

SELECT ADDRESSES

— TO —

BELIEVERS

— BY —

ROBERT C. CHAPMAN,

Author of "Choice Sayings."

28	" We that shall appear with Jesus, In His glorious beauty clad, Fain would now be wise to please Thee, Wise to make our Father glad.—R.C.C."	28
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ADDRESSES to BELIEVERS

BY

ROBERT C. CHAPMAN.

THE CHIEF BUSINESS OF THE CHILD OF GOD IS TO BE
WELL-PLEASING TO THE FATHER.

SCRIPTURES—read COL. II., III.

In connection with these words, "The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ (*Col. ii. 2*); I would remark that there is a difference between what is called "*The mystery of God*," and what is not a mystery. In *Romans i. 19, 20*, we see that that which may be known of God in Creation is manifest to every child of Adam, for God hath shewed it to them. *Ps. xix.* tells the same thing. But let us see what things the natural man is not bound to know, until they are revealed to him.

Read *Col. ii. 3, 9, 10*. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. . . . In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." The meaning of being complete in Christ is this—the believer is completely furnished and supplied in the fulness of Christ with all riches and treasures of knowledge. It does not mean that he is completely redeemed and justified; all that is in it. Hence the charge in *Verse 8*, "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." There is a sense in which the wise of this world may be well called philosophers; and there is another sense in which their philosophy is vain deceit. I say this, because I am specially desirous to commend the Scriptures in their glorious excellency to the heart's meditation of the children of God. Supposing the wise men of this world meddled only with steam-boats and railways, taking up their attention with sounding the depths of the ocean, or scanning the stars with the telescope; if they shut themselves

in their investigations within the bounds of this old creation and time, they might be entitled to the name "philosopher." But the moment the wise man of this world meddles with God and divine things, he is a fool; and when he deals with eternity, and the soul's relation to God, he is the mere dupe and tool of Satan; hence, the words, "*Vain deceit.*"

Turn to *1 Cor. ii. 7-10*. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." The word "mystery" is used here in the sense I have given it. "*Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen; nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*" The things of creation merely, may be great and important in giving light to man's natural conscience, and showing him his obligation to God as his Maker; yet all knowledge to be found in mere creation, in comparison with what is in the Son of God, is only the shallows; all the deep things of God are in Christ crucified, and glorified.

I again ask you to consider *Col. ii. 10*. "Ye are complete in Him." That is, we are completely supplied in Christ for acquaintance with God. The Spirit of God tells us, by the Apostle John, the same great truth. In *John i. 18*, we read this: "No man hath seen God at any time (that is comparatively); the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father—He who was acquainted with all the secrets of that bosom—He hath declared," or expounded God.

How are we to come at the treasures in Christ while here? Turn to *Col. iii. 16*. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The word of Christ stands here as opposed to, or distinguished from, or contrary to "*The doctrines and commandments of men.*" In passing I would say, that all the cavillings of the natural man against the Scripture are only a fresh testimony to what the Scripture says touching the blindness and foolishness of the unregenerate heart. I counsel the Christian, especially when you meet with cavillers and disputers, and professed unbelievers, don't reason with them; testify to them. Testify that you were once blind as they are, but now you see by the Spirit of God; that you were once deaf, but now you have circumcised ears and heart given you by the Spirit of God. Bring them into God's presence as guilty, with their mouth shut before Him. That is the only way in which you ought to deal with them as God's witnesses; you ought never to reason with them. They would, if they could, pull God down from His throne, and take His place; that will be seen presently when the Lord will come in His glory. But now we are furnished in Christ with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Then, it is through the word of Christ that we can be thus furnished. We are to lay up the word in the store-house of our heart.

Turn to *John xvii. 8*. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them," etc.

Also *verse 17*. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." Now then, you see that the word of Christ is the whole Book of God, for therein is the truth of God complete and fruitful. *John xvi., 12, 13, 14*. "*I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.*" Mark these comprehensive words, "*He shall glorify Me.*" So we have our Bibles, and then we have the Spirit of Truth sent by the Son of God from the Father, not only to quicken us from death to life, to seal us as the children of God, to deliver our hearts from perplexities and doubts as to our having eternal life, but a still higher business. Great indeed the work of quickening from death to life, great the work of sealing the name of Christ upon the soul, and assuring the heart of the child of God that he is a child of God; but there is a still higher business, that is, fashioning the mind of the believer so that he may be constantly pleasing God.

In *Col. ii. 1*, the Apostle says to these Colossian saints, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you," etc. We see from the closing verses of *chap. 1*. the cause of this conflict. "*Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily*" (*i. 27, 29*). What does he mean by presenting every man *perfect in Christ*? Not perfectly saved or justified, but perfectly well-pleasing to God: "*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*" (*ii. 2*). In other words, he desires that every child of God might walk in the fulness of the Spirit's communion, with the Father and with the Son. If you look through the other Epistles of Paul you will find the same burning desire in His heart for all Saints. He is always bent upon leading them onward, so that they may fully please God; walking in the constant fellowship of the Spirit with the Father and with the Son.

Turn to *1 Thess. ii. 11, 12*. "*We exhorted . . . and charged every one of you . . . that ye should walk worthy of God.*" That is the business of life which, every hour of every day, every child of God should be engaged in. We have been exhorted by the Apostle to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly; not piece-meal, but richly. We may say, as it dwelt in the Son of God himself. Of course you remember *Psalms i.*; He was the walker in that Psalm. The perfect One in obedience, and therefore, perfect in the Spirit's continual teaching. Supposing a child of God merely seeks to pass through the world creditably, how will he deal with the Scriptures? He will seek to find out, according to his own thoughts, that which may suit him in his case. But, if he has the higher aim, to walk worthy of God, he will search out all the Scriptures; he will account the whole Bible his own; he will not fail to read every book in the Scriptures, and every book in the order in which the Spirit of God has penned them. Every book of Scripture is

penned by the same wisdom of God's Spirit that we see in the Son of God coming into the world. We ask you, did the Son of God take on Him the servant's form? Then, how was He made in the likeness of man? By the Spirit. How did He walk through the world? By that same Spirit. We also see from *Hebrews ix. 14*, that "*Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.*" He was quickened by the Spirit, and now He has sent the Spirit to dwell in us in His especial office as Comforter; also to glorify Him; to receive of Christ's, and shew it to us. Then again he says, "**He will guide you into all truth.**" But if the child of God has not this high aim of walking worthy of God, he has not the Spirit's promise of leading him into the truth necessary to his walking with God. Hence, if the children of God just read the word to find out something that comforts and helps them on in their journey, they will be stunted children, and will not be growing up into servants and friends of Christ.

Turn to *John xv. 14*. "**Ye are my friends.**" Now comes a very weighty word, "if." The highest possible blessedness, the highest possible dignity on earth are in the words which follow:—"If ye do whatsoever I command you." We are called to friendship with the Son of God, the King of Glory. The blessedness, dignity, and glory of this friendship belong only to the children of God. The world knows nothing of it; and they desire to know nothing of it. Does it belong to all the children of God? They all ought to enjoy it; but then, there is that little word, "if,"—"If ye do whatsoever I command you." If you are intent on obeying, and walking worthy of God, it must of necessity follow that the obedient one will deal aright with the Scriptures, after the pattern of the blessed Lord Himself. I would say, first of all, that every book of the Scriptures has its own order, and that order is not a whit less of the Spirit, devised in infinite wisdom, than was His working and teaching, as in Christ. Again, each book has not only its own divine order, but it has also its own form of words; these are as much divine as the order. O, let us lay this to heart, it is not possible, shall I say, for fallen man, it is not possible for the highest angels of God, to have conceived the truth in Christ, revealed in the Scriptures; hence, we read, "*That now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.*" First, man was bound to know his Maker; and I have no question, that for Adam to be, and to worship, were things of the same moment. I know that the wise men of this world make Adam to have searched out things, and then to have come to the conclusion that there is a wonderful Creator. Man was made in the image of God, but he knew nothing of the future, and secret mysteries of God's heart, revealed in Christ. But, now by the Church, angels have some intimate knowledge of God that they could not have had, if left to their natural faculties.

There is no single truth of Scripture that is possible for any creature to have invented. For my part, I would disdain to prove the Scriptures true; they prove themselves. Am I hungry, and have bread set before

me? I don't wait to prove that it is bread, I at once partake of it. Whatever you and I receive to the nourishment of our souls, we receive it upon its own testimony, not because men reason about it, and show that it was found in some ancient manuscript; we receive it because God's Spirit reveals it as God's mind to our souls.

Then, as to the order of the books of Scripture—if you examine, you will see that every book, even the smallest—I call the Epistle to Philemon a book; also the second and third Epistles of John—each has its own order; carefully observe it, and then you will find the form of sound words is as much the work of God's Spirit as the matter and order.

I cannot but affirm this; it may do good to some here, when I say, the late revision of Scripture has done some good: the best good that it has done is to show that nothing can be done. The great building of truth is just the same. Here and there is a little chip off some stone; but the great temple of truth is just as it was, and ever will be.

Every one of us is bound to use what time he has for reading the Word. And let us watch against wasting time. I am bound, according to what God has given me of time, to read the Word. I am only a beginner. I began seventy-one years ago to read and search the Scriptures, and then, as now, this blessed Book gives me joy. The further I search into the Scriptures, the more unsearchable they become.

And then you will find this aiming to walk worthy of God will be a blessing to the Church of God—a peace-maker, but not a peace-breaker. You will be a witness in your families. Each one, whatever your station in life may be, whether master or servant, is a witness for God in his outward calling, whatever that may be. And when we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, what shall we then wish we had been during this brief span of time? We shall never then regret having endeavoured to walk worthy of God.

The Spirit is set forth in Scripture as a dove. If I grieve Him, I shall mar my peace; but I shall still have peace with God as a sinner saved. *Col. iii. 15.* "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called." Peace with God is common to all believers; that is to say, being by nature at enmity with God, we are now reconciled to God by faith in the precious blood of Christ; we are justified for ever; but to have the peace of God, is to be in communion with God in the peace which He Himself enjoys now. He takes His survey of all His works; He sees the present, the past, and the future at once, and He sees all in the hands of the blessed Lord Jesus; and from day to day, and hour to hour He sees that Christ is accomplishing His will, and He is at perfect peace. Now then, if instead of seeking always to get something from God to help us on in our journey, and we seek nothing more, we shall have purposes and wishes that

are perpetually subject to disappointment ; but if we seek to walk worthy of God, we are one with God in His purpose. Then the peace of God shall keep our heart and mind, and we shall not be vexed, troubled, and dejected because our purposes have not been realized. We ask God for a piece of silver and He gives us a talent of gold. The whole Book is our property, from Genesis to Revelation, and the teaching of the Spirit to us, is not to seek after wealth and station, but to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST, JEHOVAH'S SERVANT.

SCRIPTURES—read ISAIAH XLIX. AND L.

“Listen, O isles, unto Me,” etc. The Speaker here is none other than the Son of God ; none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of Israel, to be manifested on a day that is coming.

As we are called upon to “walk by faith, not by sight,” (*2 Cor. v. 7*) ; we can only walk by faith, so far as we are acquainted with God, in whom we trust. “*They that know Thy name*” (*Psa. ix. 10*) will put their trust in God, so far as they know Him. In order that we may walk in the fulness of faith, which should be the proper aim and business of every child of God, there must be the searching out of God’s will in the whole Book. The Psalmist says, “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever” (*Psa. cxix. 111*). Not this portion, nor that portion, but every jot and tittle of the Scriptures, as a whole.

The Scriptures reveal the character of God, and that is the stay of the soul ; that is the ground of our faith in God. Oh ! that it could be said, that every child of God in this assembly is a diligent reader of every book of the Scriptures ; and amongst the rest, the book of the prophet Isaiah. It is a little Bible of itself. The like may be said of every book of the Bible.

Before the prophet leads us on to *chapter liii.*, with which all renewed souls are, more or less, acquainted, and upon which we ought all to dwell, the Spirit of God leads us on to this chapter, by first unfolding the glory of the Speaker. In *chapter ix. 6, 7*, the prophet says, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ; and the govern-

ment shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," etc. Then in *chapter vi.* we have a vision of Christ in the future manifestation of His glory to Israel. Thus we are led to *chapter xlix.*, which, with *chapter l.*, leads on to *chapter liii.*

I will say a little about *chapter l.*, before dealing with *chapter xlix.* We read these words in *chapter l. 7.* "I have set my face like a flint." The blessed Lord could say as, step by step, He went on from His earliest days to the death of the Cross, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (*John iv. 34*). Now, it becomes each one of us to be able to say, "I have set my face like a flint to do the great business of pleasing God; to seek to walk worthy of my Sonship; not to dishonour my heavenly Father, my Redeemer, and the indwelling Spirit of God."

Read *verse 8, 9.* "He is near that justifieth Me. . . . Who is he that shall condemn Me?" The Spirit of God, by Paul, in *Romans viii. 33, 34*, has put into our mouth the very same language as the blessed Son of God. How did the Son of God need justification? How could He possibly need justification on His own account? He was always everything that pleased God. It was always true of Him as, step by step, He advanced towards the death of the Cross, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (*Matt. iii. 17*).

Turn to *Psa. xl. 12.*, and you shall see why He needed justification. May the Spirit of God seal it afresh upon all our hearts. We know that Christ, as the Surety of the Everlasting Covenant, is the Speaker here, from beginning to end. *Verse 8.* "I delight to do Thy will, O, My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." The second set of tables which were hewn out by Moses after he had broken the first, after Israel committed idolatry, were put into the Ark; to that the blessed Lord alludes here; the law which was broken by God's people was in His heart, magnified by the death of atonement. And now the Surety in *verse 12* makes confession, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me." The guiltless, undefiled, and undefilable in Himself, became by imputation the guilty One, and as such needed justification. According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke's testimony, as the Son finished His work on the Cross, before His resurrection, and before His body was taken down from the Cross, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; that was God's justification of the Surety. So Paul by the Spirit takes up these very words; he takes them as it were from the very mouth of Christ and puts them into the mouth of every believer. Let us read these verses in *Rom. viii. 33, 34*: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Thus we see God's justification of Christ by resurrection. The

rending of the veil was the first step, the resurrection and His sitting at the right-hand of God was the concluding act of God's justification of the Surety ; in His justification is ours. How precious to be able to look up and see Christ at the right-hand of God as my righteousness. His justification is mine ; and all that He is entitled to, the one who trusts in Him is entitled to likewise. "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (*Rom. viii. 17*). We may not suffer much for Him, but we suffer more or less with Him from Satan and from the world ; but we shall soon be glorified together. How precious to look at these Spirit-breathed words from *Isaiah l.*, put into our lips and engraved on the heart and conscience of every child of God by the Spirit !

Turn now to *Isa. xlix., 2*. "And He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword ; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft ; in His quiver hath He hid Me." Some of you may see the force of these words. Supposing that the arrow, by which the archer who aims at his mark, is notched and jagged, though skilful, he would not hit the bull's eye ; but, if a polished shaft, very smooth, shot by a skilful hand, it hits the mark. The Lord never failed to hit the mark. He was the polished shaft in the hand of God. No purpose of God by Him ever did fail or ever could fail of its fulfilment.

Verse 4. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." There seems to be a contradiction here. In *John i. 2* He says, "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." To the eye of men, two things met in the Lord Jesus ; of all preachers He was the best, yet of all true preachers the most unsuccessful. But mark, though He says, "I have laboured in vain." He says, "Yet surely My judgment is with Jehovah." Then He goes on to say, "And now saith Jehovah that formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, though Israel (for the time present) be not gathered (though blindness happen to Israel during "the times of the Gentiles") yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and My God shall be My strength." *Verse 5*.

Now let me ask you to rejoice with me in dwelling on *Psa. xxvii. 2, 3*. It is the very counterpart of *Isaiah xlix. 5*. "O My God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not ; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy"—*Observe what follows*—"O thou that inhabitest the praises (not of Jacob, but) of Israel." That was when the Son of God was enduring the Cross to which He was nailed by the seed of Israel. He had them in His heart. The Apostle in *Heb. xii.* writes of Him thus—"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross." This was no small part of that joy ; His looking onward to that very people becoming His chief witnesses on the earth. It reminds us of that lovely type,—you

remember, Aaron had upon his shoulder two Onyx stones, on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel; six of their names were on one stone, and the other six names on the other stone. Then, we are told that they were fastened with golden chains to the breastplate of judgment, never to be loosed. That tells of God's faithfulness in all His promises touching His people Israel; it speaks of the immutable love of God to His people Israel, of the unchangeable love of Christ; and of the love of the Holy Spirit, because, He must be one with the mind of God the Father and His Son in their love to Israel. Are we in fellowship with Christ about this now most wretched people Israel? Or rather, we must not call them Israel, but the Jews; vile they are, and scattered over the face of the earth, but for the Father's sake they are beloved, and they are upon the heart of the Great High Priest; and the time is coming, when "the times of the Gentiles" having run out, all the hopes of Christ concerning them must be fulfilled. Let us therefore seek to be of one mind with God about them.

Let us turn again to *Isaiah xlix.* How precious Christ's faith in the 4th verse, "I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with Jehovah, and My work with My God." For "work" say "wages," I judge this to be the proper word to use. Is not this a pattern for you and me, if we be of one mind with Christ as to *the great business of pleasing God.* The salvation of Israel is a great thing with Christ; and the salvation of the election from among the Gentiles is the great desire of Christ also. His highest aim and joy was to please the Father—that is always the mark in the new creation, in every duty, reading the word and speaking for Him, in every thought and wish of the heart—we also should always begin and end with pleasing God. If we do the like we shall always have the highest success, and whatever may seem like ill success in our endeavours to win others for Christ, let us not be cast down, though, for the present, we may not see them brought to Him. It is not lawful for us to be dejected. It is not lawful for a godly father and mother to be sad and dejected if, whilst they are asking God to lead their children to Christ, their prayers, for the present, are not answered. Though the blessed Lord wept over Jerusalem, yet He never gave place to unbelief; He never gave way to thoughts of dejection and discouragement as touching the success of His work. He knew that His first duty was to do God the Father's will, and He knew He would have His great recompense by-and-by; I mean His great recompense, as in this chapter we see Him looking on to the full, complete recompense in the New Creation. We ought also to be looking on to that time of recompense. I may be speaking to some who are pleading in faith and love at the Mercy-seat for unregenerate fathers and mothers, or others. Let us weep and mourn over them, but let us beware of anything like dejection. Let us say, "My work is with my God; my wages shall be better than my work."

Then, you observe in *verse 7*, we are led on to what there is scarce a hint of in the beginning of *Isaiah*; that is, Christ's rejection. First,

His glory is unfolded, and then little by little we go on to His rejection. The prophet says in this verse, "Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation (*of Israel*) abhorreth, to a servant of rulers." You remember when the Pharisees said to Christ, "*Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?*" . . . He said unto them, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's." (*Luke xx. 22, 25.*) Having taken upon Him the form of a servant (*Phil. ii. 7*), as such, He was a servant of rulers, thus teaching us to be ourselves also subject to "*the powers that be;*" we are neither to rail against them, nor sit in judgment upon them.

Verse 8. "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." In *2 Cor. vi. 2*, Paul takes up these words, which upon the face of them carry us on to a yet future day of mercy to Israel. He says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And when he does that, don't let us forget his admonition in *Rom. xi., 25.* "*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;*" that is, till all those are brought in, who by God's decree are to be converted, while Israel remains blind. Read also *verses 19-21.* "*Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.*" This is a most wholesome admonition, surely. What does the Apostle mean by, "Be not high-minded, but fear"? What was the cause of God cutting off the Jew? He would not have the Gospel that brought him down to the dust, that laid his pride low; his pride of his own righteousness; his pride of religion; his pride of natural birth and of outward observances. He went about to establish his own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God. (*Rom. x. 3.*) The counterpart to this is seen in the creature glory of Christendom. If we have had the fallow ground of our hearts ploughed up; if we have taken our place before God as utterly guilty; if each one of us who has been converted to God can say from the heart, "*God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Gal. vi. 14.)*"; let us bless God for this. If the judgment of God is upon Israel for their rejection of Christ, must not, of necessity, more terrible judgment come upon Christendom, corrupt under colour of the name of Christ; corrupting the Gospel, mingling up law and Gospel, walking in a clean path of outward righteousness, and going down to everlasting perdition? Do we lay it to heart as we should? Do we pray for this deluded people and their leaders of whom the Lord said—" *They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch?*" (*Matt. xv. 14.*) Let us see that by our walking worthy of God we put this corrupt thing to shame.

Turn again to *Isaiah xlix.*—"Sing, O heavens ; and be joyful, O earth ; and break forth into singing, O mountains : for Jehovah hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted." (*Verse 13.*) There is the new song. If you examine closely the Psalms with the Song of Solomon (though it belongs to us, "Jerusalem which is from above") concerning Israel, you will see this, that they are the chief singers in the new song ; that is, the song of the new creation. In *Romans viii. 21*, we read that "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." The new creation does not mean bringing into being that which had none before ; but God taking up in Christ that which sin has marred, and making it new. So, you and I are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Verses 14, 16. "But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." What is the answer ? "Can a woman forget her sucking child ? . . . Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." Is there any one of us in any peculiar trial ? I don't ask, is there one here who has no trial, because that would be very pitiable indeed. But, there may be some here in peculiar trial ; then, that is an occasion for you to trust in God's faithfulness. Don't be thinking first, of deliverance out of the trial. It is not, how will God deal with me ? but, it should be, how shall I deal with God ? Shall I say, "He hath forsaken me" ? The answer to such unbelief is, "*I have graven thee on the palms of My hands.*" O then, any thought of unbelief, how wrong ! While you and I watch against the temptation to unbelief, depend upon it God will show how pleased He is, and we shall get great gain from our trials.

Verses 24, 26, manifestly tell us of a time when the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled. "*I am come in My Father's name and ye receive Me not ; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*" (*John i. 43.*) It is Satan's man that the Lord refers to here. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered ? But thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered." When Israel, through the sin of their rejection of Christ, are brought under the power of Antichrist ; when they are in the very depth of their trouble, then God will come to their help, and take them up and shew the riches of His grace toward them.

Just a word upon Christ as the Learner. This is an old way of using the word. It is still used in some parts of England. It is said, "He is learned ;" that is to say, he is under instruction ; that is what the Lord means here. How could the blessed Lord learn ? *Heb. v. 8.* tells us—"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." He had nothing to unlearn. We have not only to learn but we have also to unlearn. The first Adam had not to learn by suffering so long as he stood in uprightness before

God ; but the blessed Lord, He descended and that led Him to the manger, and step by step He descended deeper and deeper in humiliation, so when upon the Mount of Transfiguration even there the matter of discussion between Him and Moses and Elias was His death upon the Cross—"His exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Well then, as He went on in suffering He grew in obedience, He reached a higher point in His sufferings when in Gethsemane He said, "*Not My will but Thine be done,*" than ever before.

"He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." (*Verse 4*). If our ear be awakened ; God's Holy Spirit will be always teaching us. His ordinary teaching is gentle teaching. He may speak occasionally with a mighty voice. But you remember the contrast, when Moses received the law to deliver it to Israel he said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake.*" (*Heb. xii. 21*). But when the Tabernacle was set up there was something better—Moses heard the voice of One,—a still small voice—speaking to him from above the Mercy-seat. If we have the ear of obedient children we should never lack the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 10. The believer is called to walk in the fulness of the light, How so? He is to "Trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay upon His God," so that whilst in the darkness of circumstances, he is to be in the light of communion with God. Then the end of this will be that the darkness will give place to the joy of deliverance. Our first thought should not be, how we may get out of our trying circumstances, but rather, how we may honour God by trusting Him in our trials.

In *verse 11* there is a caution needful for every one of us, against walking in the light of the fire that the flesh in its wisdom would kindle. To walk in the light of their own fire is more than ever the world's principal thought. They think they have a right to judge God in His word as they please. Beware of walking in the light of your own wisdom. Walk in no light but the light of the Word of the living God.

THE BELIEVER SHOULD NOT REST IN HIS ATTAINMENTS,
BUT SEEK AFTER CONFORMITY WITH CHRIST.

SCRIPTURES—read PHILIPPIANS II., III., IV.

It is a remarkable thing in this Epistle, that in all its words of precept and exhortation, there is no sin made mention of, that the conscience of the unregenerate man condemns. But, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, you will find plentiful mention of sins that the child of God is liable to fall into ; reminding us, that if we are not upheld by the

Lord Jesus, through His Spirit, there is not a sin that the natural man's conscience condemns, not a sin that is most vile and scandalous in the eyes of the world, but what we can fall into.

Did you ever find the people of the world talking of the filthiness of pride? You may hear them talk of *honest pride*, but never of the filthiness of it. In this Epistle, self-exaltation is held forth as utterly abominable to God; and self-will, self-glory, and self-exaltation as being ruinous to the soul's fellowship with God, and ruinous to the Church of God, in the fellowship of its members, one with another.

Before we consider the third chapter, let us dwell a little upon the *second chapter*. When it is said that the Blessed Son of God "made Himself of no reputation," or more properly, "emptied Himself"; of what did He, or could He, empty Himself? Being in the form of God, he possessed essentially all the distinguishing perfections of the Godhead, that must be true of God's only begotten Son, equality with God. All dominion over all creation belonged to Him. In *Gen. i., 26*, we read—"And God said let us make Man." Creation was equally the work of the Son, as of the Father. But, then He was in a state of equality with God, without being in the servant's state; of that state of equality in which He was, He emptied Himself, not of His Godhead—that could not be. How did He empty Himself? There is a most solemn truth in *Heb. ii.*: let us turn to it. *Verse 16*. "For verily, He took not hold of Angels, but He did take hold of the seed of Abraham." We know what Peter says (*2. Peter ii., 4*) and what *Jude* says (*verse 6*) touching the sin of Angels. How awful and solemn the truth, that God's Son passed by offending Angels, and didn't undertake to redeem them. He descended lower; having undertaken the cause of the seed of Abraham, they whose cause He undertook, being partakers of flesh and blood, He must likewise partake of the same. As the Apostle says in *I. Cor. xv., 21*, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from among the dead." He must make atonement for man, having become Son of Man. But what a solemn and awful truth it is, that Satan has no atonement made for Him. And, in his case there is the double bar to his salvation; there is his enmity, which possesses him, and his pride that rules him; He is always raging against God; that is one bar, but there is another—the justice of God has had no atonement for him. And so—I speak with reverence—it is impossible for God to raise him to his former glorious position.

The bar to the salvation of any sinner is in himself, not in God. Let the poor sinner account his own righteousness as dung and rags, he will receive Christ; God will not, He cannot shut out Christ from His heart. And let me say, I am everywhere zealous to say, that there is no need for a sinner crying to God for mercy, but there is need that the sinner should confess himself not entitled to a morsel of bread, nor a cup of cold water; and the moment he owns his unworthiness, he cannot reject what God gives—eternal life is the property of everyone that will have it.

This leads me to say, that this is not a light matter which the Apostle says, "But, what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ." (*Phil. iii. 7*). Amongst these what was the chief? He says, As "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (*Verse 6*). What does he mean? He called himself "The chief of sinners." How could he be at the same time a righteous man, and the chief of sinners? As touching his outward walk; as touching the judgment of his fellow Jews, he was a blameless man, not guilty of that which naturally defiles a man and discredits him in the eyes of his neighbours; but, though a proud self-justifying Pharisee, he is taught by the Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, to account that as dung.

The Apostle in the *second chapter* sets forth the Son of God as descending step by step down to the lowest depths—"The death of the Cross." It is one of the remarkable things in the Scripture, that the Spirit of God employs so few words in speaking of the atoning death of the Son of God. For example, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (*Gal. iii. 13*). The greatest of all possible events has taken place; that is, the death of the world's Creator, come in the flesh to save guilty man. Nothing can be so great as that; everything that remains for Christ to do, will only serve to unfold that life-giving, atoning work. The reason the sacrificial work of Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures in so few words is this—no words can ever fully set it forth; not even those that the Spirit of God has chosen. I may add another reason. At the resurrection, when we shall have come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, when time is behind us and eternity before us, then we shall have faculties to search continually into the depths of the humiliation and sufferings of Christ. The great reason I have for longing for the coming of Christ is, that I might know His Cross as I can never know it here.

We have Christ set before us in *Phil. ii.* as an example to us of self-abasement before God. True humility lies in seeing, and taking, and keeping my true place before God. No natural man does that; no unregenerate man ever will do it; and his obstinacy and rebellion against God are such, that he can never do it. It is only the child of God that can do this—it is the business of every regenerate person to do so.

When the Apostle says, "Work out your own salvation," (*Phil. ii. 12*), what does it mean? It means, that by the indwelling Spirit, we are day by day to work out our salvation from everything that is not like Christ. And if I would work it out, I must first of all have my pattern before me. Having received Christ crucified as my peace, life, righteousness, and strength, let me receive Him as my perfect example. Now, as the Gospel of Christ excels and surpasses all possible thoughts of the natural man concerning God, so in this point, you never can imagine a natural man setting before him Christ's example of self-

abasement before God as the pattern by which he is to walk. The business of every child of Adam is self-exaltation, not always as betwixt himself and his neighbour, but as betwixt himself and God. The life that every child of Adam lives is one of self-will; therefore, of self-exaltation against God.

Observe how the Apostle begins his word of exhortation in this *second chapter*—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (*Verse 3.*) Then he goes on to set before us the beautiful and glorious example of self-abasement in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, by nature God's equal, who took the servant's place. The happiness of Man and Angels, as creatures of God, could only lie in perfect subjection to the will of God. God cannot make His creatures happy, except they have no will but His will. Satan would not wear that easy yoke. He forsook the servant's place and state; he would be his own master. We know what the end must be. The full measure of retribution awaits him; he knows it. You remember the words in *Rev. xii.*, 12. "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." But what of man? He was made of necessity a servant of his Maker, capable of worshipping God as his Maker; not in fellowship with Him, that could not be, but knowing God as his Maker. Some men of science talk of Adam having discovered, after much reasoning about the matter, that he was created by some almighty power. For Adam to be and to worship, were things of the same moment. We know he did not abide in that state; he chose rather to be with the woman in disobedience without God, than abide with God without the woman. He forsook the servant's place, and took the place that didn't belong to him. Christ, being in the place of equality with God, not in the servant's state and place, took upon Him the form of a servant. Passing Angels by, He descends as low as He possibly might, and then descends step by step down to the depths of humiliation on the Cross. Now then, all self-exaltation of Satan and of man is just self-degradation, and can be nothing else. None but the child of God ever will, or can abase himself before God; he knows God, and he knows himself, as the natural man does not, and cannot know himself. Well then, if I discern my place, what is it? A poor dung-hill beggar; I take it. A dung-hill beggar, whom God in His grace has laid hands upon, cleansed, adorned, and crowned—I am a child of God, and I am a royal priest—I speak, of course, in the person of every believer. Now then, we are no longer called to take our place as dung-hill beggars, but as in Christ Jesus, raised even higher than the Angels of God. How then shall I behave myself? I shall be working out my Salvation from day to day—that is my Salvation by the indwelling Holy Spirit—from any and every thing that is not like Christ; and in myself, I shall be in a state of self-abasement before God continually. Just suppose that, throughout the family of God, this were made the heart's business of every child of God; then we should be walking in the Spirit's

fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with each other ; each contending for the lowest place, each esteeming the other better than himself ; that is to say, I should know much more of myself, as touching the flesh, than I could do of anyone else, that I would always say, "the lowest place belongs to me." Then all strife and contention amongst the children of God would die out.

Let me observe in the *third chapter* an exceedingly precious promise, and let us consider to whom it belongs. *Verse 15.* "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ; and, if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Is it not plain ? Supposing I slight the great business of conformity to Christ ; supposing that I slight the exhortation, "*Work out your own salvation,*" I have no promise that God will reveal my state to me. It is not to me as a child of God that the promise is made, but to me as a child of God and servant of Christ, aiming with steady purpose to be delivered from everything that is not like my Lord. Then I have the promise that "*if in anything I be otherwise minded God will reveal this unto me.*"

I would remind you of what we have in effect said, viz., that the natural conscience is all against us, it will never raise us higher, as it will never disapprove of self-exaltation before God. It will disapprove of a man magnifying himself above another ; but, it will never disapprove the creature man magnifying himself against God. Christ brought the Pharisees' pride of religion down to the dust ; He laid their glory low ; therefore they hated Him. Stephen exposed the Pharisees' pride, and they stoned him to death. And Saul of Tarsus, who held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, journeyed to Damascus to bring to Jerusalem those that confessed Christ. What was their fault ? They made nothing of the Pharisees' pride of self-righteousness.

(*Philip. iii. 10.*) "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." I speak very boldly here—when he says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," he does not mean the resurrection of the body, but he means, the state of the soul—the very counterpart of the mind of Christ risen ; and the very counterpart of Christ's mind on the Cross. That indeed is a high aim, but it should be the aim of every child of God. This would strike at the root of all schism and division in the Church of God. Paul means that he should so have the mind of Christ, that as a man looking in a mirror sees the exact counterpart of his own face, so Christ looking at His servant might see the counterpart of His own mind—the Lord at the right-hand of God, and the counterpart of the mind that was in Him when He hung upon the Cross. What blessedness in the very aim ! What blessedness in the very purpose of soul thus to be conformed to Christ !

Then he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." (*Verse 12*). But he says he has attained something. What is it? In *verse 13* the translators have put in the words, "I do." We ought to read it thus—"I don't account myself to have apprehended this conformity with my risen Lord and with Christ on the Cross, but yet I have attained one thing." What is it? He is running a race, he is pressing on for a prize; that is, the perfect approval of Christ at His judgment-seat as a servant. Well now, he is running his race and, in the eyes of his fellow-saints, he has made good progress in the race, but, what is his own mind? He is forgetting the things that are behind; he is forgetting his attainments. When the state of the saints at Corinth demands it, he speaks abundantly of his past services and sufferings; their folly demanded this. And when he is before the council at Jerusalem he makes mention of his service for godly purposes, but for nothing like resting in his attainments; he forgets all, and presses on. That is the mind which should be found in each of us.

We gather from these words of the Apostle Paul that the great mark of the perfect man is, that he is richly acquainted with his imperfection. If that mark be not found in a child of God he has scarce begun to seek after perfection; he has not the right standard before him; he does not know himself. Then the Apostle says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." (*Verse 15*). Here, I would say, that he is at the same time perfect, and not perfect. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can account His child and servant well-pleasing when that child and servant discerns and judges his own imperfection. So long as any one of us judges with godly rigour his own imperfections, God's holy eye as a Father does not see them, and accounts His child and servant perfectly well-pleasing unto Him. It was in this sense that Enoch had the testimony from God that he pleased Him. It is in this mind that the Apostle says, "As many of us as be perfect," that is to say, discerning our imperfection, forgetting attainment, thus proving that we are perfectly well-pleasing to God. And then, whatever be in us, that we are not aware of, that is contrary to Christ, we have the promise that God will reveal even this unto us.

Read *iv. 6*. What a blessed state for a child of God to be in, "Careful for nothing;" that is having no anxious unbelieving care for anything. How do I come at this state? By minding the exhortation of the Apostle in the *second chapter*, and following his example in the *third chapter*. If I am aiming at conformity with Christ, I will see things rightly with God's eye; I shall judge their value with heavenly wisdom; and I should find occasion in the smallest matters of daily life for pursuing the great business of conformity with Christ. Let the child of God go out of his closet into his family, having before him resemblance and conformity to Christ, he will meet, before he crosses the threshold to go out into his daily business, something to test him and to give occasion for him to manifest the spirit of Christ. If he is aiming at

conformity with Christ, he may be sorrowful, but he will not be angry; he may be sad, but he will not be vexed. He will not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and he will be witnessing for Christ to all around him; his aim being to magnify Christ.

—You observe that sweet word, “The Lord is at hand.” (*iv. 5*). The meaning is not here, “Behold, I come quickly.” (*Rev. xxii. 7, 12*). We rob ourselves of much blessing if we do not understand the meaning of those words. While you are showing the mind of Christ in your daily matters the Lord is close by you. You remember what the Apostle says in writing to Timothy. “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” (*2 Tim. iv. 16, 17*). And so here, while you, perhaps, are giving up your own will cheerfully, or yielding in some matter for the Lord’s sake; it may be a temporary loss to you, but the Lord is at hand and takes note of it, and puts it down to your account, and assures you of it. Supposing you suffer some loss in earthly substance, you will see presently by your giving it up for the Lord’s sake that you are a great gainer. As the result of this, you have the secret of “The peace of God.” What is meant by “The peace of God?” The peace that is in the mind of God as His holy eye surveys the universe, seeing all things in the hands of Christ and all things prospering in His hand; every thing succeeding in God’s account, though in appearance God may be greatly dishonoured! Well, then, you have God’s peace, because you are in fellowship with God in His mind about Christ; you are in fellowship with God in respect to the government of Christ. And what then? You don’t waste time by the anxiety of unbelief, you are a self-possessed person, and in the mind of the Lord Jesus you will “Occupy till He comes.” (*Luke xix. 13*).

When the Apostle says, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (*verse 11*) he means to say, if he is occupied with God—if he is occupied with conformity to Christ, he sees all treasures in Christ; and he sees all to be his. O then, as betwixt himself and his circumstances he is like a *self-supplied country*. It does not mean here a man submitting to what he cannot help or alter; it is much more than that. He is a royal personage, he is a child of God, a servant of Christ, who is taken up with Christ and all that belongs to Christ is his. Therefore, he is like a country whose supplies are all within its own borders. May every one of us be like this. Further, each child of God in his own circumstances has a treasury of opportunity for diligently applying himself to the great business of conformity with Christ. It is a mine of wealth, and none but the child of God can dig in it. The opportunity of pleasing God belongs to every child of God. If he won’t dig in that gold mine he shall be a great loser. May we learn the great secret of happiness and peace of mind, not living to ourselves, but living unto Him that died and rose again. (*Rom. xiv. 7, 9*).

THE HEAVENLY LIFE "MORE ABUNDANTLY" BROUGHT TO THE BELIEVER BY CHRIST JESUS.

SCRIPTURE—read HEBREWS IX.

We have in this chapter what the blessed Lord speaks of in *John* x., 10, when he says, "I am come that they (*His sheep*) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." In *chapter* xi. of this epistle, the Spirit of God records the names of worthies, beginning with Abel, and coming down to later times, making mention of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others. We find that one common mark distinguishes all the people of God, of all ages; they belong to one common family, whereof God is the Father, and they all live and walk by faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (*Heb. xi., 4*). He, no doubt, heard the promise, that Christ should come in the flesh, and he believed it. So did Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the faithful: they all lived by faith. But all natural men trust in some refuge of lies. All natural religion is made up of two lies. The one is, that whereas the Scripture declares (and those taught of the Spirit know it to be true) that man's "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (*Jer. xvii. 9*), so that God Himself does not undertake to mend it; man's religion gives the lie to this solemn fact; he thinks there is some good thing in him as before God. God says, "*desperately wicked*"; man says, "*it is not so*." That is one lie; another lie is this, they ascribe to God a mercy that treads under foot His justice; and they judge that He will, nay, they go farther, they say, that "*He ought to have mercy upon them, on the ground of their doing the best they can*." There is no such thing in the Scriptures. God cannot show mercy to the dishonour of His justice. These lies are the warp and woof of all the world's religions. All the people of God are marked out from the world by this—they accept God's testimony touching man's heart, that it is desperately wicked, incurably bad, but God gives a new one. There is another distinguishing mark in the people of God; they all trust in the Son of God for justification. "Abraham believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." (*Gen. xv., 6, Romans iv., 1-5*). It is a mighty work of the Spirit of God when a natural, self-willed, self-justifying child of Adam is taught to stand guilty, with a shut mouth before God; having nothing to call his own but sin and death; having no one and nothing to trust to but Christ crucified. O! it is a mighty and glorious work of God; a work of everlasting duration; such an one has passed out of death into life, and can never come into condemnation (*John v. 24*).

In *Heb. ix. 8.* we read "That the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing." Aaron entered the Holiest only *once a year*; that was on a special day, the tenth of the seventh month, called "The day of atonement." He entered with the blood of the Sin-offering; and with His censer full of fire from off the Golden Altar; and he cast incense upon it, and went within the veil, and filled the Holiest of all with the cloud of incense, and it covered the Mercy-seat. What Christ has done was prefigured by Aaron going thus within the veil. He didn't bring his own blood, but the blood of the goat of the Sin-offering; he could not bring in his sins with him; and it would have been death for any one to follow Aaron within the veil. Aaron entered frequently; Christ once. Aaron entered by blood of others; the Son of God entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood. Aaron could not bring in any one with him; but it is a grievous trespass in us if we be not always with Christ within the veil. You know in what sense I mean; as to bodily presence, we are in this world for a little season, but, as to conscience and affection, it is not only our privilege, but it is our obligation to be within the veil, and there to abide both day and night. Is that the custom of our hearts and conscience?

You observe what the apostle says in the *10th chapter, verse 19-22*—"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." This full assurance of faith means a great deal more than the assurance in each of us, that we are children of God; that is a most precious thing for us to be assured of by the Spirit of God. The child of God should not be in bondage; not like Lazarus, bound with his grave clothes; concerning whom the Lord said to those who stood by him, "Loose him and let him go" (*John xi. 44*). It is a great blessing to have the Spirit's testimony that we are children of God. It is not a great attainment; it is a stepping stone to something higher and deeper, that is, the fulness of the heart's assurance, that, as God has accepted Christ, He has accepted us in Him. That is the full assurance of faith.

Let us, in order to help on this assurance in all our hearts, consider two words which occur in *ix. 14*, the one is "Himself," and the other, "the blood." It is remarkable that you won't find in the Epistle to the Galatians one single mention of "the blood of Christ;" but the great intent of that Epistle is to explain what it means. But, throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews the words are found, and wherefore? To show that all that was prefigured when the bullock, the goat, and the sheep were slain, was fulfilled when the sword of God's justice awoke against the Shepherd, the Man, His fellow, and slaughtered that Shepherd. The blood of the body of the blessed Lord was shed, after He had said, "It is finished." You remember that His side was pierced by the soldier, because he found that Christ had already breathed out His spirit. They did not break the legs of the blessed Lord, so that the two prophecies were fulfilled touching the body of the Lord; the one in

Exodus xii. 46, John xix. 36, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken" and the other in Zechariah was fulfilled when the soldier pierced the side of the Lord, and forthwith came blood and water. When the Scripture speaks of the blood of Christ, it tells us of the slaughter weapon which the priest, or the man that offered up the sacrifice, plunged into the vitals of the victim. When did that happen to Christ? When He uttered the cry, according to Matthew and Mark, in the record of the Cross—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" . . . "But Thou art holy." In *Psalms xxii.*, where these words are recorded, the literal and the figurative meet together. *Verse 16*—"They pierced My hands and My feet." That was fulfilled to the letter. When they nailed the blessed Lord to the Cross, and that word, "*Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree (Gal. iii. 13)*", was also fulfilled then. But, in *verse 20*, we read these words, "Deliver My soul from the sword." That was in a figure fulfilled when the sword awoke against the Shepherd. The sword was God's unbending, sin-avenging justice which fell upon Christ the Surety, in Himself guiltless, undefiled and undefilable, but guilty as our Surety, and making confession of our sins, according to *Psalms xl.* and other *Psalms*. Man's religion always makes God's justice bend to His mercy. God's justice made a channel for His mercy, by not sparing the Son of His love. Hence, we never read in any book of human religions such words as these—"That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (*Rom. iii. 26*).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews you do not find the word, "justify;" but you find the word, "sanctify." The reason is this, whereas, the guilt of sin makes the child of Adam deserve the depths of hell, the uncleanness of sin makes him a leper that shuts him out of the presence of God. Now, we have been taught by the Spirit of God that we need to have our leprosy cleansed. The world's religions harden the conscience, and shut God out from their hearts; we cannot endure that. We want something more than salvation from hell; we need salvation from the uncleanness of sin, because we cannot be happy without having communion with God. O! how precious this word, "Jesus, also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (*Heb. xiii. 12*). The child of God is not only justified by faith, he is also sanctified by the blood of Christ. There are just as many priests in God's eyes as there are children of God; not one more, and not one less. They are not only priests, but they are kings and priests. Do we all so believe this as to deal with God within the veil, according to our priestly office? Let us see to it that we do it.

Another word I would dwell upon, and that is "Himself." One of the distinguishing excellencies and glories of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the frequent occurrence of this word "*Himself*." You will find it in the very *first chapter, verse 3*.—"Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He

had by HIMSELF purged our sins, sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high." The thought here is this :—That to create, to uphold, and to govern the world, nothing more was needed than the "*Word of His power*," but, if God would save any out of the race of Adam ; if He would turn children of wrath into children of God ; if He would find worshippers, O then ! all the glories of the Godhead of the Son of God come in the flesh, must be in that sacrifice ; that is the force of the word, "*Himself*." And hence in *ix. 26* we read these words, "**He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of HIMSELF.**" Now, let us lay to heart, beloved, more than ever we have done, these words, "**Blood,**" and "**Himself.**" Let us remember, whenever we speak of the blood of Christ, the act of God's sin-avenging justice in not sparing His own Son, visiting Him with the curse that we might have eternal blessing.

"All things were created by and for Him" (the Son of God.) (*Col. i. 16*). Have you ever thought of the teaching of the Spirit in connection with "The Bow in the cloud"? There was no such thing before the flood as a cloud or rain. It was a great trial of Noah's faith to believe that there should be a flood. We read that the fountains of the great deep were opened as well as the windows of Heaven. Turn to *Genesis ix.* You find at the end of *chap. viii.* that Noah built an Altar and offered burnt offerings of every clean beast and fowl ; and Jehovah smelled a sweet savour—typical of the offering of the Son of God. Then we read in *chap. ix.* . . . "It shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud ; and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature." (*Verses 13, 16.*) The cloud hiding the sun from view would be a type of the guilt of man, but the bow in the cloud a type of the revelation of God's holy name ; and the perfections of the Cross of Christ. And as God looks upon Christ crucified He has not respect to the guilt of the one that believes in His Son ; and as He looks upon Him He remembers His covenant.

Let us go back to *Heb. ix.* again. When the High Priest went into the Holiest do you think that the people, who were standing without when he disappeared from their view, were disappointed and went to their tents? O no. They waited till he came out again. The sun did not set before he reappeared ; it was all done in one day. That is a precious hint to us. As the people waited for the reappearing of Aaron when he entered within the veil, they didn't say, "What a long time he keeps us waiting." It was in human reckoning a little while between the time that he went in and came out. If we dwell in conscience within the veil we shall learn to reckon time in the Spirit's

fellowship with Christ Himself. Do you remember His promise three times given in *Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20*, "Behold, I come quickly;" and he answers, "Surely" to the last utterance of the promise. Let us reckon with Him when He says, "I come quickly." Then we know what Peter tells us—men will say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (*2 Peter iii. 4*). There are two ways of reckoning; the one is within the veil, where, as it were, we are inhabiting eternity; and in fellowship with Christ in His reckoning. When He shall come His enemies will say, "He came quickly;" and we shall say, "It was a long time indeed of patience toward the world; and it was a long time of the trial of our faith, but, after all, in God's account, O! how quickly did He come." That is what we shall say; and that is what we ought to say now—"He cometh quickly." As we wait for His return we ought to be in spirit ever going forth to Him. Thus it is we are able to take up the words of one who said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto Me and I unto the world." (*Gal. vi. 14*). Then we walk humbly and discreetly; we walk in holy fear toward God, and we walk in affection and humbleness of mind toward our brethren, and we walk in tender pity toward the world that knows not the guilt of sin.

There is another thing that we should dwell upon, and that is, the perfect sympathy of the blessed Lord. And let me just ask you a question from *Heb. ix. 24*. "Now to appear in the presence of God for us." Can you tell me the value of these words? It means each one of us in particular; each one, as if there was only that one to care for. It is for us, as we are here in the midst of the daily trials of our faith, with the fiery darts of the Adversary to encounter; with all manner of temptation to contend with. But never let us forget that He is stronger that is for us, than all our adversaries, both within and without. Furthermore, neither could we, without trials of faith, prove what He is. Supposing a physician had attained marvellous skill in his calling; take away sickness and disease from the world, how could he manifest his skill in relieving the suffering and afflicted? And so, let us be without all the trials of faith that we, more or less, are called to pass through, and the blessed Lord could not show His perfect sympathy with us in our trials, and we could not prove it. The first thing in any trial of faith is to remember that Christ has the chief part in every trial of faith, either great or little trials. And let us have, what I would call nimble faith, that readily goes to Him in small, as well as great things. He has been made "perfect through sufferings." . . . "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (*Heb. ii. 10, 18*). Also in *iv. 15, 16*, we read "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly," keep nothing back, but tell it all to Him at the throne of grace, "that we may obtain mercy and find

grace to help in time of need." Grace for timely help for every day, for every day is a time of temptation, more or less. Our heavenly Aaron has been "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (*Heb. i. 9*). You may remember His words in *John xvi. 7*, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." You remember in *John xx.* that Mary thought only of the restoration of what she had lost; that is to say, she thought as she had been wont to wash the Saviour's feet, and sit at meat with Him, that what she had lost was restored. He said to her, "Touch Me not." Don't think of the restoration of what you have lost, but some better thing. "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God" (*verse 17*). And then He said again, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify Me" (*xvi. 13, 14*). If we have a tender conscience against grieving the Holy Spirit, He will reveal to us our Great High Priest within the Veil who fills the heavenly sanctuary with the glorious fragrance and perfections of His atonement. We are under obligation to be there in spirit; and never to be anywhere else. While in bodily presence we are here walking in darkness, having no light, God's Holy Spirit will enable those who have a tender conscience towards Christ to take up the words of the Apostle in *Heb. ii. 9*, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." If I see Him I shall be looking on to His second coming, and I shall live to purpose the little season of my sojourn in this present world.

LESSONS FROM DANIEL, TOUCHING CONFESSION.

Let us encourage ourselves by looking at God's dealings with His servant Daniel, and his with God. He began with small matters, and regarded neither place nor circumstance, making no difficulties in the path of obedience, because he trusted only in God.

Daniel i. 8. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat," &c. Having laid hold of the great things in Christ, he determined, with true and tender conscience, to do the will of God in the smallest matters. "The king appointed them a daily provision of his meat, and of the wine which he drank" (*verse 5*). It was nothing to him that his head was endangered by refusing to partake of the king's portion. Daniel determined in his heart to obey the living God, and his Father, in the smallest matters, because he had taken hold of the great things in Christ.

Then we know the honour put upon him by the King. Though he had found Daniel and his three friends far better than the magicians (*i. 20*), yet, when troubled by his dreams, he sent first for the magicians, and when they failed to interpret his dreams, he was very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men in Babylon, but "*Daniel went in and desired the king that he would give him time, and he would shew him the interpretation,*" (*ii. 12-16*) thus saving their lives. He had no fear for the decree of the King; it was nothing to him, for he knew he could reverse it by faith in the living God.

In *chapter v.*, we find him standing before Belshazzar (that monarch being condemned by reason of his hardness of heart) interpreting the hand-writing on the wall. When he offered him worldly position and honour to interpret the writing, Daniel said, "**Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another**" (*v. 17*). He did not seek earthly honour; he sought to do the will of God.

Then, in the height of his restored glory, we find his heart occupied with God, with Christ, and with Israel. Mark what he says to God in *ix. 20*—"My sin, and the sin of My people." Though all of us, more or less, are familiar with Daniel, we shall be better acquainted with *chapter ix.* of this book, through humbling ourselves before God to-day, confessing our sin, and the sin of the whole Church of God. Read *verses 10-15*. . . . "All Israel have transgressed thy law . . . All this evil has come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth." If Daniel's depths of conscience and deep affection for Israel, which sprung from love to God, led him thus to humble himself in the sight of God, because of their sin, what shall we say of the guiltiness of the body of Christ, of which we are members, if we fail to humble ourselves before God, touching the sad condition of the Church of God? We have been praying that we might have a deeper acquaintance with the guilt of sin. God has revealed the guiltiness of sin step by step. It has reached its uttermost in the Cross of Christ; and in the coming of the Comforter, concerning which the Lord said, "**He shall glorify Me.**" Next to Christ's joy in God, and His admiration of the service of Gabriel, and of the highest elect angels, is His joy in our loving obedience—our friendship in the way of obedience. He says, "**Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**" (*John xv. 14*). And as the revelation of God's love has reached its height in Christ, so the guiltiness of sin has been revealed to the uttermost, and the blessedness of obedience. And now if we take up the state of the Church, always beginning with our sin; and then always remembering, that if we are in fellowship with the heart of Christ, we must be grieving over the whole sin of the whole Church of God.

I would add a word from *Philippians*. In this Epistle we have the saddest possible example of God's children grieving the Spirit by that which their natural conscience did not at all condemn. Some preached

Christ—true brethren truly preached Christ—supposing in their envy and jealousy to add to Paul's bonds. You see here how the apostle, though a man, forgets himself. Observe what he says—"Whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached . . . therein do I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (*Phil. i. 14-18*). Read also *verse 8*—"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." That should be our mind touching all saints; dealing with God first about our own state, and then about the state of the whole Church of God, may it be much more laid upon our hearts to be in fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, touching the state of the whole family of God.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In *Rom. xv. 13*, Paul prays thus—"Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope." *How?* "Through the power of the Holy Spirit." Now beloved, we prayed in our first song, concerning emptying and filling. Let us bear in mind that what we long for, Christ by His Spirit delights to accomplish in us. It is a longing that cannot possibly fail of its fulfilment, unless we ourselves prevent it. And let us observe that, according to *John xiv. 21*, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." Our hope will have boldness and constancy in us, according to the measure in which we see Jesus,—according to the measure in which the inward eye of the new man beholds and considers, and searches into the heart of Christ. Read *John xvi. 13*, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . and He will show you things to come." That bespeaks the eye fixed on the object. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Is it not a most precious thought? Is it not a most blessed truth, that when the Spirit is revealing Christ to the renewed soul, He is glorifying Christ? How did the Son of God empty Himself, and take upon Him the servant's form,—not of the Godhead; that was impossible; but of the state in which He was, in equality with God? Whatsoever Christ is, *that* the Son of God became through the eternal Spirit. Having taken upon Him the servant's form, He is that for ever, according to *1 Cor. xv. 27*, 28. "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall

the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." What a rebuke this is to the creature's pride ! The lowliness of Christ will be one of the chief things that will shine out in the glory ; and, in the height of His glory, the utmost of His lowliness shall be manifested. And we too shall be lowly, because so nigh and so high. Then we shall no more need to pray to be emptied.

The Spirit of God reveals Christ as He now is, showing us the glory, joy and fellowship that is laid up for us. The glory will indeed be glory, so that none other glory that has been, or can possibly be, can be compared to it. The chief thing in the glory will be the fellowship of love between the Father and the Son, and the eternal Spirit, and the redeemed. Others will be beholders, but not partakers in it. Should not this exaltation to which we are called, make us fear lest we fail to walk worthy of our high and holy calling?

All the acts of the Godhead are, and must be, acts of perfect fellowship ; hence these words in *Gen. i. 26*—"Let US make man." How shall creatures be fitted to participate in fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit? Not on the ground of mere creatureship. We must get down, and become fitted for this holy and blessed fellowship by the redeeming blood of God's own Son. The highest object in redemption is to bring us into, and fit us for this Divine fellowship. The fellowship of glory is great, but the fellowship of love is the greatest.

If there were no disobedience on the part of the Church of God, what would be the natural result? Supposing that the whole Church of God were to be obedient to the precepts of Christ according to *Rom. xii.*, the Spirit would naturally lead us into all the fulness of fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and all saints, that it is possible for us to enjoy in our mortal bodies.

We have been speaking of the trials and sufferings of God's servants in the early period of the Church's history. We have been calling to mind what Paul speaks of in *2 Cor. xi., 23, 27*. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned ; thrice I suffered shipwreck," &c. There is little outward persecution now-a-days, but we have heart-searching trials in connection with the state of the Church of God and the world. We are in danger of making light of the schisms and divisions in the Church of God. We forget the vast distinction between Israel under the law and the saints of the present dispensation who have the presence, power, and grace of the Holy Spirit, both in them as individual believers, and in the Church. It might be said that Israel in the flesh has rejected Christ, and persecuted the Church, and that there is no hope of their restoration under the old covenant. That is true, but we know that through Christ and the fulfilment of the Divine purposes in Him they shall yet be restored to God and to their land. But we, having the Spirit dwelling

in us, are just as much bound to be of one heart and soul, and to speak the same things as the saints at Pentecost ; nay, we are bound to exceed them in this grace. We are now called upon to walk so as to fully please God. Do we lay this to heart in our secret dealings with God ? Do we own the accountability of the whole Church to be what God requires of us ? This is one of the things we are in danger of neglecting.

Then, how deeply solemn for us to be here as God's representatives during the present divided and broken condition of the Church, and the downward course of the world. But let us ever remember that we are fully furnished in the fulness of Christ by the Spirit with all needed grace, both as sons and servants. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (*1 Cor. ii. 10.*) And, if we by self-will hinder Him not, He will, according to *Eph. iii. 16, 18*, so strengthen us with all might that we "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God."

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST.

Doubtless our hearts have been reminded by these words in *Psa. ii. 7*, "Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee," of God's only begotten Son, who, having died on the Cross, was raised from the dead, as the First-born among the many Sons to which family we belong. When He said, "Thou art My Son," He embraced all His sons in that First-born Son in resurrection. These words may remind us of what the blessed Son of God says in *John x. 17*, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it up again." Let us consider what these words "My life" mean. It is the life of the blessed Son of God who came in the flesh in order that by resurrection He might become The First-born amongst the many sons. Beloved, what a life was that ! The life of the first Adam cannot be compared with it ; the holiness of the highest angel ; the holiness of a mere creature, a thing of yesterday, cannot be mentioned with it. But, when we think of the life of the only begotten Son of God, who dwelt in the Father's bosom, and who became flesh, and who, step by step, went to the Cross, what a wonderful life that was ! He could say, "He that sent Me is with Me : the Father hath not left Me alone ; for I do always those things that

please Him." (*John viii. 29.*) And then, consider the unutterable contrast between God's only begotten Son and Abraham's only son. We don't read of any struggle or prayer on Mount Moriah. There was no struggle in Gethsemane, but there was that threefold prayer, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (*Matt. xxvi. 39.*) God's justice must make a channel for His love in the one way. And, surely Abraham, who had been commanded to offer up his son, had some blessed foretaste of this when his hand, with knife in it, was stayed. When the Son of God thrice made that request, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," there was no answer. If Isaac must have been doubly dear to Abraham as they came down from that Mount, how fully did God make good these words of Christ, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again;" and He laid down His life that His sheep might not only have life, but that they might have it *more abundantly*. Which of us could measure these words, "More abundantly"?

What was especially on my mind was suggested by what our brother Blamyre said concerning Abraham. Man's judgment in offering up his son in sacrifice, perhaps calling him a murderer, did not hinder him in obeying God. In connection with this, read *1. Cor. iv. 3*, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." When he says, "For I know nothing by (or against) myself," he means, that he does not allow anything within him that would displease God, or grieve the Spirit of Christ. He cannot be content without an approving conscience. And, when before Felix, the Roman Governor, He says, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men" (*Acts xxiv. 16*). But he does not rest in this; nor does he rest without it. He says, "He that judgeth Me is the Lord." If, from day to day, as the Lord's servant, whether in the sight of men, or not, whether in my closet, or anywhere, if I am exercised in my conscience towards Christ as my Judge, must I not be so raised above the judgment of my fellow men, that their judgment will have no power over me? I cannot think of the judgment of the mere creature, even though he be a member of Christ, if the question be one of obedience to my Lord.

There is a very striking word in *2 Cor. i. 12*. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." Now observe *verse 6*—"And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation," &c. Also *v. 20*—"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We see from these Scriptures, how the Apostle exercises himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. He seeks to walk in godly sincerity

and tenderness of heart toward all saints; and then, see how he represents God, in supplicating the unbelieving world to receive Christ. The heart of the blessed Lord was a fountain always ready, as occasion demanded, to supply tears; and so it ought to be with us. God looks at our heart's mindings, if I may so speak, to judge of the sacrifice we make for Him. And besides, in *Heb. xi.*, in which Abraham is commended for offering up his only begotten Son, one of His family is commended for "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (*verse 26*). And another tells of the Spirit of God moving him to write his own commendation. "*What things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ*" (*Phil. iii. 7*). It was a marvellous thing for him to surrender, and account as a dung-heap, all those things that were once precious to him, better to him than His life, viz., his righteousness and standing as a Pharisee. But, he was so raised in affection and conscience that he sees his full recompense in Christ. As the Holy Spirit reveals to us the glorious fulness of the risen Son of God, then we freely and fully give up, and count as dung all those things that naturally are dear to our hearts. In the light of the risen Lord, and in view of His coming and judgment-seat, we are enabled to count all we have given up as dung.

There may be some present that could not say that they look forward to the judgment-seat of Christ. Beloved, the more you look on to it, the more joyfully you will do so; and the more constantly you exercise yourself in view of standing at that judgment-seat, the more humbly and more joyfully shall you look on to it, because of the terrible shame and everlasting woe that the enemies of God and His Son shall have to endure. They shall reap corruption, the proper and reasonable harvest of sowing to the flesh. As saints of God we have nothing to do to share the judgment of wrath. But we have everything to do with continually considering what we have been saved from. Let us remember that it is He who died on the Cross to redeem us that will be our Judge. He will take account of our obedience as God's children; our obedience as the members of His body to whom He has given the other Comforter. While seeking to know and realize our accountability as the servants of Christ, let us look on to His judgment-seat with holy joy.

THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH SHOULD BE A REFLECTION OF THE ONENESS BETWEEN THE FATHER AND SON.

Read *John xvii.*—"I pray for them . . . whom thou hast given Me, for they are Thine . . . Holy Father, keep

through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." (*Verses 9, 11.*) We know they were not kept from strife and contention. But what a solemn contrast in him who is called the Son of Perdition, who, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed his Master ; but, who afterwards repented of his deed, cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself—(*Matt. xxvii. 1, 9.*)—thus declaring himself, by his own deed, to be under the curse of God, and the especial curse of God, as having known the Lord, not in heart, but in understanding and conscience. What a contrast in Peter ! He thrice denied his Lord ; but was saved out of the net of the Adversary. The Lord looked upon him in tenderest love ; that look broke his heart, and made him weep bitterly. Having restored him, three thousand souls were called from death to life through his testimony at Pentecost. They were kept from destruction by the grace of God, but they were not kept from strife and contention. That was their own fault ; it could not be the fault of the blessed Lord.

We remember how it was that they were not kept. We read in *Matt. xvi.* that after the Lord had foretold His death, Peter, who had just confessed Him to be "The Christ, the Son of the living God," began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord : this shall not be unto Thee." But the Lord said unto "Peter, get thee behind Me Satan ; thou art an offence to Me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (*Verse 16, 23.*) Suppose, at this point of their discipleship Peter and the rest had said, "Lord, teach us concerning these things." O ! how much evil they would have been saved from. But, alas, they would not learn. What say our hearts ? Have we so learned Christ ? He who is the express image of God's person must be crucified ; He could not unfold the depths of His love without sinking down into the depths of His own sufferings. He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it." (*John xvii. 26.*) We know how He begins, "I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work, which thou gavest Me to do." (*Verse 4.*) Having done this, He will ever declare His Father's name by the same means, the death of the Cross. He fills the heaven of heavens with the fragrance of His atoning death.

Don't our hearts tell us, that as we acquaint ourselves with God as our Father, we acquaint ourselves with the oneness between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ? Thus, our hearts and conscience are supplied with a test and standard of our own state of soul, by which we can detect in ourselves our want of oneness with the Father, and the Son, and fellow-saints. We know that the fulness of the heart's desire of the blessed Lord shall be fulfilled in our perfect state in resurrection. And it can always be answered in us, supposing that instead of committing the fault of Peter—"far be it from Thee, Lord"—we studied from day to day to acquaint ourselves by the Word and Spirit of God—shall I say, with the Cross of Christ ? I would

FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE.

1 Cor. vii. 24.—"Let every man-wherein he is called, therein abide with God." If this Scripture was rightly considered by any seeking to serve the Lord in fellowship with another, it would prevent the evil of discord, and would sow the seeds of heavenly unity. If the calling, according to the word of God, be an unlawful one, then no Christian can abide in it, because he cannot abide in it with God. In connection with this let us turn to *Luke iv. 22*. "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's Son?" or as we have it in *Mark vi. 3*, "Is not this the Carpenter?" Every one called of God, considering well the will of God, and who, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, seeks to make it the business of the heart to make the best of place and circumstance wherein God's love finds him. It will become the settled habit of his soul to make small things great, by seeking to please God in those small things. And let us remember that the Son of God, by whom and for whom the heavens and the earth were created, glorified God by being subject to His parents. He made the smallest things of eternal value and glory because He was the doer, and God was the end. Then, to the one that abides with God in the calling wherein he is called, it will be the settled habit of his soul to do everything so as to please God; then every little thing he does must be a great thing. If we walked with God day by day there would be more and more the fixed, single eye; and we would know the preciousness of that promise in *1 Sam. ii. 30*, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Supposing from this portion of the foreign land called earth, it be the mind of the Lord that such and such an one should go to some other part of this foreign land, he would be continually looking to the Lord for guidance in connection with his service. Then, supposing any one were joined with another in the work of the Gospel, the grace of God in the fellow-worker would lead him so to consider his brother's infirmities that these would afford an occasion for him to please God. And there cannot possibly be discord without self-exaltation and self-will being at the bottom of it. If we see ourselves as in the Son of God; as loved of God the Father even as He loved the Son, though falling creatures in ourselves, we stand in new creation, and as we think of what we were by nature, and what we are through grace, it will produce in us humility, mutual love and forbearance, and must work perseverance in the service of Christ. And considering ourselves rightly, that which was once fair in our own eyes, viz:—our goodness, kindness and integrity, when brought into the light of God would be seen by us to be abominable in His sight. Then we would see spiritually and rightly what we were. But we should never confound what we were with what we are. We should see ourselves as created anew in Christ, and loved by God the Father as He loves His Son. God sees Christ and His members as one object of His love. Then we should see ourselves too high to be proud, and too

rather say, with the Christ of God, as having been crucified. Then how precious to God, in the midst of the present broken and disjointed state of the Church, any longing for this oneness of heart amongst the children of God, that shall be at all a picture of the oneness between the Father and our once crucified Lord. Let us be exceedingly hopeful, and exceedingly strong in faith, and seek to encourage one another in the Lord. Remember that it is not bringing numbers of saints into like fellowship, which is our chief business, great and important as this is. Our chief business is to give joy to the heart of God our Father, and to the Lord Jesus, and to the Spirit that dwells in us, not grieving Him by anything in us that would hinder oneness of mind amongst us. Oneness of mind between fellow-saints should be, in measure, a mirror of the oneness of mind between the Father and His beloved Son, in whom He is ever well pleased. He cannot say so of any work of His hand; He cannot say it of the highest angels. He is only pleased with us in our relationship to Christ, in so far, as we reflect the image and Spirit of His only begotten Son. O! that we might be true to our relationship and calling in the blessed Son of God.

Well then, we observe, that to that end He three times makes mention, not of miracles, not of gifts of tongues, not of raising the dead, but of keeping His word. And how precious these words—"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest Me." "I have given them Thy word." "Sanctify them through Thy truth" (*verses 8, 14, 17*).

Let us remember what is written in *1 Peter i. 10*, concerning our Salvation in Christ. We shall all say that the fulness of the Scriptures answers perfectly to the fulness of Christ. I don't forget that it is suited to our present state of childhood. We are now children in comparison with the manhood of resurrection. "Now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part but then; shall I know even as also I am known" (*1 Cor. xiii. 12*). But, nothing shall ever be revealed but the truth we have in God's Book. It will be more perfectly revealed to us in the glory, but it will be the same truth, that is, Christ the Truth. But our capacity will be greater and more excellent, but it will still be the same Christ, and the same ways and works. I would add this word—that every error that Satan has coined, or by which he has deluded any regenerate or unregenerate one, is culled from some Scripture. No error will abide the test of all Scripture. If we have that esteem for the Word of God of which the Psalmist speaks in *Psa. cxix. 6*, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments," we shall be guided aright in all things. And whatsoever faults, errors of judgment, of conscience, of spirit, of ways we detect in ourselves, we shall be enabled to correct and amend.

near to God to have any lack of love to our brethren, or our fellow-labourers. It should be our constant aim to have the mind of Christ; He ever began and ended with God the Father. He came in the flesh, through the Spirit; He walked in the Spirit; He offered Himself to God through the Spirit. If this mind be in us, we should never weary, or be discouraged in our service.---We should never fail in counting the labours of our brethren to be our own; their success and their infirmities we should reckon as our own. Thus it is that those who have been yoked together in service, and have learned to take the yoke of Christ, and to learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, will find rest to their souls; and will thereby be saved from self-will, discord, pride and unbelief.

FELLOWSHIP IN THE GREAT BUSINESS OF HELPING ONE ANOTHER.

Read *Col. i. 9*.—"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." Observe here how Paul covets, because he highly prizes, the intercession of the saints. He is in this an example to us. Now surely this is God's order. We should first begin with our duty as intercessors for others; and the more diligent we are with this most gainful business to ourselves, the more earnestly shall we covet the treasure of others' intercession for us. We have often a great many requests for prayers; but would it not be well, especially for dear brethren making these requests, to begin with making intercession for others themselves? If dear brethren in other countries always had upon their hearts the duty of helping us in this land by their prayers, they would not be the less importunate in asking our prayers; and telling us as follows:—"We are always praying for you; we know your difficulties in England, amidst its outward ease, and its form of godliness without the power; and we feel much for you, and pray much about you." Then, what authority their requests for prayer would have upon us. It runs through all the Epistles, that the first business is not to seek help and sympathy from others, but to begin by shewing it.

Then observe in *Ch. iii. 1*. we are raised so high, so unspeakably high in the account of God—higher than angelic beings, and all other creatures of God, above earth's great ones *who "bear not the sword in vain."* (*Rom. xiii. 4*).—Might we not then so behave ourselves in all the relations of life as perpetually to represent our unseen Lord? Whether as husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, in

fulfilling all those relationships, we shall have an abundant opportunity of representing our unseen Lord. And, beloved, these are the circumstances in which I have much opportunity for manifesting Christ, and in which He has most opportunity of helping me. This will turn our natural thoughts upside down. Good circumstances according to the world, would be according to faith bad circumstances:—bad in the account of the flesh would be good in the account of faith. Let us therefore have fellowship in the great business of helping one another.

CHRIST, THE SURETY OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

(AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE LORD'S TABLE.)

In *Psa. xxii.* we have these words, "They pierced My hands and My feet." (*Verse 16.*) We know how this was fulfilled to the very letter. We also know that these words didn't begin *Psa. xxii.* We remember, and specially at this hour, is the remembrance in our hearts, by the Spirit of God, that in *Matthew* and *Mark* in the Spirit's records of the Cross the words that begin *Psa. xxii.*, "**My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me,**" were uttered, not only to God, but in the ear of Jew and Gentile around that Cross. Throughout the Scripture we see the atoning death of God's Son to be God's device of love and wisdom, which no creature, man or angel, could have conceived to be in the mind of God. The very order in which the Spirit of God records that death in *Psa. xxii.*, shows His mind regarding it. It is not first His bodily suffering, nor Satan's rage, nor the enmity of Jew and Gentile, but first and last in the Spirit's records of the Cross we have God dealing in judgment with His Son as the sinner's Surety. As we read in *Zech. xiii. 7*, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the Shepherd." It is precious to observe that in the Epistle to the Galatians God's deed of sin-avenging justice only is made mention of—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." No mention here of shame from man, or Satan's rage, but "**Made a curse for us.**" (*iii. 13*).

In *Psa. xl.* the guiltiness (by imputation) of the Surety is specially set before us. Wherefore? That we might understand the death of the Cross as the deed of God's sin-avenging justice in His dealings with our Surety as the guilty One. He says here, "**Mine iniquities.**" And how precious to see here, as well as in *Psa. lxi.*, that before confession of

the guilt is made, there is the confession to the ear of God of the perfect, undefilable holiness of Him that became guilty as none other could become guilty. The sinner lost is guilty by his own deed. In *verse 8*, He says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God, yea, Thy law is within My heart," reminding us of the tables of the law, hewn out by the hand of God, broken by the hand of Moses, because of Israel's worshipping of the idol; then the second set of tables hewn by the hand of Moses, type of the Mediator, the Son of God, thereon did God write the ten commandments, and Moses put them in the Ark which was the type of Christ—that Ark with its Mercy-seat, upon which the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled. It is in allusion to this that the Son of God says, "*Thy law is within My heart.*" Then afterwards comes the confession that could not but be made, the Son of God having come as the Surety of the Everlasting Covenant, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me." (*Verse 12*). Though at this time, the face of God as His Father, was hid from Him, yet, more than ever He trusted in Him—though at no time did He ever doubt Him. His faith grew with His sufferings. As He sunk deeper in suffering He rose in faith. And though He could not see His Father's countenance He could trust the love of His heart. Christ magnified the law and made it honourable. (*Isa. xlii. 21*). The obedience of the creature (man or angel) could never do that. Only the obedient Son of God, the guiltless, though the guilty One by suretyship, could magnify the law. And now observe, He could say, "It is finished." (*John xix. 30*). Though the gall and the wormwood were all for Him, yet we are called to share in His rejection and persecution.

Then in *verse 3*. He says, "He hath put a new song in My mouth, even praise unto our God." We read in *Job xxxviii. 7*, that God's elect angels, called "Sons of God," at creation, "shouted for joy." The sin of Adam interrupted that song when the song of Creation was at its best. The whole Church of God is called to share the joy of singing, "Praise to our God." In *John xvii. 13*, Jesus says "These things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." We have been sharing in the joy of this new song, but, we should seek more and more in lowliness of heart and largeness of faith to share with the blessed Lord in this song of praise. With joy we look back to the time when "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (*Heb. ix. 26*). That word, "Himself," tells that all the glory of the Divine Son of God was in *that sacrifice*. And we look forward to that day we read of in *1 Cor. xiii*. when that which is perfect will have come. Then we shall look back, and with the capacity of the manhood of resurrection we shall be able to search into the wondrous life and death of the Son of God—into the unsearchable depths of the love and sufferings of Christ on the Cross.

We, who are in the new creation, ought to be the humblest of all God's creatures, because we are highest and nearest God. Our hearts have been dwelling upon that blessed truth "Thou . . . hast

loved them as Thou hast loved Me." We don't stand in creatureship before God (creatures we are and creatures we ever shall be), but we stand in the excellency of our risen Lord. We are more than linked with Him, we are one with Him; He the Head and we the members, one object of God's love; only, in order, Christ first meets the eye and heart of God. We are embraced in His love to Christ. O! what love, what obedience, and what reverence we owe to God. How we ought to tread under our feet all earth's glory; it can only be rags to us. O! how we ought to love all the members of Christ. We are bearing in mind that in *John xvii.* we are regarded without any thought of diversity of gift, understanding, faithfulness, and obedience. All that, we know, will be regarded in due place, at the judgment-seat of Christ. But now, the main thing is not Abraham excelling Lot; nor Paul excelling Demas, but it is this, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world"—(*verse 14*)—and, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." If our hearts' affections are one with God the Father, and the Son, not grieving the Spirit that dwelleth in us, then, we shall have love and wisdom toward *them that are without*—(*Col. iv. 5*)—and love that will not fail to them, because God the Father does not fail in His love to us; and, we shall have the harder trial of our faith—unfailing love to the members of Christ; and love to deal with each with the love of God the Father.

THE MIND OF CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE APOSTLE PAUL.

SCRIPTURES read—ROMANS, IX., 14-24; IX., 1-5; X., 1-3-8-15.

In looking for the coming of the Lord, it does not become us to look at it as putting an end to our sorrows, for that would bespeak little communion with God. We should rather look at it as fulfilling God's pleasure, and unfolding what He has planned. The fragrance of the highest heaven was brought up by Christ from His death. God's bruising His own Son will be the joy and delight of the world to come. Paul says, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," (*Rom. v. 6*). Peter says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time," (*1 Peter v. 6*). Let us give thanks every day that we are left here. The true secret of never being disappointed or weary is to begin where Jesus began, with God the Father. "He could say, 'I do always those things which please Him.'" (*John viii. 29*). See the pattern of the mind of Christ in the portions read. Paul says, not to God as Moses did, "Blot me out," (*Ex. xxxii. 32*).

Paul has learned better, having had the Son of God so fully revealed to him; he says in effect, "I could endure any wrath, any curse, if my people might be saved." Paul's love to Israel came from his love to God; and his delight in Christ was in doing His will. The higher and deeper our reverence for God becomes, we shall be the more content for God to do as He pleases. He is the Potter, we the creature is the clay; and the more we realize this, the more will our affection to our fellow-men, and particularly to our kindred be nourished. They were continually plotting against Paul's life, but his love burned all the stronger towards them. We must learn to rise above all springs of action to God Himself; then we shall always find occasion from day to day for work and praise. Let the heart be able to say, "Hath not the Potter power over the clay?" While we pray for work in Halls and Tents, &c., let us not forget a "Well of Sychar," ministry. Christ's heart is seen in John's Gospel. The majesty of the "I am" comes forth in the other Gospels, but not the tenderness of "Give Me to drink." Oh! that this love might continually fill our hearts. Begin with small matters.

"WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP."

SCRIPTURES read—EPHESIANS. I., 3-7; II., 1-18; IV., 29-31; V., 1-2.

We read in *John xx. 17*, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father." The Spirit says in *Eph i. 3*, "The God and Father," of Him by whom God created heaven and earth. He now has the satisfaction of having finished the work of revealing His Father's name, which ten thousand worlds could not reveal. "I have declared Thy name" (*John xvii. 26*). He is now worshipped by us, but He is Himself the chief worshipper of the Father.

This Epistle contains Paul's psalm of praise. *Chap. i. 4*, carries us on to the time when God's heart will have all that He desires and delights in. I do not pass over the present time, for in a certain sense we are now holy, but it carries us on to *chap. v. 27*. God's delight in *chap. i. 4*, "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Christ's delight in *chap. v. 27*, "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church." In *chap. i. 6*, we read, "to the praise of His glory; but in *verse 5*, "to Himself." Glory is a servant of love. All that God can give is a token of something higher, viz., the love of His heart.

This leads us to dwell on *chap. ii. 10*, "We are His workmanship." We should all be desirous to be less than nothing in our own sight. God delights to make the best and highest use of us, if only we are fit to be used. Here among men there may be gold vessels clean;

and of exquisite workmanship, but still unused, and only for ornament ; but there is no such thing in the house of God ; all clean vessels are used. There may be a difference of uses, as Paul in prison, or Paul preaching. Let but the vessel be clean, and used it must be, and that for honourable uses.

Let us not only remember *how* we are made nigh—by a life derived from the Son of God, which helps to bring us low—but let us see how high we are in His sight. “**We are His workmanship.**” How pleasant we are to God ! The wonder of wonders is, Christ offered up, and we are beautiful to the eye of God, and of angels, as one with Christ ; and if I verily believe this, I cannot be other than well-pleasing to God, as created anew in Christ Jesus. Our great business now is to think thoughts that agree with His thoughts. (*Psa. cxxxix. 17*). We are so one in His thoughts and affections, that His thoughts should be always music to us.

Prayer should be according to *Eph. iii.* as well as according to *Eph. i.* Knowing the power should lead us to knowing the love. If we would go to other lands, we must begin by being always *abroad*, as to our place here ; and being only at *home* in the Father’s house. With the affections of Christ we shall always find a field of labour at hand,—always room for the mind of Christ to reveal itself. The very look and greeting made to one another, will be a sweet savour of Christ, if we know one another as Christ commends us to God. “*We are His workmanship.*” If we were more humble we should say ten times how “*worthy*” we are, on account of what we are in Christ, that we for once should say, “*unworthy.*” If, like *Isaiah* in *chap. vi.*, our lips are cleansed, and our consciences purged, we shall say most humbly, readily and quickly, “*Send Me.*” Begin and end with pleasing God regardless of the thousands or the few.

Eph. ii. 10, “*Ordained,*”—“*Prepared.*” David received an anointing to be King when he kept his father’s sheep. It was all one to David whether bearing cheeses to the camp, or keeping the sheep at home. He was taken up with pleasing God. This realized will take many difficulties out of our path.

HOW THE BELIEVER MAY STAND PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD.

SCRIPTURE read—*COLOSSIANS III. and IV.*

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (*Col. iii. 16*). If the word of Christ dwelt richly in us, each one would have that word which would be most needful to each heart. We need the Word

of God, for the sake of gaining acquaintance with the character of God. This word is addressed to the whole family of God ; it is a commandment *to all* ; not to help specially gifted teachers only, but to each child of God. God's word never can be proved to be God's word. I cannot prove that it is the light of the sun that shines into this room—I see—I have naturally a seeing eye. We see—God's word demonstrates itself to be the Word of God.

Observe the prayer of Epaphras in *iv. 12*. “Always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God,”—and Paul's service in *i. 28*, when he says, “Whom we preach, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom* ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” As soon as any child of God comes to this decision,—“*My aim is to stand perfect and complete in the knowledge of God's will and in obedience to that will*,”—he has the promise of the Spirit to lead him into all truth. That promise surely is not given to us simply as children, but as children who desire to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. See *John xiv. 15, 23*. Here is a promise of intimacy, of communion—not made to the child as a child, but to a child walking in obedience to the revealed will of God. And it is needful to add that the important question is, “Am I purposed in heart to do all the will of God?—To walk in the communion of approving love?” See *John xv. 13, 14* ; also, *xvi. 13, 15*. These promises are not only required for our sakes, but for the Lord's sake—for the Father's sake—for the Holy Spirit's sake. We say to sinners who cry out “What must I do to be saved?” that the Lord is more ready to save them than they can be to be saved. Well, so with us ; Christ our Friend is more ready for this friendship than we are. We have never to knock at His door. He may knock at ours and be sent away. His door is always *wide* open. We should never oblige Him to say, “Open to Me, My sister, My love, &c.” (*Cant. v. 2*). Let us not provoke the Lord to jealousy. We have in this friendship an all-sufficient, and overflowing cup of comfort. Whatever our matters, they are an occasion of friendship to the Lord ; and the deeper the adversity, the more tender and the more mighty the friendship of that love.

Every portion of the Book must be read if we would stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God. The whole Book must be a favourite, and the whole must be read. And do not let us forget that there is no such thing as “Old Testament Scriptures.” It is all one new revelation to us. They may have been penned in the time of the Old Covenant, but all the Word of God is the Word of Christ. “So then *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*,” &c. (*Rom. x. 17*.) God's servants are here God's messengers, like the heavenly bodies (*Psa. xix. 1*), declaring the glory of God. I know that many dear Christians, with a troubled conscience, go about the affairs of this life with much prayer ; but do they listen to God from day to day ? They speak to Him, but do they listen to Him ? Many Christians, I fear, do not read the Word of God until their eyes are

heavy with sleep. Let us give to God the best of everything, and we shall be always increased thereby. When we listen, it is God speaking through the Word. In prayer, and in song we speak to Him. But whose voice has the best music to a father's ear? That of the disobedient, or the obedient child? Surely the listening of the obedient one is at all times welcome to Him; and His voice is always pleasant. Then let us be God's pleasant children, by taking heed to all His will, and His Word. Have I only three minutes? God's Word is suited to me; let me only read it with the intent to obey, and for acquaintance with God; and then assuredly I shall find God's Word suiting me. Oh, that we may not wake up in resurrection, finding all fulfilled, and then discern that we have had all the treasures of this Book well-nigh neglected. If we search the Scriptures for the talk of the lips (one of the most unworthy things that can possibly be) or merely for our own comfort, they are still comparatively a hid treasure. But if we read for the sake of acquaintance with God and in that mind, the blessed Lord will hallow it. Christ read it for the sake of doing the will of Him that sent Him, and of finishing His work. And when He says in *John xvii. 14*, "I have given them Thy word," &c., and in *verse 17*, "Sanctify them through Thy truth," &c. He first says in *verse 8*, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest Me." The blessed Lord gives us His word as a treasure; and His Spirit to dwell in us and to teach us. Let us exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. If I have a set purpose to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, the Spirit of God will teach me, and what I know will then minister to the strength of my faith, as good digested food ministers to the strength of my body.

ELIJAH'S GREAT MISTAKE; AND THE HARD THING THAT WAS ASKED OF HIM.

SCRIPTURES read—*1 Kings*, i. 13-18; ii. 1-15; *John* xvi. 5-15.

Notice two things. 1st. The correction of Elijah's great mistake. 2nd. The hard thing that was asked of Him.

First—"What doest thou here Elijah?" (*1 Kings* xix. 9). Instead of going to Mount Zion, hill of grace, he went to Horeb, the mount of blackness. It was here that Moses met God, and hid his face

for fear, (*Ex. iii. 6*). It was not for Elijah to meet God there, but where Moses heard the voice from the Atonement-seat. The wind, earthquake, and fire, were as voices telling him this. God said to Moses, (*Ex. xxv. 22*). "There will I meet thee," viz., at the Mercy-seat, or Atonement-seat. *2 Cor. iii.* teaches the difference between the two covenants, the first of which though glorious is done away with, that God might keep us in the Covenant of Grace. "By faith Enoch was translated;" but not before He pleased God, *Heb. xi. 5*. Elijah was not a vessel set aside, but fitted for highest uses.

Secondly—*The hard thing*, (*2 Kings ii. 10*). The Queen of Sheba had all her hard questions answered, (*1 Kings x. 1*). Where did the hardness lie? Certainly not with God. Is the difficulty with God, or the creature? The hard thing with God is to withhold. It is said of the Lord Jesus in *Matt. xiii. 58*. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Many have begun well and gone out of the way. Elisha was a man of strong will for God. God delights to see a heart intent on His service. The difficulty lay with Elisha not having faith to receive. God has no delight in withholding. Having given us His Son, He desires to make us share in His joy. The difficulty is to have the vessel empty. God can and will quickly fill it. We ought to have something better even than the Pentecostal blessings of the early Church, for even then, there were murmurings of the Grecians against the Hebrews, (*Acts vi. 1*). All difficulty in the way of blessing lie with us. Put them into the hands of the heavenly Elijah, He will sweep them away by the power of the blood of His cross. Christ was always the Man of Pentecost. We should so deal with the law of sin in our members that no one may see it, or be troubled by it, but ourselves. When Elijah was taken away, there was a double Elijah left. Elisha imitated the good points of Elijah's character.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

Christ risen in first Epistle of John fills up that discourse of His in John's Gospel, contained in *xiv.—xvii. chapter*. We have in the Gospel Christ speaking to us in the days of His flesh; in the Epistle He speaks through the Apostle, from the bosom of the Father. In *John xv. 14* we find the path to the communion of His love, wherein to walk in the fullness of the friendship of our God, "*Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" God never gives up His will. When He most perfectly

glorifies Himself and displays the riches of His grace—when God is most a Father, He is most a sovereign, and these commandments of Christ are the highest authority. The obedience of love aims far higher than law from Sinai. It is the iron will of love: it is the only term or condition of communion, but it cannot be dispensed with. His love is always the same. Suppose any member of Christ be found like Lot in Sodom, the love is the same, but the communion is not, for it cannot then go out in bosom friendship. The fairest things of the flesh are the greatest enemies of faith. (*Eph. v. 18.*) In *Col. ii. 2, 8*, we read of “Philosophy and vain deceit.” You may put down drunkenness and unseat covetousness, which is far worse, but “Philosophy and vain deceit” are worse than both. Beloved, the crucified Son of God is made unto us wisdom, because He unlocks the bosom secrets of the Father.

We cannot follow afar off to be “Imitators.” (*Eph. v. 1.*) Imitators must follow closely. If I am an imitator of God and of Christ it is not possible for me to imitate any one else. Follow saints only as they follow Christ. “Be ye followers of Me (*1 Cor. iv. 16*)” said Paul. Every servant of Christ ought to be able to say the same. How is it that we are much more ready to copy the faults rather than the excellencies of one another? All the excellencies of Elijah’s character were in Elisha. A double portion was given, that is, plenitude for his ministry. How was this? He kept his eye on God.

The longing of Christ to have us is according to His love in dying for us. We shall far exceed holy angels in capacity, as much as we do in relationship. (*Phil. iii. 21.*) Not “A vile body,” but “*Body of humiliation*,” and this is to be “*Fashioned like unto His glorious body.*” When we have the fulness of our capacities we shall have the whole book of His glory unfolded to us. Now is the time when our Lord is preparing the work without.

“*In due time Christ died.*” (*Rom. v. 6.*) Why not before? He took time;—infinite wisdom could not suffer it to take place before. And so also, “*In due season we shall reap.*” (*Gal. vi. 9.*) There will be then a due winding up of the things of God. There is a reaping time now, but it is only an earnest. The present course God is taking with the world is in order to justify His ways by-and-by. God will not be content with being righteous in His own eyes, or in the eyes of the holy angels. He must have a testimony, even from His enemies. (*Psa. xxxi. 17, 18; Jude 14, 15.*) Every hypocritical prayer, every irreverent word, every scoffer’s gibe and jest about Him, must be brought out. God will convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds and their hard speeches; and the sinner made to give a testimony to the equity of God, and the equity of his everlasting destruction. God takes time as to sending His Son a second time. If self-will and self-wisdom do not hinder and unfit, it is natural for God to pour into us His love in Christ. Let us be so guided by the Word that we may know how fitly to represent Christ before all with whom we have to do.

TRUE SUCCESS LIES IN DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

We are called to fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, not chiefly for our own joy, nor for our own glory, but for the joy and glory of the Father and of the Son. Do we really believe this and bear it in mind as something to exercise our hearts about from day to day and from hour to hour? How precious the words in *John iv. 34*, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." The hungry, thirsty, and weary One said this as He sat on Sychar's well. He now sits on the throne. He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." (*John iv. 32*.) This probably implied a lack of sympathy and fellowship. You know what it is to say you have meat to eat which the world knows not of.

It is said "Labourers are few." After Pentecost this ought not to be so. During our Lord's earthly ministry it was different, the Holy Spirit was not yet given. We are individually responsible to know and fill our place, it may be behind the counter, or it may be in a kitchen. The highest success is in seeking every moment to please the Father. Whilst Christ never could fall, He could be preserved. "Behold My servant whom I uphold." (*Isa. xlii. 1*.) He was preserved in the way of perfect success in pleasing God. He finds His meat in the same thing now, for having finished the work He is now unfolding it. There was perfect singleness of heart in Him—the Holy Spirit ever bore witness to this. Though we see such successful preaching at Pentecost by Peter, when 3000 men (women not included) were "added unto them" in one day, and at another time 5000—(*Acts iv. 4*)—yet we see a still greater success in *Acts xxii. 22*, when Paul stood on the castle stairs bearing testimony amidst the fiendish hatred of the audience and heard the shout of "Away with such a fellow," &c. The greater success being in Paul knowing more of Christ, through sharing more of Christ's rejection. The once persecuting one had the wages, "Away with such a fellow!" They said of Christ—"Away with Him!" How much there was of Christ in Paul rejected! He identified himself very closely with His loving Saviour in life and in death, and this is the secret of his never growing cold or turning aside. He could say, and indeed we should say that "We are to God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish." If we turn our eyes away from the business of pleasing God, we shall certainly be more or less discouraged and distrust our calling. The Redeemer spoke of His work as finished. (*John xvii. 4*.) The redeemed rest from their labours. (*Rev. xiv. 13*.) Paul did not say, "I have finished my work," but, "I have finished my course," or race. Christ looked for a day beyond the present, and so should we. Let us look right on and see what is in store for us. That will enable us to leave our wages with God, and He will not be our debtor.