

Fellowship in the Light.

For Maintenance:

THE BLOOD.

For Restoration:

ADVOCACY

and

CONFESSION.

"For it is THE BLOOD that maketh an atonement for the soul."—LEV. xvii. 11.

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FELLOWSHIP IN THE LIGHT.

(1 John i. 5—ii. 2.)

THE first great object of this epistle is to produce fulness of joy through occupation with the Eternal life which was with the Father. This is presented in the first four verses of chapter one.

In order to this God brings believers into the light. In this position He maintains them by the precious blood of Jesus Christ His Son, and there they have fellowship together. A second object in writing is "That ye sin not." Acts of sin hinder fellowship. They do not alter the position, for the blood does not lose its efficacy, but they hinder fellowship. Hence we need and have by God's grace a provision for restoration to fellowship.

Let us consider these two things, that is, provision for maintenance in the Christian position in the light, which is found in the blood; and pro-

vision for restoration to fellowship if we sin in advocacy and confession.

PART I.

PROVISION FOR MAINTENANCE.

THE BLOOD.

What a mercy it is to know that the ever-speaking efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus Christ maintains us in an otherwise impossible position, where we may be continually in this divine fellowship and be always full of joy.

But fellowship in that which interests the Father and the Son here on earth necessarily demands relationship as children with the Father. But fully aware that some would take advantage of this and say they had fellowship with Him, while they were in fact complete strangers to it, the apostle concentrates his mind for the moment upon the nature of that God who has revealed Himself as Father, and at once delivers the message he had received from Him, that,—

GOD IS LIGHT.

Spite of what people may say or claim, fellowship with such a Being can by no means be enjoyed, but in perfect consistency with His nature. "In Him is no darkness at all." (v. 5). Light can bear nothing but what is itself, and light God is always.

Scripture speaks of two things which set forth what God is, light and Love; and these are nature, not attribute. Both occur in this epistle and here alone. It is what He is, not some characteristic, as holiness or grace. Here it is *light*, which is applied to those who profess to be in touch with Him. This tests the reality of the claim to fellowship with Him. Light makes all things manifest. If we have fellowship with Him, we cannot walk in darkness.

Believers are said to be partakers of His nature in this particular. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." (Eph. v. 8.) They are never said to be love, which

is sovereign and absolute, although they are exhorted to love as He loved.

Conscious that Christianity is a small nucleus of light surrounded immediately by a zone of thickest darkness (ch. v. 19), the apostle warns his children against those that seduce them (ch. ii. 26). These are in view in the frequently used expression "If we say." The first use of this (ver. 6), raises a question not of *state*, but of *position*. It is certainly not used to stumble a failing believer, but to detect the pretensions of a false professor, who will not hesitate to say that of himself which is proved to be a lie by the place in which he walks. The appearance of such within the pale of Christian profession is a proof that the devil is trying to subvert Christianity. The man supposed talks of fellowship, but he lies and does not practise the truth.

Over against this is thrown the magnificent position of the believer to-day; it is where God is, and,—

GOD IS IN THE LIGHT.

Here it is not a question of *what* God is, but where. God is always light, but He is not always said to be *in* the light. True He ever dwelt in the light, but this was unapproachable by mere man. Now He has come out into the light; that is, He has revealed Himself and is known.

It was said of old, "Jehovah hath said He would dwell in thick darkness, but I have built a house of habitation for Thee." (2 Chron. vi. 1, 2.) Yet there God dwelt behind a curtain, beyond which none save the High Priest penetrated, and that but once a year, and not without blood. There He was unknown, hidden as far as man was concerned, though ever He IS light.

But, blessed be His name, God is now *in* the light; He is fully revealed. When did God come into the light? Where was He fully revealed to man? It was at the moment of the passing away of the thickest darkness that

ever hovered over this earth. This was at the cross from the sixth to the ninth hour, and was symbolical of the thicker spiritual darkness that enveloped the souls of men, as also of that more awful power of darkness which overwhelmed, for the moment, the sin Bearer. But, blessed be God, its power was broken in that very act, and the thick cloud was rolled back for ever. God has now come out into the light, and darkness has been dissipated from the souls of those who by grace are also brought into the light.

"The hind of the morning," is the title of Psalm xxii. Here the two divergent horns of the hind symbolize the rays of the rising sun. So, from the awful darkness which shut Christ out from God when He hung on Calvary's cross the true light springs for us. True, none understood this until by the coming of the Spirit it was revealed, but *there* God came out into the light. *In the cross* He is fully known. At that time "The veil of

the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." Yet, alas! even to-day, apart from the Spirit's power acting upon the individual soul, it is still undiscerned. God is still to such "The Unknown God."

Everything is exposed in its true character in the light of that act. Everything gets its absolute value there. God is known there in all the majesty of His nature and character:—love, light, righteousness, and grace. There, the devil, man, and the world are known. There, sin, death, and judgment. Nothing is truly known till it is brought into the presence of God, as seen in the light of the cross. Here, *God is known!* Here, *the value of the blood!* Hence we have the position of the believer's walk,—

IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT.

It is not here a question of walking according to the light, but in it; as creatures of light rejoice in the sun-

shine, while those who are of darkness flee from it. The light too penetrates the inmost being. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) So that it is not only the normal position of a believer before God, but the delight of his nature is to walk in this wonderful and blessed position. He is not a believer who is not there. A position where nothing is unrevealed in God, nothing undetected in us. We do not know ourselves until we are brought thus into the presence of God.

To-day God is light as ever, but He is also *in* the light. Believers, too, are brought into the light. They are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Turned thus from darkness to light, they walk in the sunshine. In this position one is perfectly aware that all that is in him is known to God, even better than to himself. There is therefore no cover-

ing up anything here. He understands in his measure both what God is, as revealed in the cross; and what he himself is, as brought there into the light. This, from various causes, may not be fully realized, and hence the resulting fellowship may be but little understood and entered into.

Still in this position of light, where all is out, with reference both to God and to the believer,—

WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER.

This is the blessed fellowship common to all Christians. This is the place in which, in our measure, we enjoy the divine blessings which God has through Christ's work, dispensed to His people. Hence, too, we seek to spread them, knowing they belong to all believers, while the place of fellowship in which they are alone enjoyed is in the light.

In this fellowship all is unselfish. He who gives most has most. There

is that giveth and yet increaseth, is true in this connection in the highest degree. Here, all rejoice at the acquisition by each of that which is the common portion of all. In the light there is no such thing as envy. Christ gives not as the world, but brings all His own into all that He Himself enjoys as man.

But what will *maintain* such as we are in this place of light and fellowship? We in whom the very light detects sin? God is there and God is light and God is in the light. We too are there, in the light, and sin is in us and the light detects sin. What can hold two such opposite beings together in that place? We may well ask this! Blessed be God, He can as well answer it! Here is God's answer:—

THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON
CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN.

What! it may be said, Sin spoken of there! Yes; because we are there.

And nothing could maintain us in this position in the light, but the continuous, ever-speaking efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all the sin the light discovers. In this place of light, blessed be His Name! that blood ever speaks. To whom? To God! For whom? For me! Thus argues faith. There can be no imputation. It cleanseth. This is characteristic. The blood is God's provision for the maintenance of believers in the light, spite of the sin that is in them and which in honesty they recognize. He deceives himself who owns it not.

It is the knowledge of this divine and continuous efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ that keeps the believer consciously suited to the light. Without it none could be in such a position, and no heart could be kept at peace in it but for the consciousness that he is kept free from imputation of guilt by that precious blood, which has spoken and which still speaks be-

fore the throne of God. This having judicially satisfied the throne of God on account of sin, how can there be imputation? If God was not what He is—Light—there would be no need of the blood. If we were not what we are the blood would not appear in all its divine excellency. If the blood could not maintain us in the light, of what value would it be to us? God's estimate of the blood is such, that although there is sin in us, yet there we stand in the light. We cannot do without the blood. But, marvellous fact, God cannot do without the blood! It is well when the value of the blood is brought home to us. Fellow-believer, do you know the value of the BLOOD?

But it may be asked, If I sin, am I not to have recourse to the blood again? This troubles many, but it is rest of heart to know that it is no question of sprinkling the blood upon the person here, but the efficacy of the blood in God's sight, as atoning for

all that person is. It answers to the blood upon the Mercy seat and is entirely judicial, being that which satisfies God, although the consciousness of it, or otherwise, must affect the present state of the believer.

The blood is the outcome of the necessity of the nature of God. God needed the blood in order that He may give effect to the love of His heart toward His own, and have those who had been sinners in His presence cleansed, and in the enjoyment of this fellowship upon earth. Eventually upon the same basis, they will surround His throne in heaven and praise Him throughout eternity. All the divine efficacy of that blood is brought out in the light, where both God and the believer are. God knows all its infinite value, He alone. The believer enters consciously into in in his measure, but it needs divine perfection to fully appreciate divine perfection.

We have then in this judicial aspect of the blood that which maintains be-

lievers in the light, and in that blessed place they enjoy fellowship together in that which is of God upon the earth. God be praised that He has come out into the light! God be praised for the efficacy of the blood which maintains us in the light! God be praised for the fellowship possible there! May the Lord give us to value the fellowship more and more, while we more and more enter into the efficacy of that precious blood which maintains us in the light where the fellowship is possible. The result, in fulness of joy and praise to God, will then increase more and more to His glory, until it presently merges into fulness of joy and praise to God in heaven.

PART II.

PROVISION FOR RESTORATION.

ADVOCACY AND CONFESSION.

WE come now to the second part, that is, God's provision for restoration to fellowship if we sin. Note again that the blood (v. 7), God's provision for maintenance in the light, is judicial.

There is a difference between the judicial cleansing of the person and the governmental forgiveness of a sin. The first was accomplished by the death of Christ, the blood the token of it; the last is in the hands of the living, ascended Christ, Advocate and Intercessor. Remember then that what we have to do with now is the governmental forgiveness of a sin of one already in the light, with a view to restoration to fellowship.

This is introduced again by an "If we say" (v. 8). It comes from those who occupy an opposing anti-christian position. One who is in the light could not say he has no sin; the light

discovers the sin and uprightness owns it; those who say so deceive themselves and the truth is not in them.

The contrast to this gives one part of God's provision for restoration in the event of a believer having sinned,—

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS.

This is a necessity on our part in order to forgiveness. A child of God cannot carelessly assume that if he commits sins he is forgiven. This would be to put a premium upon sin and to close up everything like fellowship.

God in His governmental dealings marks every sin. Will He who demanded satisfaction for sin when but imputed to the Holy Jesus upon the tree, pass it over carelessly in His people? Impossible! One may say, Then I am out of the light at once. Not so. The position is secured by the blood, though you may have darkness in your soul, but this is your *state*. What then must be done? You must confess your sin. Nothing

humbles the soul like this. When the will is broken and the heart goes out to God in confession of sin, in all the details of it, it is humbled in the presence of God, and discovers in the light more of itself and of grace.

In all dispensations God's principle of confession has been the same. Before the law we have, "If any shall say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." (Job xxxiii. 27, 28.) Under law, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm xxxii. 5.) This is what the godly pray for, and it is a good thing to keep a short reckoning with God.

As though God delighted in it, the result of confession is immediately presented,—

HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE
US OUR SINS.

His faithfulness is to His word, here and in other places, that pledges forgiveness upon confession. He is righteous in forgiving according to that deep underlying basis of eternal, divine righteousness supplied in the cross. No divine attribute is forfeited and the confessed sin is forgiven.

Then comes that dealing with the soul which cleanses us from all unrighteousness. The Lord's dealing with Peter, when He probed him to the depths of his soul, as to the measure of his love to Himself after his boasting and subsequent denial of Him, may show the application of this. Lower and deeper was the probe thrust till Peter appealed in agony to the Lord's omniscience, "Lord, Thou art conscious of all things; Thou knowest I have affection for Thee." This dealing includes all that is necessary to bring the soul to a consciousness of its own worthlessness,

and that the forgiveness so ready to hand may be practically enjoyed by it.

But this is only a part of the provision God has made for restoration, and a minor part too, which our side of things must ever be. Who would confess his sins unless God wrought first upon the heart? The conscience may be touched, but unless the affections desire that which is lost it may soon become dull and blunted.

The second part of this provision is introduced and brought out by another saying, of those who are not in the light at all, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (v. 10.) Believers do not say such things; they do not make God a liar; neither are such things said of them.

But the earnest desire of the apostle for his children is,—

THAT YE SIN NOT.

This is the second object in writing the epistle, and is the standard for us

from the time we become believers' With the flesh in us so that we may not say we have no sin, and habituated to acts of sin before conversion, how important that this should be maintained! Sin hinders fellowship. We cannot indulge in sin and retain fellowship in the light in things connected with a holy God; this is immediately lost. We can understand, therefore, the solicitude of the apostle, who loved this fellowship, that the believer should not lose his privileges, but retain that which produces fulness of joy. It is happy work for him, then, to instruct him in the blessed provision God Himself has made to rid him of the effects of sin and to restore that which he had lost.

Yet a believer may not at once be conscious that he has sinned, for, alas! we sin ignorantly at times; hence we must have something that precedes confession. And this, blessed be God, we have; for whether the sin is known or not, there is One who knows it and

all its fatal consequences, One who loves and watches over him with a tenderness and desire far exceeding any human affection, a solicitude for its object passing the love of a mother. He knows what subtle enemies there are to contend with and how the soul may go from bad to worse if left to itself and uncared for.

Little may the soul itself know of all this activity on its behalf, and at times little may it care for it, until it is convicted and turned. Then, with Ephraim it says, "Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after I knew myself I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea, even confounded." (Jer. xxxi. 19, N.T.) Now it is ready to confess its sin.

In the full recognition of all this we can understand the apostle's solicitude that they sin not. This is the right and normal state, but conscious that any man may be tripped up, having sin in him, he goes on to assure them that if any man sin,—

WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE
FATHER.

Oh! the joy of knowing this and all the living love that connects itself with us in this way. As God needed the blood, because He would maintain us in the light, so the Father needs and provides an Advocate, that the relationship of children might never be broken. Blessed be His name, it always exists! The Advocate is with the Father. His intercession is for the children at the moment they sin. Not when the confession is made, as is so erroneously thought, but when the sin is committed. Confession would never be made unless that Advocate were there with the Father. We are brought to confession through His intercession with the Father, and His dealing with our souls.

The word "Advocate" is the same as that used for "Comforter" in John xiv. and xvi. It is "Paraclete," that is, one who undertakes all our cause.

There are then two Advocates, One on high for us and One below within us. There is perfect community of thought and desire concerning the believer between them. Their desire for him is that he may be preserved in fellowship in the light, with fulness of joy. Should he however sin, the Advocate above intercedes for him; while the Comforter below, the indwelling Holy Spirit, is grieved and causes communion to cease. He who maintains a sensitive conscience quickly detects when any thing is wrong between himself and the Father; search is at once made to find out the cause of it. When it is discovered, confession brings immediately the forgiveness and cleansing needed for restoration. The blood meanwhile always speaking before the throne, has maintained the position with God in righteousness.

We have already noted that, although the part of this provision connected with our responsibility, that is, the confession of sin, is presented first,

what actually transpires is, first the advocacy, then the confession. The intercession takes place at least at the moment of sin, and is God's provision, not for the sin, but for restoration. In Peter's case the Lord said, "Satan hath desired to have you, . . . but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." This was evidently before the sin. In any case it is not later than the act of sin. His blessed hands are then uplifted on our behalf.

The name of Him who is thus our Advocate with the Father is,—

JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.

His name shall be called "Jesus." This is as a man down here upon earth. In the days of His flesh He entered into all that which fits Him to sympathize with His own. "He learned obedience by the things that He suffered." Prayers and supplication, deepening into strong crying and tears, marked His pathway unto death. Now out of it all He enters

into all His people's feelings and sympathizes with them, though never with sin.

But "God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ." Christ is thus His official title as the exalted Man, in the place of power. There He intercedes for us, and thence He helps us, even when involved in the result of sin.

"He stays me falling, lifts me up when down,
Reclaims me wandering, guards from every
foe."

Power is His, and while He represents us in the place of power, He delights to keep us bright and happy here, that we may praise Him.

Further, the ground of His plea is a righteous one. It is not that the sin should be slurred over. God can slur nothing over. On the other hand, He can now upon a righteous basis forgive anything in this the day of His grace. All God's claims have been righteously met by the righteous One, who is now our Advocate. The mercy-

seat has become the throne of grace. This is set forth by the further fact as here stated,—

HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.

The guilt of every sin of those for whom He pleads was borne by Himself and settled in His own blood. The word rendered “propitiation” here is propitiatory *sacrifice*. He pleads for the one who sins, having satisfied the righteous claims of God on his behalf. The Holy Spirit having fixed the sin upon the conscience, leads to confession, when immediately forgiveness is administered and the soul restored to fellowship, communion, and joy.

Blessedly perfect is the provision thus made for believers to-day, whether it be for their maintenance in the light, or whether, should sin come in, for restoration to fellowship and fullness of joy. Perfectly consistent it is also with God’s own nature and character; and this spite of the fact that

believers have sin in them, that they have sinned and that they may sin.

This is what the godly desire. The heart feels the slightest estrangement, and to this end the Spirit stays testimony to the glories of Christ, in the event of sin. The soul then seeks by confession to rid itself of the burden, to hide itself in God, and again, as in Psalm xxxii. 7, to be compassed about with,—

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE.

May we seek our joy here! No relationship, no position, no fellowship, no joy like it! Let us not seek enjoyment in the world in that which denies the Father and the Son. Let us not run into that which is unrevealed and unknown; Jewish ritualism and Gentile philosophy, combined with Christian expressions, is the outcome of the Gnosticism of former days and ends in the Agnosticism of to-day. Knowing, yet in divine matters knowing nothing.

Are we in the power of these truths? Do we know what fulness of joy is? Surely there is too little of it on every hand. It is, however, a possibility. It is the way of eternal life, which ever expresses its delight in the object presented to it. On the other hand, it is the delight of God to bring His own, even in this world, into full enjoyment of that object which occupies His own heart. Nothing so high! Nothing so blessed! Maintained in this position and state, we can answer the desire of the Father, who seeks worshippers to worship Him in spirit and truth; as also to the appeal of the Spirit in Psalm xxxii. 11, "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that be upright in heart."

G.J.S.

BY THE SAME:

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

NOTES ON GALATIANS (Six Lectures).

PROVISION FOR THE WILDERNESS. (Six Lectures).

WISE OR FOOLISH? Matt. xxv.

THREE LOST. Luke xv.

CHRIST'S POSITION. Matt. iii.

CHRIST'S TEMPTATION. Matt. iv.

POWER; AND ITS APPLICATION.

**THE ASSEMBLY; AND ITS HEAVENLY
RELATIONSHIPS.**

THE HEART UNVAILED.

**OH, THAT MEN WOULD PRAISE THE LORD
FOR HIS GOODNESS.**

THE PRIEST, HIS CONSECRATION.

THE LEVITE, HIS SANCTIFICATION.

THE MEAT OFFERING.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN.

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

**THE PLEDGE, POWER, PROTECTION AND
GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT.**

GOD'S YEAR OF RELEASE.

THE STOWAWAY.

IS IT THE TRUE GOSPEL?