been opened to know Him in His own proper place and glory, and there has thus burst upon the ravished vision the light of another day! Not all at once has it been understood; but when He is known as the One alive out of death, He leads the soul that is attached to Him into the light and glory of the place to which He has gone, into the unfading brightness of another world. Then through the darkness which overspreads this world, unrelieved by the faintest gleam, the soul awaits His appearing and glory.

It was the light of that glory which shone on Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. It was not that things here were to him lost in darkness; for, whatever the secret misgivings of his heart, the sun of man's glory was at its noonday height, when, in a moment, the shining of the surpassing light plunged him into midnight darkness. During the three following days of intense solitude he learned the end of everything connected with the flesh and the world. But then opened to him all the brightness of that spot from whence had come the light which had turned his brightest day into darkest night. Not for himself alone were the unfoldings of that surpassing glory; he was the chosen vessel for their communication to us. Through those communications the Spirit leads us to Christ in glory; and we find, not merely a solace in the darkness of the night, but the establishment of every purpose of God, and the abundant satisfaction of the longing of the heart that is devoted to Him. All is set up in Him in unflinching security and in unfading brightness.

Here on earth the darkness of night still remains.

But our apostle says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 12.) The darkness for the earth will soon be past, for the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Blessed day of undimmed light and perfect liberty! Yet we can add—

"But, oh, for us, blest Saviour,
How brighter far the lot,
To be with Thee for ever,
Where evil enters not;
To see Thee who'st so loved us,
Then face to face above,
Whose grace at first had moved us
To taste and know Thy love!"

May the Lord grant us to know more of the brightness of that day upon which faith lays hold, in connection with His own blessed person, that we may walk in peace, power, and joy through the darkness of the far-spent night.

J. R.

"COME." "FOLLOW."

IT is not a little remarkable that the first and last utterances of our Lord in the gospel by John consist of three words each. The first (i. 39) is "*Come and see,*" and the last (xxi. 22) is "*Follow thou me.*"

The first recorded word that falls from His lips in this gospel is the most welcome of all words as sounding from Him—"Come."

He had come Himself. He, the Word, in all the glory of His person, ever-existent, distinct, divine, omnipotent, having become flesh, and seen in the grace

that displayed His moral glory—He said, "Come." Welcome and winning word indeed! Unknown by the world He had made, refused by His own, He is a stranger in His own creation. But, spite of all, His heart still full of grace, He moves on in His path of love to man. The most absolute rejection does not chill the warmth of that heart, nor dry up its mighty springs.

Hence, when asked by two of the Baptist's disciples where He dwelt, His gracious reply was, "*Come and see.*"

And the result? "They abode with Him." *Where* is not stated. Whither He conducted them is not told us. A palace on earth He had not; oftentimes He had no pillow for His head. He could supply no luxuries to these two disciples, saving that of being with Himself. And is not that the palace of delight to the heart of the true disciple? Is that not heaven on earth

*"When, blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear,
And prisons would palaces prove
If Jesus would dwell with me there?"*

Heaven itself can furnish nothing better.

Well, they came and they saw, and they abode with Him, and they did not regret their choice.

The grace that attracted and kept these two men, Andrew and John, is exceedingly beautiful. Their conversion was one of heart-affection. They were won, drawn, attracted. Terror did not drive, self-interest did not impel. The one influence that acted upon them was that of grace. "Come and see"—fell upon their ears in divine and charming power, and

from henceforth they were captives in the chains of love. But the lips that say "*Come*" also say "*Follow*." To become a subject of grace is also to become a true-hearted follower. It is incumbent on "*them that are His*" to "*depart from iniquity*." The two features are as clear as the two sides of a coin. Let either be wanting, and the coin is spurious; it lacks the legal mark of the mint. Hence the "*come*" of grace in chapter i. 39 is balanced by the "*follow*" of authority in chapter xxi. 22.

"*Come and see*"—"Follow thou me"—forms the perfect libration, and proves the completeness of the coin.

But does the word "follow" sound as sweetly in our ears as did the "come"? We valued the grace, do we prize the claim? We rejoiced when we received all, do we find equal pleasure in the path of obedience? When we came and said we found all our need supplied; when the Lord says "*Follow thou me*," He means us to find pleasure in that which interests Him.

To follow Jesus is practical Christianity, and *service* which is not *following*, although perhaps very imposing and successful, is not of any real worth. Hence He said, "*If any man serve me, let him follow me*." (xii. 26.) Yes, the Lord would have that word engraven on the heart of each of His people—"Follow thou me." It is His last recorded sentence in the precious gospel by John. It must have fallen with tremendous force on the ear of Peter, to whom it was said. It had a mighty effect upon His after career. May we hear it in like manner, and may our course be truly formed by following the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?

MATTHEW xvii. 19.

THE transfiguration of our blessed Lord marks a crisis in His history. It was in one aspect the end of His trial as man, and at the same time it was God's answer to man's rejection of Christ. At the end of chapter xii. the Lord broke His links, according to the flesh, with the Jewish nation; in chapter xiii., instead of seeking longer for fruit from man, He goes forth as a Sower to sow—He would now produce fruit; in chapter xiv. the actual work of rejection commences with the murder of His forerunner, although the Lord continues His patient ministry in the midst of His people; in chapter xv. He reveals, and passes judgment morally upon, the wicked heart of man, and unfolds in contrast the perfect goodness of the heart of God; in chapter xvi. we have the church and the kingdom of heaven, the two things which were about to displace Judaism on the earth; and lastly, having announced His rejection, and the consequent nature of true discipleship, He spoke of the Son of man coming in the glory of His Father with His angels, when He would reward every man according to his works, adding, "Verily, I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." After six days this glorious scene was witnessed by Peter, James, and John, who were, as Peter afterwards wrote, "eye-witnesses of His majesty."

The dispensational character of these successive in-

cidents is easily apprehended, and when understood helps us to enter into their main significance. But, having pointed out the connection, we desire to consider the question at the head of this paper in its application to ourselves. For while the casting out of this demon from the child, when Jesus came down from the mount, undoubtedly foreshadows what will take place on the Lord's return to establish His kingdom (see Rev. xix. 11-21 ; xx. 1-3), there is special instruction in it for the saints of this period, who are left on earth to represent Christ during His absence. This will readily be perceived when it is pointed out that it was while the Lord was on the mount, that this distressed father brought his suffering child to the disciples, "and they could not cure him." (v. 16.) Remark further, to show the parallel still more strikingly, that the Lord had given the twelve "power against unclean spirits, to cast them out" (chap. x. 1), and yet when besought to exercise the power they could not—they failed, and had to confess that Satan was stronger than they.

That we may not miss the application let us pause and collect the points of correspondence between ourselves and these disciples. They are three: First, the Lord is absent in both cases ; secondly, we, as they, are continually in the presence of Satan's power, seen, alas ! sometimes amongst Christians, and always in the souls of the unconverted ; and, lastly, power superior to all the strength of the enemy is bestowed upon us (Ephesians vi. 10-18 ; 1 John iv. 4) equally with, not to say more than, the disciples. To this we might add that very often, to our sorrow, we have to acknowledge that we, like these disciples, are powerless in the presence of the display of the enemy's power.

Let us then enquire what was the secret of their failure. It lies on the surface, that they knew not how to avail themselves of the power which their Lord had conferred upon them; and He expressly tells them that the cause of this was their unbelief. So plainly does He lead their hearts into the secret of their failure that He adds, "For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Without the present operation of faith therefore, there can be no display of power through the servant, whatever his earnestness or zeal for the glory of God; whereas, on the other hand, if there be but the smallest degree of faith in exercise, divine power is so brought in that obstacles as large as mountains are removed, and all difficulties are victoriously surmounted.

But this is not all. Had the Lord paused here, it might have been concluded that this victorious faith could easily be obtained and become a common possession. The Lord therefore goes deeper, down to the root of the failure to use the power entrusted to His servants, when He says, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." By these words He teaches most distinctly that faith can only thrive in a congenial soil, that a certain state of soul is requisite for that confidence in God which can call Him in, and avail itself of His power in the emergencies of service.

What then is meant by "prayer and fasting"? Prayer is the realisation of complete dependence, and the expression of it before God, combined with con-

fidence in Him, and the expectation of His response to our cries. True prayer, therefore, presupposes that we have come to the end of ourselves, of our own wisdom, and of our own strength; for as long as we have the slightest trust in ourselves, in our own skill, mode of service, manner of speech, or in our natural abilities, we cannot be wholly cast upon God. This was the lesson Paul had to learn from the thorn in the flesh, and which he was taught by the Lord when, in answer to his prayers, He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.) By "fasting" we are to understand, not the mere abstinence from food, but rather the refusal of the things of the scene through which we are passing, the things which appeal to us as men, such as the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which the apostle Paul terms "worldly lusts." (Titus ii. 12.) He shows us in Philippians iii. that he himself practised fasting, and the only power for it, viz., having a glorified Christ as the absorbing Object of his soul. It was in the joy of possessing such an Object that he counted all things loss, all things whether good or bad (as men deem good and bad), because he desired to have Christ alone as his gain.

One therefore who prays and fasts in the sense of these words will be a true Nazarite, and a Nazarite state of soul is the condition which the Lord speaks of as indispensable for the activity of faith. If therefore a believer or a servant has not learned what it is to pray without ceasing, and to count all things loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord, he could not go forth expecting the fulfilment of the Lord's words,

“Nothing shall be impossible unto you.” That God in His sovereign grace, and in His purposes of blessing, may often work through instruments of another order is quite true, for “if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself”; still it remains true that none but those who are in the condition here described can confidently expect God’s irresistible power to work with and through them in their labours. It cannot be too often insisted upon that power is in God, not in the vessel, and consequently that the vessel must be in a suited state to receive and use the power. Undoubtedly the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer; but even He, divine as He is and unlimited in His resources, is not a Spirit of power within us, unless prayer and fasting are maintained. Do not many of us know from bitter experience, as well as from the teaching of Scripture, that the slightest allowance of the flesh grieves that blessed Spirit, and that when we go forth in service in that condition we are as weak and powerless as Sampson was after he had lost his Nazarite locks?

There is much then in these words of our blessed Lord to exercise our souls, especially at the present moment, and it may help to this if a few words of application are given. That our Lord’s instruction is primarily intended for the servant will scarcely be questioned; and hence what most nearly corresponds with the failure of the disciples to expel the demon from this afflicted child, is what is understood by the want of blessing in the preaching of the gospel, that is to say, when it is constantly and faithfully preached without, as far as is known, conversions following. Satan in such a case retains his hold upon his captive-

slaves. That God is working mightily in these last days through evangelists for the salvation of souls is undeniable, and is gratefully owned; but, on the other hand, there is many a place where Christ is constantly proclaimed as the Saviour of sinners to deaf ears, and before unmoved hearts. And what is the resource in such circumstances? Very often, instead of asking the Lord, as the disciples did, "Why could not we cast him out?" a special prayer meeting is held; the object of which is to beseech God to bless the preaching of His word. Would that such meetings were multiplied a hundred-fold! Fellowship with the heart of God in the gospel would prompt these on every hand. Not therefore as discouraging them, but simply as giving force to the scripture under consideration, it is urged that want of blessing in connection with the preached word should lead to the enquiry, "What hinders?" Is there a lack of prayer and fasting in the servant? Or is it in the believers associated with him? Has the word been preached in faith? and has it been heard by the Christians present with believing expectation? Such questions—self-examination, self-judgment, and confession—should always precede and accompany special meetings for prayer, or otherwise the desired blessing may not be received. Further observations might be made, but enough has been said on this head to promote searchings of heart in the presence of God.

The same principle might be affirmed concerning the meetings of God's people, especially when Satan causes his activity to be felt in disturbing their unity, in bringing sin, through his temptations, into their midst, or in provoking the manifestation of the flesh. Want of power to deal with these things and to cast out the

adversary may ever be traced back to the same cause as in the case of the disciples—unbelief, and failure in prayer and fasting. It is humbling to the last degree to have so often to acknowledge how ignorant we are of the enemy's devices, and, even when they are perceived, how impotent we are to frustrate them. We do not reckon sufficiently on the subtle activity of the foe, and, occupied with his instruments, we often overlook the hand by which they are wielded. But if through grace we return to prayer and fasting we shall be brought into such intimate communion with the mind of God that our spiritual vision will be so quickened, and our confidence in Him will be so increased, as to enable us to act at the right moment with divine power, called in by a living faith, for the deliverance of God's people from all the efforts of Satan to mar their testimony. Let us then make constant supplication that God may be pleased to raise up servants who, being men of prayer and fasting, and distinguished by the activity of faith, shall find that nothing is impossible to them.

THE FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT.

It has been well said of the epistle to Titus that it contains directions to an apostolical delegate, as to outward order rather than doctrine.

Yet we have some very important truths in it; the manifestation of the Word through preaching (by which God's full grace and promise before the world began are made known) should produce a wonderful effect upon the Cretans, and change the laziest, the

most degraded of the Mediterranean islanders, into active and devoted servants of God with a heavenly hope.

Perhaps in no place could the ruined state of man be more conspicuous than in Crete. Liars sometimes tell the truth, and this is the case, for once at least, with Epimenides (himself a Cretan), when he described his fellow-countrymen as being liars, evil beasts, and slow-bellies.

“What bad material!” man would say, and indeed it is too true. The law could do nothing with it; and this is one of the chief reasons why the apostle speaks so severely in this epistle of those who were attempting to judaize. But what the law could not do, through the utter badness of the material, grace has accomplished, setting aside the flesh for ever.

The epistle begins in a very remarkable manner. Paul's mission is according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth that is after godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. The sovereignty of God comes before us here. Long before Adam was created, or the degenerate sons of Japhet disgraced the island of Crete, God had chosen His own. He has elected certain men unto life, and this in His own absolute and inscrutable counsel.

The faith of the elect of God is the first characteristic of the apostleship of Paul here, and before looking a little at the epistle it may be well to notice this expression with those which accompany it. It is divinely in keeping with the subject; that is, with the mission confided to Titus—the task was a great one, putting things in order and establishing elders in each

town (verse 5); and I have no doubt that the Cretans were not very pleasant people to deal with.

Paul, then, speaks as an apostle according to the faith of God's elect; God has made known to believers the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand unto glory. We are upon ground at once lofty and clear, for we believe that the sovereign God has been pleased to choose us in pure mercy, so that we may inherit eternal glory. A whole world of light opens up before our eyes, our faith sees Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and we know that our portion is with Him for ever. Sovereign grace and mercy! There is nothing of the natural man here, nor of any religious system by which man can be improved, it is the grand truth of God's own choice, and the faith of those who are the subjects of it.

There is then a faith in the midst of this world of conflicting creeds which is the true one. The elect of God, by their very position, bow with adoration to His sovereign will, and receive His revelation without reasoning. Of course I do not mean that there are no Christians who reason (we are all, alas! naturally apt to ask "Why?") but the faith of God's elect is the simple and full belief in the whole Christian revelation. It is orthodoxy in the true sense, it is Christianity.

It is the faith of *God's* elect, and not a partial faith or persuasion, such as Calvinism, Armenian views, or any other "faith" where man has succeeded in narrowing the truth and forming a system. The Athanasian creed itself is not an adequate expression of the "faith of God's elect," for we need the whole revelation given to us in scripture of Christ's glory.

Sovereignty on God's side, dependence on that of the chosen believer, and divine grace and glory known in Christ.

The knowledge of the truth which is "after godliness" goes with this faith (it should not be translated "acknowledging," but rather "full knowledge") and makes the preceding phrase more clear, for this truth, whilst putting everything in its place, brings the soul into contact with God. When God is thus known there is true piety, which is very different from sanctimonious attempts to be good. Thus Paul maintained a godly walk in his arduous work, and he can encourage Titus to work amongst the Cretans (no sinecure) upon the principles which we have just considered. Paul gives to God His full place, and it would be a happy thing indeed were all Christians to follow his example in this.

Then the following sentence goes along with divine sovereignty. "In hope* of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." The end of the course is looked forward to, as always in such passages in Paul's writings; and we have the exclusion of all that is false as to God's word. He cannot lie, it is absolute. All that is not true is shut out, and this (blessed be His name) accompanies His sovereign choice.

We may consider later on, if God will, the effect of the manifestation of God's word in due time. There was a certain time chosen of God for making known His mind—when all man's failure had been exposed, his history run out, and his utter ruin proved. Crete,

* This is a peculiar term, expressing the condition upon which his apostleship was based.

no doubt, was a notorious example of this. Paul had the great work of preaching the word committed to him by our Saviour-God. We considered lately the manner in which he fulfilled His service.

We have now had especially before us the faith of God's elect as characterising the mission. May we know more of what this means. It is a great thing in the present day to be free of imagination and fanciful views, and to hold to the grand truths of Christianity. The soul that enters into this will not be frozen up in some narrow system where nothing but "election" is discussed, but will give His true place and honour to the sovereign Saviour-God.

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

LUKE ii. 41 ; ACTS ix. 17.

NOTHING is plainer, from the teaching of the word of God, than that there is a great difference between the actings and presence of the Holy Ghost before and after Pentecost. It must, however, be firmly held that He came upon, wrought in, and, as in the case of Elizabeth and others, even filled chosen vessels of God for special service. (Exodus xxxi. 3; Psalm li. 11; Luke i. 15; 2 Peter i. 21, etc.) On the other hand, it must be as strenuously maintained that there is a very great distinction between the character of His presence and power in past dispensations and in Christianity. Our attention is directed to this again and again. For example, to cite two scriptures only, John, referring to the words which the Lord had just uttered (John vii. 38),

says, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (v. 39); and the Lord Himself said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) These passages are conclusive as to the fact of the Holy Ghost coming in an altogether new way after the death, resurrection, and ascension of our blessed Lord. How then may the difference be defined? Up till Pentecost, the Holy Ghost wrought in every soul where divine life was found; Old Testament saints were born again, as now, through the action of the Spirit through the Word; He "moved" the holy men of old in the testimony they rendered in their prophecies; He even filled some, as we have seen, with His power to qualify them for their mission; and He "came upon" the servants of the Lord to enable them to accomplish any special service to which they were called, as in the case of Gideon (Judges vi. 34), Jephthah (xi. 29), Samson (xiv. 19; xv. 14), and many others. But while all this is true, He never *dwelt* as a divine Person in the believers of old; nor did He come abidingly upon them, and hence David cried, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. li. 11)—a prayer which could not now be intelligently offered, seeing that believers of this period "are sealed unto the day of redemption." The difference is thus immense, inasmuch as every believer now who has received the forgiveness of sins, in addition to being sealed, possesses the Spirit of God as the anointing, as the earnest (2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Ephes. i. 13, 14), as the Spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 15, 16), and, moreover,

the bodies of the saints are temples of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Much more might be added from John xiv.—xvi., but enough has been said to show beyond question that the Holy Spirit dwells in believers now in a way He has never done in any past dispensation, and as indeed He will never do in any future age. Heavenly relationship with the Father, in association with Christ, and union with Christ as Head of His body the Church, not to say more, are peculiar to Christianity, distinctive Christian privileges.

II.

ACTS iii. 19; JAMES v. 20.

In so far as our English translation is concerned, the word "convert," or "converted," is very seldom used; but the Greek word so translated is very frequently found. We have therefore abundant materials for ascertaining the meaning of the term conversion. Primarily it signifies "to turn towards," "to turn round," "to turn about," &c.; and hence, when applied to souls, it includes "turning from" their evil ways and sins, and "turning to" God. An example or two will make this apparent. Paul and Barnabas exhorted the people of Lystra to "turn from these vanities unto the living God" (Acts xiv. 15); Paul was sent to turn men "from darkness to light" (Acts xxvi. 18); and the Thessalonians are said to have "turned to God from idols." (1 Thess. i. 9.) In the full scriptural sense of conversion, therefore, nothing less than the change from the state of a sinner to that of a Christian is implied. In other words, a converted man in this aspect is one who has received the forgiveness of sins, and has been sealed with the Holy Ghost.

No doubt the word is often used of those who have been born again; but, strictly speaking, bearing in mind the full scripture sense of the term, such are undergoing the process of conversion—a process which is not completed until they are brought into the Christian place and position before God. It should be added that in examining the use of the word in scripture attention must be given to the subject and its context. The question is thus often put, What did the Lord mean when He said to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”? (Luke xxii. 32.) We are certainly not to understand that Peter was not “converted,” according to the truth of that dispensation, before this time; for it is very evident that he was a “converted” man. But the Lord speaks in this passage of his conversion, his “turning round” from his awful sin of denying his Lord into which he was so soon to fall. It is, in fact, what we often mean by “restoration.” So also James, as we judge, employs the word in chapter v. 20, for he expressly says, “If any of you *do err from the truth*, and one convert him.” If however it be asked, How could he in that case speak of saving a soul from death? the words of the apostle Paul should be remembered, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” (Rom. viii. 13.) It is not that a backslider, if he has been truly converted, may perish, but rather that the bearing of living after the flesh, the full issue of such a course, is death, and would be such were it not for the grace of God and the advocacy of Christ with the Father. The occurrence of the word “convert” in such cases does not therefore in any way, as will be at once observed, interfere with the interpretation we have given.

PAUL'S CONFLICT WITH PETER AT ANTIOCH.

GALATIANS ii.

IN Paul's first missionary journey, in companionship with Barnabas, he visited Cyprus, Perga in Pamphylia, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, with other places (Acts xiii. xiv.), and finally they returned to Antioch, "from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." Their first act, on their return, was to gather the church together, and there, before the saints, "they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Sent out from the bosom of the assembly, with the entire fellowship of the saints, they, on their part, in fullest fellowship with the saints, and counting upon their interest in the Lord's work, gave them a detailed description of what God had wrought through them in the proclamation of His word. They then resumed their labours in Antioch, for "they abode long time with the disciples."

It was of God that Paul and Barnabas should return to Antioch at this time; for the question of the relation of Christians to the ceremonial law was just coming up for discussion, and demanding an authoritative settlement. We thus read in the very first verse of Acts xv., that "certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren [and said], Except ye be circum-

cised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Whether Peter was then at Antioch, or afterwards, and whether these were the certain who "came from James" to whom Paul refers, cannot be decided with certainty. But the question raised in Acts xv. is one and the same, in essence, as that which Paul debated with Peter, as recorded in Galatians ii.; and it is a question, it may be added, of permanent significance for the church of God. The whole truth of Christianity is bound up with it, as well as the way of salvation for individual souls. We may therefore consider it as presented in the remarkable conflict between Paul and Peter, as narrated by the apostle himself.

A word or two may be first expended upon the actors in this striking scene. Peter had received a pre-eminent place amongst the twelve. To him the Father had revealed that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and to him the Lord had committed "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Ardent in nature, a man of deep emotions, and consequently eager and impetuous, he was characterised by true affection and devotedness to his Lord and Master. But trusting his own heart, he was sifted by Satan, and fell into the awful sin of denying his Lord, as the Lord had forewarned him. Through the Lord's intercession His poor servant was rescued and finally restored; and in proof of his entire recovery the Lord committed to him, in the presence of other disciples, the care of His lambs and of His sheep. On the day of Pentecost, and onward till the call of Saul of Tarsus, Peter was the leading apostle, the prominent figure in

the testimony of that day. Paul, as he himself has written, was "as one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Much the junior of Peter spiritually, and without the prestige attaching to one who had been a disciple when Christ was on earth, the companion of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, at the last supper; and in the garden of Gethsemane, it was a bold thing for Paul, and a thing demanding much courage and singleness of eye, to enter upon open conflict with Peter. What then was the cause of the conflict?

Some from Judea had taught the brethren, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." It was an attempt to revive Judaism, and to impose its ritualistic observances on the Gentile believers as a condition of salvation. Peter had been taught the folly of this in a remarkable manner (see Acts x. 9-16); and for the time he learned his lesson, for he said to Cornelius, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (v. 28); and after Peter had returned to Jerusalem he justified his conduct in eating with uncircumcised persons. Still further, when he went to Antioch he at first ate with the Gentiles; but when certain came from James, "he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." (Gal. ii. 12.) The effect was, Peter's influence being so great, "the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was

carried away with their dissimulation." Paul was thus left alone in his contention, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

The great question then was very simple. Was anything, circumcision or anything else, necessary for justification in addition to faith in Christ Jesus? If Peter had the mind of the Lord in separating himself from the Gentile believers at Antioch, there was evidently something else required. For why did he now refuse to eat with them? Solely on the ground that they were uncircumcised. (v. 12.) If then Peter were right, circumcision was still for profit, inasmuch as it conferred an advantage on the Jew. In other words, a work of the law must be added to faith in Christ for justification. It was a small thing, it might have been argued, and if the point were but yielded peace between the Jewish and Gentile believers would be established and preserved. But this "small thing" undermined the whole truth of grace, and cast a slur upon the work of Christ. It was therefore a supreme moment in the history of the Church; and to have accepted this addition to the gospel of Christ would have perverted it, made it "another gospel," to preach which would bring down God's displeasure and judgment. Hence Paul said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Chapter i. 6-9.)

Paul therefore had no other alternative, if he would be faithful to the trust committed to him, than to withstand Peter to the face because he was to be

condemned.* Peter was not, at this moment, walking "uprightly according to the truth of the gospel"; and consequently, painful as it must have been to Paul, he had to be rebuked. The case would not have been met by dissociation from Peter's practice, or by withdrawing to another field of service, for the maintenance of the truth of God was involved. In the presence of all the believers at Antioch, Paul therefore exposed and condemned the action of his fellow-servant; and the proof that he was in communion with the mind of God in doing so is the fact that he was led, as inspired of the Holy Spirit, to preserve the record of the contention. Peter, on the other hand, makes no allusion to it in his epistles; but to show that grace wrought in his heart for restoration, and hence, that he fully accepted the action of his younger colleague, he was guided to speak of "our beloved brother Paul" and of his writings. It was fidelity to God that administered the rebuke, and it was grace that enabled Peter to profit by it; and the issue was the preservation of the gospel of Christ.

The truth propounded by Paul in this conflict was never of more importance than at the present time. Affirmed by him both in the epistle to the Romans and in this scripture, it was forgotten almost as soon as the last of the apostles departed to be with Christ. It lay buried out of sight, except in the case of individuals, until Luther was raised up to proclaim it once again, at least, in measure. From Luther's day till now it has had one continuous struggle for recognition and

* So should the word be rendered rather than "blamed." Some would even say "convicted of evil."

acceptance; and it is not too much to say that, wholly rejected in Thyatira, it is fast dying out, if it has not already expired, in Sardis, and that it is entirely unknown within the borders of Laodicea. Paul therefore, or those who are imbued with his spirit, and who tread in his steps, are still needed to withstand those who, like Peter, whether through weakness, as in his case, or through enmity to the doctrines of grace, as with many others, corrupt the truth of God by human additions, and lay the foundation of salvation in rites and ceremonies of their own devising.

What then was the truth for which Paul contended? It was that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," and as a consequence he adds, "we," we Jews, "have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (v. 16.) But if this be so, what place could be found for circumcision? Hence he proceeds to ask, "If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners," as we should be if circumcision is yet requisite, "is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" The very question demonstrates its folly; and he then warns Peter, and all who hold with him, that to build again the things which he once destroyed was to make himself a transgressor. This Peter had really done by reviving the value of circumcision. Thereupon Paul proceeds to expound the deliverance of the believer, as exemplified in himself, from both the claims and the sphere of the law, through death with Christ. (vv. 19-21.)

Leaving the reader to examine for himself this significant scripture, we will content ourselves with calling attention to its main points. Through the law, which had exacted the penalty of transgression from Him who was "made a curse for us," the apostle was "dead to the law," for he had been "crucified with Christ"; and the object of his being dead to the law was that he might live unto God. (Compare Romans vi. 10, 11.) If, moreover, he was crucified with Christ, "nevertheless," he says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." As crucified with Christ, his old self, over which the law had claims, was gone for ever: it was now Christ—not himself, "not I"—that lived in him; and the Christ who lived in him, was, as the Son of God, the object of his faith, and the One who claimed all that Paul was, inasmuch as it was He who had loved him and given Himself for him. Paul had done therefore with the old master, the law, and henceforward it was Christ, and Christ alone that filled the vision of his soul.

ALL through the Gospels we see that it is the soul that clings to Christ, touched by His love and grace, that learns most.

A DISTRACTED heart is the bane of the Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have neither heart nor eye for the vanities of the world.

THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS.

THE next part of the high priest's dress is connected with the offerings and worship of the people of Israel. We have to remember that the special privileges of Christianity are not seen here; that is, there was no entrance into the holiest for Israel as there is for us now, nor had they the relationship and worship of children with the Father. Christians now see the One who bore their sins, in the glory of God, and have boldness to enter according to the value of the work which glorified God. The Son also places them in relationship with the Father. Still, looked at in ourselves, we are conscious of flesh and of that in us which is unsuited to the presence of God, and therefore can enter into the blessedness of being connected in our worship with One who, as He appears in the presence of God for us, is Himself "holiness to the Lord." The believer's place is now inside with Christ, but, with the sense of infirmity in himself, he has the consciousness of being in company with the great Priest over the house of God, on whose brow holiness appears, and is present to the eye of God.

The embroidered linen coat speaks of pure and perfect humanity, and of the graces wrought into that humanity as alone they could be in the person of Christ. The great Priest must needs be a Man, but what wisdom and grace in the power of the Spirit were inherent in Him! It would seem from Leviticus xvi. 4

that the high priest entered into the holiest in this garment on the day of atonement. The garments made for glory and beauty which we have been considering in their typical import had to be laid aside. This has a voice for us, shewing that the glories indicated in them as belonging to the office of the high priest could not be connected with a standing in sinful flesh, and such was the flesh of Aaron and his sons. Sinful flesh in them betrayed itself on the first day of their priestly ministration. (Leviticus x. 1.) Here we have the figure of the purity of the Lord as man—that holy thing born of the virgin, but in order to bring His companions with Himself into the presence of God He must put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This He has done to God's satisfaction, and now all the glories are worn by One who has entered into the holy place by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. On the day of atonement Aaron entered the holiest in the linen garments alone, the coat, the mitre, and the breeches; not with glorious garments, but with blood. He who now wears these glories is of another order, not of earth, but inherently pure as begotten of the Holy Ghost, and gone into heaven, eternal glory having been brought to God by His one offering.

Aaron's sons represent what Christians are as a priestly family, the companions of Christ. They had part with Aaron as a sanctified and consecrated company in "ministry to the Lord." We have seen that the glories of the sanctuary could not be connected with sinful flesh, nor must the nakedness of the flesh appear before God. The obligation of this injunction is seen in the words, "that they bear not iniquity, and die." Thus of old God's people were instructed that

His sentence of death was upon the flesh, it could not be uncovered in His presence. We are instructed in other places in scripture as to the wonderful portion allotted to the priestly family, but here the privilege of being of the family sanctified and consecrated to minister to the Lord, is before us. The word consecrate here means to fill their hands. (See xxix. 9, margin.) Aaron and his sons were a company whose hands were filled with the excellencies of Christ, and who entered into the delight of God in Him. The sweet savour of Christ to God filled their hands.

In chapter xxix. the actual sanctification and consecration is given. The first important point is that Aaron and his sons were washed with water. We may regard the washing of Aaron in two ways. First, as a sinful man he needed purifying equally with his sons. Secondly, as a figure of Christ, his washing with his sons presents to us the truth, that the moral cleansing of those who are Christ's companions is according to the actual truth of it in Him. The type thus sets before us that "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." It was blessed down-stooping in Him, according to the will of God, to come into the place of identification with the first movement of grace in those who needed cleansing. This is seen in that having become a man He went into Jordan with the repentant remnant of Israel. He needed no baptism in those waters, but He identified Himself with those in whom the Word was working through the preaching of John. He who was the Word connects Himself, as far as John's baptism went, with the action of the word in those who repented. Afterwards (see Luke viii. 21) He owns those who hear the word of God and do it as

connected with Himself. In order to get the full import of the cleansing which *now* is ours, we must pass on to the death of Christ, when the water of purification flowed from His dead side. His death not only expiates our guilt, but clears away from the eye of God the man who is impure in the moral springs of his being. What is of Christ then becomes the word of life to us, so that the new commandment is that which is true in Him and in us. *Our* moral cleansing is thus according to what Christ is as the heavenly Man. It is represented in principle here by Aaron and his sons being washed together, for we must remember that the washing was in view of a place in the sanctuary, where we now can enter as companions of Christ.

Aaron is then clothed by Moses, acting on God's behalf, with the priestly garments which set forth the glories of Christ. Thereupon he is anointed, the oil being poured upon his head. This marked him off from his sons in a special way, as in their case the anointing oil with blood from the altar is sprinkled upon them. Psalm cxxxiii. notes this pouring of the oil upon Aaron's head, whence it descended to his garments. When the Spirit of God descended as a dove upon Jesus no others were anointed; it was on His ascending on high that He received, as Head, the Spirit to give to us. He has this place of Head from whom all flows. It is His personally, and though His companions are anointed (see *v.* 21), yet in all things He has the pre-eminence. This place of headship having been assumed, typically in the power of the Spirit, Aaron's sons are clothed and then girded, and here Aaron and his sons are together in the girded service of the priesthood. The sons are to worship

with filled hands, and to serve in company with the anointed head. It is a blessed thought that the special place of nearness and worship belongs to men, to those who are of the order of Christ, the Anointed Head, to saints, and not to angels. This is set forth in the clothing of the sons of Aaron. Angels celebrate, but saints worship as a priestly company (Rev. v.), clothed with righteousness. (See Psalm cxxxii. 9; Rev. iv. 4.)

Now that Aaron and his sons are together associated in the priestly office the offerings are brought, in virtue of which they were sanctified to approach to God. There needs not only moral cleansing, but the dealing with sin before Him according to the exigencies of His holy nature. Sin is abhorrent to Him. Hence the sin-offering is first. Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the head of the bullock, and its blood is shed. This takes place at the door of the tabernacle. Some of the blood is put upon the horns of the altar, and the remainder poured out at its base. Note that the blood is not carried inside here, though the carcass of the victim is burned without the camp. Thus we have the dealing with sin under the judgment of God and guilt met, but not yet the blood carried within to give a place there. It is so in Lev. xvi., and it is the failure of the priesthood, as here established in connection with the brazen altar, which gave occasion for bringing out the deeper thoughts of grace in its abounding over sin, according to which entrance is now made into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Sin and sins were thus judicially dealt with, as they have been in the cross in order that priestly relations with God might be established. It is on this ground that they go into the sanctuary, but not within the veil.

Two other sacrifices are offered—the burnt-offering, setting forth the acceptance of Aaron and his sons, and the ram of consecration. In the former, by devotedness to death the excellency of the sacrifice was manifested, and the sweet savour arose to God in the fire of the altar. It was wholly for God. In the latter, there was the character of a communion offering, for Aaron and his sons eat of the flesh, but its chief import lay in the putting of the blood *first upon the right ear of Aaron*, and then upon the right ear of his sons as associated with him in devoted obedience; it is also put upon the thumb of *their* right hand and upon the great toe of *their* right foot. This was done also for cleansing the leper with the blood of the trespass-offering. In his case the thoughts and actions and ways were purified according to the estimate of the blood as shed for sin and defilement. In the case of the priests it is the blood of a sweet savour offering which not only purifies but sanctifies. In the one case it is the thoughts, action, and walk of a leper who is to be cleansed, in the other of a washed, clothed, and sanctified priest. In the one it is dissociation from defilement, in the other it is association in mind and conduct with Christ according to His devotedness to God. The sanctification is complete in that the blood is taken from the altar (devotedness to death in the Lord Jesus Christ), and with the anointing oil sprinkled upon Aaron and his garments, and upon his sons and his sons' garments. It thus figures the full and complete setting apart in the power of the Spirit, by which Jesus offered Himself without spot to God.

So far we have been looking at the consecration more in the aspect of hallowing or sanctifying (see

verse 1), but consecration or filling the hand is consequent upon Aaron and his sons having been sanctified by the blood and the oil; that is, by the blood of Jesus, who in the power of the Eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God; and by the Spirit in whose power He did so offer Himself in death. Their hands can now be filled with the excellency and value of the offering—the fat and the right shoulder—and also with that which figured the perfections of Christ as man, pure, sinless, holy, anointed by the Spirit. We notice here that his sons are associated fully with Aaron in this worship. As priests we worship in the company of Christ. All that filled their hands is then put upon the altar for a sweet savour to the Lord. We enter into the delight which God has in the perfections of Christ, and He accepts our worship according to Christ's acceptance, for the consecrations were burned upon the burnt-offering. (Lev. viii. 28.)

In verse 26 the breast is not heaved or offered as with the shoulder. (v. 27.) It is called the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and was specially Moses' part as the mediator. It would indicate the special communion and enjoyment which Christ has in the love which sanctifies and consecrates a company of which He is the Head and Leader, and who are associated with Him in offering and worship. "He that sanctifieth" has this peculiar joy of love. The heave shoulder is sanctified for Aaron and his sons. It would speak to us of Christ as the power of God. Power that has come in by the cross and death of Jesus. The priestly company are in communion with this power of God by which all will be sustained in blessing for ever.

It only remains to notice the communion and enjoyment for themselves in the precious things that have been offered. The first and great thing was to have the hands filled for the Lord, for a priest must have somewhat to offer, and then they eat the flesh of the ram and the bread from the basket by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. They abide there seven days (see Leviticus viii. 35), a full period of consecration. They thus abide in the full sense of their own consecration before priesthood can begin for Israel as in Leviticus ix. It is well to note that though the great principles of consecration are set forth, yet the worship and nearness of the Church are not found in this passage. The principles abide, but priesthood was evidently established then in connection with the earthly standing of the people of Israel; hence it is transitional in its character, the great day of atonement bringing in other elements. Now there is entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and the true worshippers have access by one Spirit to the Father, worshipping Him in spirit and truth.

T. H. R.

"PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE."

THESE are the closing words of Psalm xvi., and they depict the crowning joy of the Lord as the Man who trod the earth in perfect dependence on God. "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The heart ponders what it must be to Him as the perfect and obedient Man to have reached that spot, after the scene of all His earthly toil and rejection was over.

And we should remember that we share in His present portion, that is, in all that He has won as man (John xvii.)

But how can we be brought in any sense to understand what this is? I have no doubt that it is by the Holy Ghost alone. Hence if "pleasures for evermore" are connected with His session at the right hand of God, I read also of what is connected for us with His exaltation there. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." In order that we might be brought to know what our present portion is, as contained in the closing words of this psalm, it was necessary that the Lord should take His seat as man at the Father's right hand, and that He should thence send down to us the Holy Ghost. He has done both.

The Lord trod the earth in perfection in two ways, first as a Son, and secondly as a Servant. The Holy Ghost puts us, as both sons and servants, into Christ's place on earth. He is also the power in us for the enjoyment and carrying out of these two relationships in which we stand. And first as to Sonship. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." I must know first that I am regarded (poor, feeble, as I am, and conscious only of entire weakness in myself) as God regards Christ. I must remember that He said, "And hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me"; and again, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father," putting me thus into His own place on earth and in heaven. Thus I think I am fitted to the highest joy on earth, and to serve Him also until He come.

To know how Christ is regarded of the Father as the One who, faithful in all, has reached the top; to know as a son something of what His path ever was as GOD'S SON on the earth; to know something of His path through this scene as the lowly, perfect servant of God, all of which the Holy Ghost is here to lead us into; in a word, to be in all this joy of true Christian liberty before God; these things are to me what He would have His people know, and what is contained in those words (may the Spirit make known to us more of the joy of them!), "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

H. C. A.

A BISHOP.

TITUS i. 5-16.

IT may be well, as we are come to the passage, to understand clearly what a bishop is according to scripture. Timothy, as an apostolic delegate, was to ordain elders in every city.

Things have been perverted to such an extraordinary degree that the first idea that presents itself to many, when a bishop is in question, is that of a mitred prelate in lawn sleeves; but this is not at all the New Testament meaning. I suppose that no one will question the fact that the elder of verse 5 is the same thing as the bishop (more properly *overseer*) of verse 7, and that the very first point to be noticed about him is that he has a faithful household, brought up in good order—a thing not easily found in Crete, nor indeed in some other islands.

Much has been said to clear up the main differences

between the gifts given by Christ to the Church (Eph. iv.) and the local charge of a man morally qualified to watch over the order of the church. It is well to be subject to scripture in these things, for to confound them is one of the chief causes of the present state of Christendom.

Let us notice that these overseers were appointed by apostles or by apostolic delegates (see Acts xiv. 23; 1 Tim. iii.), and if any in our day were to say, "Shew me an official bishop," the answer would be, "Shew me an apostle to appoint such." That there may be men, not officially established, who may answer by their moral character and position to the functions we may well admit.

Note, in passing, that there are no such things as archbishops in the New Testament. They are as mythical as archangels. There is *one* archangel (Michael), but there are no archbishops.

Having said so much, we may look at the character here presented of one who should be appointed to watch over the saints. He must be unblameable, having a family well brought up according to God's mind*; the same ruling of the household as in 1 Timothy, for this must precede care of the church. The expression "steward of God" is a remarkable one, for even in this world a wise man of property will not employ a steward unless he has an irreproachable character, the charge being one of great responsibility and honour. The rest of verse 7 denotes a true command of himself, *not* carried away by the senses, *not* hot-

* Of course it is understood that "the husband of one wife" refers to the man being free of Gentile polygamy. A polygamist might be converted, but he was disqualified as to overseership.

tempered, *not* given to wine, to fighting, or to gain: a man who is *not* all these things is a steady person.

But then comes that which is positively good—hospitality, love of good, wisdom, justice, godliness, continence. These virtues are far more than the mere absence of evil passions. The house door is open (hospitality), and the house itself is full of good things.

But there is more, the 9th verse insists upon tenacity as to the faithful word, according to the received teaching, so that he may exhort by sound doctrine and refute gainsayers. This character should be noticed, for it is not every one that holds fast true teaching (having himself received it). Then comes the exhortation of others, and the answering of those who oppose and contradict the truth. It is the crowning virtue of the overseer's list. His moral worth and weight had been spoken of, and, to make the whole complete, there is the retaining of the faithful word, to be used both for help to the saints in stimulating them to good, and as a means of stopping evil.

No doubt in Crete judaizing teachers had found a fine field, for the Cretan disposition ("liars, evil beasts," etc.) was naturally such as to receive wrong doctrine; and the position of an overseer in a Cretan city was no sinecure. It implied active care for the sheep, and the use of the Word to check wrong teaching for filthy lucre. (v. 11.) The fact is, that such a charge always involves patient work and suffering, whether in Crete or elsewhere; and whilst the privilege is great (if any man desire "overseership," he desires a good work), the responsibility and care are great also.

To sum up then, an overseer is here presented to us

as being one whose moral weight inspires confidence as to supervision, the house in order, passions excluded, good things cultivated, and the faithful word held fast.

Although no such man may be now *officially* appointed, yet we may well look to the Lord to raise up such for the local care of His beloved sheep. E. L. B.

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

THERE are some Christians who suppose that as they give up the world (the unstable thing) they will receive from God, in their souls, their proper heavenly portion, which I call the stable. They therefore long for more giving up of the world, and even their public prayers take this form. This looks well, but it is not the liberty of the Spirit as I see it. It tends rather to bondage. As to the *order*, it is exactly in the reverse way that the blessing comes. If I take Scripture, the order is that I first get the better, and then I gladly give up the good (so-called).

Every Christian has received a measure of certain and positive "better" from the Lord. If true to what I have received, I possess it in my soul and enjoy it, and I know, as an undeniable and established fact which needs no demonstration, that the world will, if it can, rob me of this. Now, then—for there is no other way to retain what I have—I GIVE UP THE WORLD—not only the sinful gross thing, palpably evil—but all that which I have called "Sodom," and which can be quite understood when we see that it is that which tends to make me an accepted and respected citizen down here. It is different with each saint, according to the different

walks of life, but remember it is everything that has this tendency. The tendency is to make me contented with the present scene here. Those who go on any other line, and tell you^t that they are seeking to give up the world, are not in faith as to what they have already received, nor in the enjoyment of the Melchizedek blessing. They are not entering into the heavenly portion, but are outside it. One could not perhaps doubt their Christian profession, but *you cannot give up the world save as in the present enjoyment of what is better*, and you cannot enjoy what is heavenly while you are in the grasp of the earthly.

No saint receives all his portion at one time from the Lord. He learns and receives daily. (Phil. iv. 11.) But every reception—and we find it so as we go on—of fresh light from God entails a corresponding response in our every day life. They go together, and thus we continue to receive. We all learn “bit by bit,” but it is clear that one can only do so as true to the principles already received. There was a very *similar* start with most of us. We made a bright and true start at the beginning of our course. The world then to us had little worth. Avowedly, *all* the aspects of it were refused; but this theory (good in itself) was not practice. Time has passed on. How much of the soul’s true portion is known in power *now*? for there is a power which daily keeps us right, and which first put the soul right as to this world. The apostle desired not only to begin but also to “*finish* his course with joy,” and at the close of it he wrote, “I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

Reader, you and I have entered upon our course, but

we have not yet finished it. One way, and only one way, is open to us, and this faith will gladly take in order to end our course as he ended his—"with joy." The world AS SODOM must be given up—must be judged by the soul; and its opposite, namely, the path of the pilgrim and stranger here, will, I think, mark him who has taken, and is walking with God in such a path.

Paul had much to write as to Christ in the type of Melchizedek, but though the Hebrew saints had once given up the world, and he reminds them of it (see chapter x. 32-35), they are now not ready for this. "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing." What then is before us in this type? Blessing, undoubtedly, *as overcomers*.

We are not here regarded as the assembly, the body of Christ, or as children with the Father. The blessing before us is that of individual overcomers, and from Christ in *that character*. So far as I know, this epistle only names the church in chapters ii. and xiii., because it is not the subject. The Lord is before us as the mighty Overcomer. (See Heb. ii. 14, iv. 14, xii. 2, &c.) He has reached the top, travelling along the road of faith, where WE walk now. Therefore not suffering, but reigning; not humiliation, but the throne is before us. Melchizedek was king of righteousness and king of peace. He came forth to meet Abram. In the figure, the king is Christ who has overcome (John xvi. 33), and who meets the saint when he is an overcomer, and blesses him with His own supply and from His own side of things, entirely independently of his circumstances down here.

Israel as a nation awaits this ministry of the Lord towards her, but the Church has it now, as I understand it. It is a present privilege, as I believe, for Christians to know, enter into, and receive these things while (as Abram was) we are on the faith-road, and in the wilderness, for as in this place the saint is regarded in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

H. C. A.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

GOD'S AWAKENING.

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY A SCENE IN WINTER.

NAUGHT but wintry skies prevailing
 Earth's dominion over,
 And the feathery snowflakes, sailing,
 All the landscape cover.
 In a cold and deathlike trance
 Nature ceases to advance.

But the sun with genial power
 Soon the earth will wake ;
 Spring shall bring forth leaf and flower,
 Buds its joy partake—
 Nature teems with life once more,
 And profusely spreads her store.

Thus the soul of man in nature
 Slumbers in a deathlike gloom
 Towards its Maker, not one feature
 In the heart for love finds room.
 In this world it seeks its rest,
 Moving midst the scenes unblest.

Lo! A voice the darkness breaking
Speaks the word, "Let there be light!"
From the chill of death awaking,
Blindness soon gives place to sight.
Strong the hand which touched the chord,
E'en the Spirit of the Lord!

"Life in Christ," oh, what a story
Shall the newborn souls declare!
How the Saviour came from glory
That His portion they might share;
E'en these souls shall fully prove
All the riches of His love.

While on earth the path before us
Full of trial is beset,
Well we know a banner o'er us
Floats to lead to conquest yet.
All the circumstances here
Need not cause the saint to fear.

This world's scene of restless motion
Is the scene where Jesus trod.
Once His presence stilled the ocean,
Now He calms the soul in God.
He leads on to victory!
Night will yield to endless day.

Soon His mighty power swaying
In the air, the Lord shall come
At His call, the saints obeying
Rise to share His Father's home
In the realms of endless peace,
Where their pilgrimage shall cease.

G. E. G.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MARK ix. 1.

A COMPARISON of the several narratives of the transfiguration affords great assistance in the interpretation of the significance of this wonderful scene. In Matthew, for example, it says, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they *see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.*" In Luke it is "till they see the kingdom of God," whereas in our scripture it is "the kingdom of God come with power." The allusion in all alike is to the transfiguration, as a sample, or prophetic intimation, of the day of Christ's glory in the establishment of His world-wide sovereignty over the kingdoms of the earth; and this was brought in, in Matthew, as the title of the Son of man shows, consequent upon His rejection as the Christ, the Messiah. But the kingdom of the Son of man is also the kingdom of God, for in it Christ will make good all that God is in government, and He receives it from God, holds it for God, and at the end He will deliver it up to God. (See 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.) It will be moreover, morally, the establishment of the sway of God over the nations of the world. Peter bears out this interpretation when he says, looking back upon the scene, in which he had been permitted to participate, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter i. 16.) It is very plain therefore that when the Lord was transfigured before His disciples, and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, that it was an exhibition of His glory

in the kingdom; and the voice that came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him," proclaimed Him as the fount and source of all authority in that day. The reader, as he pursues the details, will not fail to observe that in the appearance of Moses and Elias "in glory" (as Luke records), and in the presence of Peter, James, and John, there is a very distinct representation of the heavenly and earthly saints who will be associated with Christ in His glorious kingdom. More need not be added, as sufficient has been said as to the meaning of the scripture at the head of this note. Peter, James, and John were allowed, as a special mark of grace, to see the kingdom of God come with power, as foreshadowed in the transfiguration. They saw it before tasting of death, whereas the other disciples had to die before they should behold the display of the glory of Christ in the kingdom.

II.

2 JOHN 9, 10.

It would appear that the true reading in verse 9 is "goes forward" rather than transgresses; and, if this is accepted, it means, as another has remarked, "what is called development." That is, in the case of the person supposed, instead of abiding in the doctrine of the Christ, that which was from the beginning, he goes beyond it, by developing, according to his own thoughts, what he considered might be concealed in the doctrine or teaching. This is man's mind acting upon God's revelation, and the result in every such case is bad doctrine. Such an one, John writes, has not God; but he that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. Then comes the warning precept, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine" (the

doctrine of the Christ), "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"—that is, do not exchange with such an one (for this is the force of the word), even a common salutation. The reason is added, "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Before God, if such an one is received into the house, or if the courtesies of life be interchanged, there is moral identification; just as, on the other side, our blessed Lord taught, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me." Nothing can be more precise than these directions, and consequently they are binding upon all believers. Care, however, must be taken not to go beyond them in their application. They concern mainly, we judge, teachers and leaders; but, at the same time, the solemnity of being entangled in false teachings must not be ignored, nor the responsibility of keeping clear of all association with those who are followers of such as abide not in the doctrine of the Christ. Still, it is plain that in this scripture John has specially in view the leaders in heretical teachings.

III.

1 PETER iii. 19.

MANY are perplexed as to the meaning of this scripture, and, as a consequence, questions concerning it are often received. It is frequently concluded (and there are many advocates of this view) that Christ Himself went, after His death, when "quicken'd by the Spirit," and "preach'd unto the spirits in prison," the spirits described in verse 20; and it is contended that the gospel was thus proclaimed, with the object of their deliverance, to those who had rejected God's testimony through Noah to his generation. One easily perceives

the reason for the readiness with which this interpretation is adopted and promulgated. The question therefore is, Does it convey the mind of the Spirit in the passage? The following considerations will supply the answer. Let it then be first remarked that in chapter i. 11 we find that it was the Spirit of CHRIST that "testified beforehand" through the prophets "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." In this we surely have the key for the understanding of our scripture. Noah received a revelation from God "of things not seen as yet"; he was "a preacher of righteousness"; and he was thus a true prophet. In him therefore it was also the Spirit of Christ who wrought and produced his testimony to the souls of his generation. Accepting this all is plain. Peter had just spoken of the atoning sufferings of Christ, their character and object, and then, as he was about to connect the typical meaning of the flood with baptism, he adds, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went (or, "in which also going") and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." It was, then, the Spirit of Christ, or Christ in the Spirit, who *went in Noah* and preached to these spirits; but they were disobedient to the testimony rendered; and heeded not the longsuffering of God during those one hundred and twenty years. They lost therefore the opportunity of salvation, and incurred the penalty of destruction through the flood, and of their spirits being "in prison" after death. Noah and his family alone were preserved; these unhappy spirits now in prison stumbled at the word, being disobedient, to their eternal loss and sorrow.

PAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO EUROPE.

ACTS xvi.

AT the close of chapter xv. we learn that the companionship of Paul and Barnabas in service was abruptly terminated. Associated together almost from the time of Saul's conversion (for he was introduced by Barnabas first to the disciples at Jerusalem, and afterwards to active service in Antioch), and knit together, as it would seem, by their common devotedness to their Lord and to His work, as well as by true Christian love in the Spirit, they now came into conflict upon the question of the suitability of John Mark to accompany them on another missionary journey. He had been with them before as "their minister" (chapter xiii. 5), to serve them in any necessary way in connection with their evangelistic labours; but whether because he could not endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, or because his heart was on his home, he, for some reason or other, soon departed from them, and returned to Jerusalem. On this account "Paul thought not good to take him with them," although Barnabas had "determined," or at least was "minded," that he should go, "and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." Whatever the failure of these devoted men in this matter, it was evidently of the Lord that their companionship should now cease, and that Paul had the fellowship of his brethren in the action he had taken.

Paul was probably much more free for his service after his separation from Barnabas. It is difficult at all times for one who has been the leader to fall back into a subordinate place, and Paul, be it remembered, was the Lord's chosen vessel, and as such it was requisite that he should be untrammelled and unfettered. This he now became through the unhappy dispute with Barnabas, who, though he had been "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (chapter xi. 24), seems to have been, on this occasion, swayed by natural affection. (See Col. iv. 10; Acts xii. 12.) From this point onward Paul is the prominent object of the inspired record. Barnabas is seen no more, and we learn from this that however godly and devoted a servant may be, if he once get out of the current of the Spirit of God, even though he may be never so active in service, and be much used in blessing to souls, he has lost his true place, because out of communion with the mind of his Lord. If, moreover, the place of testimony be forfeited it is never recovered, notwithstanding that there may be complete restoration of soul. Paul having chosen Silas, and having been "recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God," departed, "and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

The Spirit of God calls especial attention to the apostle's visit to Derbe and Lystra, because there he came into contact with Timotheus, who was a divinely prepared companion for Paul, one who could and did "minister" to him as John Mark could never

have done.* Thus attended, Paul went through the cities establishing the churches in the faith, throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia. (Chapter xvi. 5, 6.) The last named place might well claim our passing attention as an illustration of the manner in which the Spirit of God oftentimes alludes to the activities of a servant. The fact of the apostle's visit is alone mentioned (so also on his going there a second time, chapter xviii. 23), and yet what experiences are concealed in this brief mention! The apostle would appear to have been detained through sickness, for it was through infirmity of the flesh he preached the gospel unto them at the first. And such was the effect of his preaching that they received him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." (Gal. iv. 13, 14.) And all this is only mentioned by Paul afterwards to recall the Galatians to the truth of the gospel, from which they had been turned aside by Judaizing teachers. *We* might be tempted to blazon abroad such a "revival," but the apostle was a workman who wrought for the eyes of God, and not for the eyes of men. (Gal. i. 10.)

Following upon this, a remarkable account is given of the way in which he was constrained to visit Europe. He was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia," and then, "after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." (*vv.* 6, 7.) Was Paul out of communion with the mind of his Lord?

* See the touching reference in 1 and 2 Timothy to the apostle's special ties to, and intimate affection for, Timothy—his "dearly beloved son."

We know not; but it is clear that the Lord was watching over and directing His servant, and that the apostle was in subjection to the guidance given. He had not long to wait for the Lord's will. He came with his fellow-labourers down to Troas, and there in the night "a vision appeared to Paul." A man of Macedonia stood, "and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." The source of the vision and its significance were immediately perceived, for both Paul and his companions assuredly gathered therefrom, that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. Happy servants, unentangled with the affairs of this life, they were free and ready to set forth at the Lord's bidding, and they immediately embarked, with a fair wind,* for the opposite shores. In two days they reached Neapolis, and from thence they journeyed with all despatch "to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony." (vv. 11, 12.)

No doubt existed in Paul's mind that the Lord had sent him to Philippi, but it does not appear that when he arrived he was clear as to his special field of labour. He must still wait on Him who had sent him, and thus they "were in that city abiding certain days." What patience is needed by the true servant. Activity is easy, but waiting is always a test and a discipline. But when a servant is in the Lord's path he will be ever found where the Spirit of God is working; and accordingly on the sabbath Paul and his companions "went out of the city by a river side, *where prayer was*

* It has often been pointed out that a subsequent return voyage took five days. (Acts xx. 6.)

wont to be made; and we* sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." (v. 13.) Such was Paul's first audience in Europe, composed of a few women. It is often God's way to produce the largest results from insignificant beginnings. Service of this kind requires faith, and because it is so often lacking there are some who can do nothing without publicity and a crowd. Judging according to sight it seemed hardly worth Paul's while to come so far to address these few women, but the assured sense of being sent of the Lord stills doubt and gives confidence and courage. Paul therefore would be as happy in speaking to these as to a multitude.

Although the audience was small a mighty work of God was wrought there on that day. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend "unto the things which were spoken of Paul." She belonged to Thyatira, and, as it is expressly said that she was a seller of purple, it is probable that she was in Philippi for the purposes of her business. That she was a proselyte is shown by the statement that she "worshipped God;" whether, like Cornelius, she had been already born again cannot now be ascertained, but it is certain that while listening to the message of Paul the Spirit of God wrought with the glad tidings of grace, and produced faith in her soul, and so completely was she converted that she desired at once to avow her faith in Christ, and "she was baptized and her household." She moreover

* It has often been noticed that the narrative passes in verse 10 from the third person into the first. It is now "we." It may be that Luke the writer of the book joined Paul at this junction.

identified herself with the messengers of blessing to her soul by constraining them to accept her hospitality during their stay in the city. One soul had been thus won for Christ, and if the work during this first visit of the apostle did not assume large proportions, it was yet so thorough that it became the foundation of an assembly which, as to its spiritual state, was surpassed by none of which we have record in the New Testament. As the stability of a house depends much upon its foundations, so the character of an assembly is often derived from the nature of its commencement.

Whenever God works in power Satan is sure to step in to obstruct and, if possible, to defeat the end in view. But, as often, he sought in this instance to conceal his opposition by an apparent endorsement of Paul's mission. "These men," cried Satan's agent day after day, "are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." There was no testimony to Christ in these words; indeed, as the apostle afterwards wrote to the Corinthian assembly, to enable the saints to distinguish the actings of evil spirits in their midst, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." All that Satan therefore could hope to accomplish was to frustrate the preaching of Paul and his companions by taking them under his patronage, that he might claim the results. Paul, as led of the Spirit, discerning the true nature of the enemy's wiles, refused any such co-operation; and, grieved that it should be proffered, acting in the name of Jesus Christ, expelled the evil spirit. Would that all the servants of the Lord were

as quick to detect the working of the enemy, and as faithful in refusing help in the Lord's service from any quarter in the world. The Spirit of God is the all-sufficient power for the servant, and to seek for, or to accept, any influence or aid in addition to this is to corrupt the work and to limit the action of the divine Word.

Before proceeding further, it may be permitted to us to call the reader's attention to this small trickling stream which welled up in Lydia's heart under Paul's preaching, as the commencement, the source on earth, of that mighty river of blessing which has since flowed throughout the whole of Europe, and has brought eternal blessing to millions of souls. If travellers gaze with interest on the sources of the mighty rivers of the world, much more may the Christian delightedly contemplate the beginnings of the work of grace in Europe, and remember, as he ponders upon it, that he himself is eternally indebted to that same grace which Paul proclaimed in this city of Philippi. True that Satan has since succeeded in largely corrupting the truth of God, so that the pure gospel is but little known even in Christendom. But the word of God remains, and cannot be destroyed, and God will surely accomplish His purposes of blessing in spite of the enmity and subtlety of the foe.

THE CONTINUAL BURNT OFFERING.

EXODUS xxix 36—xxx.

THIS verse (36) shews us more fully that in the first institution of the priesthood an earthly people were primarily in view. We have noticed that in verses 12-14 the blood was put on the horns of the brazen altar, and yet the carcase of the victim was burned without the camp. As yet the blood was not carried within the veil. The brazen altar was the place where Jehovah met the children of Israel (see *v.* 43), where they approached to Him in their worship. They drew near to Him on the ground of atonement having been made, and through the intervention of the priests. The priestly family themselves had a place within the sanctuary as separated to minister to the Lord, but besides this the exercise of their priesthood was in view of the earthly people. This is apparent from what follows. (*vv.* 38-43.) The two lambs, which were to be offered day by day continually with their meat-offering and drink-offering, represented the daily and continual worship of the children of Israel ascending from the brazen altar to the Lord as a sweet savour, though necessarily offered by the priesthood. There was no direct approach for the people. Let us, as Christians, bear in mind that our privilege is entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, not to worship outside *through* a priesthood, but as part of the priestly family, *in the company of the great High Priest* who is inside.

There were two things required on the altar before the worship could begin. It must be cleansed by making atonement for it,* and be anointed in order to sanctify it. Atonement was necessary because Israel was a sinful people. It was made by blood being sprinkled upon the altar—this was in view of the people; the anointing set it apart to the Lord. The worship of the people could thus begin upon these two grounds, and from thence it could be maintained in identification with the altar. Their worship could not be apart from the altar. By atonement and anointing it was constituted most holy—"holy of holies," though it stood in the court of the tabernacle. There is nothing like the cross, the place where the Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up, whether for earth or for heaven—nothing so holy, for though the scene enacted on Calvary was not in heaven, yet it was in the presence of God and morally outside of earth. Jesus lifted up between earth and heaven. Innocence is not holiness. Had Adam continued in innocence, he could not have known God, or worshipped Him according to the holiness of His own nature. This alone could be declared in the cross, but then the holiness of the cross affects everything which is connected with it. "Whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy." Our Lord refers to this in Matt. xxiii. 19. Everything offered to God must be according to the holiness witnessed in the cross; that is, it must be on the ground of evil having been judged there, and of the redemption and sanctification consequent on blood-shedding. In Numb. vii. 10-88 we get the *gifts* which the princes of the people offered for the dedication of the altar in the day that it was anointed.

* This is the better rendering of verse 36.

They represent the whole-hearted worship of a willing people.

Besides the two lambs offered daily, which with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings the Lord calls (Numb. xxviii. 2) "*My offering, and my bread . . . for a sweet savour unto me,*" there is another element introduced in connection with the altar, "*I will meet you*" (plural)—that is, the children of Israel—"to speak there unto thee"—Moses. Communications were made to the mediator for a people who drew near at the door of the tabernacle, and they were made at the altar. There were also communications made from within. (See chap. xxv. 22.) The contrast is brought out in Numb. vii., where, after the princes of the people had offered, Moses went within and heard the voice of One speaking to him from off the mercy-seat. We may notice here that though in the last verses of chap. xxix. the subject in hand is apparently concluded, and so far as the worship of Israel and their place in connection with the tabernacle is concerned it is, yet that the first ten verses of chap. xxx. are connected with that which precedes. In verse 11 a fresh subject is introduced by the words "*And the Lord spake unto Moses.*" No such break occurs between the worship of the brazen altar and the introduction of the golden altar and the worship connected therewith. It is the one subject of worship, though at two places. We have already noticed that Moses as the apostle of Israel received communications from two places—the altar and the mercy-seat. Blessing too is connected with two places. In Lev. ix. 22 Aaron blessed the people ere he came down from offering the various sacrifices. It was blessing from the altar at the door of the tabernacle. Then Moses and

Aaron went into the tabernacle, and on coming out blessed the people as from within. There is also the worship at the *door of the tabernacle*, and the worship at the golden altar *before the veil*. The one is connected with the work of Christ, the other with His perfections, though based upon the work, for the fire which consumed the incense must be taken from the altar where the burnt-sacrifice was offered.

But to return to chapter xxix. We may notice in connection with the Lord speaking to Moses at the brazen altar that we have the antitype in the communications made to His disciples by the Lord Jesus *after He rose from the dead*. He gave directions which were based upon the work of the cross. Luke xxiv. 47 gives us such, also Matthew xxviii. 19, 20; and again, in Acts i. 2, 3, He gave commandments to the apostles He had chosen, and spoke with them of the things pertaining to the *kingdom of God*. Communications as to the assembly and the truths connected therewith were given *after His ascension*. Matt. xvi. 18 is not an exception to this. It really reveals the nature and out-of-the-world character of the assembly, but the communications for it in that character are by the Holy Ghost from Christ within. Christians may also be looked at as in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and as taking the place for the moment of Israel as a people upon earth, and in this sense direction and guidance is still given as to the government of a people who share in the sufferings of Christ, witnesses that He has suffered here, and partakers in the glory to be revealed when He comes out as King and Priest. In Luke xxiv. 50 too the Lord blesses His people as upon earth before

He was carried up into heaven ; but in Ephesians i. 3 they are blessed in the heavenly places, and this is made known to them by the Spirit sent down from Him now that He is there.

It is very blessed to think of the ground which the Lord here lays for the apostolic direction of His people, and consequently for their full and final blessing, and also for His dwelling amongst a redeemed people—the lamb offered upon the altar morning and evening. During the night, when none were conscious of it, the fire was ever burning on the altar (Lev. vi. 9), the sweet savour of the sacrifice was ever before the Lord. Thus during the dark night of Israel's unbelief the work of the Lord Jesus is before God on their behalf, and the very way, as well as the ground, of their blessing is secured. In verse 44 also we see how the tabernacle and the altar are connected. Jehovah's glory on the one and Jehovah's sacrifice on the other. Thus He secures the purpose for which He brought a people forth out of the land of Egypt, that He might dwell among them and be their God, and this will yet be accomplished. Though we have partly anticipated the character of the golden altar, yet hitherto we have chiefly been occupied (in the closing verses of chapter xxix.) with the worship and direction and blessing of an earthly people, and we have seen that it is connected with the work of the cross. This is the foundation of all worship, but there is yet more typified here by the burning of incense on the golden altar. We may say that the sweet savour of the incense was to delight the heart of God. It was no question of meeting His claims on men, or of their being accepted, for no burnt sacrifice, or even meat offering,

might be offered on it. It is not the work of Christ, but the perfections of Him who did the work with which the worshipper is engaged, as he realises the delight of God in them. There being *now* no vail, not only the incense goes within, but the worshipper himself is within also, where Christ is supreme, and what He is to the Father is known and uttered forth in worship. We may well ask ourselves how far our worship goes, whether we are contented with recounting the benefits which flow to us from the sacrifice of Christ, or whether we know the place within where all the perfections of Christ fill the holy place.

Furthermore, we must remember, that though the tabernacle was placed amongst the people of Israel, yet that we Christians are a spiritual house as well as a holy priesthood. Such a thought carries us farther than the door of the tabernacle. We do know, and thank and praise as knowing, the work of Christ as the foundation of all our blessing; but in Him we are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit, and thus by the Spirit can set forth His perfections and glory to the delight of the heart of our God and Father in our worship. It is instructive and beautiful to see that the day of atonement, when the blood was carried within, is anticipated in verse 10, and the reconciliation effected by that blood constituted the golden altar most holy to the Lord. It again shows us the intense holiness that is connected with the dealing with sin, though its effect here is to render to God the worship not only of thankful, but of adoring hearts. The worship of the first day of the week begins with the death of Christ as having brought us within, that we may there

join with Him in His praises, and receive the communications which He makes to us from within, for we must note here that the position of the golden altar (verse 6) brings out the mention of the testimony in the ark, and the meeting-place where God spoke with Moses.

One other thing must be noticed, that the burning of incense was Aaron's work, and it is only as we are in the company of the great High Priest that we can enter into the sweet perfume of the incense which He offers. We worship in His company. It is important also for us to remember that the incense is *for God*. No one could make anything like it to smell thereto, yet as brought into the holy place we enter into what Christ is to God. The maintaining too of the light, and the giving it forth, are intimately connected with what Christ is for God. The testimony of the Spirit is given forth because of the presence of Christ within. Hence it is said, "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit knows the deep perfections of the blessed Man who is before God, and, we may say, delights to speak of them. It is by the Spirit we are enabled to worship within, where the incense is, for it is by the Spirit that Christ's perfections are made known to us. Here everything is looked at in its perfection in Him. Aaron lights the lamps and burns the incense, but what is true in Him is also true in us. Testimony and communion go together—the word of God and prayer.

T. H. R.

A MEDITATION.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.”—LUKE vi. 22, 23.

It is an immense thing when you see and accept that suffering for Christ is the place of the highest distinction on earth. We may not suffer much; but the mere conviction that suffering is the highest place, and the only one of true progress, will ever be healthy discipline and encouragement. Whatever we need the Father has laid up for us in the Son. All fulness dwells in Him—all the treasures both of wisdom and knowledge; and not only is there every thing for us laid up in Him, but God also has made Him at the same time the storehouse of all that *His* heart needs. On earth God found His delight only in His beloved Son, now in heaven He has His people hidden in Christ. God’s eyes and our eyes meet there; God’s heart and our hearts find rest and satisfaction only in Christ. The Father thus brings us into companionship with Himself, into fellowship with His own joy. The spring and source of our joy must be the same as His own. Nothing less could satisfy His love for us. He will have us drink from the same fountain in which He has found His own eternal joy. It is humbling to think how little we have entered into that fellowship, but there must be a beginning. Have we begun to share His delight in His beloved Son? J. G. B.

GOD'S REST.

PSALM cxxxii.

THIS psalm is important, as showing the position which all these psalms of degrees occupy. We have indeed the house, as in Psalms cxxii. cxxvii., the former of which seems to refer to the temple; yet (I think) hardly there as yet accepted and built of God, as Psalm cxxvii. shows. The remnant were rejoiced at the thought of going to the house and Jerusalem, and we have it clothed with the thoughts of faith. But the Lord had not yet built it. For all the songs of degrees are the expression of the godly ones' thoughts and feelings between their external restoration, when the sour grape is ripening in the flower (Isaiah xviii.), and the full restoration to the Lord's enjoyed blessings, their enemies being cut off by judgment. It is all Isaiah xviii.; but with this we have Zion and David—the interference of power in grace, connecting the hearts of the remnant with Jehovah as a present thing, and giving the present testimony that His mercy endureth for ever. For David placed the ark on mount Zion, and had this song first sung after the ark had been delivered from the Philistines, and brought up from the house of Obed-edom. Israel in responsibility had failed, and God had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand. Now it was brought out, and sovereign grace for His name's sake (first by a prophet, and next properly by power in grace, by a king) acted in behalf of Israel, and gave a new link and ground of

relationship in the ark on mount Zion. This was not the temple, the place of settled peace and prosperity; but it was a link with God renewed to faith, David being the centre. David's son, as the true Solomon, would give in time the full blessing; for David did not after all build the house. So the place of rest here is in the heart and in hope; what we have is the person on whom the blessing is founded. (Compare 2 Sam. vii. and 1 Chron. xvii.)

We have David brought before us as the great dispensational root, and characteristic consequently of the blessing; but the house is the subject, a dwelling-place for the mighty One of Jacob. Hence also it is not wilderness blessings. It is not, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered," and, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel." (Num. x. 35, 36.) It is, "Arise, O Jehovah, into Thy rest, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength." It is Zion which is God's rest for ever. This it is He has chosen; there He will make the horn of David to bud. The person of David's son, royal grace in Zion, is thus what characterizes the blessing. Whatever house is built, David and his trouble are remembered, not Solomon the typical son of David and his house. In truth Solomon's faith was personally every way inferior. He went to Gibeon, not to Zion; to the empty tabernacle, not to the ark until afterwards. David's heart was on the house. It was all right. But God built his as He replied to him. It is the personal grace of Christ that is the centre of all, and the faith that, when the outward blessing was not yet there in peace, formed the true link with God.

What a blessing for the remnant then, and this is in

principle our case now, and especially in these latter days. His tabernacle and His footstool are more than the temple. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the tabernacle, never the temple, is taken as the figure and shadow of the blessings of faith, though not so the very image. Still God's rest is desired, that is, that He should rest; and so we worship in His house.

Let us see a little in what particulars this is brought out. The answer of God is in everything beyond the desire. There are three requests. The first is that Jehovah should arise into His rest, that Jehovah's priests may be clothed with righteousness. This became them; it was the right desire. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright. How often had they been otherwise. The second is, that Jehovah's favour and blessing might be such that the saints might shout for joy. The third is, that for David's sake Jehovah should not turn away the face of His anointed. As to David, there is the positive promise and the conditional one. The answer then comes. Zion will be His rest for ever. He hath desired and chosen it; her saints will be clothed with salvation, her saints shout aloud for joy. There the horn of David will bud, his crown flourish on him—the true David and David's Son, the Beloved.

And now note the principles. The afflictions of faith are the true path of blessing. A rest for God is the desire of the new nature; for sin, disorder only, has disturbed that rest, and, note, that rest which has its place in His relationship with His creatures, for in Himself He ever rests; but He must rest in holiness and love in the state of the creatures with whom He has to do, being according to His mind and love. This

the heart desires. It is *God's* rest. Nor can the heart rest till then. But this is according to the manner of His presence; in Israel covenant-promise and governmental glory; for us our Father's house, God's rest according to His own nature, holy and without blame before Him in love and in glory. That it is in the Beloved, the true David, the Anointed, the Christ—this both secures and gives the true character of the blessedness in, with, and like Him.

But note that simplicity of faith, its proper energy, leaning not on the past, which is ruined or to be forgotten, but on what is before us as its object, and on our only dependence, on divine leading as to it—simplicity of faith, wrought as it is by God, leads into the place of God's desire and God's election. David brought the ark to Zion, but Zion God had chosen, had desired for His habitation. This in us is identified with a new nature, living on Christ as its object and food. And it learns and knows the place of God's rest herein. For David and Zion are really identified each in its own way with one another. Thus our new nature, God's desire, God's election, God's rest, and Christ Himself, all coincide.

But the place of Christ's glory, which is God's rest, where He dwells, God owns as His for ever. "This is my rest." And faith looks at all connected with it, priests and saints as God's—"Thy priests" and "Thy saints." But then He, taking Christ for the resting place of His glory, and contemplating the place of His dwelling, and rest, and habitation (that is; for us, the church which is His habitation, His tabernacle, His city, holy Jerusalem). He, having thus so associated Himself with her (compare Eph. ii. 22, and Rev. xxi. 3)

looks at the priests and saints as her priests and her saints, thus specially shewing His delight in her, His identification with her. His priests are her priests, His saints are her saints, as that to which they belong. *Then* it is He sets up the glory of David's horn, the glory of the power, and rule of the Beloved; and this (while David is the foundation, His everlasting glory the result) is the subject of the psalm—Zion—for us, the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is His rest, His dwelling-place for ever, His desire, what He has chosen. And if He fully glorifies His anointed, as He will and must do, it is there He will do it. Though His name flourish in Himself (for His person must be the ground and centre of glory), yet its place is in the city of grace and glory. Her priests, her saints, will have salvation and abundant joy. One cannot say, her David or her Christ, that would be out of place. His dignity is our personal glory, but it dwells here as the place with which it is associated, and all the rest can be called hers. The glory is His, the place of it the chosen city of God—for us, the church, the heavenly Jerusalem.

There too (Psalm cxxxiii.) blessing and unity are, but here, after the analogy of Aaron, the lowest skirt of his garment partakes of the anointing of the head, and this one Spirit makes the unity according to which (Eph. iv. 3) they ought to dwell together. The blessing too was there. The abundant dew of Hermon; that is, abundant as on Hermon, fell upon the mountain of Zion. This fellowship was rich in blessing from above, as the desired refreshing of abundant dew fell in the everlasting hills. For in Zion Jehovah had promised the blessing. The anointing of the Lord, the Holy

Spirit, and the refreshing of goodness from on high in abundance, shall accompany the unity of Israel in Zion. How far more deeply true was it on the church when the anointing of the Holy Spirit and His full ministration of grace by the word, revealing heavenly things, enriched and gladdened the unity in Christ which that Spirit formed! Alas! where is it now? Yet it is our privilege.

J. N. D.

THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE.

NOTHING could be a stronger proof of sound doctrine in Crete than the good and sober conduct of all Christians, whatever their position in life; indeed right teaching is always accompanied by certain fruits, and this is true both in Crete and everywhere else. Titus was to announce these things.

The instruction given in the second chapter to the different classes is clear and simple, and we should take heed to it. When slaves are mentioned at the end, a wonderful little compendium of Christianity (as seen by its fruits), and its highest motives, is given to us, and we may look into this more fully.

The character of the more aged saints speaks for itself. It is well to notice the expression "false accusers" of the third verse, for it is the very word used in Scripture to characterize *the* accuser, *the* slanderer of God and men.

The quiet, well-ordered interior of a Christian household, activity * and love in the wives, is a testimony that cannot be spoken against.

* It is not merely "keepers at home" in verse 5. The real word is, "occupied with household work," and supposes diligence.

It is well, too, to note the expressions "discreet" and "sober-minded" of verses 5 and 6, for it is the same sense in either case, and implies moderation.

Titus, in preaching these excellent virtues, was to shew them in his own life—purity of doctrine, gravity and sound speech, to the shame of opposers, who should thus find no pretext for speaking against Christians.

All this is beautifully simple, and needs to be practised in our day, when social order is being overturned by the enemy: quiet family duties despised, women going about lecturing, men generally *not* given to moderation, the word of God neglected and despised. I speak of the general state of Christendom; but these things infect true Christians, and we may well go to Scripture for the things which become sound doctrine.

When the apostle comes to slaves, he exalts at once their calling to that of adorning the doctrine of our Saviour God in all things.

A slave in Crete was a person at the very base of the social ladder, and the ladder itself was low. (Chap. i. 12.) There is not, however, a word of *Emancipation* here; and this is important, for Christianity is not a scheme for the improvement of Cretans or of negroes. It is degrading Christianity to drag it down to this level; and the Holy Spirit, in this passage, after prescribing to Christian slaves what their conduct should be, gives us in a few words a comprehensive view of the subject. Christianity is not a partial remedy for misery, nor a philanthropic institution for improving the world; but it calls out of the world an acquired people, expectant of eternal and heavenly

glory. New life, new motives, an unfailing object, zeal for good works in the very midst of Cretan degradation! And this blessed truth applies to us all.

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” The full, free grace of God, which finds man utterly ruined and lost, and upon that very ground saves him without money and without price, cleanses him from all defilement, and gives him everlasting life. Now come the things which are befitting to sound doctrine, the teaching * us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts first of all. It may be said that we are not in so gross an atmosphere as that of Crete; but we are in a world which is as ungodly as ever, and which is intent upon its own affairs (“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”), and there are many things to which we must say that difficult word “No!”

Then “soberly” is not merely the avoiding of gross material evil, but implies also moral moderation, as we have already noticed, and we may compare with it the “sound mind” of 2 Tim. i. 7.†

“Righteously” goes further, of course, than a mere worldly code of justice. The Christian's conscience has been first purified, and then enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and is a delicate instrument; and it is a very happy thing when the balance is in equilibrium.

“Godly”; these three things form the practical life of the Christian (as to himself, as to others, and as to God) in this present age. It is the period of

* Notice the force of this expression; there is positive discipline, by the word of God in our souls.

† The word has the same derivation. See the apostle's character in the *Christian Friend* for August, 1893.

man's independence, and of the rule of the god whom the world has chosen. We are now living at the close of it, and, alas! we must confess that the nineteenth century is characterised neither by moderation, justice, nor piety. The testimony of the Christian will be that of a man actuated by principles that are not of this world. "You are behind the age!" they say. "Or before it!" might be replied.

May our conduct truly shew this! The course will soon be ended; and there is the earnest outlook into the coming age, which shall be ushered in by the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Looking for that blessed hope," etc. How this most splendid perspective must have alleviated and ennobled the life of a Cretan slave! And does it not indeed shine right along our path, whatever may be our service here? The poor humble slave, suffering often, no doubt, injustice at the hands of men, could go on in a path pleasing to the Saviour God, and look forward with the same certainty as Paul himself to the day when the just Judge should reward his patient work. It is no vague hope of better days to come, such as this benighted world may dream of, but the full and bright epiphany of the glory of our great God and Saviour.

The fourteenth verse is very beautiful, for we have His own proper claim upon us, as a present motive. He gave Himself for us! The redeeming from all iniquity includes the wilful, unbridled condition of the natural man. It is well to notice this, for thus the contrast is all the more striking; we have been redeemed from lawlessness, to be under the blessed yoke of the Lord Jesus, and to be purified *unto Himself*.

He has an acquired people, bought with an infinite price ; and whilst free spiritually and morally, we belong to Him, and to Him alone. As the Levites in Numbers iii., representing the redeemed firstborn of Israel, were given to Aaron for Jehovah's service, so do we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ ; we are His own acquired people. The zeal for good works too belongs to His most excellent school ; they will not always be appreciated by those who surround us, but it is a sufficient consolation to know, as we await the glory, that we have the Master's approval in our service.

Whilst owning our failure, we feel the importance of the subject (the things which become sound doctrine), and wish to be more in subjection to Him to whom we belong both now and for ever.

Happy they who adorn the doctrine of the Saviour God in all things ! And this is the very point in question—the precious fruits that accompany Christian teaching, all through the course till the Lord's appearing.

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW viii. 26 ; MARK iv. 39, 40.

It would be a mistake to conclude that because the order is different in the scriptures an error had been made either by Matthew or by Mark. The Spirit of God has chosen the events to be recorded, and He has also arranged the method in which they were to be recorded. If therefore Matthew puts the chiding of the disciples for their unbelief before the rebuking of the winds and the sea, and Mark gives the inverse order, the

question is not "Which is correct?" but, "What is the special significance intended by the change?" In Matthew's gospel faith, or the want of it—unbelief, is more prominent than in the other gospels, and for the reason that the characteristic presentation of Christ in it is that of the Messiah. As Son of David and Son of Abraham (chapter i. 1) He was presented to the Jews for acceptance, and consequently it is in harmony with the subject of the gospel that the unbelief of the disciples should be brought into prominence. In Mark, on the other hand, where our blessed Lord is seen rather as the servant prophet, His tenderness in pacifying the fears of His terrified disciples is displayed before He stills the raging storm and the sea. Which of the two things actually came first is not needful for us to know, but the devout reader of the Word will delightedly ponder these distinctions in the assurance that they ever contain some precious instruction concerning the person and the ways of our blessed Lord.

II.

1 JOHN ii. 16, 17.

"DESIRE" and "lust" are really the same word, as may be seen from many passages. For example, the word translated "lust" in the above scripture is the same as that in Phil. i. 23 (and a number of other places), where it could only be rendered "desire." It is the thing longed for that characterises the nature of the feeling cherished. If the object of the craving is good, according to God, then it is a holy desire. Thus the Lord Himself uses the word in question when He says to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke xxii.

15.) When the object, on the other hand, is evil, then the desire for it is "lust." Hence the apostle employs the word when he speaks of the "lusts of our flesh." (Ephesians ii. 3.) There is consequently an important distinction to be noted. "Lust," as James teaches, has its origin in ourselves (chapter i. 14), but holy "desire" is the fruit of the action of the Spirit of God in the believer.

III.

1 TIMOTHY ii. 13.

IN this scripture the apostle adduces God's order in creation in support of his direction that a woman was not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. In 1 Cor. xi. he points out "that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man." These two scriptures, if duly considered and rightly apprehended, are ample to settle every difficulty, often felt, as to whether a woman may not, in some special circumstances, speak or pray in the presence of men. The case submitted is whether a Christian woman, the head of a household, is precluded from giving thanks at her own table, if an unconverted man were there as a visitor. That the head should be bowed and thanks be given all would admit; but whether audible thanksgiving would not violate the creational order, and ignore the headship of man over the woman, may well be a question. Still, as already said, silent and unconcealed thanksgivings can, in every such case, always be rendered.

IV.

1 THESSALONIANS i. 10.

WHETHER waiting for God's Son from heaven ("out of the heavens") in this scripture refers to the rapture or

to the appearing (although we have no doubt that the former is in the view of the Spirit of God) is scarcely the question. The apostle is presenting the conversion of the Thessalonians, and the object of the mighty change which had been wrought, viz., to serve the living and true God, and to maintain the attitude of the expectation of the Son of God from heaven. Really, he adduces the altered character of their lives and their waiting for Christ in proof of their conversion. They had become followers of the apostles and of the Lord in receiving the word with much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; they had become "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia;" and their testimony, as well as their "faith to God-ward," had been so widely declared that the apostles did not need "to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols," etc. We learn therefore that the whole of the Christian's life is to be devoted to serving the living and true God, to be governed wholly by God's will, even as the blessed Lord Himself came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who had sent Him; and that, while thus serving God, he is to await the Lord's return. It may be that the expression "His Son from heaven" includes His coming for, and His return with, His saints. It will help the reader as to this if he carefully examine chaps. ii. 19, 20, iii. 12, 13, iv. 13-18, v. 23, in their several connections. But let it ever be remembered that, while it is most important to have scriptural thoughts upon this subject, and thus to understand the nature of the coming of Christ, the main thing for our souls is to be constantly in the practical power of waiting for His return.

PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON.

ACTS xvi. 19-40.

THIS incident in the apostle's career is so significant that it is impossible to pass over it without a distinct and separate consideration. As in the book of Ezra, after the proffered help of the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin in building the temple had been refused, they threw off the mask and became their open enemies, so at Philippi. Foiled by the spiritual insight and energy of Paul when he sought to corrupt the apostle's work, Satan now raised against him a storm of opposition and persecution. In the first place he had used the poor possessed damsel, now he stirred up her masters, who, seeing "that the hope of their gains was gone," were nothing loth to be his active instruments. Wrought upon by their self-interest, "they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates." It was not to be tolerated that unknown men should burst in upon the quiet of a heathen city, and assail Satan in one of his strongholds!

It is worthy of observation that, whatever his efforts, Satan cannot conceal his true character. What was the cause of the enmity of these accusers of the apostles? Simply and solely the loss of their gains from the fact of the damsel being healed. But, remark, they do not utter a single word on this point; they rather come forward in the guise of being

concerned for the peace of their city, as public benefactors. And to gain their object they present a series of false accusations. As our Lord said of Satan, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John viii. 44.) Their first charge was, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city." That Paul and his companions were Jews was undoubted, but there was no evidence whatever to show that they had disturbed the city, except indeed through the casting out of the evil spirit. Nor could the second charge, that they taught customs which were not lawful for Romans to receive, neither to observe, be truthfully sustained. But all this was of no consequence if the condemnation of these preachers of the gospel could be secured. Satan accordingly stirred up the multitude, influenced the minds of the magistrates, and thus succeeded in uniting all classes of the people against these servants of Christ.

All the forms of law were perverted in this judicial procedure. But sentence was passed, and Paul and Silas had many stripes laid upon them, were cast into prison, and were there treated with exceptional severity. Satan therefore, to all appearance, had gained a notable victory. But why, it may be asked, did the Lord permit His servants thus to be worsted? The answer to this question will be seen in the subsequent narrative. There was a poor soul in that particular prison who, in the eternal counsels of God, had been chosen in Christ, and who, therefore, was the object of God's mercy and grace. As yet he was benighted in heathen darkness, and, as it would

seem, he was in full sympathy with the action of the magistrates, for, "having received such a charge," he thrust Paul and Silas "into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." But the time had now arrived in the purpose of God for bringing this hardened soul out of darkness into His marvellous light; and the unjust accusations, the violence of the multitude, the illegal action of the magistrates, were but the instrumentalities for the accomplishment of God's purpose. The word of the gospel was thereby carried into the home of the jailer, for the blessing of himself and of his household. Satan was thus, in all that he had done, but the blind instrument of God's will.

Let us, however, pause to consider the effect upon the apostles of the brutal treatment they had received. Some hours must have passed between their sentence and the middle of the night; but of their thoughts and feelings during this time we have no record. "At midnight," however, we read, "Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." Suffering for Christ, and for His testimony, they were so abundantly sustained, that, superior to their bodily pain and circumstances, and filled with the sense of God's grace and love, they rejoiced, like the other apostles, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, and they poured out their souls in prayer and praise before God. Defeated? No; they were the victors, by the grace of God, in the conflict into which they had been precipitated. The power of God was with them, and their Lord, for whom they were suffering, so revealed Himself to them that

their hearts could not contain the gladness with which they had been filled. Prayer and praise under such circumstances could only be the fruit of the mighty working of the Spirit of God in their souls.

The Lord hearkened, and heard the prayer and praises of His servants, and He intervened with a testimony that should have appalled the stoutest hearts, and that accomplished the purpose for which it was sent. "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened." If nothing further had taken place, it might have been open to unbelief to contend that the earthquake was but a common and natural occurrence, and that it could not be directly connected with the hand of God, or with the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. But it is added, "and every one's bands were loosed," a result which could not in any way be traced to the violence of the earthquake, but only to direct divine interference. The jailer, moreover, was roused out of his sleep, and, concluding, when he saw the prison doors open, that his prisoners had escaped, "would have killed himself," so near was he at that moment to eternal perdition. How often has it been the case in the history of souls, that they have been reduced to the utmost extremity just as grace was about to appear on their behalf!

We may now follow the various steps in the pathway of the jailer's blessing. Paul, it should be observed, was not in the same apartment as the jailer,

and consequently he could not have seen that he was about to commit suicide. But in some way—through being divinely instructed—he discerned the snare which Satan was laying for this poor soul, and he “cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.” The jailer was thus snatched in the first place from bodily death, and so deep was the impression made upon his soul by what had occurred, that, seeing more than a human hand in it, “he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Whether tidings of Paul’s preaching had penetrated into the prison before this eventful night cannot be known; but in some way or other this poor man had been convicted of sin and of his lost condition, and was brought to the feet of the Lord’s messengers with an earnest desire to know the way of salvation. Light had entered his soul, and the effect was the revelation of his hopeless condition. That this was a work of the Spirit of God is seen from the fact that he was drawn to the feet of those whose mission it was to open blind eyes, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

What joy to these servants of the Lord to proclaim, in answer to the jailer’s question, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Here in one short sentence is the only way of salvation. That this, however, is a compact summary of what Paul said to him is clear, we judge, from what follows, that “they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.” Whether

it be so or not, these words of the apostle are fraught with instruction, containing as they do the truth of the Lord's claims, of His person, and of His work. Salvation is in, and through, the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The reader will notice that Paul says, "Thou *shalt* be saved." This is because salvation in its full sense goes on to the resurrection of the body of the believer, and comprises his being conformed to the image of God's Son. (Romans viii. 29.) The "house" of the believer was also to be included in the blessed circle of grace; and hence it is that the households of God's people become spheres of light amidst the moral darkness of this world, though this is only the case where the truth is known, and the Lord's claims and authority are maintained.

A real work of grace carries with it unmistakable signs. That the jailer bowed to the word, and received it, is seen from the fact that he took Paul and Silas "the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." His first thought was for the comfort of the ambassadors of the gospel, his next to confess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be baptized, "he and all his"; then he brought the apostles into his house, and set meat before them, and he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." What a change had been wrought in this man and his household within a few brief hours! When he retired to rest he was as dark as the prison-house which he guarded—he was without hope and without God in the world. Now light from heaven had flooded his soul, he believed

on the Lord Jesus Christ, was filled with joy, and it was his delight, as well as his privilege, to minister to the men whom the evening before he had thrust into the inner prison, and whose feet he had made fast in the stocks. It is a bright example of the transforming power of the grace of God as made known in the gospel.

One thing more remained to be accomplished. God would have His servants, who had been publicly put to shame and unjustly condemned, as publicly vindicated. In the morning a message was sent from the magistrates to release the apostles. This Paul declined to accept; but whether, in taking the ground of a Roman citizen, he maintained the truth of his heavenly calling, or whether he was at the spiritual level of the preceding night, when he and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God, may be questioned. Be this as it may, it will be observed that he did not plead his citizenship to secure himself from scourging and imprisonment, but only to expose the injustice of the magistrates. The magistrates, fearing the consequences for themselves, came and besought their prisoners, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. Paul's work was for the time ended in Philippi, and thus having regained their liberty, they "entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

"CHRIST is perfect enough to be always good; and as absolutely and infinitely perfect, is always absolutely and infinitely good."

THE STABLE AND THE UNSTABLE.

I THINK that we can speak of stability—that is, of eternity and eternal things when they are in connection with God's purposes respecting Christ. We are not upon the ground of the trial of man now, or we should still be on the ground of instability. All *that* is over, and life and stability are before us. Life was introduced into this world *by* Him, and was seen in this world *in* Him. Beautiful shadows (indications of what was ever in God's purpose respecting Christ and HIS—the saints called "us" in Heb. xi. 40 and in 1 Peter i. 12) have appeared again and again while the first man was under probation, and have passed away. The second Man is before the eye of God for eternity, and that is the Man we have to be occupied with now; the substance has come, and we are no longer kept in a region of shadows. You can neither connect instability with the second Man, nor stability with the first. In Christ we get the key which admits to the understanding of all the shadows. I delight in those words, "The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father," because I believe that that time is now. The second Man *and His race or generation* are now before God. (Heb. ii. 10-13.)

All Christians are addressed in the passage, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling," though the state of Hebrew saints first gave occasion to the words. All the saints are called to heaven and

heavenly blessings in exact contrast therefore to the saints of past dispensations, whose blessings were earthly. The overcoming of the world in both its phases of foe and friend, the entrance now into the Holiest of all, the communion there—*i.e.* the reception of heavenly things from the Lord—these are what I understand by heavenly things, and they are what the saint is called to now.

In the midst of my "infirmities" down here I have Christ ever living as my Intercessor. I am here for God's will, as He was (Heb. x. 7—xiii. 21), and He will relieve me and support me in that path, having trodden it perfectly Himself. He is thus conscious of all that could possibly come to hinder me in it. As thus relieved of everything that could hinder, I am free to be led into the enjoyment of my own proper blessings. It is then that He leads me into the Holiest of all. Here I know communion; for, by the Spirit who dwells in us, we are where naught of the flesh can intrude, we are in the joy of the communion of the Father and of the Son. (1 John i. 3.) As seen on earth I am an overcomer of the world, both as Egypt and as Sodom, having, instead of all that the world can give its votaries, heavenly supplies. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." This is a continuous victory, for the exhortation is, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

I think I see three results in the path of the believer, who has received and desires to continue in the present enjoyment of his, or her, true portion. 1st. He refuses to accept any place on earth, but the place the Lord had as a man here, the place He got based upon faithfulness to God. 2nd. Christ is on high

as Intercessor on purpose to support him in this path, wherein he finds every opposing element. 3rd. Having thus freed him, He brings him into the Holiest of all, where he receives from Him both bread and wine, His own communications to him. He is thus in communion with the mind of God by the Spirit which dwells in us, and as looked at on earth he overcomes the world. The idea connected with the Holiest of all is, I think, that everything there is in harmony with the mind of God—that is, there is nothing there that is discordant. God is Holy. Its atmosphere can be only heavenly, but it is to be known and entered into by the saints on earth. (Heb. x. 19-22.)

I would say one word more about the world. It is as I am fed from above, from the new scene day by day, that the world loses its hold upon me. Its spirit, aims, interests, and future become of no interest to me, and if touched, or sought after, I become conscious of "weights." (Heb. xii. 1, 2.) It may help to explain why there is not so much of the present conscious knowledge and enjoyment of the "Holiest of all" as there should be if we first ask, Have I accepted as *my* place and portion on earth, the path of the believer to which I have referred, namely, the place and portion which Jesus Christ had here *as a Man*? If not, though He intercedes for ALL His saints, I am not in the present consciousness of that intercession, and of support from Him. How then can I know the third, the communion and portion that He would have me know with Himself? Rather is my course that of the one whose "hands" are hanging down, and whose "knees" are feeble. (Heb. xii. 12, 13.)

Now may the Lord keep us living in the power of

these stable things, so that, leaving all that is unreal and unstable here, we may be running on to heaven. May we accept *God's will* for us (Heb. xiii. 21) as a sufficient soul occupation for us while we are down here; for this was what marked Christ, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." The first man has always been characterized by doing his *own* will. There is no stability and no blessing in doing my own will—sooner or later all *that* must come to an end in each of us. The will of man came to an end before God in the cross, because the whole question of sin and sins (the root and outcome of man's will) came out there, and was for ever settled. A new Man, life and stability, eternal life and communion with the Father and the Son, are before us now. Oh the blessed favour of God, which thus shines upon us, and in which He would have us every day to REST even while here on earth. But that joy will have no end—for we are of these stable things, and of the second Man. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John ii. 17) Well may the believer sing—

"Praise ye the Lord, again, again,
The Spirit strikes the chord,
And faith takes up the happy strain,
We praise, we praise the Lord."

Thus may we be found occupied with stable things till the Lord Jesus comes. Amen. H. C. A.

"It is a blessed thought that Christ will Himself introduce us into the Father's house—into heaven. What an entrance will that be, when He leads us in, the fruit of the travail of His own soul—His own—and glorified according to His worth—and all His heavenly company there!"

OUR SAVIOUR GOD.

TITUS iii.

WE have now a blessed subject before us in the kindness and love toward man * of our Saviour God.

We were no better than the Cretans (observe the state of democratic socialism and its fruits in the first three verses); but the kindness and love of God have appeared, and we have been saved according to His thoughts, and in His own blessed way.

We may well consider the passage before us: the Holy Spirit begins by excluding all works of righteousness of our own, for these could not change the nature of a Cretan, nor of any other son of Adam. "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Mercy would come down to us where we were; there was divine pity and compassion for such wretches; and now we have a very important truth in that which follows.

First of all "the washing of regeneration." The word here, "regeneration," is a peculiar one, and is only found in Matthew xix. 28, besides this passage; it implies a new order of things. Many philosophers and so-called philanthropists of that day would have spoken of improved culture in Crete, and of elevating the tone of that unhappy island, but it is not this.

There must be a thorough cleansing, a real work in

* The word is *philanthropy*; that is, in this case, *God's* love to man. We use the word *philanthropy* generally in a different, and alas! far inferior sense.

the soul of man alienated from God. For what is there in common with God in those who were foolish, disobedient, etc. ? (v. 3.)

The cleansing is not an outward change, as a Pharisee might cover the blackest of hearts with a white robe and blue fringe ; but an interior work, by which evil is truly judged, and new desires are formed. The man must be born again ; it is not a polished philosopher that God would form, but a new foundation is laid in the soul by the Holy Ghost's power, and that in connection with a new order of things.

It is a very interesting aspect of the new birth, and may, with great profit, be compared with John iii. I merely wish to point out the grand truth, and repeat that the washing implies the judgment of man's evil nature.

But this is not all ; there is the renewing of the Holy Ghost, for there can be no power to enjoy the things of the new creation without the Holy Spirit, nor can there be true communion with God.

Notice the word "renewing," for it implies that which had not existed before ; it accompanies the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit, a real new power in a new man. The thoughts supplied by Him take us up to the highest point (God's heart), and the energy for good cannot be imitated by man ; it is divine.

Thus we have a new nature, and then a new power, by which we live in a new order of things, from which evil is excluded, and where God's grace and glory are known.

This is God's way of bringing poor, lost Cretans and others out of the ruin ; *His* way of saving us. Blessed be His name !

But we must look at the sixth verse, which is a kind of parenthesis; the Holy Spirit has been poured *richly* upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. We have the very fulness of blessing, and who shall limit our joy?

The seventh verse terminates the passage, and implies both present and future blessing; justified by grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Sure, unfailing hope of the full enjoyment in glory of that which is already made good in our hearts by the Holy Ghost!

How different is all this from any attempt at outward reformation; how wonderful is the love of God toward man, philanthropy in its true and divine sense!

May we be led to look into these blessed truths, and live in the power of them by the Holy Spirit!

A few practical things follow. Those who have believed God* are to be careful to maintain good works; and when good is being followed in a practical way the foolish questions which troubled the Cretans will be avoided. I think we should not despise Dr. Watts' lines:

"For Satan finds for idle hands
Some mischief still to do;"

and the remedy for mischief in Crete was the being engaged in good works. It is the same in other places.

A sectary was to be rejected after due admonition; it is always God's own way, in dealing with men, to warn offenders before judging them, and this should be carried out in the assembly.

The last words evidently show that Titus was a delegate, acting under the orders of the apostle; and the

* Notice the perfect participle.

care evinced is very blessed. The converted Cretans, so false and lazy before, were now to be the very first to help and provide necessaries; Zenas and Apollos deserved the care of true devotedness, and the habit of serving such was to be acquired.

It is a very beautiful ending to the epistle, for nothing could be more convincing of the power of Christianity than to see self-denial and care for others in these converted islanders.

May they be seen in ourselves, being the true fruit of our entering into the thoughts, by the Holy Spirit, of our Saviour God!

E. L. B.

“WOE UNTO THEM.”

SUCH is the doom of the false teachers of Christianity, whose character is described so plainly in 2 Peter ii., and in Jude. It is the latter who, in verse 11 of his epistle, pronounces this fearful and unqualified sentence. Mercy for them there is not. Their offence has been so flagrant and their self-will so stubborn that only “woe” is their portion, unless their eyes should be opened, and, humbled on account of their guilt and state, they turn from their evil ways with repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. “For,” says the Spirit of God, “they have gone in the way of Cain,” that is the first charge against them. They, like Cain, were not irreligious, but they approached God after a fashion of their own. They did not bring “*blood*”; they denied atonement by blood; they ignored the true nature of sin, and the fact of their own guilt. Their religion was one of personal merit, and based on the ground of good works—beautiful

fruits of a cursed soil! Such was the way of Cain, and such was their way—the way of multitudes of teachers of modern and apostatizing Christianity. "*Woe unto them.*" This way of Cain is popular in the pulpit of to-day, and highly pleasing to the self-righteous ear. God is worshipped, but not in His way; approached, but not by blood; owned, but not as the Judge of sin. Cain's way, their way, ends in woe, certain and inevitable woe!

"And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward!"

Now, secondly, their pace increases. They *went* in the way of Cain, they *ran* after Balaam's error, and what was that? It was *reward*! Their religion was one of hire. They were hireling teachers. They "*ran*" through college and university; they spared no pains to reach the coveted prize of wealth and ecclesiastical honours. To them the cross was but a useful stepping-stone to worldly place and fame, and the cure of souls to that of ease and comfort. And thus Christianity (so-called) has become one of the most paying and profitable concerns of the day. From its unworldly and Christlike original it has degenerated into a Babylon of golden commerce. As of old, the house of prayer has become a den of thieves. For such ecclesiastical merchants there is the one doom of "*Woe unto them.*"

"And perished in the gainsaying of Core." They went, they ran; now, thirdly, they perished! How graphic and how solemn!

Core's gainsaying was, as we know, opposition to Moses as God's appointed servant. Core rebelled against God. He wished to occupy the place and functions that God had seen fit to accord to another.

It was spiritual jealousy, pride and rebellion. It was a daring usurpation, a bold intrusion into a province from which he was debarred. God can select His own servants, and woe betide the reckless man who interferes with God's choice!

Core might have pointed out the admitted ineloquence of Moses, and dwelt upon his own fancied claims to leadership. But God had chosen Moses, and commissioned, and supported, and borne witness to him. He was God's man!

And in the matter of ministry the only qualification is the grace granted by a glorified Christ. (See Eph. iv.) If that grace be wanting, no self-asserted claims, nor man-awarded credentials, nor commendation by bishop, presbytery, or aught else, is of the smallest value. You may speak with the tongue of an angel, and fill and thrill the largest place of concourse. It is all in vain. God's stammering Moses is infinitely better than the devil's mightiest Mercury. To rebel against the vessel of God's ministry is to perish in the gainsaying of Core.

The loud and solemn voice to be heard by all to-day is this: There are teachers of Christianity (so-called) who deny atonement by blood, who have the reward of money for their object, and who resist the true vessels of Christ, and His ministry through them. That is, they reject the divine way of approach to God, they refuse the lowly and self-denying path of Christ, and they rebel against the Spirit of God in the ministry which He may deign to appoint.

Such is the picture that Christendom presents to-day. How humbling, but how divinely accurate, the forecast given by the Word of God. We are forewarned and should be therefore forearmed.

J. W. S.

THE CHARACTER OF THE ACTIONS OF CHRIST.

THE following words are commended to the careful consideration of the reader, as affording the key of the above title: "The obedience of Christ would not have been so perfect if He had not been God. Where duty exists it is the expression and test of love; and where would have been the fulness and inward perfectness of obedience, its motive, if He had not been God who is Love? So He says, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." But it [this obedience] was the expression of infinite love, and so was perfect." Now it was, it may be said, as Man that the blessed Lord obeyed, learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and indeed there is no more blessed truth in the Scriptures than that He was down here the perfectly dependent and obedient Man. But it is also a precious truth that He was, and is, the Divine and heavenly Man. This is the glory of His adorable Person. The consequence is *that all that He was entered into everything that He did.* If in His ineffable grace He wept, on His way to the grave of Lazarus, it was truly as Man that He wept, but the tears which He shed were the expression of divine sympathy with the sorrows of those around Him, who were, at that moment, bowed low under the power of death that lay upon their hearts. His own death will illustrate this more fully. It was as Man that He died; and hence

His cry, when on the cross, "My God, my God" (NOT my Father), "why hast thou forsaken me?" Holding fast to this, as of the very essentials of Christianity, it is yet true, that had not all that He was entered into His death, giving all its value to His sacrifice, atonement would not have been accomplished.

Remembering this, and applying the principle to all His actions, how it enhances our conceptions of the glory of His person, and of His unspeakable grace; and how, we may add, it bows our souls in adoration before Him as we trace out His wondrous path through this world. To understand this may be, and is, beyond the loftiest intellect, for the simple reason that what is finite cannot comprehend the infinite; but faith, child-like faith, receives this teaching of the word of God, and finds in it a new motive for admiration and praise. The time is soon coming when we shall no more see through a glass darkly, and when that time of perfect knowledge comes our hearts will perceive more fully than ever the inscrutable character of the person of our blessed Lord. It will be still true that "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father."

"BUT what an emptying that was, when He who was God could come into death, [and] though suffering, though obeying, bring all that God was in His moral perfection into death; and then when it was needed, in man's extremity through sin, in man's weakness, in the place of Satan's power, there glorify it—love, righteousness, majesty, truth, all found glorified there. God is glorified in Him, yet it was in death, and because it was death in all it meant for God; but it was all the power of love, *i.e.*, God, in the emptying.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ISAIAH lxiii. 8.

It is generally admitted that it is not easy to give a correct translation of this scripture. One well acquainted with the original renders it thus: "Only they are my people, (my) children shall not lie (or deceive), and He became a Saviour for them." This is not very different from the usual translations except in the last clause—substituting "and He became" for "so He was" (their Saviour). The meaning is easily apprehended. Isaiah in the previous verse celebrates "the lovingkindnesses of the Lord," and His "great goodness toward the house of Israel." In verse 8 the ground is given on which Jehovah had acted. He said, "Only they" (and no others) "are my people," words which express the fact that He had chosen them to be His people from the foundation of the world. Then He says, "(my) children will not lie" (or deceive); or, as others prefer, "They are children who will not (or shall not) lie." The difficulty felt here is, that this language seems as if God had confidence in the fidelity of His people, whereas their history proves the very reverse; and verse 10 indeed recalls their rebellious character. It is therefore said that this second clause is a command. The verb is in the future tense, as in the case of the ten commandments, and this is technically termed "the future of command." If this contention is accepted all becomes plain. In the first place

God's choice of Israel is stated; then His will is expressed concerning the moral conduct suited to Him who had bestowed upon them this favour and privilege; and lastly, the fact is given that, following upon the election of Israel, He became their Saviour. Verse 9 seems undoubtedly to countenance this interpretation, inasmuch as it describes, in the most touching manner, Jehovah's identification with the sorrows of His people, in becoming their Saviour; His care over them, through the "Angel of His presence," in saving them; the expression of His love and pity in their redemption; and His bearing and carrying them all the days of old.

II.

1 PETER v. 5.

As read in the *Authorised Version*, the second exhortation in this scripture would seem to render the first nugatory; for if all were to be subject one to another there could be no reason to urge upon the younger to submit themselves unto the elder. It is therefore of importance to note that the words "be subject" in the second sentence should be omitted. In the *Revised Version* the passage is thus given: "Likewise ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another," etc. (See also the *New Translation*.) If there is a moral suitability in the subjection of the younger to the elder, it is also incumbent upon all believers, whether young or old, to cherish the spirit of humility, and to seek in love to serve one another, as otherwise they could not tread in the footsteps of Him who was the meek and lowly in heart, and who was in the midst of His disciples as One that served.

III.

1 COR. v. 6 ; GALATIANS v. 9.

NOTHING is clearer than that "leaven," from its first mention in Exodus xii., has the uniform significance of evil. The only passage which is claimed as an exception is Matt. xiii. 33, 34, and this contention has sprung from the mistake of confounding the gospel with the kingdom of heaven, or rather from taking the leaven to signify the gospel and its effects in this world, supposing it to work on effectually until all the world shall have been permeated by its blessed power and influence. A knowledge of dispensational truth, and of the object of these parables of the kingdom of heaven, would have corrected this error. After the parable of the sower, with its explanation (*vv.* 1-23), there are six similitudes of the kingdom, three of which were given to the multitude, and three to the Lord's disciples in private—a distinction which gives the clue for their interpretation. The first three then (of which the parable of the leaven is one) give in different aspects, the outward form in the world of the kingdom of heaven, which is co-extensive with Christendom, during the session of Christ at the right hand of God. The similitude the Lord uses will consequently represent the fact that "evil" or corruption was almost immediately introduced among His professing people, and that this will work on and on increasingly until "the whole" be leavened. The final form of the kingdom of heaven will thus be corruption, and it is this fact which explains the ground of the judgments which will in the issue be visited on Christendom. But the question is, Is any special evil designated by leaven? We think not; for in 1 Cor. v. it was im-

morality, and in Galatians v. it was Judaizing doctrines. Any spiritual evil therefore, whether worldliness, immorality, evil doctrines—anything, in short, that might corrupt the saints or the church, might be properly termed leaven. To understand this is to answer a second question whether, when its presence is detected, it should be always dealt with in the same way. In some cases, as in 1 Cor. v., it could only be removed by the excommunication of the person in whom it was discovered, and by whom it had been introduced into the midst of the assembly. Other forms of it, as in Galatians v., might require a different discipline, the true character of which could only be discerned by a knowledge of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and by acquaintance with the state of soul of any who might be fostering the presence of leaven. Three things should always be remembered: first, that leaven is unmitigated evil; secondly, that when present it always spreads and corrupts; and lastly, that the only divine way of treating it is to purge it out in the way suited to its form and appearance.

IV.

ACTS ix. 7 ; xxii. 9.

WHEN we have accepted the truth of the inspiration—the verbal inspiration—of the Scripture we are always confident that any seeming contradiction is only apparent. Our knowledge may be defective, and the reconciliation of divergent statements may be beyond our reach, but there will be no doubt whatever concerning the absolute truth of what is recorded. But in the case before us a very little attention will suffice

to solve the difficulty. In Acts ix. it says that Saul's companion heard "a voice"; in chapter xxii. that "they heard not the voice of *Him that spake to me.*" That is, they heard a sound—which was really the "voice"—but they could not distinguish, did not hear, the words spoken. The Lord's communication was to Saul alone, and he alone received it; for while his attendants were with him they only heard a voice, but what the voice said was concealed from all but him to whom it was addressed. In like manner, in John xii., when there came a voice from heaven to our blessed Lord, in answer to His prayer, "Father, glorify Thy name," "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again," those that "stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him." They also heard, but did not understand, the voice.

"WHAT endless outgoing of love in all the life and actings of Jesus! We should think it infinite, for it never failed; but such was the depth, the power, the divine fulness of that which was within, that He was straitened—His love wrought in such power, in such necessity to itself to bless, that . . . His heart was straitened till all that saving power, in which God was fully revealed and glorified, could go forth to bless. This tells us clearly what He was."

FOR of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.