

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL
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“ Quench not the Spirit.
Despise not prophesyings.
Prove all things ;
Hold fast that which is good.”
1 Thessalonians 5. 19, 20, 21.

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PRESERVED AND PERFECTED
BY THE GOD OF PEACE AND POWER.

WE feel constrained to begin the year with a benediction, and it shall be one of the most beautiful and confidence-producing that the Holy Scriptures contain :—

“NOW THE GOD OF PEACE, THAT BROUGHT AGAIN FROM THE DEAD OUR LORD JESUS, THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP, THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT, MAKE YOU PERFECT IN EVERY GOOD WORK TO DO HIS WILL, WORKING IN YOU THAT WHICH IS WELL-PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST; TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.”—

Hebrews 13. 20-21.

NO servant of the Lord ever lived so stormy and strenuous a life as Paul the apostle. Such were the persecutions that he suffered and the burdens that he bore, that he said, “I die daily.” There was no relief, no relaxation for him in the conflict in which he was involved as he faced the world, for neither the devil nor men would endure his brave preaching of Christ and Him crucified, and he could do no other, for the love of Christ—the greatest power that ever entered a human life—constrained him. His life was a continuous day and night warfare in which no quarter was given and no armistice proclaimed. Yet he had a refuge, he knew **THE GOD OF PEACE**. It is the fact that this title is given to God here, that is one of the proofs that Paul was the writer of this Epistle, for the other New Testament writers who lived, we should judge, easier lives than he did, do not use it, while in five other places Paul does; it seems to have been a joy and delight to Him to invoke God in this character on behalf of the saints, and it must have been because He knew so well the strength and support that comes from the presence of the God of Peace.

To the Roman, Corinthian and Philippian saints he wrote of God as the God of peace, and he seems to have exulted in the thought that in all their trials He would be with them, and what more could they have desired? But for these Hebrew Christians he was specially solicitous, for they were being greatly harried, and were in much conflict, and were inclined to grow discouraged and weary. And so in his benediction he enlarges upon what the God of peace had done and still would do for them, and there is great cheer in his words for us.

Many to-day are discouraged, the pressure in every way is great, and faith and love seem to be on the wane. Certainly as we look back on the past we marvel at the mercy that has brought us hitherto, many a time we faced the future with fear, yet God did not fail, nor will He; and as we face it again as a New Year begins, our faith may take a fresh hold of the God of peace, and we may commit our future into His hands with confidence, and rest in Him. If we make our requests known to Him with thanksgiving, His peace will keep

us; if we give our thoughts to things holy and true, He Himself will walk with us. Troubled Christian, you may have the God of peace as your daily companion, and may be without fear, for that means that though the storm rages around you, your heart may be at rest, for He keeps in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed upon Him, because he trusteth in Him.

But what has the God of peace done? He **BROUGHT AGAIN FROM THE DEAD OUR LORD JESUS**. Then the God of peace is also the God of power, for He has triumphed over death, and death is the greatest force that ever men knew. We have, generally speaking, more confidence in a person who possesses power, especially if we know that such a person has an interest in us. But all power is with God, and He uses His power in infinite wisdom and love on our behalf. The power of God is always on our behalf, for God is for us, He does not always use His power to still the storm for us, but to keep us quiet and restful in it, which is a greater triumph. The greatest foe, death, has been defeated, and **OUR LORD JESUS** has been raised up out of it. Mark His title here, he is our Lord Jesus, *the Lamb who died for us is our Lord*. When we see this, how glad we are to submit to His authority, for He exercises it in perfect love, and in submission to His will we find rest to our souls.

And our Lord Jesus is **THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP**. Here is preservation for us, for He who died to save us, now lives to hold us in everlasting security. As the Good Shepherd He made the greatest sacrifice for us and reached us when we were lying under the power of death and Satan, and as the great Shepherd He will lead us safely into "the house of the Lord for ever," for

that is our goal, and there we must dwell, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death to reach it, for the Lord is our Shepherd.

It was through **THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT** that our Lord Jesus was brought again from the dead. That everlasting Covenant is the will of God for our blessing. No man's will that is not against the public good, and that had been sealed and signed by him when in a sane mind can be revoked. The everlasting Covenant is the will of the God of peace, His will for blessing. It has been sealed by the blood of Jesus, and it demanded that He who died to bring it into force should be raised up to execute it. He is the great Administrator of the will of God. But let us understand the force of it all. The God of peace must do everything in perfect righteousness, for there could be no peace apart from righteousness, and it is in righteousness that He has raised up our Lord Jesus, who has redeemed us by His blood, and now in perfect righteousness on the same basis—the precious blood—He can take us in hand, to bring us into entire accord with His will that covenanted our blessing before ever we had being.

And what is it that the God of peace proposes to do for us from this time onward? To **MAKE YOU PERFECT IN EVERY GOOD WORK TO DO HIS WILL**. And what a perfection this will be if it is His work. We may have our standards, our notions as to what we should like to be; let us drop them, and yield ourselves wholly to God. He will patiently work in us with His own standard in view, which is conformity to Christ. Let us not be afraid of the will of God. The natural thought of our hearts before we knew the God of peace was that His will must be against us, but it is

not so. God's will is good, perfect, acceptable, and so we prove it to be when we present our bodies to Him that our lives may be moulded by His grace. The will of God is for us, and against everything that could be against us. The blood of the Covenant is the proof of this. He brings good works out of us by working in us. What is external is the result of what is internal. He would have our hearts, our secret inward life pleasing to Himself, for He desires truth in the inward parts, and it is His work to produce the motives within us that are well pleasing to Him. And is this possible? Back to our memories come those words that sounded from the Father's lips, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." May we also be well-

pleasing to God. Yes, we may, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for thus our benediction continues. **WORKING IN YOU THAT WHICH IS WELL-PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.**

This New Year must be marked by good works, and they must be the fruit of the life within, the life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal flesh, and as we live within the compass of our benediction, we shall know what the **PEACE** of God is and His **POWER**, we shall be **PRESERVED** by the Great Shepherd whose flock we are, and **PERFECTED** by the will of God, through Jesus Christ **TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.**

"I HAVE SEEN."

"I have seen the affliction of My people."—Exodus 3. 7.

[**I**T is God Who speaks. He is not indifferent to our troubles, sorrows and miseries. We may seek Him with our sighing, and if we do we shall soon praise Him with our singing. What is it that Peter said? Peter, who knew his Lord so well, "**CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM.**" May we do that? We may. But why? Who will finish that sentence for us? Shall we try "*for He is omnipotent.*" No, that will not do! It is true that He is omnipotent, but it does not follow that that will help me; it adds to the care, it crushes instead of carries me, if that is all that can be said. Well, let us try again: "*for He fills the heavens with His majesty.*" No, that will not do! It is true no doubt, but it does not help the burdened with care upon the earth. It is rhetoric and I need the gospel;

the sentence must have a gospel ending or it will surely mock me, not a windy wordy ending but a gospel ending only can suit me. Let the Spirit of God who commenced the sentence conclude it. Let the One who gives the exhortation supply the reason: "**FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU.**" Ah, that is right and true. The sentence is complete. God is interested in us, He sees, He cares. And if so we may tell Him all, keep nothing back, empty our hearts at His feet, *for He careth for you.*

God sees and He speaks. He sees the affliction. He says, I know it, and I know the wherefore of it, and I will bring you through it and out of it at last. "**CAST ALL THY CARE ON ME, FOR I CARE FOR THEE.**" A speech in single syllables, every syllable beautiful as dew, every dewdrop more precious than a jewel.

THE SORROW AND THE TRIUMPH. (INGLIS FLEMING.)

“ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. . . . But be not Thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth: for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.” Or perhaps, “that it is finished.”—Psalm 22.

WE come to the very holy of holies in the Twenty-second Psalm. As we read it and think of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, in His unparalleled sufferings, there in that awful darkness and distance, darkness we can never penetrate, distance no human thought can ever measure. There is the holy One Whose every thought was for the glory of God. We see Him the abandoned One, the forsaken One. It was for our sins—and here we learn what we are in ourselves, for nothing less than those sufferings could deliver us. He was made sin for us, He, who knew no sin, that we might be made God’s righteousness in Him. To gain for us the place of favour before God that is ours to-day, and to gain for us the place we shall have with Him when home in the Father’s house, He endured the cross, He loved us and gave Himself for us.

He, the Son of God, not only became incarnate, a holy mystery, truly God and truly Man in one glorious Person, but to “Calvary’s cross of woe” He went.

The cross, which brings us near to God, meant infinite distance for Him, and from the depths of that awful desolation He cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And He gives the answer, “Thou art Holy—THOU ART HOLY.” That

fearful judgment was put upon Him, the sinless One, because of the holiness of God. But was not Jesus holy? Yes, as holy as God is, but only He who was altogether holy could vindicate the holiness of God. If ever you and I were to bow as sons before the Father’s face, to share the joys of Christ in resurrection, He, the Just One, must suffer for us, the unjust. And none could stand with Him to share that suffering, for none other than He was the Holy and the True. The terrible solitude of Calvary must be His if the song of glory was to be ours.

“ Dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet.” He suffered at the hands of the chief priests, He was beset by the dogs, the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers with their ribaldry and rudeness, and the awful power of Satan, all the powers of darkness beset Him and the lion’s mouth of death closed upon Him, but He was heard. “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns”—transfixed by the judgment of God in death. He is heard. His sorrow is changed into joy.

Someone has said that all the waves of sorrow rolled in upon Him, in righteousness from God, and in unrighteousness from the hand of men,

until the twenty-first verse of our Psalm is reached, and then comes the cry of triumph, and now wave after wave of blessing is to roll out upon men. "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." How blessed is that! We are now in perfect peace. But He thinks of the Father's delight and glory first. "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." We think, and rightly, of the blessing that word declares for us. We by grace are His brethren, and He has poured into our ears the story of the Father's love. It was the Father's pleasure to have sons before His face, to have those who should love Him because they know Him, near to Himself. Now, the Lord speaks from the heights of the victory He has won, and He first thinks of the praise to His Father ascending from the midst of His brethren. Think of what has come to the God of glory in the work of His beloved Son. Wonder of wonders, God is glorified in our blessing! And so we have wave after wave of blessing rolling out, and the Lord Jesus praising Him "in the midst of the congregation." The saying is quoted in Hebrews, "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee."

So the Lord comes into the midst of His own, as in John 20., and speaks

that word, "Peace be unto you." He shows His hands and His feet and His side—the marks of that awful conflict of Calvary—to them. He makes them glad as they see Him. But what a declaration! He had said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren"—it wasn't, go tell those poor sinners, but "*My brethren*," they had come into a new relationship—"and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God." My relationship is yours; My righteousness is yours. Perfect relationship, perfect righteousness; and we are brought into that circle where we can magnify and praise God even the Father, His God and our God, His Father and our Father.

He is going to put every string of the harp of eternal music into tune and the perfect and endless harmony of praise to God will fill the whole creation, but He begins now with your heart and mine by telling into our ears the Father's love and the Father's Name. He fills our hearts and makes our voices break forth in praise to the Father. Well may we say, "Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins (we were bound by them) in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

SERVICE.

[T is love in the heart and not knowledge in the head that will make us eloquent when we speak of Jesus. We can only be in the true spirit of service as we remember that our Lord is a rejected and absent Lord. This will keep us from being disappointed when we do not get the approbation of men, and it will make us glad to suffer reproach for His Name's sake.

¶ If we are to make much of Christ we must have much of Him for ourselves.

Be anxious as to three things (1) The state of your own soul; (2) being in communion with the mind of God as to the need for those to whom you are to speak; (3) fidelity in delivering your message.

“WHAT MANNER OF LOVE.” *(Notes of an Address.)*

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John 3.).

THE Spirit of God in this Scripture calls upon us to behold the manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us. We are liable to forget it. Jude, describing these last days, says, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, *keep yourselves in the love of God*, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” What an atmosphere! And Who has brought us into it? The Father. Behold, He says, contemplate, think of it! “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” What love could be greater? There is only one thing that can compare with it, and that is the work which enabled Him to put us in that place. We are His children and He has made it known to us. All the Old Testament saints were His children but they didn’t know it. They weren’t called that. Some were called faithful witnesses : some were called faithful men, men of faith. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.” “Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him,” is begotten of God. But those Old Testament saints could not know they were begotten of God because they did not have the Spirit, but now we have the Spirit of God and “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8.). He makes us conscious that we are begotten of Him. Think of the love that could give us such a blessing as that and assure us

of the fact, too. I am sure we have very little—I trust we all have a little—real conception of what a marvellous relationship this is. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our God and Father, through grace, of course, because everything we receive is grace, whatever it may be. Nevertheless, the relationship is a fact. It is so. He is our Father, He is Christ’s Father and Christ’s God, our Father and our God. Contemplate it, behold it!

These verses are in a parenthesis, the subject of the epistle being taken up again in the fourth verse. But he turns aside for a minute to contemplate the blessedness of this. The world doesn’t know us ; of course, it doesn’t. The children of God are a perfect puzzle to the world. We are not surprised at it. The world doesn’t know us, because it didn’t know Him. “The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” “He was in the world and . . . the world knew Him not.” So “the world knoweth us not,” because “as He is, so are we in this world.” But behold—now are we the children of God. These sentences rather puzzle people. It isn’t manifested what we shall be. It hasn’t been made public, though we are in the secret, but we know that when it is manifested, when it does come to light, “we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.” We shall be like Jesus. How do we know? Because Scripture tells us? Yes, but another way ; because we shall see Him as He is. Here in this miserable world we

have learned to know and love Him, but we haven't seen Him. At home in the Father's house, that home of unspeakable blessedness and love, we shall see Him, apart from His war array, when He shall come forth, His eyes as a flame of fire, many crowns upon His head and a sword proceeding out of His mouth, and shall smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Rev. 19.). The world shall see Him that way. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1.). Before He appears in that splendour we shall see Him as He is. We will have a little while with Him in the Father's house before He comes forth as a Man of war. He certainly will come forth "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1.). But we are to see Him in the Father's House, the eternal Object of the Father's pleasure. "We shall see Him as He is," but to see Him as He is, we must be like Him; we couldn't see Him as He is unless we were like Him, "but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." Therefore the Spirit says, "We shall see Him as He is." We haven't seen Him yet. *By faith*, of course, by the Spirit, we can say, "We see Jesus." Peter says, "Whom having not seen, ye love." We haven't seen Him, but He has won our affections. Though we haven't seen Him, we love Him. The Lord said, "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." It isn't much, my love to Him, after all His great love to me, you say; but it is a great deal to the Father that there are

people here and there with love in their hearts to His Son, whom the world mocked and spit upon and nailed to a gibbet. "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me." Is there anything like that in the universe? What in the wide universe can compare with the Father's love?

"The Father's love, the source of all,
Sweeter than all that gives,
Shines on us now without recall,
And lasts while Jesus lives."

Thank God, as long as He lives the Father's love rests on us. "Whom not having seen, ye love." To Thomas, who had said, "Except I see . . . I will not believe," the Lord showed His wounded hands and side and said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Those that the Lord speaks of as blessed we may be sure are blessed. That is true of us in this dispensation. The blessed ones are those that have not seen and yet have believed. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Glorified joy is a joy unspeakable; you couldn't tell it, it is so great. All the pleasures of this world are exaggerated by those seeking to enjoy them. They are all vanity, but the joy of the Father's love, of Jesus Christ, cannot be exaggerated. It cannot be told. "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." We are going on to see Him. We shall see Him as He is. How glorious to lift our eyes upon Him!

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." A man who has this hope will not be going on with the world which rejected Christ, but "purifieth himself, even as He is pure." The standard is the purity of Christ. "Every one that hath this hope"—What hope? The hope of being with and like the Lord.

“Every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself” according to that standard. Why? Because we know we are going to be like Him. If we know we are going to be like Him, nothing less will satisfy us, because we have that hope in Him. We look for Him to come from heaven and “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious

body.” Then we shall be with Him and see Him as He is, and when He comes forth in His glory we shall come with Him. Then the world will learn two things: first, that the Father sent His Son, and that the Father Himself loves us because we have loved Him and have believed that He came out from God.

“HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED, WONDERFUL.”

(A. S. LOIZFAUN.)

THE One of whom we speak and sing is wonderful. His very name is wonderful. You remember that Isaiah said, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . . and His Name shall be called Wonderful.” When the angel told Mary of the Babe to be born, she wondered.

His whole life was wonderful. When His parents went to the temple with the Child and Simeon took Him in his arms and blessed God because, he said, “Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,” Joseph and Mary wondered “at those things which were spoken of Him.” And when He was found in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions, all that heard Him wondered at His understanding and answers.”

When He preached His first sermon, the people all “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” So it was all His life. Many wretched people who were the objects of His healing power wondered. When they came to Him and brought

the lame, the blind, the dumb and the maimed and He healed them, the multitude wondered and glorified God. All His life His disciples wondered. They trusted Him, they loved Him, but they wondered at Him. And when at last He faced His accusers and He answered them not a word, they, too, wondered at Him. When He hung on the cross as a Substitute for sinners, the people wondered. The centurion wondered and said, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

When He rose from the dead, and showed His hands and His feet to the disciples, they “believed not for joy, and wondered.” And what a day of wonder and glad surprise it will be when *we* see Him! When He comes in power and glory, nations shall wonder at Him (Isa. 52. 15). Let not our minds be dulled by the frequent repetition of these things. Into what a wonderful relationship with God we have been brought through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we not lose the sense of His grace, but may we wonder too, and continually.

We shall have no power to draw others to Christ unless we hold communion with Him ourselves.

“YET NOT I, BUT—

(H. J. VINE.)

ROMANS 7. 20.

WHAT a harrowing but necessary experience is that which is described in Romans 7! *Harrowing* because it teaches those who in any measure pass through it the corruption of their own nature, and their helplessness to overcome it; for it surely is an appalling discovery. “In me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.” *Necessary* it is if we are to reach light and liberty. In it Paul learned to distinguish himself, as connected with the new desires, from sin which still dwelt in him, but which he hated. The new desires belonged to the new nature which he had received as being born again, the sin belonged to the old nature that he had by natural birth. But he could say, “*It is NO MORE I . . . BUT SIN*” (verse 20). So he learnt to distinguish himself as a man born again from the incubus and insistence of sin within him, and this seems to be the first ray of light in this experience that leads at last to deliverance and thanksgiving (verse 25).

1 CORINTHIANS 7. 12.

Paul was an inspired apostle, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the whole of 1 Corinthians, yet in the 7th chapter he distinguishes that which was from himself as an apostle of Christ and that which was given to him directly by the Lord in the words, “To the rest speak I, not the Lord” (verse 12); but in verse 10, “*I command, YET NOT I, BUT THE LORD.*” We may benefit greatly by noticing the apostle’s “*not I, but the Lord.*” The apostles spoke with an authority that the Lord had given them, and those who were loyal to the truth and to God heard them (1 John 4. 6), but when the Lord Himself

speaks all who hear must heed His word and obey, for He is supreme over all. A “*Thus saith the Lord*” is sufficient for those who are redeemed by His precious blood. Neither questions nor hesitation should have any place in any matter upon which the Lord has spoken.

We need to set an increasing value on the Holy Scriptures in these apostate days when they are being flouted and scorned and treated as legendary or the mere words of uninstructed men. Often have we heard the edge of Scripture turned aside by the remark, “O, it was Paul that said that,” but Paul answers, “*Not I, but the Lord.*” He may have used Paul, John and Peter, but it is the Lord who speaks. What stability this gives to our faith, and what a straight path for our feet! How privileged are we to have the word of the Lord, but how great is also our responsibility!

1 CORINTHIANS 15. 10.

There was no apostle like Paul, he abounded in the work of the Lord above all the rest. He said, “I laboured more abundantly than they all; *YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD* which was with me.” It might appear as though he were boasting in the multitude of his own activities here and elsewhere. But no, he took no praise to himself, “*not I,*” in that he refused any glory; the “*but the grace of God*” in that he gave all the glory to God. He boasted in grace and not in himself. This explains why he could speak of his experiences and service with ease and liberty for the glory of the grace of which he was the happy subject, and not for self-exaltation. He glories in it, saying, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

GALATIANS 2. 20.

The law proved to be condemnation and death to Paul, but he found Christ to be liberty and life to him, and Christ was the Son of God who loved him. Through the law which condemned the sinner, he had died to the law that he might live to God. Christ had taken the sinner's condemnation, therefore Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, *YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST liveth in me*" (Gal. 2. 20). *NOT PAUL* now (who once had such a zeal for the law in his former life), *but Christ* was the source and the spring and object of his new and living activities. And faith in the risen and ascended Son of God who had loved him and given Himself for him gave character to his life in the flesh. Not the law, but a living Person governed his life! He lived by the faith of Him!

For deliverance, for stability in walk, for energy in service, we need

not simply the negative, "*No longer I,*" or "*yet not I.*" We need also the "but" of contrast along with the positive to which the other gives place. So if for the first, *freedom* is found in Christ Jesus, for stability we have, "*Thus saith the Lord,*" and in regard to abounding in His work, there is true liberty when we can happily say, "Yet not I, *but the grace of God* which was with me." Abundant labours flow from this. Finally, that which crowns all is found in the word, "I live, yet not I," or, "No longer I, *BUT CHRIST.*" All is enshrined here! Leaving that which characterizes self behind, we have Christ Himself! Having died to sin He lives to God, and we have Him for our freedom! He, too, is our Stay, for His words are spirit and life upon which we feed! "Strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus," we can abound in the work of the Lord. And as we do so in living activities, we can say, "*I live, yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME!*"

WHY THE SCRIPTURES ARE REJECTED.

FORCES of evil are at work in the world that will make men declare at last that they are entirely independent of God. They will take counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us" (Psa. 2.). The rejection of the Holy Scripture as the inspired Word of God is all on his line. If men can satisfy themselves that God has not spoken, then they have no obligation to Him at all; they may follow their own bent and please themselves, setting up a standard for themselves. It is this that lies behind these efforts to prove that the Old Testament is merely legendary; it is a force of evil which originates with Satan and flatters man and deceives him into

believing that he can be free from any bond. Can we stand against this? Yes, we may be preserved from this spirit of the age, but we must counter it with something vastly superior.

We may say, "We belong to God, we are not our own, He has bought us with a great price and taken possession of us by His Spirit, and we need His Word, for we cannot live by bread alone, but by every word of God." This is not the spirit of pride and independence, but of lowliness of mind and the fear of the Lord, and it is this that will be magnified in the coming kingdom, when the judgment of God shall have fallen upon all unrighteousness and exposed the folly of man's efforts at independence of Him.

“JESUS HIMSELF WENT WITH THEM.”

A Message for the New Year.

(W. BRAIWELL DICK.)

PROBABLY some people think that there is no difference between the first day of January and a similar date in any other month, and that to attach any special significance thereto is simply sentiment.

It will be admitted by all, however, that it does indicate that we have reached yet another milestone on our homeward journey and that we are nearer home in this opening month of nineteen hundred and twenty-nine than ever we were before. If we take a look backward, it is to recall the unfailing love and unwearied care of our blessed Lord as we remember all the way that He has led us (Deut. 8. 2). If we look forward we seem to hear Him say: “*YE HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY HERETOFORE*” (Joshua 3. 4). It may be that some step out into the New Year apprehensive of trouble, while others go forward marked by a quiet, simple confidence in Him who has led them thus far and who, they are fully persuaded, will lead them right on to the end. Happy! thrice happy! are they of whom that is true.

We suggest that we should all take the words at the head of this paper as the comfort and stay of our souls for the few remaining steps of our pilgrimage here. The lovely story of Luke 24. 13-35 is very familiar, and we read it again and again with ever increasing delight and interest. The two travellers to Emmaus had reached a crisis in their history. Their hopes had been blasted, their prospects blighted, and to them the future was uncertain and dark, with not one ray of light to illumine their horizon. It may be some one is reading these lines who is in like case though the circumstances are different. You feel, dear friend,

do you not? as if you had missed your way, as if you had lost your Lord Jesus, and for you this is by no means “a happy New Year.” On the contrary, you, like them, “are sad” (verse 17). Whether this be so, or whether our lot is happier than that which we have described, this message is for us all. Our Lord Jesus knows all about us. He knows just exactly every circumstance through which we will be called to pass during that part of this year that He leaves us here. He has planned it, His mind of infinite wisdom has designed it. His heart of infinite love has conceived it, and His hand of infinite power will carry us through. If affluence be ours, and if nothing crosses our path to disturb our comfort or mar our happiness, we will require Him very, very much. If there be poverty, unemployment, sickness, bereavement, disappointment, trial of which we cannot speak to our nearest and dearest on earth, we will require Him, and to all these comes this word: “*JESUS HIMSELF DREW NEAR, AND WENT WITH THEM*” (verse 15). How beautiful is this touch of the Holy Spirit! It was “Jesus *HIMSELF*.” He who went with Jairus in the moment of his deep distress (Mark 5. 24); and who went with Mary and Martha when their hearts were torn with grief (John 11. 38); “Jesus *HIMSELF* drew near, and went with them.” He gained their confidence; He listened to their tale of woe; He calmed their spirit; He set their heart aflame; He tarried with them; He revealed Himself to them; and He caused them to return to the company of their fellow disciples. Whatever may be our exercise, our feelings, our foreboding, our adorable Lord Jesus Himself seeks to draw near

and to go with us. If He goes with us, all must be well; where He leads us must be right; what He does must be best. He desires to render us superior to everything here by engaging our heart not with our circumstances but with Himself. He seeks to make our heart not break but burn. He longs for the luxury of tarrying with us. He yearns that we should know Him where He is now and as He is now. He would have us to find our home in the circle of "His own," for there will we find Him; there will we get what we cannot get anywhere else; there we will be led into the sphere where worship flows, and where we will be enabled—as only He can enable us—to be "continually praising and blessing God" (verses 52, 53).

Let us consider our New Year Motto in a very simple and practical way. There is that Christian girl or boy who this year expects to go to a boarding school, or the older lad or lass who may be entering college. Away from the happy and sheltered environment of home they are wondering if amongst those who know not their Saviour they will be able to witness for Him. To such we say: If you ask Him, Jesus Himself will draw near and go with you. He will cheer you in your loneliness; He will form your character after His own pattern; He will open your lips to speak of Him; He will use you for His glory in your new surroundings.

There is that believer who contemplates an important step it may be in domestic, or professional, or business, or artisan life. You want to please the Lord—don't you? You dread doing anything that might grieve Him, or hinder you in seeking as you do to be here for Him. Be assured in the first place of His approval, then ask Him, and He Himself will draw near and go with you. Perhaps some-

one is deeply exercised as to launching out in His service. You believe you have heard His call but you are weighing matters up, and it is well that you should do so. Once you are satisfied that it is His Voice you have heard, and whether it means work at home or abroad, ask Him, and He Himself will draw near and go with you.

Probably some troubled soul reads these lines who is associated with some religious organization, where the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the Virgin birth, the miracles, the atonement, the resurrection, the coming of the Lord for His saints, eternal punishment, are all denied. You feel that loyalty to Christ demands—as indeed it does—that you should cut your connection. You very likely feel as Peter may have done when he stood on the ship, saw the Lord Jesus walking on the water, asked Him to bid him come and forthwith received the invitation to do so (Matt. 14. 22-33). What was he to do? The ship might become a wreck, and Christendom to-day is one huge wreck, but at the moment there was something tangible about it. Would he leave the boat, and those who were on it, or would he remain? If he left, where would he go? He would step on to an altogether unnatural element, what it might mean for him he did not know. *BUT*—on the water he would have the Lord Jesus, in the ship he had not. He stepped out; the wind was boisterous; he trembled; he doubted; he cried; but the Lord Jesus was with him and all was well. Is that your case dear fellow-believer? Have you heard the call: "Let us go forth therefore UNTO HIM without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13. 13), and are you wondering just what you will do? "Yes, "you say," that describes my

case exactly. Must I leave the church of my fathers, where I was baptized and married, and where I have so many friends?"

We should never ask you to do so, and we would hope that no other true Christian would be foolish enough to do so. Supposing the Lord Jesus is saying "Come!" and the Holy Spirit who indwells you is saying "Go forth *UNTO HIM!*" What then? Love delights to please its Object *and to be where its Object is*. If it be said, "But I should have to leave that service in which I am engaged," He says, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15. 22). "But what shall I have?" Just this: Jesus Himself will draw near and go with you. The wind may blow, the waves may rise, you may tremble—though you need not—but in the path of His will you will have Him with you—His company, His sympathy, His power, His support, in fact just everything that you need, for having Himself you have everything. It may be remarked that throughout this meditation we have said that in our varied exercises *if we ask Him* the Lord Jesus Himself

will draw near and go with us, and it may be observed that the two travellers to Emmaus did not ask Him—Why then should we have to do so? In their case they had not realized that He was alive, they had heard that He was, but their sorrow-stricken hearts could not credit it. As He ministered to them and made their heart to burn, and when they reached their destination they not only asked but constrained Him to ABIDE with them (verse 29). That must have been very grateful to His heart that evening, and we are certain it is no less so now when we ask Him to go with us, and when we constrain Him to abide with us.

Beloved companion-travellers to the home-land, let us enter upon this New Year with our hand in His hand, our eye upon Him, our heart filled by Him, our thoughts engaged with Him, our feet in the path that He has marked out for us, and our daily expectation His return. Let us resolutely refuse to take a step where we cannot ask Him to go with us. Let us go forward wherever and whenever we are assured of this. Soon we shall be *with Him*, to be for His "exceeding joy" for ever and ever—Hallelujah!

How are we set free from the Law of Sin and Death?

TAKE an illustration. When the time comes for the fledglings to leave the nest and enter upon true bird life, the mother bird rises above them and hovers over them, giving a peculiar call to them; and they see her there, the one on whom they had hitherto been dependent, and affection for her or instinct, or whatever it may be, makes them want to be with her; and lo, without a thought of it, a new power works in them, their newly feathered wings begin to flutter, and they are where she is. It is even so. Our Lord

is there in the glory, and we love Him:

"We love Him for the glorious worth
Which in Himself we see;
We love Him for the shameful cross
Endured so patiently."

And the Spirit within us is the power by which we set our affections on things above, on Christ Himself where He is, and so He is our new centre of gravity; by His sweet constraining power He draws us after Him and we know Him as the object bright and fair that fills and satisfies our hearts.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES. No. 4.

EXODUS 11. and 12.

(R. McCALLUM.)

The Question of the Borrowed Jewels.**The Death of the Lamb essential.****The Judgment of the Egyptians and their gods.****The Exodus.**

“ *YET will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt, afterwards he will let you go hence ; when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether* ” (Exod. 11. 1).

The former plagues had been signs bringing into prominence the power and forbearance of Jehovah. As the Psalmist says, God “ sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh and upon all his servants.” But so thoroughly hardened was the heart of Pharaoh now ; so completely had he despised divine warnings and entreaties that nothing remained for him and for Egypt but judgment—a judgment so terrible that instead of scheming to retard the Exodus of Israel the king would literally thrust them out of the land while the people would celebrate their departure by the bestowal of gifts of jewels of silver and of gold. A word of explanation is necessary just here, for our excellent Authorized Version has been responsible for the aspersion that God sanctioned a scheme for the enrichment of His people which can only merit human opprobrium. In Exodus 11. 2 we read, “ Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man *borrow* of his neighbour and every woman of her neighbour jewels of silver and jewels of gold.” Again in chapter 12. verses 35, 36, we find, “ And they *borrowed* of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they *lent* unto them such things as they

required, and they spoiled the the Egyptians.” These transactions are relieved of an unmerited censure, however, if we notice that *borrow*, *borrowed* and *lent* are rendered *ask*, *asked* and *gave* in the Revised and in other versions. The children of Israel asked those things—most inadequate return at best for the services they had rendered through more than a century of abject slavery—the Egyptians overwhelmed by the signal display of God’s intervention on behalf of His chosen ones, gladly acceded to their requests. Indeed they would burden them with wealth, if only they would quit the land. “ Egypt was glad when they departed : for the fear of them fell upon them.”

Hitherto the people of Israel had been interested spectators ; beholding in silent awe, no doubt, the wonders of God. But now they are made confidants of the details concerning the supreme blow to fall on Egypt—the manner, the time, the outcome, are all declared before the event, and they receive most minute instruction in all that is essential for their own deliverance. In His provision for their protection from the coming wrath and their redemption from Egypt’s thralldom God has furnished a perpetual witness to the fact that emancipation from the bondage of sin and the judgment due to it, is by blood and by power. To read the details given by Moses to the people is to be convinced of their predictive character. So numerous as to be cumbersome to a mere narrative ; apparently so un-

essential to the deliverance of the people they stand out in awesome significance and with eternal import when read in the light that breaks from Calvary.

In this illuminating history before us for study, the Lamb is brought into prominence for four days only, and while great emphasis is placed on the spotless nature of the Lamb, most of the instruction centres round the slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of the blood and the conduct of the people enjoying security under the shelter of that blood. It has often been observed that there is no attempt made in the Gospels to provide us with a biography of Christ. Scrupulous attention has been given to the facts concerning His unique birth so that there can be no dubiety in the mind of the simplest believer as to His intrinsic, essential holiness, and the record given of His life assures us of His spotless, untarnished humanity. There is a notable paucity of reference to Him, however, between His birth and His identification, in grace, with the nation of Israel at Jordan's waters. It is then, as it were, that He comes into the home, and this Lamb of God, the divine approbation resting upon Him, was publicly amongst them some four years, or four days, shall we say? a day for a year.

But even in the Gospels, where men would try to assure us that the emphasis is on His life, the careful reader will find that there is noteworthy attention paid to the details of His death. In Mark's Gospel, for example, some six chapters out of sixteen are occupied with the circumstances of the last week of the Lord's ministry. A similar apportioning of space to the period of His public ministry would have run that Gospel into at least 180 chapters. And then the Epistles are either concerned with the way of salvation and

redemption and the results accruing to God and to man from the work of Christ Jesus or with the conduct suitable for the redeemed. But everywhere the Cross is central, and the utmost emphasis is placed upon what is so prominent here, the truth of Substitution.

It is most noticeable, too, that throughout the chapter (chap. 12.) there is only mention of *a Lamb*. However many were slain on that memorable night when the destroying angel passed through the land, there is never reference to *lambs* but to *One* only. This fact is not merely fortuitous but is surely divinely appointed and essential since we have here a type of "Christ our Passover." There was but one Lamb before the eye of God, a Lamb which was not merely without blemish but a male of the first year, that is to say in its prime. Was it not in the very prime of manhood, in the full vigour of life that our blessed Lord died—yea, was slain for us? Moreover the very hour of a chosen day was fixed for the slaying of the lamb so that the whole nation, as one man, slew it at the God-appointed hour on the 14th day of the month Nisan. "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it *in the evening*" or as the margin reads, "between the evenings," i.e., between the evening sacrifices which we now know to be between three and five in the afternoon. It was at such an hour on the very day, that our Lord bowed His head and said, "It is finished." "And about the ninth hour (i.e., three in the afternoon) Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani," and we know that soon after He dismissed His spirit. Aye, and the very configuration of the blood marks is not only impressive but awe-inspiring. For the Israelites were not at liberty to sprinkle

the blood just where they pleased, but the blood of the victim was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and upon the two side posts. Behold them there and marvel at God's appointment, O believer! and as you turn from type to antitype, sing softly:—

“There from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

Shall we not, then, thank God again and again for the Lamb of His providing?—“a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was pre-ordained before the foundation of the world.”

Most noteworthy it is, too, that at the dread hour, the security of God's people did not depend upon their estimate or appreciation of the blood which was shed. It was no presumption on the part of an Israelite to rejoice in the assurance of salvation to be made manifest. Presumption and folly indeed to be filled with anxiety and doubt! Yet their safety bore no relationship to their feelings, for the divine promise was simply this, “When I see the blood, I shall pass over you.” Jehovah was pledged to spread His covering, protecting wings over the home simply on account of blood having been shed and applied. Yet doubt and fear would certainly mar their peace of mind and their joy in the security that was vouchsafed them, if it could not affect their salvation.

God desired for them and most surely seeks for us, the calm, sober joy that flows from a right appreciation of the ground of His deliverance, and an unwavering confidence in His word. For them, He appointed a feast, to be celebrated in the sense of security: a feast which could not precede the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. While feasting is suggestive of joy—in this

case, a solemn joy—the food was intended to furnish them with strength for the journey that lay before them. May we ever remember that the blood of the Lamb has procured for us salvation, and the flesh of the Lamb, Christ appropriated by faith, sustains the divinely imparted life. While the degree of faith, as has been remarked, in no wise affected the security of those who were sheltered by the blood, when feasting upon the Lamb is under consideration, we read, “Every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.” Growth in the divine nature and strength to walk in the paths of righteousness will be according to our spiritual appetite. May we hunger more after Christ, that feeding upon Him we may be characterized more by joy and power! Observe, too, that it is a lamb “roast with fire” that they fed upon. There is no food for the soul or power for the life in viewing Christ merely as an example, but strength and joy flow from the contemplation of Him who as God's Lamb, has exhausted divine judgment and set us free to be engaged with Himself.

“O Jesus Lamb of God
Who us to save from loss
Didst taste the bitter cup of death
Upon the Cross.
Thou wilt our souls sustain,
Our Guide and Strength wilt be
Until in glory, Lord, above,
Thy face we see.”

Yet was the feast a solemn feast: there could be no levity on such an occasion, and so the “flesh roast with fire” was partaken with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The feast thus instituted was to be perpetuated as the memorial of their deliverance when God smote the Egyptians. On the night of His betrayal, with His own gathered with Him, our blessed Lord could say, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I

suffer," and having remembered God's past redemption of Israel He instituted the Christian memorial feast, which celebrates the redemptive work of Christ. May I ask you, in passing, dear Christian reader, if you have kept this solemn feast in accordance with the desire of your Lord, "This do in remembrance of Me"?

While Israel feasted, Egypt bowed under the severity of their visitation. The destroying angel did not only claim every first-born son but also destroyed the first-born of all cattle, so that the ravages of death affected not only the people but also reflected upon the prestige of Egypt's gods. It is said that a whole province would go through the most exquisite sorrow over the death of a sacred bull, grieving its loss more than the death of one dearly loved in the home circle. Upon Egypt and upon Egypt's gods the hand of Jehovah was laid, and "there was a great cry in Egypt."

We need not wonder then that they were urgent in their request that the people of Israel should go. And these, their loins girt, with shoes on feet, and staff in hand while they had partaken of the feast, now hastened to the rallying point, and so the children of Israel; "about 600,000 on foot that were men, beside children," set out on their march from the land of bondage. It has been estimated that 600,000 men able to bear arms would yield a total population of about 2,000,000 men, women and children. Behold then the mighty army marching forth "by fives in a rank" to become a great nation under the leadership of Moses, and carrying with them the bones of Joseph which in anticipation of this august hour had remained unburied. God "brought them forth also with silver and gold and there was not one feeble person among the tribes." How signally had the schemes of the Pharaohs failed! How wonderfully God had triumphed!

THE BLESSER AND THE BLESSING.

THE last sight the disciples had of their Lord as He ascended into heaven was with His hands uplifted in blessing over them (Luke 24. 50, 51), and *the last words* they heard from His lips were the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1. 8). And these things have been recorded for us, for they abide. If we look up He is there for us, His hands are still uplifted in benediction over us. It is His perpetual attitude towards us, and if we realize this we shall be like the disciples "filled with great joy, worshipping Him, and praising and blessing God." But not that only, we shall be joyfully obedient to His word, and His word directs our thoughts outward to the world in darkness that knows Him not. Wherefore has He put the light of His love in our hearts? That we might

hold it forth for others. Wherefore has He blessed us and still blesses us? That we might be blessers of others. It makes a great difference to us when we realize the truth of this present time. Our Lord is in heaven, and we are the objects of His solicitude and love. He pours down heavenly blessing into our hearts, if we will receive it, and the enjoyment of this will lift us above the world and make us superior to its attractions, and preserve us from its evil, but it will fill us with zeal for the blessing of men in it. The knowledge of Christ in heaven will make us eager to make Him known to others, to bear witness to His glory, to press His rights and to pour out the blessing with which He fills us even to the uttermost part of the earth.

MAN-CATCHING.

(SAMUEL LEVERMORE.)

“*Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*”—Luke 5. 10.

A LITTLE talk by an old fisherman of more than fifty years' experience, who has toiled in many waters, and learned what little he knows from the greatest Fisherman of all, and the only One who made His own fish.

There is A GREAT FISHING STORY in two parts to be found in Luke 5. 1-11, telling of a *night of distress*, and a *morn of success*, which convey a fine lesson in man-catching. A fishing scene on lovely Gennesaret, giving us a sort of preparation for, and foreshadowing of Pentecost. Typically we have the *almighty Fisherman Himself*. Then come the *fishermen, Spirit-filled men—the fish, God's chosen—the ship, God's church—the sea, the world—* and lastly, *the net, figuring the gospel*.

Note the dignified bearing of the great Fisherman as He prepared to give this great object lesson, “He sat down” (verse 3). No hustling; reminding us of those wonderful post-communion addresses, John 13.-17. Teaching first. Ours to teach and preach, the Holy Ghost's to convert. *Man-made converts become devil-made perverts*. “He taught the people out of the ship” (verse 3). But “when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, “Launch out now into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught” (verse 4). The deeps—the world, for the draught. In the early church in Jerusalem the fishermen kept too near the shore, and they had their night of distress, but they “launched out,” and got miraculous draughts in the deeps of Samaria and Asia Minor. Inside the church the word is “GO,” outside, “Come.”

When fishing is bad, and when your night of distress comes, do as that ancient band of fishermen did in Acts 4. 23-33. And if they so prayed when

fish were being caught in thousands, how do we stand?

But now we come to hard facts. Peter, the foremost of the fishermen, says, “we have toiled all night and caught nothing.”

Peter, the great expert—therefore no lack of knowledge.

“Toiled,” therefore no lack of effort.

“All night,” therefore no mistake in time: yet the sea had beaten him and sent him back with an empty boat.

The failure of the idle or incompetent is a foregone conclusion, but here was real toil; head, heart and hand co-operating—yet an empty boat. So in gospel service; we may fish in the right way, at the right time, and in the right place; we may be earnest and hot enough to melt every iceberg, with results nil.

Peter, however, had a great asset, which is becoming more rare among fishermen every day. He had the “Nevertheless” of faith. *He believed every word of God*. He may have put his hand on his brow, saying, “I do not understand this, it is contrary to all precedent, I'm a beaten man in a beaten boat,” and then with the other hand on his heart produce that great historic word, “Nevertheless.” All-conquering faith overrides bitter experience.

“AT THY WORD” (verse 5). This is God's permanent way. Peter did consciously what the Pleiades and Arcturus are doing unconsciously, i.e., God's will.

Obedience is the master-key which unlocks the treasury of divine power. Wonder no longer why “The word of God” is found thirty-three times in Acts.

"I will," says Peter, and thus links human effort with sovereign power, and brings **THE MORN OF SUCCESS**. *Two factors* : The presence of the Sea-Lord (Psa. 8.); and obedience to His word.

He who is "Last Adam" and has dominion over "whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea" was there, and He was "working with them" (Mark 16. 15-20). "The Lord working with them." What a word! Peter could do no more. Human effort alone spelt nothing, but *Sovereign power takes control*, down goes the net and they "inclosed"—not "caught"—a great multitude of fishes and got a broken net to boot.

Now mark this—Peter did not put one fish in that net. Adam first could not do that, but Psalm 8., speaking of the Last Adam, said, "Thou madest Him to have dominion over the fish of the sea." Christ did all that morning. He who created all fish, gathered those particular fish. Did they come there by chance? No! Did Peter gather them? No! Did Peter put them in the net? No! Who then chose those fish? The Sea-Lord. God's fish were waiting for Peter's net. Can a man drive pilchards into St. Ives Bay, as a man drives sheep? No!

Did Peter know what kind of fish were in that net? No! Did our Lord? Certainly. He Who could put them in knew what He was putting in. Do you suppose that He who has "dominion over whatsoever passeth through the seas" does not know a brill from a John Dory, or a turbot from a mackerel?

The "great multitude" broke two things: Peter's *net* and Peter's *heart*.

Man's work puffs up. True success brings true men low before God. Broken-hearted Peter cries, "Depart

from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (verse 8). "Depart from me." That would be hell to Peter. That is the ceaseless litany of the damned. The Lord seems to answer Peter's despairing cry. "That is just what I will not do, I'm coming with you. I am the Sea-Lord—I filled those nets, follow Me, and you shall catch men." And as every word of His was a word of power, they forsook all and followed Him (verse 11).

The mighty revelation of sovereign power is followed by a crisis of absolute renunciation on Peter's part, as though he cried—

I went on working—hustling—toiling!
I thought that I could fill the net;
Yet night wore on, and then came morning,
The net was empty yet.
And I was beaten by the sea,
This bitter failure, Lord, then . . . Thee.

"Launch out! launch out" He cried:
"Let down the net and leave results to Me,
And thou shalt have a harvest yet,
For I command the sea.
Yours to let down—Mine to fill.
All things are subject to My will."

That great fisherman of my youth, Wm. Haslam, used to divide this subject into three points:—

Caught in the net—conviction.

Drawn out of native element—conversion.

Laid at the feet of Christ—consecration.

When Peter was occupied with the net it remained empty, but when occupied with the Lord it soon became full.

If we occupy ourselves with Him, He will occupy Himself with the net. Peter at Pentecost occupied the people with the Lord, and He put them into Peter's net.

Beware of popular methods.

NOVELTIES ARE THE DEVIL'S OPIATES.

It is not new *means* we need, but the old *power*. The need of the moment is not a big central hall, but a *big central faith*.

Not a new *theology*, but a new *faith in the old*.

THE ONE GREAT IMPERATIVE is the presence of the Almighty Lord. If you have Him, never fear. The

moment of emptiness is the eve of fulness.

George Borrow in the *Bible in Spain* says, "The moment when everything looks darkest is the moment He chooses to work, that man may know that He is Sovereign and give Him all the glory."

A greater than Borrow said, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE.

GOD, who is RICH IN MERCY, for HIS GREAT LOVE wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved). And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN HIS KINDNESS towards us through Christ Jesus."—Ephesians 2. 4-7.

MERCY, love, grace and kindness!

What wonderful words are these, and what a display of God's nature there is in them, but the bare words are not enough with which to express all that flows to us from Him through Christ Jesus. He is *rich* in mercy, His love is *great love*, and His grace is *exceeding rich*. If He had saved us reluctantly, we might fear that He would repent. Or had He blessed us on the impulse of mercy without vindicating the justness of His throne we might fear that in some crisis of the moral universe He might be compelled to strip us of our blessings and drive us from his home. But we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, and nothing can revoke this. His justice stands

unchallenged and His love flows forth unchecked. Never can a question arise to rob us of our rest and joy in Him or His eternal delight in us. The cross of Christ is the declaration of His infinite pity for us, His sinful creatures, and the manifestation of His abhorrence of our sins. He has maintained His righteousness with steadfast and unshakable integrity and has set us above all condemnation, the objects of His love in Christ Jesus.

And these things flowed to us when we had no merit, when there was not a pulse of life towards God in us, when we were dead in sins; we may be sure that they will not cease to flow now that we are alive in Christ and sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise.

As the sunflower ever turning
To the mighty sun,
With the faithfulness of fealty,
Following only one—
So make me, Lord to Thee.

We speak well of Jesus, of course, because we must speak of Him as we have found Him, and He is altogether fair, there is no fault in Him.

THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

(G. J. STEWART.)

"By faith Abel offered UNTO GOD a more excellent sacrifice than Cain . . . and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death."—(Hebrews 11.).

ABEL was born, outside Eden, of sinful parents, surrounded by fruits of the curse, the thorn and the thistle, and subject to the temptations of the devil, and he recognized the need for atonement. For this he turned to God Himself, as also for that which should cover his unrighteousness and for the one who should deliver him from the power of Satan. "By faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (verse 4), of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. It was this that fixed his occupation—a keeper of sheep; not to meet his own need; for men ate no flesh in those days. It was to meet the claims of God, by putting the life of another between himself and God, and to provide himself with clothing, covering himself, in figure, in the righteousness of that other before God. His offering was a sacrifice for sin, it owned the necessity of death and was to meet God's righteous claims.

Cain, on the other hand, owned neither the fall of man, nor the claims of God. The fruit of a cursed earth, produced by a fallen man is no sacrifice for sins, though the offering and product of honest toil, it could not claim the respect of a holy God. Cain believed not the testimony which he in common with Abel had heard, he did not recognize that he was a fallen man, nor that his life was forfeited to God. His occupation also showed his object in life, as did that of Abel, he tilled the ground that he might satisfy his own natural requirements with the fruits thereof.

Abel's faith in the testimony rendered to him obtained the further testimony

that he was righteous. This became substance to his soul; he knew God counted him righteous, having accepted his gifts. In the same way Cain knew that God had no respect to him, nor to his offering. Yet Abel was in no wise different in himself to Cain, the difference was in faith and its gifts. God bore testimony upon (epi) his gifts in some visible way, perhaps from analogy we may say by fire. The distinction between "gifts" and "sacrifice" is sustained here. Abel offered both, "Of the firstlings (pl.) of his flock, and of *their* fat."

"By it he being dead yet speaketh." What does Abel speak? He tells to man universally that the only ground of relationship for a sinner with a holy God is through the death of Another, who bears the penalty of sin on his behalf. He tells also that the death of that Other is so precious to God that He makes the one who presents Him as a Sacrifice to become the righteousness of God in Him. He who knows this may well be satisfied to seal his testimony to it with his own blood, as did this proto-martyr. In this way the fruit of the fall was his as to his body, for it is appointed unto man once to die; but he escaped the following judgment through Him who bore it for him, and shall live again with Christ, body, soul, and spirit. So Abel speaks by his faith and sacrifice. In his gifts he was a worshipper also. May we hear and take up his words!

But that which constitutes a sinner righteous before God, must also finally deliver him from all the effects of the fall, setting aside death altogether. This is exhibited in another man of

faith. It may be noted that every fresh announcement from God, whether of judgment or reward, is absolutely new to men. In this way, "dying thou shalt die," was new to Adam, who had never seen death; that which sets it entirely aside was new to Enoch.

This deliverance from death is illustrated next:

BY FAITH ENOCH WAS TRANSLATED.

A marvellous statement! Here all the dire effects of sin are done away by faith. But how can this be accredited to Enoch as an act of faith? Did faith spread her pinions and bear the patriarch out of the scene in which he had walked with God for three hundred years, and from the death that might naturally have been expected to terminate it? Is this within the province of faith? If so, would not many a saint fly away and be at rest? Ah, No! Faith can accomplish no such achievement. This belongs to God's power, and so it is written: "God took him." And "He was not found because God had translated him."

But it is within the province of faith to believe God and God is able to reveal His mind upon any subject He chooses. What, though it be something never before seen? The question is, Who announces it? God had already revealed to Enoch that he was well pleasing to Him; now He reveals that he should not taste death, but be translated without dying. Enoch believed, and living in the power of the expectation of it was found patiently waiting for it when it came to pass. In this way it is accredited to him as an act of faith.

The testimony that he was well pleasing to God was obtained as the result of his walk with God apart from the world, and he learned it in com-

munion with God. Now a walk with God in communion, with faith in the revelations made in this way, must produce worship, which also lies under this commendation of Enoch. The faith which in Abel establishes a new relationship in righteousness with God, delivers Enoch from the effects of sin, leading to communion and to the worship in which God finds all His good pleasure. The next verse reflects on this life.

Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who *approacheth* God must believe that He is and that He is a Rewarder of them that seek Him out (v. 6). Faith is connected with every step for those who approach God and the climax of this is that they come into the holy places in worship. Faith does not believe what it likes; it is no act of the human mind; it must have God to lay hold of. It believes that He is and seeks Him out for Himself, praising Him when found. It learns there, not only that He exists, but what He is as a Rewarder of all such and praises Him the more.

Faith rests with the most implicit confidence in every word of God awaiting its fulfilment and enjoying Himself meantime, as it enters into all that vast scheme of blessing which is already the province of faith. It blesses God upon every fresh sense of His love by the Spirit through the Great High Priest, with ever-fresh delight. The power of approach is distinctly faith, the great principle of the epistle. Now God's rewards may be present or future, but His presence known to faith now is a better thing than that put before the saints of old; better than any of the good things to come for the Jews. It is of the same character as the final reward with Himself in heaven, and this enlivens hope. "Our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens

from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ (as) Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has, even to subdue all

things to Himself" (Phil. 3. 20-21, N.T.).

At the same time it leads to the warning which Enoch also gave: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment."

CHEWING THE CUD & DIVIDING THE HOOF.

(A. J. POLLOCK.)

UNDER the Levitical law there were four types of animals specifically pointed out as clean or unclean, those that:—

1. Chewed the cud and divided the hoof.
2. Chewed the cud, but did not divide the hoof.
3. Divided the hoof, but did not chew the cud.
4. Neither chewed the cud nor divided the hoof.

The first class was clean and fit for food. The three following classes were unclean and unfit for food.

Every part of the Bible is inspired, and these instructions not only had a real and literal meaning to the children of Israel at the time of a hygienic nature—in a hot country these laws are of importance—but there is, we believe, a typical meaning to these injunctions. To find out what that meaning is, is to discover the spiritual meaning of them as applied to ourselves, and we are persuaded this is of the utmost importance. To allow no part of God's Word to remain a dead letter is to find out the wonderful meaning of truth in all its parts, and its practical application to ourselves.

It is a singular thing that in nature there are animals, which chew the cud and divide the hoof, others who do one of these things, and others again who do neither the one nor the other. Evidently God in creating these animals

had in His mind a great and necessary lesson to teach us all.

The two passages that refer to this matter are Leviticus 11. 1-8, and Deuteronomy 14. 3-8.

We have been told that animals that chew the cud have two stomachs, that on eating the food goes into the first stomach, and then by some process it returns after a time to the animal's mouth and is submitted to a second and careful mastication, finally descending into the second stomach, and is assimilated by the animal. Chewing the cud stands for full assimilation.

We believe there is a lesson to be learned here, that if we are to be pleasing to the Lord we must not only read the Word of God, but meditate upon it, make it our own, assimilate it, take it into our spiritual beings. These are days when Christians do not study their Bibles as they once did, and a general slackening of Christian character is the result.

What is the typical meaning of parting the hoof? We believe it sets forth separation in walk from the world.

An indication of this is seen in the manner in which the Holy Spirit of God descended upon the believers on the day of Pentecost. We read, "There appeared unto them *cloven* tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 11. 3).

In the early days of the Church there

was no difficulty about this separation from the world, for the persecution that the world meted out to the Christian made the line of demarcation between them and the world very distinct. Now it is otherwise. The enemy is trying to blot out that distinct line of demarcation. His first move was to bring mere professors into the kingdom of God, tares so like the wheat that it was difficult to distinguish the one from the other.

Without being puritanical, as people say, there should be the separation between the world and the Christian as seen in the Christian's whole deportment and ways.

Now where there is the true Christian, drinking in and assimilating the Word of God, accompanied by putting that Word into practice, so that the line of demarcation between the Christian and the world is maintained, we have what answers to the clean animal, that chews the cud and parts the hoof.

* * * *

What is signified by the animal that chewed the cud, but did not divide the hoof? Are there not those who are true Christians, those who have assimilated the word of God and made it their own, at any rate to the length of receiving Christ as their Saviour, and yet who are so worldly that it is difficult to know whether they are really the Lord's or not?

It is very sad when it is so. Should these lines reach the eye of any such, may they be used to stirring up their consciences in the matter. Surely the love of Christ should constrain us to a different path to this. The constraining love of Christ should be so great that "they . . . should not henceforth live unto themselves but UNTO HIM, who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5. 15).

It may be that these lines will reach

the eye of one who is in danger of drifting into this world-bordering state of affairs that is so dishonouring to the Lord, resulting in loss in the Christian life.

May the love of Christ be a reality to all of us, may we realize that we owe our all to Him, and that the fashion of this world is passing away. We may gratify the flesh and our own carnal desires for a little, but how soon that sort of thing comes to an end, whilst to live for the Lord and eternity will have enduring results.

* * * *

What is signified by the animal that parted the hoof but did not chew the cud? Are there not men in this world that are so upright in all their ways, so affectionate in all their relationships of life, nay, even so punctilious in their attendance to religious observances that it is difficult to know whether they are Christians or not? All this goes to show that only faith in the Lord Jesus, only a vital knowledge by faith in what the Scriptures reveal, avails for blessing.

It is sad to know of Christians approximating to the world to such an extent that one cannot be sure that they are Christians, whereas there may be unregenerate men, so careful of their ways and so full of religiousness, that many may esteem them Christians when they are not.

* * * *

As to the animal that neither chews the cud nor parts the hoof, the moral is plain. It stands for the utter man of the world, the man who makes no pretence of paying even an outward respect to the Word of God, one who has not got the slightest regard for the ways of God, but who simply gratifies the desires of his unregenerate mind.

“THEM THAT THOU HAST GIVEN ME.”

(J. T. MAWSON.)

“*I pray not for the world, but for them that Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine ; and I am glorified in them.*”
—John 17.

“*And I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them*”—verse 26.

NOT for the world did the Lord ask in that sacred hour, the time had not come for that. It will come in due course, and when He asks for it, it shall be given to Him, for God, His Father, hath said, “Ask of Me, and I shall give the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for Thy possession” (Psalm 2). And though the kings of the earth combine against Him and take counsel with Satan himself, as they will do, to frustrate the will of God and to keep Christ out of His inheritance (Revelation 17), it will be in vain. The Father’s pledge to His Son will be honoured and He shall dash the rebellious hosts in pieces like a potter’s vessel and shepherd the nations with a rod of iron. But here, in John 17, His request was for something very different to crowns and kingdoms and far-stretching dominions, then it will be a question of righteousness; here it is a question of love. The Father had for Him a gift, purposed before the foundations of the earth were laid, a love gift, that should yield a never-ceasing joy to His heart and a continual glory to His Name, and the time had come for Him to ask for this great gift. Let us hear from His own lips what it was for which He was now asking: “*The men Thou gavest me out of the world.*” He was speaking of His disciples, and of us also, for we, having believed on Him through their word, are included in His prayer.

There was no more wonderful moment in His life on earth than this. He had concluded His farewell words

to His disciples, and had turned His eyes to heaven and was speaking to His Father, and they were standing by to listen. They heard Him speaking of them, telling out to His Father what His desires about them were, and how dear they were to Him, because they were the Father’s choice and chosen gift. They were not the sort of men that a polished society would have sought for, the world would not have considered them worthy of honour, they were not famous for culture, or learning, or intelligence, and we cannot even speak of their nobility of character, but they were the Father’s gift, and He was glorified in them. They were the greatest gift His Father could give to Him, they and us, whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, and He had proved Himself worthy of the gift, for He could say: “**THOSE THAT THOU GAVEST ME I HAVE KEPT, AND NONE OF THEM IS LOST.**” The Father had no doubt from the beginning that His Son would treasure the gift He had given to Him, even beyond life itself, and would prove Himself able to keep them in a world of evil and subtle snares, hence worthy to possess them for ever, but this had to be manifested, and it was. He had given them the Father’s word, the word that told out how blessed a thing it was to know the Father, and He had kept them in the Father’s Name.

How great is the contrast between the first man and the Second Man, between Adam and Christ. God gave to Adam a great gift, the woman to

be his helpmeet, but he kept neither God's word nor her nor himself, and when God sought him in the Garden to see how he had treated His word and what he had done with the gift, he excused himself and screened himself by blaming her. "*The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she's to blame,*" and it seems as though he meant "let Thy displeasure fall upon her, for I could not help what has happened." But he could, if he had given her God's word and unfolded to her the goodness of God whose gift she was, then would he have kept her from the wiles of the enemy, and have saved himself from that faithless and despicable cowardice and irreparable fall. But all must stand in contrast to the holy Son of God. He could say, "I have manifested Thy name unto *the men that Thou gavest Me,*" and though Satan desired to have them to sift them, He had kept them while He was with them, had prayed for them on leaving them, and their faith failed not. And not only had He kept them and prayed for them, but He was to bleed for them, for when the time of judgment came, and the storm gathered thickly about Him, He said, "If ye seek Me let these go their way" (chap. 18). Such was His love, and thus had He preserved them from the world, and guarded them from Satan, and saved them from judgment.

He prays for them—not as associating Himself in sympathy with them as encompassed by infirmities and interceding on their behalf in regard to their needs, for that we must go to Hebrews—but as viewing them as His own inalienable possession given to Him by His Father, and remaining still the Father's. For all that the Son has are the Father's, and all that the Father has are His. Consider that great fact for a moment, for it brings

out His co-equality with the Father, and the perfection of the oneness of mind and interests and affections that abide between the Father and the Son. And we also are Their joint possession! And as being this certain things were comely and necessary for those disciples and for us, and for these things the Lord lays claim.

THEY WERE TO BE KEPT FROM THE EVIL OF THE WORLD through the Father's name. He was to have control of them, and to keep them in the blessedness of the heavenly family circle from surrounding evil, for the Father's name gathers within its holy and blessed protection the whole circle of His children.

THEY WERE TO BE SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE FATHER'S TRUTH. In a world of evil, yet separate from it, and preserved in practical separation by the wonders of the truth as to the Father and the world of bliss in which His love is known. And so would they be shining lights in the darkness, and a witness to the fact that the Father sent the Son.

THEY ARE TO BE WITH HIM AND TO BEHOLD HIS GLORY. They are, and we are, to behold our Lord as the supreme object of the Father's love, we are to behold the glory given to Him of the Father and to learn by it that He was the object of the Father's love before the earth's foundations, and that He did not forfeit that love when He became a Man upon earth. Nay, that becoming Man He had given the Father fresh causes for loving Him (John 10. 17).

How wonderful is the glory that the words of the Lord open up to us here, how surpassing all human thought is our destiny as being the Father's gift to the Son, but it is not all future, for,

mark the closing words of the prayer, "And I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it ; THAT THE LOVE WHEREWITH THOU HAST LOVED ME MAY BE IN THEM, AND I IN THEM." Let us not hurriedly close the book on reaching the end of the chapter. Does the Father love us with the love wherewith He loves His Son ? Is that possible ? He says so here. We could not have conceived it and would not have believed it if He had not said it. But on the authority of His own words we can say the Father's love rests on us. Yes,

"The Father's love the source of all,
Sweeter than all it gives,
Rests on us now without recall,
And lasts while Jesus lives."

But here is more, the Lord does not ask that the Father's love may be *on* us, but *IN US*. His aim is that it might be in our hearts, the enjoyed portion of our souls, that it might fill us and possess us, and that He Himself might be in us.

The world is to know this marvellous

fact, for when the church as the New Jerusalem shall come out of heaven having the glory of God (Revelation 21) ; when they see God and the Lamb shine forth from that heavenly city—the Father in the Son and the Son in us—then the world will know that the Father sent the Son and that He loves us as He loves His Son. But now we know all this. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

"And this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." We could not know these things except by the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit alone who gives the capacity to us to enter into these things. But since they are ours to be known and enjoyed now, and since the Spirit has been given to us all, let us go in for them and "LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS."

"BEHOLD, A THRONE WAS SET IN HEAVEN."

"And, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."—Rev. 4. 2.

WHAT quietness and rest it brings to the spirit, to look up from the turmoil of this visible, fleeting, and lying world—from the shows and shams of its tinted scenes, from all in life that startles and appals us and to know that there is a throne above it all and One sits supreme upon it. God is supreme, and though that supremacy is not manifested yet in a public way, we who have faith doubt not that He is above and behind everything, and that soon everything will be brought into subjection to His will. "Thy

kingdom come" is not a vain and foolish prayer.

The shadows are passing, and the reality is behind. Nothing lasts here, our trials are all hasting away, we look beyond and above the storms to the throne upon which Christ sits. How small all our conflicts and ambitions seem when we look up to the throne, and to the One who sits upon it. We know that against His changeless purpose all the waves of time and circumstance break in vain.

THE PATH OF LIFE.

(T. OLIVER.)

(The substance of a short address at the grave-side of an aged Christian).

“He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him length of days for ever and ever.”—Psa. 21. 4.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life : in Thy presence is fulness of joy ; at Thy right hand pleasures for evermore.”—Psa. 16. 11.

“The gift of God is eternal life through (or, better, ‘in’) Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 6. 23.

OUR friend, whose body we have reverently put in the grave, has had a long life, and has thus proved the goodness and mercy of God in a very special way. Long life is considered to be the best wish which one individual of the human race can make for another, and yet long life with all its disabilities is not an unmixed blessing. Hence the words of the Psalmist must mean more than continuance of the present unsatisfying conditions.

Perhaps the greatest peculiarity of Scripture is that whatever may be the primary meaning of a passage, there is a deeper meaning which does not appear on the surface, but which the Holy Spirit of God reveals to the Christian.

In Old Testament times the thought of eternal life could not be distinctly apprehended, let alone distinctly expressed, yet the Psalmist felt that the path of life could not continue indefinitely here. It must end in the presence of God where, at His right hand, there is a Person in whom is resident fulness of joy, i.e., pleasures for evermore. That carries us on to the truth of the New Testament, that eternal life is the gift of God and is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We take this opportunity as a sort of wayside pulpit to display an advertisement of the path of life. To some it may appear incongruous to speak of the path of life in the presence of death and the grave which break life. But it is an incident such as this which brings before us most forcibly the

distinction between physical life and eternal life. We have a very slender and uncertain hold on physical life. We are tenants at the will of Another, viz., the will of God. For any one of us there is only a short step between the present time and the breaking of the earthly path of life. But the path of life which the Scriptures advertise has no break. Our old friend is as much in the Lord's keeping to-day as last week when she was with us. Eternal life is not in the sphere of responsibility, but is stated in Scripture to be in God's Son, and is thus not in our keeping.

The entrance to the path of life is set forth in the gospel which has not changed its terms in spite of the activity of the popular modern theology which, after all, is only engaged with sweeping up the broad way—the High Street of the City of Destruction or, alternatively, the way of Cain which ends in complete eternal undoing.

The path of life, the narrow way, which leads to life, has its beginning in the death and resurrection of Christ, so that it is on resurrection ground, and is thus enjoyed in the realm of the Spirit. That there be few who find the narrow way is no reflection on God's character of fair dealing. All have sinned and come short of His glory, but He justifies freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood.

But the death of Christ has done more than satisfy the righteous claims

of God ; there has been such a surplus of glory to God in that death that Christ is at the right hand of God, in the seat of power, as the pole or zenith of the dispensation for the Christian. All eternity will be occupied with the declaration of that accrued glory to God.

Thus the Christian's politics, i.e., his abiding interests, are in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. So that we do not perform any ritual of sprinkling the coffin with earth, since depositing the Christian's body in the grave is purely a temporary provision. Ere long, the Lord will come instantaneously with all the attributes of triumph, and for

ever will establish the fact of His victory over death and the grave.

Could any message be more comforting than such words of Scripture ? The Apostle Paul introduced his exhortation to the Philippians to fulfil his joy, by the provision "if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies." The "if" does not indicate uncertainty, but the assurance of experience. Every Christian can testify in measure to the consolation to be found in Christ, and so the aforesaid writer speaks of the "God of all comfort" not as a sloppy sentiment, but as a radiant reality known specially in such times of unparalleled stress.

"AND HE ENTERED INTO A SHIP AND PASSED OVER."

"AND He entered into a ship and passed over." So we read in the first verse of Matt. 9., but that was not the beginning of the story. There was a reason why He did this, and if we would discover it we must go back to the preceding chapter. There we read some strange and fateful words, "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts"; now read on, "And He entered into a ship and passed over." He was not wanted in that city. His presence had driven a legion of devils and a herd of swine out of it, and what else He might do they knew not, and so they bid Him go.

Have any of us lost the sense of His presence ? Are we conscious that our lives lack the inner quietness and glow that His company yields ? What of it ? Have we besought Him to go ?

Not in so many words, of course, as did these Gergesenes, we would not be so rash, but have we done it by our indifference to Him, by our preference for something that excludes Him ?

If it is true that our hearts have grown cold and a distance has come in between our souls and Him, and if we feel that He has gone and we miss Him, as the bride missed her Beloved in the Canticles, we need to revive our recollection, we need to command our memories to be faithful and to tell us the truth as to when and how and why we bid Him depart, and it is only thus that the lost but longed for intimacy can be restored to us.

He passed over, and CAME INTO HIS OWN CITY. Oh, that my heart and life might be called His own city, because there He dwells and rules with undisputed sway.

“ HE THAT HATH AN EAR.”

(W. BRAMWELL DICK.)

“ *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*”

—Revelation 2.—3.

[T is not without significance that not less than seven times within the compass of two chapters is this word repeated. We know that the Holy Spirit does not indulge in vain repetition, and this makes the recurrence of this call still more striking. It may be argued that the message was addressed to different local assemblies. That is so. The fact remains, however, that these communications are set before us as one complete whole, and reading them as such we find ourselves confronted with this seven-times-repeated, rousing, challenging summons to hear. There must be a reason for it, and there would seem to be in it a Voice to us at the present time. Shall we endeavour to analyse the verse? We note, in the first place, that it is intensely personal. In each instance the local assembly is addressed through its representative. He who is in the midst of the seven assemblies (1. 13 and 20), in judicial character, commends unstintedly all that of which He approves, and indicates that which is displeasing to Him. In the company He discerns individuals who desire to be found in the path of His will, and such He seeks to encourage, as He says: “ *He that hath an ear, let him hear.*” Some might be “dull of hearing,” like those described in Hebrews 5. 11, but these would be those with an ear attent to hear. In the second place we observe that our oft-repeated text, says: “ *He that hath an ear, let him hear.*” Not one ear for the Spirit and another ear for the world and for the multitudinous voices that claim our attention. It was in “the backside of the desert” that Moses heard the call of God (Exodus 3.). It was in the seclusion of the cave at Horeb that the

“still small voice” reached Elijah (1 Kings 19.). It was perhaps in Arabia that Paul received hitherto unheard-of communications from the living Lord (Galatians 1. 17). It was in lonely Patmos that John heard a Voice speaking to him (Revelation 1. 9, 10 and 12). Yea, our precious Lord “in the days of His flesh” conducted His disciples to “a desert place, for there were many coming and going” (Mark 6. 31, 32). It has ever been His way to draw “His own” away from the sounds of this world that they might without distraction listen to His Voice. Such is His way to-day. He who would hear the divine Voice will seek the retreat of the divine presence, that away from the babel of this world he may learn the divine mind for the present time. He will not become a hermit. He will be perfectly natural in his habits, his manner and his general deportment, but he will be characterized by the meekness of Moses, the faith of Elijah, the fervour of Paul, the affection of John. In short, he will, without knowing it, be like Christ, and he will be like “the children of Israel that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12. 32).

In the third place we remark that the Speaker is a divine Person. “ *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.*” That which He communicates demands our instant, reverent, careful, and submissive attention. We dare not question what He says, for it conveys to us the mind of God. His voice is the voice of God. He informs us as to the will of God, and at the same time He seeks to lead us in the path that is well pleasing to God. It

may be that in the chapters we are now considering, it is more a question of our relation to the assembly, and to Him who with jealous love is quick to detect all that is not in keeping with that relationship, and that would tend to dethrone Him in the affections of "His own." The Spirit's word may, therefore, be one of rebuke, and it ever is one of real encouragement. The fourth feature of this verse is immensely important: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith"; not has said but "*saith*." If, as is generally accepted, we look upon these chapters as giving us a history of the church as the responsible witness for Christ upon earth from its inception until its close, we see how, at the various outstanding periods of that history, the Spirit has had some special, definite message suited to the existing condition of the church at that particular time. After that which could be commended has been noticed, and that which called forth the disapprobation of the Lord has received attention, we see how the Spirit gave the mind of the Lord for that particular time. So we believe it is to-day. We are fully persuaded, and we would urge this upon our fellow-believers, that there is such a thing as *truth for the time*. We concede at once that we have the complete revelation of God, and that nothing can be added thereto; that the Spirit has been given to "guide into *all truth*" (John 16. 13), and that those who have an unction from the Holy One know *all things* (1 John 2. 20).

We are well aware, however, that there have been times when one phase of the truth has been emphasized and when believers have been recovered to that in which they may have been defective. How we can thank God for Luther's awakening to the great fact of justification by faith. Though passed

unnoticed by the majority of church historians, there was a remarkable revival just one hundred years ago, when the Spirit recalled true Christians to the fact that "there is One Body," that all who are saved in this period of grace are a heavenly company, and that the immediate hope of the church is the coming of the Lord to translate it from earth to the Father's House. These things were contained in the Holy Scriptures, but just then the Spirit so exercised many that these truths claimed their attention and were so built into their souls that they altered the whole course of their life.

If at that time, and for many years afterwards, that which was stressed was *objective*, that is that there is a real living Man in the glory of God (Himself none other than the Eternal Son of the Eternal God), and that we by the Spirit are united to Him there, in later years that which is *subjective* has been pressed, that is, that all that is true of us "in Christ," where He is, should be made true *in us* by the Holy Spirit of God. We get both presented in the two prayers in the epistle to the Ephesians 1. 15-23 and 3. 14-19, and that in the divine order. We see the same beautiful order—with an entire absence of haste—in the period to which we have referred. We must first learn the truth *objectively*, but when we have learned it, and got it in power in our souls, it is no less imperative that it then be made good in us *subjectively*. It is obvious, then, that we need constantly to have our ear attuned to hear "what the Spirit saith." It is pathetic to find Christians who have been on the road for say half a century living on "first principles" (Hebrews 5. 12); repeating that which they learned as "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3. 1); and refusing truth for the time as something novel, fanciful, not of God.

To such there comes the solemn admonition of 1 Thessalonians 5. 19-21.

“*QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT.*”

“*DESPISE NOT PROPHECY-INGS.*”

“*PROVE ALL THINGS ; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.*”

The truth is as much the truth to-day as it was fifty, or a hundred, or nineteen hundred years ago ; but to meet the ever-changing conditions existing ; to counter the ceaseless attacks of a crafty foe ; to keep ever before saints the surpassing glories of our all-glorious Lord ; and to maintain them at the height of their calling, different phases of the truth have been given prominence at different epochs in the history of the church.

If, therefore, we are not in constant exercise, if we have not got an ear to hear, we may be able to rehearse the terms of the truth, but we shall miss the voice of the Spirit, and we shall not be in the current of the Lord's mind for the day in which we live. Do not let us be misunderstood ; we abhor religious novelties and any tendency to build a fantastic theory upon some particular portion of Scripture. Such is merely the working of the natural mind on the part of those who indulge in this, and a drawing upon the imagination of those to whom such things may be presented. The spiritual will not be led astray in this way, for “he that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1 Corinthians 2. 15, Mgn.), but will hear the voice of the Spirit, will know the Lord's mind, and this will have a marked effect when he engages in the service of the Sanctuary, as well as when he seeks to be true to the testimony, and to be found walking here in the light of revealed truth and

in the power of the Spirit who has revealed it.

Lastly, we learn that the Call is : “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith *unto the churches.*” Each message recorded in these two chapters was addressed to a local assembly, and it was the condition of that assembly that called forth the message, but—and let us note this carefully—the voice of the Spirit to the local assembly in a particular place was the voice of the Spirit to the whole assembly in Asia. So closely connected were they that that which affected one company was symptomatic of the whole company and, therefore, all were addressed. If this be so it banishes the idea of independency and of various companies of believers acting without regard to the whole church. The church is one and truth for the time at any given time is for the whole church. There may be those whose ears are not open to hear it ; or who are unwilling to receive it ; if we feel in ourselves the tendency in that direction, let us pray that we may be delivered from it ; if we see it in our fellow-believers, let us pray that they may be delivered from it. Let us remember, however, that the Word is, “*He that hath an ear, let him hear,*” hence it is incumbent upon us individually to know the truth, to walk in truth, to do truth, to enjoy the liberty of the truth, and if this be so we will walk with those who walk in truth, and in the light of the one great and glorious assembly of God.

Finally, it is worthy of notice that there is a word of encouragement “*to him that overcometh.*” In the case of the first three addresses it follows the call that we have been considering ; in the case of the last four addresses it precedes that call. The probable reason for this we must

leave to the prayerful exercise of our readers. There is this comfort that there always has been a testimony for the Lord. He never has been without one, and He will never be without one. Amid the coldness of Ephesus, the tribulation of Smyrna, the assumption of Pergamos, the corruption of Thyatira, the deadness of Sardis, the weakness of Philadelphia and the apostasy of Laodicea, He could count upon those who would be quick to hear the Spirit's voice, to follow the Spirit's

leading, and to be in simple subjection unto Him. It might mean here reproach, suffering, death, but it would secure the commendation of Him "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

Shall we each, as we lay down this paper, turn to our precious Lord, and ask Him that our ear may ever be open to hear "what the Spirit saith unto the churches"; that our feet may ever be ready to walk in the path in which He may lead?

TREES OF SCRIPTURE (No. 1).

(H. J. VINZ.)

"The Thorn."

WHERE rise the trees in leafy dress of pleasing colours, form and grace, where gardens fair the vision bless, there thorns and thistles find a place. To toiling men they sadly tell how their mean presence came at first, how Adam heeded Eve and fell. Sin seized earth's lord and earth was cursed: with briars and brambles spread they signify to all in symbol sorrowful—sin's base and hurtful thrall. (Genesis 3. 18.)

Though man had sinned God did not leave devoid of hope his troubled soul, the woman's Seed should power receive and break the tempter's dread control. The "Thorn-bush" might be wrapped in flame, yet Moses saw 'twas not consumed, for midst its thorns Jehovah came to tell that thralldom's might was doomed. A wondrous sight! the sign divinely given to men that our thrice holy God in grace can bless again. (Genesis 3. 15; Exodus 3.)

Becoming flesh, "the Word" came down to Israel, and a world of need. Their griefs and sorrows made His own in sympathy, the weak He freed. If Adam felt earth's thorny curse the Lord a deeper anguish knew: scorn, mocking, hate, and even worse—the tree where men the Saviour slew. Wearing the crown of thorns He did the curse sustain, died for our sins, and rose in life o'er all to reign. (John 1. 14; Matthew 8. 17; Matthew 2.)

Exalted high! crowned on the throne! He soon will catch the assembly up! Then save the scattered nation known as His, and fill with joy their cup! The Gentile trees shall clap their hands, all thorns and thistles pass away, for Israel's King to all the lands brings gladness by His righteous sway! Behold, the once sad earth with smiles her increase yields, while flowers and fruits with foliage rich adorn her fields. (1 Thess. 4.; Isa. 55. 12; Isa. 35.)

Some are satisfied with just so much of the truth of God as will satisfy the conscience. Let it not be so with us. If our hearts are opened the Holy Ghost will fill them with Christ and enlarge them to take in more of Him, and we shall want less of self and less of the world. Then shall we walk in the truth.

REMEMBRANCE.

(J. T. MAWSON.)

O LORD, afresh our hearts awake,
 To move along the way with Thee,
 Which Thou of old for us did'st take—
 Bearing Thy cross to Calvary.
 We pass in thought without the gate
 Of David's city, loved by Thee,
 Which gave Thee for Thy love but hate,
 And shame and scorn and enmity,

We see Thee there by men despised,
 No crown but thorns awarded Thee ;
 With malefactors crucified,
 Who mock Thy Name and piety.
 Lover and friend stand off afar,
 Nor to the cross dare they approach ;
 While foes press round and eager are
 Upon Thy Name to heap reproach.

We hear Thy broken cries ascend,
 But in Thy need the heavens are dumb ;
 No angel to Thy aid can bend,
 No succour from on high can come.
 To Thee are meted pain and grief,
 To Thee the bitter cup of woe,
 The gloom of death without relief,
 No light above, no help below.

But Thou wert there, the Substitute,
 For our offences to atone,
 To Thee our guilt did God impute,
 And Thou did'st bear His wrath alone :
 That we, forgiven and set free,
 Redeemed by Thy most precious blood
 From sin and all iniquity,
 Might find our peace and joy in God.

'Twas love unbounded made Thee bear
 For us that weight of wrath divine,
 And that same love now makes us share
 In all the favour that is Thine ;
 For risen again and glorified,
 Us as Thy brethren Thou dost own,
 By Thy one offering sanctified,
 For ever we with Thee are one.

Saviour, Thy love by far exceeds
 Our highest thought, our fullest praise ;
 Yet as the Holy Spirit leads,
 To Thee our songs of joy we raise ;
 And in Thy changeless love we rest
 Secure in holy unity ;
 Respond anew to Thy request,
 And gratefully REMEMBER THEE.

REPENTANCE IS IMPERATIVE.

(S. LEVERMORE)

“EXCEPT ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” Who said that? Christ Himself (Luke 13. 3), repeated by Him in verse 5. That settles it. Again, after His resurrection, in the same gospel (24. 46), “Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name *among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*” (Italics mine, here as elsewhere.)

Repentance is as old as sin, and is as imperative as sin is damning. It is the only alternative to perishing. There is no middle path.

John Nelson Darby has well said, “No doubt repentance is an eternal necessity to every soul that approaches God.”

Prophets proclaimed it, Kings practised it—the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by preaching it. Our Lord Himself joined two dispensations by His very first word, “Repent ye and believe the gospel,” and if the Son of God at the beginning, middle, and end of His earthly ministry insisted upon it, who shall impiously dare to make light of it! Repentance was Peter’s first requirement to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 11. 38), and Paul declared to the Greeks in Acts 17. 30 that “God now—i.e., in the fulness of grace—commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” *All persons, in all places.*

Treated *negatively* then, *repentance is not Jewish.* For, as we have seen, it was to be preached “among all nations,” and Paul “testified both to the Jews, *and also to the Greeks,* repentance toward God” (20. 21). He further told King Agrippa how God had delivered him from the Gentiles,

unto whom He sent him, and that he showed first at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and Judea, *and then to the Gentiles,* that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance (Acts 26. 27–30). This sets at rest for ever the strange contention that repentance was to be preached only, or even chiefly, to the Jews.

Repentance therefore is not a dispensational distinction, but a fundamental necessity.

Further, *repentance is not conviction,* but that to which conviction leads. The prodigal first came to himself, that was conviction; then to his father, that was repentance.

Conviction is the light, which shows me where I am,
Repentance rather is my flight to yonder bleeding Lamb.

It is not fear or regret. Oh, the sickening list of promises made to God under the influence of fear. Pharaoh regretted the plagues but hardened his heart. Fear caused Ahab to *walk softly,* but not heavenward. Balaam cried, “O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his,” but failed to live the life of the righteous. Judas had remorse, and went and hanged himself. Felix ‘heard’—‘trembled’—‘thought’—‘said’—‘hoped’—but never repented.

Galleo stoutly defended Paul, yet “cared for none of these things.” The jailor, on the contrary, awoke and trembled under conviction, then ‘sprang in’—fell down—and ‘inquired’ in genuine repentance, since he ‘believed’—‘rejoiced’—was ‘baptized’ and ‘ministered.’ Agrippa was ‘almost persuaded’ as to conviction, but *altogether lost as to fact.* Esau “found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb.

12. 17). Careful search and bitter tears availed nought. His birthright was gone. He could not eat the pottage and have it. Beware of that deadly anæsthetic of Satan.

“Whilst the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.”

Yes, possibly he *may*, and the grace of God will save him if he does, but the sad probability is, *he will not want to*.

Jerome well said that the “dying thief” repented that none need despair, and he only that none dare presume.

Repentance is not legal since “the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted (or given) repentance unto *life*” (Acts II. 18), whilst the law is unto *death*.

It is not a mere natural or historical faith which knows no repentance, for such “draw back unto perdition” (Heb. 10. 39), whilst those who repent “believe to the saving of the soul.” “The demons believe” (Jas. II. 19).

Neither is it mere natural religion. King Saul was intensely religious, but offered unto the Most High religious ceremony and sacrificial offering, instead of heart-obedience.

Rome, “mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” has the most complicated system of religious machinery, and to this very hour she will absolve any sinner *before the act if he can afford to pay*. Where could one better be saved than on the banks of the Ganges—Benares—Mecca—or before the Totem in some mid-African village, if mere religion could save a man?

Oh! solemn—awfully solemn thought that a man may have deep convictions, turn religious—be consumed with bitter regrets and remorse—he may have fear of death and hell—an intellectual faith

about God and Christ, heaven and hell, and the historicity of Holy Scripture, yet die unrepentant, and be lost for ever. Passivity toward God and activity, or repentance, are absolutely opposed. Receptivity toward the truth begets repentance, or activity toward God.

And now turning to the positive side for a brief moment, may we look God’s truth in the face and squarely ask, *What is repentance?* Traditional theology and mere etymology replies off-hand, “Change of mind,” but the scriptural meaning goes much deeper and involves a change of *heart*.

Walker’s definition is ‘attrition,’ ‘contrition,’ or ‘penitence,’ all of which one may have *without* repentance. The late Dr. W. T. P. Wolston described repentance as, “That saving grace wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost whereby a sinner is led to side with God against himself, and turn to Him for salvation.”

Conviction is *causative*, repentance is *effective*. Repentance (Gk., *metanoia*—*metanoeo*) “to have another mind,” “to change the mind,” is used in the New Translation to indicate a change of mind in respect of God and Christ, sin and self. It may be preceded by sorrow, but sorrow alone is not repentance, but may “work” it—vide 2 Cor. 7. 8–11. So that we would insist that there is not, nor could there ever be, a turning from sin without a genuine sorrow for it, not only because of its consequences, but because it is displeasing to God.

Repentance therefore involves heart work. Moses commanded Israel to love the Lord with all their *heart and soul*. Jeremiah, “circumcise your *heart*.” Joel, “rend your *hearts*.” Ezekiel, “make you a new *heart*.”

One of Satan’s favourite methods of inducing sleep is by telling sinners that

repentance is "merely a change of mind," forgetting that you may change your mind about a *place* and remain there—about a *person*, and not change your conduct toward him. About *God*, and remain "afar off"—about *Christ*, and never trust Him. You may change your *mind*, and not your *ways*.

Repentance is a turning "from" and "to." The Thessalonians turned "to God, from idols." Not a turning to the right or to the left. Not to *verto*, from irreligion to religion—vice to virtue—indulgence to abstinence, etc., but *converto*, or conversion, is to turn right round, as in military phrase, "Right about turn," or naval, "Hard a port"—or railway, "Reverse the engine," or, as some great etymologists have it, to "whirl round violently." Richard Baxter said, "O sinner, thou canst not find heaven at the end of the road which leads to hell." Repent ! Repent !

Repentance is motivated by love, and ignorance of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering accounts for the lack of it (Rom. 2. 4, 5). Thoughts of the Father's goodness brought the prodigal to himself, and to his Father.

Bunyan gives us a touching picture of "Christian" gazing at the cross, whilst his burden rolls into the open sepulchre, and he cries,

"Blest cross ! blest sepulchre,
Blest rather be, the Man that was there
put to shame for me."

The Puritans loved to speak of repentance as "the tear in the eye of faith." It was ever, with them, as in Scripture, a matter of deep heart work, emotion resulting from *immotion*, with a Godward motion resulting from both. We need emotion caused by *immotion*. *A deep emotion followed by a saving motion*. Motion without emotion is like a house without a door ; emotion

without motion is as a door without a house.

A leading advocate in Georgia had no emotion or happy feeling although a believer, until he confessed Christ, and then he was so intoxicated with joy he had to lean against a lamp-post. People thought he was drunk, but he said, "I am so happy, I can hardly stand up." There is joy in heaven when a sinner repents, but heaven would take very little notice if the Government were turned out to-morrow.

Repentance is a gift. "The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus. . . . Him hath God exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance" (Acts 5. 30). That which our Lord purchased in His humiliation, He bestows in His exaltation. "Think not that your repentance will cause mercy, it is neither the exciting or meritorious cause. Christ gives it. Except He smite the rocks, they will not yield, except He break their hearts, they will not bleed." Thus the spiritual *Clarkson*.

Chrysostom rightly says, "Repentance is the gift of heaven, a grace that is stronger than laws." Repentance is God's bulwark against superficiality and hypocrisy, and, *in Scriptural order*, *repentance is before faith*. According to our Lord Himself, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1. 15), and Paul (Acts 20. 20), "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And again in Heb. 6. 1, "Repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." Yet are repentance and faith ever inseparable.

Repentance is before life, as in Acts 11. 18. "Then hath God granted also unto the Gentiles repentance *unto life*." Whilst *repentance is always before remission*. "Repent . . . for

the remission of sins" (Acts 11. 38). "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached" (Luke 24. 47).

Repentance always involves confession. "I acknowledged, Thou forgavest," cries David in Psalm 32. "If any man say, I have sinned, He will deliver," says Job 33. 27. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive," writes John. That great expositor, J. N. D., "There were really no good trees excepting those which confessed that they were bad."

Repentance involves submission, as Thomas, "My Lord, and my God"; and Saul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

When the Fiji Islanders were in rebellion against Great Britain, all her military and naval forces were directed against them, but upon their unconditional submission, those forces were directed against their enemies. Only think, my reader, of the joy and peace in the fact that "If God be for us, who can be against us"?

Obedience follows repentance. "Repent and be baptized," cried Peter, by the Spirit, in Acts 2. 38, and it would be very rash to say there was a single dissentient.

"Go, shew yourselves to the priests," said our Lord to the ten lepers. They obeyed without question, and "as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17. 14). Cleansed in the very act of obedience.

WHEN OUGHT I TO REPENT?

This very moment, for every day you postpone it you have another day to repent of, and one day less to repent in. You cannot repent too soon, for you know not how soon it may be too late.

This matter is so urgent that a merciful God, in love to their souls, actually commands all men everywhere to repent NOW, because He hath appointed a day of judgment.

"*But I cannot repent.*" Steady! steady! O, my fellow sinner, lest you be found guilty of charging God with folly. Shall He command and not enable? If you cannot come to God *with* repentance, come to Him *for* it. If you cannot repent, then come—if you cannot come, then cry—if you cannot cry, then look, and if you cannot look, then trust. God never refuses a cry for pardon, but the time comes when men do not want it, they are "given over" and "given up" (Rom. 1. 24, 26, 28). "past feeling" (Eph. 4. 19), "given themselves over" (19). Oh, awful state! Oh, wretched, hopeless condition!

When once the heart seeks the face of God, and the heart turns to the Lord, the veil of unbelief is removed, and the sun of His gracious favour and pardoning love shines into the soul.

The repentance of the Corinthian believers, as given in 2 Cor. 7. 10, 11, is sevenfold, involving, 'carefulness'—'clearing of themselves'—'indignation'—'fear'—'desire'—'zeal'—and 'revenge,' and is further described as 'sorry after a godly manner'—that sorrow which not only dreads punishment, but that hates the sin itself because it is hateful to God.

These believers had already, of course, repented *unto* life, but there had to be repentance *in their life*, because sin had come in to be repented of. Where there is sin, there must be repentance.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT.

“ Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ?

WHERE hast thou been toiling all
the day

That thy brow is burdened and sad ?
The Master’s work may make weary
feet,

But it leaves the spirit glad.

No pleasant garden toils were mine,

I have sat on the judgment seat,
Where the Master sits at eve and
calls,

His servants around His feet.

How camest thou on the judgment seat,
Dear heart ? Who set thee there ?

’Tis a lonely and lofty seat for thee,
And well might fill thee with care.

I climbed on the judgment seat
myself,

I have sat there alone all day,
For it grieved me to see God’s
servants around

Idling their time away.

And what hast thou done on the judg-
ment seat ?

Tell me, what didst thou there ?

Would the idlers heed thy feeble voice ?
Did the garden mend by thy care ?

Nay, I pleaded and called, got
angry and cried,

But they left me there forlorn ;
My voice was weak, and they
heeded not,

Or they laughed my words to
scorn.

Ah, the judgment seat is not for thee,
The servants were not thine,

And the eyes that adjudge the praise
and the blame

See further than thine or mine.

But how fared *thy* garden plot, dear
heart,

Whilst thou sat on the judgment
seat ?

Who watered thy roses, and trained
thy vines,

And kept them from careless feet ?

Nay, that is the saddest of all to
me,

That is the saddest of all !

My vines are trailing, my roses are
parched,

My lilies droop and fall.

* * * *

Go back to thy garden plot, dear heart !
Go back till the evening falls.

And bind thy lilies, and train thy vines,
Till for thee the Master calls.

Go make thy garden fair as thou canst,
Thou workest never alone,

Perchance he whose plot is next to
thine

Will see it and mend his own.

And the next may copy his, dear heart,
Till all grows fair and sweet,

And when the Master comes at eve,
Happy faces His coming will greet.

Then shall thy joy be all complete
In the garden so fair to see.

In the Master’s words of praise to all,
In a look of His own to thee.

(Reprint.)

* * * *

*“ Let us therefore follow after the things
which make for peace, and things where-
with one may edify another.—Romans 14.*

“ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that HE loved us.” It was no wealth of love poured at the feet of the eternal One, nor passionate entreaties from myriad lips, which called forth responsive love from Him : nay, all unasked, unsought, and undeserved, HE loves, because HE is love.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES. No. 5.

EXODUS 13.

(R. McCALUM.)

BEFORE following the Israelites upon their journey to the other side of the Red Sea, let us notice briefly the instructions given to the people, as recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Exodus. From the hour of their deliverance, whatever their environment, the people were to offer the firstborn of all animals, except the ass, to the Lord. In answer to the inquiry, which this practice was bound to arouse on the part of the young, the parents were to answer, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix." The firstborn sons were redeemed from the death meted out to the firstborn among animals by the sacrifice of a lamb. Thus there was the constant commemoration from age to age of the merciful deliverance wrought by Jehovah, and thus was the child mind stimulated to inquire into the ways of God and opportunity afforded the parents to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let us not lose sight of the opportunities which in our day have graciously been preserved to us, of remembering our deliverance, and let us not despise the inquiries of the young into the meaning of the Christian commemoration.

The first halt was made at Rameses, and on breaking up camp there they journeyed eastward to Succoth, a distance of twelve or fifteen miles, and thence in the same direction to Etham. It seemed most natural that subsequent moves would bring them along a well-known route, said to have been often

followed by the Egyptians in their Eastern campaigns, into the south of Palestine; but Israel was to find that Jehovah Himself was their guide, and to their astonishment and dismay, doubtless, they were led southward to Pihahiroth. Yet was the disappointment fraught with mercy, for God foresaw that if opposed by the Philistines—at this time either subject to or allied with Egypt—they would fail in courage to advance. Moreover, Egypt was not even yet sufficiently humbled, and its army on which Pharaoh still placed great reliance was intact. God was about to be "honoured on Pharaoh and his host." This retrograde movement was reported to the king, who perceiving Israel to be confronted by the sea and "cribbed and confined," deemed that the gods had at last been propitious and that they were now delivered into his hands, and entirely at his mercy. Could a situation seem more hopeless? Flanked by mountains, the sea in front of them, the enemy behind, the men of Israel in no mood to fight but filled with consternation and despair, and terribly hampered by the presence of women and children, should they be forced to resist: without man-devised protection of any kind, destruction seemed imminent.

It is true that the pursuing host was not numerically very strong: some 600 chariots, each probably carrying two men, but this was the most formidable kind of force then known, and, moreover, it is quite likely that the charioteers formed an advance party and that infantrymen were more slowly bringing up the rear. In the hour of sore trial to their faith, the children of Israel forgot the living God and poured invective upon their leader. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye

not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord will fight for you and ye shall hold your peace. . . . Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

There were four stages in the salvation wrought for them by God. The cloud lifted from before Israel and settled in their rear, throwing a thick darkness over Egypt which made it unwise for them to approach Israel, but shedding welcome light upon Israel. With the stretching forth of Moses' rod the Lord then caused a vehement wind to blow, driving back the upper waters. "With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap; and the depths were congealed in the midst of the sea." The Psalmist describes in vivid language the nature of that night, "The waters saw thee O God, the waters saw thee; they were sore afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound, thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of Thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook." By the might of His great power God co-ordinated the elements, harnessing them to the chariot of His will, and using His own tools He clave for them a path through the waters. Then did the children of Israel go into the midst of the sea. There was no undue haste, no disorderliness, but "Thou leddest

Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Finally, we know the story well of how the Egyptians pursued, how God troubled them, how the wheels came off their chariots so that they drove heavily, how they determined to retreat realizing that the Lord fought against them; how Moses stretched forth his rod and the waters returned, and of the host of Pharaoh "there remained not so much as one of them." "And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

Well might they sing and ascribe praise to Jehovah. From beginning to end there is no mention of the part played by Moses. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea," was the burden of their song of victory. In their song they celebrated the completeness of the victory, they rejoiced in the ease with which it had been wrought for them and they anticipated the future work of God who would not only lead His people out but had guaranteed to bring them in and "plant them in the mountain of His inheritance." The day is nearing when upon the heavenly shore we shall review the triumphant work of Christ and realize how great and marvellous have the works of God been, but even here we are privileged to know these in measure and to sing the song of victory as we see every foe defeated and anticipate the day when we shall enter into the fulness of the blessing which is in store for us.

No human love is perfect; yet that love covers the very imperfections we would otherwise see, for love is blind! But in the coming day there will be no blindness; for all things are manifest before His all-searching eyes. Nevertheless, His piercing glance will see no flaw in those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Of that day, the Scripture says, "HE will rest in His love. HE will joy over thee with singing."

THE SEAT OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

WHERE is the seat of spiritual authority? This is a momentous question, and a more practical one than many Christians consider. As is well known, it has been one of the great burning questions of the Christian centuries over which there has been much controversy. But as we hope to show, so far from being a matter of past theological discussion that we to-day may safely ignore, it is of urgent practical moment to every Christian who desires to walk intelligently in the mind of God.

Is authority necessary? Surely, for it is one of the ruling principles of the universe. Without it there is no order, and "order is heaven's first law." Its necessity lies deep in the nature of things; and however much in exercise among men authority may have been abused—and few things have perhaps been more abused—it must be conceded that the *principle of authority* is of God. Without authority, moreover, there can be no certainty, and in spiritual things moral certainty is required if there is to be confidence, rest and power.

It is with *spiritual* authority that we are now particularly concerned, by which is meant the authority governing the relations of men, and of Christians especially, in regard to God and to spiritual things. Here it is evident that the authority must be—*ultimately* at any rate—that of God Himself, seeing He is the Creator, the Sustainer of being and life, and all created intelligences stand accountable to Him. The recognition of God's supreme authority and submission to it is a creature's first duty. It was the rejection of this that was the root cause of the "fall," and in that rejection is to be found the essence of sin. And it is in man's conscience, acquired through

the fall, that God seeks to establish His authority with His creature. Hence the universal necessity for repentance in which the individual soul *gives God His place in creaturely submission.*

As we survey the ways of God with men through the successive dispensations, we see that there has always been a point on earth at which God has provided for the maintenance of His authority in regard to man. In antediluvian times it was in *the conscience* alone illuminated by the primæval revelation. Later it was in *the law* with its holy demands upon and fearful terrors for the conscience. Then later still the point was found in *king and priest* whose combined duty it was to enforce and apply the law. When these had failed it was in a glorious line of *prophets* whose ministry was to call the people back to the claims of God's law, and bring home to their conscience their failure to keep it. Then, after the four hundred years of silence there came the Son of God as the climax of all that had gone before, and He brought *the authority of God in grace* here below. Both His words and works were with power (authority) (Matt. 7. 29; Mark i. 27, 2. 10). After three brief years of public ministry He was taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain. "But God raised Him from the dead!" And as the risen Christ He uttered these majestic words never uttered or utterable by human lips before: "*All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matt. 28. 18). "All power" means *all authority* (see N.T.). *True right must ever be behind true might!* His authority is *personal*—it is vested in Himself; it is *divine*—for it is His by the Father's gift; it is *supreme*—for "He is Lord of all (things)"; it is *universal*—

embracing in its scope and sweep all time and all worlds! It is *irrevocable*—for it is His until “He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power,” and having subdued all things unto Himself He—the Son—shall “also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him that God”—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—“may be all in all.” Meanwhile, as the ascended One, “He is the Head of all principality and power (authority)” ; and there where He is, yea *in Him*, is now found the *true seat of authority*.

All divine authority is vested in the exalted Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord in heavenly glory. This momentous fact is one governing the present period. *The seat of authority is moved from earth to heaven*, and all administration is centred there. The seat of authority is not then to be found in anything established on earth ; not in “the church”—how soon it failed! Not in apostles (though a delegated personal authority *was* peculiarly theirs as Christ’s representatives). Not in any established ecclesiastical order of apostolic days—for the perpetuation of these was not provided for. Still less can we look for it in the product of later days—in bishops, popes and cardinals—the less said of them the better. Not in councils, synods, conferences or conventions ; not in creeds, catechisms, or confessions ; not in dogmas or divines ; not in leaders or groups ; not in conscience or the “inner light,”—in none of these is to be found the authority we seek (though we may thank God for them in so far as they have what is of Himself). *It is only in a glorified Christ!*

Oh! how little has this fact been realized! How the church has been

from earliest days the prey of individuals and combinations claiming—may we not say *usurping*—Christ’s authority, while professing to represent Him! In days gone by, doubtless in accord with the temper of the times, it was more *autocratic* in character. Diotrophes appeared before the last apostle had passed away ; and he has had a numerous seed! Then we see its development in the Nicolaitanes—if the word helps us at all—“the conquest of the people.” Still more formidable was its growth in the Roman Church and the Papacy. And in “petty Romes” the evil can be just as bad. In more modern times the *democratic* element appears more evident and invades the life of the Christian community ; the authority (if such it can be called) of the majority ; the popular vote ; the “consensus of opinion” ; alliances, confederations, associations, unions, mass movements—these are the order of the day. In the church of God according to the Word of God, there is room, indeed necessity, for individual faith, conscience and responsibility, and for *Spiritual* leadership, but not for anything in the nature of autocracy or dictatorship. There is room, indeed necessity, for fellowship, unity and co-operation in the Spirit, but not for the spirit of democracy. For both autocracy and democracy are elements of the present world which passes away.* In different phases they both stand for the will of man, and neither gives place to God’s seat of authority. Both are alien principles in the Church of God.

But how, it may be asked, seeing that Christ is unseen, can His admitted supreme and exclusive authority

* No doubt, autocracy viewed abstractly, is God’s ideal principle of government in the world for He always had in view Christ whose kingdom will be of that character. But in human hands it is simply a worldly principle ; and it has no proper place in the church of God.

become realized practically here to-day on earth? How can it become available to us here and now with the urgent needs, difficulties, dangers, divergencies, and confusions of our time? It is true; but is it not tantalizingly mystical and impracticable? These questions are just and pertinent.

We, therefore, proceed to show that though He the Sovereign Lord and Head is in heaven, here on earth He has left these three: His *Name*, His *Spirit*, and His *Word* (John 14. 16). All He is—His glorious authority and power included—is found in these representatively; and they are available for His church, His own, to-day as ever! Authority *in this sense* is here, but it is in these as representing Christ. And they accredit us (if they do), not we them! It follows that *His church, individual assemblies, saints or servants, only possess and can only use His authority in the measure in which they submit to it themselves, and in which by faith they are in accord with His Name, His Spirit, and His Word. It is a moral matter.*

To sum up then at this point, *objectively*, the seat of authority is in heaven in the person of the Christ of God; *subjectively and practically* it is here in *His Name, His Spirit and His Word*.

But, it may be asked, does this bring us any nearer the practical solution of our difficulties? It does; for though these things are unseen, they are spiritual *realities*, and *they are available to faith*. Have any expected that there could be an authority apart from faith? Have any expected a kind of spiritual directory, of guidance, a "Urim and Thummim," a court of clear and final appeal? Then they must wait till the judgment seat and the kingdom. To-day, it is "God's dispensation which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1. 4, N.T.). Divine

things are moral not material. Apart from the exercise of faith what have we practically? With faith what have we not?

Let us then suppose a concrete case; a difficulty, an emergency, some division of judgment; or, say, some assault of Satan—in short a situation in church life, or in the path of service which demands a knowledge, wisdom and power that we feel or that we discover we have not. What is to be done?

First, let those concerned come together "*gathered to His Name*," in the faith of His promised presence (Matt. 18. 20). What does this mean? His "*name*" in accordance with the consistent idiom of Scripture stands for all the qualities of the Person. It therefore *implies the full truth as to His Person*. Those who gather to His Name gather to *the full truth as to His Person* as revealed to us in the Word of God. The truth has become their rallying point. He is the Son in the eternal Deity. He became Man for our redemption. He was complete and holy in His manhood. He was made a sacrifice for sin, and has glorified God by His death and blood shedding. He has been raised from the dead and is crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand, and is coming again to be the Judge of quick and dead. All this is involved in His Name, and to deny any of these great verities is to deny His Name.

Further, His Name *unfolds His character* and demands consistence with that character on the part of those who gather to it. This is the great lesson of Matthew 18.

It also *suggests representation*; it supposes that He personally is absent. Being "*gathered to His Name*" has with some become a kind of technical

expression of profession, a "ground" they claim; whereas, as will be seen, it is a deep moral reality. It is not something we lightly *claim* to be doing but something we earnestly *covet* may mark us. Those who truly gather to His Name rally to the truth; they will in some degree manifest His character; and they will have some realization of representing Him (like the Royal Commission acting on behalf of the King) and of being identified with His Person and interests.

Then connected with the gathering to His Name, there is "asking" in that Name. Here again the same principles apply. "To pray in Christ's Name cannot possibly mean simply appearing before God with faith in the mediation of the Saviour . . . it is to be identified . . . with Christ in our desires by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. To pray in the Spirit, to pray according to the will of the Father, to pray in Christ's Name are identical expressions." "Our power in using that Name whether with God or men or devils depends on the measure of our spiritual life union . . . to ask in the Name is to ask in full union of interest and life and love with Himself as (those) who live in and for Him." These are the conditions; but let also the precious promises in connection with that Name be pondered and given thanks for and relied upon (see John 14. 13, 14; 15. 16; 16. 23, 24). If that Name be truly invoked there will be *the Presence* in which alone things are seen in true light and through which there can be power to be or do or wait or suffer.

Then with the Name there is *the Spirit*, the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ, His personal representative here, and the living link between the saints and Christ, and the bond between saints and each other. *He is the Spirit of the glorified Man (the*

Son of God) to whom the plenitude of authority has been committed. There is nothing in Christ there, whether personal or acquired, which is not in the Spirit here. And the Spirit indwells us as saints of God! Let all that grieves and quenches Him be confessed and removed—let there be a willingness to wait upon God unhurriedly for this—and what a demonstration of the Spirit might there not be!

But all this—precious beyond words as it is—might be mere mysticism and will tend to become such—apart from *the Word*—Christ's Word, as that Word apart from the Spirit and the Name will be to say the least limited in operation. His Word is the Holy Scriptures, and *all* of them (2 Tim. 2. 16, 17), only now taking character as *His word* (John 8. 31; Col. 3. 16; Rev. 3. 8). Let that Word be duly honoured by believing that not only is it indispensable but *sufficient*. Let it be expected, as Penn said, that "God hath much yet to bring forth to us from His holy Word." Let it be believed that it is the vehicle of *His living voice to us*. In a word, let there be the grace to read it (or hear it); the willingness to obey it; the faith to trust it. Granted these things, will not the *authority speak, the light be given, the power required be manifested*, in God's own way?

Is it all too difficult? Where are we promised that Christianity will be easy? Do we want an *easy* faith—then we shall not lack it! Does anything *count* that does not *cost*? Can it be supposed that God will delegate authority, or bestow power apart from moral conditions? That would be to set aside the *moral character of Christianity*.

It remains to add that *the Seat of authority*—Christ as Lord and Head—stands in relation to all His people—to

the whole body (Ephes. 1. 22 ; 4. 16) not to a part only. *No one part can claim Him in an exclusive sense.* The principles and resources here outlined are dependent upon this truth. It may not be possible in this day of brokenness to get the body of Christ even in one locality together. Whether it be "an assembly of Christ," or "two or three" saints, or even an individual saint, the invoking of these things must be in the unity of the Spirit to be truly valid. We must never limit His unutterable *mercy*, but we may at the same time rest assured that divine authority and power will not be available to justify or to further *independent* ends—for independence denies the "Head"; nor *sectarian* or party ends—for sectarianism denies the "body." The motives and interests concerned must be according to His will and Word.

In conclusion, it may be asked, does not a glorious vista of possibilities rise before us by these considerations? Is it not along this way that true wisdom,

truth, faith, healing, love, unity and power are to be found, which alike our vocation demands, our condition needs, and our hearts desire? Oh! how little have we *represented Him!* Is not here, too, to be found the remedy, on the one hand for the individualism that limits so greatly the effective blessing and power of God through His people, and the true preservative on the other, from all sorts of human combinations which may so easily menace their true character and calling, life and witness?

Oh! that we might know afresh in this our day the power of the baptism of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12. 13) so that our separate wills and individualities being as it were submerged (cp. Acts 1. 14 ; 2. 1 ; 2. 46 ; 4. 24 ; 1 Cor. 12. 13 ; Ephes. 4. 3 ; Phil. 1. 27 ; 2. 2 ; Col. 3. 15), His authority may be our one rule, His Name, His Spirit and His Word our one realized resource, and His glory in the fulfilment of God's great plan our one united object! Amen.

WHEN HE SAW THEIR FAITH.

"*And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.*"—Mark 2. 3.

THOSE four men were not among the twelve, but they had great confidence in the compassion and power of the Lord. They were not at the meeting in the house where the Lord was teaching, but they were acting in accord with His heart, nevertheless, when they went forth to find the palsied man, and they were showing their love to their needy brother by getting him, in spite of all obstacles, to the feet of the Blessor. It is more than likely that the disciples were displeased at the disturbance: the conduct of these men was so contrary to all their notions of order. They had never attempted anything of this sort,

and so how could it be right? Ah, but these men whose faith no difficulty could baffle, had confidence in the Saviour and love for the sinner. "*And when He saw their faith*" the blessing poured forth in a living stream from the heart of the delighted Lord. Oh! that we had a greater confidence in Him, and a deeper knowledge of His heart, and more love for the souls of men, it would deliver us from our formality and deadness. These are our lack—we need to confess it upon bended knees, and pray for a reawakening of those desires that cannot be satisfied unless needy men are brought to the Saviour.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Difference between Isaiah 53. 7 and Acts 8. 32.

Please explain why the quotation in Acts 8. 32, 33 from Isa. 53. is not exact.—MONTROSE.

THE Eunuch was reading from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. This version, which was a translation from the original Hebrew into Greek, was chiefly in use at the time, and the words given in Acts 8.

are an exact quotation from it. It was not a perfect translation, but, being the Bible of the common people, it is the one that is usually quoted in the New Testament.

Who are the great multitude that no man can number in Revelation 7. 9-17 ?

Will you please give a little light on Revelation 7. 9-17 ? I heard it said lately in a sermon that it referred to the redeemed saints, the church in heaven. I thought the church would not go through the tribulation.—MORRISTON.

THIS multitude that no man can number are not the church. The church will be in heaven when this company comes into view. The fact that they have come out of the great tribulation is enough to prove that. "It is literally, the tribulation, the great one, as impressing upon us to make no mistake."—F. W. Grant. The church will be in heaven before that hour of trial comes. Again, they serve God night and day in His temple (verse 15). Revelation 21. 22 tells us that in the heavenly city there is no temple, so that they are not in heaven, and are not the church which that heavenly city is. But there will be a temple on earth, and it is in that temple they will stand. Again, there would be no force in the statement, "neither shall the sun light on them" if they were the church in heaven, for in the heavenly city the sun does not appear at all, there is no need for it. Chap. 22. 5.

They are a Gentile company on earth gathered out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and they are to be

blessed on earth along with the sealed out of the tribes of Israel. It has been said, and we fully agree with it, that they correspond to those who shall stand before the throne of the Son of Man, Matt. 25. 31-46, and shall be welcomed by Him into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, or earth. Theirs will be an earthly portion, they are a company which enter into eternal life on earth after having suffered for the sake of the Lamb during the reign of the Beast. The way the Lord addresses the righteous (the sheep) in Matt. 25 shows that they had made their garments white in the blood of the Lamb, the garments set forth the character and works, and the works and character of these will evidently flow from their love and faithfulness to the Lord. Regarding their special blessings: The reference is to Isaiah 49. 10; and 25. 8, and possibly 4. 5, 6. It may be said that these passages in Isaiah refer to Israel, and that is true, but the righteous in Matthew 25., and this countless company in Revelation 7. share, though Gentiles, in Israel's blessing, as many Old Testament Scriptures predict.

Eating and drinking in the Kingdom of God.

Help would be appreciated on Luke 22. 16-18, and 29, 30. What did the Lord mean by not eating and drinking again until the Kingdom of God shall come?

THE Lord seems to emphasize *this* passover. It was a very special one, the last of the long series that not only looked back to the deliverance from Egypt, but onward to Himself as the Lamb who was to be slain for His people. His heart was full of love for them and with desire He had desired to eat *this* passover with them before He suffered, to have them in Communion with Himself about it all, for that is what the eating indicated. Did they enter into it with Him? We fear but feebly, if at all. At this feast He was closing up the old order of types and shadows which He had ordained for them through Moses, and of which He was the substance, and opening up a new order with a new feast for His church—the Lord's Supper, the memorial of His death for us.

The day had not come for the fulfilment of all that the passover meant in the way of deliverance for Israel, and the blessing that God in His great love to them had purposed for them, the church period with its heavenly blessing was to intervene, but it shall be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God, when that Kingdom is established publicly and in power on the earth. Then the passover will be taken up again (Ezek. 45. 21) and He will eat again, not as anticipating suffering, but as looking back upon it, and as celebrating their redemption to God and deliverance from all their foes by the blood and power of the Lamb.

There is no mention of the cups in the God-given instructions as to the passover, and when they were introduced we do not know. They would be a symbol of joy, for "wine maketh glad the heart of man" (Psalm 104. 15), and of it the Lord would not partake. He would eat the passover with them, but as the true Nazarite, separated to God He would not taste the wine (Numbers 6.). How could He find any gladness in that old order of things that lay under God's judgment, because of the guilt of it there was nothing but suffering for Him in connection with it, but when the Kingdom of God shall come, and when all shall know the Lord, and when everything shall be holiness unto the Lord, even the bells on the necks of the horses (Zech. 14. 20), there will be no need any further for the Nazarite—the days of His separation will be completed, and His vow to accomplish the will of God fulfilled; then He will drink. He will know in its fulness the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the cross and despised the shame. (Hebrews 12. 1.)

Verses 28-30 point out the place of honour that the disciples—the twelve—will have in His Kingdom. They will eat and drink at His table, they will share His joy, and be specially associated with Him in His glory, as they had been associated with Him in the days of His sorrow. It will be the public recognition of them before all Israel.

"**W**ITHHOLD not the gospel from souls needing bread,
For giving is living," the bright Angel said.

"But must I be giving again and again;

And empty my storehouse for ungrateful men?"

"Oh, no," said the Angel, whose glance pierced me through,

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

WHY THE LORD WAS CONDEMNED. (J. T. MAWSON.)

IT is deeply interesting to see that all the endeavours to convict the Lord as worthy of death on the evidence of the false witnesses failed. It was for the truth that He died. This, and the inveterate hatred of the truth on the part of the leaders of Jews particularly, had to be clearly demonstrated. "We have a law," say they, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself THE SON OF GOD" (John 19. 7). It was on His own confession as to this that they condemned Him. What a moving scene that must have been in the high priest's palace. False witness after false witness was called in order to find some ground for His death, and He answered never a word. He was not there to answer false charges or vindicate His own character, but for the truth. Then the high priest, seeing the futility of the proceedings, rose up from his seat in his excitement and charged Him in the name of the living God to tell them whether He was the Christ, the Son of God. To that charge the Lord had one answer, whatever the consequences He must bear witness to the truth. In his frenzy the high priest rent his clothes, by which act he destroyed his priesthood, and pronounced the Lord guilty of blasphemy. And they all answered, "He is guilty of death." Their verdict recalls the command in Deut. 21. 22: "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God)." From that time onward they were determined that He should be hanged on a tree, the object not only of their accusations but, as they hoped, accursed of God.

But this confession that He was the

Son of God on the part of the Lord was nothing to the Roman judge; he must have something more than that if he was to condemn him also. Hence the charge that He made Himself a king. When Pilate asked Him as to this He confessed the truth again. For this cause He had come into the world. Hence the accusation that Pilate wrote and placed over His head on the cross was not, This is the Son of God, but "*This is Jesus, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*"

He was crucified, then, because He confessed He was the Son of God and a King. As Son of God He is the One who brought the *revelation of God* into the world, as the King He is the One who is to establish and maintain *the rights of God* in the world. The former is LOVE, the latter is RIGHTEOUSNESS. But neither the love of God nor the righteousness of God could be tolerated when they were set forth in all their perfection in Jesus. The love was spurned and the righteousness flouted. Cæsar, the Roman tyrant, was preferable to God, revealed in Jesus, and so they crucified Him.

We may bless God that we know our Lord, both as the Son of God and the King of Israel, and that He is yet so to be owned by the nation that rejected Him, when they shall see Him, the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. And before the day of His public glory, we may rejoice that we have been brought into His assembly, where He is known as the Son of God, the Revealer of the Father's name and heart, and the Lord, who establishes and maintains the rights of God even now. For in the midst of His brethren to whom He has declared the Father's Name, He sings praises to God, and so God is glorified. (Heb. 2.)

OUR RESOURCE AND STRENGTH. (GEORGE HEPBURN.)

Scripture read Nehemiah 9. 6-21.

This and the two following Addresses were given at meetings for the ministry of the Word in Glasgow, January 2, 1929.

THAT this is a day of failure needs not to be emphasized. It is only too evident. It matters not where we turn in Christendom, failure and confusion confront us, and to close our eyes to the fact is simply to be living in a fool's paradise. But we must not allow the failure to discourage us. To ignore it is folly; to be taken up with it is to go under. What I want to do, the Lord helping me, is to point out the way of deliverance and encouragement in the midst of it.

When Paul made his valedictory address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he told them that after his departure, referring, I take it to his departing to be with Christ, there would come in among them grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, and further that from among themselves men would rise up speaking perverted things in order to draw away the disciples after themselves. In view of this dark outlook, he said, I commend you to **GOD, AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE**, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among the sanctified. Paul's prophetic words have been fulfilled, but God Himself is our resource and the word of His grace our guide, and it alone is able to build up our souls in the things of God and so give us an inheritance among the sanctified. Then, writing to Timothy, he warns him that in the last days difficult times would come, times in which men would be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure and not lovers of God, and the instructions are clear and emphatic: "From such turn away." Again he said, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . they

shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables." This time has surely come and things will not get better, "for evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." But he says, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." In a sense Timothy had learned them from Paul, he had been the minister of them to him, but the context seems to show that what is meant is that he had learned them from God, and, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Salvation for the people of God, salvation in relation to the difficulties aforementioned, "For all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." God and the Scriptures are our resource, and more we do not need.

Nor is Paul the only one who wrote thus. All the writers of the epistles, except perhaps James, have warned us what to expect in the last days, and there is great comfort in this, for not only did our God foresee the evil, but He has made provision for it and given guidance with regard to it. John speaks of the seducing anti-Christian spirit that would mark the last time, but he says, "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you, ye shall continue in the Father and the Son. And this is the promise that He has promised us, eternal life." What could be better than that? Peter also,

after warning us in his second letter to expect a dreadful state of things, adds, "But ye, beloved, seeing ye know these things, beware lest ye fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace" (God's grace), "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Jude's way of meeting the same condition of things is to dwell in the warm atmosphere of the love of God, His word and prayer being the means for this. "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ," His crowning act of mercy, when He will come and take us out of this world of confusion altogether, to be with Himself for ever, and that will be eternal life in all its fulness and power.

But to return to Paul's words to Timothy, it is evident that the Scriptures he refers to are the Old Testament Scriptures, and so I want to illustrate from this Old Testament Book of Nehemiah how things work out. There is a certain analogy between his day and our own. There had been a wonderful revival and recovery among the people of God following their failure and the captivity that followed, but fresh failure had come in. The first chapter opens with Nehemiah a weeping, mourning, brokenhearted man because of the condition of things at Jerusalem and among his brethren, and what does he do? He makes God his resource: he turns to God with prayer and fasting, and he confesses not only the sins of Israel but also his own personal share in the sin and failure. That is the place to start, dear brethren. There is truly enough in the evils of these last days to break our hearts, but let us acknowledge our own share in it all and let us turn to God and find the resource and strength of our souls in Himself.

In the 8th chapter the people gather together and ask for the word of God, the Book of the law of Moses—and Ezra read from it from morning until mid-day to all that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. That book had been neglected, but what a wonderful change was this, and so great was the blessing as they understood the words that we read, "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, and bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord." Then said Nehemiah to the people, "Mourn not, nor weep; go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is provided. Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength," and by the time we reach the end of the chapter we read that there was very great gladness. What had effected this change? It is very simple. They had made the blessed God Himself their resource; they had daily reading of His Word and they reduced its precepts to practice and the mourning gave place to rejoicing and their fasting to feasting. There was mirth and merriment within and those without were not forgotten, and if we do as they did the result with us will be the same.

The great secret underlying this joy and strength was they had found that God was faithful, and that brings us to the passage which we read together. "Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made the heaven, the heaven of heavens, the earth, and all that is therein, the sea and all in it. Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee." God is a faithful creator, maker and preserver of the universe and all in it. "Thou art the Lord, the God that didst choose Abram and broughtest him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and

foundest his heart faithful before Thee and made a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanites . . . to give it to his seed, and hast performed Thy word, for Thou art righteous, a faithful, covenant-keeping God." What God has purposed He has promised and what He has promised He will most assuredly perform. Is not that grand, brethren? Of course it is. But listen to what follows. The passage of the children of Israel through the desert has often been used as an illustration of ours through the world, and it is in that way I speak of it now. "Thou didst see the afflictions of our fathers in Egypt and didst hear their cry, and Thou didst divide the sea before them so that they passed over on dry land and their persecutors Thou threwest into the waters as a stone into the mighty deep." Oh! the might of our God, whether for the deliverance and salvation of his people or the destruction of His enemies and ours. "Moreover Thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way they should go. Thou didst speak with them from heaven, gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and water from the rock for their thirst, and didst promise them that they should possess the land that Thou hadst sworn to give them. But our fathers dealt proudly and hardened their necks, and refused to obey, and forgot thy wonders, and appointed them a captain to return to their bondage. But Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf and said—These be thy gods that brought thee out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations, yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud departed

not from them by day, neither the pillar of fire by night. Thou gavest also Thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gave them water for their thirst." I love these verses. Not only is God a faithful Creator and a faithful, covenant-keeping God to those whose hearts are faithful as Abram's was, but He is faithful mid all the failure and faithlessness of His people. When we get dull—and who does not at times?—we are apt to think that things are not as they were, and think and speak of the good days that are past, the days when we first knew the Lord, or it may be the Pentecostal days, but Scripture warns us against that very thing. "Say not thou—What is the cause that the former days were better than these?—thou enquirest not wisely concerning this." I put it to you, beloved brethren, as I do to my own heart frequently, Is not God as good as ever He was? Has the Lord Jesus Christ changed? Has He? Is there not still the same fulness and sufficiency in Him? Think of His love! He has been through flood and fire for us, and the love that has stood firm under all the floods and the fires of death and the wrath of Almighty God against sin is not likely to fail under any other test that can possibly be applied to it, and in Christ we have found this love and our hearts rest in it. Then listen to His voice as it rings out clear and firm mid all the confusion to-day, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger." He is the manna for our mouths. "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." He is the fountain of water for our thirst. "I am the light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." He is our guiding pillar. He is our rock, our food, our light, and He is the same

tender, sympathetic, compassionate, approachable Saviour that He was when down here as portrayed in these four wonderful Gospels. What a story it is, and bless His holy name, He changes not, He is the same. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever." Then is the Holy Spirit not still with us? Is He not the Comforter who has taken complete charge of us and is as competent as ever to take of the great things of our God and make them known to us, or is He less anxious to take of the things of Christ and show them to us and thus glorify Him? To ask these questions is to answer them, and finally, the Word of God is just the same as ever it was. All the rich provision that God gave to his people at the start of

their journey from Egypt to Canaan remained with them unto the end of that journey. "Yea, forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing. Their garments waxed not old and their feet swelled not." And all that God gave to His church at Pentecost that is vital to its well-being will remain, despite all the failure, all the sin, be the days many or few, until we see His blessed face and with Him enter with triumph our own promised land, which in our case is the Father's house on high.

May the Lord bless these few remarks and make us a triumphant, worshipping people such as we find in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, for His Name's sake.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

(R. McCALLUM.)

Read Genesis, chapter 32., verses 24 to 31.

"	"	47	"	8 to 10 and verse 31.
"	"	48	"	11 to end.

THERE has been brought very prominently before us this afternoon the faithfulness of God and the wisdom of complete trust in Him, and I want to emphasize these facts by referring to incidents in the life of Jacob.

Jacob is not altogether the ideal character to present to men, young or old, on the threshold of a new year. One thing, however, distinguished him throughout his life, even at the times when his failures are most conspicuous, he valued the blessing of God. In this may we emulate him!

A new danger faced Jacob. He had already succeeded in evading the murderous intent of Esau's heart by fleeing to Padan-aram, where he had passed through divine discipline at the home of his uncle, Laban. But the

God of Bethel had called him to arise and to return to the land of his kindred. That call was guarantee enough of his protection on the way—a protection that was made evident to Jacob in the words of Laban when he pursued and overtook him, "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your father spake unto me yesterday, saying, 'Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad.'" On leaving Laban, God reassured him of His power to protect by giving him a vision of the angelic hosts of Mahanain. Nor did Jacob fail to recognize them, for he said, "This is God's host." In spite of God's assurances, however, he took the precaution of sending out messengers to gather information concerning Esau's attitude to him now. To his chagrin, word was brought back that Esau came to meet

him with 400 men. "Then Jacob was greatly afraid," and betook himself to prayer. How earnestly he prayed, "Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children!" And as he prayed he pleaded the promises of God, "O God . . . which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, . . . and I will deal well with thee" (verse 9), "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Here he was on safe ground, for, as we have been reminded, "God is faithful." Here he should have found repose: by these, his fears should have been allayed. But how like ourselves is Jacob! He bows before God when confronted by danger and rises from his knees to scheme instead of to trust. He straightway forgets his expressions of dependence upon God, and depends upon his own ingenuity to avert disaster. Have you never done that, dear brother? And so he divided all that he had into parties and sent all across the brook Jabbok. As each party came upon Esau with his men, they were to impress and appease him with a gift and the message, "A present from thy *servant* Jacob to my *lord* Esau."

Night approached, and Jacob remained alone, alone to plan and to worry, sure sign of lack of trust in God. This was the memorable night on which a stranger appeared and wrestled with him. We have often heard this incident referred to as if it set forth Jacob wrestling in prayer, but to interpret it thus is to misunderstand its import completely. The stranger—doubtless the Son of God in one of His mysterious pre-incarnation manifestations—wrestled with Jacob. He wrestled to teach him to forgo his self-dependence and to depend entirely upon God. If we would but show the

pertinacity in refusing evil that we display in resisting the will of God, how different would our lives be! Hour after hour passed, and still Jacob resisted, until as daylight broke the finger of God was laid upon him: for the stranger touched him upon the hollow of his thigh. That upon which he depended most for power to wrestle was put out of joint, so that instead of resisting Jacob was brought into abject submission to and dependence upon the One to whom he now clung. "And he blessed him there." Again, I say, how like Jacob we are. We resist the ways of God which Omniscience has planned for our greatest good. We kick against the goads with a persistence that bespeaks our wilfulness and our folly until at last God has to lay His hand upon us in His governmental dealings and remove that upon which our self-confidence depended. Yet if we are submissive to Him, if His dealings are accompanied by exercise of soul on our part, it will be found that when our impotence was most manifested we found Him to be our strength and our resting place. "No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

Now notice, "Jacob called the name of the place 'Peniel,' for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." While he trusted in his own devices, the constant fear of failure was upon him, and he dreaded the advent of his brother Esau, lest he should smite him. But now, halting upon his thigh and wholly unfit to meet Esau in his own strength, he is confident that his life is preserved. And Peniel, where he saw God face to face, is the place where his whole nature is transfigured. "Thy name shall be no more Jacob but Israel, for

as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Let us heed the exhortation of Romans 12: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed (transfigured) by the renewing of your mind." We do not transfigure ourselves. The change is wrought upon us. You will notice how the passive voice is used, "Be ye transfigured," and if you ask how such a change has to be effected, the answer is get to Peniel, behold the face of God. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." Occupation with Christ and subjection to His will, alone can transform us. The transformation cannot be accomplished by seizing upon our vices one by one and seeking to slay them. Life is too short to extirpate them thus. It cannot be by seeking to copy the virtues, although this may be deemed a nobler way. How often have we seen men pursuing a virtue and only succeeding in developing a new vice. Take for example humility. How often has it been construed as self-depreciation, and the man who is for ever proclaiming his humility, his nothingness, his unworthiness, has only succeeded in fostering a new conceit and in making himself a wretched bore. No, not by mimicry will the most desirable change from Supplanter to Prince take place, but by beholding the glory of God in the face of Christ we shall be transformed by being conformed to His image. And Peniel is the place of power—Power with men because of power with God. Power with men because strengthened by God. Power made

perfect in weakness, when we have learned the sufficiency of His grace. Are these the things that we desire, brethren? Then let us remember they can only be attained as we "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," and instead of resisting His ways, find our rest in them. And now notice, "As he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him." We have just sung together—

"Rise my soul, thy God directs thee,
Stranger hands no more impede;
Pass thou on, His hand protects thee,
Strength that has the captive freed.

"Light divine surrounds thy going,
God Himself shall mark the way,
Secret blessings richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day."

May we know the rising of the sun and the blessing of light divine upon our path.

Yet Jacob showed himself to be Jacob still, and in the passage we read in chapter 47., we see him in Egypt with the scars of his pilgrim path upon him. As he stands before the greatest of earthly monarchs, he says, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of my life been." One hundred and thirty years—few and evil were the days. Few doubtless as compared with the life of his fathers, few and evil because of the failure and lack of faith that had marked them. Have you ever pictured him as he stood there? Poor Jacob! Was ever a life more fraught with sorrow? Severed from the home he loved so well, as the result of his own and his mother's schemes, after tricking his brother and deceiving his father. Deceived himself by Laban: serving him twenty years: consumed by drought by day and by frost by night: pursued by his uncle: confronted by Esau: disgraced by Dinah: made to stink among the inhabitants of Canaan by the bloody act of Simeon and Levi:

suffering the loss of Rachel: deprived of Joseph: humiliated by the sin of Judah—did ever man pass through greater trial? Judged by human standards, had he not pursued a "will o' the wisp"? He had obtained the birthright, he had inherited shame and grief. Esau had lost the birthright, his path had been marked by ease, plenty and comfort. But here he stands and he blessed Pharaoh. And remember the less is blessed of the greater. With all his scars he has a power and an influence for good that Esau never had, and Pharaoh realized it as he received his blessing. Let me suggest just here that the length of our life is not measured merely by the number of summers and winters that we have experienced, but the measure of it is the blessing experienced in it, and passed on to others—not years but God-glorifying service.

You would notice that in the last verse of chapter 47. and in the verses read in chapter 48. he is spoken of by the name of Israel. How different the scene! The time of his death has drawn near, and in extreme weakness, "Israel bowed himself upon the bedstead," or as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "He worshipped, bowing upon his staff." He bowed himself, at any rate, in the act of worship. Is not this a glorious sunset to his life? And then we see that everything else takes

character from this act. Instead of being occupied with the failure of his life, he speaks to Joseph and his two sons of the faithfulness of God. Our brother Mr. Hepburn asked, "Is not God as good as His Word?" Israel can affirm that he realized at the end of the pilgrimage that He is better than all he had conceived. "I had not thought to see thy face, and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed." In New Testament language, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." "And he blessed Joseph," and as he reviewed the past he spoke of it with gratitude, as he regards the present he speaks of the faithfulness of God, as he looks upon the young he speaks in tones of love and invokes the blessing of God upon them, and as he anticipates the future he is filled with bright hope, "Behold I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." May a young brother venture a word of exhortation to those who are old? Speak of the faithfulness of God rather than of the failures of men or your own failures before the young, be marked by faith and love and hope supreme as you wait with joy the consummation of our desires—to be perfectly conformed to His image when even this body of humiliation shall have been changed and "fashioned like unto His body of glory."

God's love is unquenchable.

Poor fickle, transient, human love! How quickly spent; how easily turned aside; how mixed its character! E'en mother love, strongest of all earthly ties, may fail; yet saith the Lord, "I will not forget thee." A thousand occasions of neglect, and ten thousand cruel wrongs, can never quench the ardour of His love: He only whispers in our ears, "Return unto ME . . . and I will love you freely," and, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

FINAL TRIUMPH.

(ROBERT WHYTE.)

“GOD IS FAITHFUL”

(I Cor. I. 9.)

MANY problems confronted the church at Corinth, and at their request apparently the apostle wrote to give them guidance; but how inspiring before questions are dealt with to be reminded of the fact that “God is faithful.” Not a problem can arise but He has the solution, not a question but He has the answer, not a difficulty to overcome but He has the power, not a sorrow but He has the comfort. Every step for every saint fully taken account of and full provision made by God for every emergency. God is faithful, He will not fail. What an anchor this must have been to those harassed Christians in the first century; what an anchor it is for us in the present day. A fellowship has been formed by God to which we are called, and in connection therewith whatever betide there can be but one ending. God, who is faithful, shall certainly be victorious, and so while circumstances are otherwise sufficient to depress, yet in this strong confidence of the faithfulness of God, one can march with a tread of triumph. The One for whom God is doing all, is so worthy, that no final breakdown can occur, and it behoves us in the knowledge of this to seek to act in the line of the Holy Spirit’s activities, so that in all our ways and in all our associations we may ever remember the high privilege thus conferred upon us of having part in this fellowship.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD
STANDETH SURE.

(2 Timothy 2. 19.)

The days referred to in this epistle are days of difficulty, but still if this be so there is no excuse for failure, but

we may prove the power of God that is able to maintain us for His glory. Against the dark background of the faithlessness of saints and servants, there is presented the path which is according to the mind of God. There are those who overthrow the faith of some, but the words of our headline are ever true. Even when one reads such an epistle as this, and the other second epistles of the New Testament where failure is spoken of, comfort can be found in the knowledge that the same One, who could thus tell beforehand of times of darkness and indifference, is competent to make the path plain and provide the light amid the increasing gloom. In the knowledge that what is of God stands firm, it well becomes us to seek to act in keeping with what is the mind of God. If others tread a path that is unseemly, let those who value the truth of God walk carefully and prayerfully in separation from iniquity, studying to be approved by God, and to be vessels meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work.

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME
YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR
EVER (Heb. 13. 8.)

God is faithful, His foundation stands sure, and Jesus Christ is the same. A wilderness journey is the path of believers, but a wilderness provision is made by the God of the believer. How blessed to know that where everything and everyone changes there is One who is the same. *Yesterday* he was here Himself treading the wilderness, tempted and tried, feeling the pressure as He went along. Moving out and in amongst homes of need and coming in contact with all the ills and heartaches of men and women. Sitting wearied on a well,

lying sleeping in the storm, and mingling His tears with those who wept. He knows what sorest trials mean, for he has felt the same. *Yesterday* there was the journey through Gethsemane and on to Calvary. *To-day* He is the living Man in the glory, our great High Priest, fully acquainted with all His people's needs, and able to carry them through in triumph, for He who was in the pathway is now on the throne. He who died for me yesterday lives for me to-day. He is just as really interested in His people to-day, as He was in any individual with whom he came in touch when He was here. Leaders pass away and their remembrance is held precious by those who owed so much to them, but brother, sister, hang not your head, the princely Leader lives, and is bringing many sons to glory.

The One who lived and died and lives again abides for all eternity. His love has been evidence here. His care is evidenced there, and then He takes us to be for ever with Him. The One who lived and died, and lives again for us, soon comes again that He may ever have us for His heart's content throughout eternal days. How precious we must be to Him. How dearly He has bought us. How carefully He guards His treasure. How joyfully He will claim us.

So we fill our day. Difficulties abound. The love of many waxes cold, men deny the Lord that bought them, but still we seek the grace to press on, knowing that

God is faithful.

The Foundation of God standeth sure.

Jesus Christ is the same.

THE BLESSING OF TEARS.

NOT yet is God wiping away all tears from the eyes of His children, but He is certainly turning them into blessings. You will see further through your tears than you ever saw through your smiles. God does not forbid laughter, often He makes us to exult with holy joy; but sorrow and a riven heart will bring you nearer to God than ever you will come in your lighter hours. How wonderfully clear many an obscure passage in the Bible has become to us when we were bowed down with grief,

and how near Jesus seems to be when we weep. He knows what tears are, for "Jesus wept." The eyes that John saw as a flame of fire in the Revelation, Mary at the grave of Lazarus saw as a fountain of water. Yes, tears are a blessing when we look up through them to Jesus our great High Priest, who is touched by our sorrows, and pours out His sympathy, and ministers His succour, so that we know Him better, and to know Him is the chiefest thing in time or eternity.

GOD'S WORD.

GOD'S Word was not given to us to be a mass of theories and principles, but to give to us the knowledge of His will.

God's Word to us is not to gratify our curiosity regarding Himself, but to be a guide and light to our feet that

we may return from our wanderings and find our home and hope in Himself.

God's Word is ours not merely that we may know but that we may do, its sole purpose is not that we may be wise but that we might be like the One whose Word it is, good and doing good.

“THE SEED.”

(H. J. VINE,)

“Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David raised from the dead according to my gospel.”—2 Timothy 2. 8.

“JESUS CHRIST, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” It is thus that our Lord is introduced to us in the first verse of the New Testament, but this was after God had made great promises of royal blessing and glory in the Old Testament. These could only be righteously secured in Jesus Christ, but He must be of the *royal* seed and of the royal line legally, and both these are found in Him.

The “ONE KING” who is soon to reign over Israel and over all the earth is clearly marked out to be the Lord, “JEHOVAH”; but it is equally clear that He is the Messiah, the Christ, “THE SEED OF DAVID” (John 1. 41; 7. 42). The line of *divine* kingship is traced in Ps. 2. 7 and 45. 6, and other Scriptures, while that of *David* is found in Matt. 1. 1, and many other verses; but the “*Seed Royal*” came in the chosen line of Luke 3. 23–38, and the rights were secured through sacrifice, blood-shedding and death, while it is in resurrection Christ upholds all for glory and blessing; so Timothy is told to remember “Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David” (2 Tim. 2. 8). This wonderful King is designated as God, as Jehovah (Zec. 14. 9), and as Son of David. The Holy Spirit thus glorifies Him in the inspired Writings.

When the apostle of the Gentiles speaks of God’s gospel (which is being preached before the King reigns publicly), he connects it with Christ as David’s Seed, as well as with that of Abraham. It is true that He is God the King, Jehovah the King, and God’s King, begotten and anointed; but the sure mercies of David are found in his Seed as was promised. Therefore the gospel of God’s grace is preached in

His name at the present time, while He is rejected, before He returns and sits upon the throne of His father David. This gives a peculiar distinction to the proclamation to-day; for before the divine King is publicly enthroned, while He is now honoured in heaven, having been refused His rights on earth, the glad tidings are heralded in His name.

The gospel consequently calls those who believe out from world-associations (which have no place for Christ) into assembly-associations where He is owned as Lord, and known as Head. To be in these new associations happily, it was necessary that eternal forgiveness and justification should be given to all who accept the Saviour, and God’s gospel offers this to all, for all have sinned; new life is also given to those who are thus brought into the assembly, which is the body of Christ; for although many belong to the mere lifeless profession of this, it was necessary, before any could be living members of Christ’s body, that this gift should be theirs, along with the Spirit also to unite them vitally to the Head in heaven. Therefore the offer of the gospel is made through Christ, the Seed of David, who died for sinners and was raised again for our justification. In this way Paul heralded the glad tidings, as Acts 13. 23–39 and 2 Tim. 2. 8, make known to us; and the foundation of this gospel is shown in Rom. 1. 3, for it is based upon the truth concerning Jesus Christ our Lord, who according to the flesh came of “DAVID’S SEED,” marked out by resurrection as “SON OF GOD.”

The many promises recorded of old in the inspired Book, pointing on to enduring mercies and the filling of the

earth with glory, made it necessary that David's Son and Lord should come, and Himself secure all through His own death and resurrection. He must also be the woman's Seed in contrast to the serpent's seed, as Gen. 3. 15 foretold; and the defeat of the deceiver of man, the devil, has been secured through Christ, the Seed of the woman. Again, Gen. 4. 25 speaks of "another seed" on Seth's line in contrast to Cain's; Christ came of the former, and His precious blood speaks of blessing in contrast to Abel's that cried for vengeance. When world-wide blessing is promised, Abraham's Seed is pointed to, and Gen. 22. 17, 18, Gal. 3. 16, Heb. 2. 16, with other Scriptures, speak of this. The Lord took hold of the seed of Abraham and not angels, to bring this about. The Seed, moreover, is not only David's and Abraham's, but He is the Virgin's Son (promised in Isa. 7. 14), as we see in Matt. 1. 21, 23. His name is JESUS, Jehovah the Saviour; He is called EMMANUEL, God with us.

The blessing and glory that God counselled rest immovably in Christ, "the Seed." Nought can overthrow this, for all the promises are "YEA" and "AMEN" in Him, for the glory of God by those who are His. The fruitfulness of this Seed will be abundant for His honour. The Psalmist said in regard to this world even, "The earth is full of His riches!" He made the grass, the herb, and the fruit-trees yielding after their kind, the seed of which is in them (Gen. 1. 11; 2. 5), on the third day, the day which points us to resurrection; so seed is thus used to illustrate this truth by the Spirit in 1 Cor. 15. 35-44. The Seed of promise is CHRIST, as we have seen so fully proved by God's Word, and He has come in the ordered line, divinely appointed, and all in that line

are "after their kind"; but death, quickening and resurrection, were necessary if abiding fruitfulness was to result. He Himself said: "Except THE GRAIN of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears MUCH FRUIT" (John 12. 24, N.T.). The one Grain of singular and exceptional quality, "the Grain" as the Spirit speaks of Him, bears fruit abundantly for the pleasure and glory of God, according to divine purpose.

The "resurrection of life" must take place for this. Even in apostolic days some questioned the fact of actual, bodily resurrection; but the raising of Christ from among the dead is the proof and pledge that our bodies will be raised. "Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming!" even as it is said, "In Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15. 22). Already the Word of Truth has taken effect in those who believe in view of their being "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Such are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," and being begotten of God, they are preserved from the lawlessness of the disobedient and loveless, "for His seed" remaineth in them (1 John 3. 9). If the woman's Seed has bruised the serpent's head by His work on the cross, it is also said of those who are His, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." That will take place when all the redeemed are glorified with Christ, when they are in bodies like unto his own, for

"The Lord Himself shall come and shout a quickening word,
 Thousands shall answer from the tomb,
 'FOR EVER WITH THE LORD!'
 Then, as we upward fly, that resurrection word
 Shall be our shout of victory, 'FOR EVER WITH THE LORD!'"

The apostle said to one who questioned the raising of the body, "Thou

fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest is not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Cor. 15. 36-38). Then he makes known something of the vastness and variety of the resurrection splendours and beauties, for as differences of celestial distinctions deck the heavens, so is the resurrection: incorruption, immortality, honour, glory and power will adorn the quickened and raised bodies of the redeemed; the natural will be superseded by the spiritual, the earthly by the heavenly, and the

victory over death and the grave shall result in thanksgiving and glory to God. The "much fruit," borne in triumph and grace by "THE SEED" of God's providing, shall bring order, gladness, and peace to the kingdom and dominion of the Son of Man; also pleasure, satisfaction, and glory to the everlasting rest of God; and Christ shall rejoice over the results of His soul's travail. "He shall see His seed!" His co-heirs, His brethren, all like Himself having been predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, shall surround Him in scenes of holiness, love and gladness, where He shall be pre-eminent, "THE FIRST-BORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN."

AND IN THE GARDEN A NEW TOMB.

WHEN God created this green earth it was not in His purpose that its bosom should be ripped that His creature man should be thrust into its darkness. It was man that did that in defiance of God's will, for by one man sin entered the world and death by sin. And since sin and death are here the tomb is a necessity. It is God's judgment, the limit He has put upon man's rebellious career, but He has turned it into the evidence of His great power and victory, for He sent His Son to go even into the tomb, and the Son of God not only died but was buried.

"Dust thou art and to dust shalt thou return" was a terrible judgment to proceed from the mouth of God

against the man that He had made in His own image, but it was as just as it was terrible, and it seemed as hopeless as it was just. It seemed as though God's purpose was broken and His will baffled and the whole work of creation a mistake. It was clear that death and the grave were stronger than man, and indeed they seemed stronger than God, but when that new tomb in the garden received its sinless Occupant, when He upon whom death had no claim went down into the grave, things were changed, for now as by man came death, so by Man has come resurrection from the dead. The grave has been robbed of its triumph and it has now become but the resting-place of the bodies of those that sleep through Jesus.

I suppose that all true spiritual energy springs out of intercourse with and dependence upon God. "Pray ye" comes before "Go ye." There must be first the *grip of prayer*, then will follow the *go of power*. Acts 1. is "Pray ye"; Acts 2. "Go ye." And if spiritual force for this going is to be maintained, it can only be as we wait upon the Lord. Our grip upon the Lord must not be relaxed if we are to go to men with power and effect.

THE SOCIETY OF THE SON OF GOD. (J. T. MAWSON.)

Address given in the Society of Arts Hall, Edinburgh, on January 3, 1929.

"Where two or three are GATHERED TOGETHER unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. 18. 20.

"In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are GATHERED TOGETHER."
—I Cor. 5. 4.

"When ye come together in one place."

"Wherefore, my brethren, WHEN YE COME TOGETHER to eat, tarry one for another."—I Cor. 11. 20, 33.

"If therefore the whole church come together in one place."

"How is it then, brethren? When ye COME TOGETHER."—Cor. 14. 23, 26.

THERE are all kinds of societies in the world founded and carried on by people who have common tastes and interests, and they have their gatherings together to further those interests and to enjoy the things that they have in common. The Burns Societies would be a good illustration of what I mean. These gather together to keep fresh the memory of the poet, and to share their delight in his genius and work. They are the Burns fellowship. We who are Christians belong to a Society, it is the Society of the Son of God. To this Society, or fellowship, God has called us by the gospel, and through the grace of God we have responded to the call, and now we have our part in this most exalted and wonderful society on earth or in heaven, "the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have not been drawn into this Society by mere admiration for Christ, whose name we bear, nor do we gather only to look back to One who is dead and gone and recall His words and works, for our Leader is a living Person, and we have been drawn to Him because we have found that He was able to meet our great need. He is our Saviour, who died for us, but lives again, and this fact imparts a special character to His Society. It brings out also the very great difference that lies

between it and every other. There are great religious Societies in the world; there are followers of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed. They have their legends, their traditions, their codes of ethics, and systems of philosophies, but the men whose names they bear are dead. **BUT CHRIST LIVES;** He has been raised again from the dead so that we not only have the words that He has spoken given to us by divine inspiration in the Scriptures **BUT WE HAVE HIMSELF.** Only we must keep in mind the fact that though He lives He is absent from the world, and we, His Society, represent Him during His absence.

It seems to me that these two great facts lie behind these words that we so often quote from the 18th of Matthew's Gospel, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them." Our Lord is absent from the world and we are His representatives in it, a very high honour, a great privilege, but a very serious responsibility. Nevertheless, no responsibility is put upon us according to God's will that He is not able to enable us to carry out. We may consider ourselves in this world as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice that there is power to maintain us in this responsibility for His glory.

Societies must gather together if

they are to continue to exist. Suppose the members of a Society lost all interest in each other and in the object for which the Society came into being and ceased to gather together, it would at once die out, and we who belong to Christ's own Society must not cease to gather together—"Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10). We may feel that enthusiasm for the name and interests of Christ is on the wane, but that must not affect us except to brace us up to persevere and hold fast. We must be like those of whom Malachi speaks, who feared the Lord and spoke often together of Him. Of such gatherings God took notice, and a book of remembrance was kept in heaven, and I believe that God keeps the Register of the Society of which I am speaking, and He marks the attendances of the members of that Society when they gather together to speak of the Lord, as those who are His representatives in the world. We know that the assembly of Christ cannot die out or be destroyed, for the gates of hell cannot prevail against it (Matt. 16.). Yet if those who form that assembly ceased to gather together it would be a misnomer to call it a fellowship.

Now as we gather together as His representatives we are in the greatest favour, for the Lord tells us here that the Father in heaven listens to our prayers, and He not only listens but He answers. That is a wonderful thing. What wonderful power is in this way put within our reach! It seems to me, beloved Christian hearers, that we ought more deeply to consider this statement of the Lord. There is surely contained in it that of which we as yet have very little conception. "If two of you"—two of this Society—two of those who love the Lord and are

loyal to Him here upon earth—"if two of you shall agree touching anything ye shall ask in My Name, it shall be done to you of My Father which is in heaven." I pray that God will stir all our hearts to consider that, and to realize the great privilege it gives us and the power that it puts within our reach. We have but to agree to ask and at once we are admitted to an intimate audience with the Father and He will answer our united prayer.

But not only are we in the most wonderful favour when we gather together as representing our Lord Jesus Christ, but He Himself is in the midst. He loves us and He cannot keep away from us, "Having loved His own which are in the world He loves them to the end," and His love constrains Him to be in the midst of those who gather to His Name, and being there He must have control of the gathering, and in it His authority and rights must be maintained. Anyone can see that nothing else could be right. Moreover the gatherings must bear His character, and that brings me to the main part of my subject. Take my illustration of the Burns societies again; the poet's character and genius give character to them; we could scarcely imagine people who hated poetry and wine being members of a Burns society, so that the gatherings of the societies are literary in character and, shall I say, convivial.

Do we in our gatherings together bear the character of the One whose Name we profess? That is a question that ought to cause us searchings of heart, for, if we deny His Name by our conduct, and do not keep His word in doctrine and practice, we forfeit all right to be owned as His Society or fellowship. And it is to urge this that I have read from the first epistle to the Corinthians. In these three chapters

we have three definite gatherings together of the Society of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The first shows us—

THE HOLINESS OF HIS NAME ;
the second—

THE LOVE OF HIS HEART ;
the third—

THE WISDOM OF HIS MIND,
which wisdom He demonstrates by His administration in His Assembly.

We must begin with **THE HOLINESS OF HIS NAME**, and the necessary gathering together spoken of in the fifth chapter is used of the Spirit of God to teach us that the Name of the Lord must be kept clear of all complicity with evil ; there is not a shade of congruity between the two. There is no fellowship apart from this, for God who has called us to this fellowship is holy, and His Son, whose fellowship it is, is "the Holy and the True" ; the Spirit of God who has formed the fellowship is the Holy Spirit, and the faith that we hold in common is "our most holy faith," and we who are in this Society "are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (chap. 1. 2). It was not always true of us, for our sins were no less grievous than the sins of others, but "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (chap. 6. 11). We owe all to the grace of God.

What, then, is it to be holy ? To be holy doesn't mean to be hypocritical as were the Pharisees, or legal-minded and austere like some of the old puritans, or unnatural like the monk who separates himself from all his relatives and shuts himself up in a monastery to live an unnatural life. To be holy means to be spiritually healthy, for our word 'health' comes from the same root. It is to be healed, made whole.

It means to be whole, wholehearted if you will, wholehearted towards the One whose name we bear, Himself and His interests controlling us, the reason of our gatherings together. And if we are to be in spiritual health, to be practically holy in character and in ways, there are certain things that we must exclude from our lives. They are the old leaven and the leaven of malice and wickedness. If our tastes run after these things we are not in spiritual health, we are not holy, and we cannot be happy in the presence of the Lord Jesus, for an unholy man is an unhappy man. The tastes of the holy man are gratified by the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The plea for holiness is based upon the fact of Christ our Passover being crucified for us. It seems to me that is the lever that is used in this 5th chapter of 1st Corinthians, and it sets before us the measure of the holiness that belongs to Christ's Society. The basis of the Society is that He has been sacrificed for us.

Let us think of Calvary for a moment. Behold the Lamb of God there slain for us, and let us ask ourselves the question, Why ? It was because we were sinful, because of our sins, our guilt, because of what we were. Then do you think it right that we should continue to be as once we were if what we were caused Him that death, those sufferings ? Is it right that we should trifle with that that cost our Lord so much to save us from ? Christ reached us through that cross. It was the only way by which He could save us. When we were at our very worst, grace abounded towards us, but shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? God forbid ! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? That surely is our instant and hearty conclusion. If we are feasting upon the Lamb roast with

fire, and we know that we are under the shelter of the blood, then that which came under God's condemnation when Jesus died for us will be what we shall condemn. The evil that is in the world, the evil that the flesh and the devil proposes to us will be things from which we will keep separate that we may keep the feast of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Let us not think that this feast is a fast, if we refuse the evil, and purge it out, we do but refuse that which can only mar us and make us miserable. If we would be happy and free in our souls we must keep the feast of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. What is this bread? We can understand what the feasting upon the Lamb roast with fire means—it means that we enter into what death, the death of Jesus, meant, when He came into contact with the judgment of God on our behalf. That means something for us. It means that He loved us, and we feast upon His love. We feast upon those things that His death sets forth. A wonderful lesson-book for us is the cross of Christ, and wonderful food for our souls there is there. But what is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth? It is Christ also. Sincerity and truth were perfectly expressed in Him. The greatest light could search His blessed ways and the motives behind them and only reveal the perfection of everything that He was and did. Sincerity is that which will bear the searching light of the sun, and there He was in the presence of the Father's glory, and the Father's voice was heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Absolute singleness of aim and purpose; absolute singleness of heart; the Father's will His very being—nothing else but the Father's will. In regard to God in Him there was absolute sincerity. And He was the truth. There was nothing

false, out of place, or exaggerated in Him. Everything was set by Him in its right proportion, in its right relationship; in Him we see what God is; we see what man is; we understand what we are, and the wonderful relationship into which we are brought.

Sincerity and truth were made manifest in all their perfection in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is as we feed upon that life of His, that entrancing life, the life of the altogether lovely One, that we keep the feast, day by day, the whole week round.

We begin with the fact that Christ our Passover was slain for us, and then we feed upon His life, and as we do so we shall surely be practically what God has made us, a new lump, sanctified in Christ Jesus. Assimilating what He is, we shall take character from Him; there will be a spiritual formation in progress, and we shall maintain the holiness of His name—absolutely necessary if we are to be truly His Society. May God exercise us everyone as to the holiness of His name.

But the gathering together that is spoken of in chapter 5. is abnormal, and the fewer of such a gathering the better, Nevertheless, the Spirit of God uses the fact of the evil there in Corinth to press upon us the character of our fellowship, and make it plain to us that the holiness of the name of Christ must be maintained. But now we come to ordinary normal gathering together of the people of God; the coming together for the Lord's Supper, and what can there be in connection with this gathering but joy, for there is brought before us in a very special way **THE LOVE OF HIS HEART?** How wonderful it is to hear His words, "This is My body which is for you; this is My blood which is for you." How near that brings us to Him; how near it brings Him to us! It is as

though He would press upon us this very great and blessed fact that there upon the cross we were in His thoughts. He was there for us, and as a response to that, He desires that we should be together for Him, for He says: "Do this in remembrance of Me." On the cross it was as though He said, YOU, I am here for you; My body and My blood are for *you*; and when we gather together, He says, You are for Me. "You" on the cross, "Me" when we gather together to remember Him in His death. If we are true members of His Society; if we really understand what the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, means, we shall not neglect this.

At the gathering together for the Lord's Supper it seems to me that the Lord says to us, as Joseph said to his brethren, "Come near unto me." Do you remember that touching story in Genesis 45? And when they came near he took them one by one and kissed them, putting the kiss of his affection upon every cheek. So when we gather together to remember the Lord in His death He puts the kiss of His love afresh upon every one of us. The great feature of this gathering therefore is the love of His heart.

But there is another side. *We show the Lord's death till He comes.* As being gathered to His name, to use again my word, being His Society, we not only give joy and gladness to His heart, but we bear witness to the fact that we *are* His Society; we show His death till He comes. The world saw Christ last dead upon the cross—that has often been pointed out—they didn't see Him in resurrection, and as a matter of fact He is still dead to the world, and it has never repented of His murder, but we bear witness to the fact that we have joined ourselves to the One whom the world slew. We take our stand by His

cross, just as Joseph of Arimathea did when he begged the body of Jesus and bore it to the sepulchre to lay it there. We make manifest to every intelligent creature that we take our stand by the One whom the world crucified. We say, with Paul, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified unto us and we to the world."

And then we have to consider each other too in this connection. We read, "Therefore, beloved brethren, when ye come together, tarry for one another." That does not only mean to wait until all can be present—surely there is much more in it than that. It means that we have to be marked by consideration, forbearance, love, grace—that, in fact, the way the Lord has treated us is the way we are to treat each other. That comes out in the 18th chapter of Matthew most definitely, for immediately the Lord had spoken of coming unto His own, when they are gathered together, Peter asks, "If my brother sin against me seven times shall I forgive Him?" and the Lord said, "I say unto you not seven times, but seventy times seven." Tarry for one another when ye come together, and by mutual forbearance and sympathy and love and grace be to each other what the Lord has been to you. If the love that caused our Lord to give Himself for us, fills our hearts, we shall surely love one another. There will be neither forbearance nor consideration if there is not love. But if there is love there will be both.

In chapter 14. there is set before us THE WISDOM OF HIS MIND. In the closing words of it we read: "*The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*" The title Lord means that He is in authority and the Administrator, and He shows

the wisdom of His mind by His administration in His assembly. Now commandments are not optional, we either obey them or are rebellious, and to "obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 22. 23). I know that some are indifferent and ignorant; they have not enough spiritual interest to inquire as to the will of the Lord, and the apostle says, "If any man be ignorant let him be ignorant." But we must not be indifferent or ignorant, much less must we be disobedient, for if we are we shall hinder the working out of the wisdom of the Lord in the assemblies in which He is the Administrator, and shall suffer incalculable loss thereby, and God's intention will be in part obscured, for that intention is, "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3. 10).

I want us to realize that our Lord has a Society, a circle, in which He administers according to His own rights and wisdom. The fact will give us great satisfaction if we love Him. When He came into the world He was refused His rightful place. He came to His own and His own received Him not; He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not, and He was cut off and had nothing. No place was given Him in this world in which the wisdom of His administration might be shown out, but on the evening of the resurrection day He stood in the midst of His disciples, and they were glad when they saw THE LORD. He had His own circle now in which His supremacy was acknowledged, and where all would be subject to Him. We can visualize the scene in that upper room.

Peter, John, James, would not seek any pre-eminence there, nor force their own views upon their brethren; every ear would be attent to His voice, and all subject unto Him. Now the Spirit of God has come from the exalted Lord in heaven to maintain His rights in that sacred circle, and we have been drawn into it, we belong to it, and I ask you, my dear friends, do we not desire to realize and to experience the wisdom of His mind in His administration in His assembly? Then we also must be subject to Him, we must be glad to see THE LORD.

The difference between the gathering together in chapter 11. and this in chapter 14. is, that in the former we minister to the Lord, in the latter He ministers to us. So you find one great word in it is "edification." The Lord gives the word, and knowing the need He gives the right word and His Society is edified thereby. The prophesying spoken of in verse 3 is not the foretelling of coming events, but the telling out of the Word of God, to build up the saints in the truth, and to stir them up to a fuller devotion and to bind up their hearts if they sorrow at all. And if a man cannot edify his brethren he ought to keep his mouth shut, for the Lord has got somebody there who can. In the edification of His own we see the wisdom of the Lord's administration. If the mind of the Lord is in evidence the minds of those present have to be active, but subject to the Lord. Understanding has its place. "I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also; I will pray with the spirit and with the understanding also." There cannot be edification apart from understanding.

There must not only be a spiritual impulse, but that spiritual impulse must find expression according to the understanding under the direction of

the Lord, and the spirits of the prophets must be subject to the prophets. A man ought to be able to control himself as being under the Lord's control in the assembly of the Lord. If he would be in an ecstasy, let it be in his own room and let him be beside himself to God alone, but in the assembly of God he must be sober, for in that assembly the Lord is the Administrator, and God is not the author of confusion but of peace. And in this connection the question arose as to speaking with tongues, and the apostle distinctly by the commandments of the Lord shows of what small value relatively this which these carnal Corinthians thought so much of was; he shows also into what contempt it might bring them, for he says, Suppose an unbeliever comes in, or an unlearned man, and you are all speaking with tongues, he will say you are mad; it will move his contempt. Display yourselves, and the only result will be the amusement of the onlooker. "But," he says, if you prophesy, if you speak the word of God, and that can only be under the Lord's direction, his conscience will be searched, and he will fall down before you and confess that God is with you of a truth. I wonder, beloved Christians, how much of that there is in the gatherings with which we are acquainted. It seems to me that it brings out most wonderfully the character of the Lord's administration. Not only has He got edification for His own people in view, but He has got grace for the unbeliever coming in, He thinks of the outsider and His grace overflows to him, such is the blessedness of His administration.

The question is, Is it possible? It is here in the Word of God, and if we are prepared to walk according to the holiness of His Name and to feast upon the love of His heart, and

to be enthusiastic and full of admiration for the wisdom of His mind, it seems to me that the Lord would manifest Himself in a gracious revival that would mean not only the gathering together and binding together and building up of the saints, but in blessing to the unbeliever who comes in by the way. And they would come, for grace would attract them, and they would not come in vain.

The day is coming when God's kingdom will come on earth and the Lord will sit upon His throne, and He will be the great public Administrator then, and harmonize everything in this world to the will of God. Then the desert will blossom as the rose, and springs of water break forth in desert places, and the hills will dance, and the trees will clap their hands with gladness, and peace and prosperity will spread their wings over the face of the world. The wisdom of the Administrator will secure this, but we, before that day comes, should know His wisdom, grace, and power now, and realize these great blessings in a spiritual way. We may well rejoice and praise the Lord for the grace that has saved us, and enlightened our darkness with the knowledge of the Lord, and joined us to the Lord, and so to one another. And this can never change, these gifts of God are for ever. But we all should be deeply moved by them, for it is the will of God that we should be practically what He has made us in Christ; it is His will that we, His own, should be gathered together, assemblies in which the Lord may be known and where light may shine from Him for the blessing of others, where the holiness of His Name may be maintained, the love of His heart enjoyed, and the wisdom of His mind displayed. And to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

Will you please say a little on Romans 14. 10 : " For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ " ; and also 2 Corinthians 5. 10 ? Will our whole lives be brought out before us or only our lives consequent to our conversions ? I understand that this is not a question of punishment.—GALASHIELS.

THESE two passages have specially in view those who have been saved by the grace of God ; all such are justified from all things (Acts 13. 39) and it is God who has justified them, consequently they will not, they cannot, come into condemnation, for if God justifies who is he that condemneth ? (Rom. 8. 33, 34). Hence the question of punishment does not arise. The judgment of the sins of all those who shall stand there was borne for them by the One who will sit upon the judgment seat.

It is the deeds done in the body that are in question and for which we shall receive reward and suffer loss—this surely embraces our whole lives and not merely the time we have lived since our conversion. All that we did before conversion will be loss, in one sense, and yet in another it will be a great gain for us to see it all, for not till then shall we know how much we owe to our Saviour and to the sovereign mercy of our God and to His daily preserving mercies too. Then we shall learn, as we cannot now, the unreasonableness and the folly of our long rebellion against God, and the greatness of His unmerited grace. It will be a solemn hour for us, but a blessed one, when what we were and what God is will be fully seen by us.

But what will be most searching to us at that time will be the way we treated the grace of God since we received it, and our answer to the love of Christ since we knew Him, and what our deeds had been as those who were responsible to be here as the servants of Christ. The Parables of

the Pounds (Luke 19.) and the Talents (Matt. 25.) show us that the Lord will call us to account as to how we had used the gifts that He had loaned to us as His stewards.

We should ever keep that day in view. The apostles kept it in view as they longed and laboured for their children in the faith. Paul said of the Thessalonians, " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming ? For ye are our glory and joy " (1 Thess. 2. 19). He anticipated joy in them there. But John presents another side when he writes, " And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming " (1 John 3. 28). Evidently there is the possibility of both joy and shame in the presence of the Lord at that time.

The question of our fitness for heaven will not arise, for we shall be there already, in bodies of glory like Christ's own body (Phil. 3. 21), but the places that we are to occupy in the public kingdom of the Lord will be there awarded to us according to our faithfulness or otherwise. If we have been faithful in a little it will be recognized and much will be committed to us then, if we have been unfaithful here we cannot expect to be trusted with much then.

We are persuaded that in every Christian life there will be some fruits of grace to God's glory. Much work may be burned up then (1 Cor. 3.), and we shall be glad to see everything that

has not been of God done with for ever, but we cannot believe that everything that a Christian has done will be destroyed, for faith without works is dead. 1 Cor. 3. 15 may seem to suggest this, but there the word is specially to the servants of the Lord who take a part in building up His work on earth, and a solemn word it is for all such.

Rom. 14. 10, to which you refer,

warns us against sitting in judgment upon our brethren, we cannot see their hearts, and we have not been placed on the judgment seat, but we have to appear before it. 2 Cor. 5. 10 specially emphasizes care as to our conduct, as verse 9 shows, so that putting the two Scriptures together we learn that we must not judge others but we must labour to be acceptable to the Lord ourselves.

The Christian and Ill-health.

I wrote to you before as TROUBLED (see Oct. No. 1928), and I thank you for your message to me. I read it over many times, then I saw where I was wrong. Now, thank God, I can say, I belong to God. But I have another trouble and I ask you to pray for me. I suffer from great depression . . . and often look forward to the future with fear. I have prayed that God would heal me and I have believed He would. I am sure I could serve Him better if He would heal me. I have read so much of the healing power of God and I believe it. Where have I failed? . . . I have a family of little ones and we have always been provided for, we have had wonderful answers to prayer. As this is not a Bible question you may not answer it through "Scripture Truth." But do pray for me.—STILL BELIEVING.

AS the question of ill-health raised in this letter is one that gives many of God's children serious thought, and as the much advertised "healing campaigns" are very likely to result in those who are unstable being shaken in their faith, we undertake to give an answer to it which we trust will be according to the Word of God. It is right that you should turn to God about your malady as you do about every other thing that is a trouble to you. We ought not to take ill-health as a matter of course, or as an evil that we must battle with or endure as best we can. The Holy Scriptures say, "Casting all your care upon Him; for HE CARETH FOR YOU" (1 Peter 5. 7), and "Cast thy burden on the Lord and HE WILL SUSTAIN THEE" (Psalm 55. 22). Words like these should be a great comfort to you, for they state plainly that God cares for you and shall sustain you. Two wonderful things. The first shows His heart and the second His power. Begin with this, God is not indifferent to what you

suffer; you, and your affairs and your future, are matters of interest to Him, and He is able to sustain you in every trial, to sustain your faith, and to preserve you from being overwhelmed.

You may not quite understand what casting your burden on the Lord means. We believe it means that you bring it to Him in prayer, with the confidence that your own children bring their troubles to you, for the love that you have for your children which gives them confidence in you is only a very feeble spark in comparison with God's love for you. Say to Him: Lord, this burden which I have been carrying is too heavy for me to bear, if it must be carried I cannot do it in mine own strength, it must be by Thine. Thou must carry it and me also. You will recall the Lord's own words to Paul when he was greatly afflicted, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12. 9). There is surely much comfort in two such Scriptures as these for those who are incurable

invalids, suffering from crippling, painful rheumatism, or worse diseases that are slowly wearing out the body, for "these things were written for our learning that we **THROUGH PATIENCE AND THE COMFORT OF THE SCRIPURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE**" (Romans 15. 4).

Now as to the healing of the mind or body. We have to view these matters in a reasonable and not fanatical way. The gospel of the grace of God does not include "no sickness" among its blessings. Those who think it does are confounding it with something else. When God saved our souls He did not change our circumstances nor give us strong bodies if they were weak before through heredity or other causes. His grace changes us and enables us to glorify Him in the circumstances in which once we dishonoured Him. We know, of course, that if a man has lived in wretchedness and degradation his circumstances will be improved if he is converted to a godly life, and that if his health has been destroyed by his sinful habits it will improve when these are abandoned for right living, for "godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (Timothy 4. 8). But it is not of this that we are speaking.

Timothy, who was an exemplary Christian and devoted servant of the Lord, had many illnesses, evidently he was a dyspeptic, and Paul did not heal him, or tell him to seek healing by an act of faith, or that the healing of the body was part of the gospel. He told him to use natural means, to "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Timothy 5. 23). A divinely inspired prescription. Nor did Paul heal Trophimus, another of his fellow workers, but he left him at

Miletus sick (2 Timothy 4. 20). Nor did he heal Epaphroditus, who had brought himself to the brink of the grave by his excessive labours for the Lord, though he acknowledged God's mercy in raising him up from his sickness (Philippians 3. 25-30), as we all should do when recovery from an illness is granted to us. Nor did he get healing for himself, when he suffered so acutely from the thorn in the flesh, though he prayed three times for this. He got something better, even the grace of the Lord, that turned the affliction to his own good and the Lord's glory. Indeed, you will search the record of Paul's labours in vain for one instance where he healed a believer, or preached that the healing of the body was part of the gospel. And Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, and that which he calls "my gospel" is the gospel of God's grace by which we have been saved. And yet he had the gift of healing and used it when cast upon the island of Melita (Acts 28.).

We gather from these instances from the Holy Scriptures that God has put natural remedies for ordinary ailments within our reach and we have to use them with wisdom, giving Him thanks for them. That when the sickness goes so far or is of such a sort that remedies are useless we may still count upon the mercy of God. That it may be that the malady is allowed of the Lord to continue for some wise purpose of His own, as in Paul's case, but if so we need not despair for He can supply the grace to make us glory in the tribulation, and so turn it to a present and an eternal benefit.

Does this, then, preclude the desire and prayer for health? Certainly not. We are encouraged to make all our requests known to God. "Be careful for nothing, but **IN EVERYTHING** by prayer and supplication with thanks-

giving **LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD.**" He desires that we should make our wants and needs the cause and opportunity of communion with Him, and if it is not according to His will and for our good that He should answer exactly as we ask, yet our going to Him will not be in vain, for "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4. 6, 7). And all fear of the future will be cast out of the heart, and the mind if the peace of God which passeth all understanding takes possession of them. In this very matter of our connection with a creation that is groaning and in which we groan also, but do not grumble, we read that we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and all His intercedings are in full accord with God, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8. 22-28). So that if the sickness continues and increases it is only one of

those things that are working together for our final blessing. The "tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given unto us" (Romans 5.). And in this lies the great advantage that the children of God have over those who refuse His grace, they are not exempted from sickness and pain and death and the ills that sin brought into the world, but in them they have the sustaining grace and mercy of God, and they know that God can and will turn them into means of blessing.

But continue to pray, still believing that God can do what you desire, for He is indeed able, and there are many witnesses to the fact that He can give healing and health in answer to the prayer of faith; only let the prayer be in the spirit of those never-to-be-forgotten words that arose from Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

O DEPTH OF RICHES.

(E. H. HAGEMANN.)

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory for ever. Amen.—Romans 11. 36.

O DEPTH of riches, depth of grace,
Of knowledge and of wisdom, too,
Which makes each failure of our race
Occasion to display anew
Resources, infinite, above,
Past finding out, O God of Love!

*Of Thee, the source and spring, O Lord,
Creation and redemption came,
And in Thy Son, the Living Word,
Thou hast revealed Thy heart and
name.*

For we behold in Jesus' face
Thy image, likeness, God of Grace.

Alone, O gracious Lord, *through Thee,*
By toil of blood secure were laid
Foundations for our blessings free;
Their price Thy blood has overpaid,
And justified now in Thy sight
Our souls adore Thee, God of Light.

All things that are, they are *to Thee,*
To tell the glory of Thy name.
But sinners bound, redeemed, set free,
Whose need has been their only claim
To grace divine, forever these,
Shall sing Thy praise, O God of peace.

BLINDING, BEGUILING, BUFFETING. (J. T. MAWSON.)

An Address on the work of Satan, and how he is beaten.

2nd Corinthians 4. 3-7.

„ „ 11. 1-3, 14-15.

„ „ 12. 7-9.

WE have in this epistle a sort of autobiography of the Apostle Paul, and I think if you read it from that point of view you will marvel at what the man endured, and how he triumphed. Read the 1st chapter, the 4th chapter, the 6th chapter and the 11th chapter and you will say: How was it possible for a man to endure such vicissitudes as this man endured and yet live undaunted? The secret lies in the happy fact that he knew God as the God of all comfort and the sufficiency of the grace of the Lord. He is going to tell us of what he suffered for Christ's sake, and he begins with a burst of praise, "Blessed be God," he says, and it is THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT and the Father of mercies that he blesses. He was a happy man who knew God in this character, and this knowledge is within the reach of every one of us, and having it we have a priceless treasure.

BLINDING.

But if there is the blessed God to be known, there is also a great foe to be faced whose intention is to prevent men from knowing God and to harass those who do know Him. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. In three chapters in this Epistle is Satan spoken of. We learn that he blinds people, he beguiles those whom he cannot blind, and he buffets those whom he cannot beguile. Blinding, beguiling and buffeting, this is Satan's threefold work.

He blinds those that believe not in God, for "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the

minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them." He has been baffled in that respect in regard to us, I trust in regard to everyone of us. But if any of you gathered here are still ignorant of God, and do not know His goodness and grace, the god of this world has succeeded in blinding your minds. May your eyes be opened this very day. What is it that Satan is blinding people in the world against to-day? It is against the knowledge of the God of all comfort, he is blinding people against their blessing. There is no pity in the heart of Satan, he is the great adversary and the destroyer; none would ever be saved if he could prevent it. He has failed as far as we are concerned, for the light that shines in the face of Jesus has shone into our hearts to give to us the knowledge of God, and this is a treasure that money cannot purchase and of the like of which the earth has no knowledge. We go through this world with this treasure in our hearts, we know God, that blessed God, in all the fulness of His grace, we know Him as our Father, revealed to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

What a difference this has made to life, how dark would time and eternity have been without the knowledge of God. Everything is changed for us now, as the radiance from the face of Jesus fills our hearts and illuminates our lives and makes us glad.

The love of God, and that we should know that love, is indeed very wonderful

and it was that that the devil was against. The devil was bent upon keeping God out of our hearts. Then plainly he is no friend of ours, and when we understand that we will give him and all his works a wide berth, we will beware of the devil who sought to blind us against the knowledge of God. In the knowledge of God lies all our blessing, all our comfort. How are we going to face this great enemy and the tribulation that must be ours in the world that he controls? God will carry us through; it is the knowledge of God that gives us hope, confidence and power, the knowledge of God drives fear from our hearts. As long as we are dependent upon Him we are safe and undisturbed; He holds us in His blessed hand, and if trials even as great as those through which the apostle went confront us, God will carry us through.

But if we have the knowledge of God in our hearts, how will we be affected by it? What manner of people are we? The God we know is greater than every adverse circumstance, do we put God between ourselves and our circumstances, or do we allow our circumstances to come between our souls and God?

I knew a young lady who was just coming into the light, and it was very wonderful to her. She had a Christian friend, to whom she said, one day, "Do you know God?" and the lady said, "Yes, I know God," then she said, "Why do you worry so much?" . . . Christians, if we know God, if we carry about this treasure from day to day, what sort of people ought we to be? You may be sure it pleases the devil when we worry, it glorifies God when we trust and give thanks. May we be marked by thanksgiving, as those into whose hearts the light of the knowledge of God has come. And if some of us are

still doubtful as to what God is, and shrink from wholly trusting Him, let us learn the truth that He is known in the face of Jesus. Look upon the face of Jesus, the face that smiled on the children, that was wet with tears at the grave of Lazarus. That same face that looked with compassion upon the leper, is all radiant with God's glory now. What He is God is. How blessed it is to know Jesus, for in knowing Jesus we know God.

"Sinners gathered round Him, lepers sought His face,
None too vile and loathsome for the
the Saviour's grace."

Such is our God.

From the glory where Jesus sits enthroned there has been ministered to us fullest blessing, perfect righteousness has been ministered to us from the very glory of God, as chapter 3. teaches, and that righteousness is our fitness to enter into the glory from whence it has come, so that we may be, and I trust we are, perfectly at home in the very presence of our God, and the knowledge of Him is our boast and our joy. This will make us channels of blessing, for the light that has shone in must shine out. If we awake in the morning with the sense of the knowledge of God in our souls, we shall meet the difficulties of the day as those who know God. There will be a quietness of spirit about us, and people will realize that we have unseen resources that are greater than the demands that life makes upon us, and being comforted by the God of all comfort we shall be able to comfort others and show them what a treasure we have in the knowledge of God, and how rich we are, and how blessed He is. What a triumph over Satan it will be if we can say with Paul, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Only

those whose eyes have been open can say this, and they say it *while they look* upon unseen and eternal things (chapter 4. 17, 18).

BEGUILING.

But if Satan has been baffled in his effort to blind us against the knowledge of God, he will endeavour now to beguile us from Christ. Paul wrote that he was very jealous over the Corinthian Christians, for he had espoused them unto one Husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ, and he greatly feared that as the serpent beguiled Eve, so they should be beguiled from the simplicity as to Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has been taken up out of death by the power of God and has been set on the very throne of God, and the light of the knowledge of God is in His face, and that light has shone upon us and we are in the light now. In all that there is set forth what God and Christ are for us, but now we learn that we are to be for Christ. I want this to arrest and impress us, beloved Christians, we have been espoused to the Man in the glory of God. The day is coming when we are to be presented to Him as His wife, for the marriage day is coming (Ephes. 5. 25-27; Rev. 19.), but these are the days of His espousal, when He makes known the love of His heart to us, and in which He wants our hearts to be moved with responsive love to Him. These are the days in which He is to be supreme in our affections, shutting out every other object, so that there shall be no rival in our lives to Himself. He wants us for Himself in the light of God in which we have been set, as espoused to Him.

The devil wants now to divide our hearts from Christ so that He will not get His pleasure in us. He will not be able to do this after the marriage of the Lamb has been celebrated in heaven,

for we, the church, shall ever be as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21.), satisfied with Him and forever wholly for His pleasure, and Satan in that timeless and glorious eternity will have been cast into the lake of fire, his eternal doom (Rev. 20.). But now He comes with his beguilings and we need to be watchful lest we be deceived by him; for now that we are in the light, Satan does not come as darkness, he transforms himself into an angel of light (verse 14), and he will set before us thoughts that appear at first to be right just to turn our feet a little way out of the path and make us leave our first love. He will make us self-occupied, and think that we are wonderful people, if he can; he will make us proud, scornful and censorious of others, and think ourselves everything. He will make us think less of our need of Christ and of His glory and grace, and occupy us with all sorts of questions if he can, under the guise of making us more spiritual and useful. He may even try to divide us from Christ by our service. My friends, and you young Christians specially, I want you to understand that the greatest thing you can do in this day of His espousals is to keep yourselves for Christ. Beware of the world and its snares, the devil is behind it; beware of the flesh and its clamours, the devil is behind it. Beloved Christians, is Christ not worthy of our wholehearted devotion? When we think of the greatness of the love that carried Him down into death for us, what have we to say to Satan? "The love of Christ passeth all our knowledge," are we going to let him seduce us from Christ or chill our affection for our great and eternal Lover?

No, we will not be seduced, for the Bridegroom of our souls is brighter and better than the brightest and best that

Satan can offer. We will keep ourselves for Christ and allow no rival to get into our hearts.

“Thine, Saviour, Thine,
No more this heart of mine
Shall seek its joys apart from Thee,
The world is crucified to me,
And I am Thine ;

Thine, Saviour, Thine,
For ever to recline.
Oh love eternal, fixed and sure,
Yes, I am Thine for evermore ;
Lord Jesus Thine.”

With heart fixed wholly upon the Lord, and satisfied with Him, the devil will be baffled when he seeks to beguile us from Christ.

BUFFETING.

If Satan fails to beguile us, he will buffet us. There was one man that he could not beguile from Christ, and that was Paul, and so Paul became the object of his intense hatred and buffeting and it looked as though he was all but overwhelmed. This messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, was the devil's supreme effort to crush him. It must have been something very terrible, for he does not seem to have asked to have been spared any other suffering, but this was something so special, an infirmity so dreadful, that human strength and fortitude failed under it and he pleaded with the Lord three times that it might be taken away from him, such was his agony. And it was not done for him, as we have often heard. But he got an answer, and what an answer! He found that there was something greater than Satan's buffeting, and the Lord spoke to him personally in giving the answer, “MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE, MY STRENGTH IS PERFECTED IN THY WEAKNESS.” Do you see what we have here? The Lord is at one end of the sentence and Paul is at the other, and His grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, lies between. There is the ocean at one end, and there is the thimble at the other end, and the truth is that the ocean is enough for the thimble. Paul asked no more. The Lord was enough. Satan might continue to do his worst, his attack was in vain, it only gave Paul a fresh opportunity of showing how wonderful his Lord was and how sufficient was His grace. And here we are, to-day, so many little thimbles who may be buffeted by the devil, some of us perhaps sorely buffeted, and we have wondered why, and whether the Lord knows the trials through which we pass. It may be because you have been true to the Saviour and have made a stand for Him and for His interests, things have gone against you. You have been and are being buffeted. If it is indeed for Christ's sake you are honoured indeed, “for if ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you ” (1 Peter 4. 14) and the Lord has said, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” The ocean is enough for the thimble.

Satan is a defeated foe, and will shortly be trodden beneath our feet, for the God of peace will do this, as His word declares ; but he is not trodden beneath our feet now, and we need to know his wiles, and to be watchful. But, blessed be the name of God, though he may be more than a match for us, and will be if we get away from our Lord, he is no match for our Lord, and he can never get ahead of our Lord, our Lord was always ahead of the devil. Never once did the devil steal a march upon the Lord. You remember how He said to Simon, “Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee.” The blessed Lord had looked ahead and

prepared beforehand for Satan's attack upon Simon so that it turned out for Simon's good and Satan's defeat.

So He views the path that we tread, and He knows just from whence Satan's attacks will be made upon us, and His grace is prepared beforehand and is enough for us, so that though Satan may buffet, and trials may come, we may be more than conquerors through the grace and strength of Him who loves us and will never cease to love us.

BENEDICTION.

The epistle that begins with "Blessed be God," closes with a benediction for

us. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." What a glorious threefold escort is here! What can Satan do against the triune God? What supplies, what protection, what comfort are ours! And what compensation for suffering and loss does this benediction unfold for us! As we dwell upon it we begin to see what made Paul the triumphant man that he was, we learn how the saint of God can be superior to all the attacks of Satan and how in the midst of trial and distress we may be able to say, "Blessed be God!"

KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

(EDWARD WRYTE.)

WHEN you come to the end of a toilsome day,
 And you kneel alone with your God ;
 When you're weary and worn with the winding way,
 And you feel oppressed with your load :
 How sweet to repose on a Father's love ;
 How soothing to hear His voice—
 "The path may be rough, but it leads above,
 And thy burden, child, is My choice."

When the bosom is aching with anxious fears,
 And the heart with its grief is torn ;
 When the sleepless eyes are bedimmed with tears,
 And longingly look for morn :
 How sweet is the solace that comes from Him
 Who passed through *His* night of woe,
 When the cup of sorrow o'erflowed its brim
 With a bitterness none can know.

When the morning breaks, and another day
 Stretches out like a path untrod,
 Like a trusting child be it mine to say—
 "Take my hand in Thine, O God" :
 Then I need not falter though storm-clouds lower,
 With His hand encircling mine ;
 Whilst feeling the hand-grip of infinite power,
 And the pressure of love divine.

IN TIMES PAST UNPROFITABLE.

(SAMUEL RIDOUT.)

Address given in Baltimore, U.S.A.

THE Epistle to Philemon, a brief note we might almost call it, was evidently written at the same time as the Epistle to the Colossians by the apostle. Those who are familiar with it would say that the glories of Christ, His Person, His work, His place in resurrection, and His headship over His church, are the theme of that wonderful Epistle to the Colossians. And what is the theme of that to Philemon? It is about a runaway slave, a man who had very likely stolen money when he went away from his master and had been found in Rome, and there laid hold of by the Spirit of God and brought to the Lord Jesus, and was now being sent back to the master against whom he had sinned. I mention this to show you the extremes. Here is Onesimus, along with his companion Tychicus, carrying these letters to the brethren; one of the Epistles setting forth the glories of Christ, and the other presenting a returned fugitive, an unworthy, sinful man. One letter speaks of Him who is higher than the highest; the other of one whom the world would esteem lower than the lowest. There you have a little summary of the gospel. One Epistle concerns God's Son in all the effulgence of His glory and the perfection of His work, and the beneficiaries of it are nothing more nor less than such as Onesimus here, a runaway slave, who is the theme of the other.

I want to speak of Onesimus and his master and then gather up what God delights to scatter through His Word, the nuggets of the blessed gospel of His grace. Notice that his master had evidently been saved some time before. He was well known; indeed, Paul was his spiritual father. It is beautiful to see that Philemon, the master, owed all

that he had under the Spirit of God to the man who brought Onesimus to the Lord later on. In running away from his master, Onesimus had deprived him of his service. He was an unprofitable servant. He had also probably taken some of his master's money. He very likely had a good home. I judge his master, Philemon, especially after his conversion, showed all kindness to Onesimus. I judge that the faith and love that the apostle speaks of in this Epistle were shown to his slave. What was the matter with Onesimus? He was discontented, restless, and he watched his opportunity and absconded. What made him do it? What made us wander away from God? Surrounded by every token of His kindness and goodness, with such a Master as none could ever have, what led us away from God? One little word tells what it was in our case as well as in that of Onesimus. It was sin. "All we like sheep have gone astray." So we start out with the solemn truth that our alienation from God is due to the sin and folly and pride of our hearts.

Where does a young man go when he runs away from his master and home? Onesimus had heard of Rome and the pleasures there, perhaps of the wonderful Colosseum and the combats that take place within it. So he goes to the great metropolis bent on enjoying himself, but God was watching him and that which did not reach his heart at Colosse, God brings home to him at Rome. We do not know the circumstances, the shameful revelry or the riotous living that led him to spend all that he had stolen. But at Rome there was in prison one who was there for no sin of his own, "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." How like our blessed God to bring together in that distant place,

and of all places apparently the most unlikely, a prison, a wanderer from God and the man who would lead him to God! It is God's way; how blessed to see it.

One does not know how he came in contact with Paul; possibly some offence took him to prison for a short time. At any rate, he learns from one whom he possibly had heard before and paid no attention to. He has spent everything, wasted all he had, poor miserable wanderer, and then in his sin God finds him through His servant Paul. How like the blessed Lord to give His dear servant fruit in prison! He says, "Whom I have begotten in my bonds." Paul would naturally be discouraged. Before that he had been passing through the land in a sort of triumphal march, you might say, carrying the gospel of God's salvation far and wide, and now all that is past. Now no triumph as in Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, and elsewhere. No more of these triumphal gospel scenes, but a lonely prison. He is perhaps discouraged, and God brings a poor needy sinner right to him and he has the joy of telling him God's salvation. Notice how it is described, "I have begotten." There had been labour on Paul's side for this sinner, but there is the other side, new birth is what the sinner must have. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." So we have in the third chapter of the Gospel of John three great outstanding facts presented to us: first, the necessity of new birth; secondly, the uplifted Christ on the cross; and thirdly, the love of God, who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the gospel, beloved. This was the gospel that Paul preached, whatever Scriptures he pointed to;

this was the great truth by which Onesimus passed out of darkness into God's marvellous light, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." He became a new man.

What is to be done with him? The apostle says, I am here in prison; I have errands to be attended to and all kinds of service to be done. Dear Epaphroditus is sick; perhaps I can keep Onesimus with me. I know how Philemon loves me. But no, Onesimus has run away. I cannot keep him here; I must send him back to his master. So he talks it over with Onesimus, and Onesimus holds back a little, we may imagine. "But you do not know how great a sinner I have been. Philemon will not receive me after my vile conduct. He will hand me over to the authorities. I have stolen his money. I shall be punished and lose my life. Do not send me back!" But there is a new life in his heart. "Onesimus, would not you like to show your master the reality of what God has done for you? Do not you know you owe your service to him, and now under the constraining love of Christ do not you want to go back and yield yourself up to service as you should?" We are not told the details of the conversation; we are not even told he held back; but we can imagine what were the shrinkings he had as he thought of his return. No doubt Paul felt the matter must be laid before Philemon in a way that would appeal to his heart and conscience. Perhaps the letter was so arranged that Onesimus could read it on the way back and reassure himself as he went along by the words he had written about him. He had one to speak for him. He was not going to speak for himself. Oh, fellow sinner, Another is speaking for us! How He speaks in the ear of

infinite holiness and truth and justice and tells all that is in His heart for every sinner that trusts in Him!

That is sufficient about the details. Now I want to speak, as I said, about a number of precious gospel nuggets embedded in this letter. I have spoken of the tenth verse. In the eleventh Paul looks over the past life of the repentant runaway. "*In time past . . . unprofitable.*" What about our past life? One word will cover it all—unprofitable. We have been unprofitable servants. We have run away from our Master and been of no profit to Him and in this world of God's fair creation, where everything ought to be for Him, we have lived only for ourselves. In time past we have been unprofitable. Now notice a number of simple, precious things, as the apostle, his friend, sends him back. "*Whom I have sent again; thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels.*" I need not say that there is no contradiction between our blessed God and His beloved Son. People sometimes have an idea that God has to be placated and that the Lord Jesus is the One who comes in between the sinner and God. That is not the case. Let us take the thoughts we find in this chapter and see if we cannot distinguish the echoes of divine love between the Father and the Son. "*Receive him, that is, mine own heart's affections.*" Here is a sinner turning to God. "*Receive him,*" Mine own heart's affections; the love of Christ! I see the faces of some who, like Onesimus, have been brought to know the Lord. What can be said of such? They are the affections of Christ. He does not say, Receive your slave; he says, "*Receive him, Mine own heart.*" It is as though Paul was sending his own heart to Philemon, for Onesimus is the object of his love. So "the Son of

God . . . loved me, and gave Himself for me." We are the trophies of the love of Christ. So are all those who have trusted Him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." He says of every soul that has trusted him, "I lay down My life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life." What has the Father in His heart? Love, perfect love. The sinner who comes to God by Christ finds "love that no thought can reach." It is the Father's joy to bless, and so the one who has trusted Christ has God also and His love as a sure foundation on which his faith can rest.

"*Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing.*" Here is a beautiful illustration of the perfect accord between the Father and the Son. When you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, beloved, you trust God the Father. When you are seeking to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, you are seeking to serve God the Father. As we have it in Peter's Epistle, "Who by Him"—that is, Christ—"do believe in God." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He (the Father) loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Between the Son who came to save and the Father who sent His Son is the sinner in the eternal embrace of God.

"*For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.*" A season there was, when he was an unprofitable servant; in time past, he departed, but now returned and received for ever! Wanderers, some of us, for a longer time than others, but all of us in time past had departed from Him for a season, but now every one who has come and

trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ is His for ever. Eternity is stamped upon that. For a season Onesimus left his master, and when he went back to Philemon it was an illustration of the eternal tie of a child of the Father, brought back for ever. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." Look again at this relationship. "*Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved.*" No longer in bondage. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." There is a new eternal relationship. Just as Onesimus was looked upon as a brother beloved, so every sinner trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ is a child of God, born of God by faith in Christ Jesus. "Above a servant, a brother beloved." Onesimus, as he goes back, might say, What a wretched slave I have been! But let me see what Paul says about it. "Receive him, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." Every fear would be checked as he read those words. Oh, I am going back as one who belongs to the family. So we have a letter. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."

"If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." Oh, says Onesimus, Philemon counts Paul as a partner; it is his highest joy to honour him. Well, he says, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." Philemon will do what Paul tells him, receive me as himself. Translating that into gospel language, who is the one who is God's Fellow? "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." And the Son says, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left

Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." Can you doubt what God says He has done and accomplished for Him? The dying thief confessed that he received the due reward of his deeds, and lifting his eyes in faith to that One on the middle cross, he cried, "Lord, remember me." And the Lord spoke to him much the same way Paul wrote of Onesimus. "Receive him as myself," he wrote to Philemon; and the Lord's answer to the penitent thief was, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." What a welcome was given to the Son of Man! How all heaven reverberated with triumphant shouts! And to think that the spirit of that malefactor was there too, "absent from the body . . . present with the Lord." And the triumph accorded to the blessed Lord is also given to every one who has trusted in Him. "Receive him as Myself."

"So dear, so very dear to God,
I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith He loved His Son,
Such is His love for me."

But there is another question to be settled. The gold I took, says Onesimus, is gone. I have wasted it, all. I cannot bring it back. How can I ever look Philemon in the face? "*If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.*" Onesimus says, It is not my debt any longer. I have wronged him. I owe him a great deal. "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" Could you calculate how much? "*Put that on mine account; I have written it with mine own hand.*"

"Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe."

It is true. But, you say, I do not feel as if my debt is paid; I do not feel as though my sins are forgiven. "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God;*

that ye may know that ye have eternal life." The written Word declares it has been put on His account. He paid it all, thank God. So the last doubt in the heart of Onesimus is quieted. He is assured of the payment of his debt and so he can say as he rolls up the letter, I am going to meet the one who loves me as much as Paul. So, beloved, we are on our way to God and we have the letter of tender and infinite love of the Son of God, and as we read we hear Him say, "*I have written.*" Beloved, let every doubt go for evermore.

"Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt

also do more than I say. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." "Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." We talk about the gospel, get a little way round the outside, but the half has never been told. It is far more than can be said. At the close, the apostle says, I am coming, too. I trust through your prayers to be granted to you. Oh, beloved, what a reunion when every redeemed soul shall be gathered home with the Father and the Son to enjoy for evermore the love that came here to seek and to save the lost and wandering.

"A PLACE FOR YOU."

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."—John 14. 2.

HE who had NO PLACE to lay His head told His disciples that He had A PLACE for them, and His promise stands good for us who believe in Him, to us also He says "a place for you." Many of His disciples, like their Master, have had no place on earth, they were "destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," but the Lord had a place for them in His Father's house. And many who love Him have little of this world's goods, and the men of the world have little or no use for them; they have no property here, and no place in the world's estimation or counsels, but a place is prepared for them in the Father's house into which the Lord has gone. What a consolation this fact gives now! What a compensation it will be then, when they enter into that prepared place.

Envy not the rich man with his broad acres, Christian; covet nothing

that he has. Strive not for a place in the world—let its prizes go to them that seek them; be satisfied with this, that you have a home, a place that will never be taken from you. You have a standing in the Father's house, for you are one of His children. Be glad to be unrecognized here, and unknown by the world, for you are known in heaven and your name is written there. Rejoice, rejoice in this!

The Person who has prepared the place by His presence there is coming Himself to take you there. It is His place, His Father's house, and His love is so great that He purposes to share the best He has with you. So He says, "WHERE I AM THERE YE MAY BE ALSO."

For Thee we wait, Lord Jesus,
Thy voice we long to hear;
Our hope, our life, our Saviour,
Thy coming must be near;
The watch is nearly ended,
Our hearts expectant are!
Oh, let Thy lustre cheer us,
Thou glorious Morning Star.

THE PERSON OF OUR LORD.

[I]t is taught, and we believe rightly so, that the Gospel of Luke reveals the Lord to us very specially as the Man, Jesus Christ. The whole character of it generally, and texts that we might cite particularly, bear witness to the completeness and reality of His human nature, if we may so speak. Yet it is remarkable how every title that is given to Him in the beginning of it warns us that though Man He was unlike every other man, though the Son of Man He was the Son of God. We question whether any other Gospel is more emphatic than this is as to the divine glory or titles of the Lord. Let us note some of these.

"Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS." He was the woman's Seed (Gen. 3.), yet if He came of a woman it was God who sent forth His Son (Gal. 4 4), for mark what follows: **"HE SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST."** Then when Mary asks by what means this was to be brought about, the answer is, **"THAT HOLY THING THAT SHALL BE BORN OF THEE SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD."**

When Elizabeth welcomes Mary to her home she greets her by the surprising title of **"The mother of MY LORD."** And Zacharias, being full of the Holy Ghost, addresses his own son John, and says, **"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the**

Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of THE LORD to prepare His way."

To the shepherds the angel announces **"Unto you is born . . . a Saviour, which is CHRIST THE LORD."** And to Simeon the Holy Ghost revealed Him as the **LORD'S CHRIST**, and he, by the same Spirit, speaks of Him as **GOD'S SALVATION**.

The first words that are recorded for us from His own lips when Mary speaks of Joseph and herself as **"Thy father and I,"** are **"Wist ye not that I must be about MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?"**

But when angels, pious women, and Spirit-filled men have borne witness to Him the heavens are opened and the Father speaks, for **"the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, THOU ART MY BELOVED SON; IN THEE I AM WELL PLEASED."**

We might go on to show how Satan admitted His Sonship in the desert, and even made it the ground of His temptations, and demons proclaimed it in the Synagogues and in the streets, but we prefer to dwell upon the voice from heaven and the Father's testimony to Him, for there is joy and blessing for us in this—the Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost is the Father's beloved Son in whom is all His delight.

God's love is a love manifested.

It is no secret love; silent, strong and true, but pent up within the fathomless depths of the heart of the Most High. Nor is its manifestation limited to those holy beings who dwell in the very presence of His glory: on the contrary, the very sublimity of that love is displayed in its outpouring upon His wayward creatures, as it is written, **"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that GOD sent His only begotten SON into the world that we might live through Him."**

JABEZ—A YOUNG MAN OF PRAYER.

“And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren : and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me ! And God granted him that which he requested.”—1 Chronicles 4. 9, 10.

THE birth of a son is usually the cause of joy to the mother : then what was it that caused the mother of Jabez to call him by that strange, sad name ? May it not have been that his father had died before his birth and that she was a broken-hearted widow bringing into the world a fatherless son ? We are inclined to think so, and we infer that she taught him from his earliest childhood that God alone was his resource—“the God of the widow and a Father to the fatherless.” We gather that this was his outlook on life, and it made him more honourable than his brethren in that he trusted wholly in God. God was a great reality to him.

It is interesting to see that in the New Testament we read of some who were “*more noble*” than others. Their nobility lay in the fact that they loved the Scriptures and tested everything by them ; the Word of God was to them the judge of everything that they heard. These two things—prayer and the Word of God—bring God definitely into the lives of those who pursue them, and this makes them honourable and noble in the eyes of heaven.

But consider Jabez, a young man on the threshold of life. He was no self-confident, giddy youth. We quote from another writer. “We see a young man standing at the door of his house, looking abroad at the unknown and unmeasured world, listening to the many voices that troubled his native air, then turning his eyes to God and asking for His direction before he would take a single step from the threshold of his home.”

The story is written for us in the Word of God for our learning, to teach us that it is well to acknowledge God in all our ways, and that He will not fail to direct our paths if we do. Jabez fared better than his self-sufficient and perhaps scornful brothers, for “God granted him that that he requested.”

Young men may start in life as Jabez did, they may make God their resource and their refuge, they may draw the blessings of their lives from Him and look to Him to be their protector from evil, they may say to Him, “My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth,” and they will prove as Jabez proved that He is worthy to be trusted. Happy are all they that put their trust in Him !

GOD is so absolute that He can do whatever He pleases ; but so just that He cannot be pleased to do an unrighteous thing.

It is an immature state of knowledge that renders men susceptible to doubts but incapable of their solution.

A saint is not free *from* sin, as to its presence, that is his burden ; but he is not free *to* sin, that is his blessing. Sin is in him, that is his lamentation, he is not in sin, that is his consolation.

AN ARROW SHARPENED BY LOVE. (A. J. POLLOCK.)

THERE is a touch of genius in the description that John Bunyan, the immortal dreamer, gave of the death of Christiana, the wife of Christian, who in the allegory followed her husband to the Celestial City. He described how she journeyed to Beulah land, "where the sun shineth night and day." Evidently Christiana had become old and infirm. Weariness marked her, and she waited for the summons to the everlasting home.

One day a stir was made. A post had arrived from the Celestial City with tidings of great importance for one, Christiana, the wife of Christian, the pilgrim. The post presented her with the letter, which ran as follows: "Hail, good woman! I bring thee tidings that the Master calleth for thee, and expecteth that thou shouldest stand in His presence, in clothes of immortality within this ten days."

There was a sure token that the messenger did indeed bring the summons of the King, and that was "an arrow with a point sharpened with love, let easily into her heart, which by degrees wrought so effectually with her, that at the time appointed she must be gone."

The thought of an arrow sharpened by love is a real stroke of sanctified genius. It gives us the thought, it may be, of a painful illness, but that love is at the back of it, and that, though it may be a rugged path, it leads to HOME and REST and INEFFABLE BLISS. Old age is a very real thing. Christians, who once were active, find one power after another leave them. Their tether gets shorter and shorter.

Christians often fear death. As old age approaches the fear sometimes becomes acute. As someone has said, It is the dying they fear, not death. It is the weakness and pain and difficulty of dissolution that fills them with foreboding, not the thought of being actually with the Lord. How this might be alleviated if the thought of the arrow sharpened by love were kept in mind.

The fact is, we shall not get grace for dying till the dying time arrives, if the Lord does not come first. Let us then seek grace for living; if old and feeble, grace to live in that condition—which grace the Lord will abundantly minister, if we only seek it. Let the grace for dying not trouble us. It will come when it is needed. The Lord will not fail us. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," is as true for the end of the journey as for only a portion of it, for "the valley of the shadow of death" surely means the whole of our life in this world. Let our minds dwell on the heavenly scene. Let us be at home with the Lord now, and we shall rejoice to think that we shall actually be with Him where He is, in that land of pure delight, for ever.

An aged saint gave utterance to the thought that there was only a cobweb between him and the glory, and it only needed the hand of the Lord to brush it aside, and he would be with Him.

We can take the words of the Psalmist, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23.6), and be content about our present and our future.

It was not the servant's business to expose and talk about the wickedness of the prodigal, but to put the best robe upon him and rejoice in the grace of the Father that welcomed him.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES.—VI. (R. McCALLUM.)

Murmurings and Mercies. Exodus 15—17.

COULD this nation ever again doubt the faithfulness or the power of God? They had just been witnesses of His infinite resources: they had beheld the overthrow of their foes: they had sung the song of victory and had expressed their conviction that He who had led them out would lead them in to "the mount of His inheritance." But how shallow our assertions often are! How speedily our boasted confidence may disappear when we find ourselves in the crucible of testing! Three days of journeying had intervened and three days only. God was visibly leading them, for had they not the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day? and yet they could not trust Him.

On the third day, their patience strained to the breaking point and irritable to the point of rebellion, they espied water, and with gratitude and delight they hastened to satisfy their thirst, but to their utter dismay they found the waters to be bitter and undrinkable. The disappointment was greater than they could bear. Thankless and forgetful they murmured against Moses—the man to whom, under the appointment of God, they owed everything—and in murmuring against him they murmured against God. This servant of God did not revile them but cried unto the Lord—the Lord who is slow to anger and slow to upbraid. Well might Jehovah have chided them on account of their unbelief, but instead of doing so He removed the cause of their complaint, for as yet He was dealing with them on the ground of grace. The Lord showed unto Moses a tree which when cast into the waters made them sweet. The tree grew near to the pool but the

Lord had to direct the attention of Moses to it. Have you had your attention directed, my brother, my sister, to a tree which has sweetened the bitter circumstances of life for you? Cry to God in your distress and He will point you to it. Does not the Cross of Christ do this for us? When prone to complain about the bitterness of our portion let us look again to that wondrous Cross where we behold the love of God brought into prominence, a love which sweetens, for His own, every bitter cup. It is just as we experience this that we learn the Lord in the new character in which He was revealed at Marah, "the Lord that healeth thee." Our God allows us to pass through days of disappointment that being rightly exercised thereby we may know His healing touch.

Let us thank God, then, that if in our experience we have to come to Marah God is willing to make a new revelation of Himself to us just there, nor are we called upon, as a rule, to tarry there long. The Marahs of life are in the mercy of God, preceded for those who are redeemed by the evidences of His love and power and succeeded by the Elims. "They came to Elim where there were twelve wells and three score and ten palm trees, and *they encamped there.*" With the promise of blessing attendant upon godly exercise of soul under divine testing He leads us on to recuperate and to be refreshed. Yes, He guides to that oasis where there is delightful shelter from oppressive heat, and most gracious provision for every need. "Now no chastisement for the present seemeth joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to

them that are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees." Have we not felt how after days of trial when our souls have been cast down under the burden of care there has followed the delightful sense of the calm of His own presence and a blessed ministry of Christ by His servants that has proved both meat and drink to our souls? We have found, have we not? a veritable Elim where we have received refreshment, sustenance and rest.

The pastures green precede but prepare the way for the paths of righteousness, and Elim is the precursor of the wilderness and the glorious land beyond; for God has something supremely better than Elim in view for His people. To this He leads although the desert way with all its experiences may intervene. "And they took their journey from Elim and all the congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the Wilderness." Their fickle hearts cherished the memories of the Egyptian flesh pots; their faithless hearts forgot God's inexhaustible resources and supplies. Yet without a word of reproof, but in divine grace, God made provision for them again, and in the power of His might He sent them quails and manna. Competent to cleave a path through the sea He proves Himself able to spread a table in the very wilderness ample for their necessities. The gift from heaven throughout the forty years of their wilderness sojourn, years marked by disobedience and constant provocation, is a witness to the patient forbearing grace of Almighty God. The provision was that which spoke of Christ once humbled here, and with the writer of the hymn we can assent "The manna and the springing will suffice for every need." Amid the

weariness and the toil of life we view Him here in all His grace and tenderness and learn the sympathies of Him who has passed this way before us.

Journeying from the wilderness of sin they came and pitched at Rephidim where there was no water. Again they abused their leader, and so unreasonable and slanderous did they become in their accusations, so threatening in their attitude that "Moses cried unto the Lord saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me." "Go on before the people" is the answer. There has to be no suggestion of fear, but fortified in spirit in the presence of God, and assured that Jehovah Himself will stand before him upon the rock in Horeb, Moses is to lead on quietly with rod in hand. With this he smote the rock according to the word of God and forthwith came there out water and the people drank. How merciful is God, even to those who doubted His love and His righteousness; to those who despite manifold signs had questioned whether God was with them or not!

Have not we, too, proved His mercy at Massah and Meribah? We have found ourselves in sorrowful or difficult circumstances, and in spite of our agonized cries and appeals the heavens have been as brass and the question has come to our minds, if it has not found expression upon our lips, "Does God care? Is He really with me?" But just then our gaze has been directed to Christ smitten for us; our doubts have vanished, and in the strong assurance of faith we have been able to say He cares, He loves, He leads, and He who has led us out and who has borne us upon eagles' wings will not desert us. The waters which flowed from the smitten rock were emblematic of the Holy Spirit, the only power for a life that will be to

God's glory. The manna is, as we have seen, symbolic of Christ come down from heaven and humbled here as man; the rock smitten is Christ crucified, and the living water is an emblem of the Holy Ghost, and immediately upon the reception of that which prefigures the Spirit there comes conflict with Amalek. Now just as Egypt is a Scriptural type of the power of the world, so Amalek is typical of the power of Satan operating through the flesh, a power that is ever antagonistic to the activities of the Spirit and which accomplishes the overthrow of such as lag behind in the spiritual pathway. This enemy is increasing in his hostility, and the Lord has sworn that He will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

The way in which the defeat of Amalek was brought about becomes a matter of interest and instruction for all who would triumph over the flesh. At the command of Moses, Joshua leads out chosen men to the conflict while Moses himself, with Aaron and Hur, goes up to the mountain top. Joshua sets forth Christ as our Leader on whom we lean for victory. Moses, on the other hand, sets forth Christ on high in His character of intercessor. For while we are led by Christ in the power of the Spirit we experience the support of Him who, in the presence of God, intercedes for us in all our weakness. "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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?"

Moses on the mountain top, supported by Aaron and Hur presents to us, too, a beautiful picture of the value of the intercessory prayer of the children of God. Behold, then, upon that mountain top an aged servant of God, upheld in his intercession by other two, and observe that while his hands are upstretched to heaven those engaged in combat in the valley prevail. Those arms uplifted, doubtless holding on high the rod of God are, moreover, the declaration of his faith that Jehovah fought for His own; that the unseen hosts of God assisted Israel. There is not only depicted the sense of dependence which causes a man to supplicate God for victory, but there is the faith which marked Abraham when he believed God, or *Amened* God and assented, "It shall be so." So Moses called the name of the place Jehovah - Nissi—the Lord our banner.

Amalek neither slumbers nor sleeps: he opposes the progress of the people of God to-day just as he did of old, and we only prevail as the Lord Himself supplies prowess and wisdom and as we recognize that He commands the issue.

A sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ.

Thou wast on Calvary, bearing my sin.
Thy precious blood avails to make me clean.
Saviour what love was Thine!
Love, matchless and divine.
Oh let it brightly shine
My heart within.

We have only to find God's will and we shall find Him in it. Submission to His will means the support of His presence.

TREES OF SCRIPTURE. No. 2.

(H. J. VINE.)

"The Almond Tree."

"And I said, I see the rod of AN ALMOND TREE. Then said the Lord to me, Thou hast well seen : for I will HASTEN my word to perform it."—Jeremiah 1. 11, 12.

SPEED, Lord, the glad fruition of
God's unchanged design, fill all the
earth with glory, let heavenly radiance
shine. Hasten the days of beauty as
hastes the almond tree, give truth and
peace like flowers, and fruits in full
degree.

Yet though we wait earth's summer,
as for the seasons fair, open to faith's
keen vision the greater glories are.
Ere spring unrolls her treasures the
almond earlier blows, ere serrate leaf
adorns her, her welcome blossom grows.

Bright in the Sanctuary holy the
lamp of God was seen, its flowers and
cups like almonds had knops of gold
between. There in the radiant bright-

ness riches of light were shown, fruit
of the Spirit's fulness to faith and love
foreknown. (Exodus 25. 33.)

Within the very Holiest was Aaron's
favoured rod, which yielded buds and
almonds, commanded by our God ;
and though we cross the desert, Christ
lives within the veil, our Priest who
now sustains us, whose grace and
power prevail. (Numbers 17. 8.)

We haste to reach the home-land,
for ever then to dwell with Him who
died to save us in love unspeakable.
Then, Lord, Thy Word shall hasten the
promise to complete—earth hails
Messiah's glory, His reign its praises
greet !

DEATH.

(CONTRIBUTED.)

JUDGMENT of God no mortal may repeal,
Nor by high art nor stubborn pridefulness
Escape the compass of that bitterness,
Which, in thy shadow, o'er the mind doth steal !
Rough-handed thou and scornful of our weal,
Crushing our fairest in thy ruthlessness,
Mocking our love-sighs in thy brutality,
Tearing our hearts with wounds that none may heal !
Yet have my tearful eyes been giv'n to trace
In death, the death of Christ upon the tree,
God's claims so rightly met that, from His face,
Glad beams of light and love now shine on me,
Bidding my crush'd and blighted hopes take wing
And rise to Him. "O Death, where is thy sting ?"

JOHN XVII.

THOU loved'st Me before the worlds were framed,
And these are Thine and Mine in glory named
And loved by Thee.

SPIRITUAL POWER.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

CHRISTIANITY is characterized among other things by—*power*. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the “*power . . . of God*” (1 Cor. 1. 24); the gospel in which He is presented to men is “*the power of God unto salvation . . .*” (Rom. 1. 16); and the preaching of it should be in *power* (1 Cor. 2. 4). The kingdom of God into which we are introduced on believing the gospel is said to be “*not in word but in power*” (1 Cor. 4. 20); and the Spirit that God has given unto us is one “*of love and power and of a sound mind*” (2 Tim. 1. 7). To have a “*form of godliness but to deny the power thereof*” is a serious condition (2 Tim. 3. 5).

This question of power, then, is far from being an academic one. Its essential place in true Christianity—whether as regards the individual or the church—is amply attested in the hearts and consciences of God’s people everywhere. Would it be too much to say that on all hands there is a deeply felt need for this very thing? Volumes issued on the subject have apparently a large circulation; and meetings held to consider it do not fail to gather large numbers. There seems a pretty general feeling among Christians that the spiritual power of the early church and of times of revival at different periods since, is sadly lacking with us to-day. Now why is there this lack? In other words, *what is the secret of spiritual power?* Who would not like to know that!

Now before we can profitably consider the *secret* of spiritual power we must enquire as to its *nature* as revealed in the Word of God. This is the more important on account of the fact that there is supernatural power which is Satanic; for Satan has always been the great imitator of the divine. But

his power—permitted of God—however disguised, is the sinister *power of darkness, the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies* (Luke 22. 53; Col. 1. 13; Ephes. 6. 12, N.T.).

There are also, and much in evidence to-day even in religious circles, psychic forces, powers connected with the subconscious mind, with the “*soul*” of man, such as are seen in hypnotism, telepathy, and other occult phenomena. These, while not in themselves evil, are certainly exploited by Satan for the furtherance of his schemes; and many of God’s people have thereby been deceived. Against all such deception (“*wiles*” Ephes. 6. 11), and against extravagances which lead to deception, we can only be preserved by having and holding fast the *truth*. And where is the truth to be found? Where could it be found but in Christ, and in the Word that reveals Him? To that Word, then, let us turn.

Now truth revealed in the Word is always seen in its cleanness and beauty in the Person of Christ; and we do well always to study it in Him. If *power belongeth unto God*, and our Lord Jesus is “*God manifest in flesh*” (as He is) all the power of God must be *inherent* in Him. Indeed, the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily (Col. 2. 9). But how blessed to see Him during His sojourn here below, exercising that power not in His own prerogative as the Son—though He never relinquished either the possession of the power or the prerogative to use it—but as *the Son in dependence upon the Father*. The works that He did were what the Father gave Him, and the power to do them He obtained by prayer! (John 5. 36; 11. 42). *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power* (Acts 10. 38). Well might men, as they witnessed the wonders and

signs wrought by Him, be "amazed at the mighty power of God" (Luke 9. 43).

But, let us note, these works were never *mere* displays of power; nor were they ever done to meet His own need, to advertise His mission, to satisfy curiosity, or to compel acceptance of His claims. They were always *moral* in character, revealing God in grace, meeting man's deep need, or sealing his doom if unrepentant.* In *design* they were moral, in *execution* they were by the power of the Spirit, in *purpose* they were to accomplish the will of God. In these facts thus briefly sketched lie deep lessons for our instruction, for "the disciple is not above his Master, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his Master" (Luke 6. 40). Even before He went on high He delegated authority to His disciples, and in His Name they performed similar works of power (Luke 10. 1, 17).

But now He was about to leave the world, and in the closing scene on Mount Olivet He commissioned His disciples to the great work of evangelization and teaching, preceding the commission by the declaration of His supreme authority and following it by the promise of His perpetual presence (Matt. 28. 18-20). His authority, His commission, His presence, what more could be required? Yet more was required! "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be *endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24. 49), and further, "Ye shall *receive power* after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you" (Acts 1. 8). Power was required, for which they were to await the advent of the Holy Spirit in whom would be the divine power to effectuate the divine plan. As we know, the

Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and they "received" † Him, and the book of the Acts is the divine commentary on the outcome—the *Acts of the Holy Ghost!*

Here we may pause to remark an important fact. *As the dispensation advanced the miraculous gave place to the moral.* Marvellous signs attended the inauguration of the Spirit's day; but they grew less and less, and when we come to the epistles of Paul, ‡ Peter, and John, miracles have no place save in retrospect. This is a fact of immense significance, and being consistent with God's ways in every dispensation would, if respected, have saved many Christians from spiritual extravagance, deception, and disappointment.

To the epistles we now turn to enquire what is there revealed as to the *nature* and *purpose* of this marvellous power. Considering the purpose first, may we not say in one word, it was for the accomplishment of the *will of God in this present period?* What an unspeakable encouragement and stimulus is here found! What more particularly is that will?

Firstly, the *calling-out* of souls from this world by the gospel according to Acts 15. 14. Not for the conversion of the world, but for its evangelization and the calling out of it those who are to be Christ's. How this might be enlarged upon! Have we not each a personal responsibility in this mighty work of redeeming grace? Oh, what need that the proclamation of the gospel should be *in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power!* As is the preaching, moreover, so generally are the converts! (1 Cor. 1. 4, c.p. 5). How

* In two cases only they were acts of judgment—the destruction of the swine and the cursing of the fig tree—both of typical significance.

† Is it not sometimes overlooked that this word "receive" (lambano) signifies an ACTIVE reception, "to take what is given"; c.p. Matt. 26. 26 "take," and Rev. 5. 7, etc.

‡ Except 1 Corinthians.

much 'preaching' appears to be devoid of results. May not the explanation lie here?

Then it is not God's mind that those called out by the gospel should remain units, but that they should be *gathered in* truly and vitally into the church of God. This is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2. 41; 1 Cor. 12. 13). Men make churches and inscribe members upon the rolls; God forms the church and incorporates by His almighty power living members into it, on their receiving the Spirit consequent upon their believing.

Then, further, those gathered in need to be *built up*; not indoctrinated (as is so often the case) but really built up, that is, *edified* (Acts 9. 31; 2 Cor. 12. 19; Ephes. 4. 12; 1 Thess. 5. 11), and this that they may grow, and be *perfected*. How anxious was the apostle that his converts should be "*perfect*"! (Col. 1. 28; Ephes. 4. 12; 2 Cor. 13. 9). What can accomplish this but the power of the Holy Spirit using the Word?

Then again, power is required that we "might *know* the things that are freely given unto us of God," and only by the Spirit can they be discerned (1 Cor. 2. 12, 14; Ephes. 1. 17), or experimentally enjoyed (Ephes. 3. 16). How many beloved saints of God have never even *apprehended* what God has for them. How many are seeking to live their Christian life on a few precious elementary truths, and never *go on to perfection*!

Yet again, all we know is to be worked out in *practice*; is to become *walk*. What power is required for this—to mortify the deeds of the body; to have no confidence in the flesh; to be complete as regards the fruit of righteousness; to exercise patience and longsuffering; to produce the fruit of

the Spirit; to overcome the world; to live unto God! All this requires *power* as we well know by experience, and by our failure oftentimes!

Then true Christian *walk* is a *witness*, and witness in this world which lies in the wicked one will mean *warfare*, not the 'civil war' of Romans 7., but true Christian conflict! We are enjoined to "be strong in the Lord and *the power of His might*" (Ephes. 6.). The Spirit of Christ indwelling us is the Spirit of the Conqueror who leads His people like Joshua of old from victory unto victory! The divine *panoply* (the "whole armour of God") and the divine *power* are indispensable in the "good fight of faith."

Only "by the word of truth, by the *power of God*, and by the arms of righteousness . . ." (2 Cor. 6. 7) can we prevail; but having these we must prevail, for the "weapons of our warfare are . . . mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10. 4, 5). And this warfare means endurance; by the power of God we can go on, and *go on*, and only so (2 Tim. 1. 8).

Now what is the *nature* of the power which accomplishes such results? What we have seen in the Acts we also find throughout the epistles, that spiritual power is *the power of the Holy Spirit*. He in His power works in and through human vessels, and these made of earth, that the *excellency of the power* may be of God and not of them (2 Cor. 4. 7). The power, we repeat, is in the Holy Spirit, who is actually and actively the sole Source of it for us; and *only what is done in His power and energy*—whether worship, walk, witness or warfare—is *acceptable to God and truly*

efficacious. He is both Source and Stream—we are the channels; He is the Agent—we are the instruments. The power is in us but only possessed as *derived*, and only usable in *dependence*. Oh! how much in our lives will perhaps in the great day be found to have been but “creaturely activity” resulting in nothing living or lasting because not accomplished in Holy Spirit power! Let us have grace, then, to “seek the Lord and *His strength*; seek His face for evermore” (Ps. 105. 4).

Spiritual power is also the *power of the cross* (1 Cor. 1. 18; Gal. 6. 14). Having come down consequent upon the accomplished work of Calvary, the Holy Spirit always magnifies the cross as the grand foundation of all for God and man. Not only the blood of atonement—that, of course, is fundamental—but the cross where “the rays of His glory meet”; God’s focus of power; His principle of working; where He has declared His sentence upon sin in the flesh (Rom. 8. 3); His judgment of the world (1 Cor. 1. 18–29); His triumph over Satan and all evil powers (Heb. 2. 14; Col. 2. 15).

The *Spirit ever honours the cross in the life and testimony of God’s people*. When the cross no longer cuts; where the “offence”—the *scandal*—of the cross ceases to be evident, there will inevitably be found in some form or another the allowance of the flesh, the spirit of the world, and the loss of spiritual power. As J. N. D. has said, “Where the life of the flesh ends, the life of the Spirit begins, and practically we have power in the life of the Spirit in proportion as the flesh is dead.”

But the cross alone would, after all, be negative—a necessary, a blessed negative, but negative for all that. But *God’s negatives are always introductions to His positives!* The Crucified was raised from the dead by divine

power; and spiritual power being the power of life in Him (Rom. 8. 2) is *resurrection power*. The apostle prayed that the saints might “know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephes. 1. 19–21). The same apostle longed to “know the power of His resurrection . . .” (Phil. 3.). This power is one superior to death, and victorious over every enemy; and its source is outside all that is seen. God’s power has a *plane of working*, and that is resurrection. All Christian blessings and hopes lie that side of death in Him who is “the firstborn from the dead.” So we can say, “All my fresh springs are in thee,” i.e., in Zion—the risen Christ! How unspeakably blessed to have had any experience of this!

As the “firstborn from the dead” *Christ is the Head and Beginning of the (new) creation of God*; and all those in Christ are embraced in that new creation—yea, each such one is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5. 17). This is particularly the standpoint of Ephesians (Ephes. 2. 10). New creation is both a measure and a *power of walk*—“as many as walk according to this rule. . . .” (Gal. 6. 16). This lifts us entirely outside all the religion of man, outside the flesh into the region where “Christ is everything and in all.” It is power to be there! Spiritual power is *new creation power*. Oh, may God give us to know more of it!

The power is *one*; we have only been considering various aspects of it, the varied rays of its glory. It is divine power. *In Person* it is the power of the Spirit; *in principle* it is the power of the cross; *in plane* it is resurrection; *in perspective* it is new creation; *in*

purpose it is for the will and glory of God. We now proceed to show that *in possession* it is derived, and *in practice* it is dependent.

It may be helpful at this point briefly to suggest what does *not* convey power. There is no power in the *flesh*: happy the Christian who has no confidence in it! There is no power in the *law*, though it be God's just demand; it is the "strength of sin." Neither is there power in the *new birth*, though it be a necessity; nor even in eternal life, for life is perhaps capacity rather than power. Nor is power to be found in spiritual light, in knowledge or even in visions and revelations of the Lord: Paul had all these and yet needed a thorn in the flesh that in His weakness He might know the power of Christ.

The power of God is the Spirit; and it is possessed by the Christian as he is possessed by the Spirit. For it is one thing to be indwelt and anointed by the Spirit—true of all believers—and another to be possessed by, filled by (in) the Spirit.

This brings us to the *secret* we have been seeking. *All self-seeking destroys power*, for the Spirit has come to glorify Christ and will only impart power for that purpose. And being the *Holy Spirit* He must work to bring the vessel into accord with the holiness of God. *All sin destroys power*. To expect power apart from a holy life is the prelude to shipwreck.

Further, as we have seen, power in a creature must be a derivation not a

deposit, and therefore constant *dependence* is needed, and for that, *faith* (cp. Ps. 78. 41, and Mark 6. 5). *Self-confidence* and *unbelief* render power impossible. Power can only be found in *fellowship with God*, and hence it is always associated with the life of *prayer*. For in true prayer all these conditions are met, or the lack of them remedied.

In prayer we yield ourselves to God and give Him larger possession of us. We come by the renewal of our mind, the exercise of our conscience, and the stimulus of our affections into a closer adjustment to Himself. And prayer is the very essence of dependence, and if true, of faith. In other words, to walk with God in the light of His Word, in obedience to His will, in occupation with His Christ—that means power, as indeed it needs it!

Oh, may our need of more of this power be divinely impressed upon us, and upon the church of God to-day! May our very need drive us to Him! In the sense of this need, and in the light of His grace, let us *ask*, and let us *receive* more largely, for surely God is waiting and longing to give us of this sacred and indispensable unction and dynamic for the accomplishment of His good and perfect and acceptable will!

"Thou giv'st the Holy Spirit's dower,
Spirit of life and love and *power*,
And dost His seven-fold graces shower,
Upon us all.

"To Thee from whom we all derive,
Our life, our gifts, our *power* to give,
O may we ever with Thee live,
Who givest all!"

It is not the man that sees defects, and does no more than talk about them that does the work of God.

The man who in reading the Bible does not learn to think less of himself reads it in vain.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Eternal Life and Law-keeping? Luke 10. 28.

"I shall be glad if you can allow me space for the following question in your valuable paper, **SCRIPTURE TRUTH**, of which I am a regular reader. When our Lord Jesus Christ quoted, 'This DO and thou shalt LIVE,' did He mean that which the **LAW** promises to those who help its precepts—that is to say (A) A continuance of life, or length of days (Exod. 20. 12). or (B) Eternal life? With the following Scriptures in mind, Gal. 3. 10-14; 4. 21, 22; Rom. 3. 20; Acts 13. 39; it would seem that if the sinner could get **LIFE** by the **LAW**, it would not be perfect or else he would not be a sinner! also eternal life is a gift (Rom. 6. 23; Ephes. 2. 8, 9). Help will be greatly valued."—R. M.

YOU will notice that the Lord did not speak of *eternal* life in His answer to the lawyer, but said what the law itself said, "This do and thou shalt live." If a man kept the law, which none did, he would be free from the penalty of breaking it, which was the curse and death, and he would have the right to continue to live. But that right would be his only as long as he continued in all the things that were written in the book of the law to do them. So that he might have the right to live to-day and forfeit that right to-morrow. Life was his only so long as he was obedient. A life that a man might lose any day could not be spoken of as eternal life. The law could only offer natural life on earth, with its natural relationships and conditions, and it was conditional.

There was not a man who ever lived under the law that kept it, save only the one man, Jesus Christ; all others are guilty before God, and because all have sinned, death has passed upon all (Rom. 5. 12). Those who have broken the law lie under the sentence of death already, and it is too late for them to talk of gaining life by keeping it. "If there had been a law given which could have given life verily righteousness would have been by the law" (Gal. 3. 21), but there was no such law. Law in its very principle, can only condemn the transgressor, it cannot restore him to the life he has forfeited by breaking it. But God in His infinite wisdom and love has found a way by which He

can give life to men. It is not the old life restored, which all must part company with sooner or later, but a new life which Adam even in innocence did not possess. It is eternal life, the gift of God.

You will find that righteousness and life go together, and sin and death. We could have no life before God apart from righteousness, and as we have no righteousness of our own, for "there is none righteous, no, not one." We must look away from ourselves and find it in another, and the gospel preaches this to us, for God is "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." "Christ Jesus is made unto us righteousness." We are "made the righteousness of God in Him" (Rom. 3. 26; 1 Cor. 1. 30; 2 Cor. 5. 21). Our Saviour bore the dread penalty for us. "He was delivered for our offences," "He was made sin for us," and "He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that is hanged on a tree" (Gal. 3. 13). Having met the claims of justice against us He has been raised again for our justification (Rom. 4. 25), and all who believe are in Him, and there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8. 1). Now clear of the condemnation of the law, and clear of God's holy judgment in Christ Jesus, we have life also in Him, as the gift of God. We had no claim upon this, we could not have inherited it, for we

were heirs of death and not life, we could not have merited it by any work, it is the gift of God's infinite love. And as such we cannot lose it. It is a sinless heavenly life, we only possess it in Christ risen from the dead.

The Christian and Voting.

“ . . . We have had before us Romans 13., ‘ Let every soul be subject to the powers that be.’ We are under much exercise here as by the law of Australia it is compulsory for every person to register and vote at elections, the penalty for non-compliance is a fine of £1. Now according to the Scripture we are dead to the world and alive unto Christ, thus we are separated to Him, and is not the penalty a way of escape for us? Will you give us definite help as to this in Scripture Truth? ”—SYDNEY.

LET us get things clearly before us.

The Scripture does not say that we are dead to “ the powers that be ” but “ dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world ” (Col. 2. 20). There is an important difference between the two. The powers that be are ordained of God, but the world and its rudiments are of the devil, for he is the god and prince of it, and it lies in him the wicked one (1 John 5. 19). “ The powers that be ” may be governed by the rudiments or principles of the world, but that is not the question in our Scripture, it is that their AUTHORITY is from God and they are maintained and restrained by Him, and in upholding authority they are God's ministers. So that one who is subject to the Word of God will be subject to these higher powers. Counting them as the ministers of God in their administration for the maintenance of peace and the execution of justice against law-breakers and evil doers. This would apply to the policeman in the street as well as to the Prime Minister in Parliament. We have to pray and give thanks also for all that rule (1 Timothy 2.). So that we are not dead to them but very much alive to them, since we must obey them and pray for them. This is the will of God concerning them and us. So far the commands of the Word are clear and definite and Christians

“ This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and *this life is in His Son*. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life ” (1 John 5. 4.)

have no option but to obey the Word.

But while we must be subject to the administration of the law, and fulfil our obligations as Christians, we have no instruction in the Word as to assisting in the making of legislators, this and the hurly-burly and excitement of party politics does not seem to us to harmonize with our position and character of strangers and pilgrims in the world, who have been called with a heavenly calling and whose conversation [citizenship] is in heaven (Phil. 3. 20). So that as long as the Christian is allowed liberty in this matter we believe it is better for him to hold aloof, and this altogether apart from the question as to whether he can endorse the policy and person of this or that candidate.

Where voting is made compulsory by law the position seems somewhat different and the question becomes a very practical one, but we feel that it is one that each must decide for himself. If the penalty for noncompliance is really an alternative to voting we should suffer it, only those who take this course should see that they do not do it in the spirit of “ I refuse to be coerced.” But let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, avoiding contention and endeavouring as much as lieth in him to be at peace with all men.

A CHAMBER FOR THE MAN OF GOD. (J. T. MAWSON)

Read 2 Kings 4. 8—11.

THIS 4th chapter of 2 Kings is one of the most delightful and instructive in the Old Testament. It begins with a famine and it ends with a feast, plainly proving that God has come into it by the way. Elisha the man of God, who stood for God and showed what His goodness and grace were to a needy and sinful people, is the great figure in it, but he does but illustrate the fullness that there is in our Lord Jesus to meet every need that any man or woman can have. Thus we will view him. Elisha shall show us what the Lord Jesus is as the dispenser of the grace and blessings of God.

The chapter opens with a bankrupt widow, a speaking picture of a burdened unforgiven sinner, but Elisha met her need, and not only was her debt paid—the past all settled—but she had “the rest” to live upon: the future was all secured and provided for. So it is with all who have turned to the Lord Jesus Christ in their need—they are justified freely by the grace of God—cleared for ever of their guilty past—but their future is also secured: the grace of the Lord is sufficient for them.

But the figure changes, the bankrupt widow, now forgiven and free, gives place to a great woman with great possessions. And this very change has been wrought in and for us. Christians, we who were once bankrupt sinners are now a great people through the grace of God. I hope we are not great in our own eyes, and I hope that we do not desire to be great in the eyes of the world; yet we are great in the eyes of heaven, for we are the children of God. Hear the words of Holy Scripture: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and **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. 8.). No angel has so high a place as that, nor can any claim so great a destiny. I saw crowds of people waiting in the streets the other day and learnt that the king’s daughter was expected to pass, and when she did she was given a respectful and loyal tribute by the crowds, and perfectly right—honour to whom honour—she is a great person in the land and the people acknowledge it. As you and I walk in the streets nobody notices us; we have no honour in this world, for we are nobodies in its estimation; but the day is coming when we shall enter our own land, the golden gates to the Father’s house will be thrown back for us, and in that day the angels of God will line the shining way and welcome us home—the sons of God brought to glory by redeeming blood. This is the dignity that God has put upon us; may our ways be consistent with it. Let us live as the children of God should, as those who have great resources and a great destiny.

We owe everything to our Lord, and it is right we should consider Him and His desires. What does He desire? Above all things He wants our company. True love can be satisfied with nothing less from us. Notice in our picture that **THE MAN OF GOD PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF THE GREAT WOMAN CONTINUALLY**. It is thus that our Lord acts. He seeks in a place within our hearts and lives. And the Holy Ghost has come to take of the things of Christ and show them to us, and thus He passes by us continually to win a place for Himself in our hearts.

It is thus that we see Him in Revelation 3. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," He says. "If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me." The man of God did not force himself upon this woman's hospitality, but when she constrained him he went in and ate bread with her. It has been said, and truly said, that "we get as much of the company of the Lord as we desire." If we *constrain* Him He will not deny us His company ; it is this that His heart yearns for and it is a joy to Him when yearning for Him awakens in our hearts.

I gather that these occasional visits of Elisha to the Shunammite's house were wonderful times for her, insomuch that she determined to have him there not as an occasional visitor but as one of her household, a constant guest. And we, have we not known seasons of joy when we admitted the Lord to our hearts? In sorrow we have sought Him and He has blest us with His own comfort ; in times of depression He has cheered us, and turned our mourning into songs of praise. He has touched our hearts with His love and we have been ashamed of our neglect of Him but rejoiced in His grace that abides ever the same. These seasons may not have lasted long, but they were wonderful while they did last. He gave them to us that we might long after Him more and do what this great woman did for Elisha.

She said to her husband, "Behold, now *I perceive that this is a holy man of God*, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber on the wall . . . and it shall be when he cometh to us that he shall turn in thither." Her perception was right—she was a wise woman. Oh, that we may be all like her in regard to Christ ; but if we are to be, as she prepared a

chamber for Elisha, so we must prepare a chamber for Christ. The heart is the chamber—your heart, dear Christian. It may not be very large but it may be the guest-chamber of the King of glory. But how can the heart be prepared for Him? Let us learn the lesson that the story of this wise woman teaches.

She was a practical, thorough kind of woman, and I have no doubt that the first thing she did was to use the broom and clear out the cobwebs that were hidden in the dark corners and sweep out of the chamber all that was unsuited to the desired guest. Test yourself here, dear Christian. Are there lurking in your heart things that you cherish that keep the Lord out of it? Ah, if you do but see Him passing by, and get one glimpse of His glory, these cherished things will be filth and rubbish to you ; you will feel them to be encumbrances, occupying time and space that the Lord would fill, and you will want to be rid of them. Do you say, "I have tried often to give up habits and things that I know are wrong but have only failed, until I have almost despaired"? Yes, I know that experience and I know what you need—a true sight of the cross upon which Jesus gave Himself for you to redeem you from all that iniquity that holds you and to purify you unto Himself, to be His own peculiar treasure. You need that backward look to the cross, and then an upward look to the glory into which He has gone, and the Holy Ghost who dwells in you can give you both, and the Holy Ghost will be the power within you to bring you into conformity to Christ. It is in the presence of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit that we are enabled to condemn and turn out of our lives what is contrary to Christ, and best of all,

and most needful of all, to judge and turn from sinful self.

The Lord Himself will come to our aid if we place ourselves without reserve in His hands, and we may take up David's words and say to Him, "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me." Lord, take Thy candle and go through every chamber of my life from its topmost turret down to its deepest vault. Light with Thine own light the dark recesses in it and show me things as they appear to Thee!

Now comes the furnishing of the chamber. Into the one that she prepared for Elisha the great woman put **A BED, A TABLE, A STOOL AND A CANDLESTICK**. The bed is the place of rest. You remember the words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls." The yoke of the Lord means submission to His holy will, and His will is good and perfect and acceptable. It is not against us but for us, and when we yield ourselves to it the inward conflict and restlessness give place to quietness and rest. And as we learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, the envyings and jealousy and ambitions of men that make them fret and fume do not trouble us; we can leave ourselves and our concerns in God's hand and in confidence in Him find rest. This is the first thing; we have no chamber fit for the Lord to dwell in if this is absent, but in such a heart He will find His pleasure and rest.

Then follows the table, and this speaks of communion. "I will sup with him and he with Me," said the Lord. He desires to enter into our

things, our joys and sorrows, for He loves us and is interested in us as our dearest and truest Friend, and He desires to bring to us His own comfort and grace in all that may cause us grief, but He would also lead us into His things, for He wants us to sup with Him, to have communion with Him in His things as His friends. A heart that is at rest from itself and consequently free to hold communion with Him is a heart that is delightful to Him.

The stool came next, and we must not overlook this. Mary understood the need and blessedness of the stool, for she sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word, and we can only be maintained in communion with Him as we sit at His feet and learn of Him. The old restlessness will re-assert itself if we neglect this; but as we sit at His feet we shall abide in Him and His words will abide in us, and we shall ask what we will, for hearing His word and speaking to Him in prayer go together. At His feet we learn of Him, and the more we know Him the more we love Him, and He has said, "If any man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." The chamber will not be tenantless if we show our love to the Lord by hearing and keeping His word.

Then the candlestick will be there. Our bodies will be full of light, having no part dark; sincerity and truth will mark us and we shall shine for Him who dwells within our hearts. The light that has shone in will shine out.

Into this chamber swept and furnished the man of God came and lay there, and the Shunammite was a happy and honoured woman. May the spiritual reality pictured in this Old Testament story be true in every one of our lives!

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(D. Ross.)

(Bradford, February 16th, 1929.)

Scriptures: John 45. 16, 17, 26 ; 15. 26, 27 ; 16. 13, 14.
 Acts, chaps. 1, 5, 11, 4.
 Galatians 5. 22-25.
 Ephesians 1. 13, 14 ; 4. 29, 30 ; 5. 18, 19.
 1 Thess. 5. 19, 20.

HUNDREDS of people recite the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," but do they really believe in the Holy Ghost? We all accept the teaching of the Bible as to the Holy Ghost, but is it vital in our lives? Last week in a leading religious journal there was a very timely article warning Christendom of the danger of the defective Christianity which results from a neglect of the Holy Spirit. The writer pointed out that, while many recognized the evil of Unitarianism, few saw that there was at present the danger of Binitarianism, i.e., the belief in only two persons in the Godhead. In our holy faith God is a Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Some one recently remarked to me that the young Christians of to-day need specially to be taught regarding the Lord's Second Coming and the Holy Spirit, and it is precisely in connection with these two doctrines that so much erroneous teaching is diffused to-day. Therefore I propose to give a very simple outline of the Scriptural teaching concerning the Holy Ghost. I shall give you nothing new, as it is not novelties we need, but the plain truth of God's Holy Word.

1. There is a widespread idea that the Holy Spirit is merely an *influence*. In the Scriptures which we have read, especially from John's Gospel, the personal pronoun is constantly used in reference to the Spirit. It is HE not IT. Again He is spoken of as having a mind, as knowing, as willing, as speaking, as loving, as capable of being

grieved. None of these things can be predicated of an influence. Scripture, therefore, indicates that the Spirit is a PERSON.

2. Some believers, though acknowledging Him to be a person, yet think of Him as inferior in some way to the Father and the Son. He is, however, spoken of in the Bible as having attributes which belong only to God. Psalm 139. shows us that He is *omnipresent*, 1 Corinthians 2. 11 indicate that He is *omniscient*, while Hebrews 9. 14 attribute to Him *eternity*. Clearly He is GOD.

3. Note now some of the epithets applied to the Spirit. He is the *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of Holiness. A Christian as he is led by Him will never fall into unholiness or uncleanness. He is the Spirit of *Truth*, and under His guidance we shall never wander into error. He is the Spirit of *Grace*, and therefore, the ungraciousness that we often display is not His fruit, but is an evil work of the flesh. He is the Spirit of *Wisdom* and *Understanding*, and when we act foolishly we are assuredly not walking in the Spirit. Again He is the Spirit of *Glory*. The God of Glory appeared to Abraham, but the glory of God is now revealed to us in the face of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, He is the Spirit of *Promise* to give to us now as heavenly light what soon we shall enjoy in our Father's home on high.

4. You will notice that Jesus speaks of Him as *another Comforter*. That implies that there had already been

one, viz., God the Son, the Lord Jesus, but He had now to leave the disciples and another Comforter was necessary. All that Christ had been to His disciples the Spirit would be, and even more. Sometimes we sing :

“ I think when I read that sweet story of old
When Jesus was here amongst men,
I should like to have been with Him then.”

But when Jesus was here the cross still loomed ahead, death was still unconquered, and there was no man in the glory. Now there is at God's right hand a risen, ascended Man from whom has come the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit's day. Our English word does not fully express the meaning of the Greek word translated Comforter. Literally it is *paraclete* (para—beside ; clete—called). The term thus really means “ one called alongside to help.” Now apply that to Jesus Himself in His life down here. No matter what difficulties confronted His disciples—lack of bread, a raging sea threatening to engulf them, the sickness of a dear friend—Jesus was there alongside to succour them. When He departed, it seemed as if they would be left orphans in their stupidity, distress and human weakness, but Jesus said, “ I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter,” and He is here to-day. I would speak reverently, but it is as though you and I are going through this world on a conducted tour. Many people would like to travel in Europe, but are prevented by the difficulties that present themselves in the language, their lack of knowledge concerning hotels, timetables, tariffs, gratuities, etc., but there are now touring agents eager to step in and undertake everything for them if the travellers will only put themselves under their care. So it is with the Christian. In all the manifold difficulties of our pilgrim pathway we have beside us, abiding with us

for ever, this wonderful Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.

5. For the disciples of those days the Spirit was to be their Remembrancer, to bring to their memory and to their understanding the things which Jesus had taught them in the days of His flesh and which they could not then comprehend. What a difference Pentecost made in these men whom the Gospels bring before us as so unable to enter into the mind and purpose of their Lord. Peter could say at a great crisis, “ Then remembered I the word of the Lord.” The Spirit had illumined for him the *Past*.

But the Spirit is not here simply to tell us of Christ after the flesh, but also to witness to the risen and glorified Christ. “ He shall testify of *Me*.” It makes a vast difference in our lives, when we truly realize that Christ lives for us in the glory of God and when the Spirit makes good to us the Saviour's *present* grace. By that Spirit we are changed into His image from glory to glory as we behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord.

Again the Spirit has to tell us of things to come. The Christian who is enlightened by the Spirit-breathed Scriptures of Truth will never be taken by surprise by such happenings as the recent compact between Mussolini and the Pope. Such things are foreshadowed there, and foreshadow still greater happenings indicated for the *future*.

One thing the Spirit does not do and that is, He does not speak of or from Himself. Here is a test for some of the present-day movements where people profess to have experienced some special blessings in connection with the Holy Spirit. Do we find these people occupied with Christ, or concerned merely with the evidences of the work of the Spirit in themselves ? We grow

Christlike not by watching the operations of the Spirit within us, but by learning Christ under the Spirit's direction. I once heard a man declare that he stood on the pedestal of sanctification. Well, a pedestal must be a rather uncomfortable and unrestful place upon which to stand. One would feel safer at the feet of Jesus.

The Spirit *dwells in you*. Youth, middle age and old age have each their peculiar problems and temptations, but we have to remember through them all that our bodies are the temple of God's Spirit. Some people wax extremely indignant against Oliver Cromwell because he stabled his horses in one of our magnificent cathedrals. He was guilty of sacrilege. Shall we not be also guilty of a greater sacrilege if by carelessness or unholiness we defile our bodies—God's holy shrine.

6. Let us look now at some of the actions attributed to the Holy Spirit. First of all, we learn that He *baptizes*. Scripture shows clearly that this baptism is an accomplished *historical* fact, which took place once and for all at Pentecost. In only one Scripture other than Acts 1. 5 and 11. 16 have we the word; 1 Cor. 12. 13 tells us by "one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body." There is no need, therefore, to pray for a second baptism, as all believers since Pentecost have come under the influence of the great Pentecostal outpouring. Just as a stone cast into a pool produces ever-widening circles, so we see in the Acts of the Apostles how the Pentecostal wave widens out till it takes in Judea, Samaria, Cæsarea, Antioch, the Greek world, the Roman world, and, thank God, since then it has reached us in our little island.

What we need is *filling*. This is Christian *experience*. The disciples were confronted with all kinds of trying

emergencies, but when the power of the Spirit filled them, they were ready to meet them. How often do we read such words in the hour of crises, "But He, full of the Holy Spirit," etc. But not only do we need this filling for difficulties, but also for worship. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The greatest incentives to song have been love and wine and war. The power that prompts and fits for song in the Christian life is to be something different, viz., the Spirit. Our hearts are to be the musical instrument upon which He is to produce melody. Frances R. Havergal tells in one of her beautiful poems of the lady who received an Æolian harp from whose seven strings her fingers could only produce a single note. The accompanying letter, however, said :

"You cannot wake its music till you lift
The closèd sash. Take up and gently lay
Your harp where it may meet the freshening
air,
Then wait and listen."

This she did, and presently lovely music, "the delicate twining of silvery cords," "swelling notes full and long, like a far-off cathedral song," trembled out of the silence.

The wind that bloweth where it listeth brought
The glory of harp-music—not my skill or
thought.

Shall not we likewise open our hearts to the breathings of the Holy Spirit, and let Him produce therefrom heaven-gratifying music?

"Having believed ye were *sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise." The point of this passage is to show who are sealed, viz., believers. The Spirit then is given as marking off all who believe as God's *property* :

Then on each He setteth His own Secret Sign;
"They that have My Spirit, These," saith
He, "are Mine."

The Holy Spirit is also the *earnest*, that is, the pledge of our inheritance. In this sense He is *prophetic*. An interesting use of the word "earnest" was its application to a bridegroom's betrothal gifts to the bride. All that was his was one day to become hers. We have a beautiful illustration of this when Eliezer gave to Rebekah jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment as a foretaste of the wealth that would be hers when she was married to his master's son. Ephesians brings before us the heavenly bride, and the Spirit is the "earnest" of what is yet to come.

7. And now, what is to be our part in all this? What can we do? The Apostle Paul exhorts us to "walk in the Spirit." He speaks also of those who are "led by the Spirit," and it is for us to be ready unreservedly for His guidance. It is not a question of our worth, but of what the Spirit can do with a heart fully surrendered to the Lord. A huge audience of some 11,000 people gathered together to hear a great violinist play on an instrument worth £1000. During his play their hearts were stirred, but imagine their surprise and horror when he smashed his instrument over the chair. Then he explained that he had bought the instrument he had been using for 8s. at a second-hand music-stall. Then he proceeded to play on his £1000 violin. There were those present who found but little difference in the music produced therefrom. It was the player that counted, not the instrument. Some of us may be only 8s. instruments, and some more valuable, but if we yield ourselves to God the music of our lives will be for the pleasure of God and the blessing of our fellows.

If we walk in the Spirit, then we shall produce the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. But perhaps there is a worm at the root, which keeps the fruit from growing, and here again we have an exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit." Might not the cause of our fruitlessness be found hinted at in these words, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth"? How can a grieved Spirit produce His lovely fruit in a heart filled with bitterness? How can He call forth His divine music from a mouth filled with slander? Is not this the reason oftentimes why we cannot pray, and why we preach in vain?

Finally, we are not to *quench* the Spirit. Have we not here one of the evils of modern Christendom? Men have abandoned the God-given way, the Bible methods of carrying on His work, and have substituted for these their organizations with Committees, Presidents and Popes whom they call God's Vicars on earth, thereby shutting out the true Vicar of God upon earth—the Holy Spirit, and oftentimes quenching His activities. Is it not also a fault sometimes found in the individual Christian life when we resist the promptings of the Spirit of God to some little bit of service on our own part, or hinder by our fussy, fleshly activities the Spirit's leading in another?

Chosen—through the Holy Spirit, through the sanctifying grace
 Poured upon His precious vessels, meetened for the heavenly place;
 Chosen—to show forth His praises, to be holy in His sight;
 Chosen—unto grace and glory, chosen unto life and light.

Take the sorrow from God and full consolation will flow to you from the same source.

THE GIFT.

(L. R.)

“*Those whom THOU hast given ME.*”—John 17. 11.

EVERY word that fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ is of eternal import—words of counsel, words of reproof, words of power, words of comfort—each perfect in its season ; but there is one little sentence, seven times repeated in almost the same words, in that wonderful seventeenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel which claims our humble and earnest meditation. “*Those whom Thou hast given Me.*” We hear the Lord speaking to His Father about them. He had been leading them along all through the Gospel. In chapter 6. 37 He says, “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me,*” and again (verse 39), “*Of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing,*” and verse 44, “*No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.*” In chapter 10. 29 He tells them, “*My Father which gave them Me is greater than all.*”

It is such a very marvellous thing that there should be those who have been given by the Father to the Son—the subjects of divine love, for we read, “*As the Father hath loved Me so have I loved you*” (John 15. 9), and again, “*Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me*” (John 17. 23).

In that day the great, conquering, Roman world went on its idolatrous way, ignorant of, or indifferent to the fact that the **SON OF GOD WAS THERE**. True He had come in the form of a servant, of One who paid tribute to Cæsar, though above all the Cæsars, Heir to an Imperial Throne, the throne of the Universe, such as Cæsar could never have imagined.

The Jewish world with its chief priests and rulers, its Scribes and Pharisees, its temple, that should have been a house of prayer for all nations,

likewise went on its unbelieving way, seeing no beauty in Him of Whom all the prophets had spoken, not only indifferent, but openly hostile to Him Who came to His own, only to be refused by them.

Nevertheless there was a little band drawn by the Father, and given to Him out of the world to be His own. Lazarus raised from the dead was one of these, Martha who served, Mary of the alabaster box of precious ointment, “*who also sat at Jesus’ feet,*” John who lay in His bosom, yea Peter who denied Him and Thomas who doubted, all these and many more whose names are unknown except to Him are numbered among His own which were in the world. Lest we who live to-day should question whether we may have part with them, the Lord in His prayer in that same chapter 17. links with them “*those who shall believe on Me through their word*” (verse 20).

Do we realize, beloved, that we belong to this favoured company? Let us say the words “*those whom Thou hast given Me,*” over and over again until by the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit, come to take of His things and show them unto us, their preciousness shall sink deeper and deeper into our hearts.

Let us consider some of the things He does for His own. He loves them unto the end. Knowing well their faithlessness, their self-seeking, their dullness, He loved them as the Father had loved Him.

He gives them eternal life “*that they might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent.*” “*Life without end that no beginning knew,*” life of an entirely new order, the life enjoyed by those who “*con-*

tinue in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2. 24).

He holds them in His hand.

He declares the Father's name to them; He puts them in the place of sons in His Father's house, and makes them know how welcome they are there.

He pleads that they may be with Him where He is, to behold His glory—loved before the foundation of the world—and He promises to come again and receive them unto Himself. They are to be His joy now, in the day of His rejection; they shall be for His glory for evermore.

And when He told them all these things He knew at what a cost to Himself all must be accomplished. Such was their condition as lost and ruined by nature, sinful in heart and practice, before they could be numbered among His own He must lay down His life for them. No man took it from Him, He would lay it down of Himself. One who came after had understood a little, for he said, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20).

How great was His love! Many waters could not quench it, floods could not drown it, Gethsemane and Calvary stayed it not, inalienable, unalterable, eternal; through time with all its changing scenes, and beyond time when heaven and earth shall have passed away this love of

Jesus shall be the theme of our wonder and praise. "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end" (John 13. 1). He loves them still, now gone up on high, their great High Priest and Advocate; they are the objects of His ceaseless care; no words could tell how much He loves, it is for each heart to yield its own worshipping response.

But beloved, we must ask ourselves—as far as we are concerned—shall that great love be in vain? Is such a thing possible? Alas! too sadly possible. It shall not be in vain as to our eternal blessing, because that is secured for us in Him who can never fail, but if we are not living in the conscious knowledge and enjoyment of His love, then, as far as we are at present concerned, that love has been in vain. And yet He waits patiently to make it good to us, He bids us come and come again to Him; does He not call Himself "your Lord and Teacher?" Much perhaps in our lives may have to go, and the choice be made in a very practical way between the seen and temporal things and the knowledge of Him and of His great love, unseen and eternal.

May these two thoughts, "Those whom Thou hast given Me" and "Having loved His own which were in the world," constrain us to be just a little more for His joy and praise than hitherto. Amen.

He led me through the wilderness
 A long and lonely way,
 He soothed me by His tenderness,
 And fed me day by day.
 Oh! better far the wilderness
 And desert way to me,
 If, passing through its loneliness
 I should be nearer Thee.

THE UNDYING ALTAR FIRES OF ISRAEL.

(S LEVERMORE.)

“The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out”—
Leviticus 6. 13.

THE fire went out in Ephesus; they left their “first love.” Only the smouldering ashes of orthodoxy—their works, their labour and their patience, remained. Alas! but few—very few, if *any to-day*, are even up to their level. They did *try* the false teachers, but how few can be depended upon to do so to-day? Alas, the “Modernist” carries all before him, and goes almost unopposed, because none, or very few, have the moral courage or spiritual power to cast back his lies in his teeth. They worship the *creature* more than the *Creator*. Solemn condition! They allow Christ’s Name to be dishonoured rather than offend. Yet, with Ephesus, in spite of all their works, etc., etc., the fire of an undying, quenchless love had expired. That for which Paul prayed in his epistle (Ephes. 3. 14-19) in A.D. 64 is now lacking in 96. “Thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2. 4). Let there be no mistake about this “first love.” It was not *theirs* for *Christ*, but *Christ’s* for *them*. It was “the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” What the life is to the body, the love of Christ is to the soul. Without this powerful dynamic—this motive force—all is cold and lifeless. Instead of *spiritual life* there is *carnal death*, for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom 8. 6)

All that ceaseless devotion and self-sacrifice of Jonathan for David, all that intimate and passionate attachment—the *feminality* of love to which David refers, when in heart-broken accents he cried, “Thy love to me was wonderful, *passing the love of women*” (2 Sam. 1. 26)—was now lacking, alas!

Now all that love of Jonathan’s dated from David’s wonderful and unique victory over Goliath in the valley of Elah, type of our most gracious Lord, when,

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

It was then that “he loved him as his own soul” There and then he “stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow and to his girdle.” Calvary was the manifestation of the love that passeth knowledge and is the birth-place of first love in our hearts.

Only there may guilty self reach the end of it’s own guiltiness—only there—

And only there find freedom from its robe of self-love: only *there!*—

The great unconscious transference—the stripping place is ever—and only ever can be—*there!*

’Tis *there* great David’s greater Son begets a love so great that nothing can surpass it, and happy Jonathan freely gives him all he *is* and *has*. *There* and only *there*.

The *heart* is the altar. The immutable and quenchless love of Christ is the *flame*. The Holy Spirit is the One who keeps it brightly burning. Oh may the fire of this unutterable love be a living flame and an undying experience upon the altars of our hearts, burning up all that wretched self-love with its wicked pride, its envy and emulation, consuming all malice, hatred, unkindness, deceit, make-believe; changing our *philanthropy* into *philo-Christy*, and our

polytheism into one great unique and absorbing passion. Ply the fan of meditation. It is a mighty flame-kindling fan. David found it so: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" (Psalm 104 34). The angels of the Lord who dwell in the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings of the holy place are so integral a part of it that they themselves are described in this very Psalm, verse 4, as "flames of fire." The flaming chariots of 2 Kings 2. 11; 6. 17, 13 14 were cohorts of angels all aflame with the ineffable, supernal radiance and splendour of

God. May we, in all the pure, intense reality and sincerity of Christ's own love, ministered by the Holy Spirit, cry out in those Spirit aflame words of Wesley,

"O that in me the sacred fire might now
begin to glow,
Burn up the dross of base desire, and make
the mountains flow"

Or, with Andrew Reed,

"Come as the fire and purge our hearts,
Like sacrificial flame,
Let our whole soul an offering be
To our Redeemer's Name."

Amen and Amen!!

NOW THEN DO IT.

"Ye sought for David in times past to be King over you Now then do it."

WAS there ever a time in your spiritual history when the desire rose up in your heart to be altogether for Christ, when you longed to be wholly under His sway because of the love that He has for you? And did that desire pass and leave you as it found you? Call upon memory and conscience and heart to awaken and pray the Lord that He will lead you back to that sacred hour in your spiritual history, and renew within you that Spirit-wrought desire. Then make your decision. You have lost much time, there is not much more to lose. If your life, or what remains of it, is to be in accord with God, Christ must in all things in it have the pre-eminence. You have desired that it should be so in the past. Do it now.

"After ye have Suffered Awhile."

(1 Peter 5. 10)

It is no use to hope that we shall be stablished and settled and deeply rooted if no rough winds pass over us. Shrink not from the winds of trial, but take comfort, believing that by their rough discipline God is fulfilling this benediction to you.

"He Careth for you."

Let all who are sad take heart again,
We are not alone in our hours of pain;
Our Father looks from His throne above
To soothe and comfort us with HIS LOVE
He leaves us not when the storms are nigh—
And we have safety for He is nigh.
Can that be trouble which He doth share?
Oh, rest in peace, for THE LORD DOTH CARE.

“THE END OF THE LORD.”

(F. B. HOLE.)

ALL God's dealings with His people have a definite end in view. If, in the first place, we recognize that this is a fact, and if secondly we gain some understanding of what the end is, we shall be stabilized and tranquillized in our souls; we shall be patient and enduring unto the coming of the Lord.

If we open the Epistle of James at his fifth chapter we shall find that in the first six verses he contemplates the early Christians as being defrauded and even killed by the ungodly. Then in verses 7 and 8 he exhorts them to patience: they were to endure unto the coming of the Lord, when everything will be rectified, when the end God had in view in all His dealings with them will be reached and the riddle which His ways had presented will be fully solved. In verse 11 he reminds them that while waiting for the coming of the Lord they had the comfort of the Scriptures and particularly of the book of Job. The history of that patriarch has been put on record that future generations might have a clear insight into the object that God has before Him in allowing even the direst calamities to overwhelm His people.

We doubt if there is living upon earth to-day one Christian who is not more or less tried by circumstances. Moreover, in the great majority of cases they are not only tried but also very much perplexed and often tempted to quarrel with God's discipline and find fault with His ways. We are all of us apt to reason about such things as did Asaph before he went into the Sanctuary. He tells us about it in Psalm 73, and records that going into the Sanctuary of God he gained an understanding of the end of the ungodly, which solved the riddle of

God's previous dealings with them. It was *their* end, however, which Asaph discovered. *God's* end, the object He has before Him, in all His dealings with His people, is another matter; and it is this that we find in the closing chapter of the book of Job.

We have “heard of the patience of Job.” It has indeed become proverbial. It is not likely that in all the history of the world before or since has such a combination of disasters fallen upon one man in one day. The various happenings were as co-ordinated as to rule out all idea of chance and make it manifest that they were directed from the unseen world. Job's friends felt this and so did Job, yet he endured and gave God time to work out His seemingly dark design to its bright conclusion.

Our patience may be very small compared with Job's. We indeed may hardly have had the patience to read through the forty-two chapters of his book, while he had the patience to endure the sufferings and trials which those chapters record! The Apostle James said to his fellow-believers, “Ye . . . have seen the end of the Lord.” We may well ask ourselves if we have seen it. It is still worth seeing. It will strengthen our feeble patience if we observe it. Let us read Job 42. with that object in view.

Having read the chapter, let us endeavour to summarize what we have seen as to the end of God's dealings with him.

1. *Job was enriched by an increased knowledge of God Himself*, for he said, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee.” In these words he contrasted his former knowledge which had been by report merely with that which he

had now acquired by direct observation. He had, if we may so put it, exchanged knowledge acquired at second hand for knowledge of a first-hand sort. Formerly he knew *about* Him but now *he knew Him*.

"Mine eye seeth Thee." Not exactly the eye of his head—for the Lord was in the whirlwind and there was no visible shape before his eyes—but the eye of his mind. He had gained a direct apprehension of, and contact with, God. Was there no gain in this? There was *immense* gain.

Precisely this is the first great end of all God's dealings with His saints to-day. Every trial that crosses our paths has this for its object, for there are certain things that can only be learned in the school of experience. We do not underrate the importance of Bible study. God forbid that we should! There are things that can only be learned in God's Bible-study School. There we must go and sit if we would be instructed in God's thoughts and get delivered from our own thoughts. Sound doctrine is of the utmost importance and there alone, with the Spirit of God as our Instructor, can we get it. But to graduate in the *experimental* knowledge of God we must enter His school of discipline—a school which offers to us a life-long curriculum.

The Scriptures are full of examples which show us the value of God's school of discipline. A peculiarly striking example is the case of the sisters of Bethany, as recorded in John 11. They had a very trying experience, for it must have been tantalizing beyond words to know that all would be well if only the Lord appeared, and yet there was that unaccountable delay, that apparent indifference, until death supervened and their hopes crumbled to dust. Still in the final issue how

greatly were they enlarged in the knowledge of Jesus! What a display they witnessed not only of His power but of His love! They gained an insight into His divine affections that could never be exactly duplicated during an eternity in heaven.

"The touch that heals the broken heart
Is never felt above.
His angels know His blessedness,
His way-worn saints His love."

Now it is exactly thus for us to-day. Let us earnestly pray that we may not miss this "end of the Lord" in all the trials we may be called upon to face. If this be the happy finish to the story of our difficult circumstances we may well endure with patience.

2. *Ingaining this knowledge of God, Job gained a corresponding knowledge of himself in an experimental way*, for he added, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Thus it ever is. The more we know of God the more, by way of contrast, we know ourselves. Self-knowledge of this sort is very painful but it is very wholesome, for it leads to salvation from self, which is a deliverance of the first magnitude.

There was a time in Job's history when things had been very different in every way. He describes it in chapter 29., and the pronouns "I," "me," and "my" seem to tumble over one another all through the chapter. He was prosperous and flourishing and mightily content with his performances. Verse 11 of that chapter stands in striking contrast with verses 5 and 6 of our chapter. Then he stated, "when the ear heard *me*, then it *BLESSED me*; and when the eye saw *me* it gave witness to *me*." Now he says, "I have heard of *Thee* by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth *Thee*. Wherefore I *ABHOR myself* and repent in dust and ashes." When the eye was filled with Job there was one story to

tell. When Jehovah filled the vision and Job was only seen as in the light of His presence the story was quite another. This self-knowledge can only be reached in an experimental way. The worthlessness of our nature is very patiently stated in Scripture, and of course we do well to believe its holy denunciations and humbly bow before God's Word as convicted by it. Yet it is one thing to believe in the worthlessness of the flesh and another thing to learn it by humbling experience. In Romans 7. 18, Paul did not say "I believe," but "I KNOW that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" and that chapter details for us the sad experiences through which he reached that knowledge.

Have we learned this much needed lesson? It is the narrow gate that leads to a large place of blessing in the liberty of the Spirit. It is a part of the "end of the Lord" in all our trials.

3. *Job himself was much altered; his own character brought more largely into conformity with the gracious nature of God.* This feature is not perhaps so immediately apparent; but it unquestionably underlies what we have in verses 7 to 10 of our chapter.

Job's three friends had not as yet been humbled as Job had been. At last, as recorded in chapter 40. 3-5 and 42. 1-5, Job had spoken of God the thing that was right and the three friends had not reached this point. They had only ceased speaking, had only laid their hands upon their mouths, because Job had talked them to a standstill. They were now instructed of God as to the course they were to take. They were so to act as firstly to render a testimony to sacrifice on the only ground upon which sinful men may have to do with God; and secondly to humble themselves by seeking the intercession of the very

man whom they had been accusing and maligning. They were to be the humble applicants and Job was to act as a priest of God! This was "the end of the Lord"—very desirable indeed—as to the three friends.

But what of Job? Well, here he is still in his bodily wretchedness, stripped of all earthly possessions, sitting in the dust heap. In his smitten and afflicted state he had proved himself an intellectual prince amongst men. Handicapped as he was, he had taken on these able men in argument and talked them to silence. They had said cruel and uncalled for things to him and he had repaid them with added interest in hot words, cutting with sarcasm. Now, however, the wordy storm is over and the three friends approach Job's heap of ashes with the animals of sacrifice and in a very different spirit. Did the men of the east hear of these strange doings and gather round in their crowds to see what would happen?—we wonder.

If they did, they saw a lovely sight. The Lord had told the three friends that the man who had argued so hotly *against* them would now intercede *for* them. The sacrifices offered, they draw near and ask his prayers. The afflicted patriarch arises from the dust and though still stripped like a beggar and covered with boils he acts like a prince and a priest. The Job that they knew had disappeared, submerged beneath a new Job formed in the character of the God whom he now knew with a first-hand knowledge. The hot feeling, the animosity, the sarcasm gone. Prayer is heard in its place. And not prayer for himself, not a cry for deliverance from his boils and poverty, but prayer for them, in a warm stream of kindly intercession.

Formerly Job thought he was great, as chapter 29. witnesses. Now he

really was great, with the only kind of greatness that abides for ever—moral worth in the likeness of God. Behold this bereaved, beggared and boil-smitten man in conscious nearness to God, lovingly interceding for three men well favoured and healthy who had formerly filled him with annoyance. It was a delightful triumph for the kindness of God. Job was immeasurably promoted in spiritual grace. God's end in all Job's sufferings was a worthy one, if we think for the moment of this feature alone.

4. *God blessed Job abundantly ; turning his captivity and giving him twice as much as he had before.* This He did, when Job had prayed for his friends—and not till then. The blessings of those days were earthly and material, in contrast with the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephes. 1. 3) which are the distinctive portion of the Christian. Yet God did not permit the tide of them to once more roll in upon Job until he had been profoundly altered in spirit and character. When at last brought into nearness to God, he exercised priestly functions in a way that reflected the goodness and benevolence of God, then everything external changed. The boils disappeared, health returned, the ashes were forsaken, kindness and benevolence was poured back into his own bosom by those who had previously misjudged or forsaken him, and God so prospered him that he ended with twice as much as he had before. Job, therefore, was not a loser but a gainer by the divine dealings, even in material things.

And this, too, is one great object that God ever has in all His discipline. To-day the blessings conferred are spiritual and not material, as we have seen ; but there is many an aged believer who would testify that their

very trials and sorrows have been instrumental under God's hand in leading them into an enjoyment of His spiritual gifts twice as great as that with which they started.

In our case we have to remember that God *has* blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and that His gifts as well as His calling are not subject to recall or to a change of mind. The spiritual blessings are ours, but the apprehension, the realization, the enjoyment of them is another thing ; and it is here that great enlargement may be known. That we should be so enlarged is part of God's design in His dealings with us.

5. *Lastly, God conveyed to Job a somewhat hidden but very sweet assurance as to one of the main points of perplexity and exercise of mind through which he had passed.* In the first chapter we read about Job's intercessory sacrifices and his earnest desires for his children, and how they were swept out of life in a way that well might have raised in his mind distressing doubts and fears as to them. In chapter 14. we read his reasonings and mental struggles over the great matter of resurrection, which in his day was not a subject of clear and unmistakable revelation. "If a man die shall he live again?" was his anxious question, and we have the pathetic record of how he tried to spell out an affirmative answer, reasoning from the analogy of a cut-down tree. He succeeded in reaching the conclusion that death was not the end of men ; but that in the end his change would come, and he would rise in answer to the call of God. Still at the best it was a conclusion he had reached by reasoning and not a plain word of revelation from God.

The hour for that plain revelation was not yet. It arrived when Christ Himself rose from the dead, and consequently life and incorruptibility

came to light by the gospel. Still, by means of His peculiar arithmetic, God gave to Job an intimation calculated to confirm him in his expectations. It looked like faulty arithmetic, but it was really thoroughly correct and full of meaning.

In verse 10 the plain statement is made that "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." This is supplemented by details in verses 12 and 13, so that we may see that this statement covered not only sheep, camels, oxen and asses, but also sons and daughters. If we have a mind to check the arithmetic of God's "two-times table" we have only to refer back to chapter 1. 3. We find it correct as to sheep, fourteen thousand as against seven thousand; as regards camels, six thousand against three thousand; as regards oxen, a thousand yoke as against five hundred; as regards asses, a thousand as against five hundred; but when we come to children we find a serious discrepancy, only seven sons and three daughters as against the same number before. Why is this? The Lord gave him twice as much as he had before and no qualification or reservation is attached to that statement.

Was it a mistake? By no means. It was a gracious intimation to Job which doubtless his faith knew how to interpret. Had God given him fourteen sons and six daughters the inference would have been that his former children were as much and as irrevocably lost to him as were his former sheep and camels and oxen and asses. In giving him afresh only seven

sons and three daughters, it was in effect God telling him that the first family was not permanently lost, that his prayers and intercessions had been heard and that there was a resurrection world in which he and they should meet again.

So this, too, was part of "the end of the Lord" in Job's case. It must have greatly established his faith and filled his soul with contentment and praise. As in after years he looked back over his strange and trying experiences he must have felt they were worth while in spite of being so crushing. He was enriched in every way as the result of them, and God was glorified in him.

These things written aforetime were written for our learning. Have we learned by them? In the New Testament we have the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8. 28). *All things*, without any qualification. The troubles that come upon us in the church circle as well as in the domestic or business circles; troubles springing from one's brethren as well as troubles arising from the world or from one's own personal mistakes; *all* are included. The fact is, that when most things seem to be combining against us, then most are we entitled to look up to God with enquiry as to what His end may be and to wait with patience to behold it.

It may be ours to behold it and rejoice in it even now; but whether so or not, at the coming of the Lord it will be manifested perfectly.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord."

Come, troubled and burdened soul, your griefs are heralds of weighty mercies; bring them to God: bring them with words, or tears, or silence, which you will, but bring them. You will find that these sorrows and trials are but busy spades digging deep channels into your soul into which God's own consolation may flow. Nay, they are making room for Himself. How often when we have many earthly comforts there is not so much room for Him.

GOD OUR STRENGTH.*

(A. J. ATKINS.)

THERE are some exercises and experiences that we have that are peculiar to us as *Christians*, but there are others that have been the common portion of saints of God of all dispensations. While it is indeed helpful, we might say necessary, to distinguish these, it is happy and helpful to realize that we share in common with saints of other times as recorded in Scripture. For their God is ours; and while "all God's Word is not about us, all is for us" upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10. 11; 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17). A precious heritage indeed!

One point where we touch the experience of all saints as much as anywhere is in our need of strength, *spiritual strength*. As we all realize, it is one thing to see and accept the principles of "power" as found in Scripture; and another to know experimentally in the needs, difficulties, trials and exercises of the way what it is to be strong, and if not "to do exploits," at least to be able to be, and do, and suffer in a way pleasing to God. For this we need strength not only in life's great crises, its heavy trials or sore temptations, but equally in the duties and demands of each day's pilgrimage.

If we would rightly and adequately estimate our need in this respect as well as discover the answer to it, we need to turn to the Word of God, for while it is true that experience interprets Scripture, it is still more true that *Scripture interprets and illuminates experience*, and only in the light of Scripture can our experience as saints be rightly understood. Moreover, there is power and strength in the Word itself apart from our full understanding of it. Happy in respect of the theme before us is the man

whose continual prayer is, "Strengthen me according to Thy Word"! (Ps. 119. 28).

In the Word this need of strength is seen in a multitude of examples of men of like passions as ourselves who at different times and in varied circumstances "out of weakness were *made strong*." With the emphasis of repeated illustration, as well as by direct statement, we are taught that man is indeed "frail man" (so one of the Hebrew words for man means), and in himself "is as water spilt upon the ground." We learn, too, in the history of God's ways that *every creature fails and falls who is not divinely sustained*. The need of strength arises, also, from the fact that from Abel downwards the godly life has been lived in an evil and hostile world where opposition and persecution are to be encountered by the faithful, and that against them is a mighty and subtle enemy. It is in this connection that repeatedly we find God exhorting His people to "be strong."* Precious command that carries with it its own grace and power to the obedient heart!

Where, then, is this strength to be found? This question brings us to a deeply affecting truth concerning our God. *He loves to adapt Himself to the needs of His people and proves this in the very titles which at different times He assumes*. The need on our part is always met by some glory on His! What a God is ours!

It is so in respect of the need in question. To Abram it was that God first revealed Himself as *the Almighty* (El-Shaddai—God-All-Providing); and this Name has been the heritage of all

* A sequel to "Spiritual Power," see April issue of "Scripture Truth."

* See e.g., Deut. 11. 8; 31. 6; Josh. 1. 6; 1 Chron. 28. 10; 2 Chron. 15. 7; Isa. 35. 4; Dan. 10. 19; Zech. 8. 9, 13; 1 Cor. 16. 13; Eph. 6. 10; 2 Tim. 2. 1.

the "faithful" since. "Strength *belongeth unto Him*" (Ps. 62. 11, marg.), and that, as the connection shows, not merely creative force but a "saving strength" that is the "salvation," "defence," the "rock" and "refuge" of His people. It is one of the things that they naturally and rightly ascribe to Him in their worship (Ps. 68. 34; Rev. 5. 12).

And this glorious and gracious attribute is not only declared directly by the Spirit in Scripture, but is recorded there by His inspiration as part of *the spiritual experience of saints*. How tender and persuasive is this mode of teaching us! We find this truth, then, in the first recorded song—the redemption song of Israel—"Jehovah is my *strength* and song . . ." (Exod. 15. 2). And how often is this note struck in the Psalms—the "book of experience"! "God is our refuge and *strength*" (Ps. 46. 1). "God is the *strength* of my heart" (Ps. 73. 26), ". . . of my life" (Ps. 27. 1), and "of my salvation" (Ps. 140. 7). How beautiful to the spiritual mind are the Psalmist's breathings after God in this connection! "I will love Thee, O *Lord my strength!*" (Ps. 18. 1; cp. 19. 14, etc.); and the beatitude of the Spirit through him, "Blessed is the man whose *strength the Lord is*" (Ps. 84. 5), in contrast to the man "that made not God his strength" (Ps. 52. 7). "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," declares Isaiah (26. 4); and Habakkuk takes up the same strain: "Jehovah God is my strength!" (Hab. 3. 19).

Not only is this precious truth the answer to our need, and part of the divine glory, but it is embraced among those exceeding great and precious promises, those blessed engagements of our God which stimulate and feed our faith. And we see that like our other

blessings strength is not so much something we attain to as something we obtain. On His part it is a gift: "In Thine hand it is *to give strength* to all" (1 Chron. 29. 12)—there is the ability; God "*gives strength* and power" (Ps. 68. 35)—there is the fact; and "the Lord *will give strength* to His people" (Ps. 29. 11)—there is the promise!

How then may this boon be obtained? If it is a gift from above, why do not all receive it? Why do so many of us outwardly bewail or secretly deplore our lack of this very thing? Is not the secret in this?—that *God's blessings are free gifts but their reception and enjoyment is subject to conditions on our side*. Some may think that this is a "legal" principle, but it is not so. It is one that runs all through Scripture. What characterizes Christianity is not the setting aside of necessary moral conditions but the ministration of *grace*; that is, that the same grace that provides the blessings freely, makes them available for us, and works in us the conditions of receiving and enjoying them. The fundamental condition of all blessing is *need*, and *a sense of need*.

So it is with the blessing we are considering. God will not add His strength to ours; He requires "empty vessels." "He giveth power to the *faint*, and to them that *have no might* He increaseth strength" (Isa. 40. 29). To have His strength there needs to be a renouncing of our own; a relinquishing of nature's energy; a repudiation of the arm of flesh; a resigning of ourselves to God, and a readiness to let Him be to us what He will. How many and varied are the circumstances He passes us through to bring us there!

But there is no strength merely in acknowledging and feeling our weakness. This may easily by itself become

sinful, perilous, passivity and apathy of soul, and a cover for unbelief. We need also definitely, actively and believingly to "*seek the Lord and His strength*" (Ps. 105. 4), even as Abraham of whom it is said he "*found strength in faith*" (Rom. 4. 20, N.T., J.N.D.). Faith is not merely submission to God but laying hold of God! And along with this goes the holy and courageous determination of the soul—this is, perhaps, where many of us fail—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God" (Ps. 71. 16). Such an attitude on our part is always answered above; it moves heaven and the heart and hand that make heaven: "Thy God hath *commandeth thy strength*"; with the resulting experience; "I was *strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me*" (Ezra 7. 28). The strength is not, as it were, despatched from a distance to us; it is a personal ministration—"the *hand of the Lord.*"

There is a real imparting of strength. Praise God! have we not known it? Do we not long to know it more?

In this connection let us not forget that *joy* is an accompaniment of this divine strength. Much weakness with God's people seems to be due to lack of real holy joy in God. Has there not been too much of the wan, wistful, woe-begone kind of Christianity among us? "*The joy of the Lord is your strength*" (Neh. 8. 10). Did not Luther well say that the devil hates the sound of praise? Someone has well called him "the god of *discouragement*"!

Both strength and joy, however, are only truly to be found in the path of the will of God; to be in that path is strength, though we also need strength and courage to find that path and to walk in it. "*The way of the Lord is strength to the upright*" (Prov. 10. 29).

To be continued.

ABOUT PRAYER.

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting."—I Tim. 2. 8.

WE should earnestly consider these accompaniments of true prayer.

HOLY HANDS describes the personal state without which the soul must be out of communion with God, for without holiness no man can see the Lord.

WITHOUT WRATH describes what ought to be our feelings towards our fellows—our brethren and all men. If anger, malice, hard thoughts are in our hearts the Father's ear is not open to hear our prayers. If we forgive not those who trespass against us, neither will He forgive us, and if unforgiven, then out of communion and at a distance as to practical state from Him.

OR DOUBTING describes our attitude towards God, if we come to him we must believe that He is. Faith must mark our approach to God. Let not the waverer, the doubter, think that he shall receive anything from the Lord.

In these things we may perhaps discover some hidden reason why our prayers remain unanswered. Let us stir ourselves up to cleanse our hands, to walk in love, and have faith in God.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES. No. VII.

(R. McCALLUM.)

MOVING from Rephidim they came to the Mount of God where Moses was joined by his wife and two sons, who had been brought to him under the care of Jethro, his father-in-law. The 18th Chapter of Exodus throws a very interesting light upon the life of Moses at this time. There was no frittering away of time when they came to a halt. "For it came to pass on the morrow after the arrival of Jethro that Moses sat to judge the people." We are told that all the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. Every matter, great or small, was brought to him for judgment. The people enquired of God through him and their petitions he spread out before God for guidance. The burden must have been tremendous for one man. Jethro realized that under the strain he would wear away, and advised the institution of subordinate judges who would adjudicate in matters of minor importance and refer the weightier matters to Moses himself. These assistants in the work were to be representative of all the people and able men who feared God, "men of truth, hating covetousness."

It has frequently been asserted that Moses erred in giving ear to the voice of his father-in-law, but in the absence of such a verdict in the Scriptures themselves it would be rash to dogmatize too confidently about this. We might with equal validity declare that the twelve erred when subsequent to the "murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations," they advocated that seven men be selected to look after this business. They themselves had formerly been responsible, but they felt the necessity of giving themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word

and of leaving this important but lesser service to others. So, it would appear, Moses was relieved of a great number of harassing details, many of them no doubt mere trivialities, to devote himself to things of greater spiritual import. Moreover it called upon men of character to come forward and undertake a share of the responsibilities connected with this great nation. It is quite true that the arguments presented by Jethro were based upon his anxiety for the welfare of his son-in-law. He was actuated by desires for his bodily good. But does not God care for His servants, and may He not give through those who love us advice for our physical good with a view to securing the extension of our term of usefulness and determining its sphere?

There can be no doubt that there is important typical teaching in this chapter. We have, in fact, presented a picture of millennial blessing when Israel brought back to the land will rejoice under the administration of Emmanuel. The church prefigured by Zipporah will have her part in that day as happily associated with the administrator in the glories of His millennial reign. The Gentiles, too, as typified by Jethro, have their part in this scene. Moses declared to Jethro "all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake," and the story of Jehovah's intervention on behalf of His people makes the heart of Jethro to rejoice and to confess the absolute supremacy of Israel's God, so that he worships with Aaron.

"In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they unto the wilderness of Sinai." At this point the period of pure grace terminates and there begins

God's dealings with His people on the ground of law. Obedience to the voice of God would establish them as His peculiar people and would constitute them "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." When God's proposals had been placed before the elders of Israel we read that "all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." It need hardly be emphasized here that the law was never intended to be a revelation of the nature of God. It revealed the moral requirements which a just God had a right to demand from man, and its designed effect was to make patent the absolute incompetence of man to come up to the divine standard. The manifestation of human incompetence could in no wise astonish God, for, as already remarked, this was the designed effect of the law, but it is just the last thing of which man can be persuaded. "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do," was their assertion then, and right down through the ages man has been protesting that he is able to secure divine approbation on the ground of works. But what saith the Scriptures? "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight;" and the tables of stone hurled from the heights and broken before the people had received them, because of their shameful and inexcusable idolatry, witness to man's total inability to keep God's law. Yet the fact that they were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone shows their enduring nature: no jot or tittle can pass away. The terrors of Mount Sinai testify of the majesty and holiness of God and of the distance of man from God as revealed under law.

Moses alone ascended that holy mount to commune with Jehovah, and

during his absence terrible scenes were enacted in the valley beneath. "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount the people gathered themselves unto Aaron and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Aaron bade them break off the golden earrings which were in their wives' ears, perhaps imagining that this would be too great self-sacrifice on the part of the women to meet with a hearty response, but if so he was soon to be undeluded. "All the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And Aaron cast the gold into the furnace and when molten fashioned it with a graving tool." Both care and skill were brought to work upon it until the calf stood complete and the people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." It was not that they positively denied the existence of God, but they changed the glory of the Omnipotent One into an image like to four-footed beasts. Gross immorality is the invariable concomitant of such idolatry, and we gather from the 32nd Chapter of Exodus that the people had engaged in shameful orgies as they danced around the calf. They were naked and "corrupted themselves," and but for the intercession of Moses God would have consumed the people in His wrath.

God's proposal was to take Moses and of him make a nation as He had done with Abraham, but Moses used every conceivable argument to prevent such a termination to the nation's history. Would not the Egyptians say that it was with a view to their destruction that God had led them into the wilderness? Would not men ridicule

the promises made to the fathers? On the next day we learn Moses made that strange but noble offer that he himself should be blotted out of God's book and the nation spared. He realized that an atonement for the sins of the people was a necessity if they were to be spared, but he failed to see that no man can atone for his own sins or the sins of his brother, to say nothing of the sins of a whole nation. The 32nd verse of Exodus ch. 32. is one of the strangest in the whole range of Scripture. Here we have an unfinished sentence, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—, and if not, blot me out, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." How much we should like to know what was in the mind of Moses, although he could not find words for its utterance, or dared not speak it! May it have been that the glory of the Lord in His gracious dealings would be greatly magnified? Yet how could He act in grace and yet be righteous?

In the next chapter, however, we find Moses making the request, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." The answer is, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." God has been merciful, but in the manifestation of His grace He has displayed divine glory, for He has maintained every claim of righteousness. An atonement was necessary, but the One who made it was One competent to do so, the ever-blessed Son of God Himself. In the Cross of Christ there has been the declaration of divine righteousness in the "remission of sins that are past," and it is clear that those to whom the

law was given were never at any time under pure law, for mercy sovereign in its exercise intervened to limit the judgments which their sins had incurred.

We have made reference to mercy, but it must be emphasized that the law cannot in any wise be tolerant to transgression. The commandments given a second time upon two tables of stone, although now by the hand of the mediator, were identical with the first, and just because the law cannot forgo one jot or tittle in its claims it was the ministration of condemnation. Under the mixed system of law and mercy the tabernacle, sacrifices and priesthood found their place, and the convicted conscience approaching God in the exercise of faith obtained forgiveness. The tables of stone brought down the second time from the holy mount were placed within the ark over which was the mercy seat. The mercy seat was covered with the blood of atonement, which told of sacrifice offered and accepted by God. Looking back in the light of Calvary we can say, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us."

"It came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses' face shone while he talked with Him." It is in the presence of God that we become transfigured, but we may be sure of this, that the one so transformed is blissfully unconscious of it, although the effulgence is manifest to others. As the late Dr. Meyer has said, "True Christian excellence is unconscious of its beauty as Moses was: whenever it becomes self-conscious it loses its charm."

God can cause the flowers of joy to grow in the furrows of sorrow.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Capital Punishment.

“Would it be possible for you to give in **SCRIPTURE TRUTH** the authority of Scripture for “Capital Punishment” for murder, in this dispensation. If not, may I ask the favour of your sending me the Scriptures by post? I would like to take this opportunity of saying how often I thank God for the helpful ministry published in **SCRIPTURE TRUTH**. The one copy I take is enjoyed by several Christians who are prevented by circumstances, like myself, from attending lectures and meetings. **BERKS**.”

THE grace of this gospel dispensation, which has been manifested to gather men out of the world for God’s name and for heaven (see Acts 15. 14, and other Scriptures), has not in any way interfered with or changed God’s government of the world. That government continues, and what a man sows he reaps. God has delegated His government of the world to men, and the powers that be are said to be ordained of God; they are His ministers, “for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13. 4).

It was to Noah after the flood that this power was first given, and in ordaining him as the first magistrate God declared the sanctity of human life in the words, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed,” and the reason for this is given, “for in the image of God made He man” (Gen. 9.). Men may have lost both the sense and the dignity of being in God’s image, and that image may be and has been terribly marred, but the fact remains, and it puts a man on a footing before God and towards his fellows which far transcends that of the beasts. Man, as the image of God, is God’s representative in this lower creation, and as such has great

responsibilities, first of course toward God, and then towards his fellows. As regards his fellows, his responsibility is to recognize the sanctity of human life, which belongs to God. This lies at the basis of society, and murder is rightly deemed by the universal conscience as the worst of crimes.

At Sinai where God laid down His law for the direct government of a people, this fundamental law and its penalty takes a leading place. “He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death” (Exod. 21. 12). And when we come to the New Testament we read, “But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manslayers” (1 Tim. 1. 8, 9).

The grace of God is enough to save even a murderer, and he may go from the scaffold to heaven, through the atoning merit of the blood of Jesus, just as the malefactor went from the cross to paradise, but for his crime his life in this world is rightly forfeited, and that according to the fundamental law of God.

Under His wings what a refuge in sorrow,
 How the heart yearningly turns to its rest;
 Often when earth has no balm for my healing
 There I find comfort, and there I am blest.

Was Christ the Sin-bearer all through His life ?

“In the current issue of a monthly magazine that I read there is a paragraph from a book by Prof. Smeaton in which it is stated that ‘Christ must be regarded as bearing the penalty of sin from the first moment of His incarnation, or even from His sending by His Father :’ and all His privations and humiliations in His lifetime are put down to this. He says, ‘All these griefs in the Man of sorrows tended to satisfaction for sin, and were comprehended in the primeval threat of death.’ Will you please say whether this is correct, and give some help ?” — WOLVERHAMPTON.

IF this teaching means that the Lord Jesus was making atonement for sins by what He suffered between His birth and His cross, it is false and unscriptural. “It is *the blood* that maketh atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17. 11), “without **THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD** is no remission” (Heb. 9. 22). “Christ **DIED** for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15. 3). All Scripture teaches that it was on the cross and by His suffering and death and blood there that our Lord made atonement for us, and no Scripture teaches that He did this in any way by His life · it is an imagination of the mind arising from a faulty conception of the truth.

It is true that our Lord suffered continually ; from the beginning of His life He was “the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” but these were not atoning sufferings, nor did He suffer them as the Sinbearer. He entered fully into all the trials and buffetings that necessarily came upon a man wholly dependent upon and obedient to God in a world of evil. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and felt in His own Spirit all the misery that had come upon men as a result of sin and death.

He felt this perfectly, being Himself perfect and sinless. As representing God and revealing Him to men He suffered, for men hated both Him and His Father, and in showing all the meekness and lowliness that was in Him and that should become a Man before God He suffered, for men despised and rejected Him for it. But in none of these sufferings did He endure the wrath and judgment of God, but upon the cross during those three hours of darkness, when God's face was hidden from Him, He was bearing in His own body our sins. Throughout His life He lived and moved in the unclouded light of God's countenance ; whatever the vicissitudes that He suffered in the world and at the hands of men He found His peace and joy in communion with God, His Father, but on the cross that countenance was withdrawn, for He was made sin for us there, and as our Representative He bore the judgment of the Holy God, and His life was poured out in sacrifice for us. It was only when His side had been pierced and the blood and water flowed forth that “satisfaction for sin” was rendered, and only by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all could we be sanctified (Heb. 10. 10).

The more fiercely the billows beat upon the shore, the more the pebbles are rounded and polished. Afflictions are the billows that polish us as stones for the great city, the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21.).

BEARING MUCH FRUIT.

(J. T. MAWSON)

"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you."—John 15. 16.

EVERY Christian heart desires to bear much fruit that the Father may be glorified. If a man has not that desire we may safely conclude that he is dead, with no work of God in his soul. It is our purpose to spend a while in considering how this can be done, and for this we will turn to the very words of our Lord. He shall be our Instructor, and we will be His disciples, sitting as learners at His feet.

I know that the Vine and its branches show us what the Lord and His disciples were when He was on earth. He displaced Israel, who had proved themselves to be a worthless vine, and He brought forth fruit to God where they had failed; but the parable is recorded for our learning, and the analogy between the vine and its branches and Christ and His disciples abides, and the Lord intends that we should learn the lesson that it teaches, and having learnt it bear much fruit. We are not considering the branches that bear no fruit, mere professors of Christ, who have a name to live but are dead, but the true fruit-bearing branches. These are the subjects first of the *once for all* cleansing power of the word of Christ, and then of the *continuous purging* or cleansing under the Father's hand.

"I am the true Vine."

We must begin here, for the great I AM of this declaration, is the beginning and source of all fruit for God. He was not a fruitful branch of a vine that already existed, nor the choicest shoot of a struggling and fallen humanity, but He was Himself the Vine from whom all fruit must come. The Jews under the law had been tested and

found wanting and their religion was now rejected as a worthless thing, for it produced only bitter grapes. In the philosophy of the Greeks there never had been life or fruit for God—"Man, know thyself" was its highest aim—but Christ had come and all fruit for God is henceforth from Him and no man ever will or can bear fruit except he abides in Him. To use another figure from another Scripture, we are married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7. 4).

"WITHOUT ME

ye can do

NOTHING"

is an arresting word; may we understand the full force of it.

"Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (ver. 3).

It is here that our vital contact with Christ begins, for I still speak of those who are fruit-bearing branches. His word has made us clean. He is not speaking of His blood here; the precious blood has cleansed us from our sins, from the evil things that we have done, but His word has purged us from what we were. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1. 22). His word has reached our souls in cleansing, vitalizing power; we have been born again by it, and purged from every false hope to find our all in Christ. Peter was an example of this when in answer to the Lord's question, "Will ye also go away?" he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6. 68, 69). He may not have understood the full import of his words at the time, for they were the full confession of the Christian faith. They meant that the temple and its ordinances were now of no account to them; that the priests and their sacrifices no longer appealed to them; that the whole ritual of that religion in which they at one time had hoped to find life had been judged by them as of no profit. They meant that they had turned from their own efforts for life and righteousness to find everything in Christ. "To whom shall we go," said he, "all else has failed us, the flesh with all its works is worthless. Thou alone hast the words of eternal life; in Thee are our hopes centred now; on Thee our faith rests. Thou art the Lifegiver, the Son of the living God." The word of the Lord had come to His disciples as light, revealing the futility and corruption of all that had gone before, and cleansing them from it, and leading them to turn from it and from themselves wholly to Christ. Of such disciples the Lord could say, "Now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken unto you." God be praised if Peter's confession is ours.

"Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He [the Father] purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit."

No fruit-bearing tree needs more care than the vine, for none has more enemies, and no fruit is more delicate or more easily spoiled. It must be carefully watched and continually purged, and that does not mean pruned merely. It means more than that—it must be cleansed from the pests that attack it and would destroy it. I am not an authority on vine culture, but I do know something of the Christian life and its besetments, and I see a striking analogy between the pests that

attack the vine and the things that hinder fruit-bearing in the Christian's life. I am speaking now of the vine as it is cultivated in such a country as this (England), where it is an exotic, and so needs more care and protection from adverse conditions, than it would if it were indigenous to the soil. Here the analogy has special force, for the heavenly life which is ours, and which is the only fruit-bearing life, does not belong to this cold world; it is an exotic here. The conditions that surround it are adverse to it, and the enemies are many, for the devil hates to see God's children bearing fruit as he hates God Himself. But what a comfort it is to know that **THE FATHER IS THE HUSBANDMAN**. What gracious care He will show in our cultivation, for the Father is the Source of all grace. He it is who purges the branches that bear fruit, that they may bring forth more fruit. Perfect wisdom and love combine in His ways with us, and He knows how to enable us to thrive in spite of the adverse conditions and evil influences that surround us, and He knows how to purge us from every pest.

"A holy Father's constant care
Keeps watch with an unwearying eye—
To see what fruits His children bear,
Fruits that may suit their calling high.

"Takes ever knowledge of our state—
What dims communion with His love,
Might check our growth—or separate
Our hearts from what's revealed above.

"Oh, wondrous love, that ne'er forgets
The objects of its tender care :
May chasten still, while sin besets,
And warns and guards us where we are.

"But ne'er forgets, but feeds us still
With tokens of His tender love ;
Will keep, till freed from every ill,
We find our rest with Him above."

One of the chief pests that mar the vine branches and destroy the fruit is the **WEEVIL**. It does its deadly work in the darkness and cannot be found during the day. If it is to be

discovered and the vine riddled of its destructive work, the vine grower must flash the light of his lantern on it in the night. It cannot endure the light and will fall from the vine when the light shines on it. There are evil things that often work secretly in our lives like the weevil, unknown to any but ourselves and God, and their presence only becomes manifest by the results of their deadly work seen in failing spiritual vigour and poor fruit—unholy thoughts, secret intentions, selfish ambitions, perhaps: these are the destructive weevils that if cherished will most effectively spoil our fruit-bearing. When the weevil has got a footing in a vine it is most difficult to dislodge; in fact several fruit-bearing seasons may be utterly lost because of it, and these evil secret things often develop into open evil that may spoil a Christian's fruit for many a day. But there may be things of which even we are not conscious, or that we have not thought of as evil, and yet that God sees are secretly sapping our strength. Ah, we need to pray David's prayer. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139.). It is by the light of His word that He searches. How wonderful is the power it has! It is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4.). Blessed for us that it is so!

Another great pest is the MEALY BUG, and no vine can be kept free from it if its surroundings are unclean.

If infected plants are near, or if filth is allowed to accumulate in the vinery, the grower may bid "good-bye" to all hope of a fruitful season, the mealy bug will see to that. This shall illustrate the fact that we must not only watch our inner life for the insidious weevil, but we must also take heed to our associations, for "evil communications corrupt good manners." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is a needed and cleansing word. And the Father Himself is specially concerned in this, for the Lord prayed when about to leave His own in the world. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17.). And on this line a clear call comes to us through the Scriptures: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." And if the fear of the consequences of such separation causes us to hesitate God pledges His name and word that He will take care of us, for He adds, "And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters." It is the Lord Almighty who says this. What a wonderful thing it is to have the Lord Almighty as our Father! But some of us may have to live with those who are godless and of the world, and we certainly have to mix with them in our work and business. What about this? Well, as much as lieth in us, we must live at peace with them, doing good unto all, but we may be, and must be, separate in heart and practice from their ways and pursuits. "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

The atmosphere that the leaves of the vine breath must be kept moist

and fresh, for if it is allowed to get dry the vine will be attacked by the RED SPIDER, a microscopic pest that can work great havoc in the vinery. And we need heavenly moisture and continual refreshment from above else our souls will become dry in spite of our separation from what we conceive to be evil things. A man may be very dry in his soul, unlovely and unloving, and yet be a separate man; but such separation is to himself and not to Christ; it is the separation of the Pharisee, and there is nothing so dry as the Pharisee. When a Christian becomes censorious, critical of his brethren, harsh in his judgments, setting up his own opinions, or it may be his own conscience as a standard for others, it is certain that he has not been breathing the atmosphere of love which keeps the soul fresh and makes us suffer long and be kind. "Continue ye in My love," said our Lord in this chapter, and this is the atmosphere that will preserve us from the depredation of the red spider. The more we see the evil of the world and the necessity of separation from it, the more necessary it is that we should be kept in the enjoyment of the positive side of our Christian life, else instead of showing the meekness and gentleness of Christ, we shall become harsh, and bitter, and dry. The atmosphere that we breathe is all-important.

There is a difference between a moist, fresh, warm atmosphere and damp, depressing cold. If the latter prevails, MILDEW will attack the vine and rob it of its juice and hinder its respiration. The world is a cold, muggy place for the Christian. The latter part of our chapter shows it to us in complete contrast to the divine sphere of love into which the grace of God has called us. It is a sphere of hatred, for it hated Jesus and His Father, whom He

so blessedly and fully revealed, and it will hate us because we belong to Him. But our souls may rise above it, if while we are in the world our souls live in our own sphere of love, and breathe the heavenly atmosphere of communion with the Lord we shall not be mildewed Christians; but if we become negligent and settle down in the world, and become lukewarm under its influence, neither cold nor hot, we most assuredly shall.

THE WINTER SEASON is the time when the vine grower gives special attention to the cleaning of the branches, and it is in what we may call our winter seasons that the Father comes very near to us to purge and to prune us. When trials come, perhaps of sickness and suffering, or stress of circumstances, or bereavement, we may be sure that the Father has something to say to us, and that He will make these things which we could not endure were He not near to us, turn out to our bearing of more and sweeter fruit, if we are exercised by them. Let us not allow the thought to enter our minds that God must have something against us when trials beset us, or say as some have said to me: "I do not know why God should punish me like this." To feel and talk in that way reveals an utterly false view of the vicissitudes of life, and must surely rob those who have it of the great blessing that the Father has for them. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," and if He left us alone and we were free from all trial, we then might grow alarmed and fear that we were not fruit-bearing branches at all. If we are near Him we shall welcome His gracious work with us, and even if the process is not joyous but grievous there will be great compensation. It has been said, and truly said, that the vine grower is never nearer to the vine than

when he is pruning it, and we may be sure that the Father is never nearer to us than when we are passing through trial according to His will, and we may eagerly look for the peaceable fruits of righteousness as a result of it.

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

The Lord's words in this chapter impress upon us the solemn fact that **WE ARE RESPONSIBLE** to bring forth fruit. It is a chapter of responsibility yet of great privilege. The Father's grace and care and His dealings with us are one side of the question, our responsibility is the other. We have been chosen, ordained and even commanded to bring forth fruit that shall remain. What is our response? A glad and willing obedience, surely. Yet human efforts are in vain; the branches are barren and useless apart from the vine. *"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."*

"WITHOUT ME

ye can do

NOTHING."

The man that abides not in Christ, and is cast forth as a branch and is withered, is an apostate, who turns wholly from the Christian faith because he never had any vital union with Christ. Judas would be an outstanding example of this. No true Christian could ever be in this verse; yet a true Christian may be more or less diverted from Christ by the wiles of the devil, hence warnings are given in the Word and watching is needful on our side. The man who turns to philosophy—the wisdom of men, that will come to naught—in the hope of enriching his life and becoming a more fruitful Christian, is being diverted from Christ,

for he is looking outside of Christ for that which can only be found in Him. The man who turns to the ordinances and traditions of men, and to forms and ceremonies, thinking that his religion will be made more appealing and impressive by these things, and that the faith of Christ needs these things to improve and complete it, is being diverted from Christ. These were the snares that were laid by the devil for the Colossians of old. We know them in these days as Modernism and Ritualism, and the majority of professing Christians have fallen into either one or the other. The warning word is more necessary than ever. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ."

The man who puts himself under the law of Moses and hopes by his endeavours to keep it, and so perfect his Christianity and assist the Holy Spirit that dwells in him to produce more fruit in his life, is being diverted from Christ. This was the Galatian error, and to them the apostle wrote, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? . . . Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh? . . . As many as are under the law are under the curse." And thorns and briars are connected with the curse, and not fruit.

The man who is puffed up with pride and boasts in the progress of mankind, saying, "I am rich and increased in good and have need for nothing," is not abiding in Christ; he has been diverted from Him, and knows not, that having shut Christ out of his life, he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. This is the Laodicean error, most terrible of all, in which no fruit can be produced

for the Father's glory and for Christ. Its end is to be utterly rejected as most nauseous to the Lord.

We have considered many things that spoil the fruit of the vine branches and divert souls from Christ, the only source of fruit-bearing, for we must not be ignorant of these things; yet they are the negative side of the matter and we must have the positive side or we shall be barren branches. **WE MUST ABIDE IN CHRIST** with purpose of heart. This must be a practical and every-day experience with us if we are to bear fruit.

Two things have operated together to make us fruit-bearing branches. The sovereign grace of the Lord that chose us and ordained us that we should go and bear fruit, and **FAITH** in us that responded to that g.ace. To abide in Christ is to continue where grace has set us. We have spoken of the Colossian snare; they were in danger of falling into it because they did not realize the greatness and all-sufficiency of Christ. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2. 6, 7). When we came to Jesus as needy, helpless sinners we found Him enough for our salvation. We did not look for anyone or thing to aid Him in this great work, and we were helpless ourselves in the matter. He did it all. As we began so we must continue; as we were then wholly dependent upon Him, so are we now and shall be, for as the branch is a dead stick without the vine, so we have no life apart from Christ. To abide in Him, is to continue in this complete dependence upon Him with which we began. He will not fail or disappoint us. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily,

and we are complete in Him; we have no need to go outside of Him for anything. He is the one and only Source of all supplies of spiritual life and sap and vigour.

AFFECTION must be active also as well as faith. Faith may be of such a feeble sort that it may cling to Christ because of the sense of need, and be satisfied to have the need relieved and met; but affection will cling to Him for His own sake and will rejoice in the knowledge of union with Him. He has loved us even as the Father has loved Him. Can we measure love like that? No, His is immeasurable love, yet thus we are loved, and His desire is that we should abide in His love. It was from this that the Ephesian church fell and their fruit was spoiled. But is not His love sufficiently attractive to make us desire to continue in it? As His love is the breath of our souls, fruit-bearing will be the simple and natural result.

OBEDIENCE goes with affection; we show our love to the Lord not by our talk but by our obedience to His word. There is one word above all others that He has pressed upon us, it is His one great commandment, "**THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER,**" and that not, as ye are loved by one another, but, "**AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.**" If we are indifferent to His word and if we disobey His commandments we are most evidently out of communion with Him, practical contact has been lost for the time being, and our fruit will suffer. But if we keep his commandments, communications will flow from the Lord to us and these are of the utmost importance in fruit-bearing, for they occupy and enthrall the thoughts of the heart, and "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he," and out of the good treasure of the heart fruit comes forth. "**YE ARE MY**

FRIENDS, IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU. Henceforth I call you not servants but friends. . . . all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

What an intimacy of life and confidence is opened up to us. Let us trace the way into it. We depend wholly on Him not only for salvation but for the life that we live as saved people; we love Him because He has won our hearts' affections; we obey Him, and He trusts us as His friends, and trusts us so fully that He communicates to us His Father's thoughts and purposes. Let us understand it. "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that He Himself doeth" (John 5. 20). The Son loves us as the Father has loved Him, and all things that He has heard of the Father He makes known to us; we are to love one another as He has loved us, and find fulness of joy in holy communion in these things. It is in this intimacy of

love and confidence that fruit is brought forth in perfection and only here. And here we may ask the Father what we will and He will give it, for here it is the life of Christ reproduced in us as we move together in obedience to His word and in union of life with Him. And His great present purpose will be fulfilled in us, for as the whole effort of the vine is to show the fulness and completeness of its life in the grapes that it bears, so is the Lord's purpose to manifest His life in us in much fruit.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1. 1-3).

THE GREATEST WONDER.

"His father saw him . . . and kissed him."—Luke 15.

THIS is the greatest wonder of all.

My Father loves me. And His love is not a blind love. He has seen all, knows all, has searched my sin to its very depth, and yet He loves me and has welcomed me to His outstretched arms and kissed me with a kiss that has reconciled me for ever.

I HAD SPENT ALL in the unspeakable depravity of my sinful heart, but HIS LOVE CANNOT BE SPENT nor can I ever pass out of the reach of it. I have left the English shores, and seen the cliffs sink below the horizon, gone on and on for hundreds of miles until

new stars shone over me. But ever and always I was hemmed in by the heavens. Heaven ringed me round about. I could never get outside that. As the heavens encompass the earth so am I compassed about with that infinite love of God. There is my strength; my unfailing hope lies in that unfailing love. Yes, prodigal, you who have gone down lowest and spent all, this love abides, and abides for you. "When we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Wonder of wonders, my Father loves me!

THE FATHER'S JOY.

"It is meet that we should make merry and be glad."—Luke 15.

HAVE we understood how God rejoiced when we returned to Him as repentant prodigals? Luke 15. is given to teach us the joy of God in the blessing of men. It is infinitely more than the meeting of our need, it is the gratification of His heart. If the sinner's need were the measure of Christ's work, then human joys would suffice; but when divine love is the measure, the Father's house and the joys that are there are alone sufficient. It is the Father's pleasure that His house should be filled with gladness. "This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." When our eyes are opened to see this side of the gospel we begin to understand how cordial and full is our reception.

"TOGETHER WITH HIM."

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."—1 Thess. 5. 20.

MARK the object of His death: it was that **WE MIGHT LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM.** Does not that touch our hearts? Is not that much more than going to heaven and being happy for ever. He sought us, desired our company, will be satisfied with nothing less, and He shall have it. Whether we watch or sleep, live or die, this shall be brought to pass. And the word "with" Him means co-partnership: we are to be with Him as His companions, not only has His death saved us *from* destruction, but it has secured for us this eternal blessedness! Nothing will satisfy divine love but this, and this is the proper hope of the Christian.

SATAN'S MODERN WAY.

(F. A. HOUSEMAN.)

IN his wanderings up and down the world,
 In his questings to and fro,
 The Enemy hit on a new device
 That should increase his following twice or thrice
 And make his kingdom grow.

"There is too much Wheat in the Field," thought he,
 "And the Tares are far too few;
 We must try to discredit Christ's Holy Word
 By boldly denouncing the Book of God
 And pretending it isn't true."

"For the time is short, and souls who stray
 From the Lamb of God that taketh away
 The sin of the World—may be snared to-day,
 If they'll only believe what I teach to deceive,
 And give credit to all that my agents say."

"We'll tell them the records their fathers loved
Can no longer be received ;
And that though God's prophecies true have proved,
Yet times are changing and things have moved
Since their ancestors first believed."

"We'll tell them that faith is of no account,
They must use their brains instead.
And "Pastors" shall give to the souls who seek
Their help in the Houses of God each week,
Poison instead of Bread."

So from pulpit and platform rings out his call—
"These Bible stories must go to the wall ;
We'll deride the Flood and deny the Fall,
And by placing reliance on men of science
Get rid of such fallacies once for all."

"They were good enough for a bygone age ;
But we of the modern schools,
Who use our reason, as everyone should,
Have decreed that to-day they are only good
For antediluvian fools."

"Our ancient Creeds, they are out of date,
We have entered a more enlightened state ;
While men of culture and learning say
There is now no sin, or at least no need
For sins to be washed away."

O we who were given this charge to keep,
To protect Christ's lambs and to feed the sheep
Dear-bought by His precious Blood,
May we never the Holy Faith betray—
Else how can we render on that Great Day
Account of ourselves to God ?

It was said of old to a Church that dared
To despise men's praise or blame,
"I know thy works—thou hast kept My Word
And hast not denied My Name."
And precious promises were declared
To the ones that overcame.

And ever the servant of God must strive
To increase the amount of his talents five
Or to multiply the two ;
Until that day when the King of kings
Shall make him ruler of many things
Who was faithful over a few.

ENLARGED IN PRESSURE.

(DAVID ROSS.)

Address at Alloa, on Saturday, March 23rd, 1929.

Psalm 4. verse 1—second clause of that verse. I want to consider it as it is translated in Mr. Darby's Version, "In pressure Thou hast enlarged me," and as an illustration of that I would like to turn to the—

2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 1.	Verses 8 to 10
" " " " "	3. Verse 10
" " " " "	4. Verses 6 to 9
" " " " "	4. Verses 16 to 18
" " " " "	9. Verse 14
" " " " "	12. Verses 7 to 9
The Epistle to the Ephesians,	3. Verses 17 to 19

"[IN pressure Thou has enlarged me." We were reading in our afternoon meeting of the meat offering (Leviticus 2.), and it occurred to me that the three elements mentioned as composing that offering—the fine flour, the oil and the frankincense—had all been subjected to pressure, and the greater the pressure upon the flour the finer was its texture and the same with the oil, and all the pressure and bruising of the frankincense could only bring forth more of its fragrance. It was our blessed Lord Jesus of whom that offering was a type. At the most crushing moment in His history, when His kindness was flung back in His face, and when He lamented that the cities in which He had done His mighty miracles would have none of Him, when His overtures of mercy were spurned and men despised and rejected Him, it was at that moment that there came from Him that sweet note of praise giving as He said, "Father, I thank Thee." "In pressure Thou hast enlarged Me." What do we think that pressure does to us—contracts us, limits us, impoverishes us? Not if we are in the company of Christ. If we are set here for His glory, we shall find that the pressure, the trials, the bereavements, the sorrows, the disasters, the disappointments that come upon us, will open up for us a

large place. We shall not be impoverished, but we shall be made rich and filled with the fulness of God.

Let us consider this wonderful man of God, Paul, in order that we might see Christ magnified in him. It is not with the desire of magnifying Paul that I speak of him, but it is in order that we might see fulfilled his desire, that in his mortal body Christ might be magnified whether by life or by death. He penned these lines which I have read to you, probably, from the city of Ephesus, or shortly after he had left it. Let us consider the pressure that there was at that time upon his spirit! Read the 11th chapter of this epistle: the care of all the churches—enough to bow anyone down as you think of the condition of the churches. To the east of him in Galatia, the brethren were in danger of leaving the true Christian position and being entangled with the yoke of bondage, a foreign, spurious thing, a Judaistic adulteration of Christianity. And the news of this reached him from over the hills and crushed his spirit. And then from across the Ægean Sea there came to him the news of the opposite danger, not of legalism but of laxity, where the Greeks of Corinth were translating Christian liberty into licence—licentiousness and looseness, and he

wondered if all his work was to be in vain—that work he had built up in Galatia ; that work on which he had spent years in Corinth. Truly he was pressed in spirit. And then in Ephesus, a stronghold of Demonism, he was face to face with the powers of darkness and of hell. He tells us he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus—men that were so bestial, men that were so under the power of the devil that they looked and acted like veritable wild beasts.

And then he says, " I want you to know, brethren, that we were pressed *beyond measure*, above strength," and it is the word " beyond measure " to which I want to draw attention. I happened to look up Mr. Wigram's Greek Concordance for a word beginning with " hyper," which means " over," and I found that the great majority of the words that begin with that prefix came from the writings of the Apostle Paul, and the writings of this period—when this epistle was written—have this word over and over and over again. A man in the battle of life ; a man pressed above measure, and yet in pressure we find that the Lord has enlarged him, and the blessing runs over. The pressure was excessive, above human strength to bear, so that he had the sentence of death in himself. And what did he learn ? Oh, what an enlargement he got in that pressure ! How was he enlarged ? He learned not to trust in himself. What a deliverance that is, and that is why God allows the pressure to come upon us ; that is why He allows the sorrow to bow us down ; that is why He allows us to be bitterly disappointed, that we may learn deliverance from SELF. He uses this word in the 7th of Romans when in that terrible experience he found out that within him was something that was *exceeding* sinful, above measure, surpassingly sinful ; so sinful that he felt himself chained to a corpse

and cried, " Who shall deliver me from this body of death ? " Oh, the pressure to find himself bound up with that foul, corrupt self of his ; and in the pressure God enlarged him and set him free, and the chapter that takes you to the depth of misery ends with a keynote of victory, " I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ! " So it was at Ephesus—the pressure led to the enlargement, and this man was delivered from himself that he should not trust in himself but that he should trust in the God that could raise from the dead—the living God.

As you read through the epistle, you find alternating the pressure and the enlargement ; the fainting and the wonderful strength ; the impoverishment and the enriching with the fulness of God. Gospel preachers, when you preach the gospel, do you ever feel, as the apostle felt in the 2nd chapter, " Who is sufficient for these things ? " Paul's sufficiency is of God. Then he goes on to think of the glory, and here you have the word in contrast to the ministry of angels that came on Mount Sinai, when there was such a revelation of the glory of God that the face of Moses shone with the reflex of that glory and the children of Israel could not bear to look upon it—such a glory that men's eyes could not bear it. And what does he say ? There has been revealed a glory that *excelleth*, that surpasseth, that is above measure, that is beyond all that glory and has utterly eclipsed it, and you and I are led into that glory ; and no longer do we need to veil our faces in fear and darkness, but we, all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed. Feeling our insufficiency for the ministry of the Lord in any sense of the word, we turn from ourselves to Him and we realize the glory in the face of Jesus, and there is this wonderful enlarging from the mean, small, contracted little

creatures that we are. We are changed into His image by having our eyes fixed upon Him, the One who fills the heart of God. No longer fearing to look upon that glory, the supreme glory of God, we gaze upon it, for it shines in the face of the One who died for us. And we are not conscious of the shining. Moses wist not that his face shone, and if we get occupied with our shining we are self-occupied, and that will cause the cloud to come upon us. But when the eyes of our hearts, without any cloud, are gazing upon the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is this transfiguration; there is this unconscious result—the reflection in us of the glory of God which is in the face of Jesus.

Chapter 4. tells you about the possibility of fainting. Paul has a terrible burden: the god of this world is against him, blinding the eyes of men, and he might well faint under the pressure of the bitter opposition, but “In pressure Thou hast enlarged me,” and he says “God who commandeth His light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.” Beloved brethren, as we look into the face of Jesus we are on holy ground; and as we feed on Him, the Bread of God, we find our delight in Him, upon whom God feeds. But now you come to the pressure side. Where have we the great treasure? In earthen vessels—frail, brittle. Why? That the *excellency* (the surpassingness) of the power might be of God and not of us. Surpassing pressure and surpassing power! And, brethren, why is it that we are so little conscious of the surpassing power of God? Perhaps because we are so little conscious of the weakness of the earthen vessels. The apostle protests as to this against God allowing him to have a thorn in the flesh, which seemed to weaken him and incapacitate him and handicap him for

the ministry of the Lord; but the Lord says, “My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect”—not in your strength but in your weakness.

Then he begins a series of paradoxes, as we might call them—troubled on every side, yet not distressed. Brethren, do we know anything about that—to know what it is to be right at the centre of the storm cloud? That is where the Lord dwelt. Look at Him on the last night—the night before His crucifixion! All around the storm is raging; the cyclone of the devil’s malignity and man’s hatred was there; and there is that calm spot in which He speaks of *My joy* and *My peace* right in the centre. Oh, my dear brethren, if we know what it is to company with Christ we may be troubled on all sides but not distressed; perplexed but not in despair—that might be translated at our wits’ end but not out of our wits; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; pressure on the one hand and the enlargement on the other; human weakness on the one hand only gives the opportunity for the manifestation of the power of God on the other hand. And then at the end of the chapter here is a beautiful expression, “For which cause we faint not.” Paul, is the pressure not too great for you? Are you not too burdened? because he uses the same word here as in Chap. 1., where he says, “We were weighed down beyond measure.” But what does he say now? “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment”—momentary and light, although a little before it was beyond measure and above strength—“worketh for us a far more exceeding”—now the word is repeated—if you were mathematicians, I would say the word was “squared”: it is an exceeding, exceeding weight of glory; it is a surpassing, surpassing weight of glory. Look at him in the 1st chapter, weighed down

above measure, and look at him as he is looking forward to that day when he will be weighed down above measure with the eternal glory of God. We do need eyesight, and we need to have our eyes turned from the things of time, from the things that are visible and temporal, and we need to look on the things that are eternal—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and all the eternal system of things that are linked up with Him; and we shall see the surpassing, surpassing weight of glory that lies ahead of those who, it may be, in this the vale of tears in the day of our testing and our trial, are in pressure. Won't we let the Lord have His way with us, and in the pressure enlarge us?

And what else do we find? What these Corinthians found, for Paul could speak of the *exceeding* GRACE that was in them. We get the same expression in the 2nd chapter of Ephesians: "That he might show forth the *exceeding* riches of His grace." And that same man in the 11th chapter tells you of all the pressure through which he went. If you want to read and know what he calls "light afflictions" read the 11th chapter of this epistle, a chapter not sufficiently well-known. When we think of our petty trials and we are weighed down, it would be a very good thing for us to get a sense of proportion, to read what this man of God went through and what he called "light," and then we shall see that anything we have been bowed down under is a mere trifle. This man that knew pressure beyond measure was the man that was privileged to have revelations beyond measure, because the *abundance* of revelation is the same word I have been speaking of—*exceeding* and above measure. He received an abundance of revelation, but along with that abundance of revelation he

received a thorn in the flesh. Why? If we get merely the revelations of God, the truth of God, without something to balance it, we become exalted, and if he got revelation above measure, he also got the ballast to keep him steady along with it. What does he call this thorn in the flesh? A messenger of Satan to buffet him, dealing blow upon blow. Perhaps you know what it is to be buffeted. Some of us hardly get our heads above water but we get buffet upon buffet. Abundance of revelation, abundance of buffeting, and with it all abundance of STRENGTH. "My grace is sufficient, my strength made perfect in your weakness."

And then, lastly—to balance this exceeding pressure, the "exceeding glory," the "exceeding power"; the "exceeding weight of glory"; the "exceeding grace"; the "exceeding revelation," and we may know the LOVE, *exceeding*, surpassing knowledge—the love of Christ that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Brethren, if the Lord allows us to pass through sorrow; if He allows blow upon blow to fall upon us; sorrow after sorrow to come upon us, it is in order that we might be enlarged. What is the hand that sends it? It is the hand of infinite love, and the love of Christ is the love that surpasseth knowledge, and yet we, brethren, can come to know it and be filled with all the fulness of God.

Brethren, shall we rebel against God's way with us? Shall we spurn the hand that brings discipline with it? or shall we not put ourselves into His hands, and, if He allows us to be weighed down, remember with that weight, with that pressure, that trial, comes the enlargement, the enrichment, the enlightenment and the filling with the love of Christ passing knowledge into all the fulness of God.

“BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.”

(Revelation xxi. 5.)

(A. J. POLLOCK.)

WHAT a truly magnificent statement, made by the One who sits on the eternal throne, the One who became incarnate in this world of sin and sorrow and death, who died to break the power of death, and who has earned the right to make this glorious announcement.

What a contrast to this present creation! We read that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together till now” (Rom. 8. 22). How sadly true is this statement! Everywhere we look there is sin and sorrow and sadness and death. Death marks all mankind for his victims. It seems as if the enemy had triumphed. Politicians endeavour to right things. A few years of strenuous effort and they sink under the intolerable burden of their tasks. Generations come and go, and humanity does not learn the lessons of history.

If we were left without a revelation of a God of love, and of One whose purposes will stand for ever, we should be pessimists indeed. In despair we should cry, “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die” (1 Cor. 15. 32). We should live in the present and shut our eyes to the blank future that lies ahead.

But thank God, a wonderful light has reached our souls. It is the light of new creation. The very thought comes as a soothing balm to our troubled spirits, as an incentive to live a life in view of it that will be pleasing to God. We look through the mist of this vale of tears, and we get a glimpse of everlasting sunshine. We struggle with our increasing weakness, and we are cheered by the thought of a new creation in which there will be no limitations, as of earth, no sickness,

no weakness, no want, no struggle.

In that wonderful chapter in Revelation where we have the account given of the new heaven and the new earth, we have to content ourselves with what we might term a negative account of what lies before us. We are told what will NOT be there, rather than what will be there. We are told that there will be no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more crying, no more death. Take these things out of this present world and we would have the millennium at once. These are the things that are the result of SIN.

No sorrow yonder, no pain mental or physical, no death, we may well leave it at that. The prospect is delightful. We would rather not know what is in store for us. If it had been good for us to know, it would have been revealed.

It seems as if the Scriptures intended that we should be occupied with the *Person* who makes the place rather than the place. For we may well ask, What is it that gives character to new creation? We answer that it is the Head of the new creation that gives character to it, the One who brings it into being, its Head and Sustainer. So we read, “If any man be IN CHRIST there is a new creation” (1 Cor. 5. 17, New Trans.). Christ gives character to new creation. New creation is not the old creation improved, renovated, continued on a higher plane. It is not the carrying forward into the next world the relationships of this present life. We are told in this connection that, “Henceforth we know no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more” (2 Cor. 5. 16).

In new creation there is "neither Jew nor Greek—neither bond nor free—neither male nor female—all one IN CHRIST JESUS" (Gal. 3. 28).

Every believer in the Lord, sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, is already IN CHRIST. There is what Scripture designates as the "inward man" (2 Cor. 4. 16). The "outward man," the physical man connected by his body with the fallen creation, perishes. If the Lord does not come, we shall each, believers though we are, age like other people, lose the freshness of our faculties, and die; but, thank God, there is the "inward man," that new creation that death cannot touch, and for which death is only gain.

But this has a special aspect for us, and results in conduct of a certain kind. This "inward man" is spiritual, incapable of sin, with true and holy desires and affections. So we read, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5. 6). This means that new creation is not a matter of form or ritual or outward profession, but of reality, of life, divine life with its affections and desires. It links us up with another world, whose principles are the very opposite of the principles of this world, whose end will be to present the Antichrist as its highest achievement, bringing about its destruction under the hand of God in government.

Faith and love are the two great elements at work—faith, that links us up with the unseen, the truly real; love, that is the very nature of God, not human love, which is drawn out to that which ministers to its own gratification, but *divine* love, the very nature of God.

Again, the result of new creation is seen in a life of good works. "We are

His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2. 10). Good works are works that spring from a heart devoted to Christ with an intelligent sense of what is pleasing to God. Good works according to God would not be the building up of the present course of things in this world. Many a work done by Christians is acclaimed as a good work, when all the time it is only building up that which will be burned up in the day of judgment.

And further we are put in relation to each other. Jew and Gentile are brought together in Christ. He has made "in Himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making peace" (Eph. 2. 15). To get the germ of this idea will help us immensely. We may belong to different nations, to different social positions, to different sexes, but IN CHRIST all these differences vanish. This one new man takes every believer to complete it. Believers have "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4. 24).

We have begun with the "inward man," but the day is fast approaching when we shall have new creation bodies, we shall be like Christ; the redemption of our bodies will take place, and then there will finally come the day that will end days, when that glorious new heaven and new earth will burst upon our astonished gaze, and there will be the fixed eternal state, the blissful eternity when God shall be all in all.

What a joy to His heart when sitting on the throne, He shall say, "Behold, I make all things new"—new, never to grow old, never to lose its lustre, never to be invaded by sin, God's own rest for ever in which we shall be blessed for ever and ever!

THE FIVE UNFOLDINGS.

(H. J. VINE.)

THE Holy Spirit gives us in the Gospels a complete fourfold picture of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but He adds, through Luke, a further disclosure of Him, giving us a most necessary and wonderful complement to what is termed "The former treatise" (Acts 1. 1), which had been set out "with method" or "order" (Luke 1. 3). This may be said of all the precious Gospels, and they show us a perfect portrayal of our gracious Saviour and Lord ; only the addition of Acts carries our thoughts not simply to the living One in resurrection, but right up to the heavenly glory where Stephen saw Him, as he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7. 56). From thence the pleasure of God prospers in His hands, whether in *grace* now or in *government* soon.

Since the presentation of the Lord on earth, the Spirit of God has disclosed the glorious counsels and purpose which centre in Him ; and also illuminated the promises and prophecies concerning His kingdom, service, dominion and personal glory ; likewise He has made known to us His exaltation to the right hand of God, consequent upon His rejection by man. The Gospels, therefore, along with the striking addition of Acts, unfold before our delighted gaze the all-varied beauties, dignities, distinctions and honours of the One who—because of His own greatness, grace and glory—alone could be the unfailing answer to the deep designs of divine love and wisdom.

1. First of all ! Have not our souls marvelled at the glowing words of psalmist and prophet as they speak of a kingdom on earth, with a glorious King, or Messiah, reigning in righteousness ? when, with Israel at the centre,

and the ordered nations around, having the multitudes of peoples beyond, there shall flow the satisfying mercies of true equity, peace and joy for all. And have not our hearts rejoiced at the prospect ? Moreover, the meditative mind might reflect, that righteous kingdom order is an absolute necessity in a sinful world like this, if the further designs of God which are according to eternal counsels are to be brought to pass, and remark, who but the one that is the divinely promised "*Son of David*" could establish it ? It is then the first Gospel of the New Testament which gives the beautiful answer to this in its opening words : "**Book of the generation of JESUS CHRIST, SON OF DAVID.**" No one else could recover Israel and set up the kingdom with regal right, ruling upon "the throne of His father David." He who is named Jesus, or Jehovah Saviour—who is yet to save His own people (Israel) from their sins (Mal. 1. 21)—is also named Emmanuel ("which being interpreted is, **GOD WITH US**"), and only such an One could perfectly bring to pass this necessary rule. The works of power and mercy recorded in this Gospel concerning "great David's greater Son" show who was present in Israel at that time ; and the same Gospel makes known also that as Son of Man He would build an indestructible assembly after His death, resurrection and ascension, in view of the coming kingdom. Its closing words consistently sustain the faith of those who serve the rejected King, for He hath said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen." This is fully in keeping with the truth unfolded in Matthew. The expression, "*The Kingdom of the heavens,*" so much used, is only found here, and is in complete accord with what the

Spirit reveals concerning Christ through
MATTHEW.

“Lord of glory, we adore Thee !
Christ of God, ascended high !
Heart and soul we bow before Thee,
Glorious now beyond the sky :
Thee we worship, Thee we praise—
Excellent in all Thy ways.”

2. And then, not only did we marvel at the promised splendours of the coming kingdom on earth, but have we not also often wondered as we have read of the many and great sufferings of One who is so strikingly shown in prophecy to be THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH—the One whose work should bring pleasure and glory to God, even as Isaiah 42. to 53. foretold—“*Behold My Servant*” (42. 1) ? Yea, “Behold My Servant shall deal prudently. He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (52. 13), and that after being “despised and rejected of men,” and after being bruised for our sins and put to grief by Jehovah ; for, raised and glorified, “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” (53. 10). This is the One God’s Spirit livingly pictures to us in the second Gospel. The Royal One of *Matthew* is seen as the Serving One of *Mark* ! The King to reign come as the Servant to suffer ! The crown and the kingdom preceded by the preaching of grace and salvation ! Therefore without genealogy or special personal introduction, as in the other three, *Mark’s* Gospel commences thus, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” ; and with diligent zeal we find Him rapidly prosecuting the work He had come to do. The word “*straightway*” occurs again and again, and gives character to this divinely directed writing, which fittingly closes by showing how the work is still going on, now Christ has risen and ascended, after having secured eternal redemption through His shed

blood ; thus the disciples “went forth, and preached everywhere, THE LORD WORKING with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” This reveals the living Lord Himself still serving along with those who had learned of Him, and so the suitable end is reached of the servant Gospel of MARK.

“Though in the very form of God,
With heavenly glory crowned,
Jesus a servant’s form assumed,
Beset with sorrow round.”

3. Not only was the glorious King and *the kingdom* pointed on to, also the servant of God’s providing, but vast and magnificent is the Son of Man’s *dominion* of which the Spirit of God spake through holy men of old. Lit up by the citation in the New Testament, Psalm 8 shows Him set over all (after having been made a little lower than the angels) crowned with glory and splendour, with everything placed beneath His feet ! Daniel 7. 13, 14 mentions Christ as the Son of Man for the last time in the Old Testament ; and both the kingdom and the dominion are spoken of. He is seen before the ancient of days, “And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him : His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Who is this wondrous Son of Man ? Who is this promised One that is able to hold the Lordship of universal dominion ? He must be Man as was foretold ; yet not the created man, but the Son of Man !—not an angel, but truly man, of Adam’s race ! If *Matthew* traced the Royal One from David the king, it is LUKE whom the Spirit uses to show us this SON OF MAN—the PERFECT MAN, “*of Seth, of Adam, of God*” (Luke 3. 38) ! He is seen to be the

virgin "FIRSTBORN SON" (2. 7), and yet "SON OF GOD" begotten of the Holy Spirit (1. 35); also the "SAVIOUR, who is CHRIST THE LORD" (2. 11); and heaven opened upon Him, and a voice said, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have found all My delight," while as a dove the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (3. 22). Truly He is the Son of David! Truly He is the Son of Man to centre up in Himself all dominion! Truly He is also the Son of God! Yet, come down "a little lower than the angels," He Himself said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . be slain, and be raised the third day. . . . Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (9, 22, 26). And having shown Him to be Man in every beautiful perfection, this third Gospel gives us to see also His priestly grace; and it closes with "GREAT JOY," and with responsive "PRAISING AND BLESSING GOD," after Jesus was seen going up into heaven, blessing them with uplifted hands. This is the last view given us by the Gospel of LUKE.

"God's counsels ere the world began
All centred in the Son of Man.
Him destined to the highest place,
Lord over all through sovereign grace."

4. The fourth Gospel is the unfolding concerning GOD Himself!—

'God manifest! God seen and heard!
The heaven's beloved One!'

Commencing by telling us of the eternal Word who "was God," in verse 14 we are told, that same One "became flesh and tabernacled among us" (N.T.):

"Image of the Infinite unseen
Whose being none can know."

Did MATTHEW trace his regal ances-

try for the kingdom right back to David, to whom the promise was given? Did MARK show us the divine Servant in His few days of diligent toil for the pleasure of the Lord? Did LUKE trace his ancestry as Son of Man far away back to Seth and Adam, of God, in view of His taking up universal dominion? JOHN, passing outside official glories, takes us to what surpasses all else, infinitely further back still than the others—BACK INTO ETERNITY! Mark, not *from Eternity!* but in eternity! Not *from the beginning!* but "*in the beginning was the Word!*" He did not begin with the beginning, for the beginning began from Him—"All things received being through Him." He was therefore the eternal One in eternity when the beginning began. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 18 tells us that He declared God who had not been seen before, for He was the Son in a unique sense, dwelling in the Father's bosom, and could consequently declare Him so perfectly. He spake the words of God (3. 34). To see Him was to see the Father (14. 9). He was truly MAN, unfolding the truth to men. He said so (8. 40)! but note His words in verse 58, "Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I AM!" Certain of His miracles or rather "*signs,*" were selected, and were recorded as inspired in this Gospel—SIGNS to manifest who was here on earth! in order that eternal life might be ours in HIS NAME through believing (20. 31). Yet, seeing it was the One who inhabits eternity that stooped to manifest Himself on this small planet, we may understand the final words of this book without difficulty: indeed, what else could be said of the works of such an One than this? "There are many other things which JESUS DID, the

which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written." There can be no failure in regard to the kingdom, the service, the dominion and the glory when all depends upon such an One. When Thomas saw the risen Saviour with His wounded hands and side, He exclaimed, in faith, and with sincere homage,

"MY LORD AND MY GOD" (20. 28).

This is fittingly recorded alone in JOHN.

"Worthy of homage and of praise,
Worthy by all to be adored :
Exhaustless theme of heavenly lays !
Thou, Thou art worthy, Jesus, Lord."

5. The fifth—the additional unfolding of which we have spoken—gives us to behold by faith our exalted Lord glorified on high, carrying on from thence the work of grace, and granting power to this end. If *John* shows us God in Christ on earth amongst men, *Acts* shows us the Man Christ Jesus glorified at the right hand of God ; GOD seen on earth in the one, and MAN seen in heaven in the other ! It can be easily understood therefore why this added writing of Luke's is given by the Spirit—added to the "former treatise," not that it immediately links on with John, but rather with Luke and the previous two gospels.

Having secured eternal salvation and redemption by His sacrifice on the cross, the sight of Jesus, the Son of Man, at the right hand of God on high (7. 55, 56) is what gives character to *Acts*, and indeed to this whole present period. The Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit from thence. Indeed, though the fulness of the Spirit was His when on the earth, after He arrived at the glory above, He "RECEIVED" on behalf of the work below "the promise of the Holy Spirit," and "poured out" the power for that

work, which was seen and heard in its immediate effects (2. 33). Christ has been on high ever since, and the Holy Spirit is still here. The salvation of sinners through faith, and the forming of the assembly (as the body of Christ united livingly to Him its Head on high) are some of the results now in *grace* ; but the pouring out of the Spirit by the Lord upon all flesh will follow later (after the assembly is translated from earth), and that will be done in view of *government* (verses 17–20). When the Man Christ Jesus was exalted, He not only "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" for others, but "GOD MADE HIM" officially (what He was personally and in counsel before) "BOTH LORD AND CHRIST." All the Gospels show Him to be this, for He came *out of heaven* ; but the addition was a necessary unfolding to let us see what took place *in heaven* after He went there as MAN. Matthew may specially make Him known as the Christ, the Messiah, or God's anointed King, and Luke as the Lord, the Son of Man ; while Mark gives us to see Him as God's servant, and *Acts* also thus speaks of Him, for chapter 3. 36 should read, "His Servant" instead of "His Son" Jesus ; and so 4. 30 is "His holy Servant Jesus." Even the gift of "*apostles*" takes a new character consequent upon His exaltation. There were apostles before, but "having ascended up on high," He has "given some apostles" (Eph. 4. 8, 11). Peter was specially for the Jews, but Paul (apprehended from heaven and for heaven by the exalted Lord) was given the work among the Gentiles specially ; and, in spite of his sufferings and imprisonment, this fifth unfolding ends by showing us the successful overruling of the exalted Lord of all, so that Paul is seen in the very citidel of the Roman Empire, preaching and teaching, "no

man forbidding him." This unhindered freedom, maintained by the glorified Lord on behalf of men, is the triumphant note which is sounded at the close of ACTS.

"Ye servants of God, the Saviour proclaim,
And publish abroad His wonderful Name;
The Name, all victorious, of Jesus extol,
He's Lord in the glory! He'll rule over all."

PAUL said to Timothy, "The grace of our Lord surpassingly overabounded" in calling him, a persecutor, and using him in His service. This overbearing Pharisee learned he was "the chief of sinners," and he was fitted by divine grace to carry the glad tidings of forgiveness and salvation to sinners of the Gentiles. The same grace glorified itself in MATTHEW, who was scorned as a publican (or tax-gatherer) disloyally serving a foreign king, Cæsar. Grace made him loyal to the true King, Jesus, and used Him to preach His kingdom, and to write the gospel of the King. MARK was the servant who failed as such—turning back; he "went not with them (Paul, Barnabas) to the work" (Acts 15. 38); but grace

fitted such an one to serve the true Servant in His work, and to write His Gospel. LUKE—one of the "far off" men, called out from the despised "dogs of the Gentiles"—the only Gentile used of the Spirit to write any part of the inspired volume—clave to the apostle of the Gentiles, and wrote the Gospel of the perfect Man—the Son of Man; also ACTS, where we see the exalted Man sending His herald to Gentile men afar off in sin and degradation. Then how wonderfully divine grace is glorified in taking up JOHN to tell us of God made known in Jesus of the love of God told out in Him; to show us the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, giving a place to a disciple in the bosom of the Son; and that disciple had been a Boanerges, marked once by a spirit foreign to that of His Lord. Grace, however, melted him, and the Spirit guided him to write the Gospel of love eternal, love unchanging, of God, who is love, made known in the Son—of the eternal Word become flesh, "FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH."

THREE FRIENDS. Luke 11. 5—3.

1. A FRIEND IN NEED. "A friend of mine out of his way (margin) is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him."

2. A FRIEND WHO CARES FOR THE NEEDY TRAVELLER. "Which of you shall have a friend and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves?"

3. THE FRIEND WHO GIVES ALL THAT IS ASKED. "He will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

Who will be the middle friend—the mediator, the intercessor? He must have a heart that feels for the need of others. He must be ready to bestir himself on their behalf. Having no supplies himself, he must know the third Friend, who can do for him more than he can ask. He must be sufficiently intimate with Him to go to Him even on the most inopportune times and he must be importunate in his pleadings. Who is prepared to qualify for this self-forgetful, God-honouring, soul-blessing service?

FAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD.

THE assembly must have fallen into great disorder when profane babblings are tolerated there. But this we find in 2 Tim. 2. 17: "Their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus." It is not leaven here, but a worse thing, gangrene. The Lord did not get His place in that assembly, that is evident enough. In such great failure as this, what are those who desire to be faithful to the Lord to do? Are we to stay where the Lord does not get His place? Surely not. And the word is clear as to this, for in verse 21 we read: "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour." Now this word "purge" is only used twice in Scripture. It is used for purging out the unclean person in 1 Cor. 5. 7., and it is used here for purging out oneself. The assembly has come to such a condition as to tolerate vain babbling there, and you must purge yourself, not from the doctrines only, but from the vessels. People are ready enough to purge themselves from the doctrine, but where the trouble has occurred in many cases, is the endeavour to exonerate themselves because they were clear of the doctrine. To be clear of the doctrine is not sufficient; you are to purge yourselves from the vessel. You are to be vessels unto honour, and to follow "righteous-

ness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This indicates that there never would be a time when there would not be a purged people calling on the Lord.

This was the divine counsel given to Timothy, to whom it was written when things were in order, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." One might say, I have purged myself from the vessels to dishonour, where shall I go? If you depend on the Lord, He will show you that there are others besides you who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Isolation is never recommended. A person may have more light, but as he is faithful to Christ he would find that there are other exercised souls who would be glad to receive from him. The saints are all united together; there is one Spirit in the whole; I mean the unity of the Spirit, and not the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Therefore you will find that when the Lord is working and leading souls in a certain direction, He is working elsewhere in a like way, and you will often be surprised at the expanse of the testimony, so that if there is an energy of grace here you will find that energy of grace elsewhere also.

J. B. S.

We are the vassals of the Lord. To Him we belong; redeemed and saved, we are by that very fact annexed. He rescued us not to turn us adrift, but to lay His hands on us for ever. He has set us free to bind us to Himself, that henceforth we live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

Believer, thou art, thou must be—it cannot be otherwise—thy Redeemer's *property*. Joined to Him for safety, thou art joined to Him also, and of course, for service. Believing, thou belongest. Whether thou livest, thou livest in relation to the Lord. Whether thou diest, thou diest in relation to the Lord. He died, and rose and revived precisely for this end, "that He might be Lord of thee, dead and living."

GOD OUR STRENGTH.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

Concluded from Page 115, May Issue.

THE Puritan Gurnall says: "When at any time thou art ready to run from thy duty, Christian, encourage thyself with that (word) of God to Gideon whom He called from the flail to thresh the mountains—'Go in this thy might; hath not God called thee?' Fall to the work God sets thee about and thou engagest God's strength for thee, for 'The way of the Lord is strength.' Run from thy work and thou engagest God's strength against thee; He will send thee some storms or other after thee to bring home His runaway servant. How oft hath the coward been killed in a ditch or under some hedge when the valiant soldier that stood his ground and kept his place got off with safety and honour. Art thou called to suffer? Flinch not because thou art afraid thou shalt never be able to bear the cross: God can lay it so even that thou shalt not feel it." As another says: "The righteous do not so much spend as increase their strength by *going forward*."

Three outstanding names from sacred biography, and One whose name must for ever stand alone, come before us in illustration of the secret of spiritual strength. First we have Jacob. In the graphic portraiture of Scripture he comes before us, the crooked, calculating Jacob. By various dealings God brings him to that hour when by Jabbok God meets him alone face to face (Gen. 32. 30). "There wrestled a man with him till the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh." Jacob's creature strength is withered; and in his weakness he can only cling—to God; and pray to be blessed! And what is the Holy Spirit's comment some centuries

later? "By his *strength* he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed . . ." (Hosea 12. 3-4). Here we see *nature's strength becoming weakness—the secret of prevailing with God*.

We pass on to Samson, the man whose life was such mingled triumph and tragedy, achievement and dishonour. He was a remarkable vessel of divine power; but his strength had a secret. It was his Nazariteship. He divulges that secret to a treacherous world, who robs him of his strength, then of his liberty and his sight; and he grinds out his remaining days in wretchedness and bondage. What a tragic lesson to us of *divine strength bartered and becoming weakness through worldliness and sin!* Take heed, my soul!

In Daniel, the man greatly beloved, we have quite another picture. The state of God's people and the mighty vision he saw had taken away all his strength both of spirit and body (Dan. 10). Then by the touch and word of the "angel"—"one like the appearance of a man"—he is revived and strengthened and able to stand upright and to receive further revelations, and go on his way till the end. In Daniel we seem to see *spiritual weakness strengthened for further vision and vocation*.

And passing on to Him who is at once both God and Man, how we might linger upon the example He above all affords of a life divinely strengthened, whose fresh springs were ever in the Father. Who as He—as Man—could say in the words of the ancient Psalm: "I will love Thee, O Jehovah, *my Strength*"? Never was there a flaw in His absolute Nazariteship; and never

in *Him* any *nature* of sinful flesh to be brought into death. And yet in the fulfilment of His mission He could say in the prophetic word: "He *weakened my strength* in the way; He *shortened my days*." Who can fathom the deep mystery of this? And conversely it could be said after the Gethsemane agony, "There appeared an angel from heaven *strengthening* Him." In Him above all others we see *divine strength and true human weakness* (apart from sin) distinct yet blended in perfection in one blessed Person, and He the Son of God!

And lastly, we come to Paul, the pattern *Christian*. The divine strength experienced by saints of earlier times is now seen, as is implied in "Paul's gospel," to be *Christ's* strength imparted to His servant. The Lord says: "*My* grace is sufficient to thee, for *My* strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12. 9). Here we see *divine strength—the strength of the risen Christ—perfected*, reaching its maturity, attaining its end, revealing its true character, *in weakness*. Precious but difficult lesson! Paul learnt it, for he could reply, ". . . that the *power of Christ* may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12. 9). And in accord with this are the three exhortations in the New Testament to "be strong." As has been pointed out by others, the form of the word is "*be strengthened*"—"in the Lord and the power of His might" (Ephes. 6. 10);

"in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2. 1); and in *courage and faith* (1 Cor. 16. 13).

And never once for all. It is a continuous supply needing continuous appropriation, like the air we breathe. In those matchless words of the prophet Isaiah: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary; and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew (marg. "change") their strength; they shall *mount up* on wings as eagles"—does not this suggest communion and worship?—"they shall *run* and not be weary"—does not this suggest service?—"they shall *walk* and not faint"—does not this suggest the ordinary activities of life? And strength is required for each. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall *strengthen thine heart*: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. 27. 17). Yes, *waiting on the Lord*, that is the secret of strength. Of such it can be said, "They go from *strength to strength*!" And the consummation?—"every one appeareth before God in Zion!" Meanwhile, fellow pilgrim—

On to Canaan's rest still wending,
E'en thy wants and woes shall bring;
Suited grace from high descending
Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring.

Though thy way be long and dreary
Eagle strength He'll still renew,
Garments fresh and foot unwearied,
Tell how God hath brought thee through!

—J.N.D.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

PARENTS generally are interested in the growth of their children, and in some homes this is recorded by pencil marks upon the wall in one of the rooms. I have sometimes thought it would be a wholesome thing if Christians kept a record of their growth in spiritual things, but how can this be done? Well, our PRAYERS would

be one test. Has the circle of our prayers widened since last year at this time, or have we become more selfish and narrow? As we grow in grace our hearts will be enlarged and our desires for the blessing of others will be increased and we shall pray over a wider field and with great zeal and intelligence.

UNBELIEF AND FAITH.

(SAMUEL LEVERMORE)

The Tragedy of "Kadesh Barnea." Numbers xiii. 14.

A place of crisis. A tragedy of the wilderness.

The men of unbelief and the men of faith.

The "evil" report, and the "good" report.

The *anti-gospel* and the *gospel*.

The majority of unbelief and the minority of faith.

THE TEN AND THE TWO.

"We be not able" (13. 31).

"There we saw the giants" (13. 33).

"They are stronger than we be" (13. 31)

"We are grasshoppers" (13. 33).

"They are men of stature" (13. 33).

"The cities are walled and very great"
(13. 28)"Let us make a captain and return
unto Egypt" (14. 4).

"We are well able" (14. 30).

"Fear them not" (14. 9).

"They are bread for us" (14. 9).

"The Lord is with us" (14. 9).

"Their defence is departed" (14. 9).

"An exceeding good land"
(14. 7)."If the Lord delight in us then will
He bring us in" (14. 9).

Fate of the majority (probably about two millions). "Surely they shall not see the land" (14. 23). "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness" (14. 29; Jude 5).

Fate of the ten anti-gospellers. "They died by the plague before the Lord" (14. 37).

Reward of the two believers. "They lived still" (14. 38).

What a tragedy! Two out of probably two millions. And the Spirit Himself adds (1 Cor. x. 6), "Now these things were our examples."

Comment is needless, except that *their* loss was an earthly Canaan, whilst *ours* is the present enjoyment of God's own rest.

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

WHAT an example of the efficacy of the work of Christ was the salvation of the dying thief. To him the Lord said, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Some have tried to put a comma after to-day, to make out that it did not happen then. But at that moment Paradise was open, and not the paradise on earth, that having been lost could never be regained, but the Paradise of God. It was the Lord's place, which He had never forfeited, but that He had opened up now for sinners

by the greatness of His work on the cross.

The effect of that work was to transfer that man from the deepest misery to the greatest happiness. See what he was transferred *from* and what *to*! By the efficacy of the death of Christ that thief passed from the lowest, deepest, darkest place of misery and shame ever known to man on earth, into the brightest, holiest, most blessed place of ineffable bliss with the Lord. That is what Christ has done, and on Him and His work we rely.

FAITH, FAITHFULNESS, FELLOWSHIP.

(J. T. MAWSON.)

“ And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

“ After this came Joseph of Arimathæa.”

“ And there came also Nicodemus.”

John 19. 35, 42.

Faith.

WE begin with faith. Faith is the response in a human heart to a Divine revelation. God says it, I believe it. That is faith. God has made a full revelation of Himself. He has shown to men what He is, but when He did it we were not there to see, and if the revelation is to affect and bless us, if we are to believe and understand it, we must have a true record of it, a divinely inspired record, and such we have here. *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true ; and he knoweth that he saith true, THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE.*” What was it that he saw? The Son of God hanging dead upon a cross, with blood and water flowing from His wounded side. That was a great sight, and God commends it to our special attention.

Since the time that the startled earth was first made to drink the blood of a man, foully slain by the son of his own mother, there had been millions of deaths in the world, for death from that time was as common as birth, and tears and misery. We do not wonder at that, for when by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, death followed quickly and irrevocably upon its heels, and it has passed upon all his children and claimed them as its rightful prey. These multitudes who had died were all creatures whose life was forfeited to their Creator ; they commenced their journey to the grave with the first breath that they drew, for not one of them was without sin. There was nothing noteworthy in the death of any of them, for death was the

common lot, but in the death of this Man who John saw yield up His life there was. Death had no claim upon Him at all, for He was not a sinner, but the holy, sinless Son of God. He had shown Himself to be the Master of death before many witnesses on at least three occasions, for He was the Word, the Creator and Life-giver. Yet He died, and because of what He was and who He was, His death was unique. Never had there been one like it before, and never shall there be one like it again. It stands alone, unrivalled, to be unforgotten for ever and ever. An eye-witness has recorded the fact. He did not argue about it, there is no room for argument, the fact was too stupendous ; he did not even interpret it ; he has simply told us what he saw, and his testimony commands our earnest consideration. It is a Holy Ghost inspired testimony of a great event and it cannot be ignored. It calls for our faith for it has been told us that we might believe. Yet we on our part may reverently ask for an explanation. What does the death of the Son of God, and His death in such circumstances, mean? Let us see.

God sent His only-begotten Son into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. He became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. It was the day of revelation and of testing. Never before had absolute goodness appeared in the world ; never before had unconditional mercy unfolded its treasures to assuage the miseries of men ; never before had the true light shone in the darkness, for never before had God been manifested

in the flesh. What was the answer to it on the part of men? Hatred, treachery and murder! "Ye have been the betrayers and murderers of the Just One," said Stephen, when he pressed home upon the leaders of the Jews their awful guilt.

"The Father sent the Son
A ruined world to save.
Man meted to the sinless One
The Cross, the grave."

As we read the record of John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," let us stand in thought near to that cross with him and fix our earnest gaze upon the Lord as he assuredly did. Many things that are recorded for our learning and faith in the other Gospels John did not see, or if he saw them it was not his work to record them. He does not, for instance, record in such full detail the unspeakable cruelty with which men treated his Master. The other evangelists show us that nothing was left undone that they could imagine. In the excess of their hatred they heaped suffering and shame upon Him as never was heaped upon a man before, and we do well often to read their records, that we may have no delusions as to what the heart of man is when he is put to the test. But John does not dwell on this side of the cross, he is absorbed with his Lord. So when he describes the going forth to Golgotha, he is the only witness who says, "*He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull.*" In the other records we read that *He was led forth* by His foes, and John tells us this too, for that was the culmination of their guilt; *but He went forth*, that was the triumph of His love. *He went forth*; do we not discern the majesty of that lonely Man, with thorns on His head and a cross upon His shoulders? He was not driven forth or dragged forth, but in obedience to His Father's command He went forth

to lay down His life and to take it again. It was this that John saw, though he could not have understood at that time the full meaning of it, and the sight made an indelible impression upon his soul. We read in the ancient Scriptures that "*His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting*" (Micah 5.). How glorious were those goings forth when as the great Creator He cast the stars before Him as a shining pathway for His feet, and the sons of God shouted for joy as they beheld the wonders of His works, but none of those goings forth were as wonderful as this, when bearing His cross He went forth into a place called the place of a skull. In creation He displayed wisdom and power; at the cross He revealed in all their glory, righteousness and love, and fuller wisdom and greater power than were called for or possible at creation.

John heard Him cry, "It is finished," and saw Him bow His head and give up the ghost, and bears witness to what he heard and saw, and again we feel that there is a majesty about this that fills us with awe, and we do not wonder that "when the centurion [a pagan up to that moment as far as we know] which stood over against Him saw that He so cried, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God" (Mark 15.).

But John seems to gather up all his energy to bear witness to the final scene that was enacted when the Lord had yielded up His life. He tells us that "*one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*" It is this that he saw, and to this he bears witness, and his witness cannot be challenged, he knows that he saith true, **THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE.** This witness is essential, it is vital, for here is the revelation that awakens faith and to which faith responds. What does it

mean? Let us see. The devil by his subtlety in Eden turned the hearts of God's creatures from Him and made them believe that God did not love them, for was He not withholding something from them that would do them good? The poison did its deadly work, and they fell from their faith and fidelity, and from that time onward the very nature of men has been suspicion of and enmity against God, as the Scriptures declare. That enmity found its final expression in that spear thrust that rent the side of Jesus. The wickedness of men was fully exposed by it, but the blood and water was God's answer to that wickedness and to the devil's lie that was the first cause of it. In the blood we behold the triumph of God; it is the great price that He has paid to rescue us from darkness and destruction. His care for His creature's blessing was fully revealed by it. It is the witness to us that GOD IS LOVE. No less a sacrifice would have done, no greater could have been given. "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and He "commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Our sins have met their judgment in the death of Christ, all that we were passed under God's condemnation when His dear Son was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. By the death of Jesus God is just and the Justifier of all that believe. Here is solid ground upon which we may rest in peace; here is a revelation of God which calls for our willing faith. Here we meet with God in Him whom He hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, and before this mercy seat we bow down and worship. The darkness is past for us and the true light now shines, and hereby we perceive the love of God, because He laid down His

life for us, and faith can sing:—

"The precious stream of water and of blood
Which from the Saviour's side so freely
flowed,
Has put away our sins of scarlet dye,
Washed us from every stain and brought
us nigh."

Faithfulness.

If we have believed the witness of the disciple whom Jesus loved, let us still stand with him and watch the sequence of events. The end has come. No miracle has been wrought to save the Son of God from death, and there He hangs, dishonoured and dead, the whole world against Him, and the world apparently triumphant. He had pleaded with men, toiled for them, wept for them, and now He had died for them, but they knew it not and were glad to be rid of Him. But will His death be in vain? Will any amongst the vast multitude that had gathered to see that crucifixion be moved by it? Shall there be any response in any man ere the sun goes down to this boundless love? Yes, there is a movement. One man stands forward, separating himself from his fellows; he goes to Pilate and begs the body of Jesus. And now he stands beside the cross, one solitary man in the face of a hostile world. It is as though he said, "O Jews, ye have spurned Him, but I embrace Him. O world, ye have despised and crucified Him, but I love Him. I share in His shame, and will bear His reproach. Christ for me. Ye are on that side, I am on this." Ah, heaven must have been thrilled at that sight, and so are we, as we see Joseph of Arimathæa turn his back upon the world and its prizes and honours and stand friendless and alone by that cross for the love he bore the One who hung upon it. It was here that Paul stood when he said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." It was here that the Eunuch from Ethiopia stood, when, having heard from Philip that the life of Jesus was taken from the earth, he said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And his identification with Christ in His death is the only place and path for the believer who would be faithful to Him. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" and as He suffered without the gate, faithfulness demands that we should go forth unto Him bearing His reproach.

Fellowship.

The love of Christ constrained Joseph to take his stand in faithfulness to Christ regardless of all consequences, and to take it alone; but he has no sooner done it than he is joined by another, for Nicodemus, braving the frowns and scorn of his fellow-pharisees, throws in his lot with Joseph, and they, with perhaps two women or more, are joined together as one to do honour to their rejected and dishonoured Lord. It is a moving sight to see them identified with His dead body, Himself their object, their love to Him the bond that makes them one! And in them we see illustrated what *true Christian FELLOWSHIP in this world is*. Look at those "two or three" as they tend the sacred body of the Lord, wrapping it in linen clothes with the spices and bearing it away to the sepulchre. The world is lost to them, they are heedless of its praise or blame, they have one common object, they are absorbed with Him, and they are acting according to the mind of heaven and with the approval of God.

It is well that we should ask the question as to how we stand in regard to this same matter. Any fellowship

that we may profess is a mere show, if this that moved the hearts of these people is lacking. We may stand for external correctness and strive even to have everything according to the terms of the truth, and be intolerant of any who do not see as we see, but if there is not this faithfulness to Christ, and this affection for Him that binds hearts together as one, it is of no account to God; it is the shell without the kernel, and a stumbling block to others.

Do we know the meaning of the words, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread"? Do we know what it means to "SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME"? It means that we stand together in faithfulness and affection for the One whom the world rejected, and that by eating His supper together, which brings Him to mind in His death for us, we declare to all who can take notice that we are identified with Him, that we stand by His cross, that it has become our boast and our glory. It is a solemn stand to take but a blessed one. It will not meet with the world's approval but it will have God's. It will cause us to walk in self-judgment and in separation from the world, but it will open up for us a sphere in which Christ is everything and in which we shall be more than satisfied with His love, for it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him," but these things are revealed to us by His Spirit and they are our common portion to be enjoyed together as faith produces faithfulness, and faithfulness draws us together in holy, happy fellowship.

THE LORD'S PERSON.

(J. A. TRENCH.)

THAT there was distinct individual personality in the "Man Christ Jesus" seems to me so clear that I cannot understand any thoughtful person questioning it. But if it is meant that there was a "human personality" in the Lord Jesus here (and now) as distinct from His Divine personality as the Son, then I should ask for an explanation of what is meant by it.

Two distinct personalities in one person? If I look at Scripture I find He could say "I" as God—"Before Abraham was 'I' am." And He could say "I" as man—"I will put my trust in Him." But these were not two "I's"; the Person was one—the Son. Individual personality was there beyond a question, a true "ego," but who was the Person?

Depend upon it we shall gain greatly in our souls and in our knowledge of the truth, if we adhere to Scripture. I read there of a Person—the Word—existing in eternity, Himself the Creator. I read of that same Person becoming flesh, a Man on earth amongst men, a true, real, individual Man, but the same blessed Person—God manifest in flesh, the Son whom God sent in the likeness of flesh of sin, God's Son come of a woman. There is no thought of a change in the Person, the real "I." He is always the same, though His "form" is changed, and the condition in which He has life.

When He took part in flesh and blood, who was "He"? Personal identity does not change, though form

and condition may. It lies behind all that we commonly think of a person. If "I" depart to be with Christ, all the affections and interests I have as a man belonging to this condition of life are left behind with the condition to which they belonged; but the "I" remains, and it is the same "I" when it is a spiritual body. "I" shall be "for ever with the Lord," though the conditions of life are totally different.

In our case personality began to exist when we were born, but in the case of the Lord He "came down from heaven." His existence was eternal. He was the "I am," but there was a moment when He "became flesh." In doing so He entered into the feelings and affections which belong to the nature of a man.

It seems to me so beautifully simple if we allow the plain words of Scripture to have their place in our hearts. There we find a perfect, blessed Man—"full of grace and truth." He was "wearied" at the well. He "loved" Martha and her sister and Lazarus. "He groaned in spirit and was troubled." He "wept"—all beautiful expressions of human feelings in perfection; but who was "He"? The eternal Word, the Son of God, one with the Father. If you bring in another personality the truth of incarnation is gone.

The fact is, in my opinion, we are scarcely conscious how material our ideas of spiritual things are, and even of God Himself; and how largely they are formed by the creeds, and theology, instead of by Scripture.

There is only one type of life that can possibly be lived out of and above the reach of disappointment. It is the life that recognizes Christ's death-won ownership, and rests in His mighty hand, to save, to possess, to use for ever. That life is a continuous harmony, as to its inner secret, through this world, through death, and in the eternal day.

“WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.”

(W. BRAMBELL DICK.)

“*Who went about doing good.*”—Acts 10. 38.

“*To do good . . . forget not.*”—Hebrews 13. 16.

WE could not have a more beautiful epitome of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Man in this world than is contained in the verse from which we have culled the first text. It begins with God, it ends with God. The Person of whom it speaks is God, but He became Man in order that He might be here for the will, for the pleasure, and for the glory of God. For this purpose He was anointed by God with the Holy Ghost and with power. In the carrying out of this purpose He “went about doing good.” How beautiful the language! He “went about.” A heavenly Visitor, a lowly Stranger, a Man unlike any ordinary man. His walk unique; His words the like of which had never been heard before; His ways perfect. Known to men as “Jesus of Nazareth”; looked down upon; treated with contumely and hatred; misunderstood; and yet unmoved, He “went about doing good.” We sometimes sing—

“Thy foes might hate, despise, revile;
Thy friends unfaithful prove;
Unwearied in forgiveness still,
Thy heart could only love.”

Precious, adorable Lord! How our hearts praise Thee! He “went about”—unknown, unrecognized, unwanted—“a homeless Stranger in the world His hands had made”; seeking not the applause of men; craving no favour at their hand; from morning till night, from town to town, from village to village, He “went about doing good.” The little children were at home in His arms; the outcast sinners found a welcome at His feet; the grief-stricken hearts found solace in His company; the tempest-tossed found refuge in His

presence; the sick received healing at His word; the disciple found comfort as he leaned on His bosom. He was at the service of all—high and low, rich and poor, old and young, friend and foe; He “went about doing good.” Observe! “For God was with Him!” Disowned by men—acknowledged by God. Hated by men—loved by God. Deserted by men—“God was with Him.” In His lonely, solitary path the Father’s will was His delight; to reveal the Father was His supreme joy; the Father’s presence was His home; the Father’s love was His portion. “God was with Him.”

Can we imagine what it meant to God to look down upon a world where every man did his own will and to see One who ever and only did His will? We are not surprised—are we?—that He should once and again open the heavens over Him and say: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” What is the significance of all this for us? (1) That God graciously permits us, and enables us, to share with Him in the delight that He has found in the wonderful path of that wonderful Person. In Numbers 28. He speaks of “My offering, and *My bread*” (verse 1), so that in fellowship with Him, in the sanctuary of His presence, we feed with Him upon that which He calls “*My Bread*,” and “The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6. 33). (2) As we eat of the Bread of God the result will necessarily be that our hearts will overflow in worship to the Father. We will forget ourselves; our souls will delight in Him who fills the Father’s heart. We

will enter into the secret of Christ's preciousness to the Father, and we will relieve our hearts in Spirit-begotten worship. (3) We will remember the divine admonition that we "ought so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2. 6). Here is one of the obligations of Christianity, and in a short sentence the reason for our being left here. We have been left here in order that the life of Christ might be continued in us, and that will be accomplished in measure as we "walk even as He walked."

This brings us to our second text. Let us consider its setting. In reading the Epistle to the Hebrews we have passed before our vision the varied glories of Christ—as God; as Man; in the different offices that He so worthily fills. We view Him as One who has trodden the path of faith, now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12. 2). We learn that "Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (13. 8). We are recalled to the fact that He "suffered without the gate" (verse 13). We are exhorted to "Go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (verse 13). We are reminded that "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (verse 14); that it is our privilege to be praising God "continually" (verse 15). All this seems to lift us clean out of the whole course and order of things in this world, and that is just what it is intended to do. Why, then, have we been left here? Verse 16 supplies the answer—"TO DO GOOD." Why was Christ here? To do good. Why are we here? To do good. We are left here to be for God in measure what Christ was in perfection. Has some reader been

saying: "I do not know why I have been left here. I am confined to the house, bedridden, of no use to anyone. What can I do?" You can do what Jesus did, you can do good. Does someone say, "That is not my difficulty. I am a busy person; to give my time would involve too great a sacrifice, and my money I cannot afford"? Let us finish our text: "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." When we sang that beautiful hymn recently that brings before us the sacrifice of our adorable Lord; and when we sang the closing verse—

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all"—

did we mean it? Or was there a mental reservation that said, "What I can afford"? When we have heard His still, small voice whispering in our ear: "I gave My life for thee: what hast thou given for Me?" have we replied: "I cannot afford anything"? But how much we can do that makes no demand: a warm handshake, a cheerful smile, an encouraging word. If we are feeding on "the Bread of God"; if we are cultivating the company of our precious Lord; if we are maintained in communion with Him: then, unknown to ourselves, we will shed abroad the fragrance of Christ wherever we go, and thus we will do good. The Lord is coming! Our day of opportunity may end at any moment; we have an honour and a privilege here that we shall not have when He calls us hence, and that is to be for Him; to live His life; to set forth His excellencies; to do good in the world out of which He has been cast.

“LEVITICUS AND HEBREWS.”

(H. J. VINB.)

Nearness and Response.

ONE of the great distinctions of this third book of the Bible is found in the name given by Leah to her third son. She called him *Levi*, which means *joined* or *united*, for she said, “Now this time will my husband be *joined unto me!*”

The near place of the Levites is seen in the fact that they were joined to Aaron (who was of the same family), the high priest who could enter the holiest on the ground of blood-shedding. The Lord said to him, thy brethren of the tribe of Levi shall be “*joined unto thee*” (Num. 18. 2, 4). We are also told that He said of the Levites, “Instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel have I taken them unto Me,” and yet they are rarely mentioned separately in Leviticus, where the priests, the sons of Aaron, are prominent.

Joined to Aaron, and representing the Children of Israel, the Levites kept the charge of the tabernacle; and nearness in relation to the presence of the Lord is indicated in Lev. 1. 1, for Jehovah is not there speaking from a burning thorn-bush, or from a quaking mount which filled the people with fear, but “*out of the tabernacle!*” There His presence was known, there His holiness was vindicated by sacrifice, there response to His redeeming work was shown in sweet-savour offerings, there the high priest bore the names of all upon his breast and upon his shoulders immediately before God; and, in relation to this holy nearness in the tabernacle, every detail of daily life was correspondingly ordered.

In this day of God’s saving grace, when the assembly in Christ is being called out, those who have eternal

redemption in Him through His precious blood are brought into the reality of what was so strikingly typified in Israel. They were redeemed from Egyptian bondage, and they offered what pointed onward to the present “sacrifice of praise,” thanksgiving and worship—the “spiritual sacrifices” which are offered up by Jesus Christ, having been “made nigh” in Him. So intimate is the present nearness, we read, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit”; and, “Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren”; yea, still more closely are they “joined” or “united” to Himself, they “*are members of His body!*”
 “So nigh, so very nigh to God, we cannot nearer be,
 For in the Person of His Son, we are as near as He.”

Aaron might represent Israel before Jehovah, but the Son of God now brings us into the presence of the Father. Through Him we have access to the Father by the Spirit. “Much more” does “the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,” purge the conscience from the merely “dead works” (like those of Israel) to “serve the living and true God” with the sweet-savour offerings of praise and worship, for the worshippers of to-day being once purged have “no more conscience of sins.” CHRIST is their one and only High Priest now, and He has “gone into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God FOR US”! (Heb. 9. 24). Everything in the holiest spoke of Christ in divers ways. The ark, the mercy seat, the gold, the purple, the scarlet, the fine twined

linen, yea, and the very tabernacle itself signified His glories in various aspects.

"In Him we every glory view,
Of safety, strength and beauty too ;
'Tis all our rest and peace to see
Our Sanctuary, Lord, in Thee."

Contrasting what is now ours permanently with what went before, we find that Leviticus foreshadowed what we have the substance of in Hebrews. It is true, both Leviticus and Hebrews speak of the tabernacle, but the latter of "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man"! Both speak of Moses, but the latter of Him who is "counted worthy of greater glory than Moses"! Both speak of Aaron, but the latter of God's Son, "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" who was king as well as priest! Both speak of sacrifices, but the latter of the "one Sacrifice for sins" which needs no repetition! Both speak of sacrifice for sin, but the latter of Him who "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"! Both speak of offerings to God, but, while the former speaks of the priest that "*standeth* daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices," the latter tells of Christ who offered one sacrifice and "*sat down* in perpetuity at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10. 12, N.T.)!

"In God's own presence now for us
The Saviour doth appear,
The saints as jewels on His heart,
Jesus doth ever bear."

The beautiful prefigurings given to us by the Holy Spirit in Leviticus help us greatly to understand the present things which are ours in Christ. Great indeed, however, are the contrasts between the two! In the offerings of old God found no pleasure, we are told, but in the one perfect offering of Christ He has found complete satisfaction! There was *no seat* provided for the priest of old, but God said to His Son,

"*Sit Thou on My right hand*"! The One who offered Himself has now the most exalted seat in the universe, and He is our "GREAT PRIEST over the house of God"! Perfect is the peace, eternal the rest and holy the boldness which are consequently ours in His presence. God's holiness has been perfectly met in the one Sacrifice! He can therefore say of us, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember **NO MORE**"! In contrast to the "remembrance again made of sins every year" (Heb. 10. 3), the worshippers to-day being "once purged," as we said, have "**NO MORE** conscience of sins" (2)! and so satisfactorily has the work been done in regard to which Jesus has sat down, the Holy Spirit conclusively declares, "There is **NO MORE** offering for sin"! No more remembrance of sins on God's side! No more conscience of sins on the worshippers' side! No more offering to be made on Christ's side! Leviticus pointed *on* to a work to be done! Hebrews points *back* to a work finished! and also points *up* to the Completer of that work!

"High at God's right hand is seated
Christ, the Lord, the living One,
All His toil on earth completed,
All His work for sinners done.
In the glory,
See Him! God's Eternal Son!"

It took both Moses and Aaron to typify Christ, for He is both the Mediator and the High Priest; and, like Moses who spoke on God's part, God's Son has spoken the words of God; also, like Aaron who represented the people before God, Jesus represents us in His presence now. Moses and Aaron adorned with the garments of glory and the holy crown went inside together, so Christ has gone into heaven itself. He is the Holy One there, and He is there for us. Moreover, so great is He, where two or three are gathered together unto His Name He Himself is

present. Visible glory filled the tabernacle in the wilderness, but Jesus Himself is in the midst of His own who are rightly gathered to-day. Faith recognizes His presence before we see Him in glory, and boldness is ours even now to enter into the holiest, boldness by the blood of Jesus! Full assurance of faith gives us to enter where He is.

Jehovah spake to the people by Moses, "Ye shall be holy: for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19. 2). Every detail was ordered according to that. The without was to correspond with the within.

In chapter 1. 1 He speaks "out of the tabernacle," and in the last chapter all estimation is "after the shekel of the sanctuary" (27. 3). The book begins with the burnt-offering ascending as a sweet savour to the Lord wherein the offerer is "accepted," and it closes with persons and things being "holy unto the Lord"—the words "*the Lord's*" and "*holy unto the Lord*" being repeated over and over again. This nearness and the response to Him are expressed in abundant offerings to the Lord, and in the divinely ordered details which He gave of instructions as to sweet-savour offerings and others also prefigured the work of Christ by which we draw nigh as worshippers to-day; and the ways which are well pleasing in His sight take character from this. In the case of Israel, Leviticus instructed them as to the minutest details, as to priestly consecration, as to food, uncleanness, relationships, separation, land, houses, cattle, etc., but in regard to the

redeemed to-day much stands in contrast to what was said to Israel; and we read in Ephesians 2. 10 that "we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The practical details given in Ephesians flow from the knowledge of saving grace, whereas those in Leviticus from law; nevertheless they pointed forward to the "better" things of which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks.

When the glorious consummation of the wonderful designs of God is fully reached, we read, "Behold *THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN*, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Near to Him then forever, there will be a full response to God in love and holiness, in praise and worship, and in every beautiful detail of living activity amidst scenes of stainless glory. All will be intimately and eternally "JOINED" TOGETHER in abiding splendour and grace.

Surveying the vast extent of the divine designs opened before our view, we see that the ruin in Genesis yielded the redemption in Exodus, and the redemption in Exodus yielded the tabernacle approach of Leviticus, which indicated vividly the present realities made ours through faith, and in the Spirit's grace and power—realities entered into by faith now, and soon to be actually displayed in counselled glory, when God's tabernacle is seen shining forth in heavenly brightness and blessedness.

The shield of faith has two sides, glorious with the gold of heaven. On the one side is inscribed "I BELIEVE." On the other side, carved as deep, outlined as large, and pregnant as the other with all joy and strength for the soul, "I BELONG." This was the shield that Paul carried into the good fight. It is the shield we must all use. We belong to the One in whom we have believed.

THE LORD'S TABLE.

(J. B. S.)

I TURN to 1 Corinthians 10., to show how the youngest believer is at once connected with two things which are embraced in the Lord's table. One is the responsibility to have that table suited to the Lord; the other is that there is room enough at the table for every believer on the face of the earth. It is on one or other of these that all the variances have arisen between Christians. Either they are too lax about what suits the Lord, or they are too narrow as to receiving all that belongs to the Lord; and so there are what we call denominations, and that is not His assembly. It is the Lord's table, therefore the Lord is there, and you

must remove from among yourselves everyone unsuited to the Lord's Name (chap. 5.). There must be nothing sanctioned which is unsuited to the Lord; on the other hand, verse 17 says, "Ye are one bread, one body." That is, every believer in Christ has a right to be there: you must acknowledge his right; he has a place at His table. These are the two things that mark the Lord's table. The moment you break bread you are committed to these two things: that nothing shall be there which will not suit the Lord, and that there is room there (it is not the Lord's table otherwise) for every one of His own over the whole earth.

THE CHRISTIAN'S BODY.

NOTHING is more significant in the gospel than its profound regard for the body. According to it, the body of the Christian is already "the temple of the Holy Ghost," and hereafter it is to be "changed into a fashion like the Lord's own glorious body." In the meantime he is exhorted to "glorify God in his body," for the price that God has paid for him was for the body as well as the soul. It should be his ambition that whether in life or in death "Christ may be magnified in his body," and he is to "present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable service." It is for "the deeds

done through the body" that he will receive the Lord's praise or disapproval at the judgment seat of Christ. And the Christian's appearance at that judgment seat is not a formal muster before the Prince's chair, it is a manifestation, for the word is, "We must all be manifested," and that manifestation of what we are will be through the deeds done through the body. It is through the body that we use or misuse God's mercies and gifts; it is through the body that we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit or the work of the flesh. How solemn will that inquiry and manifestation be!

"That they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach." There is the first, the deepest, the absolutely vital qualification of the preacher who is to be true to His Master: "that they should be with Him." A personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus, nothing between. To come evermore to Him, to deal first hand with Him, to get from Him, to learn of Him.

LIBERTY.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

[IT is a matter of importance to remark that the facts of Christianity come before the doctrine. This is so in point of time, for the glorious facts of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit preceded the full and clear revelation of their significance. Morally, too, the facts take precedence, for what the root is to the tree, the spring to the stream, the foundation to the edifice, these are to the doctrine, that is, the body of revealed Christian truth.

This also has its counterpart in the work of God in His saints. Frequently, we might almost say normally, the Holy Spirit by His power illuminates and imparts the spiritual reality of the truth to the soul in stages; and then gradually instructs the soul in the meaning and understanding of the truth thus imparted. As has been said: "In divine things one does not learn the definitions of words and then the things; one learns the things, and then the meaning of the words is evident." Life is more important than understanding; and, primarily, Christianity is *life*. The understanding is important that we may know the things freely given us of God; have fellowship with Him about them; be preserved from imitations; and be able to transmit to others what we ourselves thus know and enjoy.*

These considerations apply with particular force to the aspect of Christian truth before us in this paper—that of Christian *liberty*. Many dear saints of God, without doubt, are enjoying the

reality and the fruits of this liberty who would be quite unable to explain it even in a Scriptural way. Nevertheless, it behoves us to give careful attention to all that God has given us in His word on this as on other parts of His truth. There we find a "form of doctrine" (Rom. 6. 17), and a "form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1. 13) which we need to have, obey and hold fast.

Liberty is a blessed and glorious word; one of subtle power to thrill the hearts of men. It stands for a priceless boon in every realm of life, and most of all in the highest realm, the spiritual; but a boon fraught with strange peril. For we are faced with the paradox that man's innate passion for liberty is at once an evidence of his high origin and destiny in God's purpose; and evidence of his sin and shame. It is evidence of sin because his desire for liberty is naturally to do his own will and go his own way, and that is the essence of *sin*; and of shame because his very passion for liberty proves he has it not.

We know whose were these words: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin" (John 8. 34). They were His who came from heaven that He might preach, not the "ascent of man" but, amongst other things, *deliverance* to the captives, the *setting free* of them that were bruised (Luke 4. 18). The music of His gospel has liberty as a dominant chord. History and experience assure us that wherever His gospel has made its way bondage and tyranny have been unable to abide. The gospel is a gospel of liberty; and liberty is therefore the believer's heritage. We have as believers been "called" to it (1 Pet. 2. 16). But this liberty, it must be emphasized, like all else in Christianity, is of its own order. It is *gospel* liberty; of that source and

* This does not mean that the Word has a secondary place. It must always be first. We were born again by it (1 Peter 1. 23) and we must have it for the maintenance of the life that was imparted to us through it, for "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God."

character. It is not natural liberty consecrated to God, as people say; such an idea is unchristian. It is Christian liberty, liberty *in Christ*. It comes from God; it is proclaimed in His gospel; it subsists in His Son. Morally it is *liberty to love and obey*. Here lies its glory and its safeguard.

Our Lord Jesus has told us explicitly what it is that *sets free*. "If ye continue in My word . . . ye shall know the truth and the *truth* shall make you free" (John 10. 32). What truth? The truth; *all truth*. The tendency, and, where believed, the effect of all that is truth is to emancipate the soul. Praise God!

But man needs above and before all freedom from *sin*, and we may therefore say that primarily it is the truth that we find in Romans 6. that sets free. In that chapter, as perhaps nowhere else, is set forth clearly and fully the way of freedom from sin. By a series of profound yet simple steps the conclusion is reached and repeated twice for our encouragement: "Being made *free from sin*" (Rom. 6. 18, 22). What in one word is the secret? It is *judicial identification with Christ* as having died and risen again. This identification was effected in God's sight when Jesus Christ died and rose; it is set forth in our baptism; it is recognized and reckoned as true by faith, and is realized by the power of the Holy Spirit in a yielding of ourselves to God as alive in Christ Jesus. Oh! how truly wonderful thus to be made free from sin's thralldom! And it is here that liberty of soul begins. This is God's starting place, and all future progress depends upon coming into line with God's own method of deliverance and liberty. Happy people, thus made free to *serve Him* (Rom. 6. 22)! Our liberty then is *judicial liberty* through

the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

This liberty has a prevailing principle of application and working. The converted soul, like the children of Israel of old, soon finds that it is one thing to leave "the house of bondage" in Egypt and to sing the song of redemption, and another to walk with God in the wilderness where there is no way, and in the desert where there is no provision. Only one thing can enable us to do that—*grace*. Yes, the same grace that sought and found us; pardoned and cleansed us; that sheltered us and set us free, alone can *keep us free*. Here is the charter for liberty: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: because ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6. 14). Not what we are, but what He is; not what we can be or undertake, but what He has declared Himself to be and has promised to accomplish. Not our efforts but His giving. Not demand but supply. Not *I*—but Christ. The sway of grace means liberty. And as the gospel is the gospel of grace, we may say that Christian liberty is necessarily *evangelical* liberty.

But God does not merely save us *from* a certain condition. He saves us *for* a definite purpose. "I will bring you *out* and bring you *in*." Our Lord Jesus therefore goes on to say in the passage already quoted: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8. 36). God would have us more than servants (cp. Romans 6.); He would have us sons; the liberty which is ours is not only that of sinners saved and saints set free by grace; it is the liberty of *sons*! Sonship is the very cream of Christian blessing (Eph. 1.). Nor is it as some would make it to be, a matter of mystical attainment; the Word says: "We are all the sons of God by faith

in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3. 26, N.T.). If we are His at all, we are sons. Oh! the joy and blessing of having the "freedom" of the Father's house, and sharing His own celebration of grace! (cp. Luke 15.). Truly, He has brought us into a large and blessed place where our souls can expand in the warmth of His sovereign love. Dear fellow Christian, do we walk at large in the courts of our God even now? Has the Son so made us free that we can truly say of our God—"His presence is our home"? Oh, let us do ourselves this good and give Him the joy of taking Him at His word. Let us allow His love to have its way with us. Then we shall know what liberty is, for Christian liberty is *filial* liberty—the liberty of sons with the Father.

Neither the work of Christ for us, the work of God in us, nor even the provisions of His grace on our behalf would avail to enable us to realize practically either our freedom from sin or our freedom in privilege, apart from the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of sonship and has come into our hearts because we *are* sons (Gal. 4.6). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3. 17). Where the Spirit has His way, and in that measure only, will true Christian liberty be known and enjoyed. Where, on the other hand, in the individual or in the assembly, He is grieved, liberty will suffer; and where spiritual liberty is restrained the Spirit will be grieved. All legality, whether the result of the person's own conscience or through the influence of others, is destructive of liberty.

We need, in this connection, to beware of anything, however small, which brings us into bondage, bondage of spirit. If we find ourselves not "free" about anything we should never allow ourselves to be forced into it either by inward impulse or by out-

ward pressure. It is best to wait; to consult the Lord and His Word. A little quiet waiting on God will generally clear things. If the bondage is of Satan or the result of our own subjective state—it will lift. If, however, it is the restraint of the Spirit it will remain and be confirmed. Let us remember that God never hurries or harasses His children. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Similarly we need to beware of bringing pressure to bear upon others to take any step contrary to their conscience, or beyond their faith or liberty.* We should respect our own liberty of spirit and that of others, for God does. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" is a principle of profound importance and far-reaching application, and as saints and servants of God we can scarcely give it too much attention. We need, however, to remember that the terms of the statement must not be reversed. It is not correct to say that "where there is liberty there is the Spirit of the Lord." That would be a fatal blunder; for the liberty may not be of the Spirit of God at all, and may be simply the exercise of self-will. Christian liberty is *spiritual*—liberty of which the *Holy Spirit* is the living Source and operative Power.

What is to be said about the practical outworking of this liberty? Surely we may not do as we like? Yes, *in a sense*, we may! If we are in accord with Christ's death; surrendered to His claims; abiding in Him; enjoying our sonship; living in the love of God; filled with the Holy Spirit, *obedient to His Word*, we may do as we like, for our "likes" (as has often been said) will in that case be His "likes" and

* We do not preclude by this remark helping the faith and conscience of our brethren in the Word. Nothing could be more important in its place.

our "hates" will be His too! And this is really what liberty is. The "perfect" law—prevailing principle—of liberty is in operation with us when *we want to do the things we ought to do*. Our lives are to be governed now, as they will be judged hereafter, by this perfect law of liberty (James 1. 25; 2. 12). Oh! of how much needless friction, effort and struggle would this law relieve many Christians' lives! Let us, then, "look into" this law continually, and continue therein, and surely our lives will be more happy, glad, free, and fruitful. This liberty is a liberty of *life* and nature which we have from God.

But it may well be asked, are there *no* qualifications of this liberty? Yes; three only, given us in the Word. Our liberty is not to be a *cloke* (1 Pet. 2. 16). It is not to be an *occasion* for the *flesh* (Gal. 5. 13). It is not to be a *stumbling block* to others (1 Cor. 8. 9). In a word it is to be honest before God; sincere as regards ourselves; charitable to our brethren. So far as the writer is aware these are the only three qualifications given in the New Testament of this liberty. Do we not need care not to add to them? Has not God seen that they are sufficient and all-embracing? *All man-made restrictions hinder and mar the liberty of saints*, and tend to the creation of "folds."* These do not; they only keep it from abuse and from imitation. Shall we not seek grace to apply them more deeply and searchingly to our hearts before God that we may better enjoy and manifest that glorious liberty which He has given us in His Son! Have we a better safeguard than the "word of His grace"? Alas! grace can be abused, but *there is no remedy for the deliberate abuse of*

grace; it is the spirit of the apostasy. Let our continual prayer be: "Preserve us, O Lord, for in Thee would we put our trust."

We may remark that when the tide of spiritual life among God's people runs high Christian liberty is enjoyed *spontaneously*. But the very exuberance of joy calls for the need of watchfulness and prayer. For times of gladness and victory in the soul or in the community are often followed by times of humiliating failure and even by excess and fanaticism, whereby the glorious Name and the liberty of the gospel have been brought into disrepute. We have a watchful foe, and it suits his purpose as much for the truth to be run to an extreme as for it to be openly attacked.

On the other hand, when the tide of spiritual life is low, religious life tends always to settle into routine and form. With the growth of form without power, some sort of legality soon appears. Christian liberty then appears too open to be safe; and it becomes restricted, either by the soul for itself or by others laying down rules and prohibitions. Rules, not necessarily written; restrictions and prohibitions, take the place of the law of liberty and the Word of God. Power wanes. The Spirit is quenched. There is no "dew"; no "fresh oil." Sectarianism and ecclesiasticism appear. Man assumes a place. Then, sooner or later, there comes a reaction. Individuals break away and refuse to be bound by "tradition" and "authority." Freelances abound. The keeping of the unity of the Spirit becomes gravely compromised. There is confusion and disquiet and the enemy gains ground. *True Christian liberty is opposed and is the antidote to both these extremes.*

* The reader is no doubt aware that John 10. should read, "There is one flock . . ." There is no "fold" in Christianity properly.

After all, it is the old story of the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew wants

religion ; order ; authority and regulations. He loves a *fold*. Christian liberty is difficult for him to understand. His mind is legal. On the other hand, the Gentile wants freedom ; he loves to express himself, to live his own life intellectually and religiously. He hates to be bound. His mind is *lawless*. We have both these types represented within us, for what are they but *flesh* ? They are found in every assembly and community of Christians. And if either one or the other in a strong personality or combination succeeds in seizing the reins it is disastrous for the testimony of the Lord and the health of God's people. Much spiritual discernment is needed, especially on the part of those who lead among the saints, to perceive the germs of the things ; to seek the Lord's face, and to deal with them in ministry of power, and by suitable admonition. It is certain that the flesh cannot deal with the flesh. It is at the cross that the Jew and the Gentile have both been ended.

Let us bring them there in faith and judgment whenever they become apparent ; and indeed in continuous judgment. For Christian liberty, as all other blessings, is based upon the cross, and not merely the cross of history but the truth of the cross in application and experience (cp. Galatians and Colossians).

Let us seek grace to appropriate more fully this wondrous blessing of Christian liberty ; to hold it fast, and maintain its purity in our own souls and in our associations. It is a

precious but a perilous boon. If at any time we have—as may on occasion be necessary—to claim it, let us in His presence subject it to these tests. Is it *judicial* ? That is, is it consistent with our place of identification with Christ's death ; with the meaning of our baptism ? Is it *evangelical*—is it the liberty of grace ? Is it *filial*—does it become one of the sons of God ? Is it truly *spiritual*, inspired by the Spirit of God, *according to the Word of God* for the glory of Christ and the good of others ? Is it *practical Christianity*, that is, is it honest before God ; is it sincere as regards ourselves ; is it charitable to our brethren ? In a word, is it consistent with *all* our Christian relationships and responsibilities ?

If it does not, we may be sure it is a counterfeit liberty, a wile of Satan, and, however fair may appear its form and intent, it will only bring dishonour upon the Lord, and add to the present confusion.

If, however, it answers to these tests it is our sacred heritage, and we can allow none to take it from us on any account. Let us enjoy it with our God and with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

It is an earnest of glory, for, lastly, Christian liberty is *prophetic*. Grace leads on to glory. The liberty of grace is a pledge and earnest of the liberty of glory. Let us close with the divine word : " Creation itself shall be brought into the *liberty of the glory of the children of God* " (Rom. 8. 21, N.T.). Lord, haste that glorious day ! Amen.

" *The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*" The light shines from the end of the pilgrimage to light you to the end. As you advance it becomes fuller and fuller. The Holy Ghost has come from thence, your resources are from thence. Many Christians are not happy because they do not derive their enjoyments from the end, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES—No. VIII.

(R. MCCALLUM.)

IN drawing to a close in these studies we would overlook many incidents and lessons full of interest and practical value, and pass from the time when Moses came down from the Mount with the radiance of glory upon his countenance, to the day when sadly provoked he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and reaped a harvest of extreme disappointment and lasting sorrow. The people of his care had now come to Kadesh, where they again experienced the exhaustion of the water supplies. Neither past experiences nor present favours, nor yet the whole intervening period of divine preservation, had sobered them to patient endurance. On the contrary, God's gracious care of their fathers in spite of their misdemeanours, and His intervention on the occasions of their rebellion had been regarded as the pattern of His response to vigorously expressed ingratitude. Their foolish contentions and chidings transgressed all bounds of reason and truth, and have branded them for all time as basely ungrateful.

Instead of vindicating himself, lustily exposing the utter stupidity of their charges against him and denouncing their wicked outburst, he and Aaron retired to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and there fell upon their faces before God. "And the glory of the Lord appeared unto them," and guidance for their actions was there vouchsafed to them. Here lies the way of blessing. It is not what worldly men would designate strong or effective action, but it leads in the way that is both dignified and fruitful in its results if we are but true to the directions that the Lord will give. The instructions are clear but not tediously numerous: "Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together,

thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink."

The servant of the Lord set out to render implicit obedience, but like many another he failed and failed where he was strongest. With rod in hand he gathered the people, but instead of speaking to the rock as he was bidden, he smote it twice in wrath after having addressed them in those memorable words, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" It was thus that he failed to sanctify the Lord God in their eyes, for He failed to render that complete obedience to His word which God demands. In his ire he failed to make mention of God to the people and spoke as if the power to bless lay with Aaron and himself. "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

The moment the servant of God speaks as if he were the source of power instead of merely the channel of blessing, he is on a slippery path and is failing to sanctify the Lord his God. He felt he could trust his rod. Had he not smitten the rock at Meribah with it, when there gushed forth refreshing water? Past methods which had been so successful could hardly fail to be efficacious now. But just so did he fail to sanctify the Lord God before their eyes, for the word of Jehovah was, "speak ye unto the rock before their eyes." Does it not demonstrate how necessary it is for the servant of the Lord to be dependent upon his Master for guidance at every moment, and to be faithful to the leading of the Lord? Success may have attended

the means used in the past, but that is no guarantee that such is the method called for at present. God is not bound. The results that He achieves are not in any wise conditioned by the efforts that we exert. A word to the rock if He orders it will accomplish as much as a blow with the rod.

Yet there is more to be learned from the incident. In reviewing the incident at Meribah we remarked that the smitten rock was a type of Christ smitten for us. Now the actuality could only occur once, and Moses by smiting the rock this second time spoiled a beautiful type of the death of Christ. He has died unto sin once: this rock can never again be smitten, but blessing still flows from the One who thus came under the blows of divine judgment. These incidents serve as patterns for our learning, and God had a purpose, we may be very certain, in instructing His servant to speak on this occasion, and not to strike. By his disobedience Moses failed to sanctify the Lord God before the people. Let us learn then how inviolate is His holy word. How awful must be the displeasure of God incurred by those His professed servants who to-day wittingly set aside the authority of His words! Moses His servant failed, but his failure did not withhold the blessing from those who were indeed rebels in heart, for "the water came forth abundantly and the congregation drank and their beasts also." Was not this marvellous grace?

The waters proved in very deed to be waters of bitterness to Moses. Who had cherished more fondly the hope of entering the land of promise? The prospect engaged his heart, and caused him to speak of the land in rapturous tones. But alas! a moment's weakness, a few hasty words, an act of disobedience to Jehovah, and he had

for ever forfeited his title to entrance. In vain did he plead with Jehovah, "O Lord God, Thou hast begun to shew Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or earth that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might? I pray Thee, let me go over and see the goodly land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain Lebanon." Did he then persuade the Lord to relent? "The Lord was wroth," and said, "Let it suffice; speak no more unto Me of this matter." God's decision was final, irrevocable, and the matter was no more to be mentioned.

Yet God gave to His servant a view of the goodly land. From Pisgah's height he might survey the length and the breadth thereof and behold it with his eyes, but it could not be his now to go over this Jordan. "And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed. I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Moses' death on Pisgah stands as a beacon-warning of the precipice of sin—sin that men count trifling, but sin that dishonours God. Let us not err. Moses was much loved, much blessed, but in this he suffered loss.

Withal, we have here a most beautiful picture. Here is a saint of God dying upon the mountain top, with a vision of the land glorious filling his gaze and entrancing his soul. We have here the death of a saint precious in the eyes of his Lord, one so loved that God will commit the act of burial to none other hand than His own. And if we would mourn that Moses did not achieve the desire of his heart, let us reflect with joy that God gave to him the vision of this goodly land and then took him to a better. As if to assure

us how much greater was the blessing that Moses actually received than anything he could have desired or thought of, we have been permitted to see him upon the Mount of Transfiguration—he and Elijah in the presence of our blessed Lord. Thus Moses on Pisgah's heights not only warns but encourages us. His eyes surveyed the goodly heritage. Resort often to Pisgah, dear child of God, and freed from the grovellings of earth anticipate the day of coming bliss. O day of joy ! when freed from every care and sorrow, the journey ended, we too shall enter the abode of our Lord. Here Christ is often hidden, sin interposes, distrust obscures the vision, but there no cloud shall intervene.

How fitting too it was that Moses should not lead the people into the land of promised blessing. His hands had brought the tables of the law ; he was its mediator. As such he stands identified with it, and his failure to enter the goodly land is typically expressive of the inability of the law to lead into blessing. Not Moses but our Joshua, our Saviour Jesus, leads thereto. But although grace and truth have come by Jesus Christ, the law that came by Moses is "just and holy and good" and unrelenting in its demands. God's holy law, although it cannot lead to God, remains unimpaired in the vigour of its demands from man, and therefore it was most fitting that Moses should die in full vitality. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated." Let all who would seek acceptance by way of Sinai learn the folly of such effort. The law can never remove guilt's stains ; it cannot lead to celestial rest. He had lived long. His path was strewn with trials and with sorrows. Amidst them all he had enjoyed a unique fellowship with Jehovah, and now his Heavenly Friend

took him home to glory. And such a destiny awaits us ; here sorrow, there bliss perennial.

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth ; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." Such are the words of Jehovah, and how wondrously have they found their fulfilment in Christ !

Let us conclude by making a very imperfect comparison which the reader may improve for himself. At his birth no peaceful cradle received the child Moses, but a tyrant's frenzy doomed him to a watery grave. When Christ was born, Herod plotted for His life. Massacre cast its net to snare Him but He too was spared. At God's appointed hour Moses quits Egypt. The parents of Jesus took Him to that very land, and out of Egypt did God call His Son. The type and heavenly antitype came forth from the same country. Both intervene in grace on behalf of their people and the reception meted to both is identical. Each is rejected and reviled, both are alike thrust out. After a season of obscurity Moses appeared amongst his own people to stand as a man manifestly approved of God among them by signs and wonders. So Christ was manifested in this world : "A Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." Moses stands forth as the mediator of the old Covenant, mediating between God and man ; Christ appears as the Mediator of a better and abiding covenant, now "the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." God communed with Moses face to face.

To other prophets He gave visions, with Moses He spake as man to man. But what shall we say of the fellowship between the Father and the Son? Moses had to die ere the people could pass over Jordan's waters to the land of blessing: Christ must die before heavenly blessing could be secured for those who are His own. But Moses is but a ray of light compared with Him

whose glory is as the mid-day sun. Yet was he a wonderful servant—obedient, meek, patient, ever waiting upon God: willing to be effaced if God's people might thereby be blessed. As servants of Christ may we be like him, and may God grant that to this end these imperfect studies of the life of this great servant of Jehovah may be blessed to our souls.

THE WANING SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

MATERIALISTIC thought has invaded the life of to-day as never before; education, literature, politics, religion, and the increased leisure that many have, have all their part in the devil's campaign against spiritual and eternal things. Responsibility and duty have not now the weight with the individual conscience and will that once they had, and this not only where the revelation of God is denied. The laxity is everywhere, the awe of responsibility is not felt as it was even where the Lord is owned. The cares and riches and pleasures of this life choke the seed of the Word, and even Christians live as though the needs and respites of this present life were all-important.

But there is a world of which the unveiled face of Jesus is the glory, and of which His everlasting service is the joy, and the Spirit of God has been given to all who believe, that they might become acquainted with that world now, and draw its power and resources down into this life, that they may be acceptable to Him. About all this He will speak to us when we come under His scrutiny at the Judgment Seat, and in view of that we need to think and watch and pray until our hearts are re-animated with the joy of the gospel and a deep sense of our indebtedness to the Lord and responsibility to Him, and with the thought that we must give an account unto Him. This last will not contradict our joy in the Lord and His service, or spoil it any more than the fuel contradicts or spoils the fire that it feeds.

The Possessor and Observer of our Lives.

WE would stir our hearts and yours to a deeper consciousness that our Lord is the rightful Possessor, and the Observer, of our whole lives; whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Because we belong to Him, He will certainly scrutinize the lives that we have lived, whether He has been the Object of them or not, and as He has observed them with Divine exactness, nothing will be overlooked. It will not be a penal judgment, for "their sins and iniquities will He remember no more" in that sense, and for this sublime reason, that they fell upon His sacred head when He suffered on the cross. But He will most certainly scrutinize His servants, for He is their Lord as well as their Redeemer.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Sufferings of Paul for the Church.

“Will you help me with an explanation of Colossians 1. 24, more especially the clause, ‘And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the church’? It is the truth of the one body that I should like to know more about, and what our attitude towards it should be.”—CHEDDAR.

CHRI**S**T, the Head of His body, the church, had suffered for it. He had suffered on the cross to make a full atonement for the sins of those who are now members of it, and of course no one could have any share in those sufferings, nor add anything to them. They were finished when He died, and by His “one offering He has sanctified for ever them that are sanctified.” Now His body, the church, is the choicest and most precious fruit of His death to the Lord, but to bring out the truth of it and to establish it in the power of the Spirit on earth would involve whoever should do it in great afflictions, because of the intense opposition to it on the part of Satan and men. It was necessary for these two reasons that a special vessel should be chosen to whom the administration of this mystery, which had been hidden in God from all past ages, could be committed. This chosen vessel was Paul. At his conversion on the roadside outside Damascus, he saw the glory of Jesus, a glory above the noon-day sun in its brightness, and he also learnt that the blood-bought saints on earth, not merely belonged to Him, but were Himself—members of a body of which He was the Head, for this is what those words meant, “Why persecutest thou ME?” From that hour Paul was drawn into an intimacy and fellowship with Christ as to His church which made him ready to suffer the greatest afflictions for it; his love to the Head of the body found its outlet in an intense devotion to the members of it. We have it expressed in other connections: “Therefore, I endure

all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2. 10). “I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles” (Ephes. 3. 1). For the sake of the body of Christ he was a daily martyr, and in this he rejoiced, not only because of his love for it, but because he realized the blessedness and the riches of the glory of it, and also because he was the specially chosen minister of it: in this he gloried, and suffered what none of the other apostles suffered, nor any servant of Christ since. So completely one with Christ was he in his labours and sufferings for the church’s sake that he could rightly call them the afflictions of Christ.

It is interesting to see in Matthew’s Gospel, which is the Gospel of the Lord’s Kingship, that when He spoke first to His disciples about His church, He also from that time began to tell them of the rejection of His rights as King by the nation of the Jews, and what *He would suffer at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes* (chap. 16.). These sufferings were not His atoning sufferings, but He endured them in view of having His church, and on this line Paul suffered, for the leaders of the Jews persecuted him from city to city, because he would preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and show that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise in Christ by the gospel. But Satan also was set against this great truth with a deadly and per-

sistent hatred. He had hoped that he had got rid of Christ from the world when he drove men to crucify Him, but lo! he found that Christ was still here in His body, for the riches of the glory of this mystery is *Christ in you*, Gentiles, the hope of glory. And he found that the very life of Christ in its blessed moral features was being reproduced and manifested in the body of Christ—in kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, love and peace; and because of this he vented his enmity on Paul and brought all his subtlety and power to work against him to crush him, if possible. We know that Paul was sustained in these sufferings by the excellency of the power of God (2 Cor. 4.).

You will notice that Paul speaks of this great truth as completing or filling out fully the Word of God. This does not mean that he was the last inspired writer: we know that he was not that, but that this revelation of the mystery

was the crowning truth of God's Word. A place had been left for it by every previous revelation, and now that it had come out, every truth of God fell into its place in relation to it. How necessary it is that we should understand it. No other truth is fully understood if this has not its place in our thoughts. And the reason so many earnest men get astray as to prophecy—fixing dates for the Lord's coming, teaching the partial rapture of the church, or that it will go through the tribulation, falling into the error of Anglo-Israelism—is simply because they have not grasped the truth as to the mystery. It delivers also from all sectarian narrowness, for "there is one body"; it could not be otherwise, for there is one Head, and every member of the body is equally necessary and dear to the Head; and if that is understood, each will be seen to be necessary and dear to all the members. When this truth is in power in our souls, our attitude towards our fellow-members will be as described in Col. 3. 12-17.

Exceeding Joy. Jude 24.

"Would you please say what your thought is as to this verse? Is the 'exceeding joy' the joy of those who are presented faultless before the presence of God's glory, or of God who presents them there?"—GATESHEAD.

THE exceeding joy is the joy of God.

It is the climax of that joy which the Lord spoke of in Luke 15., "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad" (verses 11-32). To understand the cause of it, and of the wonderful ascription of praise that speaks of it, we must see it in relation to the epistle in which it is given. Jude describes the condition into which Christendom will sink, into which it is already sinking fast, alas! It is a solemn picture that is shown to us, but a true one, of men denying the only Master and Lord Jesus Christ (N.T.), and being carried by their own proud

wills and hateful lusts deeper and deeper into apostasy from God and His truth, until He will be compelled, according to His word spoken long ago, to intervene in just and final judgment. But in the midst of this condition of things there are "the called ones, beloved by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ" (N.T.). And three times over in the epistle they are called "beloved." What of these? Are they to be swept away on the strong tide of evil into the depths that Jude describes for us? No. The One who loves them and received them at first with gladness is able to keep them

even from stumbling, and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory. This He will do, and He will do it with exultation, for it will be a double triumph of His grace. Not only the grace that received us at first will be celebrated there, but the grace also that has carried us through the world and kept us from the evil of it, in

spite of every adverse influence. The grace that keeps us and will eventually glorify us is equal to the grace that has saved us. We can rejoice in this now, and we certainly shall then, but then it will be God's joy in which we shall share, His exultation in the final triumph of His grace.

Affection for Christ.

"In one of your issues a reference is made to affection for Christ. My trouble is that I cannot say truthfully that I have affection for Him, though I am as sure of my salvation as I have hands and feet, and I am assured of His love to me. I find others in this condition and don't know how to meet it. Could you write something on the subject to make it clear?"—
ONTARIO.

WHILE it is right for us to confess our coldness of heart towards the Lord we gain nothing by being continually occupied with it; a morbid introspection is never healthy or profitable. The only way in which love to Christ can be produced and increased is by learning of His love to us. What made Mary break her box of ointment and in silent adoration pour its precious contents on the Lord's feet? She had learnt through His tears the truth of the statement in chapter 11., "Now the Lord loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." What was it that made Paul the Apostle the devoted lover and servant of the Lord that he was? Only the fact that with deep conviction he could say, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2.). What reason does John give for his statement, "We love Him"? There could be only one reason, "because He first loved us" (1 John 4. 19).

We have no hesitation in saying that if you are assured of His love to you, you do love Him in response; if you did not love Him you would not be interested at all in His love to you. A good test would be to ask yourself what value you put upon His love to

you. What would you take in exchange for it? We put a question like that to one in a similar state of mind to yours, and she answered, "Not for a thousand worlds would I part with the love of Christ. I would lose everything I possess rather than that"—very clearly proving that she did truly love the Lord, as you no doubt do. Do not allow thoughts of the poverty of your love to rob you of the joy that the wealth of His love yields. Your love to Him is neither the ground of your peace nor the source of your joy. Everything flows from His love to you. You may have to sorrowfully sing:

"O Lord, alas! what weakness
Within myself I find,
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind"—

but you may add:

"And yet Thy love's unchanging,
And doth recall my heart
To joy in all its brightness,
The peace its beams impart."

Let that suffice. Rejoice in the fact that Christ has made you His own and that His love to you can never change. Dwell upon this, and you will long to know Him better and to love Him more, and this will be positive proof that though you have not seen Him you do love Him (1 Peter 1.).

The Souls of Animals and of Men.

“It was recently stated in one of our Gospel Addresses that ‘a dog has a soul.’ The gospeller was wishing to draw attention to the difference between a plant which has life, and a dog which has life and—he maintained—a soul. Saying that a plant thrown on the fire would not be conscious of the fact—a dog would. Therefore that dog has a soul. The person puts forward these scriptures to qualify the statement: Gen. 1. 24; Heb. 4. 12; 1 Cor. 15. 44; 1 Cor. 2. 11. The latter three certainly distinguish between soul and spirit, but I know of no Scripture to support the statement under question. Would you please assist me?”—

YORKS.

WE believe that there is truth in the statement that the animals in common with men have souls; the word is used of all creatures that live by the breath of life, and in contrast to angels who are *spiritual* beings; but if it were carried further and said that the soul of an animal is the same sort as the soul of a man we should entirely disagree. The Scriptures tell us that there is a difference of flesh. “All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men and another flesh of beasts” (1 Cor. 15. 39); and in a much more definite way there are the souls of men and the souls of beasts—they are not of the same kind. The divine account of the Creation should be enough to prove this. As to the animals, it is said: “And God said, Let the earth bring forth living souls after their kind, cattle, creeping things, and beasts of the earth. And it was so” (Genesis 1. 24). These creatures live by the breath of life, and they and men are classed together in regard to this in Genesis 7. 21, 22. Each has an individuality, they are attached to and care for their offspring, and feel pleasure which is not physical, as a dog does at the sight of its master; anger, too, and other emotions that men also feel—these belong to the soul life that they possess in common with men; but here the likeness ends, and they are described as “natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed” (2 Peter 2. 12) in contrast to the souls of men that survive death (Matthew 10. 28.)

But when God had finished their creation, calling by His word the

animals out of the earth, the crown of it all was yet to be brought forth—that crown was man, who was to have dominion over them all. And the God-head took counsel as to his creation, and he was made in the image and likeness of God. First God formed his body out of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. We know from the New Testament that he has a spirit as well as a soul, but we gather that the Word of God alone can separate between the two, and often when the soul is spoken of the spirit is included; he received both by the breath of God which puts him on a very different plane to that of the animals.

Man is a moral being: he has been set in relationship to God and has his responsibilities towards God, even in regard to the lower life of his soul, which might be called animal life; so his conscience bears witness against him, and his thoughts accuse or excuse him, in regard to the things he does in his body on this side of his life. But there is another side of the soul life. David cried, for instance, “O God, my soul thirsteth for Thee,” and no soul of man will ever be satisfied apart from God, the Source of its life. It is sometimes stated that it is only by his spirit that a man can be in touch with God, but the passage quoted and many another prove that this is not so. The two are brought together in Mary’s song of praise: “My *soul* doth magnify the Lord, and my *spirit* hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”

“THE MORNING” AND “EVENTIDE.” (J. T. MAWSON.)

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and ISAAC . . .” (Genesis 22. 3).

“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide, and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming, and REBEKAH . . .” (Genesis 24. 63, 64).

IT would be wrong to obscure the faith of Abraham that shines with such lustre in this twenty-second chapter of Genesis by any typical interpretation of it, for these are days in which God is not greatly trusted and we need the example that this man has set us to encourage us to believe and prove for ourselves that GOD IS, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Abraham gained by his faith in God the title of “faithful Abraham,” and God was not ashamed to be called his God, and he was called “the friend of God.” God spoke and he believed and obeyed, and God did not fail him when the great test came. He is dead, but his witness to the faithfulness of God lives, and we learn as we read the story the blessedness of the man who follows God without a question and who leaves the consequences in His wise and almighty hand. No figure in those Old Testament days bore himself with such dignity as Abraham. No man rivalled him in his superiority to circumstances, none acted with such vigour and purpose and without hesitation or panic, but it was because he had the word of God and believed it. God was his God, his shield and exceeding great reward, therefore he staggered not in the great crises of his life, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. All this lies on the surface of the story, and it is not God’s intention that we should miss it, for not less than four times in the New Testament is Abraham’s faith pressed upon us. Having guarded that let us proceed to consider the typical meaning of it, for it is an Old Testament picture of great New Testament truths.

The first time that LOVE is mentioned in the Bible is here: “*Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest.*” It is the love of the father to the son, and it typifies for us the first and the greatest of all loves, and the source from which all true love has flowed, the love of God the Father for His Son. This is a most wonderful theme, and great blessing must come to us as we consider it. I believe that we may justly say that all the grace that has come to us and all the glory that we hope for finds its spring in this, for “the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand” (John 3. 35). This love is shown to us very clearly in John’s Gospel where Jesus is called “the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father,” and where, when speaking to His Father, He said, “Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (chap. 1). He was worthy to be loved by the Father, and this was surely what the Father meant when twice He declared from the excellent glory, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Out of this love of the Father to the Son has sprung up a great purpose for the joy and glory of the loved One, and for the fulfilment of this purpose God had to awaken into activity, if we may be permitted with the greatest reverence to use such an expression in regard to Him. This is set before us in figure when Abraham rose up early in the morning to lead his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, to the place of sacrifice.

The early morning is the beginning of the day’s work and the eventide sees its completion or failure. The

day of God's work for the fulfilment of His great purpose began when His beloved Son, the Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," and how bright was the dawning of that day! The true light then shone in its gracious fulness for every man. How the hearts of men ought to have thrilled to it! What expectations ought to have awakened within them! Alas, the darkness did not comprehend the light, and the world did not know its Maker, but that did not turn the Father from His purpose. The day of His great work had begun, and He could do no other than work while it was day. It was the early morning of that day when the Father and the Son rose up and started forth on the journey that led to the place of sacrifice—Golgotha, for judgment and death and Satan's power lay between the morning and the eventide. We learn as we read John's Gospel how the Father and the Son "went both of them together," in an absolute and indivisible oneness of purpose. This oneness is seen in the Lord's words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work. . . . What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise, for the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that He Himself doeth" (John 5.).

The time came in the journey of Abraham and Isaac to the land of Moriah when the young men were left behind and the wood for the burnt offering was laid upon Isaac; and as we read the story we are reminded of the words of Jesus to His disciples, "*Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the FATHER IS WITH ME*" (John 16. 32); and then, "*He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.*"

(chap. 19 1). We who are parents may have some conception of what Abraham's feelings must have been as he walked with Isaac to the place of sacrifice, and as they communed together on the way, but what heart of man can conceive what it cost the Father, when in obedience to His will, His well-beloved went forth unflinchingly to death; and when in their communings together on the way the Son said to the Father, "*Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.*" There was an instant answer to that cry, not that the Lord Himself needed it, for His confidence in His Father's love was absolute, but for the people's sake, that they might know that that lonely Man whom they hated was heard and beloved by the Father in heaven.

Isaac was delivered from the uplifted knife and there suffered in his stead the ram caught by its horns in the thicket, but no substitute was found for God's beloved Son; it was impossible that He could be delivered from the stroke of death. God's purpose must be realized and there was only one way by which it could be, the Lamb of God must die, and the Son of God was the Lamb of God.

We believe that we are right in saying that it was not far from the place to which Abraham led Isaac that Jesus suffered, and Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh—the mount of the Lord who sees and provides. The place was well and truly named, for we see at Golgotha how God, who saw the end from the beginning, provided a Lamb for Himself and by the death of His Lamb laid an immovable foundation for eternal peace and joy and glory, and the fulfilment of all His will.

How wonderfully the purpose of God unfolds in this story. Abraham had said to the young men, "*I and the lad will go yonder . . . and come again to you.*" He knew that He would not come back alone ; his faith laid hold upon God and he knew that He was able to raise up his son even from the dead, "from whence also he received him in a figure." How blessed it is for us to know that the fact infinitely exceeds the figure, and the fact is, that "*Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*" (Romans 6. 4), and as the risen Son of God He could send His disciples that triumphant message, "*I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.*" Beyond the suffering of death and the darkness of the grave we see the Father and the Son moving on together to the great end that the Father has in view.

This brings us to Genesis 24, where Abraham declares what was in his heart for Isaac's joy ; it was that he should have a bride worthy of his love to share all his wealth. She had to be brought from a far country, and a servant who could be trusted had to be sent to fetch her. In Abraham's own household there was a servant, who, without any thought of himself, would carry out all Abraham's desire. I am not saying anything that has not been said before, nor am I stretching the Scripture unduly when I say that this devoted, unselfish servant is a figure of the Holy Ghost. The story teaches us the Father's purpose for the joy and glory of His beloved Son, the Risen Man, Christ Jesus, which will be brought to full realization by the work and power of the Holy Ghost. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all have their part in this great matter.

It is an enthralling story. How

well Abraham's servant carried out his mission, how well and wisely he spoke of his master's son, how charming was the grace of Rebekah, and how ready was her response to the servant's appeal. All these features in the figure are found in the great antitype of it. The Holy Ghost has come from the Father to bear witness to the blessedness and unsearchable riches of Christ, to take of His things, and show them to us and to glorify Him, as John 14. 15, 16 shows us. He works within us to produce a response in our hearts to the attractiveness of God's beloved Son, that just as Rebekah was willing to leave her father's house and her own land and to go to Isaac whom she had not seen, so we may be made willing to turn from the world and choose Christ instead of it, and say in response to the demand, "Wilt thou go with this man?" "I will go." And thus it comes to pass that, to use Paul's figure, we are espoused to one husband that we might be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11. 2). Happy indeed it is for us if this is true, and if it can be said of us in regard to the Lord, "*whom having not seen, ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*" (1 Peter 1. 8).

The Holy Ghost is gathering souls out of the world for Christ. This is His great work. He uses the gospel to this end, and becomes the Comforter to all who believe it. The Scriptures tell us that believing the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the Earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph. 1. 13, 14). The Holy Spirit who seals us, indwells us, and our bodies become His temple (1 Cor. 6. 19). We all who are indwelt by

Him are formed by that very indwelling into one body, the church, and the church is to be the bride of the Lamb. The Lord Himself was the first to speak of it in the Bible, and then He called it "MY CHURCH," and of it we read, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5. 25-27). Rebekah in our story is a type of the church, and just as Abraham's faithful servant sought her and conducted her from her own land to Isaac, so the Holy Spirit is conducting the church to the great day of presentation—the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19). The day of these divine activities is drawing to its close, we are surely very near the eventide when the Lamb will meet His bride. And that hour fills His thoughts. The place that it has in the closing words of Scripture is significant. Three times over in the last chapter our Lord says, "I come quickly." It is true that two of these times have to do with the rewards that He will give to His faithful servants, and He will find a peculiar joy in this, but when that side of things has been dealt with in every phase of it, and He is free to allow the feelings of His heart to break out without any question of gain or judgment, He says—"I JESUS . . . AM THE BRIGHT, AND MORNING STAR." This is the last presentation of Himself before He comes. It does not show Him in His majesty and power, with eyes as a flame of fire and feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and a sharp two-edged sword going out of His mouth. It is Himself, the Saviour, who in His measureless love went down into death for His bride; it is Himself so meek and gentle, so full of grace and truth;

it is Himself the altogether lovely One, and the great Lover of His church. By this Name we have come to know and admire and love Him. He presents Himself in this personal way to stir the affections of His bride and to make her cry in unison with the Spirit, "Come" (Rev. 22. 16, 17). Then He gives one final word. The very last that He has addressed to His church, it is His final love-word to His espoused and longed-for bride. "He which testifieth these things saith, 'SURELY, I COME QUICKLY.'" There can be but one right response to that word, and may it break forth from everyone of our hearts, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"*And Isaac went out . . . at eventide . . . and behold the camels were coming, and Rebekah.*" What joy awaits us when the fact that our story prefigures actually comes to pass, but what will the joy of our Lord be? Let us see how the Scripture puts it. "*The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.*"* It will be a shout of triumph and of joy, for then the time of waiting will be past, the day's work will be finished, the church completed, and Father, Son and Holy Ghost will rejoice together as the Lamb sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

Thus shall this acceptable time, this great day of grace reach its climax. And all heaven shall share in the joy and the glory of it, for then shall be fulfilled the prophetic word, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad

* Note:—At the coming of the Lord not the church only will be caught up, but "all that are Christ's," and that will surely include all who have died in faith from Abel onward.

and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19. 6, 7). Then shall we enter into that new day, in which they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and there shall be no night there.

Has grace chosen us for this great destiny? Is it for this that we have

been bought with a price and sealed by the Holy Ghost? Yes, for nothing less than this. Then knowing this, may we keep ourselves for Christ, and if the world would detain us and occupy us with its trifles instead of Him, may we hear the Spirit say to us, as Abraham's servant said when her old friends would have retained Rebekah amongst them—"HINDER ME NOT."

FORGIVENESS AND AFTER.

GOD proclaims the forgiveness of sins to all through the name of Jesus. It is the New Testament message, and all the Old Testament prophets bear witness to it (Acts 10.), but let no one imagine that this is merely a great scheme by which he may escape the just punishment of his sins. That is altogether too negative, too low. It is a way of escape from crushing liabilities, we thank God for that, but it is the way into a new life, a life of liberty and holiness, and no truly repentant heart could be satisfied with less than that. If God lifts the load of sin, and He does, it is that, being freed from sin, we might live unto Him. It was *life* that John Bunyan's pilgrim craved for, and not only to be rid of the burden that weighed him down. God's salvation is a great deliverance. Our sins are forgiven, the yoke of sin is broken, we have freedom from it by the cross of Christ, but His life as the risen One is imparted to us and we live in the love of God.

GOD.

HOW wonderful it is to have God, revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, as our God! There is no time in our lives to which He is not altogether suitable.

IN CHILDHOOD we may know Him as the One who gathers the lambs with His arms and carries them in His bosom (Isa. 40.).

IN MANHOOD, when plunged into the conflicts of life, and when face to face with the adversary who would overthrow our faith, we may know Him as the mighty God of Jacob who with His hands will make strong the arms of our hands so that our bow shall abide in strength (Gen. 49.).

IN OLD AGE we may still say the Eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms (Deut. 27.).

How gentle He is, gentle as a mother brooding over her babe. How strong is He who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and who makes His feeble saints more than a match for Satan. How faithful is He who does not forget His children, upholds even unto old age, so that their feet walk serenely into the eternal day.

PARTNERS—SLEEPING OR ACTIVE? (DAVID ROSS.)

BARHEAD, MAY 25, 1929.]

Scriptures read : Judges 4. 14 ; 5. 2, 6, 7, 9, 15-18, 20, 21, 23, 31 ; Philippians 2. 17-18, 20, 21, 30.

WE have been called by God into a *partnership*. 1 Corinthians 1. 9 tells us that "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship (partnership) of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Verses 26-28 of the same chapter show us who the *partners* are, Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, the foolish things, the despised things, and the things that are not. I wish to ask the question: Are we *sleeping* partners or *active* ones?

A bee has been buzzing in my ear all this week. I have read several times the Song of Deborah; her name means *a bee*, and some of her words have greatly impressed me. This bee was needed to sting Barak into action. Although his name means *lightning*, he needed a woman to rouse him and change him from being a sleeping partner in Israel to being a leader. God had called Israel with a wonderful calling (not so wonderful as ours is, however), when He gave them a land flowing with milk and honey. It was theirs in the purpose of God, but they were to possess their possessions, they were to go in and lay hold of what God had meant to be theirs. In this, however, they had failed. We read in the first chapter how Benjamin dwelt with the Jebusites whom he had failed to drive out from Jerusalem, how Dan was forced into the mountains by the Amorites, and dared not show himself in the valleys. The enemy was everywhere, and not one of the twelve tribes had succeeded in gaining complete possession of the heritage allotted to it. Is not that the way with many of us to-day? We have been called with a

heavenly calling and the land is before us. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, but spiritual energy is lacking and, consequently, these blessings are not possessed in actual enjoyment. We require holy confidence to lay hold of that to which God has called us. Deborah's stirring call was "Up! for this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee?" So we need to listen to the clarion note, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

What a deplorable picture of misery the ancient people of God presented to His enemies. The highways were deserted, the people who should have owned the land were hiding in caves and dens, not daring to show themselves, but living like a conquered nation in their own territory. Is that not often where we are? Instead of living in the enjoyment of all that God has made ours; instead of feasting on the fruit of the heavenly land even here and now, we are impoverished and depressed, and often are a defeated people. "The highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through bye-ways, the inhabitants of the villages ceased." The God-given land was occupied by a race of fugitives. Is there nothing like that in our day? Alas! there is. The church of God does not come forth triumphantly manifesting its glorious entrance into heavenly blessings, but almost seems to apologize for its very existence.

The word of a woman summoned Barak from inaction, although he said

to her, "If thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." Even Barak, wonderful leader as he was, needed a woman to go along with him to supply his lack of courage. Evidently, he found it easier to believe in a woman than to believe in God. How often are we looking for somebody to lead us, someone to be with us, instead of trusting in the word of the Lord, "Is not the Lord gone out before thee?" He wants us to put our faith in the Man of His counsels, in Christ who cannot fail and who has promised to be with us, even unto the end of the age. "This is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into thine hand." This clamant call of the Prophetess affected not only Barak, but also the other leaders and the people so that they offered themselves willingly. Shall there be to-day a renewed desire on our part to be up, to awake out of our slumber, to get out of our dull, dead lethargy, to hear the awakening call of our blessed Lord, to quit ourselves like men, knowing that He will give us the victory and enable us to enter into our heavenly possessions?

What did it mean for the leaders and the people who willingly offered themselves? SACRIFICE. Is that why so many of us are sleeping partners? No business, no partnership, will ever succeed if it is made up of nothing but sleeping partners, and what a vast number of Christians may thus be described, mere do-nothings! God wants us to offer ourselves willingly in the spirit of Paul, when he said, "Yea, if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." This was the result of knowing the stupendous sacrifice, the willing offering made by Christ Jesus. "The One who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal

with God . . . became obedient even unto the death of the cross." Brethren, if we were more constantly in the presence of the Lord of glory, who made that wonderful sacrifice, we might catch something of His mind and of His spirit. We may not be leaders, but it is more than leaders that are required. Barak did not win the war by himself. It was with ten thousand nameless heroes—the rank and file—that he faced the nine hundred iron chariots of Sisera. So the great apostle lovingly alludes to his unnamed "fellow labourers whose names are in the book of life." If we look at the mighty chariots of the hosts of evil which are out to crush our faith we may well fear and tremble, knowing that we are weak things, but God is with us, and He will surely lead His people to victory. May we be ready like Paul to lay ourselves upon the altar and be poured forth so that God's will in us may be accomplished.

What was Israel's enemy doing? If you study the map of Palestine, you will see that a wedge was being driven between the people of the south and those of the north which would have led to their separation. The enemy of God is ever eager to divide His people, for division spells weakness. Sisera, with all his up-to-date appliances of war, was advancing up the valley of Kishon, but the people, stirred by Deborah's call, offered themselves to meet his mighty host, and though they had nothing apart from faith in God, that was enough, and the enemy was completely routed. You do not need all the equipment of an up-to-date theological education to fit you for the conflict. What you do need is the "shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali

came forward with their quota to the noble ten thousand who won the victory. But there were "slackers." At their head came Reuben, "My firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, BUT *unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*" You remember when the Israelites were about to enter the land, Reuben and Gad grievously disappointed their noble leader, Moses, by their desire to settle down on the wrong side of the Jordan. Their desire was granted, but the result was that they were the first to be carried into captivity. What need there is to-day to ring out the clarion notes to the world-borderers, who do not wish to pass the Jordan, to those who are content to be saved from Egypt and its miseries, but do not desire to be dwelling in the heavenly land. These are the people, neither one thing nor the other, neither hot nor cold, of whom the Lord said, "I will spue you out of My mouth." Reuben was too dull, useless, and poor-spirited to be stung into action even by Deborah's words. He was one of those who are always "sitting on the fence," who are like a royal commission that sits continually taking evidence and never issuing a report. How many brethren are failing to get on with the Lord's business, because their lives seem to be spent sifting the evidence concerning their wretched divisions, and never reaching a conclusion. "In the divisions of Reuben were great searchings of heart." He remained at home minding his sheep, perhaps having a little "scrap" with his next-door neighbour, just to keep himself in exercise, instead of going and wrestling with the enemies of the Lord. How often have God's people used their weapons against one another instead of against the mighty hosts of darkness.

"Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds to hear the bleating of the flocks?" Reuben was seeking his own things, not the things of his Lord. How different the spirit of Timothy, who sought the things of Jesus Christ, and did bond service in the gospel. He had learnt of that great servant, the Lord Jesus, who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," and who pleased not Himself. Timothy had imbibed something of the gracious spirit of the One who died on the cross, and thus in contrast with many of his contemporaries cared genuinely for the state of the saints. What about Dan? He had his ships to look after. What about Asher? He remained in his creeks, probably catching fish and mending his nets. What about Gilead? He abode beyond Jordan consulting his ease. These selfish people had no interest in the unity of the nation, though God's purpose was that His people should be one. They all sought their own things. The Jordan was deep and dangerous, their sheep, their ships, their nets were their first and all-absorbing interest, and the interests of the Lord could look after themselves.

One verse (23) of this wonderful song has been imprinted on my memory ever since I was a lad, when I read a tract, the subject of which I have forgotten, but on the back of it was a little dialogue based on this verse:

"Curse ye Meroz," said the angel of the Lord.
 "Why, what has Meroz done?"
 "Nothing."
 "Then why should Meroz be cursed?"
 "Because they have done nothing."

Wellington's victory at Salamanca was not so complete as he had wished, because an ally on whom he was depending "did nothing," and the victory of Mount Tabor might have been in doubt, just because Meroz was a do-nothing. Consequently Meroz was bitterly cursed. I wonder how many

of us are do-nothings? Perhaps you answer, "I cannot preach." You may not be asked to preach, but you are summoned to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. "But," you say, "if He is mighty, He can do His own work." Yes, but nevertheless, He expected Meroz to come to His help, and He expects you. Do you say, "I am so weak, I am nothing"? Have you not heard that God takes the things that are weak to confound the things that are mighty? He chooses His partners from those who *are* nothing, but He does not win His victories with those who *do* nothing. Jehovah was mightier than Sisera with all his mighty chariots and yet He deigned to use feeble folk to work out His glorious victory.

Again. What kind of people did He use? People that took risks. "Zebulun and Naphtali jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." We hear much to-day about "safety first." Are we merely going to play for safety in our Christian life? Shall we fear to risk the loss of our sheep, our ships, our goods, and, like Asher and Co., mind our own business first? Let us remember our first business is to mind the Lord's business, and then it is His business to look after ours. What a contrast between gallant Zebulun and Naphtali hazarding their lives to fight the Lord's battles on the right side of the Jordan, and laggard Reuben and Gilead sitting at ease on the wrong side. In Philippians 2. we have a beautiful example of the true heroic spirit of the Christian. The Apostle Paul, in order that God's calling might be known, and that God's purposes might be fulfilled, says, "If my death helps in bringing these to pass, I am glad to die." Then a man like Timothy, who might not be called to die, was prepared

for a life of unselfish devotion that the church might be blessed and God's will accomplished. And, lastly, we have Epaphroditus, whose name curiously enough is derived from that of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of luck, the gamblers' deity. Men of the world will take risks for mere trifles, and yet many a Christian will venture nothing for the bringing in of the glorious Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Of Epaphroditus, Paul says, "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death (He was like a man who walks right up to the mouth of the cannon), not regarding his life (literally gambling with his life), to supply your lack of service." He took risks, he jeopardized his life, not out of a spirit of foolhardy bravado, but for this simple purpose, that the service of the Philippian saints in the form of money might be carried to the leader, who had offered himself so willingly, and because of this was now lying in a Roman dungeon. The Philippians were not sleeping partners. In chapter 1. Paul thanks God that from the beginning they had had fellowship in the gospel, and now once more they were proving themselves active partners. What a wonderful spirit! The leader Paul, lying bound, ready to be sacrificed; Timothy, willing to spend and to be spent for the sake of the saints of God and the interests of Jesus Christ; Epaphroditus, willing to gamble with his life in order that the active partners in Philippi, the simple brothers and sisters, whose share in this business was to put their hands in their pockets, might have fellowship with the apostle. Do we ever think how we may be letting down the men in the front line? Brave-hearted men and women, who have hazarded their lives in Africa, China, and India, are fighting the very

forces^v of hell in all the stark wickedness of heathendom. Are we sleeping, slumbering, or are we actively participating by prayer, and purse, and sympathy in the spread of this fellowship into which a faithful God has called us, the partnership of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? May we all hear the Bee with her words, "Up! Up!! Up!!!" May she sting us, as she stung Barak to answer to his name, and become in truth a "lightning" leader.

Deborah's wonderful song finishes thus: "Let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his

might." Is it sunshine we want? Is it light amid the encircling gloom we need? Then let us remember that it is only those whom love to Himself has made active partners in His interests, who know what it is to live in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, radiant in the face of Jesus, and not the sleepers, the sluggards, the do-nothings.

"Light divine surrounds thy going,
God Himself shall mark thy way;
Secret blessings richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day.

"When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling,
Love divine thy foot shall bring;
There with shouts of triumph swelling,
Zion's songs in rest to sing."

CORRESPONDENCE.

"The Father."

MY dear Brother,

Having been withdrawn from the field of active service, a few days ago I took up the 1928 Volume of *Scripture Truth*, and looked at the index to find something concerning *the Father*. I was not disappointed, and therefore send these few lines, thinking they might interest both yourself and your readers.

For some time the truth that the Father as exclusively made known to us by the Son had come with fresh power to my soul; and now, experiencing a measure of isolation and weakness, along with enforced quietude, the preciousness of the Father's love and the Father's name, "like ointment poured forth," brought sweet solace and joy to my spirit, and I blessed the Saviour that He had come to make Him known when the world knew Him not. He said, "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him."

Turning to the article indicated: "*Father: A Meditation*," one's heart rejoiced, first of all to be so helpfully reminded of the holy intimacy of Jesus Himself with the Father, so that in the most trying circumstances—circumstances of immeasurable sorrow—He could, as the Son, say, "FATHER"; and then we too, taken into favour and relationship, can say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and in circumstances of sorrow or joy truthfully say, "FATHER."

Moreover, the eternal love of the Father for His Son is now ours—love immeasurable and inexpressible, yet ours nevertheless!—even as Jesus said to the Father, Thou "hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

May it please the Lord to enrich us all with a deepened sense of this in His own tender and gracious way.

Affectionately yours in Him,

"A REGULAR READER."

THE FATHER'S NAME.

(H. J. VINE.)

DESCENDING in a cloud the Lord proclaimed to Moses the name of JEHOVAH; and somewhat of the wealth of that name is found in Exod. 34. 5-7; also the value of it in the experience of others in a multitude of Scriptures which follow (Ps. 86. 15; Jonah 4. 2, etc., etc.).

Previously the Lord said to Moses, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of GOD ALMIGHTY, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Exod. 6. 3).

It remained for the Son to come, our adorable Lord and Saviour, to disclose to us THE FATHER'S NAME. He was here in lowliness, and in love and grace, not in fiery majesty, with tempest, terror, and the sound of trumpet as at Sinai. Found amongst men full of heavenly favour and truth the Son said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6. 37); and as to the inestimable preciousness of the Father's Name, we have recorded in John 17. what He

has said in holy intimacy and intercession concerning it:—

1. Verse 6.—"I have *manifested* Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." All that the Father is was seen in the Son: in Him His ineffable name found *MANIFESTATION*.

2. Verses 11 and 12.—"Holy Father, *keep* through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. . . . I kept them in Thy name." While passing through this world, in the Father's name may be found true *PRESERVATION*.

3. Verse 26.—"I have *declared* unto them Thy name, and will declare it." As we said before, it was necessary for the Son Himself to come to disclose the Father's name; and having done this, He continues to sustain the making known of it from His exalted seat on high. It is that *the Father's love for the Son* might be ours we have this *DECLARATION*. Blessed be God for the revelation of *THE FATHER'S NAME* in His beloved Son.

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

NOT safety from punishment only, but freedom from sin, is the earnest longing of the man in whose heart the fear of the Lord has sprung up; not pardon merely, but holiness. Justification through Christ and sanctification in Christ—these two must go together; the first is the closing up of the guilty past, the second is the entrance into the new life. God reveals His grace in the first and becomes attractive, we are set apart for Him and His service in the second. What a miserable gospel that is that sees nothing beyond salvation from just punishment; if this were all that God had to give us we should say that Christ had died in vain. But now the door of liberty is open and we pass through it into a sphere of life of which God is the object and power. Obedience to Him, a joyful obedience, is the great principle of this new life. "I will walk at liberty, for I keep Thy commandments."

SAMUEL THE PROPHET. (1 Samuel i.-vii.)

(HAMILTON SMITH.)

HISTORICALLY the first book of Samuel is the continuation of the book of Judges. There we have the history of a people whose course was ever downward, in spite of occasional revivals. It closes with the solemn statement that, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Israel had lost all true sense of God as their King, with the result they ceased to be a united people. They broke up into mere units acting independently of one another, each doing his own will and walking according to the sight of his eyes rather than by faith in God.

Nor is it otherwise with the people of God to-day. The same cause produces the same result. Failing to hold the Head in heaven, the people of God fail to maintain unity and fellowship among themselves on earth. Fellowship being lost, they drop into mere individualism in which each walks according to his own will independently of others.

In the opening chapters of the first book of Samuel (i.-7.) we have depicted one of the darkest periods of Israel's history. The downgrade movement of the book of Judges was continued until the condition of the nation was not only evil but desperate. Such was their iniquity that it became impossible for God to continue His outward links with Israel without sanctioning their sin or sully His glory. Thus the people enter that solemn period in their history in which God withdraws the symbol of His presence, and all outward relations with God are ended.

There is, however, another side to this dark picture; for, if we are permitted to see the utter failure of God's people in responsibility, we are

also privileged to see the grace of God in sovereignty. If the story probes the depths of man's sin, it carries us also to the height of God's grace. We are thus taught, once again, that where sin abounds grace does much more abound.

As the story opens, there are not wanting ominous signs of the coming storm; as it proceeds the shadows lengthen and the darkness deepens, but amidst the increasing gloom we learn the truth of that sure word which says, "It shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud."

Briefly, then, we may say that the first seven chapters of the first book of Samuel present the total failure of the people of God in responsibility, and the ultimate triumph of the grace of God in sovereignty.

This section of the book may be divided as follows:—

(1) 1. to 2. 10. The sovereign grace of God working, in spite of nature's weakness and man's failure, for the fulfilment of God's settled purpose to maintain His own glory, and secure His people's blessing, under the reign of Christ as King.

(2) 2. 11-36. The failure of God's people in responsibility, through the breakdown of the priest, with warnings of coming judgment.

(3) 3. The climax of evil with the consequent setting aside of the priest, and establishment of the prophet.

(4) 4. The governmental judgment that falls upon the people of God, whereby they come into bondage to their enemies, and the outward sign of God's presence is withdrawn.

(5) 5. and 6. God acting to vindicate His holiness and maintain the majesty of His Name in a day when the people of God have ceased to be a public witness for God.

(6) 7. God in sovereign grace restoring His people, and renewing His relations with them through the prophet.

I.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD (1.-2. 10).

In this opening section of the first book of Samuel we have a very blessed anticipation of the word which speaks of "the power of God; who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1. 8, 9). In the end of Hannah's song we reach the ultimate purpose of God to establish blessing under Christ as King. In the story of the birth of Samuel we see the grace of God at work to bring about His purpose, in spite of the weakness and failure of man, and hence not according to our works.

We learn, moreover, that grace foresees every crisis that arises among the people of God, and, not only overcomes the crisis, but quietly works to make provision for the crisis before it comes.

The commencement of the story presents a God-fearing Levite with two wives; one fruitful and the other barren. The barren woman mourns her condition before the Lord and is persecuted by the fruitful wife. Elkanah goes up yearly to worship and to sacrifice before the Lord at Shiloh. There we find Hophni and Phinehas, two wicked men, as we know from chapter 2. 12, officiating as priests of the Lord. Eli, the high priest, with much personal piety, comes before us as an enfeebled old man sitting by a

post of the temple (verse 9) and mistaking the exercises of a godly soul for the vagaries of a drunken woman (13). Sitting where God had provided no seat would indicate a lack of spiritual energy; his mistake in regard to Hannah, a lack of spiritual discernment.

There is thus brought before us the barren wife, the persecuting woman, two worthless men as priests, and a feeble and failing old man as high priest. In such circumstances we are permitted to see the sovereign grace of God passing by the strength of nature in the fruitful woman, working through the weakness of nature in the barren woman, and abounding over the sin of man in the priests. In the son given to Hannah we see the foresight of the grace of God making provision to renew His relations with His people in the day of their coming breakdown.

The three great offices by which relationships between God and man are maintained are those of Priest, Prophet and King. **THE PRIEST** maintains relations with God by drawing near to God on behalf of the people, and for this, in association with the priest, there must of necessity be the Ark of the Covenant and sacrifice—the Ark signifying the presence of Jehovah, and sacrifice the way of approach. **THE PROPHET** renews relations with God by appealing to the conscience and heart of the people with a message from God. When the priest fails and the people cease to draw nigh to God by means of priesthood, then God, in His sovereign grace, draws nigh to the people by the prophet. **THE KING** maintains relations between the people and God by ruling and leading the people under the authority of God. When the king is established God no longer rules and leads directly, but acts through the king, and the blessing of

the people depends upon the personal faithfulness of the king to God.

The first book of Samuel records the failure of the priest, the prophet, and the king of man's choice, making way for the sovereign grace of God to bring man into blessing by establishing His anointed Man—the Christ—as King, of whom David is a type. Thus at last it will be made manifest to the whole universe that all blessing for Israel, and the nations, will depend upon the faithfulness of Christ as King. Man will be blessed, but all the glory of the blessing will rest upon Christ. The glory of Christ is the end of the purpose of God.

Furthermore the story of Hannah not only sets forth the great principles by which God is carrying out His purposes of grace, but it gives rich moral instruction to every tried and sorrowing child of God. How striking the contrast between Hannah unable to eat, and weeping sore in bitterness of soul, as stated in verse 7, and Hannah when she "went her way and did eat and her countenance was no more sad," as recorded in verse 18. How came this difference? Was it change of circumstances or the removal of that which caused the sorrow? Not at all; the circumstances had not altered; she was still the barren woman. The secret of the change is found in the fact that she had poured out her soul before the Lord. The persecution of her adversary, the fretting of spirit, the bitterness of soul—she had poured it all out with weeping before the Lord. Having poured out her sorrow, the word came to her, "Go in peace." Her sorrow is poured out and God's peace is poured in. A striking illustration of the exhortation which bids us "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God,

which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4. 6, 7).

How often we carry our sorrows instead of pouring them out before the One who came into this world of weeping, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Have we a secret sorrow; have we an adversary that sore provokes (verse 6); anything or anyone that causes our spirits to fret (verse 6); anything that grieves our hearts (verse 8); anything that fills the soul with bitterness, and the eyes with tears (verse 10)? Then let us pour out our souls before the Lord and He will pour in His peace. And a glad heart will make a glad face, as we read, "Her countenance was no more sad." The heart at peace, and filled with the gladness of the Lord, is the heart that worships; thus with Hannah, we read, she "worshipped before the Lord" (verse 19).

Then having learned that the Lord is able to sustain in the circumstances, and make her a worshipper in spite of them, the mercy of the Lord alters the circumstances by granting her request. She had prayed, "O Lord of hosts . . . remember me" (11); now we read, "the Lord remembered her" (19). She obtains a son—the man-child she had asked for. The child that she receives from the Lord she gives back to the Lord. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

The gift of the child very naturally calls forth the thanksgiving of Hannah (2. 1-10). Hannah had poured out her soul in prayer for a son, and now that her request is granted she does not forget to pour out her heart in praise;

for thus she commences this second prayer, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord" (1).

Recognizing that all blessing depends on God, she rightly begins by celebrating His glories. God is holy—"There is none holy as the Lord." God is omnipotent—"There is none beside Thee." God is eternal—"Neither is there any rock like our God." God is omniscient—"The Lord is a God of knowledge" (2, 3).

Then she celebrates the sovereign grace of God that picks up, for blessing, the weak, the needy, and the unfruitful. Those who have "stumbled," and are "hungry," and "barren." God passes by the wise, the mighty, and the noble, and takes up the base, and the despised of the world, that no flesh should glory in His presence (4, 5).

Moreover, God has His own way of dealing with us to make us conscious of our need. He rolls in death upon the soul in order to make alive. He brings us nigh to the grave that we may learn our utter weakness. He strips us of all that wherein we trust, thus making us poor to make us rich. He brings us low in our thoughts of self, in order to lift us up (6, 7).

Having shown us our nothingness, He unfolds to us His fulness—the purpose of His heart. Not only does He meet our need but He changes our condition—the beggar becomes a prince. Further He gives us a new position suited to the new condition. From "the dust" and "the dunghill" we pass to "the throne of glory." In all these blessed ways He acts as sovereign. The One to whom the pillars of the earth belong, and who has set the world

upon them, can set a poor and needy soul among princes on a throne of glory (8).

Moreover, not only is there a glorious inheritance before the people of God, but they are kept by the power of God for the inheritance. "He will keep the feet of His saints." In their own power they cannot stand against "the wicked" and "the adversaries of the Lord," for "by strength shall no man prevail." In the Lord's safe keeping they need not fear, for He will silence the wicked and brake in pieces His adversaries (9, 10; cf. 1 Peter 1. 3-5).

Finally the prayer of Hannah discloses to us the ultimate purpose of God to establish Christ as King and glorify His Anointed. Thus in the revealed purpose of God we are carried on to a glorious time when the people of God will be blest, every enemy destroyed, and the ends of the earth brought under the beneficent sway of Christ as King.

From the closing verse of the book of Judges we learn there was no king in Israel. Now, through the revelation made to a woman, we learn the settled purpose of God's heart to establish His King, and in sovereign grace to call the weak and needy to share the throne of glory with His King.

In the wisdom and perfection of God's ways, this glorious revelation precedes the darkest period in Israel's history. Thus we are assured, ere ever the storm bursts, that in the end grace will triumph, for God is sovereign. The storm may come, but truly the bow is in the cloud. Our way may lie through a dark valley, but our faith is sustained by a glimpse of the sunlight that shines on the hills beyond.

“GOD’S HIGH PRIEST.”

(L. R.)

THERE is an old hymn by Dr. Watts which is, no doubt, well known to readers of *Scripture Truth*.

“With joy we meditate the grace
Of God’s High Priest above,
His heart is filled with tenderness,
His very name is Love.”

Beloved, shall we, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, meditate for a while “the grace of God’s High Priest”?

The writers of the Old Testament delight to tell of Him. By type and shadow and direct prophecy they unite to sound His praise. They unfold the glories of the Aaronic priesthood (Exod. 28.), and we may consider Him thus, crowned with glory and honour, glory and beauty, with the fair mitre on His brow, and on its forefront the golden crown, with its writing, “holiness to the Lord.” We see the anointing oil, the precious ointment which flowed down to the skirts of His garment; and again we behold Him as the Head of a priestly family, associating them with Himself in the worship and service of God.

But there is another order of priesthood which was in the mind of God long before Aaron came. In Gen. 14. 18, we read, “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine and blessed him (Abraham): and he was the priest of the most High God.” What a contrast is here! In the ways of God Aaron was the priest under the law, whose office was to administer the law, to receive the offerings of the people, to go in to the most holy place once a year, with the cloud of incense and the blood of atonement, that a guilty people might be maintained before a holy God. Here in this early chapter of sacred history is the priest who *gave*, not the priest who

demand; here is the priest in *grace*, not the priest under law.

When Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, wearied with conflict, flushed with victory, Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine and blessed him: bread, the emblem of the bread of God coming down from heaven; wine, the emblem of the bitter cup which the true Melchizedek would drink, that He might put that other cup, the cup of blessing, into the hand of His saints. He comes on the scene, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, king of righteousness, king of peace, without father, without mother, without descent, made like unto the Son of God, a priest continually (Heb. 7. 1-3).

Then, when the time was come, the Son of God, so long foreshadowed, came to fulfil all the types. He came as God’s High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek; not clothed in royal robes, not given a place of honour here, but the lowliest of all, “Who in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared” (Heb. 5. 7). Are our hearts touched aright at the thought of such an One weeping and praying? Do we ponder sufficiently those words, “strong crying and tears”? What depths of grief are here!

He moves through the Epistle as the suffering One. “Made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death”; “Made like unto His brethren”; “Suffering being tempted”; “Though a Son, learning obedience by the things which He suffered”; “Sanctifying by His own blood”; “Suffering without the gate.”

Aaron may die on Mount Hor and Melchizedek be found here no more, but God's High Priest abides. "The Lord swears and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

In Heb. 2. 17 He is presented as "A merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." In Heb. 4. 14-16 He is *the Great High Priest*, passed into the heavens, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, so that we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (timely help). In Heb. 7. 24-25 He has an *unchangeable priesthood*, "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And in Heb. 10. 19-21 He is "*an High Priest over the house of God*," so that we have "Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh."

These Scriptures bring the Lord Jesus before us, in His pathway of sorrow, even unto death, and they tell us where He is now—gone up on high for us, "Set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8. 1). He has been through all earth's sorrows, feeling them as none other could, and He knows the hour of

need, the moment of danger; He knows, too, just how to bring forth the bread and wine and bless. The good of His saints, their succour, their cheer, are His constant care; as has been often said, nothing that concerns them is "too small for His love, or too great for His power"; but greater and dearer to our hearts is the knowledge that He *understands*. There are heights and depths in His love that must ever be beyond us, eternal days will cease not declaring it, yielding new themes for our wonder and praise. He has been along the way before us; we sometimes think the way difficult, a wilderness way indeed, but He had not where to lay His head, and "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness" (Deut. 2. 7).

If we have turned to Gen. 14. we have seen Abraham's response to the blessing. "He gave him tithes of all," and God took note of his act and the Holy Spirit records it twice in Heb. 7. What, then, shall be our answer to the blessing He has wrought for us at such a cost? Not tithes—tithes would not satisfy love—remember He gave up all that He had for us; He makes no claim, He *asks* for nothing in return, indeed what He has given is so great no *return* is possible, but beloved, our love is precious to Him, may we not say reverently, our love is His joy and solace, love must have love, shall not our answer be, "Gladly let us render to Him all we have and are"? Amen.

Sweet to trace His toiling footsteps
Here amidst the desert sands;
Bear in memory all His sorrow,
Thorn-clad brow and pierced hands!

He of old the Man of sorrows,
Pleads before the Father's face,
Knowing all the needed solace,
Claiming all the needed grace.

A WOMAN, A MOUNTAIN, A CITY. (A. J. POLLOCK.)

"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."—Galatians 4. 25, 26.

A WOMAN, a mountain, a city, strung together as if they symbolized one and the same thing, afford a very interesting example of the way in which the Spirit of God utilizes Old Testament history to illustrate New Testament truths.

The key is at once put into our hands, for we read, "Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants" (verse 24). The first covenant was the law. It could only minister condemnation and death. (2 Cor. 3. 7, 9.) No person ever got blessing from the law.

The second covenant is one of grace, founded on the righteous basis of the death of Christ. It will be publicly established with Israel in a future day. The terms of it can be gathered from Jer. 31. 31-34 and Ezek. 36. 21-38. It consists of the new birth, the forgiveness of sins, and the bestowal of the Spirit of God. Clearly none of these things can be procured by merit or effort. It is the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3. 8, 9).

Let us see how the woman, the mountain, the city, illustrate this.

HAGAR—THE WOMAN.

We all know the story of how Abraham was childless and sought a blessing from the Lord, and how the Lord promised him a son, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. Later when the Lord told him to take a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon, and the smoking furnace and a burning lamp went between the pieces, it was

to let him know that the promise of sovereign blessing could only come through death and the faithfulness of God. The sacrifice of the animals bespoke the great truth that it was only through death that the blessing could come. The smoking furnace and burning lamp passing between the pieces spoke of God's faithfulness. See Jer. 34. 18, where the significance of passing between the pieces is shown.

But Abraham was impatient. He sought the blessing by human effort. Yielding to the suggestion of Sarah, his wife, he took to himself as wife Hagar, an Egyptian woman. In this way he sought to take the matter out of God's hands, and to obtain the blessing by human effort. But the blessing could not come that way. God has stamped the miraculous in the matter of man's blessing. The birth of Isaac, of Jacob, of John the Baptist, and above all and contrary to all human thoughts, that of our blessed Lord, were all miraculous. It is all lifted out of the region of human power.

As the result of Abraham's marriage with Hagar, Ishmael was born, his birth stigmatized as being "after the flesh." The law is given to man in the flesh, and the flesh resents the law. The Lord said of Ishmael, "He shall be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. 16. 12).

So it is with the law. By it men find out what the flesh is. Wild, incorrigible, untameable, as it is, the lesson of the first covenant, if learned aright, leads us to appreciate the second covenant, the free sovereign grace of

God, conferred apart from "works of righteousness, which we have done" (Titus 3. 5).

Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. God kept him waiting for a further fourteen years before the promise of a true heir was fulfilled. A century old, his body dead, his wife an old and barren woman, it became a question of GOD'S power and faithfulness. Abraham at last learns his lesson. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4. 20). Isaac is born, the child of promise. Isaac means "laughter," and Sarah's son was laughter in the home of the hitherto childless couple.

The day came when Isaac was weaned. Ishmael mocked; Sarah counselled casting out the bondwoman and her son. God confirmed this counsel. It ever has to come to it that the choice must be made between the flesh and the Spirit. The world mocks at the Christian to-day. It is true that the flesh will be found with the believer as long as he is in his mortal body, but the mind has to cast it out, in other words, to judge it as incurable, not capable of being educated into anything different, to be judged and set aside, learning that it is condemned once and for ever in the death of Christ.

It is a great matter to appreciate the new covenant and not to expect anything in any shape or form from the old covenant.

SINAI—THE MOUNTAIN.

There seems a touch of sarcasm when it describes it as "Mount Sinai in Arabia," reducing it to a mere material geographical expression. We are told it "gendereth to bondage." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us "Ye are not come unto the mount that

might be touched" (Heb. 12. 18). Woe betide the man that touched that mount, Sinai. If so much as a beast touched it, it was stoned or thrust through with a dart. If anyone touched that mount, in other words, if anyone under the law failed to keep it in all particulars, it meant condemnation and death. There was no mercy there.

The thunders and lightnings, the overshadowing thick cloud, the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, the whole Mount smoking as a furnace, the earth trembling as God approached the place, the mediator, Moses, the one who was nearest to God in every way, filled with fear and quaking with dread, such were the accompaniments of the giving of the law. No wonder that the people entreated that the voice of dread should be heard no more. This was the first covenant, connected in this Scripture with the mountain, where it was promulgated.

What a contrast to the beautiful sight of the Babe in Bethlehem's manger, the homage of the angels as they worshipped Him, who was indeed the virgin's Son, but infinitely more, who from all eternity was God, the Son, who became flesh that He might bring blessing to men. See Him moving through scene after scene of blessing; the lepers cleansed, the deaf and dumb cured, the dead raised, the gospel preached. It was all a ministry of blessing, but at what a cost. He had to become the Antitype of the sacrifices that Abraham offered up. The new covenant could only be founded on death, and that the death of One mighty enough to settle all the claims of the first covenant.

It is good that we come to Mount Sion, typical of grace. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant as Moses was of the old. How good it is to be

clear that blessing can only come through death, that it is absolutely undeserved by the best of us, that its blessings are alone bestowed by sovereign favour.

The Epistles to the Galatians and to the Hebrews are evidence how slow we are to learn the lesson.

JERUSALEM—THE CITY.

“Jerusalem, which now is . . . is in bondage with her children.” What a vivid way of showing the end of law-keeping. The law was the school-master until Christ came. The Jew, alas, failed to learn the lesson of the law. They turned the precious types of the great Antitype into empty ritual. They failed to understand the shadows and rejected the Substance, Christ Himself. Was there ever a spectacle of the futility of the law in itself when we find a nation of professed zealous law-keepers banding together for the destruction of the Mediator of the New Covenant? Oh, grace upon grace, that God should take occasion of man's greatest sin to lay the foundation in righteousness of that channel through

which His glorious grace could flow to perishing men.

Though long after the Epistle to the Galatians was written, it is not surprising to see the city destroyed, the temple razed to the ground, the people scattered, truly in bondage, for well nigh two thousand years.

And there will be no blessing for Israel till they seek it on the terms of the New Covenant, and through their crucified and rejected Messiah, till they learn the true meaning of Ps. 22. and Isa. 53., and the great day of atonement is truly celebrated.

Meanwhile there is the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of all those who come under the blessing of God in this dispensation. Our blessing comes down from above. It is all of grace. It links the believer with the place from which it comes. It gives character to those it blesses, as a mother gives character to her children.

May we know more of this. May we lay this remarkable lesson of the woman, the mountain, and the city, to heart.

We must know the truth, and make it our own, if it is to be of definite and permanent use to us. We accept it by faith, we believe it because God says it, but eating it—and this is the figure used in Scripture—is more. When we believe it, we see it, approve of it, take hold of it, but when it enters our souls we live by it. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

He who holds a truth, not because he has found it to be true himself, but because an eminent preacher has told him it is true, or because a trusted friend believes it, does not really and properly hold the truth. He has no more escaped from doubt than you have escaped the rain when you have crept under some man's umbrella who for the moment is going your way, but who may at any moment turn aside, and whose umbrella in the meantime is not big enough for two.

THE LAMENT OF THE UNCARED-FOR.

(SAMUEL LEVERMORE.)

ONE fine morning I met in the City of London a very well-known Christian merchant who had been a prominent figure in all evangelistic enterprise for half a century. A man of a Christlike spirit. He greeted me very warmly, and then, under a sense of compulsion, I said, "And how are you going on spiritually? You do quite a lot for other people's souls; how about your own?"

He was powerfully moved. Grasping my hands, he replied in a broken voice, "Listen! I have been spending my time and money for many, many years, and moved among Christian workers of every type, but never . . . never until this moment has any man cared for my soul, or spoken to me as you have done this morning." He could say no more.

One can be LONELY IN A CROWD.

David found it good to look back upon his *cave* experience. Let us look back with him in this 142nd Psalm,

the title of which is Maschil [i.e., to give instruction], of David: a prayer when he was in the cave. Here it is in a few verses.

I. His "spirit was overwhelmed."

II. He was ignored. Dead cut. "No man would know him."

III. He was without a spiritual home: "Refuge failed me."

IV. He was without a real Pastor or Shepherd. "No man cared for my soul."

So much for the earthly view, "my right hand." The *look around*. But there comes a blessed change. David looks up, and there, in Jehovah, he finds all he lacked in his lonely path down here. "I cried unto Thee, O Lord. I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living."

[We should advise all who feel neglected and disconsolate to look up.—ED.]

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

"We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ; that each may receive the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad."—2 Cor. 5. 10.

WHAT an awe-breathing yet uplifting sentence is this for the Christian! This is not a universal judgment, with its dread appeal to the universal conscience, it is an investigation with the family circle of the disciples—a *forum domesticum*—the Lord's particular scrutiny of His servant brethren. He will inquire how they have lived for Him, how they have used life for Him, with its powers and occasions; how they have acted and behaved themselves not merely in but through the body. He will inquire how much they have gained for Him

by trading with the resources He has committed to them, the golden talents of time, of health, of wealth, of thought, of truth; what they have done with the gospel, with the grace that saved them and set them free from sin and Satan to serve Him, and of all the means and opportunities for service to Him through the body. These things have been placed in their hands to have and to hold and to use FOR HIM. How have they responded? Let them come up before Him, that it may be made manifest to Him, and to themselves.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Bishops or Elders and their Work.

“ Premises :—

1. That the government of a local church in apostolic days was by elders, when the church was sufficiently established.
2. That the local church was not governed by one, but SEVERAL elders that formed an oversight body.
3. That elders and bishops were the same persons (Acts 19. and Titus 1.).
4. That in order to function, the elders must have had the recognition of the local church as constituting the oversight, and that they acted jointly and unitedly, by consultation and agreement amongst themselves.

Queries :—

1. Has God the same means to-day : (A) Where there is one united assembly in a locality forming the church ; (B) Where there are divisions ?
2. If God has a different method, why, and what is it ?
3. If God intended this form of government to lapse, why did the Apostle Paul twice over, just before his decease, clearly outline the qualifications necessary in the choice of elders ?
4. In apostolic days, had the elders in a church chosen by the Apostle Paul more authority than those in other churches ?
5. Did the authority of those elders chosen by (A) Paul, (B) Timothy or Titus at the request of Paul, (C) others, rest on the fact of their being appointed by these, or on the Holy Spirit having constituted them bishops, or on the willingness or spirituality of the local church to recognize their authority ?
6. What is the Scripture for rule by : (A) the Leading Brother ; (B) The Brothers' Meeting.
7. What does the Apostle Paul mean by saying to the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit had constituted them overseers or bishops (Acts 19.) ?—BRAZIL.”

IF we put together the Scriptures that speak of bishops and their ordination we may perhaps find answers to this series of questions.

1. ACTS 14. 23. “ And when they (Paul and Barnabas) had ordained elders in every church.”

2. ACTS 20. 28. “ Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”

3. 1 TIMOTHY 3. 1-7. “ This is a true saying, If a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop must be blameless,” etc.

4. TITUS 1. 5. “ For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I appointed thee.”

The FIRST gives us appointment of

elders to this office by apostolic authority, and the FOURTH appointment by authority delegated by the apostle to Titus. The SECOND indicates the Source and authority from whence the office and work proceeds and the power by which it can be carried out ; the THIRD gives the qualifications that one who aspires to the office must possess.

It is the will of God that His flock should be guided and cared for and fed, and that order should be maintained in His house, and this is the work of the elders, they are responsible before God for it. To emphasize the necessity and importance of the work they were appointed at the beginning by apostolic authority. This our 1st and 4th Scriptures show us. It was inauguratory. But when the assemblies (churches) were established in the world, and the Divine plan for their maintenance and

order was clearly seen in fact and recorded for us in Holy Scripture, there was no more need for the authoritative ordination of elders, and so the apostle says nothing about any successors to him to whom this authority would be committed. It is interesting and instructive to see that the truth was to be committed to faithful men, but not authority (2 Timothy 2.). So that while our 1st and 4th Scriptures remain to show us the necessity for the work of the bishops or elders, and that it was sanctioned and approved by the Lord through His apostle, they do not lead us any further, and we go beyond Scripture if we recognize any as having authority to appoint to this office to-day.

Then what have we? Our 2nd and 3rd Scriptures show us. The Holy Spirit is still here. It was from Him that the wisdom and spiritual power proceeded that made the elders at Ephesus fit for their office, and He can and does still impart this grace and these qualities to men, and will maintain those whom He fits. In such as He has fitted there will be the desire for this important service, and those that do desire it desire a good work. They do not desire a place of importance among their brethren, or to lord it over the flock which is not theirs but God's. Such desires could only arise from the flesh; but they desire, as moved by the Holy Ghost, to labour for the good of the flock; to watch, giving their time and strength, that all who come under their oversight may be preserved and prosper. These are the vital things. Apostolic ordination which was inauguratory ceased with apostolic days; it was needed no longer, as we have seen, when it was clearly shown that it was the will of the Lord that elders should be; but the power and presence of the Holy

Ghost, and the gracious desire and qualifications in the elders for the work, remain, and will do to the end.

What, then, is the present position? The flock of God needs gathering together and caring for and feeding as much as ever it did, and more, for "the grievous wolves" and men "speaking perverted things" have entered in among them, as Paul said they would (Acts 20.), and the wolves have mercilessly scattered them, and the self-seeking men have separated them into parties and folds. Yet God cares for His flock, and puts it into the hearts of His servants to care for them too, and where such are who have not only the aspiration but the qualifications for the work, they will be most surely supported by the Holy Ghost, and recognized by all who are subject to the Word, and desire to walk in the truth.

Such cannot be officially appointed for no one has authority to do this, and we have no hint of any kind in the Scriptures that assemblies would ever have any right to appoint their own elders. But the qualities enumerated in 1 Tim. 3. and Titus 2. are such that cannot be hid, and will point out those who possess them as elders fitted by the Holy Ghost for the work. It is evident that these qualities are more likely to be possessed, if they exist at all, by elder brethren (by age) rather than by younger brethren who have not had the experience or time to develop them.

Eldership is office truly rather than gift, but the elders must not be lords, but guides, watching with much solicitude for the welfare of the flock as a faithful shepherd would watch his master's sheep, or as a faithful nurse would care for her charge. Peter's appeal to elders in his Epistle and Paul's to the elders of Ephesus are

powerful and appealing words on this line.

There are two things that destroy the true character of the house of God, they are clericalism and radicalism. The former is prominent where what is official is assumed and pressed, the latter, when those who guide or rule according to God are flouted. We are sure that the apostle did not appoint any to the office who were not morally fitted for it, and only those who are faithful to the truth, temperate in all things in their personal habits, wise in the rule of their own households, and have love for the flock of God, are fitted to exercise oversight now, and the flock cannot recognize or submit to any other.

The answers to the Queries then would be as follows :

1 and 2. Elders are not now officially appointed, but where the desire and qualifications for the office exist there will be plenty of scope for the work in spite of the divided conditions. It was not God's way at the beginning that any who were not qualified should be appointed, it is not His way to support those who are not qualified to-day.

3. We do not like the term "form of government," it sounds too hierarchic, but we can see the importance of having the qualifications for eldership given twice over in the Scriptures. The work must be done, and with these Scriptures before us we know the sort of men who are fitted to do it, and if they are lacking we can pray that God will raise them up.

4. The question of more or less authority ought not to arise as though elders were graded. This is the error into which the great religious systems of the day have fallen. The more spiritual and moral power the elders have the better they will be able to

lead and help the flock. This is the necessity and not a show of authority.

5. We do not read of anyone appointing elders except Paul and his delegate Titus; not even Timothy, as far as we can gather, was told to appoint them, though he would recognize them when he saw them from the description of what they ought to be that Paul gave him. They would be honoured, of course, because the fitness to rule that they had already shown had been approved by the apostle, and as they were sustained in their labours by the Holy Ghost those who were godly would be subject to them.

6. We know of no Scripture for the leading brother; it should be noted that when elders are spoken of in connection with rule, the plural and not the singular is always used. It is true that James seemed to exercise considerable authority at Jerusalem, but this did not make for the liberty and progress in grace of the saints generally. A meeting of brothers who have the Lord's interest in any assembly at heart is very necessary surely if things have to be carried on in an orderly and godly fashion, and there are many Scriptures that would support this.

7. The fitness for the work was from the Holy Ghost, and not from the apostle, and it was specially necessary, in view of the apostle's departure, that this fact should be emphasized, for the Holy Ghost remained with them when Paul was gone. It is a word for us to-day—the Holy Ghost abides, and we have God and the word of His grace. Men fail, but these never fail, and these are sufficient for us even though elders and the work they should be doing are sadly lacking. Let those who feel the lack wait upon God for the qualities that are necessary, and then in dependence upon Him do the work.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

(J. T. MAWSON.)

A Sunday Evening Gospel Address.

“The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children. And one of the Pharisees desired Him to eat with him. . . . And behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner . . . stood at His feet behind Him weeping.”—Luke 7.

WITH what scorn the enemies of the grace of God spoke of our Lord. They despised Him because He did not respect their self-righteousness and pride, but sought out the sinful and the poor. Luke, whose high privilege it was to write specially of the grace of God, shows us this more often than the other evangelists. In chapter 5. he tells us that the Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, “Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” Here in chapter 7. they scornfully call Him “the Friend of publicans and sinners.” In chapter 15. the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying, “This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them”; and in chapter 19., “they all murmured saying, that He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.”

The self-righteous religionist always did and always will murmur against the grace of God, but what folly is this, for where should the doctor be but among the folk that are sick, and where should the great Saviour be but among sinners. It was for this He came—to call sinners to repentance. We are glad that His foes called Him “the Friend of sinners”; they gave Him a name that shines out with an imperishable lustre and countless multitudes will rejoice in the glory of God for ever because He befriended every individual soul of them, when apart from Him they were hopeless and lost.

They had scarcely flung their bitter taunt at Him than He took it up and

showed how true it was, and showed, too, that from among these sinners whom they despised, wisdom would gather her children and fill heaven with them. He showed that there were two families in the world—the family of wisdom and the family of folly. He Himself made the division between them and discovered which was which. The children of wisdom came to Him and clung to Him as the needle clings to the magnet, while the children of folly held proudly aloof; and as it was, so it is, and by this very thing every one of us may test himself as to whose child he is.

The scene where Jesus showed Himself to be the Friend of sinners was the Pharisee's house. A strange and uncongenial place in which to do that, we might think, but the background of Pharisaical pride and criticism only served to throw into bright and blessed relief the Saviour's grace. So we read, “One of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him, and He went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat.” This man may have thought himself a very important person when he extended his patronage to this prophet from Nazareth, and we can easily imagine how proudly he looked upon the multitude when his invitation was accepted. He little knew that his humble Guest was really arranging that feast that day, that He might spread another feast at which thousands have fed since then; a feast of grace for hungry men and women, which is as

full and fresh as ever and which, I trust, will rejoice and satisfy us gathered together here this night.

The Pharisee supposed that Jesus was a prophet, but then a prophet was not, of course, in the same class as a Pharisee, and while he had invited Him to his house he looked upon Him as so inferior to himself that he did not offer Him the ordinary courtesy of the day. How could a Pharisee treat a prophet as an equal! And what prophet would expect it?

So on entering that house the Lord took the lowest seat at the feast, just inside the door. He could not have done otherwise, for He did not teach others to do what He did not practise Himself, and He had taught, "When thou art bidden to a feast take the lowest room"; and no friendly voice addressed Him saying, "Friend, go up higher." He was left where He reclined—just inside the door. And just outside the door there stood a woman, bowed and broken by her sin. She had heard Him and His word had made her feel that He alone could ease her of her burden and heal her stricken soul, and now between her and Him there was but a step. She was just outside and He was just inside that door, with only a step between. If He had been seated at the head of the table at the Pharisee's right hand, her courage would have failed her at the threshold and she would probably not have reached Him that day, but He was so near to her. Why, she had but to stretch out her hand and touch Him, she had but to take one step to be at His feet. Thus did the disdain of the Pharisee put the Saviour within reach of the sinner.

There were two great powers conspiring together that day to bring her into the place of blessing; her great need was driving her and His great

love was drawing her, and between the driving power of her need and the drawing power of His love she was forced into the most blessed place in the universe of God, at the feet of Jesus. How do I know that to be at the feet of Jesus is to be in the most blessed place in the universe of God? I know it from experience. It was there my burden rolled away. Happy day!

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad."

And He was so kind to me. He made me feel that He was glad to see me. He released me from my sins and attached me to Himself, and I can bear witness to the fact that to be at the feet of Jesus is to be in the most blessed place in the universe of God.

Will someone amongst us gathered here to-night take the step that this sinner took? I tell out the gospel truth to you when I proclaim the fact that it is but a step to Jesus. Oh, why not take the step now? Just as you are, come to His feet. He will welcome you as He welcomed the sinner of the city and you need Him as much as she did. In a gospel meeting some time ago I pressed the people on this point. There was a lad in that audience who lived alone with his widowed mother, and that night he could not sleep. He wanted to be saved, dear lad, and he took the step. It was near to midnight when he crept into his mother's room. "My boy," said she, "what's the matter?" "Mother," he said, "do you remember that the preacher kept saying to-night, 'It's only a step to Jesus, why not take it now'? I've come to tell you that I've taken the step." I press this upon you, my hearers. This is the time. Now is the day of salvation. It is only a step to Jesus and there's room at His feet for you.

Behold this weeping sinner at the

Saviour's feet. What kind of tears were those that flowed down her cheeks? They were tears of repentance we may be sure, but they were tears of gratitude also. She had found the place of rest. He had said, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." She had heard His word and had come, and had He disappointed her? Nay. He had exceeded her highest hope, as He always does, and though He had not spoken one word to her, her heart had found its rest, where weary souls may always rest, at His blessed feet.

The Pharisee watched her as she washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and anointed them with ointment and kissed them in her gratitude, and as He watched he disapproved, and the Lord went down, down in his estimation. A prophet he had thought Him when he invited Him to his house; but now he is sure that He cannot be that, for no prophet would have allowed such a woman as this to touch him. Perhaps not, but He whom this woman adored was more than a prophet—He was her Saviour and her God. This, my hearers, is the wonder of the gospel, it transcends our highest thought. When sinners did not seek their God, He sought them and came to earth to save them. The Son in the Godhead, by whose power the worlds were made, became flesh and dwelt among us, not to condemn but to save, and if we would see Him in this mighty condescension of love, where must we look for Him? There in the lowest seat in the Pharisee's house with a sinful woman weeping out her penitence at His feet, and a proud, graceless, self-righteous Pharisee despising Him for it. Oh, let us bend at those same feet, let us bring our adoration there, for our God is our Saviour; our Saviour is our God. Yes, Jesus is our Saviour and He is our Lord and our God.

But if Jesus went down in the Pharisee's thoughts, He went up in the thoughts of the sinner. The longer she stayed at His feet the more wonderful He became to her, and the less she cared for the Pharisee's scorn. She knew herself to be worse than even he imagined her to be, but all her deep need was met by her Lord who knew her perfectly. He knew all her sins and did not spurn her, and in Him she could rest; at His feet her storm-tossed soul and unsatisfied heart found all for which they had longed. Heaven looked on and saw in the Pharisee a child of folly and in the sinner a child of wisdom, and heaven's judgment is just and final. And the Father looked on and judged between these two. He could feel nothing but displeasure for the Pharisee who despised His well-beloved Son, but He loved the sinner who adored Him. We know He did, for Jesus said, "*The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me,*" and she loved much, hence she was greatly loved of the Father. Oh, my friends, if we would stand well in the eyes of heaven and be loved by the Father, we must stand with this sinner in her appreciation of Christ and not with the scornful Pharisee.

The unspoken reasoning of the Pharisee was suddenly arrested by a challenge from the Lord: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee"; and he said, "Master, say on." Then the Lord propounded to him one of His most beautiful parables, beautiful in its simplicity. "*There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?*" It required no special acuteness of mind to discover the answer to that riddle, and Simon was compelled

to give it, though he did so without enthusiasm. What personal interest could he have in such a topic, and what was his Guest driving at, anyhow? He was not a debtor; he had harmed nobody. He was not like this poor sinner; he had always met every just due and demand; and as for God, well, was he not a Pharisee, fasting, saying his prayers, paying his tithes, and was not that enough? What need had he for forgiveness who had never felt a burden or acknowledged a debt? Those words of the parable, "*He frankly forgave,*" might thrill others, but there was no warmth, no music, in them for him. This Guest of his had evidently no sense of the fitness of things. He ought to have fiercely denounced the extortions of the tax-booths and the sins of the streets, or the follies of the court and society might have been a timely subject for discussion; but creditors, and debtors, and frank forgiveness! These belonged to a sphere of life of which Simon cared nothing and so, with Pharisaical iuke-warmness, he gave his answer, "I suppose, he to whom he forgave most."

How swiftly the Lord turned his answer against him and showed him that while the sinner's heart was warm with much love that poured itself out in gratitude and adoration at the feet of her Lord, he remained coldly critical.

Oh, is there amongst us a heart such as Simon had? An unforgiven heart that has never been moved with gratitude to the Saviour and has no love for Him? A heart that has never felt the utter alienation of its sinfulness from God? Such a heart is a dead heart, dead and cold as a stone, except when some sinful passion moves it to beat with selfish interest. To live like that is to be twice dead, and to die like that is to be damned in unforgiven sin for ever.

We do not envy the feelings of the Pharisee as he listened to the Lord's words, but, thank God, many of us can understand what the feelings of the poor sinner were as she heard Him say, "*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.*" David described the blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven, and this woman knew it. I know it, and I thank God that many of you who hear me this night know it also. Yet what words can describe this blessedness? The quietness after the storm, the relief after the oppression, the deep, holy peace that fills the heart as the sense of forgiveness steals over it! To sink down into the arms of a pardoning God and to rest on His bosom, the bosom from which the pardon flows, this is a never-to-be-forgotten experience and none who have known it can ever think lightly of it!

A Pharisee could not know it, nor any man who excuses his sins or hides them or refuses to admit to God and to himself that he is a sinner. But those who have felt the smart and sting of sin, those who have tried in vain to slay the serpent that has bitten them, they will know it. Those who have discovered that their sins are neither dead nor done with, who have groaned in the night at the memory of them, and found that they cannot escape them, that with persistent feet they pursue them and gather round them and point accusing fingers at them, crying, "Thou art the man," they are on the verge of the blessing. Those whose consciences are awakened, who feel that it is against God that they have sinned, who have looked into the abyss of horror into which their sins were carrying them, these will find no relief, no refuge, no hope except in Jesus, and to Him they will come, as came this woman, with broken and contrite hearts, and He will receive

them and frankly forgive them. They cannot forgive themselves, neither angel nor man can clear them, but God can, and He will for Jesus' sake. Forgiveness is His grand prerogative, and when conscience-stricken, sin-laden, honest at last, they come to Him, He frankly forgives. This is Bible truth, this is the first glad note of the gospel, it is the first ray of light that shines from the Saviour's face into the sinner's heart, and the experience of multitudes who have answered to it as the diamond flashes back the light of the sun.

And now the Lord deals only with the woman at His feet. It seems as though the Pharisee and his guests with their questionings and scorn fade away into their own insignificance and are blotted out, and we see the Saviour, benign and kind, bending over the weeping, wondering penitent, and by His words hushing her every fear and answering her every question. He speaks of the past, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee*"; He speaks of the future, "*Thy faith hath saved thee*"; He speaks of the present, "*Go in peace.*" And as she arose and went to her house or tarried in the street until He should come forth, do you think that she envied even the most exalted woman in the land? Oh, now she had got what wealth and honours could not purchase, what He alone could give to whose feet she had been, and she was satisfied.

And now I would say a word to those who have believed. Let none of us imagine that we are but little debtors needing only a little forgiveness, for such have but little love. They know not the rapture of a glowing and expanding heart, their souls cannot warm towards the Saviour who died for them. They must be ever half-

hearted towards their Lord and have little pity or care for weary, burdened, broken-hearted sinners. We are, I trust, like this woman at the great Redeemer's feet, we had nothing to bring to Him but our sins and these were many, consequently we could only look for pardon, though wrath were our desert. We know the relief, the joy that a full and frank forgiveness gives and we can sing the glad song of the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered."

How great is the price that has been paid to secure this blessing for us, and how great a blessing it is! Even in those parts of the Word of God which unfold for us the highest truths we are reminded of it. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we read, "In whom we have redemption *through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Yes, the price that has been paid for this priceless blessing is the precious blood of Jesus.

Let Simon sit, smug and critical, tearless and cold, in his Pharisaical pride, despising alike the Forgiver and the forgiven, with him we have nothing in common, for we have sinned much and been forgiven much; we are much loved and must love much in return. So we do not sit with the Pharisee, but we fall with the sinner at those feet which were beautiful upon the mountains, bringing good tidings and publishing peace, feet that were pierced and wounded for us at Calvary, the feet of Jesus. There we pour out our gratitude and our adoration and feel the strength of those cords of love that bind our hearts to our Saviour and make us His willing slaves for ever. **FOR TO WHOM MUCH IS FORGIVEN THE SAME LOVETH MUCH.**

CONTINUE

(W. BRAMWELL DICK.)

(Address at Barrhead).

Scriptures read : Acts 1. 8-14 ; Acts 2. 1-8, 12-21, 36-47 ; 2 Tim. 3. 14-17.

THE two great facts of our faith are : there is a Man in the glory of God, and the Holy Spirit of God is here in this world. These are the two basic facts upon which the whole superstructure of the faith is reared. The reason why the Holy Spirit is in this world is that there is a living Man in the glory of God, and He has come for the express purpose of bearing witness to the glory of that living, glorified Man.

There has probably never been a time in the history of the world when the Holy Spirit was not here in some way or other. In Old Testament times we know He was a frequent visitor, moving men to write the Holy Scriptures, and to do great deeds for God ; but the great fact to-day is that He has taken up His residence in those who have believed the gospel, and by His indwelling has united them in one as the body of Christ and the house of God. But there never was a man in the glory of God before Jesus ascended there. What joy it gives us to know that He is there, for He is our Saviour, our Lord, our Representative. The first man, Adam, was cast out of the earthly paradise because of his sin. The second Man, Christ, has entered the glory of God because of His obedience. Adam disgraced himself, he dishonoured God, he ruined God's creation, and to all outward appearance it seemed as if God were defeated ; but He had His Man in reserve, and now Christ, the last Adam, the One who came into the world to do the will of God and to be altogether obedient, where the first man had been disobedient, and had done his own will in defiance of God's, has brought satisfaction and delight to the heart of

God. He has accomplished redemption and glorified God in the accomplishing of it, and having done all this, He has gone right up above all principalities and powers and has been set down far above all heavens that He might fill all things, and therefore the highest place in the glory of God is occupied by a Man.

He always had a right to that glory for He was the Lord of it, but He became Man to do the will of God and redeem us, and it is as the Man Christ Jesus that He is there. After He had told His disciples that they should be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth, it is recorded, " He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said . . . why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The Jesus of Nazareth, of Cana in Galilee, of Sychar's Well, of Bethany, of Gethsemane, of Calvary, " this same Jesus," the One whom they had known so well, to whose voice they had listened, who had won their hearts, who had been everything to them while down here in this world, this same Jesus whom they loved, had taken His seat in the highest place in the glory of God. Everyone in heaven said, " He is worthy to be there." And there were one hundred and twenty disciples on earth who also said, " He is worthy to be there."

The second chapter of Acts gives us the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit of God, consequent upon the

Lord Jesus taking His place at God's right hand. We have got the testimony of the Holy Spirit by the lips of the Apostle Peter to the exalted place that God has given Him, though he at the same time charges home on the people of Israel their guilt in crucifying Him. He says, in effect, by their crucifying Him they had given Him the lowest place, but God had given Him the highest place: they had given Him a crown of shame and of thorns. God had crowned Him with glory and honour: they had put Him so low that He could not possibly be lower: God had made him so high that He could not possibly be higher. He declared, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

See the result of that. They were pricked in their hearts and cried out and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." As we read the Scripture we can almost visualize this wonderful sight. On the one side we see the enemies of Christ, and on the other side we see one hundred and twenty disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, with Peter in the forefront. Peter has been asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And he has given his answer. Now see them coming from the ranks of the enemies and stepping over the line to own the person of God's exalted Christ. Peter, as I said, had been charging home upon these people their guilt in rejecting Christ. He had been telling them of the place in which God had placed Christ, and he had been calling for and demanding their allegiance to Christ. What was it going to mean for them? It meant leaving the ranks

in which they were; leaving everything and everyone behind them, and bringing upon themselves the reproach of those from whom they had separated, and it meant drawing a clear line between themselves and all their former associations. Were they prepared for that? Thank God there were three thousand souls who were. They crossed the line, and in the face of the world they took their place, definitely, unquestionably, on the side of the world-rejected but the heaven-accepted Christ of God. I wonder if we have all done that. Can you imagine them sometimes wanting to recross the line? Can you conceive them saying, "Well, of course, on Lord's day we are with the Christian company, and we take the Lord's supper, but we cannot keep that up all the week, we will go back to our old company during the week"? Is there not a danger of our doing that to-day? Is there not a possibility of being very pious Christians on the Lord's day, and very worldly persons during the week? I think we need to pull ourselves up and test ourselves in this matter, and seek a renewal of heart loyalty and devotedness to Christ, that, as drawn by the glory of His person, and held by the love of His heart, our chief concern shall be to be for Him in the world that has rejected Him.

Now see what the result was. The forty-second verse, "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" You will observe that these two things go together. "The apostles' doctrine and fellowship." What was the apostles' doctrine? Just exactly that of which we have been speaking, that which is set forth in the thirty-sixth verse of the chapter, that there is a living Man in the glory of God, to whom God is gathering souls

out of the world by the gospel, God's one and only Centre. And they continued in that.

I believe that God is recalling our hearts to Christ, as God's one and only Centre, and to "the simplicity that is in Christ." Do not mistake me when I speak of the "simplicity that is in Christ." I do not mean that the Christian should remain a babe ever feeding on milk—that is what they were doing at Corinth—God does not want that, He wants us to grow, but we shall only do this as we apprehend the doctrine in the beautiful simplicity in which it is set before us in the Holy Scriptures: it is that Christ is all in all.

"They continued"—not only continued, but "continued *stedfastly* in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The result of their apprehension of the doctrine, that there is a living Man in the glory of God and the Holy Ghost here in this world dwelling in all who believe, was that they were formed into this one fellowship, a fellowship divinely formed and which, thank God, can never be dissolved. Yet we can only be in it practically as we continue in the Apostles' doctrine. There went with this the expression of that fellowship, the breaking of bread, and they continued *stedfastly* in that, they did not give it up, they continued. Finally they felt their weakness and their need of all the power and grace to carry them on; and realizing that, they continued *stedfastly* in prayers. It may be if we prayed more, and if we continued *stedfastly* in prayer as God's children, we should see less failure, and talk less of failure because we should have a greater sense of God's sufficiency.

Now as to 2 Timothy 3. The third

chapter gives us an accurate description of the state of matters that exists to-day. I can understand someone saying, "Well, it is all very nice to speak of things as they were at the beginning. What about the state of things to-day?" Well, I think that we ought to thank God that we are living in a day such as this. But look at the failure! Look at the departure from the truth! Yes, and then when you have taken a good look at all that, look up!—look up to the Lord Jesus, a living Man in the glory of God! And ask yourself, as long as there is a living Man in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost down here in this world, is there any likelihood of the gates of hell prevailing against the assembly of God? Is there any likelihood of the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, going to pieces? To ask the question is to answer it. And in all the darkness, the failure, and the declension of the last days, you and I can be in all the freshness and confidence of the first days, because God is faithful; and because there is a living Man in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost is down here. Therefore, if what characterized them in the first day was that they continued *stedfastly*, the word for us in the last day is, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Continue! Continue!! Continue!!! If there is one word I pray may be burned into our souls, it is this word continue. Give up? NO. Continue! Let the hands hang down and the knees become feeble? NO. Continue! Talk about failure? NO. Continue! In what? "Continue in the things which thou hast learned, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."

ON ZION'S HILL.

(L. R.)

TO Zion's hill hath come the King of Glory,¹
 Once Man of Sorrows, once the Crucified;
 Her wailing place resoundeth with the story—
 The King is come! Proclaim it far and wide!²

The young men now have seen the heavenly vision,
 The old have dreamed glad dreams of golden days,³
 Because the King, once crowned there in derision,
 Is now brought back again with songs of praise.⁴

Fair maidens bow in lowly supplications,⁵
 The Spirit hath attuned their hearts by grace,
 And here the saved ones out of all the nations⁶
 Have come to gaze on their Deliverer's face.

And in the streets the boys and girls are playing,⁷
 Their crying hushed, their tale of tears all told;
 Erstwhile they were like little lambs a-straying,
 Now they are gathered safely in the fold.

Throughout Immanuel's land the curse hath vanished,⁸
 And where the thorns and thistles grew apace,⁹
 All trace of sin, all trace of sorrow banished,¹⁰
 The rose and lily bloom with fragrant grace.¹¹

The travail and the groaning of creation¹²
 Shall be remembered now no more for joy;¹³
 All creatures have their part in this salvation,¹⁴
 No lions roar, no ravening wolves destroy.¹⁵

Lord Jesus Christ, we hail thee King of Glory,
 For Thou hast wrought for God's supreme delight,
 The gates have lifted up their heads before Thee,
 Returning as the Conqueror in Thy might.
 We bend the knee, Thy name our lips confessing,
 To Thee ascribe all honour, power and blessing.

Amen.

¹Ps. 2. 6; ²Ps. 24. 7-10; ³Ps. 28. 29; ⁴2 Sam. 19. 10; ⁵Joel 2. 29; ⁶Rev. 21. 24; ⁷Zech. 8. 5; ⁸Isa. 8. 8; ⁹Rev. 22. 3; ¹⁰Rev. 21. 27; ¹¹Isa. 35. 1; ¹²Rom. 8. 21; ¹³John 16. 21, ¹⁴Isa. 11. 1-9; ¹⁵Isa. 35. 9.

Think of the blessedness of knowing God. God has sent His Son into this world that the hearts of men might turn to Him and find in Him everything that would make them supremely happy; that they might never again need to turn to the world or anything else for satisfaction.

THE PERFECT DAY.

(F. B. HCLER.

Substance of an Address at Bath, on Proverbs iv. 18.

THE verse I have read compares the path of the just to "the shining light," but the words more literally translated would read, I understand, "the light of dawn." This makes Solomon's allusion far more clear and striking.

The wicked have their "path" as the four earlier verses indicate. This figure of speech is a familiar one: life is compared to a way. The living of our lives is, therefore, like the treading of a path. The path of the wicked is the order of life that the wicked live, and that is to be avoided at all cost, for, as the nineteenth verse indicates, it leads into the darkness of night, where stumbling is certain sooner or later.

The "just"—those in right relations with God—live another order of life and pursue quite different objects. They have their "path." It is like the light of dawn, which though it comes up softly, yet increases in brightness and strength. The sun rises and sheds its beams, which increase in power as it mounts the heavens to its zenith at mid-day.

There the allusion stops. In nature the sun is only at its zenith for an instant, and then begins the inevitable decline towards evening and night. Not so in grace; for the path of the just is not going to arrive at "the perfect day" until glory is reached, and when glory is reached our sun will no more go down. It will remain in the splendour of its zenith for ever. The path of the just is like that.

This is a remarkable assertion, truly! Have we all taken it in? If so, the remark most likely to spring to our lips will be: "Well, the path of the just may be like that, *but usually it does*

not look like it!" Usually it certainly does not; indeed, we believe we might go as far as to say it *never* looks like it in this world.

First of all, let me remind you of One who was pre-eminently "*the JUST One*" (Acts 7. 52). No other just one can be mentioned in the same breath as He. He is beyond all comparison; solitary and alone in His perfection. What was His path? Well, it was prophetically anticipated in Isa. 49., and we hear in that chapter His voice saying to us, "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain" (verse 4). We turn to the Gospels and we see how fully these words of His were verified in His life.

When first He came forth in public service His sun appeared to be rising in the heavens. At Nazareth, when first He spoke in their synagogue, the people marvelled at the words of grace He spoke. Yet very soon His faithfulness stirred them to fury, and they would have killed Him. Again and again later there were moments that gave promise of more prosperous things—times when the people wished to make Him a king, or when they met Him shouting, Hosanna! at the entrance into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, and His enemies ground their teeth in impotent rage saying the world was gone after Him. Yet these moments were exceptions; the general trend of His path was in the reverse direction. He was more and more hedged about with foes and apparent failure, until that last fatal week in Jerusalem which ended in His death.

The secular historian dwelling in Jerusalem in those days would have

put it on record that the Jesus of Nazareth, who had excited such large hopes in the breasts of a few visionary folk—fishermen from Galilee and the like—suffered a rapid and sensational eclipse. His sun set amid dark thunder clouds. His path was not at all like the light of the dawn that shone more and more unto the perfect day, but rather like the dim light of a very stormy winter afternoon that faded more and more into the inky blackness of the night. That clearly enough was the verdict of the world.

Which was right? The verdict of the world or the verdict of the inspired Preacher of Israel? Do we not sometimes sing:

“Thy path, uncheered by earthly smiles,
Led only to the cross”?

Only to the cross? Yes, certainly, if we confine our thoughts to His earthly path as the hymn so sweetly and appropriately does, in its place. If, however, we lift our eyes beyond His earthly path, then we can say with triumph it did not lead to the cross alone, but to the glory also, as Ps. 16. makes so manifest.

The fact is, of course, that the divine eye sees in every path what is not known to the mere historian. As the Father looked down upon His beloved Son, what did He see? He saw everything that was beautiful in its season. Grace was shining everywhere; in His infancy, His boyhood, His early manhood, His maturity. As He increased in wisdom and stature so the light that had dawned in Him increased in strength. When He came forth at length in public ministry, then the “great light” burst forth upon “the people which sat in darkness” (Matt. 4. 16). Heaven’s sun had risen upon them. And in spite of all that was done against Him the light continued

to shine against the dark background of man’s sin. The more He was tested the more the light shone to the glory of God. When at last it looked as if man had finally extinguished Him in death, then really His shining reached its zenith, for it was in anticipation of death that He said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him” (John 13. 31, 32).

As man saw it, His death was the end of everything for Him. As God saw it, it was the beginning of everything. To the one it was the lowest point of His humiliation: to the Other the highest point of His glory. To the one it was the quenching of His sun in night: to the Other the permanent establishing of His sun in its zenith of splendour, for the display of moral glory to an infinite extent which took place in His death was immediately followed by His exaltation into the Father’s glory, which will yet be displayed in this world and before the universe.

The path of “the Just One,” in spite of what it appeared to be, has reached “the perfect day” in the Father’s presence. His path is a finished path in a sense which can be so spoken of of no other. No other has completed it as He has. Yet all who have been privileged to be servants of God have been alike in this, that apparent defeat and failure have followed their steps, and this not always because of their own personal failure, but sometimes just because of their personal faithfulness. This stands true whether we think of Old Testament or New Testament saints.

Think of Moses. What a marvellous beginning when in God-given faith and courage he withstood the mighty

Pharaoh and his magicians. See him standing on the further bank of the Red Sea with the rod of God in his outstretched arm! Listen to the chantings of victory from a million throats! Was it not splendid! Should we not all have said that his sun had reached noontide height? But then we trace the story of the forty years in the wilderness. His meekness and patience were truly remarkable; yet the people beneath his hand were increasingly trying and disappointing, until nearly at the end of that long testing time the great Lawgiver broke down and spoke unadvisedly with his lips. Let us not marvel at this. We should have broken down before forty days had gone, whereas he endured it for nearly forty years. At last, however, he broke forth with, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" smiting the rock twice in his anger.

Alas! poor Moses. Those lips of his which had been taken up by God to be His mouth, had emitted angry words which were emphatically not God's words, but misrepresented Him. His sin, therefore, was great and his punishment correspondingly great. He lost his entrance into Canaan. The triumphal entry into the land of promise, which he must have looked forward to as the fitting sequel to his triumphant exodus from Egypt, was never to be realized by him. What would the secular historian say? He would unquestionably have said that while the sun of Moses' prosperity reached high noon at the time of the exodus, it declined during the wilderness sojourn and set in clouds on the confines of the promised land.

But was it really so? Turn your eyes to the Mount of Transfiguration, as recorded in the Gospels, and see him appear in glory in companionship with the Son of God. Did his sun decline?

No, it shone more and more unto the perfect day.

Think of Elijah, another outstanding Old Testament figure. In his case do we not see things working in exactly the same way? When we see him, alone and unaided, confronting the eight hundred and fifty prophets on Mount Carmel, with Ahab, Jezebel, and the people at their backs, he appears the most heroic of all Old Testament heroes. When the fire fell from heaven, what overwhelming triumph! It was high noon indeed with him. Yes, but behold him a few days after, under the juniper tree and filled with fear of Jezebel. His sun had indeed gone down while it was day. And after that Horeb, and another prophet anointed in his room. How his light appeared to have been quenched! But was it?

On the Mount of Transfiguration he too stands with Jesus. He too has glory shining on his head. It is not night for him after all. It is the perfect day.

There is only one amongst the followers of the Lord of whose life much is recorded in the New Testament. But there *is* one, the Apostle Paul. What was his path like?

His path as a Christian started when the Son of God, brighter than the noon-day sun, shone upon him from glory. He became the chosen vessel for bearing the Saviour's name to the Gentiles, and we all know something of his devoted labours. We remember how he evangelized from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum with great power and God-given success; so much so that to his bitterest opponents he and his helpers became known as, "These that have turned the world upside down." We think of the churches that he founded as a wise master-builder, and

how for a time it seemed as if nothing could stay his progress.

But suddenly a halt seemed to be called. Bonds and imprisonment not only awaited him but actually held him fast. And then defection definitely set in amongst the churches, and his own children in the faith turned away from him and deserted him in the hour when most they might have been a comfort to him. At last he stood, aged, war-worn, forsaken, like a poor old beggar who was of the offscouring of the world, before the powerful Cæsar, and ended his career under the axe outside the imperial city. The path of this pattern Christian was no exception to the rule. It also appeared to be like the setting sun, declining more and more unto the darkest night.

Thus it appeared to be. But in reality it was far otherwise. To Paul himself his approaching martyrdom was but his offering up, his departure, and his eye was by faith on the "crown of righteousness" which awaited him when the upward path he trod should end in the perfect day of the Lord's appearing.

And now I have a question to ask. Why should we twentieth-century Christians expect that the path should be different for us? Is it our prescriptive right to be carried to heaven on downy beds of ease, amid sunshine and flowers, whilst all others sail through stormy seas of trial and persecution? Is it for us to feel shocked and scandalized if difficulties seem to dog our footsteps? By no means. It is just what we should expect. It is as true to-day as nineteen centuries ago that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14. 22). We may not get the tribulation in the form of outward persecution from the world. Still we

get it within the bosom of the professing church, if not from without.

There are many difficulties to-day. They throng thickly around us—church difficulties, business difficulties, family difficulties—all of them difficulties which we should not feel were we not Christians, with some desire to walk in a way that is pleasing to God. What do they mean?

Do they mean that our poor little sun is fast declining and our day is nearly over? They do not. Only go through them in faith, and with the courage begotten of faith in God, and they will work out patience, experience and hope within us. Thus there will be made room within for the inshining of the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts like sunlight by the Spirit of God given to us. There will be great spiritual gain.

Instead of the shining of that light growing less and less, paler and yet paler with days' decrease, it will be more and more, brighter and yet brighter with the day's increase—unto the perfect day.

The perfect day will have fully and finally arrived when Christ is established in His place of glory according to the counsels of God. For that moment we all wait, whether Moses, Elijah, Paul or ourselves. When the king is crowned in Westminster Abbey the peers of the realm are present, every man with his coronet in his hand; and in his hand it must remain until the king is crowned. Then, when the crown imperial rests on the sovereign's head, each peer assumes his own coronet and not before.

This is as it should be, and as it will be in the age that is coming. When Christ is glorified in public we shall be glorified with Him. When He is crowned "the perfect day" will have arrived for Him, and for us as well.

FELLOWSHIP.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

CHRISTIAN fellowship is a priceless blessing. On our understanding and realizing its meaning and possibilities, much depends for the development of our own spiritual life and growth, for the fulfilment of the will of God and for the furtherance of the work of Christ in the world. In Christianity is realized what men are always endeavouring unsuccessfully to attain in the world, full safeguarding of the life and rights of the individual and the greatest good for the greatest number. Do we value Christian fellowship as we should ?

It is indeed a *heavenly* thing. "In the beginning," when as yet there was nothing made that was afterwards made, there were the eternal Three-in-One, an ineffable circle of love, unity and fellowship. The very thought of this mystery bows us in deep worship. *From that divine circle all true fellowship has come.*

In Christian fellowship is found a veritable foretaste of heaven. For what will heaven be but a glorious scene of holy and eternal fellowship in the company of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, where no sin-soiled feet shall ever tread and no jarring note shall ever discordant sound ? That will be fellowship perfected. All the vital elements of Christian fellowship, being in *Christ*, belong to that eternal world.

The word "fellowship" is in constant use among Christians, and it may be well at the outset to enquire what we mean by the term. Its elementary idea is that : (1) Of sharing together, a joint interest, common participation ; (2) A partnership or society in which these things are realized ; and then (3) In the Scripture word is included the

thought of communication and distribution.

Now it is very helpful to distinguish in our minds between (1) and (2), that is, between what we may term "fellowship" in a subjective and in an objective sense. An illustration may make this plain. In the world men have their "fellowships"—political, professional, social, and the like—existing for a declared purpose of mutual advantage ; having a certain agreed constitution, and a recognized membership. The members subscribe to the conditions and enjoy the fellowship afforded by the "fellowship." Christian fellowship as indicated in the Word embraces both these thoughts ; that is, the fellowship to which we belong, and the fellowship we enjoy therein. Let us consider them in this order.

It is the first of these that is clearly brought before us in 1 Cor. 1. 9, where we read, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

From this verse we may gather a number of important facts. Firstly, that the fellowship is "*of His (God's) Son*"; that is, it is based upon the truth of His Person, and the great facts of His death, burial, resurrection, and coming again ; that it is formed by Him, belongs to Him, and exists for Him. It was not created by man's voluntary effort or enterprise ; it was formed by the Lord.

Secondly, that in the design of God it is a *fellowship*, a definite visible order here below. Such in point of fact it clearly was in the days of the Acts, for example, "They continued in the apostles' fellowship . . ." (Acts 2. 42). In the midst of Judaism or heathendom it was a definite and recognized

fraternity. It was, in fact, the assembly of God. Ideally it is so still.

Thirdly, people did not "join" it; they were joined; believers were "called" by God into it. This does not merely mean that they were invited to it, but that by the "efficacious call of God," in virtue of which they had become saints (Rom. 1. 7), they had been incorporated into it. The Lord "added" them (Acts 2. 47). The recognized outward sign of their admission appears from the Acts to have been baptism (cp. Acts 2. 41, 42).

The fourth point emerges from the last, and one of importance—true now as then—the *fellowship embraces all Christians*. It is *inclusive* in character. Many may be unenlightened as to its privileges; some may, in fact, have disqualified themselves for these; many in these days may be found in man-made systems in which the characteristics of the fellowship have been defaced or even destroyed; nevertheless, as individual Christians they belong to it. After all, it is the sovereign grace of God that any of us have been given a place in it, and it must therefore embrace all the objects of that grace.* The denial of this means sectarianism.

This fellowship has a unique sign and seal. It is brought before us in chapter 10. of the same Epistle. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (verse 16). This *fellowship is a fellowship of death*; and this fact is set forth

once every week when its members partake of their simple and characteristic feast—the Lord's Supper. As the Jews had their "altar," and the Gentiles their "table of demons," so the Christians had "the Lord's table." In the Supper is signified their being "partakers of," i.e., in fellowship with, the Lord's table, and this implies a real participation in the death of Christ. For this act is more than commemoration ("do this in remembrance of Me") and confession ("we do show forth the Lord's death till He come"); it is distinctly declared to be also one of *communion* (10. 16). This communion is not literal, for "alone He bare the cross"; we had no part *there*, but in our sins and sin: it is not physical, as Catholicism teaches, for that is not only unscriptural but grossly materialistic. It is spiritual, and its spiritual reality is greater than many Christians consider (cp. 11. 27).

These facts are introduced in chapter 10. in connection with the solemn obligation of the death of Christ. For if, on the one hand, that death is the blessed and eternal basis of all our blessing, and therefore inclusive of all saints, on the other hand, *nothing in the whole universe of God is more exclusive*. The fierceness of God's wrath, the curse of His law, the enactment of His holy judgment against sin met at Calvary and upon the Person of His Son our Saviour. Sin in the flesh was condemned. Our old man was crucified, and we ourselves as men in the flesh. The handwriting of legal obligation was nailed there and blotted out. The world was judged. Every time we partake of the Supper we commit ourselves afresh to these tremendous facts. Christianity is a have-done-with-sin and have-done-with-flesh and have-done-with-the-world system.

* J. N. D. speaking in this connection says: "The practical difficulties are sometimes great by reason of the state of the church of God: but Christ is sufficient for all, and if we are content to be little in the eyes of men the thing is not so very difficult" (C. W., xiv, p. 554).

The Lord's Supper being the sign

and seal of the fellowship, it is clear, then, that the fellowship is *exclusive* in character. It excludes all that was excluded at the cross (cp. 1 Cor. 2.). Neither the wit, wisdom, wealth nor religion of man has properly a place there. The Christ of God and the Spirit of God are supreme (chap. 2.).

What self-judgment, what holy searching of heart, what hatred of sin and the flesh in all their forms, what dread of the intrusion of the world should this weekly feast engender! *And it was meant to do so.* For it is such a spirit, together with a sense of grace, which alone maintains the moral character and tone of the "fellowship." Where these elements are lacking, gradual degeneration and disintegration are inevitable. To press the "inclusiveness" apart from the "exclusiveness" is perilous.

The fellowship, then, is based, as all else, upon the Person of the Son of God, and the revelation of the truth in Him; then upon His death in its inclusive and exclusive characters; and then upon the authority of the Lord. It is the "fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." It can only exist as these things are acknowledged and preserved in their integrity among the saints of God.

Within this fellowship the members are bound together by the very strongest and most sacred ties, formed not by common subscription to certain opinions, but upon relationships, and these formed by God. The members own and belong to one Lord. They have been made to drink into one Spirit. They are members of one body. They share the life of one Head. They constitute the family of one Father. They are the flock of one Shepherd. They are the living stones of one spiritual house. Could stronger or more precious ties be conceived?

And what is the nature of the fellowship enjoyed? The Apostle John tells us. He says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ . . . if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another . . ." (1 John 1. 3, 7). We share the knowledge of the Father and the Son. By grace we are—

"Brought to rest within the circle
Where love's treasures are displayed."

We delight in the same objects. We share the same blessings. We have common tastes. Our joys and pleasures grow as we share them. We rejoice together in Christ Jesus. With one mouth we praise Him and our gracious God and Father. *We worship together.* These alone constitute joys that the world knows not of, and cannot imitate.

Then how blessed is the company of the saints! Are they not, with all their faults, the excellent of the earth? What sacred intimacies do we enjoy? What blessed friendships in Christ have we known! How delightful it is to be brought to a circle where, at least *ideally*, all is real, governed by the truth, where everything is tested by the light of God, where simulation and make-believe are alien things, where the Word of God is the supreme authority, where the Spirit of God pervades all, and the "house is filled with the odour" of Christ and His graces and perfections! Divine love reigns there, and tender affections and sympathies prevail. The members provoke one another to love and good works. Each looks on the things of the other. The strife and vainglory of the world are absent. The members care for each other's needs. They take

delight in joining together to help forward the great work of God and in doing works of charity. And how they can pray together with one accord! What victories of grace do they accomplish!

We are indebted to Bunyan for an exquisite illustration of this fellowship. He says: "Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished and become nourishers of each other."

Have we been picturing a spiritual Utopia, impossible of realization *here*? We all know too well, alas! how much that is the very reverse of all this has come in among God's people. The fellowship has become corrupted, and if we look at Christendom to-day there is no united expression of the fellowship. And men's attempt to re-create out of the confusion a united Christendom will be Babylon—a hateful conglomeration.

The vital elements, however, of the original fellowship remain. God is still "faithful." The Lord is still supreme. And the Holy Spirit is still on earth. And therefore its obligations remain, and those who are faithful will recognize them. In doing this they will have the blessed "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." Twice is this referred to in the Word; once as a gracious benediction (2 Cor. 13.), and once as a powerful motive (Phil. 2.).

The question which at once naturally arises is: Where are we to find this fellowship to-day? I would suggest that that is a fatally misleading question. It is akin to that asked by Romanists with such success, "Where is the true church?"; and by others, "Where is the true, the original

circle?" We cannot say "lo, here" or "lo, there" in that way. The community that professes to be it has proclaimed its falsity by the very pretension. The fact is, Christian fellowship is now a *moral thing*. And the enquiries we need to put to ourselves are such as these: Have I really apprehended the true character of Christian fellowship as found in the Word? Am I maintaining that character in my personal life and associations? Am I adopting or allowing any principle or practice contrary to it? Am I doing my utmost to act in its spirit and further its interests? Am I prepared for sacrifice to this end? Christian fellowship is not so much a matter of ecclesiastical location as of spiritual condition.*

True spiritual condition is marked by "faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Where, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, souls have been drawn to Christ, they find in Him the Object in heaven of their faith and love, and this leads them to find in Him their Centre on earth, and to this Centre they are drawn together. Their faith and love will manifest themselves as fidelity and loyalty to His will and word, no part of which will be insignificant to them. It is thus that they come *practically* into the fellowship of God's Son, and into a recognition of its principles. These they will seek to hold fast at all costs, not as mere "principles"—ecclesiastics can contend for these without any judgment, mercy and love of God—but as inseparably linked with *His* name and glory. Divine principles, like the "laws of nature," are manifestations of Himself, and must not in thought or practice be separated from Him.

* No one who really values the truth of God will use this to support association with what is contrary to His Word, for that would be disobedience (cp. 2 Tim. 2. 19, last sentence).

Those thus drawn together will not seek to make a fellowship in miniature within the one fellowship, "a church within the church," for that would be contrary to the constitution of the one fellowship, and such an effort would be foredoomed to failure. They will seek first in the locality where God has placed them to follow the principles and be marked by the features which should characterize all God's people, and then to recognize others in other localities who by personal knowledge or on trustworthy testimony are found to be in the same path. Only they will settle things in subjection to the Lord and His Word *in fellowship*, and not in any self-will or independency. Both ecclesiasticism and independency are destructive of Christian fellowship. Such saints will exercise care and vigilance to avoid these things.

We may entertain the happy confidence that saints acting thus, not only have been blessed of God in the past, but will be so to-day. They will, however, only be kept together as their moral and spiritual condition is maintained, and they are kept devoted to Christ and faithful to the truth. *God values holiness*, and there is no true unity apart from it; the place that holiness and unity have in the Lord's prayer in John 17. is very remarkable. Holiness in the power of grace is the greatest preservative of unity.

Someone has spoken of that "happy combination of liberty and order which we fitly call fellowship," and we might add "*holy combination.*" These words may well be pondered. May we not pray that God would grant His people more of this blessed "combination" in these days?

And yet we must not make fellowship an object, for if we do self-interest will in some form surely creep in, and it will tend to deteriorate. Social and brotherly good feeling is no substitute for spirituality. The fact is that if God's will and glory be before us, if we are walking in the light as He is in the light, *we have fellowship*, a fellowship that will be in every way consistent with the fellowship. It will be based on "the truth." It will be "inclusive" in principle. It will also be "exclusive." No one stresses these elements more than does the Apostle John in his Epistle. And so the "fellowship" of Paul and the "fellowship" of John are found to answer to one another. And so they should in practice.

Sad and, we may say, shameful breaches have occurred among God's people. It is only on these lines that, if God permit, they may be healed. For we may rest assured that by no principle inconsistent with the fellowship, that is, with *the truth*, can its interests be furthered or its breaches repaired. Neither independence—individuals doing as they please; nor sectarianism—the forming of a little coterie not recognizing practically *the body*; nor anything that is of man's contrivance, will God acknowledge, save in judgment.

Do we not need to get back in these very last days to the simplicity and power of the truth of early days? For "*God is faithful by whom we have been called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*" May He give us better to realize its character, to enjoy its privileges, and to fulfil its obligations, for His name's sake!

"We must be thankful for small mercies," said one Christian to another. "I have never yet received a small mercy," was the answer. "All mine have been big ones, some bigger than others, but not a small one among them."

PAUL'S TWO MINISTRIES.

PAUL spoke of the ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the church (Col. 1. 22, 23). The first is that Christ has done a great service for us; He has delivered us from death and judgment: the second is that we are united to Him. We might have the first without the second. David did a great service for Jonathan when he laid Goliath in the dust, but there was no relationship between them. Christ has done a great service for us, and we who believe rejoice and thank God for it, but the great wonder now is that we are brought into the closest relationship to Him who has done this service for us. He is not our Saviour only, we are united to Him, we are

members of His body. We are not only delivered but we participate in the life of the Deliverer, for Christ who delivered us is the fountain of all life and power, and ye are complete in Him. The more one thinks about it the more abasing it is that we know and enjoy it so little. Let me emphasize it. Christ has done an incredible service for us—apart from that where would we be? But He has now disclosed the great secret of our relationship with Him—a secret hidden from the foundation of the world but now made known to us—we who have been delivered by His death are His body, and Christ is in us, the hope of glory.

People foolishly think that if only they could change themselves then that would change God's feelings towards them. Nay, God's feelings could not be kinder than they are. He has shown Himself to be full of love. His love has been shown to men in the death of His Son. It is when a man sees what God is that he turns and is changed. It is faith in God, revealed in Jesus, that purifies his heart and nothing else will.

Christ the Head of His Body.

NO other figure than that of the human head and body can illustrate for us our marvellous relation to Christ. Think of Christ being to me what my head is to all the members of my body! I have no head but Christ. I do not want man's wisdom because I have got Christ's wisdom. Whatever counsel and direction the members of Christ on earth need, Christ will give it. The body of Christ is on earth, in the very place where He was most utterly refused. The cross meant that man would not have Him; there was no place for Him here, but God has given Him a place in heaven. Is there to

be no answer to that on the earth? Yes, the answer is that He has a body on earth in which He lives. His saints will be all one in heaven, everyone believes that, but the wonder, the mystery is that they are all one on earth. There is one body. Let men think and say what they will, God's answer to the glory of Christ in heaven is that His body is on earth; the Head and the body in one indissoluble unity in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Let us learn that great truth and see how it will enlarge us and deliver us from all our narrow sectarianism.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Eternal Life, a present possession and a future hope.

“Will you kindly read the accompanying quotation from the writings of W. Kelly and enlarge and explain more fully. — is much exercised on the subject, and as I felt unable to meet his difficulties I thought perhaps you would be able to do so. ‘It is important to note that eternal life is viewed not only as a present possession for the believer in Christ, but as a future issue of a devoted pathway for His name. The Gospel of John develops the former; the other three show us the latter; as one Apostle elsewhere in this Epistle (Rom. 6. 22, 23) gives us both brought together in the same context.’ ”—CROYDON.

ALL who have believed on the Son of God have eternal life; as to this the Scriptures are emphatic. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5. 11, 12). Eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6. 23). It is communicated to His sheep by the Good Shepherd (John 10. 28). It cannot be forfeited by those who possess it, for they have it by the will of God (John 6. 40). There is no deception about it, for the God who cannot lie, promised it before the foundation of the world (Thess. 1. 2).

The youngest babe then in God’s family has eternal life. He does not know much about it but he begins to enjoy it when he is happy and free in the Father’s presence. The little children (babes) know the Father (1 John 2. 13), and to know Him and Jesus Christ His sent One is life eternal (John 17. 2). To deny this would be to make God a liar.

There ought not to be any difficulty about that side of this great subject, which is John’s presentation of it. It is when we turn to the side of it that is shown to us in Paul’s writings that the question arises. How can eternal life be a present possession and yet be

the issue of patient continuance in well-doing? (Rom. 2. 7). In considering this let us not forget the wise saying, “Don’t let that that you don’t understand rob you of your joy in that that you do understand.”

It is important to see that all truth flows to us from the way in which God presents Himself to us. IN JOHN’S GOSPEL it is as the Father that He is revealed. There we see the only-begotten Son with the Father, and the love that the Father has for the Son, and in the revelation of this wonderful relationship there is unfolded to us what eternal life is. IN HIS EPISTLE we learn that this revelation has been made for us, for it was God’s purpose that we should have our part in this life. What is true of Christ in the Gospel is true of us in the Epistle (ch. 2. 8). We have been born into God’s family, and eternal life is the life of the family. It is the knowledge of the Father and the enjoyment of His love. We could not have this life apart from the knowledge of the Father, and we could not know the Father apart from the Son, hence “he that hath the Son hath life,” for the life is in Him. We have it because we have Him, *but we have it in a sphere foreign to it.*

Now PAUL shows us what God is in His righteousness. There is no clash between the Father’s love and the righteousness of God. One is what He is to us as being His family,

the other is what He is to us as being men. The Father's love has been revealed in Jesus, but the righteousness of God is also declared in the gospel (Rom. 2. 7). The first is revealed that His children might have fulness of joy, the second that guilty men might be justified and be at peace with Him. None could have eternal life apart from righteousness, but when God justifies a man it is that He might also glorify him, that He might bring him into *eternal life in its own sphere*, where he may enjoy it untrammelled by the weakness and failure of our mortal flesh or hindered by a distracting environment. In this view of it it is set before us as a hope, as the goal of our responsible life here, it is conformity to Christ in glory, "that He may be the first-born among many brethren," all of whom shall bear His image, who is God's dear Son. This is the full purpose of God in respect to it.

It is on the line of God's righteousness that He renders eternal life to those who continue patient in well-doing—who do His will patiently in a world that is contrary to it. But who does this describe? None who are in Adam, i.e., in their natural condition. As children of Adam they are said to be "in the flesh" and cannot please God, and there is none of them that doeth good (Rom. 3. 12). All have sinned. Hence if any are to live unto God they need to be justified from all things, and they need a new life which is really Christ's life. There is no other. The Adam life is one of disobedience and ends in death. The Christ life is one of patient continuance in well-doing. Paul described it when he said, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2. 20). This is in one sense eternal life, it must be so, for it is Christ's life, and the object of it is God Himself, but it is not viewed in relation

to its true sphere and relationships, but in relation to our responsible life in the world in which we carry out God's will.

While we would not build too much on natural illustrations, one may help us here. Think of a man who is greatly attached to his family; his wife and children and home are everything to him; he knows what *family life* is, and enjoys it. But he has to earn his living in very unpleasant surroundings from which he is glad to be released when his day's work is done. Yet he does his work with a will, with the home pleasures that await him at the end of the day in view. That is his reward at the end of the day, and it helps him to continue patiently at his work until the time for release comes. He is the same man with the same life both at his work and in his home, but as a *family man* his true life is not in the factory but in the home. So it is with the believer; he has been quickened into life, but the true sphere of that life is the Father's presence and home with the family relationships, and these are essential to eternal life, as it is spoken of in the New Testament. We may enjoy it now as we retire in spirit from all else into that sacred sphere, but we await the time when we shall have it without hindrance; meanwhile we labour on with it in view and get the grace and power that belong to it to do so with patience.

God has set us in His family, and the rest of heart and confidence that the knowledge of His love yields may be ours, and having the Spirit of His Son, the Holy Ghost, we may rejoice in this relationship now, and this is life eternal. But He has also set us in His kingdom, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. He has put our feet in the way of patient continuance in well-doing and the end of that way is eternal life, for that way is "the

narrow way that leads to life." These two sides of the truth are interesting and it is important that we should understand them. John shows us how we have this life and may enjoy it in a sphere foreign to it. Paul shows us

the path that leads to the sphere of glory to which it belongs. They are complementary to each other. I need not say that here and there John touches on Paul's line and Paul on John's. This is well known.

Was Paul wrong when he claimed to be a Roman Citizen ?

"On page 6 of 'Should Christians take part in Politics?' published by you, attention is drawn to the fact that a Christian has no earthly city, and therefore cannot claim earthly citizenship. I should be glad if you would say how this can be reconciled with Acts 21. 39, where Paul evidently claimed to be a citizen of an earthly city, viz., Tarsus ; no doubt with its privileges and responsibilities. Thanking you for any help on this point."—ESSEX.

WE have not a copy of the publication you refer to, and do not know exactly what is stated in it, but will endeavour to answer your question. The fact of our citizenship being in heaven, which Phil. 3. 20 clearly states, does not relieve us of the responsibilities that attach to our earthly life. We belong to certain nations by birth, and to cities or towns by residence. What we are *in Christ* transcends all this, of course, and binds us up with an entirely new sphere of life, which is spiritual and not natural, and in which there are no nationalities, nor male and female, but all are in Christ (Gal. 3. 28). But the responsibilities of our daily life and towards others remain, and certain privileges also. We pay taxes, we hope without complaining, to the authorities, and being subject to them we have the benefits and protection that they provide, as Romans 13. shows. We need passports if we are visiting other lands, and may, without falsifying our heavenly calling, take advantage of the help that the consuls in foreign lands can give us. We may use these things without abusing them, even while we press on by faith to our heavenly country, and confess that here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come (Heb. 13. 14).

We do not think Paul claimed any

more than this in Acts 21. 39, or 22. 25-29. In the first instance he wished to speak to the people, and simply stated who he was in order to gain permission for this from the chief captain, who supposed him to be a seditious Egyptian instead of a law-abiding citizen. In the second case he saved the chief captain from an illegal procedure and himself from unnecessary suffering by quietly saying that he was a Roman. He did not make a claim exactly, but stated a fact, and we believe that he was absolutely right in this and acted according to the laws made by the authorities that he owned, and did not in any way deny his heavenly citizenship by so doing. It was a different case entirely when he claimed to be a pharisee before the Jewish council (ch. 23), for that was a religious and class distinction, that could have no part in the Christian life on any side of it ; it was a clever move on his part to divide the council, and he afterwards confessed that in this he was to blame (ch. 24. 21).

But party politics are an entirely different matter, and as we have received letters on this subject lately a few remarks on it may not be out of place. This party or that is not the nation or the government of the country to which we belong. As

things are in Great Britain, when a party comes into power and receives the seals of office from the King, it ceases to be a mere party and becomes His Majesty's Government with all the responsibilities attaching thereto, and is recognized as such by all law-abiding people, and all Christians should be that, and further, they should recognize these higher authorities as ministers of God. We must distinguish between nations and their governments, and the world. The former are of God (Rom. 13.), the latter is of man and the devil is behind it (1 John 5. 19), and party politics are essentially of the world. We do not think that that needs any proof. The clashing interests, ambitions, rancour, rivalry, and everything about party politics proclaim it to be of the world, and the Christian is not of the world. If we were asked why we take no part in politics, we should give as our reason, *We are not of the world.* This the Scriptures plainly teach, and if we are to be faithful to our Lord whom the world has rejected, and true to our heavenly calling, we shall stand apart from the world.

We do not question the sincerity of many politicians, but even if they are most sincere the whole principle that underlies their activities is wrong; they are working to make the world a better place without Christ, and if we are instructed in the Word we know that it will go from bad to worse until He comes, we know that all their schemes and efforts are vain. We do

not waste our energies on that that will come to naught, if we are wise, but would labour for His kingdom and patiently wait His coming again. Hence a second reason why we take no part in politics is that we do not desire to waste our energies and place our hopes in that which is all to be shaken and come to nothing, but in that which cannot be moved, the kingdom of our God (Heb. 12. 28).

If there was a party to which Christ was everything, that owned Him as its Lord and Leader, and that looked alone to Him for guidance, and followed Him with wholehearted loyalty, then there would be a party that we could support and work for, but as there is not such a party in the world's politics we stand aloof. And this will be dubbed impractical talk. Well, we are prepared for that.

The Stone which the builders rejected is still rejected and their building will come to naught, but God has made that rejected Stone the head of the corner and we are on His side, and in the final issue it will be seen that only those who have been on His side have been the wise and practical people; their labour, and theirs alone, is not in vain, because it is in the Lord (1 Cor. 15.). A third and final reason why we take no part in party politics is that Christ has no part in them.

Yet God rules and overrules, and it is our privilege and responsibility to pray for kings and all that be in authority, and this we will continue to do with the help of God.

Hebrews 6.

“Would you kindly give through your magazine some light on Hebrews 6. 4-6? In what way were they enlightened? What is the heavenly gift? In what way were they made partakers of the Holy Ghost? How did they taste the good word of God and of the powers of the world to come? Explain renewing unto repentance. Could verse 6 be rendered, ‘Because they have fallen away’? Were those referred to believers or professors only?”—SYDNEY.

ANSWERING the last of these questions first, the Epistle to the

Hebrews is addressed to those Jews who had made a profession, or confes-

sion, of Christ. Three times this is stated (ch. 3. 1; 4. 14; 10. 23). They were like the manslayer who had fled to a city of refuge (see Joshua 20.). This is the figure used in verse 18: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The nation had slain the Lord, but He had become the Refuge from the avenging sword for those who had confessed His name; the proof of the reality of their faith in Him, or otherwise, would be proved by their not drawing back unto perdition (ch. 10. 39). And the writer of the epistle has no doubt about those to whom he wrote as he says in verse 9, though he finds it necessary to warn them that Christ was their only hope, and if they turned from Him they had none, any more than the manslayer would have had if he had abandoned the city to which he had fled for refuge.

The 6th verse is given in J. N. D.'s translation, "and have fallen away"; i.e., if any of those who were once enlightened had fallen away it was impossible to renew them to repentance, for in turning back again from Christ to Judaism, they had virtually said the nation was right when it crucified Him and that He was not the Son of God as He claimed to be. Thus they crucified for themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.

"*Were once enlightened.*" They could not say they did not know, for they had

been impressed enough to confess Christ.

"*The heavenly Gift*" would be the blessing and joy brought by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, in which they had professed to have a part.

"*Partakers of the Holy Ghost.*" They had their part in the circle in which the Holy Ghost moved and wrought.

"*They tasted the good word of God and the power of the world to come.*" They had tasted or tried these, and rejected them, they had found them unsuited to their taste, plainly proving that they had not that renewed nature that could appreciate them.

Impossible to renew to repentance. Repentance is really a turning, but there was nothing to turn them to for blessing or salvation if they had turned from Christ. Their case was hopeless.

If any did fall away according to this Scripture they were apostates from the faith. Such were not what we speak of as backsliding Christians, they ceased to be Christians altogether; they abandoned their faith in Christ and went back to a religion that God had disowned. The only analogy in our day would be that of a man after testing the faith of Christ giving it up and becoming a Jew or perhaps embracing an anti-Christian religion. None truly born of God would or could do this; hence whoever did this among these Hebrews were professors only.

Peace.

"*And He arose, and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still.*"—
Mark 4. 39.

○H, blessed calm! Both wind and wave,
Though wild, obey His will;
And tempest-tossed disciples prove
The power of "Peace, be still."
So precious, Lord, our hearts would rest,
Through life's tempestuous day,
In Thine own keeping, ever blest,
Thy perfect love our stay.

HELD UP ON THE WAVES.

J. T. MAWSON.)

LET us recall a wonderful story told in the Gospels. It was night and the disciples of our Lord were afloat upon the Sea of Galilee. He had remained upon the quiet mountain-side in prayer to His Father, and we are sure that His disciples had a place in His prayer, but He looked through the darkness and beheld them toiling uselessly, for the waves rolled high. His heart was moved with compassion as He saw how the storm baffled them, and from His peaceful retreat He stepped out upon the sea to go to them. His appearance, as he strode from wave to wave, affrighted them, but His voice quickly calmed them. How sweet must have been the peace that filled them when they heard Him say, "BE OF GOOD CHEER; IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID"! Aye, it is good to hear the voice of the Lord above the night-storms, and to know in the days of stress that He is nigh.

But Peter, impulsive and full of admiration for his Master, and ready to dare much to be near Him, left the boat to join Him where He walked. Then he found himself in circumstances that were new and strange to him—circumstances in which the creature could only sink and perish. But here comes in the loveliest bit of the wonderful story. He felt his desperate need, and cried out to His Lord, and "immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him," and held him up. And together with the Master of every storm, Peter walked on the very crest of the waves. The gale still raged fiercely and the sea surged and swished about his feet, but he was held up by almighty power, and he walked by the side of his Lord, erect, fearless, and comforted.

Now let us understand the story. The Lord who sits above the water

floods, and rules the waves from His throne of eternal calm, does not send succour to His saints as a sympathetic onlooker who knows nothing experimentally of the sorrows they endure. No. He came down upon the waves; He came from the eternal peace of heaven into the storms where His loved ones laboured; the winds blew and the waves tossed about Him. When His disciples saw Him, they were affrighted and supposed that He was a spirit. But He was not a spirit. HE WAS A MAN, AND HE IS A MAN. This is the amazing thing: because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, the Lord of glory, likewise took part of the same, that He might know in His own experience the fierceness of the storms that beset our weak humanity in their endeavour to overthrow our faith; and He was tempted in all points as we are, *apart from sin*, and so He can succour us with a sympathy that is perfectly human though divine. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

It was the hand of a Man, in which was the very power of God, that held Peter on that memorable night. It is the hand of a Man—of Jesus, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that is stretched out to us, and that holds us up upon the very waves that have leaped to our destruction. He is the Son of God, eternal in His being, and omnipotent in power, yet a Man who loved us enough to die for us that He might take from our souls the very fear of death and make us triumph evermore. And He lives again a Man at God's right hand and for evermore makes intercession for us.

We want our readers to lay hold of this great truth, not as a theory, but as a fact to be known first to faith and

then blessedly in their experience. Peter's was an individual experience, he had it for himself, but it is an experience that every Christian may have when seas of trouble roll around. Yes, when sorrows like sea-billows roll, each for himself, may be supported by that hand of gracious power, and be made more than a conqueror in the very circumstances that threaten to swallow him up. What encouragement there is for us in the story—Peter's need and distress stretched out and reached the Saviour's heart, and the Saviour's hand stretched out and reached His sinking

saint, and with his need met, his fears calmed and his faith strengthened, Peter walked hand in hand with his Master until the storm ceased.

Is our Lord less able to-day than He was then? No. Is He less sympathetic? No. He is "the Same yesterday, to-day and for ever." We do not see Him as Peter saw Him, but "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." His hand still upholds His saints, and faith may take hold of Him with a stronger grip than even Peter's.

THE INCENSE OF PRAYER.

"Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense."—Psalm 141.

THE incense lay dead, unfragrant, and with no capacity for soaring, till it was kindled; and unless there is a flame in my heart there will be no rising up of holy aspirations from my heart to God. Cold prayers have no power to soar. Whence was the incense kindled? From coals brought from the altar of Burnt Offering in the outer court. Here is the secret; let the heart be kindled with a coal from the altar, with the thought of what the Saviour suffered when He offered Himself to God for us. The heart is kept warm by the continual realization of His great love, "the Son of God, loved me and gave Himself for me." It is this that will make our prayers ascend as incense and nothing else will, for only when that love fills us will we pray unselfishly and for His glory.

The Lord is Gracious.

"The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men has appeared."—Titus 3.

BLESSING is not now a question of what men are, but what God is. What men are is clearly stated in the Word: "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Rom. 3.), and that surely closes man's side of the question, he can put in no claim for God's favour; then everything depends upon what God is. And here it is that the gospel brings its wonderful message to us. He is gracious. In Christ He offers an eternal forgiveness and declares that in Him all that believe are justified. We would not have God altered one bit; His holiness and righteousness give an eternal stability to His blessing, and He looks for no change in the sinner before He blesses him, except that change which makes him own that his only hope is in God. But he does not ask that the sinner should be other than he is. He wants him to come just as he is, and then he will learn that God is just what He is. Grace meets the guilty, the Saviour greets the sinner, and where sin abounded grace does much more abound.

“THE LORD THINKETH UPON ME.” (W. BRANWELL DICK.)

“*But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*”—Psalm 40. 17.

IN seeking to read the Psalms intelligently, we want to find Christ there, and if we peruse them in dependence upon the divine Teacher—the Holy Spirit—we will do so. When the risen Lord appeared to the disciples as they were gathered together, He spoke to them of “all things . . . which were written . . . in the Psalms concerning ME” (Luke xxiv. 44).

The first book of the Psalms which ends with Psalm 41, gives us, as another has written, “the state of the Jewish remnant before they have been driven out of Jerusalem, and hence of Christ Himself in connection with this remnant.” This is specially noticeable in the Psalm to which we here draw attention.

We see further in the Psalms how aptly the experience of the godly remnant sets forth the exercises of believers at the present time. It is, perhaps, this that appeals most to the mass of God’s dear children, and that makes the Psalms so unspeakably precious to them.

It is in this latter sense that we would seek to encourage some of our, it may be, tried and wearied fellow Christians by reminding them of these twelve words at the head of the page. They concern two persons—“*The Lord*” and “*me.*” Will you read the words again, and as you emphasize that last word of two letters say to yourself “that refers to *me*”; exclude everybody else from your mind, and, in the first instance, at any rate, get all the benefit of it for yourself. When the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter: “Give unto them for *Me and thee*” (Matthew 17. 27), Peter would quite understand that meant the Lord and himself, and nobody besides

them. How it must have thrilled his heart, as he learned that his blessed Master had thus graciously deigned to take him into association with Himself! Now to come back to our Psalm—*The Lord and me. The Lord.* He who is great, and high, and holy. The Father of Heaven and Earth. The One before whom angelic hosts bow in reverent worship.

The Lord. He who died for *me.* Verses seven and eight of our Psalm tell us of His coming to do the will of God, and that Will was that He should die for *me. The Lord.* He it is who has risen and ascended to the right hand of God, and there He sits in the place of supremacy, authority and power. How great! How glorious! How truly clothed with Majesty is He who is presented as “*the Lord!*” “*Me.*” Who or what am I? An insignificant, infinitesimal speck in the vast creation, less than the least of those who compose the company of the redeemed; and yet, “*the Lord thinketh upon me.*” That is not all. “I am poor and needy.” “Ah!” says some reader, “that exactly describes me, ‘*I am poor and needy.*’” Then put yourself right into this test, and say, “*I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*” Are these lines being read by some lonely, desolate, perhaps bed-ridden person. It is long since you were visited by any one, and just this morning you were saying, “there are those who know that I am poor and needy, but no one thinks about me.” You were mistaken, were you not? Here is the Lord’s answer to that disappointed, distressed utterance: “*I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*” If *He* thinks upon you what else

matters? Does that just mean a passing, occasional thought? Nay, read verse five: "Thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order with Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." That means He is always thinking about us. You may say it, dear friend, "He is always thinking about *me*."

We recall that choice word in Psalm 139. 17, 18, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." His thoughts are thoughts of blessing, and as we discover them we learn that though we may feel "poor and needy," we are endowed with all the wealth of heaven, for He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1. 3). If He has made us so surpassingly rich, what will He not

do for us in the exigencies of our homeward journey? If He has thought of our present and everlasting happiness, will He not think of the little things that try us in our everyday life? When we apprehend the immense fact that He is thinking about us, then we will cease to worry; we will give up planning for ourselves; we will no longer spend anxious days and sleepless nights wondering what the future has in store for us; but, in quiet, simple confidence, we will say: "*I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Be of good cheer, fellow pilgrim! Look up! Look up! and sing:—

"Let shadows come, let shadows go,
Let life be bright or dark with woe,
I am content, for this I know,
Thou thinkest, Lord, of me!
What need I fear since Thou art near,
And thinkest, Lord, of me."

"But *I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*"

BLESSED IS THE MAN.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."—

Psalm 34.

MORE than twenty centuries have passed since those words were written, as many stretched dim behind the Psalmist as he sang. He was gathering up in one sentence the spirit of the past, and confirming it by His own life's history. And has any one that has lived since stood up and said, "Behold! I have found it otherwise. I have waited on the Lord and He heard me not, I have tasted and seen that He is not good. I have trusted Him and been disappointed. I have sought His face—in vain. And I say from my own experience that the man who trusts Him is not blessed"? Not one, thank God! The history of the past may be put into one sentence. "They looked unto Him and were

lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." And as for the present, there are many of us who can say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Let us all make the experiment. We have the experience of all generations to encourage us. The God who has blessed them is enough for us, His wealth is not exhausted. Like the meal and the oil which were the prophet's resource in the famine, yesterday's supply does not diminish tomorrow's store. We too may have all that gladdened the hearts and stayed the spirits of saints of old. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

HOW GOD IS KNOWN AS FATHER. (H. J. VINER.)

THE highest knowledge of all is obtained through our Lord Jesus Christ alone! Advanced religious thought and modernism deny this! While they profess to reverence Him in measure, they refuse the honour which essentially belongs to Him as the Revealer of the Father.

Salvation and redemption are in Him alone—this is both a divinely revealed and proven fact. It is proclaimed in the gospel of God, it is proved in the experience of multitudes of true believers. The actual bodily resurrection of Christ, after His sacrifice for sin had been completed, and His exaltation to the right hand of God's throne are facts, but it is equally true that the knowledge of God the Father is through Him alone, notwithstanding popular discourses on the universal Fatherhood of God. The Son said, "*Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.*" And none can know the Father apart from Him.

They were exceedingly proud and self-satisfied religious reasoners to whom He once said, "Ye neither know Me, nor My Father: if ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple" (John 8. 19, 20). The fact is, there was no true knowledge of the Father as such in the world until He was made known by the Son. He never uttered one word which would mislead any soul; and it was to guide into the way of eternal blessedness Jesus said, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father, but by Me*" (John 14. 6).

When speaking to the religionists already mentioned, He uncovered the source of unbelief, deceitful perversity,

and practice: "Ye are of your father the devil," the Lord said to them, "the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 14. 44). And their conduct towards Himself soon confirmed His solemn judgment of them, for "Then took they up stones to cast at Him!" But leaving the temple, He passed from their midst. War against the truth is waged in various ways, and often with the greatest acumen where boasted attainments are reached, and the benefits of religion and civilization are reaped outwardly, but where the knowledge of God the Father through the Son alone is not desired. The Gospel of John is the part of the inspired Word which specially makes this known.

If it be true, however, that none know the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him, how inestimable is the favour divinely granted to those who have this knowledge, which surpasses all else. Such may not boast in themselves, but they may be profoundly thankful to the Lord for His grace! Such have learned their sinfulness and need before a holy God. They have found forgiveness and salvation through the finished work of Christ. They came weary and heavy laden to Jesus; and, learning of Him, rest and enlightenment became theirs. It was THE FATHER who had drawn them to the Son, and revealed to them that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, though they understood not at the time; and it is THE SON who revealed the Father to them, according to His own divine pleasure. Born of

God, even the babes in this favoured family now know the Father (1 John 2. 13); and in this they grow, increasing as they are preserved from the love of the world.

The love of the Father and the love of the world are shown to be incompatible in 1 John 2. 15; while the first verse of the next chapter invites us to behold the wonderful love of the Father, which has put us in family relationship to Him,—*in eternal relationship as the children of God!*” Therefore, it is said, “The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” We may be known as neighbours, relations, business men, etc.; the world, however, is not capable of taking cognizance of this precious relationship with the Father; but the

Spirit gives us the cry in our hearts, “**ABBA, FATHER.**”

Some of us once prayed religiously (with a sense of distance in our souls) to the almighty God; now, in the nearness of children, we may address Him as God our Father.

“Father, Thy Name our souls would bless,
As children taught by grace.”

Speaking to the Father concerning His own, Jesus said, “I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” The Father loved the Son before the world was, and this love is the portion of those to whom God is known as Father. Blessed be His Name.

Love's Demand.

OUR love is precious to Christ. If we offered Him all that we had instead of it, He would spurn it. It is not your purse, your brains, your labour, but the love of your heart that He seeks, my reader. He has given everything for it. He did not die that we might be great servants of His, but that He might have us all for Himself, that *we* might be to Him and not to another. The word is that we might live henceforth not unto ourselves but *unto* Him. Not *for* Him so much as *to* Him, that He might be in our eyes the altogether lovely One. Mary learned this lesson as she sat at His feet and hearkened to His word. She learned that she was more to Him than service, and she showed in the last mention of her in Scripture that He was more to her than self. For she poured out upon Him without reserve that which would have beautified herself. Many waters could not quench His love, it was stronger than death, and He cannot be satisfied with anything less than a whole-hearted response from us.

What you fill the vessel with, that you must expect to draw from it; if you put in water, you cannot bring out wine. What dost thou fill thy heart with all the day? Is it the earth? Then how canst thou expect to find heaven there at night?

It was a sweet speech of a dying saint, that he was going to change his place, but not his company; for he had always been living in communion with God.

FAITH.*

(A. J. ATKINS.)

CHRISTIANITY is said to be "God's dispensation which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1. 4, N.T., J.N.D.). Christians themselves are spoken of as the *household of faith* (Gal. 6. 10). All the Christian realities and blessings are entirely outside the region of the natural man, and therefore beyond the scope of his senses and reason. They are discerned and appreciated by faith only. It would therefore be difficult to exaggerate the importance of faith. It was the Reformers' recognition and assertion of the place and power of faith which recovered the gospel to them and for us. It was this that gave peace to their souls, clearness to their vision, character to their testimony, and permanency to their labours. There is no substitute for faith, not even piety and devotion. Faith will surely produce these in reality; but they may exist in a sense and be cultivated where faith is very little exercised and the gospel even despised. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11. 6). One has well said, "It is of first importance to understand the nature and province, powers and possibilities of faith, for upon it depends the existence and development of all true life in the Spirit."

As the word "faith" is used generally in a wide variety of senses, it is necessary to see what God means by "faith," that is, how the term is used, and what it signifies in Scripture. For it is the *use* of a word which is the true index of its meaning; and it is always most profitable to study God's own vocabulary, and *His* use of His own words. "Faith," we read, in Heb.

11. 1, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," or in J.N.D.'s rendering: "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." We gather then, that faith has to do firstly with *future* things—"things hoped for." Of these it is the "substantiating," or as it has been rendered, "guarantee." Indeed we believe that it has been discovered of recent years that the word so translated was used in business and law in the first century to signify title-deeds. What a wonderful word—"Faith is the title-deeds of things hoped for"! Then, secondly, faith has to do with unseen things: that is, not only things in the future, but *the present realities of God's world*. Of these, it is the "conviction," the deep, inward, divine assurance.

Faith has been well said to be, "such confidence in the faithfulness of God as leads to a reception of His testimony, to such love and trust as become a personal bond of union with Him, and to corresponding obedience and testimony." Or in the words of another, "Faith is the divinely given perception of things not seen, wrought *through the Word of God* by the Spirit. True faith is the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul revealing the object of faith in divine power, so that the heart receives it on divine testimony as divine truth and a divine fact" (J.N.D.). "It is the spiritual eye, enlightening the mind, directing the feet and cheering the heart; the whole [of Christianity] turns upon it. As our faith is, so is our strength and fruitfulness in good works. Nothing can be stronger in the universe than the hand of faith. By this we lay sure hold on our most glorious and almighty Lord in heaven, and such an inviolable union is established between Christ and a

* May it be suggested that as this paper is in the nature of a Bible study, it will be more profitable if the Scriptures mentioned are turned up as the paper is perused.

believing soul, that none can separate one from the other, and all the powers of hell and sin avail nothing against it. Faith breaks through the greatest obstacles, removes mountains of difficulties, and has as it were a kind of omnipotence in it."

In its elemental sense, faith is *the reception by the soul of God's testimony*. This is strikingly illustrated in the life of Abraham, "the father of all them that believe." God had declared that Abraham should have a son when naturally this seemed impossible. There was no false church to presume to authenticate God's word to him; and so far from reason, intuition or experience supporting it, they were dead against it. Disregarding all these considerations, *Abraham believed God*. He "*amened God*." God had promised; and Abraham said in his heart, "It shall be so." He ventured himself upon the bare word, the veracity of the God that cannot lie! And that is what faith always does. "*The word of God carries its own authority in the heart of him in whom it has wrought*" (J. N. D.). This is a principle of vital and far-reaching importance. As the same writer has said: "Our faith must be a divine faith in its nature and source as well as in the things which it reveals, and for a divine faith we must have divine testimony." Thank God we have it certainly and completely in His own precious Word.

True faith not only rests upon a divine word, but has a divine origin. God is its Source and Giver. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephes. 2. 8).* Peter speaks

* Question has been raised as to whether "that" refers to faith; but without going into critical questions and authorities, this, which is the simple plain meaning of the verse, has been amply justified by those competent to speak.

of "them who have *obtained like precious faith* through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1. 1).

How happy to be dependent upon Him even for the faith that believes His word and accepts His gifts!

"Faith, too, that trusts the blood, through grace,
From that same love we gain;
Else sweetly as it suits our case,
The gift had been in vain."

And yet, like most of God's gifts, it is received under certain conditions and by appointed means. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10. 17); that is, faith comes by a message heard, and that message is God's word—therefore fitly called the gospel, which is "*the word of faith*" (Rom. 10. 8). It is preached, too, "*for the obedience of faith among all nations*" (Rom. 16, 26). And all its priceless blessings are received on that principle. It is by faith we are forgiven (Acts 10. 43) and justified (Acts 13. 39; Rom. 5. 1), and saved (Ephes. 2. 8), and possess eternal life (John 5. 24). By the same faith, too, we are sanctified. We read, "*them that are sanctified through faith that is in me*" (Acts 26. 18). Into the grace in which we stand we have access by faith (Rom. 5. 2), and our blest relationship of *sons* is conditioned by faith—"Ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3. 26, N.T.).

Faith also conditions our experimental entrance into and enjoyment of our blessing. It effects a real and practical purification within, as read, "*(God) purifying their hearts by faith*" (Acts 15. 8). Buried with Christ in baptism, in it we are raised with Him *through the faith* of the operation of God that raised Him from

the dead (Col. 2. 12).^{*} And that which is perhaps the deepest, sweetest experience of all, bears out this same truth. Christ comes to dwell in the heart of the believer by faith (Ephes. 3. 17). Not, of course, that we can omit the Spirit of God and His work in us in these relations, but the place that faith has is striking.

Thus, faith which commences as an *experiment* goes on to become an *experience*. It starts as the reception of His word, and by the work of the Spirit grows into trust and confidence in Himself. Thus through faith we reach and possess a clear and certain knowledge of God. He becomes the portion of the soul, yea its "exceeding joy" (Psa. 43. 4) and its "exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15. 1). "Faith gives you God, fills you with God in immediate experimental knowledge, puts you in possession of all there is in Him, and allows you to be invested with His character itself."

This being the case, we can well understand that faith must be vital and central in Christianity. And so we find it declared to be. If we *live*—it is "by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2. 20). We *walk by faith* (2 Cor. 5. 7), governed by the unseen things it makes so real to us, and not by the passing things of sight and sense. By faith we *stand* (2 Cor. 1. 24), that is, remain steadfast in the position grace has given us. By faith we *resist* the devil (1 Pet. 5. 9), and *overcome* the world (1 John 5. 4). J.N.D.'s rendering is expressive, "This is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, even our faith." True Christian conflict also is the "*good fight of faith*" (1 Tim. 6. 12), and in the battle itself faith is the essential piece of armour that covers

the vital parts—"the *shield of faith*"—which we are exhorted *above all to take* (Ephes. 6. 6). The word of God, even when ministered in power, fails in result, unless it be *mixed with faith* in the hearer (Heb. 4. 2). Christian service, too, is characterized as being a *work of faith*, and it is sad indeed when Thessalonian power wanes, and the same activity becomes but works and labour, the vital spring missing (cp. Rev. 2. 2). Faith is also the very soul of prayer. One has well said, "God has no use for pessimists in prayer." To faith all things are possible (Mark. 9. 23). "Whatsoever ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive (*have received them*) and ye shall have them" (Mark 11. 23, 24).

By faith it is we "obtain a good report," and if the Lord tarry and we fall asleep in Christ, who would not desire this epitaph inscribed by the Holy Ghost, "*— died in faith*"? (Heb. 11. 13).

At this point it may be helpful to draw attention to the passive and active aspects of this grace, for it has both these, and both must be in exercise if spiritual balance is to be preserved. Faith always *submits* to God's word; *yields* gladly to His will; and *waits* His time and way. But these aspects can be so emphasized in our thinking and life as to lead to a truly perilous passivity of soul, to quietism, practical fatalism, and ultimately to what is nothing less than sheer unbelief and sloth. The fact is, faith is also an energetic and active thing. It "*lays hold of*" God (Isa. 64. 7). It *bestirs* itself. It is marked by importunity and perseverance. It can "*storm heaven's gates*." Listen to Knox as he prays—"O God, give me Scotland, or I die!"—that is no passivity! Faith, too, *grasps* God's promises. It *wills* His will (Phil. 2. 13).

* A deeply important passage both as regards baptism and also as to entrance into Christian position. It is the death-blow to a certain school of ultra-subjective teaching.

It *seizes* opportunities. It is alive and alert; full of holy aspiration and inspiration. It is "*living*." Faith implies not only receiving from God, but a responsive *co-operation* with God.

Yes, faith is *living*. Though it is not exactly life, it is so intimately connected with the divine life in the soul as to be inseparable from it. It is likened to a grain of mustard *seed*. "Your faith *groweth* exceedingly," said the apostle (2 Thess. 1. 3). And like all other living things, faith *grows by exercise*. As Gurnall says, "Faith must be *exercised* if it is to be preserved . . . (it) lives by exercise. . . . O, Christian! take heed of letting your faith be long out of work; if you do not use it when you ought, it may fail you when you require it most." Faith is also *strengthened by trial*. "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1. 7). And faith, we are told, *worketh by love* (Gal. 5. 6). "If you ask how shall I do to love, I answer, believe. If you ask how shall I believe, I answer, love. This seems a circle, but it is a divine one" (Leighton). As another old writer has well said, "Faith first worketh love, and then worketh by it. As first the workman sets an edge on his tools, and then he carves and cuts with them, so faith sharpens the soul's love to God and then acts by it. . . . Faith brings the soul to the meditation of the peerless, matchless love of God in Christ, and at this fire stays the Christian's thoughts till his affections begin to kindle, and then he bestirs himself for God with might and main." "*Faith is the bellows of love*." To use another metaphor, faith is the energy in the plant that enables it to strike its roots downwards and absorb the nourish-

ment in the ground, and to push its shoots upwards, and absorb all that the air and sunshine bring. Love is the fair blossom and fruit that is the result that glorifies God and blesses man.

Faith being living, it is subject to growth, and hence there are among Christians all degrees of development of this grace. This always needs bearing in mind. The prime matter, however, is not the degree of the faith, but its genuineness. If it be as a tiny mustard seed, it will accomplish much, for life is there. A golden rule for Christian life is: "Never go beyond your faith or lag behind your conscience." Every step not taken in faith is fraught, we may be sure, with peril; indeed the Word says: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14. 23). At the same time, degrees of faith are recognized in the Word, and this fact is full of encouragement, for we read, "as God has dealt to every man *the measure of faith*" (Rom. 12. 3). Nevertheless, like the disciples, how often the Lord has to rebuke us—"O ye of *little faith*" (Matt. 6. 30, etc.); "How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4. 40). On the other hand, we read of Abraham who was strong in faith; Stephen who was full of faith; and James speaks of those poor in this world who are rich in faith.

Whereto we have attained in this grace, let us seek to go on to perfection. First let us see that our faith is sincere (1 Tim. 1. 5; 2 Tim. 1. 5); and fruitful (2 Pet. 1. 5-8); then let us continue in it, with the constant prayer, "Lord increase our faith," and "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." By so doing, our faith will become steadfast (Col. 2. 5); will be increased (2 Cor. 10. 15); and its joy (Phil. 1. 25), confidence (Ephes. 3. 12), and full assurance (Heb. 10. 22), will be ours.

(Continued on page 235.)

II TIMOTHY 2. 20.

(SAMUEL LEVERMORE.)

A Brief Bible Study.

TH**E**RE are one or two points in the Timothy letters which call for serious and prayerful consideration. Let us contrast A **GLORIOUS FACT** in the first letter (3. 15) with AN **APT ILLUSTRATION** in the second. As is fitting, and customary, the Spirit gives that which is **POSITIVE** and **POSITIONAL** in the first letter, followed by that which is **PRACTICAL** in the second. This **GLORIOUS FACT** then is "The house of God, which is the church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Note the definite article in each case—*The* house—*The* church—*The* pillar and ground of *The* truth. God's church is **IMPREGNABLE** and **IMMUTABLE**—"My" church, says our Lord, against which the gates of hades shall not prevail. Then how to behave *in it*.

Now in the prison letter, Paul, as a foundation prophet, foresees by the Spirit a huge religious growth of profession which we call *Christendom*; a great abnormal growth which he likens to "a great House" illustrating **SATAN'S GREAT MIX UP**. He, having with great subtilty put man's work—wood and earth—beside God's work—gold and silver (1 Cor. 3.), even as, in the Kingdom Parables, we find *wheat* and *tares*, *good* and *bad* fish. Keep this Spirit-given illustration in mind and you know what to do in view of the "Perilous Times" of chapter 3.

Moreover, the Spirit gives examples of wood and earthen vessels in "Phygellus and Hermogenes" (1. 15) and "Philetus and Hymenæus" of 2. 17. The first pair went wrong through failing to "hold fast the form of sound words" (13) and *slighting the Holy Ghost* (14). A very common sin, alas! The second pair were on the same in-

clined plane of apostasy, but had gone further still, even "overthrowing the faith of some."

Let him, therefore, who named or called upon the Lord endure (10)—suffer (12)—rightly divide (15)—shun the babblers (16)—depart from iniquity (19)—purge himself from, or separate from, the vessels of wood and earth, such as the above-mentioned, and every such person, whoever and whatever he may be. Separate, not stay and teach them better, as men foolishly speak.

Further—he must be pure in *person* as well as in association. The *doctrine he holds* must be golden as well as the *company he keeps* (verses 22–25).

Now it is quite clear that all this gives to the individual believer A **LINE OF CONDUCT AND A PRINCIPLE OF ASSOCIATION**.

Some people may say, "We are gathered on 2 Tim. 2." But that chapter retorts as it were, It is not a question here of *what you are gathered on*, but of *what your conduct is*. Bless God we are not asked to gather to an **ETHICAL CODE**, but unto A **MIGHTY NAME**. That precious *Name* is the ground upon, and the Centre unto, which the Spirit gathers. A *Person*, and not a *code* or *creed*.

"If a man" (21) (not an Assembly, for Assembly purging is in 1 Cor. 5.) "purge himself." May we, therefore, by "The Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us" (1. 14), rejoicing in the glorious facts of the first letter, and profiting by the *apt illustration* and the many exhortations of the second, have the ineffable joy and distinction of being set apart—"and meet—for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

SAMUEL THE PROPHET. No. 2.

(HAMILTON SMITH.)

The Failure of the Priest (2. 11-36).

THE song of Hannah assures us of the ultimate triumph of grace under the reign of Christ. In the light of this assurance we are prepared to face the complete breakdown of man in responsibility.

The evil condition of the professing people of God under the priesthood of Eli is manifested by three fearful evils. The priesthood was defiled (12); the offering of the Lord was despised (17); and the tabernacle was desecrated (22). We have already learned from chapter 1. 3, that the sons of Eli were priests of the Lord, now we are told that they "were sons of Belial," and that "they knew not the Lord." The very men whose office was to represent the people before the Lord, were themselves ignorant of the Lord and using their position to enrich themselves at the expense of the people (12-16). The greatness of their sin before the Lord is seen in that their conduct led to the offering of the Lord being despised by the people. They became instruments for the corruption of the professing people of God (17). Finally through their evil conduct the house of God, at Shiloh, became the scene of wickedness that shocks the natural conscience (22).

Alas! is not this an exact picture of what is taking place in Christendom in our day? This condition has, indeed, been found in Christendom throughout the centuries though becoming more painfully evident in these last days when many, who publicly avow they are priests of the Lord, are strangers to the Lord. Like Hophni and Phineas of old, such use religion to serve themselves and their own ends, at the expense of the people of God. Through such the atoning sacrifice of Christ is being

despised, and wickedness and worldliness of such a gross character are being introduced into that which professes to be the house of God, that the natural mind is shocked and turns with righteous disgust from that which is a mere travesty of religion. Thus leaders of Christian profession, like the priests of old, become the main instruments of corruption and apostasy.

Such was the terrible condition of Israel; and yet, as we see the storm gathering, we are again reminded of God's own words, "*When I bring a cloud over the earth . . . the bow shall be seen in the cloud.*" In the midst of the gathering gloom the Spirit of God again and again sustains faith by giving us the vision of the bow. Thus we read, "the child did minister unto the Lord" (11). Then the sky darkens as we have the awful disclosures concerning the sin of the priests (12-17); but again we catch sight of the bow, for we read, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child . . . and the child Samuel grew before the Lord" (18-21). Nevertheless the darkness grows yet deeper as we read of the desecration of the house of God (22-25); but once again the bow is seen in its beauty, for we read, "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the Lord, and also with men" (26).

Does this not assure our hearts that, however dark the day, God will maintain a testimony for Himself, and sustain the faith of His true people? Moreover the constant mention of "the child" would indicate the way God takes to maintain His testimony in a day of ruin. He passes by the self-accredited religious officials and takes up "the child" to be a witness to Himself.

Thus when the priests break down in Eli's day the child comes into prominence, and always in association with the Lord, "The child did minister unto the Lord"; "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child"; "the child Samuel grew before the Lord"; "The child Samuel . . . was in favour . . . with the Lord"; "the child ministered unto the Lord" (2. 12, 18, 21, 26; 3. 1).*

Thus we have God's disclosure of the terrible condition of Israel—a solemn forecast of the condition of Christendom—and the gracious way God maintains a testimony for Himself in the day of ruin.

* It appears to be an unvarying principle of the ways of God, again and again illustrated in Scripture, that in a day of ruin God passes by those who assume to be His official representatives and uses, as witnesses for Himself, those who are little and of no account in the eyes of the world.

Again, at a later day, amidst the desolations of Israel, Isaiah could say, "Behold I and THE CHILDREN whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 8. 18). Seven centuries later, when the nation was "in darkness and in the shadow of death," and God visited His people to tell them of the coming King, it was through THE CHILD of the barren woman—a child that was called "the prophet of the Highest"—that this witness came.

Again, a little later, when at last the "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" came into the midst of the guilty nation, it was in the lowliness of a child that He entered the world for, said the angel, "this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find THE BABE wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger," and the godly could say, "Unto us A CHILD is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Luke 2. 11, 12; Isa. 9. 6).

Thus, too, in that yet darker day in Israel's history, when the Lord, a despised and rejected Man, stood in the midst of a corrupt nation fast hastening to apostasy, He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them UNTO BABES" (Matt. 11. 25).

Moreover we see a further great and encouraging principle of the ways of God, that at the very moment when the people of God are entering upon evil times, through their own folly, God in secret is preparing a vessel for their ultimate deliverance. As one has said, "In all the seasons of man's destruction of himself, there has been another thing going on in the plans of the blessed God. . . . While his brethren are filling up their sins and sorrows in Canaan, Joseph, unknown to them, is growing up in Egypt for their help. While Israel is in the heat of the furnace, Moses is preparing to be their deliverer in the distant solitudes of Midian. . . . When the priesthood was defiled, and the glory gone into the enemy's land, Samuel the child is brought forth to raise the stone of help. . . . When Saul and the kingdom are bringing ruin on themselves, David, 'the secret of God,' is under preparation to set the throne in honour, and the kingdom 'in order and strength.'"

A further truth comes before us in the closing verses of the chapter—that God will not allow the evil condition of His professing people to go unjudged though, as ever, He warns before He judges. Thus a man of God is sent with a solemn testimony, and warning, to the aged Eli. He is first reminded of the high privileges of his office. He was chosen, says the Lord, to be "My priest to offer upon Mine altar . . . before Me." His offence is then plainly stated. "Wherefore," says the Lord,

Furthermore, in the day of Christ's exaltation, those who maintained a bright witness for the Lord in the presence of the religious officials of corrupt Judaism, were "unlearned and ignorant" fishermen—those whom the world would esteem as children of no account (Acts 4. 13).

Nor is it otherwise in the midst of corrupt Christendom, for, in the midst of the ruin of the church, those who are marked out for the Lord's special approval, like the little child, have but "a little strength" (Rev. 3. 8).

“do ye trample upon My sacrifice and upon Mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above Me” (N.Tr.). Actually the sons were the guilty persons, but, inasmuch as Eli took no action against them, he is charged with their offence. It is true he had raised protest, but the evil was of such a character that to protest and yet continue with those against whom the protest was made was to sanction their evil. The secret motive that governed Eli is disclosed in the words, thou “honourest thy sons above Me.” The relationships of nature, and the friendships of life, were set above the claims of the Lord. He was chosen to walk before the Lord, but having honoured his sons above the Lord, he has to hear the solemn word, “Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Has not the solemn failure of this pious old man a warning voice for God’s people in all ages? In very different circumstances, and in varying degrees we can easily slip into the snare of honouring our brethren, our friends, our kindred, above the Lord. Again and again has the truth of the Lord’s words been proved, “Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” If God in His grace has chosen us to walk before Him, we shall only be kept in safety as we act upon the word of the Psalmist, “I have set the Lord always before me” (cf. 1 Sam. 2. 30, and Ps. 16. 8).

Having been reminded of his privileges, and charged with his offence, Eli has to hear of the judgment that is about to fall. Eli had sinned through his family, and upon his family the judgment would come. The

increase of his house would die in the flower of their age; Hophni and Phinehas would meet their death in one day. Every one left of his house would be thrust out of the priest’s office to beg their bread. The after history gives the solemn fulfilment of these predictions. Hophni and Phinehas are slain in the conflict with the Philistines (1 Sam. 4. 11); sixty years later the increase of Eli’s house was cut off by King Saul (1 Sam. 22. 18); and one hundred years after the prediction the last of Eli’s house was thrust out from being priest by King Solomon (1 Kings 2. 27).

Moreover the failure of the priest becomes the occasion for indicating the great change about to take place in the ways of God. Because of the unfaithfulness of Eli, his house would be cut off, and a faithful priest would be raised up that would act according to the heart and mind of God. His house would be established; nevertheless henceforward the priest would no longer occupy the first place before the Lord, but would walk before the Lord’s anointed. Already we have learned from Hannah’s song that the Anointed is the King. The high priest is thus set aside, as the immediate link between the Lord and His people. He falls into a secondary place, there being another anointed greater than he. Thus through the failure of the priest the way is being prepared to fulfil God’s purpose to establish Christ as King with a faithful priest walking before Him for ever.

We may note that in a day of official failure God uses a woman to declare His purpose; a child to bear testimony to Himself, and a nameless man of God to warn of coming judgment, and tell of final blessing.

"THE COMING OF THE LORD."

(A. J. POLLOCK.)

"*The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*"—James 5. 8.

THIS statement is found in the very practical Epistle of James. The Epistle of James stands in a sort of analagous contrast to the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament. The Book of Jonah is the only book in the Old Testament that tells us of a mission to the Gentiles. Every other book has a Jewish setting save this one, unless perhaps the Book of Job. It shows that though dispensationally God's dealings were with the Israelites, yet His heart went out to all, and was typical of the present day of Christianity when the gospel goes out world-wide to the Gentiles.

The Epistle of James is the only epistle in the New Testament that is addressed to the Jews. Every other book is addressed to Christians. Here we have one addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.

It has been pointed out that, when the Holy Spirit formed the church on the great day of Pentecost, the disciples spoke with tongues, and "every man heard them speak in their own language" (Acts 2. 6). The church was *universalized*. Judaism was for one nation, though the lessons to be learned were universal. The law was given to Israel, "that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3. 19). The whole history of the Old Testament after the flood circles round Abraham and his descendents—Israelites—save the one exception we have named, and perhaps the Book of Job. The history of the New Testament reached to Athens, Corinth, Rome, in fact the gospel went out freely to the Gentiles. Paul knew this to his cost, for he was persecuted by the Jews with bitterness because he put the Gentiles on the same footing as the Jews for the blessing of God.

"*The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*" This statement has, then, a bearing both for the Jew and the church. The blessing of the Jew will never come till the Lord comes. Their only hope lies in the coming of their Messiah. "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Zech. 12. 10).

But we would consider the verse from the Christian standpoint. The coming of the Lord is calculated to have a great effect upon the lives of the Christians. It connects them with a heavenly hope, for when the Lord comes He will take His church to heavenly glory. It has a purifying effect. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John 3. 3). Held in power in the soul it has a detaching influence as far as this world is concerned. With this hope burning brightly in their hearts believers will not be settling down in this world. Things in this world will be held lightly. First things will be surely first in our estimation.

We shall use the world and not abuse it. In other words, we shall be thankful for the mercies of this life, but we shall not allow ourselves to be absorbed by them, but use them, whilst our chief concern will be the interests of Christ in this world.

Our tendency, alas! is to settle down in this world. We need to be alive to this hope. Its glad realization may occur at any moment. It was never so near as at this moment when the reader's eye is scanning these lines. We hear Him saying, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22. 20). We can respond gladly and heartily, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE TIMES OF JEREMIAH.

The following paper was written over seventy years ago and published in "The Present Testimony," a much used religious periodical of those days. If it was a word in season at that time, how much more so in our day when the failure and weakness has so greatly increased among the people of God. It is reprinted in the hope that it will encourage every faithful soul who—in the midst of circumstances of great weakness, in the presence of widespread failure, and in spite of the turning aside of many—is seeking to walk humbly in the path of separation, and follow righteousness, faith, love and peace. Many such, like Jeremiah, can look back to brighter days among the people of God, and, in contrast with those times, bemoan the conditions in which we find ourselves to-day. Such exercises, unless taken to the Lord, may engender a feeling of disappointment which may expose us to the danger of giving up the conflict and seeking to escape from exercise by turning aside to some easier path either in a wider, or narrower fellowship, than that which is marked out for us in the Word of God. In such circumstances shall we not find in the history of the Prophet Jeremiah—the conditions in which he laboured, the spirit in which he acted, and the exercises he passed through—rich instruction for our day and encouragement to look up, hold fast, and press on?—H.S.

"THE ministrations of the prophets, in the varied exigencies of Israel, unfolds the grace and forbearance of the living God. The periods at which God raised them up, and the consequent character of their service, make the history of each very interesting; but of all the times during which the prophets prophesied, none are more painfully so than those of Jeremiah.

"It is not in the amount of good done that Jeremiah stands before us as pre-eminent; on the contrary, results of labour are nowhere found so small, perhaps, as from the labours of that prophet. The ministry of Moses was one that told wonderfully on the condition of God's people. He found them under the galling yoke of Pharaoh—he left them within sight of the promised land. Joshua left them in possession. The history of the various deliverers from the days of Samuel, gives us an account of victories obtained. Each one left some footmarks in the track, to say that he had passed that way. So, afterwards, with the prophets. Elijah's and Elisha's days were marked times of God's goodness to an unfaithful people; but if we ask what were the results of Jeremiah's prophecies, we see nothing but desolation and ruin, and, by and by, lose him himself in the great confusion.

"At the same time, we see incessant

service, unwearied faithfulness, so long as there remained a part of the wreck to be faithful to. Others who had gone before, had foretold what the disobedient and rebellious ways of Israel would lead them to, but it was the lot of Jeremiah to be on the ship when it went to pieces. He warned and warned again of the rocks that were ahead; but Israel heeded not. Up to the last moment, he was used of God to press home on their consciences their sad condition—but without avail; and even after the captivity, he remained to guide the wayward remnant of those left in the land, but only to experience the same obstinacy and determination to be ruined on their part.

"The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. Now, this was a period of blessing,—of revival. It was in the eighteenth year that the Passover was kept, of which it was said: 'And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet.' Jeremiah would have his share in that joy. I have often thought how much depends on the start of a Christian; how easily the heart sympathizes with what is around, whether baneful or healthful. To have the lot in early life cast among the fresh provisions of God's house, and mid the energies of His own Spirit, will give advantages to

such a soul which are not the common lot of the church of God. Such were Jeremiah's first days, the days of Josiah—he was cradled in blessing—such, too, as had not been tasted in Israel since the days of Samuel.

“He lamented the days of Josiah. These joys so fresh were of short duration. But there is an intimate connection between the joys of communion and faithful warfare. There will be little of the one without the other. Jeremiah had drunk of the sweet draughts of blessing which had been so richly provided, and he was therefore able to feel the bitterness of that cup which Israel had to drink.

“The last chapter of 2nd Chronicles shows how prominent as a prophet he was. His words were despised, and the result, the casting off for a season of God's people. One of the services of Jeremiah during this period, was to break the fall (if I may so express my thoughts) of Israel. Careful reading will show how carefully the prophet applied himself to the then existing wants of the people; and it is wonderful to see the compassion of God, as exhibited by him. Jonah regretted that God's judgment did not fall on Nineveh—but the solitudes of Jeremiah were those of the tender parent, who would fain prevent the calamity befalling a disobedient child, but failing there, carries still the parent's heart, the parent's tears, to soften the rebellious woes of that child.

“How often do we, in our intercourse with our brethren, act otherwise. If I see wilfulness and disobedience, I warn; I tell the consequences it may be; I press home with diligence those warnings; all are unheeded, the calamity comes, bad, or worse than I foretold: how ready is the heart then to triumph in its own faithfulness, and the poor victim of his own rashness is

left to himself, while in a kind of triumph I tell him, “'Tis all deserved.” The heart of Jeremiah could say: “But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.” Such hearts, such ministry, are needed now.

“It is in the book of this prophet, that we have the history of that part of Israel which was not removed out of the land. Jeremiah's service did not close even when the city was taken, and the wall broken down. The heart that—like this prophet's—is true to God and His people, will always have something to do. The special place he held was to seek to draw the people into repentance, to warn; he was unheeded, and the judgments of God reached home.

“No sooner had the captives been borne away, than quite another field of duty rose before him; and one would have supposed that what had just happened would have made him a welcome guest in the house of the poor deserted Israelites. In chapter 42 we see this new labour that Jeremiah found. The destroying flood had swept away all he had formerly been among, the king, the priests, the princes, the temple, the vessels: the glory of Israel had departed. How often have we seen, that when services have apparently been disowned, the servant retires. When we have been labouring for an object, we find suddenly all dashed from our hands, like a goodly vessel before the world and to ourselves; our labour is in vain, and the heart faints and grows weary. Never was a more complete failure than that that was before the eye of the prophet. His heart alone remained whole amidst it all; he was ready for

fresh service. The remnant muster to him; their confession seems honest, their hearts seem true. 'Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us): that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do' (chap. 42. 2, 3). Jeremiah had had experience of the human heart; ready to act as aforetime, he says, 'whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you.' After ten days the answer was given to the same company (verse 9 to the end of the chapter).

"The leaning of the hearts of the people was towards Egypt. There is something in Egypt, with all its bondage, that the heart naturally clings to. The remnant, wearied with the struggles they had passed through, sought for rest to the flesh. 'Would God we had died in Egypt!' every now and then oozes from the hearts of Israel. There is something in Egypt to attract all our hearts, something that flesh values; and no wonder, when we can say, 'No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread.' This repose of death the Lord keep from us! The disappointed heart is in danger of turning back here. When the people came to Jeremiah, their words were, 'That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing we may do.' God had provision for this time of need. There never was a time when the Lord would not bless them that trust in Him—there never was a place, however desolate or forlorn, where God could not meet His afflicted ones. His word was, 'If ye will still abide in this land, then will

I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up; for I repent me of the evil I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the King of Babylon,' etc. 'And I will show mercies unto you, that He may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.'

"The prophet's words are despised; and notwithstanding the threats if they returned to Egypt, they are soon gone, once more to contend against the judgments of God. Once more Jeremiah finds himself despised. Unable to keep them by promises of blessing, or to deter them from going into Egypt by threats of judgment, the power of unbelief has set in so strongly, that spite of the warnings, Johanan, the son of Koreah, and all the captains of the forces, swept [the people of] the land, and along with the rest Jeremiah himself, into the land of Egypt. But even here we find him with a word from God. The people once back in Egypt, were soon burning incense unto other gods. When once we get into a current, it will carry us far beyond our intentions. This remnant hoped to reach Egypt, that they might no more see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or suffer hunger; but they went into all the idolatry of the people. How often have we seen the same in principle. In all the periods of Israel we shall not find a more hardened state than that into which the remnant sank; see their reply to Jeremiah (chap. 44. 15-19). Here we appear to lose the prophet; and might he not say, 'Surely I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought.'

"I think we may lose blessing, if we do not follow on in the track of God's grace to His people; and if we do, we must keep side by side with Jeremiah. Others had their service away in Babylon. God remembered His own

there but in following with this prophet, we learn the inexhaustible grace there is in God, where there is a heart to trust in Him, while we see, at the same time, the evils of the human heart becoming greater and greater as that grace is put forth.

“What varied scenes did this man of God pass through, from the time when with joy he partook of the pasover in the days of Josiah, till he saw the utter desolation, which he so pathetically describes in his Lamentations—Oh, for hearts like his! ‘Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.’

“As we have before observed, those who beforetime had served their generation by the will of God, saw around them the fruits of their labours. In none of them, however, do we see the same measure of tenderness of heart. God had reserved Jeremiah for his day, and had given him the heart for his work—a heart sorely tried, but one that could weep for Israel’s woes. This

prophet was the expression of God’s heart towards Israel too. “How can I give thee up, Ephraim?” was Jehovah’s language; and his prophet was there as the proof of God’s grace.

“In looking back on the history of the Church of God, we see a constant raising up of one after another to step in to meet the Church’s wants. The Spirit of God acts according to his knowledge of present needs. Sometimes instruments (not marked either for correctness of knowledge, or even purity of walk, I mean when judged by the word as to their associations) have been much used of God. In the latter days of Christendom, I doubt not, but that, however lavish the hand of God may be in giving hearts like those of Jeremiah, to meet the wants of His saints, the apostasy will be so dark, that labour therein, even of the most devoted character, will scarce leave a trace of itself. The nearer we draw to the end, greater will, on the one hand, be the arduousness of service; and on the other, the profitlessness of it, too, to human eye.”

FAITH.

(Continued from page 226.)

Let us then “have faith in God” (Mark 11. 27). The marginal rendering of this verse is most suggestive. It is, “Have the faith of God,” i.e., have the faithfulness of God. It is His faithfulness that calls forth our faith. As Saphir said, “All our spiritual qualities are reflections”; and faith with us, we may surely say, is the reflection of His faithfulness. In presence of such vast and blessed evidences of that faithfulness that are available to us, is not our deplorable and all too prevalent unbelief, positive *sin*? Should we not treat it as seriously by confession and cleansing?

The Christian’s *best* will always be ahead. By faith we look back, look up, and *look on*. Someone has beautifully said that hope is “faith with outstretched wings looking towards the dawn.” The just one lives by faith in the present; and “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the *perfect day*.” That will be the *end of our faith* (1 Pet. 1. 9). All the things “hoped for” of which faith has been the substance, guarantee, the title deeds, and we may add, the foretaste, shall then be realized. Faith and her sister Hope shall be needed no more, and love alone will remain. (A. J. A.)

“ THAT BLESSED HOPE.”

(J. T. MAWSON.)

THAT blessed hope! What is it?

It is not the improvement of the world, for “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3. 13).

It is not the conversion of the world by the gospel, for the Lord Himself asked the question, “When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18. 8). And when He does come back to the earth He will not be welcomed by glad and enraptured multitudes but “all tribes of the earth shall mourn” (Matt. 24. 30), “and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1, 7). He will come to judge, and terror will take hold of the dwellers on the earth because they are not ready.

It is not universal revival of divine life and energy in Christendom, for “the love of many shall wax cold,” and “the time shall come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4. 3), when they shall have the form of godliness but deny the power (2 Tim. 3. 5).

“That blessed hope” is not centred in either the world or the church, it does not draw its inspiration from anything on the earth; it turns the eye to heaven, and amid the encircling gloom below the light of it glows with increasing splendour before the soul. It is centred in Christ—“THE LORD JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE” (1 Tim. 1. 1). It is the hourly expectation of seeing Him and being with Him and like Him. But it is not through death and the grave that we look for this “blessed hope.” Multitudes have travelled that way and they shall as surely triumph in the glad realization of this hope as we that are alive and remain, but it is not through death and the grave that we are told to look

for it. The way of its fulfilment is most definitely and clearly described in 1 Thessalonians 4. 15 to end.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

And these words of the Lord are confirmed to us by a glorious passage in the resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15. 51-57):

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Unless we are prepared to argue that words do not mean what they stand for, we must believe that the moment is coming when the dead in Christ shall

arise, and with them millions of people—the whole of the blood-bought church—will be caught up from the earth, and without dying will meet the Lord in the air to be for ever with Him. They will disappear suddenly and completely from every place, position and pursuit in which the world has known them, to be seen no more until they return with Him to reign over the earth.

That this appears an impossibility to the human comprehension of things, we admit, and we are quite prepared to hear the scoffer contend that the law of gravitation will prevent it. But by the word of the Lord it is revealed to us, and faith lays hold of that and says, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." And what says the Word? "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The shout of the Lord is mightier than the law of gravitation. Notice how this comes out in Philippians 3. 20, 21:

"For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

The power that will bring this marvellous thing to pass is that power by

which He will subdue all things unto Himself, until from His throne to the uttermost bounds of His infinite universe every force in every realm within it obeys His will. The power that was put forth when He rose from the dead, the power that has quickened us and delivered our soul from bondage of sin: this is the power of His working.

We might remark that the law of gravitation is a natural law and controls natural bodies. But we are to be changed, our natural bodies will be transformed by our Lord's mighty power into bodies of glory, like unto His own glorious body, and what law will control them?—not any natural law, but the law of the glory, and that law is that Christ is supreme, and that He will draw up to Himself everything that is of, and like, Himself.

The law of gravitation did not prevent the translation of Enoch; it did not hold Elijah when the time had come for God to take him up; it did not prevent the ascension of our most blessed Lord. How could it? He is the Creator of every law, and the power by which He went up is the power that will catch us up when He descends from heaven with that wonderful shout of triumph and pent-up love for His church. We know not the hour when this shall be, but waiting and watching we should be, we must be, for His last word to us upon the sacred page is, "Surely, I come quickly."

There is a better thing to ask than exemption from sorrow, even grace to bear it rightly.

A man must have gone only a little way on the path of obedience to God's will if he has not found out that He cannot do it, and unless he has found out that there is only one way by which it can be done, and that one way is to go to God and say, "O Lord! I am baffled and beaten, I put the reins into Thy hands. Teach me to do Thy will, do Thou lead me in the paths of righteousness for Thy Name's sake."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Last Days. (Acts 2. 17.)

“As a young believer I should value help on this subject. Does the ‘last days’ referred to in Acts 2. 17, refer to this dispensation as the promise for the Jew, or for the Church?”
—FALKIRK.

THE “last days” in this Scripture are the days of blessing for Israel and not for the church. If you read Joel 2, you will find that the prophecy is in view of the time when the Lord will be in the midst of Israel for their blessing. Then why should Peter quote it on the day of Pentecost, which was, as we know now, the birthday of the church? Because on that day though Israel had rejected their Messiah, they were being given an opportunity of repentance. When they had crucified Him He had prayed that they might be forgiven, and the answer to His prayer, and according to His commission to His disciples (Luke 24), repentance and remission of sins were preached to them by the Holy Ghost through Peter, with these accompanying evidences to which he calls their attention, and these ought to have convinced them that God was drawing near to them afresh according to the prophecy. If they had received Peter’s testimony, the times of refreshing of which Joel and other prophets had spoken, would have come, chapter 3. 19. But they did not receive it. Instead the leaders of the nation

showed the incorrigible hatred of that generation against the Lord by commencing at once the persecution which culminated in the martyrdom of Stephen. It was then that they sent the message after Him saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19. 4). Consequently, the blessing of Israel was postponed, the nation scattered and the city destroyed, and instead of it we have the revelation of the mystery which is the truth of Christ and His body, the church. We learn from Peter’s words that God was showing how ready He was to fulfil His own word to Israel. It was impossible to do this at that time because of their unbelief, and their rejection of the witness of the Holy Ghost to the exaltation of Jesus. Of course, that prophecy and every other one will be fulfilled in due time after the church period is closed, and the nation of Israel are brought through much tribulation to call on the name of the Lord.

The last days of 2 Timothy 3 are the last days of the church period, which days we are in now, and not those of which Peter spoke.

 Jerusalem.

“In our Bible Class the question was asked in relation to these references to Jerusalem. Jerusalem (Isa. 65. 18, 19, and 66. 20). Jerusalem, Heavenly (Heb. 12. 22). Jerusalem (Rev. 3. 12), the City of my God. Jerusalem (Rev. 21. 2), The Holy City, New Jerusalem. Jerusalem (Rev. 21. 10), The Holy Jerusalem. I hope it is quite in keeping and for spiritual help to know the meaning of these different references.”—SOMERTON.

EVERY mention of Jerusalem in the Old Testament is to the earthly city in the land of Canaan, which will be the metropolis of the Messiah’s Kingdom and consequently of the whole earth, when that Kingdom is estab-

lished. Isa. 65. has this millennial age in view and shows us that Jerusalem will no longer be a city of rebellion and oppression (Zeph. 3. 1), and a burdensome stone to all nations (Zech. 12. 3), but a city of joy and gladness and

blessing. Verse 17 is supposed by some to refer to the Eternal State (see Rev. 21. 1), but this is not our thought, we believe it has in view the entirely new character of things that will obtain when the Kingdom of the Lord is established on the earth and His glory fills it, and when guidance and grace will flow from heaven into Jerusalem and through it to all nations.

Heb. 4. 22 is the heavenly city, which is our mother (Gal. 4. 26). The present administration of the grace of God is spoken of in this symbolical way, in contrast to the bondage and terror of the law. It is the grace of God which has delivered us from bondage and made us citizens of a free city.

Rev. 21. 10 shows us the glorified church, the result of the present administration of grace, in relation to the millennial earth. But it will be the

centre and heavenly metropolis not of earth only, but of heaven and earth, for the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it (chapter 22.), and the nations shall walk in the light of it, i.e., it shall radiate wisdom and knowledge for the whole earth, for the glory of God will lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.

The early part of this chapter (verses 1 to 8), describe the Eternal State, when time will have ceased to be, and when the Son shall have delivered up His Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15. 24-28). And here the church, as the new Jerusalem, is not shown in its administrative capacity, for meditorial government will have ceased when God dwells with men, but it is shown in its eternal suitability to Christ, as a bride adorned for her husband. The unfading beauty and eternal affection and fidelity of the church to Christ is thus described.

The Church and the Churches.

"I notice that 'Scripture Truth' has more to say about the church than the churches (see the churches of Galatia, Gal. 1. 2; the seven churches which are in Asia, Rev. 2., etc.). Explain why."—CANADA.

IT would be a great mistake if we in any way lost sight of the importance either of the truth of the church in its indivisible oneness, or as it applies to the local churches, or assemblies, as the word should really be. The local churches can only act aright as they act in the truth of the one church.

The first time the church is mentioned in Scripture is in Matthew 16. where, in response to Peter's confession of the Lord, He answered, "Upon this rock will I build My church." The building began at Pentecost, and has continued ever since, and every one—no matter where—who has believed the gospel of our salvation, and been sealed by the Holy Ghost, has been added to

that indestructible structure, the one church, the body of Christ. But as the work spread out from Jerusalem to other centres, and churches were established in every city to which the gospel was carried, the bounds of the one church were extended, and of course those who believed could no longer all come together in one place, yet they did not come together as being separate or independent churches but as being one with those who were in Christ before them. The separation was purely geographical, and not of the heart, mind or purpose; the truth that there is one body and one Spirit, and one hope of your calling, remained the same.

The church is not made up of a federation of local churches, but the churches are a local expression of the one church, hence the churches are not a number of independent bodies but are part of an indivisible whole, and their constitution and character should be moulded and governed by the truth of the whole church. Christ is the Head and Director of the church, which is His body, and the Holy Ghost is the medium and power by which His mind is made known to us and carried out, as it is revealed in the Scriptures. If the churches had always been subject to Him, as the Head of the church, in their local responsibility, all would have moved on together and the oneness of the church would have been a visible thing. It is here where the widespread failure has come in. The responsibility to be faithful to Christ as His witnesses, wherever they are, rests with the local churches, as

Rev. 2. and 3. shows, and while the spiritual intelligence and circumstances may not be the same in any two churches, and this is not overlooked by the Lord in His scrutiny of them, yet His word to each one is for all, and His commandments (1 Cor. 14. 37) are for all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord (ch. 1. 2.).

We do not know of any company of Christians in any place that can rightly claim to be the church of God, for this to be true it would have to be composed of all the Christians in it. Yet it is possible for even "two or three" to meet together according to the whole truth as to Christ and His church, and to walk in it. This would involve the exclusion of evil as indicated in the Word and the recognition and reception of all who carry Scriptural qualifications for fellowship.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE love that seeks to bless us desires, as all love does, that it should be known for what it is, that it should be recognized in our glad hearts, and smiled back again from our brightened faces. God desires that we should know Him, and such knowledge is eternal life; He desires that knowing Him we should love Him, and indeed when we do know Him we can do no other; and that loving Him, we should praise Him and in doing this we should glorify Him.

But why should our praise glorify Him? The answer is easy enough.

If we praise Him it is proof that He has enlightened us, delivered us, blest us; that He has done great things for us and made us glad. Our praise does but proclaim the fact that our God is great in His mercy, wonderful in His grace, and that His grace has called forth gratitude from us.

God desires that there should be an interchange of love, love bestowed, love received; the fire descending and the sweet incense ascending from grateful hearts, going up in acceptable clouds unto God.

Ye who look for so much in another world may well be content with little in this. Nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than an earthly heart.

The nearer we reach heaven in *hope*, the farther we recede from earth in *desire*

THE BELOVED.

(J. T. MAWSON.)

An Address on the Epistle of Jude.

The "Beloved" are the precious wheat among the tares, the sons of God in the midst of a perverse generation. Let no one imagine that they are few in number. They are a great host. It is probable that there are more on earth to-day than ever before, for the Holy Ghost has not been weakened in His work by the work of the enemy. Let us give thanks for that.

JUDE tells us in his short letter that he was **THE BROTHER OF JAMES**, and this appears to stand next in importance to the fact that he was the bondman of Jesus Christ. He is the only New Testament writer that makes any reference to a blood relationship in introducing himself and his letter to his readers. There must be some reason for this, let us see if we can discover it. This James was a stern and watchful man, an austere man, who would not tolerate anything that fell short of his standard. He was a second Nehemiah, who, when some of the priests married wives of Ashdod and Ammon and Moab, was very angry, and "contended with them and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair," and "chased them out of his presence." Yet in spite of this zeal of his he was unable to keep Tobiah, the enemy of the Lord, out of the house of God; he had crept in unawares and established himself in that house, much to Nehemiah's surprise and grief. And James was no less zealous for the name of God and no less angry with those who made friends with the world and otherwise misbehaved themselves, as his epistle shows, and yet his brother Jude is compelled to declare the fact that into the Christian circle, the house of God, ungodly men had crept without being recognized. Something had to be said about this, and the truth had to be ministered that could meet this strategic move of the devil. Hence we have Jude's epistle, which seems to stand as a supplementary epistle, a second epistle of James.

Now we are not wiser or stronger than Nehemiah or James; we cannot cast the evil out of Christendom, and efforts to grapple with it are not successful. It is in whether we will or not, and it will certainly run its course to its foreordained end as Jude tells us. We can neither arrest its course nor change its character. Let this sad fact sink into our minds, men have crept unawares into the Christian circle and have brought with them their pernicious doctrines and practices. We shall not be able to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God if we forget this. Yet it must not be the dominant factor with us. The great question is, Is there any good remaining? and if so, let us follow that.

Christendom professes to follow the One who is holy and true, and yet within it there are these ungodly men who **TURN THE GRACE OF GOD INTO LASCIVIOUSNESS**, and deny the only Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, for so the 4th verse should read. They are saying "God is so good, we need have no fear, there is no judgment to come, and we can do as we please, it does not matter." Of course, those who talk like that, deny they have a master at all—they are out to do their own wills, and judge for themselves what is right and what is wrong. They may profess still to acknowledge the name of Christ, but in works they deny Him, and His commandments are of no account to them.

If Jesus is the one Master and Lord, when He speaks we must hear and

obey, we have no option, we are disobedient and rebellious if we do any other, but these ungodly men care nothing about His words; they prefer their own notions and do as they please, and claim that nobody has anything at all to do with it. They have no master but self, they are the captains of their souls. This is the spirit of the day and what will the end of it be?

I ask you to carefully read the whole epistle; it is a true description of the state of things which has resulted from the incoming of these ungodly men. It shows us the state of corruption, godlessness and apostasy that is developing in Christendom, and it shows us what the end of it will be.

It is very remarkable that Jude should quote from Enoch, the first prophet that ever prophesied, and the burden of his prophecy was that "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly." A long time ago it is since Enoch uttered this prophecy, six thousand years have elapsed since then, and the ungodly still vaunt themselves, and the tides of evil rise higher and the scoffers are saying, "WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING?" We must expect them to ask that question and to see them grow bolder in their sins because that coming is delayed. They do not understand that our God is long-suffering, and not willing that any should perish; they do not understand His infinite patience, or the immeasurable pity of His heart. They take advantage of His grace and turn it into lasciviousness. But the Lord is coming and He is coming to judge. Then will these ungodly sinners who have thought they could do as they pleased in the Christian circle, and who have pastured themselves there without fear, be brought to book, and their ungodly

careers will be brought to a sudden end by the righteous judgment of God.

But my purpose is to ask the question, "Is there not anything good in the midst of all this evil?" And if there is, it shall be my theme. Shall the tide of evil sweep everything before it, and is there nothing but judgment ahead?

It is wonderful to see that in this epistle in which Jude paints the picture of the growing apostasy in such dark colours, there are some who are four times addressed as "beloved." And in this we see the great contrast between Old Testament times and those in which we live. Nehemiah had no brother as James had to write about the "beloved" as a set-off to the evil that had grieved him so sorely. Like the great Elijah, he was a solitary man, and knew not the blessedness of a fellowship in the love of God. And so he finished his book, the last historical book of the Old Testament, with a prayer for himself alone, "Remember ME, O my God for good," were the last words that he left on record. While we learn the lessons which the Old Testament has to teach us, dear brethren, let us not live in the Old Testament but in the New, lest we become solitary men like Elijah and Nehemiah. In the New, in spite of all the evil that may abound, we see the triumph of God's purposes for His "beloved," and these may know the joy of the love that rests upon them in fellowship one with another.

These beloved are the precious wheat amid the pernicious tares, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And let no one imagine that they are few in number, they are a great host. It is probable that there are more of them to-day on earth than ever before, the Holy Ghost has not abandoned His

great work nor even been hindered in it all by the work of the devil. In this let us rejoice.

As we centre our thoughts on this side of the epistle, it takes on an entirely new character; just as great masters, Rembrandt for instance, painted their finest pictures against black backgrounds that their beauty might be enhanced by the contrast, so Jude in this short epistle rejoices our hearts as he shows us the beauty of God's work in contrast to the devil's. We begin with "beloved by God the Father," for so the first verse should read. Consider this, my Christian hearers, the same endearing epithet by which He addressed His Son when He was here on earth is given to you. It was an evil day in which Jesus lived, gross darkness covered the people, but in the midst of it all He walked in the perfection of His grace, and the Father looked from heaven upon Him and said, "This is My beloved Son." The evil that surged all around Him did not prevent the beloved Son from enjoying the Father's love, nor can all the evil of this present day prevent the "beloved" from enjoying that self-same love.

Let the wonder of this fill the mind. Is it not amazing that this is the name by which you are called no less than four times in this short epistle! We may well ask how do we know this, how has this love been shown to us? And for answer, our minds are carried back to the 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel and we read afresh and with renewed interest the story of the prodigal. We see the sinner in his distress and destitution in the far country; we see him, driven by his hunger, decide to return to his father's house of plenty, and to our astonishment we see that no sooner does he turn than his father's arms are about his neck

and he is covered with kisses. What a surprise that must have been to that prodigal! One thought must have filled his heart, driving out all others, MY FATHER LOVES ME, and his love is an unmerited love; it cannot be because of what I have been or am, it must be because of what he is himself.

It is a wonderful story, not told by an angel from heaven, or by Peter or by Paul, but by the Son of God Himself, and in it He described the way in which God receives a repentant sinner. Who but He could have told that story? and when He told it, He told the truth, the plain, simple truth. He described for us the way that God receives those who return to Him; the way He received you when you turned to Him. He says to us, "Behold, the manner of the Father's love." It may be you did not just realize the blessedness of the reception He gave you at the time, it may be that you have not yet realized it. Oh, enter into it now! When you were yet a great way off, He saw you, *for the eyes of love are keen*, and He was moved with compassion, *for the heart of love is tender*, and He ran, *for the feet of love are fleet*.

"Yes, a great way off He saw you,
Ran to kiss you as you came.
As you were your Father loved you,
Loved you in your sin and shame."

The youngest as well as the oldest is beloved by God the Father. You do not need to grow great in the service of the Lord to be beloved by Him. The babes in His family are loved with the same changeless, eternal love wherewith He loves His Son.

But suppose there had been an interval between the turning of the prodigal and his reception by the father, and suppose somebody had met him and said, "Are you going back to your father's house, and do you expect to get inside? Don't you know that your father has got a very

high standard for his house, and that everything that goes into it must be suitable to it, and you—look at you! those clothes you are wearing are filthy, what are you going to do about it?" That would be a very serious problem for the prodigal. What could he do about those rags, so filthy, and himself so unfit for his father's house? But the father solved that difficulty without delay when he said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." And when the prodigal went into the father's house, there was nothing better there, for he was dressed in the best, and there is nothing better than the best. He went into his father's house clothed in the best robe. How splendid was that boy as he crossed the threshold, dressed in the best that the father himself could provide, and what servant in the house could say he was not fit to be there? The father had satisfied himself in adorning him according to his own thoughts and for his own company, and that was enough. Have we understood the story? It is thus that we have been treated—by the Father.

"From the riches of His glory
Brought He costliest raiment forth,

Put them on me—robes of glory,
Spotless as the heavens above.
Not to meet my thoughts of fitness,
But His wondrous thoughts of love."

Here is set forth in the parable our being "in Christ Jesus." May we all understand what that means. The Scripture says of those who have believed, that they are "IN CHRIST JESUS," and when it comes to the question of their acceptance, He is not spoken of as Christ Jesus merely, but as "the Beloved" (Eph. 1.), and here we see the love of our God pass from the love of compassion to the love of complacency—we are loved in the Beloved, and for His sake. We stand in the presence of God our Father in

all the fair, spotless beauty of His beloved Son, we are preserved in Christ Jesus. But let no one suppose that Christ has become a cover for our filthiness and sin, that the best robe has merely covered our rags. It is not so; all that we were as ragged, filthy sinners met its just condemnation at the cross when Christ died for us. Our sins, our guilt and all we were was there condemned, when "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" before God, and in faith we have stepped out of the old condition, in Adam, and are now in Christ, and the Spirit has been given to us that we might rejoice in it evermore. While we accept the fact by faith, it is only by the Spirit that we can know it experimentally.

Oh, my friends, if we see this we shall confess that we have been greatly blessed. "Beloved by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ."

When the prodigal started off to the far country, he must have been very well to do, but he soon spent all and wasted everything that he possessed in his pursuit of pleasure, and got nothing in return, but when he came back to his father he came back to something that he could not spend. He was enriched by his father's unsought love, and that could never be spent, he could not exhaust that. He had come back to boundless munificence, to infinite wealth. He came back seeking bread, he found his father's heart. We were prodigals: our necessities brought us to God. He met us with the munificence of His love. We have been enriched—we cannot exhaust the Father's love; it exceeds all our needs, it is eternal, fathomless, changeless. The love that rests upon the beloved Son is the love that rests upon us, and not only does His love rest upon us,

but His desire is that it might be in us, for the Lord closes His prayer to the Father in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, by asking that His love might be *in* us, that it might be our enjoyed portion, that we might know in the deep experience of our souls that the Father loves us.

I have no doubt also that when the boy started off on his travels he fitted himself up with a good wardrobe, the best tailors in the place would be set to work, and his clothes, made according to his own notions, were as good as he could get, but they were soon worn out in the far country. He came back in rags, but now he had a garment that could not wear out, that could not be spotted. At least such a garment is typified in the best robe that has been given to us, for "Christ is made unto us righteousness." He was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. We have a robe that can never be spotted, and we are accepted in Him who is the Beloved, and we are preserved in Him, for there is no condemnation for those that are in Him.

What evil could reach us there in Him who is beyond death and judgment? There surely is everlasting preservation. I pray God that we may understand what it means to be "in Christ Jesus."

The Christian life is not one of leisure and ease, **THE "BELOVED" MUST BE ON THE ALERT**, they have been called to contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. But they go forth to the conflict from this most blessed base, and this is their safe retreat when tried and tested by the conflict. Here they may rest and find their hearts' true portion in the Father's love, and it is this that will preserve them from being swept away by the waves of

evil that roll around. Indeed none are fit for the conflict, or able to move through the abounding evil for the glory of God, but those who know that they are loved by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus.

The beloved by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus, are also called to a great destiny, and we might well expect this. How could grace that began with the Father's kiss have any mean end in store for us? The epistle shows what this destiny is. It says, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless in the presence of His glory with the exceeding joy." **A GLORIOUS DAY IS COMING**, we are to be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory, and He is going to do it with exceeding joy. You might say, "I do not feel very blameless now, I find a great deal of fault in myself every day." No doubt that is true, but all that belongs to you as you are as having the flesh in you, and that flesh really is not part of you as a child of God, and the day is coming when everything of the flesh will be dropped, and we shall be there in that glory entirely and altogether according to what we are in Christ. There will not be a spot in us then, we shall stand there without blame, and God will exult in the grace that brought us there.

We must turn again to the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel. There the Father said, "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." So they began to be merry. There was joy in heaven when you turned to God, but that was only the beginning; what will the end be? When you came to Jesus, God celebrated in the presence of the angels the grace that saved you. But when

He has brought you and all the beloved to the great destiny that His love has purposed for you, He will not only celebrate the grace that has saved you, but the grace that has kept and the grace that has glorified you. What a celebration it will be!

We do not wonder that Jude speaks of Him as **THE ONLY WISE GOD**, for only the wisdom of God could have accomplished this. Could the wisdom of man have taken up such as we are and put us at last in that glory, made as meet for that glory even as Christ is? No, none but God could do this, and Jude is right when he speaks of Him as the only wise God. His wisdom has become the servant of His love and He has found a way by which we may be in His own home as His own sons, and that way is Jesus. Once in the manger, once on the cross, once in the tomb, but now risen again from the dead, and in the glory, Jesus is God's wisdom and way, and it is through Him that He has carried out the plan of His love. He owes it to Him, and we owe it to Him. Because He owes it to Him He is going to put the brightest crowns in the universe upon His sacred brow, and because we owe it to Him we are going to cast our crowns before Him. He is the centre of the Father's thoughts, He is the centre of our adoration and praise.

Now the question arises, What about the in-between? Very important is the in-between. Our salvation at the beginning was all grace and our translation at the end will be all grace, but in the interval there is grace also. There is more. In other epistles mercy and peace, and grace, are desired for the saints or servants of God, but in this one *love* also must be multiplied. It is the daily, hourly income of the beloved, **IT IS MORE THAN AN UNTAXED INCOME**, as grace for

timely help might be, it is the very state in which they are set. Love, as well as mercy and grace, must contribute to their maintenance as the beloved.

The whole spiritual income of the beloved and surroundings in which we are set in relation to God our Father and one another are adequate, but there is our responsibility also, and now we come to that. "*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.*" Here is something for us to do. It is most blessed to talk about what God has done and what He will do, but we must consider what we are to do. We are to build up ourselves on our most holy faith.

Again we are carried back to the Gospels, and we remember how the Lord spoke of the man who built his house upon the sand, and the one who built his house upon the rock. These apostates in this epistle who are turning away from the truth and from Christ, these successors to Cain and Balaam and Core, are building on the sand, they are building in their self-will upon their own speculations and hypotheses, upon what they think is right, and what pleases them, and they have got no foundation. They are raising their superstructure upon the sand, and they are finding no place in their building for Christ, the chief corner stone. The Lord is coming to judge, and the first blast of that righteous judgment will sweep away the edifice in which they have boasted and they will be left without a shelter in that day when every man's work shall be tested.

THANK GOD, WE ARE NOT BUILDING ON THE SAND. "*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith,*" that is the rock. We may well thank God for the rock. What would you feel like, my Christian hearer, if your feet were on the shifting

sand? Just for a moment, imagine what it would mean to you to be cast back into the former life that you lived before you knew the Saviour; the very thought of it makes you shudder. Your feet have been taken off the shifting sand and fixed upon the rock, blessed foundation—you have to build up yourselves upon the rock where grace has set you. That is the beginning—the rock is beneath your feet—build up yourselves there. You will have to read the Scriptures if you are to do that, you cannot build yourselves on your most holy faith if you neglect the Scriptures. In the Scriptures God Himself speaks to us, He reveals Himself, makes known to us what His grace is, His wisdom, His righteousness, He reveals Christ in all His glories, and that is the material that builds up and develops the soul. But I want to emphasize the fact that it is yourselves and not yourself. The “beloved” are indispensable to each other. If you forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, you will fail in this. If you do not allow your affections to flow out to all whom God loves, you will fail in this. Each must look to his own soul first, of course, but none must say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“Praying in the Holy Ghost”—and of course we cannot do that if we walk in the flesh.—“Praying in the Holy Ghost” is a great privilege. If we pray in the Spirit we shall be praying according to the will of God. It is by God’s communications to us in His Word that we build up our souls and in praying in the Holy Ghost we communicate with God. The Father speaks to us in His Word, and we speak to Him by prayer in the Spirit.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God”—the rock beneath your feet,

and the sun shining above your head. Keep yourselves there. Where else would you like to be, dear Christian, but in the love of God? You say, That is the place for me exactly; I want no other place than that. Yet there is such a thing, of course, as losing the sense of it. You may allow your heart and mind to wander after vain things, or you may become overcharged with care as though God did not love you. There is such a thing as a cloud covering the soul, but if the clouds gather over the soul they are not over the love of God, and:

“Still sweet ’tis to discover,
When clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover,
To me as ere Thou art bright.”

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” I have the very best of news for you, dear people, the very best of news. I could not bring any better news to you than this that I have to tell you: **JESUS IS COMING.** Rejoice and be glad, our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. And when He comes it will be His crowning mercy to us.

And here I believe we see why Jude quoted from Enoch, and not from Isaiah or Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. All spoke of the Lord’s coming, but Jude passes them all by and goes right back to Enoch. Enoch was the one who was translated to heaven without dying; he was in this a type of the church, that is to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming. Now the man who looked for translation without dying had to bear witness to the world of judgment to come. He was to be taken out before the judgment came, but his witness was that “the Lord cometh to execute judgment.” And those who are expecting to hear the Lord’s assembling shout that shall translate them to the glory, have a

witness to bear to the world meanwhile, and it is this, "The Lord cometh to execute judgment"; and that when the church is gone this judgment will fall.

IT IS VERY SIGNIFICANT that when Peter preached to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, in Acts 10. (the first sermon that was ever preached to Gentiles, and given to us by inspiration of the Spirit) he said, "He hath commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be Judge of quick and dead." And when Paul spoke to the Gentiles at Athens, as recorded for us in Acts 17., he said, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." These sermons, the only sermons, as far as I know, recorded for us in the Acts as having been preached to Gentiles, put judgment to come in the forefront of the preaching. But in what sort of spirit must we preach it? Two brothers met on Monday morning, and one said to the other, "I was giving them the judgment last night." Said the other, "I hope you did it with tears." And so we read here, "Of some have compassion, making a difference." Oh, Christians, how do you feel about that? How hard we get, how little compassion we feel for the perishing! The God who will judge, because He must in righteousness, is a God of compassion and willeth not the death of any, and HE IS LOOKING FOR VESSELS into which He can pour His own compassions that they may overflow in compassion to others.

I am ashamed of myself as I read

this word and feel how little compassion there is in my heart for the lost, how little I am like our only Master, whose eyes ran down with tears because men would not come unto Him that they might have life. I chide myself because I am so contented with my own blessing and so little concerned about the souls of men and women in this doomed world.

We who are saved are to be saviours of others, "*snatching them out of the fire.*" And to do this we must go where they are. The figure is surely that of the angels dragging Lot out of Sodom, they could not have done it if they had not gone where he was. Yet nobody in that filthy city would mistake those angels for Sodomites, they were distinct and separate from the ways of that city, and there only to do the will of God. May we be in the world as they were in Sodom. There are *three* qualities needed if we are to save men out of the pollutions of the world. We must have **COMPASSION**; we shall not seek them at all if this is lacking, compassion for men in their miseries. We must have **FEAR** of that which has caused the miseries, which is sin. We must have **HATRED** of the pollution of sin lest thinking little of it we be drawn into it. Let us not waste our time in endeavours to clean up the world system. It cannot be done. No more than could Sodom be cleansed. The world is ripening for judgment. The Lord cometh to judge. Our business is to snatch men out of the doomed place. May God show us how to do it. And to Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and for ever. Amen.

"Thanks be unto God, for His unspeakable gift."

THE LORD'S DESIRE.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me."—Rev. 3. 20.

WHAT a wonderful thing is this—the knocking and the voice. The knocking may be in many ways; it must be something that arrests the attention. It may be by the Word of God, it may be a sudden sorrow, sickness, fear, but if *the voice* is heard and it is realized that it is the Lord seeking company, the true and changeless Lover at the door, it makes all the difference. It is individual; I for myself may open the door and say to the Lord, "Come in." It is more than reading about Him, talking about Him, hearing about Him, it is personal company with Him and communion. "I will sup with him." Am I prepared to receive

Him? is the question. How strong is the Lord's desire to be received. Oh, for a fuller response in the hearts of those He loves so well. "*I will sup with him,*" means I will be his guest and commune with him about himself, his joys and sorrows, fears and needs. And then "*he with Me.*" "I will awaken an interest in his heart about My things and he shall commune with Me about those things that are near to My heart." What an unspeakable privilege is set before us, and this personal intercourse with the Lord is the one antidote to the prevailing Laodicean condition, and without it none can be an overcomer.

"NEITHER DEATH."

"I am persuaded that neither death nor life can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Romans 8.

HOW beautifully this thought contrasts with the saddest aspect of the power of death in our human experience! He is Death the Separater, who unclasps our hands from the closest, dearest grasp, and divides asunder joints and marrow, and parts soul and body, and withdraws us from all our habitude and associations and occupations, and loosens every bond of society and concord, and hales us away

into a lonely land. But there is one bond which his "abhorred shears" cannot cut. Their edge is turned on IT. One Hand holds us in a grasp which the fleshless fingers of Death in vain strive to loosen. The separater becomes the uniter; he rends us apart from the world that he may bring us into the very home of our God. The love filtered by drops on us in life is poured upon us in a flood in death.

"HOLD THOU ME UP."

"Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."—Psalm 119. 117.

DO not spoil the chime of these morning bells by ringing only half a peal. Do not say, "Hold Thou me up" and stop there, or add, "But still I shall stumble and fall as usual." Finish the peal of God's own music, the bright words of faith that He puts into your mouth—"Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe"; for He "is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." HE IS ABLE.

THE OPEN SECRET.

(A. J. ATKINS.)

God and the Lamb shall there
 The light and temple be,
 And radiant hosts forever share !
 The *unveiled mystery*.

J. N. D.

WHAT is this mystery that the long and weary centuries have waited to see unveiled? that philosophers and scientists are always vainly endeavouring to penetrate, but which still baffles all their search; the mystery that will answer the questions—Whence are all things, and why, and whither? Is there one will and one purpose at the back of all the majestic order and beauty of creation? Is there some design that will explain and resolve all the deep and dark problems of human life and history? Man's fruitless search to solve the riddle continues.

But what man cannot discover, God can reveal; and we believers rejoice in the knowledge that He has done so. To us the mystery has been disclosed. To us the secret is an "open" one, while we still wait with all creation to see and share its great unveiling.

Divine revelation, and therefore all true thinking, starts with God. "In the beginning *God*." And now that revelation has reached its finality in Christ, the wondrous and soul-moving fact is declared that "God is love" (1 John 4. 8). "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." This blessed fact has come to light then, by the appearing of Christ; but it is a fact that never began to be, for love is what God is; it is the divine nature itself. And this means that that past eternity was no frigid void; love was there. The fact that God is love demands the truth of the Trinity, for love must have some object. We may be sure that the Unitarian God is not only foreign to Scripture, but impossible to thought.

Scripture unveils to us a holy circle of love within the very being of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwelling in ineffable reciprocal relations of fellowship and love within that sacred unity.

When heaven and earth were yet unmade,
 When time was yet unknown,
 Thou in Thy bliss and majesty,
 Didst live and love alone.

Our wonder and adoration should be inspired by the consideration that God, thus supremely blessed in Himself, moved to *create*. The reason is given us: "For Thy pleasure they were and are created." That is to say, it was for the pleasure of His love; and when He said in creative counsel, "Let us make man," it was because He would have objects on whom He could lavish His love, and who should respond freely and intelligently to it. It is the nature of love to yearn for response; and so we learn that while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, He—the eternal Wisdom—rejoiced in the habitable part of His earth, and His delights were with the sons of men. Yes, even then, long before the world was made, the God who is love was busy devising our salvation and blessing. (Prov. 8.; 1 Peter 1. 20; Eph. 1. 3.)

Descending now in thought into time and human history, we are soon—tragically soon—confronted with the awful fact of sin, and we stand aghast at the havoc it works. We grope about in the shadows it has created and vainly seek to solve the problems it has raised. But let us pass on through long ages of sin and death and of mingled

judgment and mercy, and at the centre and climax of the ages, in "the end of the world," we find—a cross, and upon it the Son of God! As we gaze upon this spectacle our hearts are melted to read in clear and certain light there, where "sin abounded," the same truth that reaches back into the eternal past, that *God is love*. Well may we sing:—

"Inscribed upon the cross we see,
In shining letters, God is love."

Here in the cross of Jesus is love's majestic and yet mysterious *demonstration*. What blessed assurance of heart it is to look there!

And what is the *end* to be? Such a Source, such age-long times of preparation, such a marvellous means as Calvary, morally demand a goal and glory commensurate. Praise God, Scripture does reveal such a goal, and towards it the whole creation moves. It is that "*God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15. 28). This means that every enemy shall be destroyed, all vestige of sin removed, all things reconciled, brought into order and harmony, and unified in Christ. It means a scene where righteousness will dwell, and where love—the love of God—will pervade all and hold all together!* Surely a consummation worthy of God! This is the "open secret"—the love of God the Source of all—the Centre of all—the End of all. For "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11. 36.)

Now in the present time God is calling out and preparing the vessels of His mercy who are the firstfruits of that new creation. They are the special objects of His love. He is

demonstrating in them now that there is no power so mighty as His holy love, that in spite of all appearances it is greater than sin and sin's consequences. He is revealing its *sovereignty*—for there is no motive for it but itself; its *supremacy*—for none can stay its course; its *suffering*—for who can know the depths of Calvary? and its *sublimity*—for it is the theme of the redeemed universe. A company of those who receive His love, who respond to it, and who reflect it, is the pledge that sin and death shall not always reign, but that His purposes shall yet be fulfilled. Nor are these few in number who respond to His love. In olden times He spoke of "thousands of them that love Me" (Exod. 20. 6). By now there are millions upon millions of them—most waiting *up there*, the rest watching and working down here.

Now let us study a little more closely the way in which God is bringing His triumph to pass. It is a love-story indeed from first to last! God is love: that is the Fountain and Source. Because He is love, He *loved*. "God so loved"; and that love could not remain pent up in the eternal Bosom, it was active. "God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3. 16). We are not told *when* He gave, but simply that He gave; it was a decision of love. And then, having given Him, He *sent* Him into the world to be the propitiation for our sins, and in order that we might live through Him (1 John 4. 9, 10). And God *commends* His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5. 8). He has raised Him from the dead, and now in Him, risen and reigning in glory, that love rests and is secured to us for ever; the love of God is now *in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8. 39). The "persuasion" of faith is that nothing can separate us from it.

* This, Scripturally considered, does not imply universal restoration in the sense that all sinners shall ultimately be saved. Many Scriptures plainly declare that this is not the case. Compare e.g. Col. 1. 20 and Phil. 2. 10, and read Matt. 25. 41.

Nor is that love only toward us—it comes nearer still. By faith divinely given we can say that “we have *known and believed* the love that God has to us” (1 John 4. 16). And that love is *shed abroad in our hearts* by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us (Rom. 5. 5). But this love is infinite, and our hearts are poor finite things, and therefore there is the still deeper experience of our hearts being *directed into it* (2 Thess. 3. 5). How much do we need to *keep ourselves there* (Jude 21.). The love of God is indeed rightly placed at the *heart* of the Christian benediction, having on the one side the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” that brought it to us, and on the other the “fellowship of the Holy Ghost” that makes it real (2 Cor. 13. 14).

This love must of necessity do a mighty work in the heart and life where it is received. It removes all trace of that guilty fear which hath torment: “He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4. 19). And it delivers from self-will by inspiring the believer to a disposition of obedience: “Whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected” (1 John 2. 5). This love is perfected then, in regard to us, when it reaches its present *end* with us, that is, in producing perfect confidence in God, and perfect obedience to Him. This attitude of confidence and obedience becomes—through the Holy Spirit—the settled habit and disposition of the believer, who comes to *dwell in love*; and “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4. 16). God and love are inseparable, not only in the divine nature, but in the believer’s experience. It is by the divine nature imparted to him he is able to love; and that nature cannot but love.

We may well indeed say with J. N. D.,

“What is greatest is simplest—the perfect love of God.”

This responsive love in us, His own, the fruit of His own grace, is deeply gratifying to His heart. Touching thought that God craves *our* love! And though it all comes from Him, and only of His own do we give Him, yet it is our love, and He values it. He *knows* them that love Him with the intense and intimate knowledge of love (1 Cor. 8. 3). “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2. 9). He orders all things, too, for their good. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8. 28); and for those that love Him He has prepared at the end a crown of life (James 1. 12).

In these last days when “the love of many waxes cold,” when with sad hearts we see many like Demas loving this present world, and becoming lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, let us seek grace to open all the avenues of our being to that wonderful love of His which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So will He obtain the response He desires. J. N. D. has written, “I have been unspeakably happy . . . in the thought of being the object of God’s love. I had been seeking right affections towards Him—all right—but the thought that He loved me filled me with joy and peace.”

Yes, the response to that love will be as the reception of it. “We love because He first loved us.” Of olden time the law demanded a love from the whole man: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart”—the centre and shrine of being; “with all thy soul”—all the noble capacities

of feeling and emotion; "all thy strength"—all the redeemed energies; "and with all thy mind"—with full intelligence. *Shall the grace that gives all produce less?* This love to God is no lazy pastime, no mere sentimental song, but strenuous self-sacrificing service involving the whole man and the whole life, with the cultivation of all He loves and abhorrence of all He hates. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5. 3). The love of God unites the mystical and the practical sides of Christian life as nothing else. It is the very heart of the moral power of Christianity.

Oh! for grace to admit His love more freely into these hearts of ours!

Oh, to walk with an ungrieved Spirit, that its warmth and power may be known better! Oh, to be more willing to accept that love with all its blessed consequences and its mighty claims! Oh, to abandon ourselves with less reserve to its gracious lessons and faithful dealings! Oh, to enjoy better its tender embrace and sweet enfolding! Oh, to feast more upon that love's great consummation! Oh, to sing more truly:

"Thy grace, O God, alone revealed
That wondrous heart of Thine;
We thank Thee and ourselves WE YIELD
TO LOVE DIVINE."

For love divine is the *open secret* explaining all things.

(*To be continued.*)

"I AM PERSUADED, THAT
NEITHER
DEATH, NOR LIFE,
NOR
ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS,
NOR
THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME,
NOR
HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE,
Shall be able to separate us from
THE LOVE OF GOD,
WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD."

"And even now that love can fill my soul—
That love that soars beyond all creature thought."

THE LORD HEARETH ME.

"*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.*"—Psalm^v 34. 6.

THERE is Christ, as most of us, I suppose, believe, Lord of all creatures, administering the affairs of the universe. The steps of His throne and the precincts of His court are thronged with dependents whose eyes wait upon Him, who are fed from His stores; and yet my poor voice may steal through that chorus-shout of petition and praise, and His ear will detect its lowest note, and will separate the thin stream of my prayer from the great sea of supplication which rolls to His seat. HE WILL HEAR ME AND WILL ANSWER ME.—
(*McLaren.*)

CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN.

(H. J. VINE.)

His grace for them now, His glory with them soon.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is wonderful. Those who know it have reason to rejoice for "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2. 11), yet they should not presume upon such inimitable favour on His part, or overlook the honour which is due to Him; for, though He has secured their eternal salvation, made them His co-heirs—members of His body—sons of God—His fellows or companions—calling them *brethren*—it is becoming on their part that they reverently call Him LORD; and where the Holy Spirit leads and teaches this will characterize them, for "No man can say, LORD JESUS, but by the Holy Ghost."

His divine grace brought Him first of all into our circumstances, and it will bring us into His own circumstances of incomparable glory and blessedness. He has passed through sufferings here in all perfectness, and now, enthroned on high, He graciously aids, succours, sympathizes with, and saves to the uttermost, those who are being brought to the glory where He is. The trials are over for Him. We are still beset with them. He is glorified on high. We shall soon be glorified with Him. Meanwhile, His grace is for us on the way. Neither the grace nor the glory can fail. Divine wisdom and love have ordered both.

The grace which brought the Son of God here as a man amongst men is commonly spoken of as "*Incarnation.*" This expression, though well meaning, is not a Scriptural one, and comes short, I believe, of that which the Spirit signifies, when He speaks of the Word—who is God *eternally*—becoming flesh (John 1. 1, 14). That such an One "*became*" flesh is a miracle which

outstrips finite comprehension, and yet it has been so plainly manifested and proven in Him, whose personal distinction was, the only begotten Son with the Father, that those who are taught by the Holy Spirit, worship and adore Him intelligently and affectionately as they contemplate His surpassing grace.

The glory, on the other hand, to which divine favour is bringing the sons of God, is correctly expressed by the Scriptural term "*predestination.*" If the former speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ coming here in lowliness "full of grace and truth," the latter points on to our being brought to Him in the destined glory—"conformed to the image" of God's Son. The former has to do with His being like unto us, in view of our deliverance and sanctification; the latter with our being made like Him in glory. It was for this that God called us according to His purpose; "for whom He did foreknow, He also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8. 29). Christ in grace was like to His brethren here, and His brethren shall be like unto Him in glory there—the "many sons" conformed to the image of the "Son of God!" It is this which *predestination* has to do with. By making it a matter of salvation, instead of the sonship of which the Holy Spirit speaks, hyper-calvinists fall into error and hardness.

"CHRIST'S GRACE."

At the present time "grace upon grace" is ministered to those who receive the gospel of God concerning His Son. If, as we have seen, He became flesh, it necessarily follows,

“grace and truth subsist through Jesus Christ.” It was law by Moses, but Christ is full of grace and truth. Of old Moses spake the words of the law to Israel, and Aaron represented the people before the Lord in the sanctuary. Israel desired of Jehovah at Horeb that they should not again see the great fire, nor hear His voice as at that time ; and He said to Moses, “They have well spoken that which they have spoken. A Prophet will I raise up unto them from among their brethren, LIKE UNTO THEE, and will put My words in His mouth.” God’s word to Moses was fulfilled when the Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us : He fully declared God, speaking the very words of God. Moreover, surpassing the priestly order of Aaron, Jesus is our High Priest after the order of Melchisedek, being both King and Priest, having gone “into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us,” after He had first of all put away sin by His sacrifice. In the presence of the pre-eminence of Christ, we may gladly heed the exhortation of the Spirit, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the APOSTLE and HIGH PRIEST of our confession, JESUS.”

When Jesus had spoken “the words of God” (John 3. 34), and fed the five thousand in a desert place, the men said, “This is truly the Prophet” (6. 14). Again, when some of the crowd heard His gracious invitation to thirsty souls, “Come unto Me and drink,” they said, “Truly this is the Prophet !” Yes, there stood before them the greater than Moses, feeding them with “the bread of life,” giving them “the words of eternal life” (6. 68). “Never man spake like this Man !”

The letter to the Hebrews names Him “THE APOSTLE . . . of our confes-

sion !” and tells us that God has spoken to us “in the SON” or SON-wise. 2 Peter 3. 15 informs us that it was Paul who had such “wisdom” given him to so write to the saved from amongst the nation of Israel, but in the epistle itself Paul leaves the One who is greater than all others before the rejoicing hearts of the saints of God. When we think of the greatness of the One who came to speak of God to men, we marvel not when we are told that they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. Even the exulting singer of Ps. 45. sang sweetly of the divine One, whom he hailed prophetically, saying, “Thou art fairer than the sons of men ; GRACE IS Poured INTO THY LIPS !”

When, however, we meditate upon Him as the “HIGH PRIEST of our confession,” we are at once confronted with the glorious fact that He fulfils that precious function for us as glorified on high ; for, we read, “If He were on earth He should not be a priest” (Heb. 8. 4). The family of Aaron had given to them the earthly priesthood. Christ’s brethren partake of the heavenly calling, as we have seen ; therefore no one less than God’s own Son could fittingly fill such a place for them. It might truly be said, only He could becomingly be High Priest before God ; but how gracious and how wonderful and how cheering is the truth conveyed to us by the words, “Such a High Priest BECAME US ! . . . became higher than the heavens” (7. 26). Nor can we happily accustom our hearts to the thought, “became us,” until we gratefully lay hold of the stable fact that we have been called “in Christ’s grace,” not only to salvation, but to sonship. The many sons who are being brought to glory, He speaks of as brethren ; and it is in the sense of the gracious dignity thus bestowed upon us we may rejoice in

the words, "Such a High Priest became us."

We are to'd also what BECAME GOD in regard to the same One, and those who are His brethren. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings" (Heb. 2. 10, N.T.). Because those who are journeying heavenward know trials and temptations on their way, their Leader passed through all in like manner, apart from sin, and suffered Himself, being tempted. Therefore in perfection He now is able to help those who are tried, for He is exalted on high. What a Leader Jesus is! It *became God* to provide Him in this way! He was truly like unto Moses, as we have seen, but in all things He was like to His brethren. To be made thus here on earth is that which BEHOVED HIM, in view of His becoming on high our High Priest; as it is said, "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made *like to His brethren*" (2. 17). Truly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is wonderful indeed! Because we partake of flesh and blood, He also in like manner took part in the same, that through death He might set us free from the slavish fear of death. By the grace of God He tasted "death for everything," because He is to inherit all things; but, in a special way, He made "propitiation for the sins of the people," and then, purification of sins having been made, He set Himself down on the throne's right hand above. We see in the manner He passed through our circumstances here, what BECAME GOD; and in the grace which brought Him there like His brethren, that which

BEHOVED HIM; while He Himself, Jesus, our High Priest, become higher than the heavens, is the One who BECOMES US. We may well praise the grace which is exceedingly abundant, and rejoice in the love of Him who exercises on our behalf an unchangeable priesthood.

"Within the veil, Thou dost prevail,
Our souls for worship fitting;
Encompassed here with failure,
Thy name alone avails us.
In Thee we trace sustaining grace,
And strength that never fails us."

The very throne upon which He now sits is called "the throne of grace" (4. 16). Grace for seasonable help is to be found by those who boldly approach. And this we may do without misgiving, for what could be more suitable to us in our present need than grace? Israel had a movable "*mercy seat*," we have an established "*throne of grace*." Grace reigns to-day, because the One who was made like to His brethren here is now enthroned there. He reached that place through sorest trials. Help, succour, sympathy and salvation, as we said, are therefore supplied by Him to-day for His own who are going on to the glory. We may sing to Him in truth:—

"Thy tender heart doth take its part
With those Thy grace befriended;
Thy sympathy, how precious!
Thou succourest in sorrow,
And bidst us cheer, while pilgrims here,
And haste the hopeful morrow."

The competency and the grace of Jesus were fully proven here, and He is perfectly able to aid us now that He is glorified there, while He sustains the many sons on their pathway heavenward. He was made like His brethren here—they shall soon be like Him there.

(To be continued.)

It has been said that "prayer is the flight of the lonely soul to the only God."

PARTY SPIRIT.

“Now the works of the flesh are these . . . strifes, contentions, schools of opinion, envyings, murders. . . . Gal. 5. 21 (J. N. D.).

The following comments on Party Spirit are abridged from a paper by the late Dr. Alexander Whyte.

PARTY spirit is the complete destruction both of truth and love. The truth is hateful to the out-and-out thoroughgoing partisan. We all know that in ourselves. When we have, at any time, become abandoned partisans in anything, then farewell to the truth. We will not have it. As many lies as you like, but not the truth! We hate and detest both you and your truth. It exasperates us to hear it. You are henceforth our enemy if you will insist on speaking it. We cast it, and all its organs, out of our doors. We shut our eyes to the truth, and we stop our ears. It is not truth that divides us up into such opposed parties as we see all around us in Church, it is far more lies. It is not principle once in ten times. Nine times out of ten it is pure party spirit. And I cling to that bad spirit, and to all its works, as if it were my life. I feel unhappy when you tell me the truth, if it is good truth, about my rival. I feel the sore pain of concession. I feel as if all my foundations were being taken away from under me. How fierce you always make me when you so rejoice in the truth and go about spreading it! I am a Jew, and I want no dealings with the Samaritans. All I want is to hear that fire has fallen from heaven to consume them. I want to stand aloof all my life from all who differ from me. I do not want to hear what they have to say for their fathers and for themselves. I hate like poison all your proposed fraternizing and unions. I hope that the old walls of separation will hold together all my time.

And where truth is hated in that way love can have no possible home.

Truth is love in the mind, just as love is truth in the heart. Trample on the one, and you crush the other to death. Cherish and be tender with the one, and you will eat the fruits and drink the sweets of the other. Now the full-blown party spirit is utter poison to the spirit of love as well as to the spirit of truth. “Love suffereth long, and is kind: love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.” But party spirit is the clean contradiction of all that. “No assurance,” says Thucydides, “no pledge of either party could gain credit with the other. The most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent, were received not with candour, but with suspicion. No artifice was reckoned dishonourable by which a point could be carried. Every recommendation of moderate measure was reckoned either a mark of cowardice, or insincerity. He only was considered a completely safe man whose violence was blind and boundless: and those who endeavoured to steer a middle course were spared by neither side.” That might have been written yesterday, so true to our own life also is every syllable of it.

By the just and righteous ordination of Almighty God, our sins carry a punishment immediately and inseparably with them. And party spirit, being such a wicked spirit, infallibly inflicts a very swift and a very severe punishment on the man who entertains it. You know yourselves how party spirit hardens your heart, and narrows and imprisons and impoverishes your mind. You must all know how party

spirit poisons your feelings, and fills you with antipathy to men you never saw, as well as to men all around you who have never hurt a hair of your head, and would not if they could.

It humiliates my head to the dust of death, and it breaks my heart before God and before myself every day I live, to discover such stains in my heart against men who have hurt me in nothing but in this—that they have given their great talents and their shining services to another church than my church, and to another party than my party. I cannot meet such men on the streets but they scowl at me, and I at them back again. What a terrible punishment all that is, let him tell us who, before God, is keeping his heart clean of all that. Unless it is casting pearls before swine to attempt to tell us such things. No! Do not attempt to tell such things to us lest we turn again and rend you.

Another divine punishment of party

spirit is seen in the way that it provokes retaliation, and thus reproduces and perpetuates itself till the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate the truth.

Now for the contrast. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law. But they that [are] of Christ have crucified the flesh with the passion and lusts" (Gal. 5. 22-24). And "Love has long patience, is kind, love is not envious of others; love is not insolent and rash, is not puffed up, does not behave itself in an unseemly manner, does not seek what is its own, is not quickly provoked, does not impute evil, does not rejoice at iniquity but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, LOVE NEVER FAILS" (1 Cor. 13., J. N. D.'s N.T.).

"WHEREFORE DID YE DOUBT?"

ONE of Luther's friends visited him to complain of the trials through which he passed and of the way the devil buffeted him. Said Luther to him, "The devil can do that in a masterly way, otherwise he would be no devil. But you come to me, dear friend, and believe that I can surely comfort you through God's Word, and that is good. But if you expect good from me, *what may you not expect from Christ who died for you?* Look up to Him who is ten thousand times better than I."

Luther himself was often tempted and cast down. On one such occasion his good friend Dr. Pommer said, "Our Lord in heaven is looking down and doubtless thinking, 'What shall I do

with this man, Luther? I have poured My mercies upon him and given him many gifts and much grace, and yet he will despair of My goodness.' " Dr. Pommer intended the words to be a rebuke, but they came to Luther as a great and glorious comfort.

So many and great have been the mercies of God to us in the past, that is it right that we should doubt Him now? He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, and will He fail us now? He has carried on His own work from the beginning, we have no need to doubt His ability to still maintain it.

SAMUEL, THE PROPHET. No. 3.

(HAMILTON SMITH.)

The Establishment of the Prophet.

THE nameless man of God, having rendered his testimony, and pronounced the doom of Eli's house, passes from the narrative. Henceforth the Lord will speak more directly through Samuel who is "established to be a prophet of the Lord" (20).

The opening verses of chapter 3. indicate the low condition of the people of God. Ignorance of the mind of the Lord prevailed, for the word of the Lord was rare; the eyes of the priest were dim, and the lamp of God was going out (1-3).

Solemn indeed for the people of God as a whole, or for any company of His people, when there is little ministry from the Lord to feed their souls; when they themselves lack spiritual discernment, and when the testimony to God amongst them is dying out. Such was the condition of Israel in the days of Eli. However, God is not unmindful of His people whatever their condition. Hence we find the Lord begins to act from Himself in sovereign grace, "to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death." We might have thought that, in such a low condition, the people—or the priest on behalf of the people—would have called upon the Lord. It was the Lord, however, who "called Samuel" (4-10).

This is deeply significant, for in the end of the chapter we read "that Samuel was established to be a *prophet* of the Lord." This emphasized the difference between the priest and the prophet. This office of the priest is to draw near to the Lord on behalf of the people, and thus maintain relations with the Lord. The prophet is one through whom the Lord draws

near to the people when relations with the Lord have broken down through the failure of the people. For this reason the prophet comes to the front in a day of ruin.

It is also significant to notice the character of the one that the Lord uses for the prophetic office. He is one who had been devoted to the Lord as a Nazarite (1. 11), and who, again and again, is spoken of as the child. He is separate from the evil against which he testifies, devoted to the interests of the Lord, and, like a child, conscious of his own weakness and lack of wisdom. Thus he is dependent upon the Lord and drawing all his resources from the Lord. Such is the one the Lord uses to reach the consciences of His people.

His call becomes the occasion of emphasizing the lack of spiritual discernment on the part of the priest, for not until the Lord had spoken for the third time does Eli discern the voice of the Lord.

The first message of the Lord (10-14) to Samuel is of intense solemnity. Already Eli had heard the sentence passed upon his house. Now Samuel is prepared for his prophetic office by being definitely told of the judgment coming upon the priest, and the reason of that judgment. All Israel is to be concerned in the judgment that comes upon the priestly family, for what the Lord was about to do will take place "in Israel," and make both the ears of everyone that heareth it tingle. The Lord Himself is about to act. He says, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end."

Moreover we are explicitly told the reason that leads to the Lord's direct dealings with His people. It is solely because they themselves refuse to deal with existing evils. Very evil things had been done amongst the people of God: yet the evil in itself did not call forth the governmental dealing of God. No amount of evil would call forth God's government if the evil is dealt with and judged by the people of God. The Lord intervenes in judgment because the evil was known and not dealt with.

Solemn indeed is the condition of the people of God, if evil arises in their midst, whether against the person of Christ, or disobedience to the principles of God's house, or lapses from the path of moral rectitude, and the evil is known and not restrained.

It may indeed be truly said that Eli did raise some protest; that he judged the course of his sons to be evil; but evidently he took no steps to restrain them. So to-day people may indeed protest that they do not agree with erroneous doctrines, that they regret the course some are taking; but what

avail is such feeble protest if no steps are taken to restrain the evil and those who protest associate, as if all were well, with the wrong-doers?

Samuel exhibits a natural and proper shrinking from imparting this solemn word to the aged Eli, and at the same time faithfulness to the Lord in telling "every whit" of the Lord's message. It is ever right for the younger to show respect to the elder, but neither youth nor age are to stand in the way of faithfulness to the Lord (15-18).

Having answered to the call of the Lord, and faithfully delivered his first message, we learn "the Lord was with him." The solemn word concerning the priest was, "I will perform *against Eli* all things which I have spoken" (12). The Lord was against the priest, He was with the prophet. The Lord being with him none of his words were allowed to "fall to the ground." Inasmuch as his words did not fall to the ground it is made manifest from Dan to Beer-sheba that he is "established to be a prophet of the Lord." To him the Lord appeared, and to him the Lord revealed Himself by the word of the Lord.

HE THAT IS JOINED TO THE LORD.

"*He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.*"—1 Corinthians 6. 17.

HE has joined us to Himself and united us to Himself with a tie so close, so enduring, that no tie on earth can be so close and enduring; and none on earth by the firmest bonds, by the holiest rights or the nearest kinship, could be related to me more truly than I am to Him. Surely I ought to yield myself wholly to Him.

From Him I may and should expect greater things than from the person most devoted to me on earth; because His love to me is to an infinite extent

more fervent than the love of the most tried and steadfast friend, than the love of brother to brother—than any love on earth.

And He knows us, for He is Man. He can enter into every trial through which we pass, whether of spirit, soul, or body. He can rejoice with us when we rejoice and succour us when we mourn, for He rejoiced and mourned and wept when once He trod the path of faith, and when He marked out the way that we should go. With what confidence we may go to Him!

THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD. (J. T. MAWSON.)

WE QUOTE the following sentence from a letter recently received: "*The word of Christ as a living power over the soul seems to be quite lost. You say to a man, the Scripture in such a place says so and so; his attitude is, 'Well, suppose it does, what of that?'*"

Our correspondent was not writing of infidels, or openly godless men, but of Christians, of those who as a matter of doctrine would stoutly maintain that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Is his witness true? If so, herein lies the secret of the widespread spiritual dearth and death that we have to mourn. Is it true? Let our readers answer for themselves, for it is a vital matter. We press it as being the most important question that we could press. **IS IT TRUE THAT THE WORD OF CHRIST AS A LIVING POWER OVER OUR SOULS IS QUITE LOST?**

BY THE SAME POST that brought the letter from which we have quoted, we received a copy of a letter written by the late J. N. Darby, giving an account of the way that the Lord led him when first those truths of Scripture which so greatly affected him and his generation began to be unfolded to his understanding. What impressed us was the place that the Scriptures had in his mind and life. He says, "As a result of great soul exercise, **THE WORD OF GOD BECAME TO ME AN ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY**, I had always recognized it as being the Word of God." And what was the effect of this? "*The three persons in one God, the divinity of Jesus, His atoning work on the cross, His resurrection, His seat at the right hand of God, were truths which, learnt as orthodox doctrines, began to be living realities to my soul. Not only were they truths, but I knew God personally after this manner; I had no other*

God but He who had thus revealed Himself, and I had Him. He was the God of my life, of my worship, the God of my peace, the only true God."

But not only did these as well as other great truths become living realities to him, but he was compelled in subjection to the same Word to test all his association and relationship by its light, so that, what "*was not in accordance with what I read in the Bible concerning the church,*" was judged and departed from by him. We could quote other exceedingly interesting and helpful passages from this letter, but our purpose is to emphasize the authority of the Scriptures as being God's Word to us, and the effect upon the soul and life when there is submission to this authority.

ON LAYING DOWN this very interesting letter we took up a paper written by the same hand about forty years after the exercises described, and we desire to bring to the notice of our readers the following forcible sentences. Speaking of the Scriptures, the Word of God, he says: "That only is the rule and measure of my responsibility, the expression of the authority of God over me. It is direct from God, and God's title is absolute, and embraces my whole being in obedience; He exercises His authority immediately by the Word. . . . My first, immediate, and all-ruling relationship is with God by the Word. It has precedence of all others, and claims absolute and immediate subjection. 'We ought to obey' is the Christian's ensign; but 'We ought to OBEY GOD rather than man' is the absolute claim of God, who has revealed Himself fully, and reveals Himself immediately to us by the Word."

THE IMPORTANCE of this matter cannot be exaggerated; the Scriptures

are the Word of God to men ; the revelation of Himself, the declaration of His will ; His voice speaking in love, with many warnings *and with all authority*. They "cannot be broken," said the Lord. In them we learn the way of salvation ; they are sufficient to thoroughly furnish the man of God ; (2 Tim. 3. 15-17) ; he who will not obey them is no fit company for any Christian (2 Thess. 3. 14) ; and those who wrest them and reject them do so unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3. 16). This word LIVETH and abideth for ever ; it is the sword of the Spirit, quick, powerful ; it is the discernor, or critic, of the thoughts and intents of the heart of man, to be heard and obeyed, and not to be criticized by him. Having such a treasure in our possession lays upon us the solemn responsibility of hearing it and being subject to it, that it may exercise its living power over our souls.

THE TENDENCY IS, when fervency of spirit wanes, and the divine life within grows feeble, to escape the exercise that is necessary in order to know the truth and will of God directly from the Word, and to turn to leaders and accept what they say simply because they say it. This is the easy path, but a most dangerous one, for the ear becomes dull to every other voice but the favourite one, and then the result is often carnal zeal for some special line of teaching or ecclesiastical procedure which may not be wholly according to the Word, and which can be adopted without that soul exercise which subjection to the Word demands, and thus are sects and parties formed.

It is true that the Word exhorts, "Remember your leaders" (Heb. 13. 7), and this we must do, but my conviction is that these here spoken of were the God-inspired men, who, as the Scripture says, "have spoken to

you **THE WORD OF GOD.**" *They were "His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"* (Eph. 3. 5), to whom the truth was first given, and whose ministry is now embodied for us in the New Testament. About this I have no question, for it is not God's way to turn us to fallible men, who, because they are fallible, must of necessity be more or less affected by their limited outlook, but He would turn us to those whom He kept in answer to the Lord's request (John 17.), and whom He made the inspired vessels of His communication to us. It is only as the lesser men have directed us to the Word that they have helped us. If their sayings have become in any measure our guide instead of the Word, and displaced the Word, one of two things is certain, either their sayings are carnal or we have taken them up carnally. The writer from whom we have already quoted continues : "If another knows **THE WORD** better than myself, has more spiritual power, he can help me ; and that is according to the will and mind of God. But he does not come between my soul and the Word, but brings me more fully into acquaintance with what God says to me in it. My soul is only the more in immediate relationship with God by His Word. . . ."

Another able writer has said :

"Leaders there always will be, and all right when it is their faith that carries them ahead of others. But faith must be in the Word of God, and have this to justify itself to others. This true guidance is always by the Word, and that is what preserves following from being a mere following of men. Apart from this, we may go easily astray in the path of very good men. Peter led Barnabas astray after this fashion. Paul says : 'Follow me,' but adds, 'as I follow Christ.'"

THERE IS DANGER also in looking back to anything that is short of the beginning, or of taking as our pattern or standard any *effect of the truth* that we have seen or heard of. As to this we quote again from the writings of J. N. Darby :

“ Let me here engage my reader to realize in his own mind, and, if occasion call for it, insist upon it with others. . . . ‘ Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning : if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall continue in the Son and in the Father ’ (1 John 2. 24). Nothing has secure authority for the believer but that which was from **THE BEGINNING**. This alone secures our continuing in the Father and the Son. There may be much ‘ reverend antiquity ’ ; and the spirit of reverence, where the object is true, is a very important quality in the believer, but an amazing means of seduction when it is not ; but as a *ground* of faith, the Christian must have, ‘ what was from the beginning ’ ; the authority for believing must be ‘ that which existed from the beginning.’ In the Scriptures I have that certainty—I have the thing itself and nowhere else. Many may preach the truth and I profit by it ; but by the Word I have the certainty of what was from the beginning, and I have it nowhere else.”

TRADITION holds a certain cast of mind in a thrall, from which only the Word can deliver. We must beware of this. The Pharisees of old were great sticklers for what they held to be correct, but they made the **WORD OF**

GOD OF NON-EFFECT by their traditions, and were the most persistent critics and opponents of the Lord Jesus.

The traditions that we must follow are clearly indicated in 2 Thess. 2. 15 ; they were taught by the apostles in word and letter, and are now contained in the Word for us ; as we stand fast in these we are safe.

CONSCIENCE is also often taken as a guide and standard instead of the Word ; and this is a subtle snare, and the more so as people often confound their opinions with their conscience. To substitute conscience for the Word is bad enough in matters which are purely individual, but this becomes a serious matter when it obtrudes itself in questions that involve the name and testimony of the Lord, and when it assumes the place of dictator in the fellowship of saints and the service of the Lord’s servants. Yet we fear that often the plain word is not sought or is set aside, and conscience, or what is said to be conscience, taken as a guide even in this sacred enclosure.

It is of the utmost importance that we should see the end of the commandment, which is “ love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.” But we must first have the Word, and the conscience subject to it, then all will be well. Without this we shall do serious damage in the interests of Christ on earth ; and the more sincere and zealous we are the greater the damage, like Saul of Tarsus, who, with a perfectly good conscience, believing he did God service, persecuted the church of God and wasted it.

NO one ever made himself so little and low as Christ, so that He alone has the right to say, “ Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ”—words which no saint can venture to utter, nor evermore claim to himself. The Master-ship in meekness and lowliness belongs to our Lord. All together, and whoever they are, must abide the scholars under this Master.

THERE IS REST.

O. N. D.

THERE is rest for the weary soul—
 There is rest in the Saviour's love ;
 There is rest in the grace that has made me whole—
 That seeks out those that rove.

There is rest in the tender love
 That has trodden our path below ;
 That has given us a place in the realms above,
 But can all our sorrows know !

There is rest in the calming grace
 That flows from those realms above ;
 What rest in the thought we shall see His face,
 Who has given us to know His love !

There is rest in the midst of grief—
 For grief's been the proof of love ;*
 'Tis sweet in that love to find relief,
 When the sorrows of earth we prove.

There is rest in the Saviour's heart,
 Who never turned sorrow away,
 But has found, in what sin had made our part,
 The place of His love's display.†

There is rest in the blessed yoke
 That knows no will but His ;
 That learns from His path, and the words He spoke,
 What that loving patience is !

Where He too has gone before,
 Is the path which we have to tread ;
 And it leads to the rest where sorrow's o'er—
 To the place where His steps have led.

* It was the love of the Saviour that made Him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

† The full measure of the Saviour's love was seen when He was made sin for us.

Men may shut us out from their fellowships ; slanderous tongues may separate us from friends. The devil and men may build a wall around us and imprison us from many a joy and fair prospect, but there is one thing they cannot do—they cannot put a roof on the prison to keep out the sweet influences from above, or hinder us from looking up to our God, from whose love none can separate us.

THE GLORY THAT EXCELLETH.

(J. T. MAWSON.)

BRETHREN, I refuse to hang my harp on the willow tree ; that sort of songless depression belongs to the Old Testament and the glory that is annulled ; I belong to the New Testament and "the glory that excelleth." Hence I have a song, and it is a song of triumph, for God must triumph, and faith anticipates what is yet to be.

I live in New Testament days, and they are different in every way from any that have gone before. They are the days in which God has spoken in His Son. He could not speak fully until the Son came, nor could He speak in a partial way when He did come. The true light shines now, the truth is here. God is fully revealed, and the revelation of God means the overthrow of all evil, and our blessing. "To Him be glory for ever and ever."

There is a magnificence and a munificence about the New Testament that no clouds of evil can obscure. It is Christ triumphant ; and God shows us that in spite of every evil work, He has His "beloved" ones. The writers of the short Epistles that describe the evils of the last days exult in this precious epithet—see how Peter, John, and Jude use it. I am one of God's "beloved," and shall I not rejoice ? But I am only *one* of them—He has millions upon millions beside me ; they are all beloved, they are all His saints, they are all precious to Christ, they are His great interest on earth, and I, though less than the least of them, am permitted to know and help some of them, and shall I not rejoice ? Who would dare to forbid any who have the heart for it, to know and help the "beloved" of God ? Onesiphorus will not be forgotten in the day when every man shall receive praise of God, because

he sought out very diligently one of them that he might refresh him (2 Tim. 1.).

The Old Testament has many things to teach us, for the things therein were written for our admonition, and *not the least* of the things that it teaches is that we should rejoice that we do not belong to the Old but the New, that our lot is cast in the day when "the glory that excelleth" is shining from the face of Jesus at the right hand of God.

There are some who live in Moses—they go to Leviticus for their principles of life ; no wonder they are legal and would bring others under a yoke of bondage. Others live in the prophets, chiefly the minor prophets, and walk with Nehemiah ; no wonder that they are depressed and depressing.* Our place is in the New Testament, and the saints of the New Testament are free and triumphant. Their Mother is Jerusalem which is above, and their Saviour and Leader is Jesus crowned with glory and honour.

Elijah in his day wailed, "I only am left." Nehemiah, after cursing the priests, plucking off their hair, and chasing them out of his presence, had no one to pray for but himself. He was an unhappy man, he had no fellowship ; and no wonder, he cannot have been a pleasant man to live with. He was a faithful man truly, but he was the product of his day, faithful to his day—and God will not forget that—a day not of blessing but of cursing, the day of the glory that has been annulled. How glad am I that I was not one of Nehemiah's companions, whose sole

* If we go to Moses, the psalms, and the prophets to learn in them the things concerning Himself, we do well, and we put them to their proper use, but that is another matter.

thought was the building of a wall to keep people out. And perfectly right in his day; it was the character of that day, the glory of which has faded away. Instead I am a companion of the Holy Ghost, who is gathering together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad—the beloved of God—and how it reaches to the heart's very core when we read that Jesus died that it might be so. Not to walls are we now to look, built to keep a few sheep in a fold separate from all others, but **A FLOCK**, sought for and gathered by divine grace, and following the Good and Great Shepherd who laid down His life for them and rose again. Blessed be God for the glory that excelleth!

Broken-hearted men were all these old prophets; nothing succeeded with them, their brightest hopes were quickly dashed, their labours amongst the people were all in vain. And some would put the Son of Man on the same level with them, as the people did in Matthew 16.; or at least they act as though He were no better than they, for they have lost heart, as though all were lost; they dwell upon the failures of men instead of upon the triumph of Christ. Ah, if they but knew the glory that excelleth they would labour in the light of it and would know that their labour was not in vain in the Lord. The truth is that He is invincible. His work must prevail; the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church, and I am part of it, and shall I not rejoice? And every one of the countless hosts of the beloved of God on earth is also part of it, and I am one with them all. What consolation! What fellowship! We may meet them everywhere, for they are being gathered out "from every kindred and tongue and people and nation," and what a vast range they give us for self-

forgetful intercession! Their Leader is Jesus, and He is crowned with glory and honour, and sings a song of triumph in the midst of His own, and shall they not sing a song of triumph as they march? They will; they must if they know that they belong to the New Testament and not to the Old—that they have their part in "the glory that excelleth" and not in that which is annulled.

* * * *

Brethren, let us exult in the glory that excelleth. It has not shone forth making demands upon us that we cannot meet and filling us with terror, but it has ministered a righteousness to us without the law, in which there is no flaw, a righteousness in full consonance with the glory itself. And we may sing:

"Had I an angel's raiment, fair
With heavenly gems unpriced,
That glorious robe I would not wear;
My robe is Christ."

And the Spirit has been ministered, given to us from the same glory, and by Him we have been anointed and sealed, and He is the earnest to us of the glory from which He has come, and can by His power occupy us with the glory so that we become like it. This righteousness is upon all the "beloved," and this Spirit dwells in every one of them, and a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, is the goal of them all. Well may we bless God with all the saints for the glory that excelleth, and live in the light of it, and not in the gloom of Old Testament days. And may the Lord "stablish our hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with **ALL HIS SAINTS.**" "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen."

THE YOKE.

(J. J. ANNING.)

An Address to Young Christians.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."—Matthew 11. 28-30.

I AM going to assume—you are most of you strangers to me—that all of you have responded to this wonderful invitation that I have read to you. I am going to take it for granted that there is no one here to-night who has not come as one that is weary and heavy-laden to the Lord Jesus and found out that He is as good as His word.

The Lord does not stop there. There is the 29th verse, and it is of that verse I want to speak to you. *"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."* It is not a question of sharing the yoke with the Lord Jesus, but having responded to His invitation, He wants to put the yoke of His blessed will and service upon us.

The Apostle Paul knew what it was to take the yoke of the Lord Jesus. Speaking to you—servants to the Lord, of course—he says, "Ye are bought with a price" . . . and the Apostle Peter, in his 2nd epistle, wrote, that he was a bond-slave of Christ. Both these men had taken the yoke of the Lord Jesus upon them, and that is what He asks each one of us to do. It is the yoke of service—a yoke that He has every right to put upon us, because we have been bought by Him with His precious blood. The Apostle Paul knew what he was speaking about when he wrote, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." Don't shrink from it, for it was love that paid the price for you, and He who loves you says, "Learn of Me; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." What a blessed Master He is! The word

"yoke" presents—to me, at any rate—something that might be irksome, something that might be hard, if we did not learn of Him. It suggests a road that might be rough. Whatever pathway He may see fit to lead us on, and whatever service He may have for us to do, it is not for us to grumble, to dictate; but that we may get the spirit of Peter when he said he was "the bond-slave of Christ."

I think that the finest service in the world—from the point of view of service—is when one works for a relation. You take a lad that works for his father or a girl that works for her mother—the question of recompense does not come in; the question of "downing tools" at a specific hour does not come in. There is affection and love behind the service, and I am quite sure that in speaking to you about service, I must put love to the Lord Jesus as the first motive behind it. He loved you, He has given Himself for you, and you can say, "We love Him because He first loved us." Have you taken His yoke upon you? Can you honestly say upon your knees before Him that you have taken His yoke upon you? If so, you can know that the burden He will put upon you will be light. Love will make it so; your service to Him will be glad service.

But to come down to every-day life. What are the qualifications for good service? Well, I have put love first because I think in the Lord's service that comes first. Love for Him will smooth out or surmount all difficulties, it will make for a very much easier

going, it will make our hearts light and stout when we come to the stiff hill, and we'll cheer the way with song.

I think the qualifications that we value in every-day service come into the Christian service. Such things as being punctual, being industrious, and so on; reliability, steadiness. All those things count in good service, and these things have to be learnt. Some of us want to get there before we begin. I was asking a boy a while ago what he would like to be. He said he would like to be a retired merchant! Well, that would be all very nice, but if he was going to be a retired merchant he had a long way to go. He had much to learn and to do. I have got some good words on a card which is on my bedroom mantel-shelf; somebody gave it to me. I think they are Pascal's. "WE MUST DO LITTLE THINGS AS IF THEY WERE GREAT THINGS BECAUSE OF THE MAJESTY OF CHRIST, AND WE MUST DO GREAT THINGS AS THOUGH THEY WERE LITTLE THINGS BECAUSE OF HIS ALMIGHTY POWER." Well, if we can go on that line I think the Lord can make something of us.

Do you know what is the greatest enemy of service? SELF—selfishness. Now, do not think for one moment that I am hitting at ambition. I am not and do not intend to. The apostle's ambition was to be pleasing to the Lord. There is no finer ambition than that. I think some of us start wrong, "We have come to the Lord Jesus—we know the future is safe," and then we get drifting and thinking about our own future and prospects, and we forget that yoke in the 28th verse: "Take My yoke . . ." "The future! we have got to make our way in this world," you say. Yes, you have. But what is your object? Is it self? If self is your object you are going to be a

tremendous loser in the future. If you are going to take the yoke of the Lord Jesus upon you, you will have to renounce self altogether. Did self come into His life? "I do always those things that please the Father"—always. "Even Christ pleased not Himself."

MONEY is another great enemy of service. There is a fascination in making money, until at last that fascination can so grow that it can make us serve money instead of money serving us and the Lord Jesus. A good many people take up service with the idea of self-exaltation. They like to get the approval of other people. Some people like to hear their own voices, and get a certain amount of satisfaction out of it. That all comes in under the heading of selfishness. To go to the other extreme from self-exaltation, we have the person who is so humble—with a mock humility—that says, "Oh, what can I do? I don't know anything and I can do nothing." Well, that is not much use, is it? Remember Pascal's saying, "Do little things as though they were great things because of the majesty of Christ." It is all humbug saying that you are no good and you cannot do this, that, and the other. There is a Latin motto that says, "Do what you do." That is the kind of service the Lord Jesus wants from us—to do what you do. Why, do you know, the first great martyr was a man who was picked out because he was a reliable man? He looked after people's stomachs and so on—looked after their feeding—the commissariat department; and he did the work so well that God brought him out into the open for the most wonderful service—aye, to testify, by the death of martyrdom, to his blessed Master. That was what was in store for a man who had done "little things as if they were great

things"—*as unto the Lord*. I think, as I have said, that some of us want to get there before we begin. I know in talking to medical students I have been told, in answer to "What are you intending to be?"—"Oh, I am going to be a consulting surgeon, a consulting physician!" Very few of them are prepared to face the humdrum general practice; and I have no doubt it is the same in the teaching profession, etc. You want to be at the top of the tree: you must be prepared to go step by step along the road that leads there, and if you are to tread that way in Christian service you must remember the words of the Lord, "Learn of Me"; and if you learn of Him you will be glad to be the least of all and the servant of all.

Another enemy of true service is forwardness—running before you are sent. There is a good deal of fever in our lives! Simon's wife's mother was not able to do duty when she was sick of a fever, and the Lord Jesus healed her and then she was able to serve Him. People cannot serve when they are sick of a fever. Martha was troubled about many things. She was not proving the rest and the peace that is promised to us in these words of the Lord. Yet the time did come when she could sit down to supper with the Lord Jesus.

If you turn to the 12th of Romans, the Apostle Paul starts off by saying, "I beseech you . . . by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable (or intelligent) service." I take it that that meant he was beseeching the people he had written to, to present themselves wholly and without reserve to the Lord. And he beseeches them on sure ground. He points them back to the mercies of God. In the chapters that have gone before in his epistle are the wonderful truths he has brought out there; how

we have been justified by a holy God, how we have been loved with a love that is unbounded! "I beseech you . . . reasonable service"; and then he goes on through the chapter to point out to them the qualifications of service. You will find that these qualifications—characteristics, perhaps, is a better word—are the characteristics of one presenting his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, or, in other words, taking His yoke upon him. "Lowliness, sobriety, simplicity in giving, diligence, cheerfulness in showing mercy"—one could almost break off there.

"Cheerfulness in showing mercy!" I think some of us could maybe learn a lesson from that. When Moses was told to show mercy to the grumblers of Israel when they were thirsty, he struck the rock with his rod. Was there any cheerfulness about the way he did it? "Hear now, ye rebels: must we draw water out of this rock?" That is an outstanding case, but don't we often do things that are merciful, but not cheerfully, and the recipient of the mercy would rather we had not gone to them at all. "Brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient (or enduring) in tribulation; instant in prayer; given to hospitality; not wise in our own conceits; honest in the sight of all men; and overcoming evil with good." Now there are all those characteristics just picked out of this 12th chapter; and those should be the characteristics of one who has responded to the rights of the Lord Jesus and taken His yoke upon him.

It is a comfort to me to turn from what one ought to do and what one should not do, to the Lord Jesus Himself. He was the pattern servant. There never was a servant like the Lord Jesus. If you want to make a study

of service you cannot do better than read and re-read the Gospel according to Mark. Mark tells us that the Lord Jesus said He came not to be ministered to but to minister, or to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Some have said that is the key verse to the Gospel according to Mark—that the Lord Jesus came to serve. We should take as our motto “Saved to Serve.” The Lord Jesus came to serve, and how blessedly He served! I quoted earlier His own words, how He came to “do the will of Him that sent Me,” and how perfectly He did God’s will. How blessedly perfect was His service. You can start off in the 3rd chapter of Mark’s Gospel and you can trace the blessedness of His service right away through and see how wonderfully He did things.

We have been talking about doing little things as if they were big things—about doing great things as if they were little things, and so on. Why, the Lord Jesus could take five loaves and two small fishes—nothing could be too small for Him—and He could feed the multitude with the supply, limited as it was. And see how blessedly He did it. There was orderliness, everything nice about the way He did it: the company was divided; they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. Talk about being methodical! The Lord Jesus could think of little details that some of us would think were beneath us. If we were capable of feeding 5,000 with some little loaves and fishes, we would depute others to do the small jobs. But *He* takes the whole matter into His hands. He directs from start to finish. Nothing is too trifling to Him; it is not a question of condescension, but oh, how condescending He was! Was there ever grace like His? He came right down

where we were. . . . There was never anybody did things as He did them. When He came to cure the leper He could have just said the words “Be cleansed,” and he would have been cleansed, but the Lord Jesus as God’s servant comes right down to where that poor, wretched fellow was and touches him—came into contact with his condition, and he hears the voice of love and feels the touch of love. It has been said that in Mark it is a case of deeds, not words. Well, shall we do things a little bit more as He did? If we learn of Him—yes, that is the only way.

The Lord Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” There is no subject so fascinating as that of the Lord Jesus. We long to learn of Him, and we are going to learn of Him best if we are bearing His yoke. We learn what the Lord Jesus is in our circumstances as well as by our acquaintance with the Bible. I am not deprecating the reading of the Holy Scriptures for one moment, but you and I want to go through life so that the Lord Jesus can say at the end, “Well done,” and for that we must know Him.

There is no service like the service of the Lord Jesus. There is no master who is so patient as He. We are always making a mess of things; we are always having to go down on our knees and tell Him how unprofitable we are, but He never changes, and His grace is sufficient for us day by day. And He would that we should not be weary in His service; and we need not be weary if we walk with Him. And so I close by quoting His own words to you once again, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me.”

“THE NEARNESS OF THE BELOVED.”

(I. R.)

“*Thou . . . hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.*”—John 17. 23.

“*That we might now the nearness
Of the Beloved know.*”

WE have here a very wonderful theme for our meditation, and one would dread to approach it lightly, or to touch such a subject with an irreverent hand. We crave from the Lord that subduedness of heart and spirit before Him, that holy atmosphere in which divine things can be apprehended. It is ever true that God will look to the man of the broken and contrite spirit, who trembles at His word (Isa. 66. 2).

How, then, may this nearness be realized and enjoyed by us *now* instead of being relegated to a distant and obscure future?

By way of contrast, the story of Philemon and Onesimus may help us. We admire, and justly, the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to his well-loved friend Philemon, concerning Onesimus. Perhaps no more tender and touching letter has ever been written. “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: . . . For perhaps he therefore departed from thee for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved. . . . If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it” (Philemon 10-19). But Philemon, dearly beloved and fellow-labourer as he was, could only reinstate Onesimus in his household and treat him as a brother. Onesimus would never call Apphia mother, nor share a son’s place with

Archippus; it could not be. Doubtless very much love and kindness were lavished upon him, and he was not ungrateful. We know that the lessons he had learned from Paul, the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ, were remembered, for, later, Paul writes of him as a faithful and beloved brother.

But what a contrast this presents to our happy portion, “The nearness of the Beloved”! How much greater was the wrong we had done! How much heavier the debt we owed! Placed by God in a happy world, where everything ministered to his enjoyment, it was required of Adam that he should trust and obey. Made in the image of God he was to represent God in the world. We know how he failed, and from that day to this man has filled up the measure of his wrong doing. Who was ever so misrepresented as our God? Who so mistrusted? Who so disobeyed? To misrepresent Him is to wrong Him, to mistrust and disobey is to heap up a great debt, for this was what the creature owed to the Creator.

And then, in the fulness of time, the Lord Jesus came here, and in all the vicissitudes of His earthly path He declared His Father’s Name, He trusted Him through all, obeyed through all, even unto death. Has He not in dying said for us each one, “If he hath wronged Thee, or oweth Thee ought, put that on Mine account”? And in resurrection does He not say, “Receive him as Myself”? It is so beautiful, beloved, one would fain dwell on it. The thorn-crowned brow, the pierced hands, the cross of shame, the soldier’s sword, have told us something of the

cost to Him. Eternity will be too short to tell it all.

But such love as His cannot be satisfied with taking away our burden ; He must bring us as sons into His Father's house, to share His place and to know ourselves at home and loved there, in the nearness of the Beloved. We belong there, and though our path in this world may lie through rough ways, yet our true home is there. What joys are ours ! The Father and the Son dwell there, perfect love is known there, and, wonder of wonders, the Father and the Son are both delighting in the sons whom Their love has brought there.

All the glories, foreshadowed in the temple King Solomon built, will be displayed in the Father's house, in a universe of which God is all in all ; for when our Lord was here He owned the temple as His Father's house ; but for us to-day, it is more the thought of the intimacy of home, to which we are brought—as the well-known hymn says,

“ His home made ours,
His Father's house.”

We understand in earthly things, it is not the house, however stately and well-proportioned, that makes home ; not the furnishings, however luxurious and ornate ; not the food, though man should eat angel's bread, but the company of our loved ones makes HOME, and their dear presence bids our hearts overflow with joy. So is it with us, beloved ; it is not the glory of the house that shall be, not the joy and rest and peace of that house, not even love's

rich provision on which we feed, but it is home to us, because we have been brought consciously into nearness to the Father and to the Son.

We may well ask, how shall this be ? and the answer is—“ Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father ” (Gal. 4. 6). One of the offices of the Holy Ghost is to give us a son's heart. A person who was born to mean things could never be really at home in high places, without a change of heart. But the Holy Spirit maintains the saint in the conscious enjoyment of his portion as loved by the Father and the Son, in that holy place, and teaches him that he is made meet for that place, so that he can be there without fear and without misgiving.

And, further, He shows us how to sit down quietly and listen, as the Father tells us of His counsels for the glory of His Son, and as the Son tells us of His joy in making known His Father's name. If we are willing and obedient He will show us also how we may have our part in this wondrous work. Yet, it is all so simple ; no mystic imaginings are here, but just the precious Scriptures we hold in our hands, made to live in our hearts by that same Holy Spirit. True, there must be the broken and the contrite spirit ; the things of the Spirit are unknown by the natural man, and the carnal saint will miss them also. May the Lord grant to writer and reader the spiritual mind, that counts the knowledge of “ the nearness of the Beloved ” dearer than all beside. Amen.

Members of One Body.

WHEREVER I am, if I am walking faithfully, I am helping and invigorating the whole body of Christ on earth ; but if I am walking in wrong, and grieving the Spirit, my consciousness of union is weakened, and I am hindering the whole body, for, “ *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; and if one member be glorified all the members rejoice with it* ” (1 Cor. 12. 26).

THE OPEN SECRET (*continued*).

(A. J. ATKINS.)

THE love of God is not only the source of all our blessing, the solace and joy of our souls, the spring of all true praise and service, it is also the mighty stimulus of love to others. For love the gift becomes love the debt. Divine love creates a deep obligation. All love does; and God's love does supremely. Both John and Paul unite in one testimony by the Holy Spirit on this point. Let us hear what they say: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we *ought* also to love one another" (I John 4. 11). "We *ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3. 16). "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4. 21). "Owe no man anything, except to love one another" (Rom. 13. 8). Here is a demand not of law but of love; a command not grievous but gracious; an obligation not of the letter but of the spirit; a debt which the more we pay the more we feel we owe.

And what is the measure of this debt? How much are we to love? We are told in the Lord's own words, which gain a solemn impressiveness by the occasion on which they were uttered. We know them well. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13. 34). What simple words! But what an amazing suggestion that we should love as He has loved! How almost startling it is to find this as the "commandment" of the new dispensation, then about to be inaugurated! And yet with what serene dignity and calm deliberateness do the words seem to have been uttered! Was it to be but a splendid impossibility?

These considerations alone take this matter of *love* completely out of the realm of our opinion or option. They

mean that love is vital, and the proof of vitality. It is, in fact, declared to be the evidence of our having been born of God, and of our possession of eternal life! "Beloved, let us love . . . for love is of God . . . and he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4. 7, 8). "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3. 14). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth [i.e., does not love] his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4. 20). And, again, "Everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (I John 5. 1).

The reason for this is as simple as it is profound. It is the nature of the love of God to reproduce itself. Where that love is known and believed there is a divine work; such a person is among those "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 12). The divine nature in the believer, the result of this birth from above, is of God and *according to God* and therefore *like God*. And therefore this nature in the believer cannot but love. It is one love, in God and in His own. Where love is not, it is clear proof that God is not; and such a one is, therefore, in darkness and death until now.

This fact of the origin and nature of this love determines, too, its character. It is not merely natural sentiment or feeling. Nor is it mere amiable goodwill or kindly benevolence; nor is it even natural affection.* It is *love*; a word

* It is scarcely necessary to add this last is of immense value in its place. "Without natural affection" is one of the signs of the last days.

that we need to remind ourselves in its true and higher meaning has been born within the bosom of divine revelation. Let us say again, it is love of its own order; the same in kind, though not of course in degree, as the love in God's own heart. It is His love really and truly active in us by the Holy Spirit! And yet it is our love; ours because it is His, and because we are His. This being so, we can readily see it is a love that is neither called forth by circumstances, nor dependent on them. It loves, and goes on loving in spite of sin and sin's entail. At the same time, it is holy love, that hates sin, and will go to any length to remove it. It does not shrink from suffering. It is no stranger to sacrifice. It does not count cost to achieve its ends. It is love that persists and perseveres. It is of God.

How this love comes about, we are told clearly by the Apostle Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love. . . ." (1 Peter 1. 22). This order is of the last importance if we would be preserved from human or Satanic counterfeits of this blessed divine quality. Firstly, "obeying the truth," that is faith; secondly, the result of faith, purity of soul; thirdly, the natural consequence ("unto," i.e., with a view to) unfeigned love; then practice, *love*. Faith, cleansing (implying the new birth), a nature that loves, and then a walk in love—this is the divine and evangelical order, to which there is no exception. We may add that the Holy Spirit is the power of this new nature. Love is the first feature of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5. 22).

And who are to be the objects of this our love? *The same objects that are embraced in the Love which has kindled*

ours. At this point we need to recall that God's love is general and particular. "God so loved the world," that describes the one; "God so loved us" (1 John 4. 11), that is particular. The one is the love of infinite pity and benevolence; the other the love of relationship. Any mother will know the difference at once. If she is a true woman she loves all little children, but not as she loves her own! So is it with God; and so it is with us. We are to love all men, even our enemies (Matt. 5. 44); to pray for all men (1 Tim. 2. 1), and to feel a responsibility for their souls (Rom. 1. 14).

But who are the particular objects of our love? Peter tells us in the passage already quoted—"the brethren." These are they who are born of God, and include all His children, the whole household of faith. And what a beautiful word our Lord has given us "that ye should love *one another*." Yes, we are to love these, and all these. It is to be no less a circle than "love to *all the saints*" (Eph. 1. 5; Col. 1. 14). Here is found at once love's high privilege and crucial test. How easy it is to love those who please us, who think well of us; those of our own social standing or intellectual level, or of our own particular religious circle. Is there any virtue in this? Does not the world do the same? But to love those who do not appeal to us, who try us, cross us, differ from us; those who, it may be, do not requite our love, to love them for their need not our gain—only divine love can do that! Further, it is as natural for divine love to do all this, as it is for the old nature to be sinful, selfish and sectarian!

And *how* are we to love? Oh! how easy it is to think that studying the subject, thinking, singing, talking about it, even admiring it, is showing love! How our God knew we should need the

word: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3. 18).

God's love to us has been shown in a mighty *act of giving and sacrifice* and in our measure His love in us will show the same characteristics. By love we are to *serve* one another (Gal. 5. 13). Service is love's badge.

This love is to be real—"without dissimulation" (Rom. 12. 9). There is to be no pretence about it. What is more hateful than *acted* love? Then it is to be "fervent" (1 Peter 4. 8), that is extended, or stretched out! It is to be no cramped, narrow affair. Nor is it to be meagre in quantity. The apostle prayed that the saints' love might increase and abound (1 Thess. 3. 12). What blessed enlargement is to be found in the exercise of love! What education in holiness (1 Thess. 3. 13). And yet love is not to be unintelligent, for the apostle also prayed that the saints' "love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1. 9). It is not merely "Christian charity," as the world speaks, meaning to condone thereby anything and everything contrary to righteousness. It is love *in the faith* (Titus 3. 15), and love *in the truth* (2 John 1). We may be sure that it is not true love that leads to neutrality to the claims of the Lord, to compromise with His truth, or to condonation of what His word condemns. Oh, that many of the Lord's dear people understood this! "By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 5. 2).

Love is the ultimate measure of our testimony. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." How has this been forgotten! Not by our fine preaching, or magnificent organization,

but by our love to each other do they judge us! Love is, too, *the real measure of our own spiritual stature*. Do we consider this sufficiently? Of what use is knowledge of truth if it produce not love? It only puffs up (1 Cor. 8. 1). Of what use are forms of doctrine, correct principles, right "associations," and all that relates to outward order, if they do not produce, safeguard, or manifest love? We speak of discipline, and rightly; but of what use is it, unless it springs from the exercise of holy love? It will only give advantage to the devil. Is not truth necessary? But we are to hold it in love (Eph. 4. 15, N.T.). Is not faith vital? But it works by love (Gal. 5. 6). Is not separation from evil imperative? But if love to God and His be not its spring, it will only breed Pharisees. Is not unity desirable? But if the holy love of God be not its moving impulse, it will be a parody of the truth. Love is *vital*. It permeates and characterizes every part of Christianity. To be loveless is to be anathema. To love is to *live*.

What a mighty force we have been considering! Do we realize, as we should, its glorious potentialities? What sin it conquers! What barriers it demolishes! What selfishness it strangles! What breaches it heals! What suspicions it stifles! What discord it removes! What harmony it creates! What devilish schemes it frustrates! What glory to God it brings! What blessings it disperses! Truly, the place—whether heart, home, or assembly—where it reigns becomes a little suburb of heaven! Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13. 10). Love is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3. 14). Love never fails! (1 Cor. 13. 8). The Lord increase it among all His saints!

We have seen the love of God to be the blessed Source, Centre and End of

all things. The present triumph of that love is reached when it is so perfected in us His people that it produces full confidence and obedience in regard to Himself, and *when it becomes in us the source, the central constraining motive, and the end of all we say and think and do.* For "no man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4. 12).

This is the pledge and promise of His full triumph and constitutes, therefore, the purport of the present testimony in His saints. That is to say, it is the satisfaction and the manifestation of His *holy love* in His people now, before the day dawns when He will publicly unveil the mystery of the ages, and display the triumphs of His love to wondering worlds (Eph. 2. 7).

WISHES TURNED INTO PRAYERS.

WISHES that are not turned into prayers irritate, disturb, unsettle. Wishes that are turned into prayers are calmed and made blessed. Stanley and his men in Central Africa lived for weeks upon a poisonous root, which, if eaten crude, brought all manner of diseases, but, steeped in running water, had all the acrid juices washed out of it, and became wholesome food. If you steep your wishes in the stream of prayer the poison will pass out of them. Some of them will be suppressed, all of them will be hallowed, and all of them will be calmed. Troubles, great or small, should be turned into prayers.

Breath spent in sighs is wasted ; turned into prayers it will swell our sails.

If a man does not pray "without ceasing" there is room for doubt whether he ever prays at all. What would you think of a traveller who had a valuable cordial of which he only tasted a drop in the morning and another in the evening ; or who had a sure staff on which to lean, which he only employed at distant intervals on the weary march, and that only for a short time ? Let us turn all that we want into petitions, and all that annoys us let us spread before God.—(Maclaren.)

PRAYER FOR OTHERS.

PRAYING for others can only flow from a heart at rest about itself, and knowing in itself the value of the desires that it expresses for another.

If I pray for another according to the will of God, I am in concert with the Spirit. It is not a question whether my prayer is successful. I have been in company with the Spirit of Christ in the prayer and my own soul is invigorated by the very passage of His thoughts through my mind.

Yet if a desire has been awakened in my heart for the blessing of any individual, or any number of the children of God, it is really God's desire flowing through me, and I may be sure that He will answer the desire according to His own mind and not after man's judgment.

Divine love expresses itself by the greatness of its gifts, but it never diminishes or lessens its energy or thought for me because it has given much. It remains rich in its own enjoyment in giving, and in my joy in possessing.

“WHOM THE LORD LOVETH.”

(J. T. MAWSON.)

A Word to Those who are Passing through Trial.

IS it not a wonderful thing that the

Lord should take a special and individual interest in you, and that for your own profit? If you were asked what you desired for yourself above all things, would you not answer, I should like to be just that which the Lord Himself desires that I should be? If that is your desire He will bring it to pass, and it is more than likely that this present pressure, this trial through which you are passing, this sorrow that has lacerated your heart, is going to be a great factor in bringing you to the Lord's end for you. Therefore, “My son, DESPISE NOT thou the chastening of the Lord, NOR FAINT when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12. 5, 6). You will not despise it if you take it directly from the Lord, you will not faint under it if you are conscious that His love is behind it and will sustain you in it.

Nothing happens to us that is not common to men. Grace has made us the sons of God, but it has not made us immune from those things which humanity suffers as a result of sin being in the world; yet we do not accept things as matters of fact that cannot be escaped and so must be endured. No; we have a great and perfect example in the Lord Jesus who, when His cup was filled to the brim with hatred and shame and suffering, said, “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink?” You will be sustained and comforted if you look upon your trial from that standpoint—if you take it from your Father's hand and watch for the blessing that must surely accompany it.

Our fathers after the flesh were

interested in our welfare; they had their own ambitions for us and their own ideas as to what they wished their children to be. Sometimes we chafed under their discipline, for we were not always sure of their wisdom, but with our Father's chastening, who is all-wise and full of love, it is different. His purpose is to bring us through the world to the zenith of His own delight in us, and to the fulfilment of the purposes of His love for us, and even now He desires that we should be partakers of His holiness, He wants us near to Himself.

It should be evident to you that there are things within your heart and life that need to be checked, that there are ways that need to be corrected, that there is a persistency of will that calls for scourging. On the other hand there is His own work within you—a spiritual growth that needs to be encouraged and developed. He only knows how to effect all these things, and He will not fail, as our earthly parents often failed to secure their pleasure in us.

He wants you to be conscious of His purpose for you and to have confidence in His love. He wants you to rest in Himself, and the more you do so the more independent you will be of other sources of comfort. He will not begrudge you other comforts. Nay, He will give them to you abundantly, but He wants you to realize that He is more than them all and that when

“Other helpers fail and comforts flee,”

He, the Help of the helpless, will never leave you nor forsake you. Let the chastening be to you a proof that the Lord loves you. This will be a soft pillow for your head, and you will find in

the thought that which will strengthen your faith, and the chastening itself will be preparation for your next trial, for neither you nor any of us can expect to be free from trial as long as we are in the body.

The time came in our ordinary lives when we reached our majority and we were cast upon our own resources and had to carve out our own lives. We had outgrown our childhood and the sphere of chastening by our fathers after the flesh. But this can never be so with our Father in heaven. You would shrink from claiming independence of Him. You would much rather have His will than yours, for your will would probably lead you into all sorts of foolishness and misery, while His

will is good, perfect and acceptable, and seeks only your good.

If some who are suffering have to own that it is the result of their own folly and self-will, what then? Ah, there is only one way. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Let lowly submission mark you before Him, be honest and without guile in His presence, and in His own good time—the due time when it will be good for you—He will make a way of deliverance and raise you up.

So the winter of your sorrow and trial will be followed by a wealth of summer fruit, for these wintry blasts and all these trials afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby (Heb. 12.).

CIRCUMSTANCES.

IN circumstances that are easy to us, and suited to us, there is not the same order of exercise or of dependence on God which there must be if we walk with God in circumstances disagreeable and naturally trying to us.

Be assured that it is a far more signal instance of your Father's favour towards you, as a servant of His Son on earth, to place you in circumstances unsuited to you where the grace of Christ may be known by you, making you master of them, than if He placed you in a nice little sphere where naturally you could swing round like a ship at anchor in a dock.

Would you learn the power of Christ or would you recline at ease under the shade of a gourd? If you are in your right place (and difficulties are no proof that you are not) you must conquer in it. You must not only give satisfaction to all therein, but you must justify God in your own triumphant and thankful spirit before Him.

God's Soldiers.

HE is not a good soldier who cannot maintain his duty unless he is allowed to choose the post that he thinks would suit him the best. The commander sends him to places where he thinks best, and the good soldier will not be thinking of the circumstances, but how best to acquit himself in them. He is a bad soldier who thinks more of his post than of his duty in it. But how many Christians are like that? To obey the great Captain and acquit themselves in so doing so as to gain His approval is not the first thing with them; they consider for themselves, their families, etc., rather than how they may please Him who has called them to be soldiers. They like to choose their own posts and service instead of listening for His commands.

CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN.

(H. J. VINE.)

No. 2. His Glory with them soon.

CHRIST'S GLORY.

WHEN God called Israel, His national son, out of Egypt, He did so in view of the promised land ; and when God called us in grace by the gospel at the present time, He did so in view of His purpose concerning Christ's glory. Aaron was Israel's high priest on the way, as they passed through the desert. He failed, and did not enter the land. Christ is now our High Priest : He cares for us on the way. He cannot fail. For His own glory, as well as for theirs through grace, all those He is not ashamed to call brethren, shall surely share with Him the glorious inheritance which has been secured by His redeeming blood, according to the counsels of divine love and wisdom. Failure in this is as impossible as it would be for God Himself to fail, or for the perfect work of our Lord Jesus Christ to fail. On the ground of human responsibility we see failure in the case of Israel, but that which rests upon the sure foundation of God's sovereignty and Christ's sacrifice can know no breakdown ; and the exaltation of the Son of God amidst His brethren in glory, for the good pleasure of God, will soon display the truth of this. Meanwhile, the gracious priesthood of Jesus being ours, having been "marked out beforehand according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will—that we should be to the praise of His glory"—He is leading us on to that day of designed splendour, holy pleasure, faultless favour and divine rejoicing.

If Hebrews 2. 17 tells us that it behoved our most gracious and glorious Lord "in all things to be made like to His brethren," when He was here on earth, Rom. 8. 29 speaks of our

being like Him in heavenly glory, that He might be pre-eminent there, "so that He should be the Firstborn among many brethren." He was like us in lowly grace—we shall be like Him in exalted glory. To understand this rightly, however, it is necessary for us to allow the Holy Spirit to raise our thoughts to God's own view-point. Leaving, therefore, the consideration of the priestly grace ministered to us on our journey, and of the testings and trials which call for this, we are definitely engaged with God's own thoughts made known in the inspired Scriptures, and are given to see that which is definitely before His own holy mind for His own good pleasure.

The previous verse closes with the word "PURPOSE" (verse 28). That carries us far away back into eternity when that purpose was formed. Much is counselled according to it, and many wonderful details are necessarily provided for, but originally the eternal purpose which God "purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" was before Him ; and even the creation of all things, together with the assigned place of the assembly, are said to be according to it also (Eph. 3. 9-11). Then in eternity to come we are shown the most blessed fruition of that purpose in the glory of the Son of God amidst His well-loved brethren.

"God's eternal, gracious purpose,
Now to us in Christ is shown,
Purpose fraught with richest blessing
For the sons He had foreknown."

The singer of these words rightly says that *purpose* is fraught with blessing, but the purpose itself centres in Christ's own glory, as we shall see. Ephesians 1. tells us of much that is "according to it," but all is rightly

understood in relation to what was the purpose of God in Christ. Before the foundation of the world He had (1) "CHOSEN US IN HIM" (ver. 4) ! That was not our choosing the Saviour ! It was God choosing us before we were born ! We rise up to God's own thoughts, thoughts of love. And then, (2) "MARKED OUT BEFORE-HAND" according to the purpose of God (ver. 11). Also (3) to "HEAD UP ALL THINGS IN CHRIST" (ver. 10) according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for all sprang from the fountain of eternal love. Oh ! what rest of heart and mind this yields to the loved of the Lord ! How becoming and right it is that the choice, the counsel and the consummation in glory should all find their source in Him—the Father of glory !

Ephesians shows us the vast range of counselled magnificence which centres in Christ on the ground of redemption through His blood, but the foundation Epistle to the Romans—giving the forensic basis of the gospel of God—takes us right up to the top-stone of purpose after assuring our hearts that "all things work together for good" to those who are called according to it (8. 28) ! Let us therefore mark this carefully—*God's purpose came first*, and "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called : and whom He called, them He also justified : and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (verses 29, 30). Here then we behold that which reaches from eternity to eternity ; from the purpose purposed right on to the purpose in result ; and yet reaching down to us in time, and taking us up in accordance with it !

We might reverently speak of this in symbol as a golden chain chased by divine grace and workmanship. The two extremes are *of* God (the first), and *for* God (the last), being eternal and everlasting ; namely, THE PURPOSE FORMED, and finally THE PURPOSE FULFILLED. The diamond set in this golden chain is that the purpose was

"PURPOSED IN CHRIST JESUS
OUR LORD,"

and, finally, He Himself as the Son of God will shine resplendent as

"FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY
BRETHREN."

The divine links of pure gold connected with this are the number of divine grace—*five* ! Allied immediately with God's purpose are His foreknowledge and predestination. Yet they are quite distinct things in themselves, as we read, "whom he did (1) *foreknow*, He also did (2) *predestinate*." These are the two first precious links of the five in the unbreakable chain which is firmly fastened to eternal purpose. In second Timothy days like these we are well reminded that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace," for the next two links in the chain come down to us in our lost and sinful position and condition : "Whom He did predestinate, them He also (3) *called* : and whom He called, them He also (4) *justified*." Grace came not to call the righteous, but sinners ! Christ died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification ! Therefore being called and justified in time by divine grace, the last link of that chain cannot but reach right up to where the One who died for us is now honoured, and so we read, "Whom He justified,

them He also (5) *glorified*." From eternity to eternity all is complete.

There is not—there could not be—a single flaw or break in this golden chain of beauteous grace, for it is altogether of God, whose thoughts in regard to Christ and His brethren are indeed wonderful. He purposed! He foreknew! He predestinated! He called! He justified! Nor could He leave over the completion. He glorified! For He who is the Object and purpose is the **FIRSTBORN** from among the dead, the Head of the assembly even now; and soon among His many brethren He shall shine in rightful and gracious pre-eminence—the fulfilment of God's glorious purpose in Him, also of God's predestination in regard to us. Purpose hath the glory of the Son of God in view. Predestination had His brethren in view. When all are like Him in glory *as predestinated*, the glory of God's Son will be manifested among the sons of God *as purposed*. The one is therefore the complement of the other. God's purpose as to His Son made predestination necessary as to us, and the predestinated were *foreknown* by Him. They were sinners by nature and by practice, it was therefore equally necessary that they should be *called and justified* before they could be *glorified* along with and like God's beloved Son. Rich and everlasting praise to our God and Father shall result; yet, even now, faith beholds what God's grace has designed.

"And we our great Forerunner see
In his own glory there,
Yet not ashamed with such as we
As **FIRSTBORN** all to share."

That which is so real to faith now will soon be actually entered upon by the "many sons" who are nearing the end of the road to glory. They are the "many brethren" who shall surround the Son of God in His Father's

house soon. They, conformed to His image, shall reflect Himself—His name shall light up their foreheads. His beauty shall be theirs; but the profound rejoicing, and the exalted blessedness of that purposed and predestinated loveliness, words fail to express. The poet seems to have felt this when he sang of it thus:—

"Like Jesus in that place of light and love
supreme,
Once Man of Sorrows full of grace,
Heaven's blest and endless theme.
Like Him! O grace supreme! Like
Him before Thy face,
Like Him to know that glory-beam
Unhindered face to face."

Ah, but what shall the joy be then of the One who once knew sufferings *beyond measure when in all things He was made like to His brethren*? Comparable only to His own love and His own glory it shall exceed in divine perfectness! The revered One, the honoured One, the beloved One, among His brethren! in glory, love and joy. His pre-eminence shall be their everlasting praise! Then indeed the Word will be verified in our glad experience, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

He Himself looks forward to that precious time! We also long for its blessed consummation! And, though the groaning creation anxiously looks for the revelation of the sons of God—the brethren of the Son of God—our longing must be satisfied first by the coming of Jesus, our Saviour, **FOR US**. Then, having been caught up to be for ever with the Lord, He will come forth **WITH US** in power and blessing, for "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear **WITH HIM** in glory" (Col. 3. 4). He shall "come to be glorified in His saints, and wondered at in all that have believed!" With Him and like Him first, we shall then adequately radiate His wondrous grace and glory.

SAMUEL, THE PROPHET. No. 4.

(HAMILTON SMITH.)

The Judgment of the People.

[N chapter 4. we have the solemn record of the complete failure and ruin of God's people. Israel is smitten before the Philistines, the ark is taken, the priests are slain, and the high priest is removed by death. Thus every outward link with God is broken.

The nation enters upon a period of bondage to their enemies which lasts for twenty years (7. 2). During this period it is significant that the name of Samuel is not once mentioned. For twenty years the people neglect the man the Lord is with.

The Spirit of God has given us His commentary on this solemn time in Ps. 78. 56-64. From this passage we learn that the secret of their low condition, and consequent defeat at the hands of their enemies, is found in their disobedience and idolatry. They "kept not His testimonies." "They provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images." Then follows the solemn statement, "When God heard this, He was wrath and greatly abhorred Israel." From 1 Sam. 2. 17 we learn that "man abhorred the offering of the Lord"; now we learn that the Lord abhorred idolatrous Israel.

The low condition of the people of God becomes the occasion for their enemies to acquire power over them. The particular enemy at this juncture was the Philistine within the land. The people of Israel were indeed surrounded by enemies without—the Egyptians, Syrians and others; but they also had enemies within their borders, and of these the most inveterate were the Philistines. It is the enemy within the circle of God's people

that will ever be to the front when the people of God are in a low condition. Opposition from without may be the result of a bright testimony; but in every age corruption from within has always been the result of a low spiritual condition.

Degraded by idolatry, and without reference to the Lord, or the man the Lord is with, Israel attempts, in their own strength, to join battle with their enemies, only to suffer a serious defeat (1, 2). Following upon their defeat they hold a council to enquire "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" The elders, who should have known the mind of the Lord, reveal their low spiritual condition by the counsel they give. They say, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." They could have said much in favour of this counsel. They could appeal to their history and plead that precedent was on their side. Did not the ark lead them to victory in the days of Joshua when the city of Jericho fell before Israel? One thing, however, they forgot, and it was their undoing; they overlooked the majesty and holiness of God that will not, and cannot, brook iniquity in His enemies, still less among His people. It is true that in the day of Joshua the ark had led them to victory, but not without the leading of the Captain of the Lord's host. Moreover the capture of Jericho was preceded by circumcision at Gilgal. The people who used the ark in Joshua's day were a people in whom the flesh was judged, and who were under the leadership of the Captain of the Lord's

host. When the condition of God's people is right the ark of the Lord, speaking of the presence of the Lord, must be a centre of blessing for His people. To invoke the presence of the Lord without the judgment of their condition is to call down the governmental judgment of the Lord.

In any age the opposition that arises from corrupting influences working within the circle of God's people can only be met by first dealing with the low condition amongst the people of God that has given occasion for the existence of the opposition.

Following the advice of their leaders, and without any judgment of their condition, the people send to Shiloh, and bring thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts. We are solemnly reminded that the Lord "dwelleth between the cherubims," and then that "Hophni and Phinehas were there with the ark." The Lord of hosts is there and the sons of Belial are there (2. 12), a sure presage of coming judgment, for "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. 6. 15). The people of God may show themselves indifferent to the glory of Christ and the holiness due to His name, but God will be no party to man's indifference. He cannot deny Himself. He will ever vindicate His own glory even though it involves defeat and disgrace for His people.

The ark is brought into the camp and received "with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." The great shout has a triumphant sound and the appearance of power, but in reality only manifests their lack of faith on the one hand, and their carnal confidence on the other. Faith moves quietly and moral power makes no noise.

However, nature is easily moved by a great shout, and thus the Philistines, when they "heard the noise of the

shout," and understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, "were afraid." Their fear was rightly based upon a sense of the true significance of the ark for they said, "God is come into the camp." Such was the terrible effect upon the people of God of having allowed unholiness to be linked with the ark of God, and so hardened were they by sin, that they had become less sensitive to the presence of God than their enemies. They had said of the ark, "When it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (3). When the ark did come into their midst, their enemies rightly said, "God is come" (7).

Under such circumstances the fear of the Philistines is as vain as the shout of Israel. The Philistine need have no fear of the ark when polluted Israel brings it into camp, as a sanction for their iniquity. The condition of Israel was such that God could not defend them, and, in such circumstances, to fall back on the symbol of His presence was to call down judgment upon themselves. So it came to pass; the people of God are slain, the ark passes into the hands of the enemy and the two sons of Eli are killed. "He delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hands. He gave His people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with His inheritance."

The last touching scene in the chapter makes manifest the personal piety of Eli, in spite of his failure to deal with the evil in his sons; and also shows that God had a godly remnant in Israel, represented by the wife of Phinehas, who set the glory of God above the claims of nature.

Israel was in combat with the enemy, Hophni and Phinehas are in the battle; nevertheless the heart of Eli trembled for the ark of God (13). His first

thought was the ark. When the news of Israel's defeat reaches the aged priest, he hears in silence of the great slaughter among the people, and of the death of his two sons, but at the mention of the taking of the ark of God he fell back a stricken man.

So with the wife of Phinehas; her first thought was not for her husband, herself, or her child, but for the glory

of God. They seek to arouse the dying woman by speaking of the son that is born, "But she did not answer, neither did she take it to heart" (New Translation). She is fully aware that a son has been born, for she gives the child a name, but the name shows that her thoughts centre in the ark of God. Her last words are, "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken."

ON WINNING SOULS.

"*He had compassion . . . and went to him.*"—Luke 10. 33, 34.

"*On some having compassion.*"—Jude 22.

THERE was a shipwreck, some years ago, off the Tuscan coast. The Tuscan coastguard, in reporting the lamentable affair to his Government, said: "Notwithstanding that I lent the crew on board the ship every assistance possible *by means of my speaking trumpet*, I regret to say that a number of dead bodies were washed upon the shore the next morning." Very wonderful, was it not? And yet this is the kind of assistance which many who profess to have faith and to serve the Lord, give the people. They have yielded them the assistance of rhetoric, flowers of speech, and poetical quotations, and yet men persisted in impenitence. There has been no real care, no earnest love for souls. The sermon was preached; but the people were not prayed for in secret, they were not wept over, they were not hunted for as men hunt for precious things. There was no sacrifice in the service; perhaps the preacher shone in his grandiloquence, but souls were not reached and saved. It was the help of the speaking trumpet, and nothing else.

Not by such means as this did our Lord and Master rescue souls from Satan's power and their dire condition. His heart was filled with compassion, and that compassion carried Him to where they were. And to us, His servants, He has said, "*Go thou and do likewise.*"

The gospel preached at the street corner or upon the village green will probably be more effective in blessing men than twenty sermons *delivered* behind closed doors. And to seek out souls in their homes, to lovingly discover their difficulties and trials, to win their confidence, and make them feel that you love them for Christ's sake, that is the way to destroy their prejudice against the Word, and to make a way for it to reach their hearts. This is labour and it means sacrifice, but those who love the Lord will find a keen delight in presenting their bodies living sacrifices to God, they will desire to be abundant in good works. May we, through God's grace, be of this latter sort, and never be satisfied with mere speaking-trumpet service.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Disembodied Condition.

"I am glad there is a page in 'Scripture Truth' devoted to Answers to Correspondents. Please will you explain for me I Thess. 4. 16? It has puzzled me as a young Christian, because I hear people say that when we die we go right away to heaven; others say that we go to a resting place until Jesus comes, when everybody is judged. Is there any truth in Hades and Paradise as resting places?" -A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

FOR a man to be complete and entire, wanting nothing, he must have spirit, soul and body, for thus he was created by God. Death, which came into the world as the result of man's sin, is the dissolution of the man; by it the spirit is separated from the body. The body is dead without the spirit, and the spirit is incomplete without the body, for it has then no vehicle of expression.

When Jesus died He annulled him that had the power of death, that is the devil. He took from him his power completely and for ever, so that now the devil has nothing to say to the dead at all. But Jesus has, for He said, "I have the keys of death and hell (hades)," He has the absolute disposal of the dead.

This brings us to the Scripture you inquire about. There are those who sleep through Jesus. This applies to all His redeemed people who have died. It does not say that the spirit sleeps, indeed that cannot be; the desire of the apostle to depart and be *with Christ which is far better*, forbids of such a thought. But in regard to the former life, in which they were in contact through their bodies, they sleep, but their spirits are with Christ (Acts 7. 60; 2 Cor. 5. 6; Phil. 1. 23). Their bodies, like those of all others who are laid in the grave, await the resurrection.

The intermediate condition in which the dead now are is not the perfect condition, for the spirit is separated from the body. It is better than the one we are in, "far better," Paul said,

but faith looks on to the time when we shall be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; this will be realized at the coming of the Lord. He will descend from heaven with heavenly glory, and His shout of power and triumph will assemble His saints, dead and living, to meet Him in the air. The graves will no longer hold the bodies of those who sleep through Jesus, for they will respond to His call first of all, "for the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them," our bodies changed into bodies of glory. Death will then be swallowed up in victory, and we, whether raised from the dead or changed, will have bodies like unto the Lord's own glorious body (Phil. 3. 21).

Nobody will be judged at that time. Only those who are Christ's will be raised, and there is no judgment for them (John 5. 24), because the Lord bore the judgment on their behalf when He suffered for their sins on the cross, though their works will be scrutinized at the judgment-seat of Christ. The idea of a general judgment, by which it will be decided whether souls are fit for heaven or hell, is not found in Scripture.

There will be two resurrections (see Rev. 20.). That of which we have spoken will be the first. When this has taken place, and the Lord has come to set up His kingdom, there will be the judgment of the living nations, of which you may read in Matthew 25.

And then after the thousand years of His reign over the earth is concluded, the second resurrection and judgment, that of the dead who have died without mercy, will take place (Rev. 20.). At this judgment only the lost will appear.

Paradise is where the Lord is (Luke 23.; 2 Cor. 12.). The departed saints are there with Him. Hell or hades is the unseen world of the departed dead.

The word is used only, as far as we know, in regard to the lost; it is a temporary condition, for death and hades are to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20.). It is not a place of rest. The word *Gehenna* is also translated 'hell' in our authorized version of the Scriptures. This word is used to describe the eternal abode of the lost, the lake of fire. A concordance will show you where the two words occur.

Women: Teaching and Preaching.

"I was listening to an address in which it was said that when the Apostle Paul directed that women were not to teach, he, the preacher, did not believe that this was intended to convey that they were not to preach, contending that preaching and teaching were different things. I had thought that the Scriptures were very emphatic on this subject (see 1 Tim. 2. 11, 12; and 1 Cor. 14. 34). Would you mind giving a little help upon it in 'Scripture Truth'?"—
INQUIRER.

THERE is a difference between preaching and teaching. Preaching is making the Royal proclamation known. It is the announcement of God's full and eternal forgiveness to all who will hear—"How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" Teaching is the explanation of the proclamation and the instruction of those who have bowed to it and received it. The preaching, then, is for those who are outside, it calls men into God's kingdom and favour. Those who believe it come into His kingdom and need to be instructed. The teaching is for those who are inside. And one of the first things they have to learn is obedience to the commandments of the Lord. Some of these are given in 1 Cor. 14. There we see the saints—for thus believers are named in the first chapter—gathered together, acknowledging the Lord Jesus as the Director of His own assembly, which they are, and in such gatherings the women have to be in silence—they

must not take any place of prominence. To do so would be to flout the Lord and His commandments. They may not at first understand why this should be so, but if they are subject they will learn, and be glad of the place the Lord has assigned to them, which place even nature teaches them is the right one.

1 Timothy 2. takes a wider sweep, and gives us the behaviour that is comely in the House of God—for both men and women.

As that house is a spiritual house made up of all true believers, it follows that once we are in it, we are never out of it. Hence the instruction given is for everywhere and at all times. Here, then, we are told that Christian women have to adorn themselves in modest apparel and learn in silence and be in subjection. They must not teach or usurp authority over the man. This we believe covers all mixed public gatherings; the woman cannot be in silence, and teach or preach at the same time. One of the great rules in the House of God is, then, that women should be modest and retiring and not

put themselves forward or make themselves conspicuous. And we are sure that they are happier, and it is safer for themselves and others when they are subject to the word of God. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

When the Lord chose His disciples and sent them out to preach in public, they were all men. If it had been His will that women should take part in this public work He would surely have

chosen at least one for it. Theirs was the more blessed part, to remain with Him and minister to Him. They may labour in the gospel, as some did with Paul, without preaching in public gatherings, and they may teach other women (Titus 2. 4), and they may fill the place that the Lord has assigned to them in His great wisdom, and so be a great blessing, as the short paper, entitled, "Devoted Women," on page 288 shows.

God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility.

"I would be glad of some light on John 6. 44 and 65, where it is stated plainly 'that man CANNOT come to Christ at all except he is drawn by the Father.' How do these Scriptures apply to every man? Has every man at some time or other in his life been drawn of the Father and yielded or resisted as the case may be? If a man has never been drawn by divine love, how can he be judged for not coming to Christ? I confess I am puzzled. Then in John 5. 40, 'the Lord places all the responsibility of coming on the men He was speaking to.' He said, 'Ye WILL NOT come to Me.' If every man was at some time of his life drawn of the Father it would be easily understood. Please say a few words about this subject."—CORK.

WE have to accept the fact that apart from God's sovereign mercy none can come to the Lord Jesus. Nothing could be clearer than that from John 6. 44, but we have in the same statement those most encouraging words, that the Lord will not cast out any who come to Him, whosoever they may be: two sides of the truth, each incomplete without the other.

We have also to acknowledge that all are responsible to come. We may not be able to reconcile these two things: God's sovereignty and man's responsibility—but there they are. It is evident that those who heard the words and saw the works of Jesus were responsible to recognize that He was God's sent One, the Giver of eternal life, and on this side the Lord did not say "Ye cannot come," but "ye will not come." They preferred their own way to God's, and so clearly showed what their nature was. "They loved darkness rather than light because their

deeds were evil." But so clear was the evidence as to who the Lord was that they were without excuse.

All who come to Him find a refuge in Him from judgment to come, as John 5. 24 shows. And those who do not come will be dealt with in perfect righteousness on the ground of what they have done. The Scripture does not say that men will be judged for not coming to Christ, but according to *their works* (Rev. 20.); those who have *done evil* come forth in the resurrection of damnation (John 5.). Those who have come to Christ are given life and salvation, but they cannot boast because of this, as though their coming was meritorious, for their coming has only proved the Father's gracious drawing. We have no authority for saying that the Father draws every man; on the contrary, all that the Father has given to Christ will come to Him; yet, on the other hand, we are sure that God often speaks to every man in one way or another, in warning

and beseeching and in words and ways that touch his conscience, and He sends His message of forgiveness to all, and none will be able to charge Him with

unrighteousness in the day of judgment, nor will any sinner be able to say in that day, "I would but He would not."

DEVOTED WOMEN.

DEVOTEDNESS cares only to please the Lord. It is not occupied with exploits; and this trait you find exemplified in women in the Scriptures. The women ministered unto Him, they stood by His cross, they prepared spices, they watched, they saw Him in resurrection. They occupy the place of personal devotedness; as someone has said, they have more affection, men more energy. I believe they fill a place in service which men never can render; and when the Lord is working, you will always find the women are helpers in a marked way. They are like the soft feathers to a quill; they are not the masons, they do not build, but no stone is comfortably in its place where there has been lacking the cementing ministry in which women are unequalled. I see servants remarkably helped or otherwise by the women

connected with their work. Paul knew their value. But if they leave their place, they spoil everything. They put the soft feathers assumptively in the place of the strong pinion, the cement in place of the stone—everything is misplaced; and like a man thinking his hands would be more useful if employed to carry him than his feet, he diverts them from their true usefulness.

How blessed to have no interest but His, and then surely, the eye being on Him, each will fill his proper place. Deborah will give the first place to Barak, but Barak will not go out without Deborah. The Lord give faithful women who will supply, as He calls, the down to the quill; so that His people may mount up on eagle's wings, well-feathered and powerful.

J. B. S.

THE SECRET OF ENJOYMENT.

LIGHT and heat may be found in many substances in nature, but in none, excepting the sun, is there the quality to disengage the essential food of life, oxygen, from the vegetable world, to sustain us, while at the same time imparting the most perfect light and heat. What are light and heat, if life be not sustained to enable me to enjoy them? Just so, if I would enjoy

the light and heat of grace, I must connect all with Him, who is the Sun, the Centre and Source of everything from God to me. And the more fully I do so, telling Him of His favours, owning His gifts to me, praising Him for the light and truth He imparts to me—the more fully will my soul enjoy all in the unquestioning assurance that they come from Him who gave Himself for me.

"BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH, GO YE OUT TO MEET HIM."

"AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME."

"SURELY, I COME QUICKLY. AMEN. EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS."