

Life and Communion :

BEING

Notes of Lectures

ON

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

AND

LEVITICUS II.,

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EXPLANATORY.

THESE Lectures—notes of which were taken at the time, and a proof copy made of them—have been withheld from publication for two and a-half years, for reasons known to those interested. They have been freely charged with bad doctrine, the outcome, as it is alleged, of a system. As the main reason for withholding them has been now, alas! sorrowfully removed, the best answer is to publish them. They have been revised, and criticism has been utilized in altering some crude and faulty expressions.

I desire to express my sorrow that an expression I have used should have stumbled some of the Lord's dear people, and now withdraw it as far as may be the case with that which has never been published, although put into proof and seen by a few. I would assure any who may have been stumbled by it, that all I meant is conveyed in the altered sentence on p. 146,—that the blessed Lord never used His Godhead power to shield Himself from the exigencies of the situation He took upon Himself in grace. Had I been content with this at the first, and not have attempted to enter into detail, I should not, perchance, have offended against the generation of His children.

Increasingly conscious of the feeble way the truth is either grasped or set forth in them, and of their shallowness beside the profundity of the written Word itself, it is yet hoped, that, beside answering accusations, they may minister, under the Lord's gracious hand, to many who read them, as much help as they have done to some who heard them.

G. J. S.

LIFE AND COMMUNION.

LECTURE I.

1 JOHN I.

JOHNS commends to us in this epistle a perfect Object:—One whom we may go on to know, even “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;” that also in which the eternal life finds its own proper sphere of enjoyment: “Our communion is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” And this is presented to us as the thesis of the epistle in the first four verses: “That your joy may be full.”

He next presents to us that which here, in this world, tends to hinder the enjoyment of this communion. From the epistle itself we find that there are a great many things which, unless they are looked at in their right light, form a thorough hindrance to our entering into this communion, which constitutes our greatest joy while here. It is the joy of heaven also.

This must be enjoyed in life, and life is supposed in those to whom this epistle is written. Hence it will be observed that the characteristic difference between the gospel and the epistles of John is that, in the gospel, eternal life was manifested in the Person of the Son; while, at the very outset of the

epistle, it is viewed as imparted also ; “ Which thing is true in Him and in you.”

Christ has abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel. One has said, “ While Christ Himself was alive, although life was in Him, this purpose of God was not accomplished in us.”

And again, “ Not that life had not been there before, but death and He that had the power of death were not overcome, and all was dark beyond the closing tomb ; a lightning flash might pass across the gloom, adequate ground be laid for the just conclusion of the Pharisee, but life and incorruptibility were not brought to light, but in Christ and His resurrection.”

Still in the gospel the life was manifested, and they saw it. *Now* in the epistle it has been communicated, and the apostles are in the communion in which that life delights itself—“ With the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The difference between life in the Old Testament and the New lies in the conditions in which it is enjoyed. Relationship; the indwelling Spirit; union with Christ; consciousness; power; the knowledge of the Father and the Son; communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; the Father's house thrown open to us, and all its joy made ours now, with the prospect of soon entering into that blessed place to abide forever with the Son and with the Father;—these constitute the conditions of eternal life as

communicated to us since Christ's victory over death; and these never were known to the saints in Old Testament times.

It will be well for us to glance first at the epistle itself, and see if we can gather the objects of its being written. There is light as to this in the first four verses.

One object is, "*That* ye also may have communion with us," "*that* your joy may be full." The apostle wanted to lead them into this communion, that their joy might be full (chap. i. 4).

Another object is, "*That* ye sin not" (chap. ii. 1). This is the standard for the maintenance of the communion, and he wrote to them of the immensity of the sacrifice demanded to cleanse from sin—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son—that they might be deterred from sin.

A third object is, "*That* ye may have the consciousness that ye have eternal life" (chap. v. 13). He wants those who "believe on the *name of the Son of God*" (note the terms; it is not "believe in Christ") to have the consciousness that they "*have eternal life.*" He wanted them to enter into the grandeur and magnificence of the thing that they possessed, in order that they might not be led aside by those who were seeking to lead them aside; for there were some who were working up Christianity into a system which gave scope to the mind and intellect of man. Christianity, they said, is very good, but elementary, and needs to be wrought out by man's mind. These combined the ritualism of Judaism, and the philosophy of the heathen, with the terms of Christianity; and it is more difficult to discover heresy which is couched

in the terms of the truth. This system adopted the terms of Christianity that it might seduce believers. It talked about fellowship and the Father, but it walked in darkness (i. 6). It also denied the Son, and consequently had not the Father (ii. 23).

The apostle first presents a full Christ, a perfect Christ, and in the character of "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." If advancement is wanted, you need not go outside Christianity. You have before you that which no mind can compass, and you have power, in the Holy Spirit whom God has given you, to enter into it; and if we enter into it, we have no time for this Judaic philosophy, this would-be advancement upon Christianity. The apostle wants to have us so thoroughly occupied with the magnitude and beauty of that Christ who has been presented to us, that we may be able to say, We want nothing else; we are perfectly satisfied on every hand. He presents Christ in such a wonderful way, that we can say, Perfection is here! It is enough to be a Christian.

There is much that hinders the entrance into this. Each chapter of the epistle speaks of some one or more hindrance.

Chapter i. presents: *first*, the fellowship with the *Father* and the *Son*: and, *secondly*, the fact that this fellowship must be enjoyed according to the nature of *God*. And this spite of the fact that sin is in us. Now sin is one great thing that hinders communion; not simply the fact that it is in us, but if allowed to work itself out, into acts of sin. This acts like an incubus upon eternal life, which in itself is a perfect thing. *We* may grow in the expression of it, but *the*

life does not grow. We have to throw off that which would hinder the expression and enjoyment of that life.

In chapter ii., the snare of the young men is "the world" and "the lust thereof"; and there is that which answers to it in our hearts.

The snare of the little children is the false teachers. The "little children" were credulous, and believed what was spoken, because spoken by those who took the place of authority. But it needed simply that they should yield themselves to the influence of the anointing which God had given them, and to let that which they had heard from the beginning abide in them, to rise above the power of seducers.

Chapter iii. is wholly made up of tests whether the profession of having the eternal life is real or not, or to discover what was of God and what was of the devil.

Chapter iv. speaks of evil spirits who deny all that is really of God; but this is met by the wonderful tests of "Jesus Christ *come* in flesh," and the inspiration of the apostles. The false prophets give a place to the first man, and that hinders the development of the eternal life.

Further on in this chapter we find the love of God, which answers any questions that might rise in the mind that turns in on itself, by reason of the tests of chapter iii., as to whether he has this life or not. God *loved* us in the past (vv. 9, 11). God *loves* us now, as we see in vv. 12-16. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." God's

love to us *will continue*, "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (*vv.* 17, 18).

Chapter v. speaks of the world as the place of faith's victory; and shows propitiation to be the basis both of this victory and also of the eternal life as communicated to us.

To return to chapter i. Here is shown the eternal life manifested in the Person of the Son, and the fact that the apostles were brought into the communion proper to that life; and the epistle is written that others might have fellowship with them, that their joy might be full (*vv.* 1-4).

"The beginning," spoken of in verse 1, is the beginning of Christianity, as manifested in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—God's true beginning! This was at the moment Christ was born into this scene. We are helped to this by the type in Lev. ii., where the fine flour mingled with oil sets forth Christ as born into this world,—His very human nature begotten by the Holy Spirit. This constitutes a new beginning, and opens up to us after redemption a new and immense sphere of blessing.

Men are trying to find out the beginning of this creation; but here we have One who in His Person, as become flesh, created a new beginning, though in Himself He had no beginning, but was with the Father before all beginnings.

There are four beginnings in the Scriptures:—

1. In Genesis we have the beginning of the creation.
2. "The beginning" in John's Gospel, which shows that before the creation the Word "was," or existed; *i.e.*, He had no beginning.

3. In Mark's gospel we have "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"; that is, the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

4. "The beginning" in this first epistle of John is the *first* manifestation of "that eternal life, which was with the Father," in the Person of that little babe which lay in Bethlehem's manger.

In every case, save one (chap. iii. 8), in this epistle "the beginning" refers to the beginning of Christianity in the Person of Christ. In that verse it is, "The devil sinneth from the beginning"; *i.e.*, *his* beginning as such.

The apostle, speaking of the Word of life, says, "That which . . . we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have *looked upon*" (they contemplated Him, not merely glanced at, but "looked upon"), "and our hands have handled." It was not merely an appearance. He was a real Man down here on the earth, and here are the senses brought to bear witness to that fact. Some to-day say that God assumed the *form* of a man and entered this scene to show men how they might work their way out of it; but here was One who was from eternity with God, but who became a real Man, though a Man of a new order. The life was manifested; it never found an expression before. "Logos" in John i. is the expression of all the mind of God; here it is the expression of *life*—"the Word of life."

In reading John's gospel we find that whilst Christ was down here with them, the disciples did not understand that He came from the Father. The

Lord in this gospel seemed to labour to impress upon them that He had come from the Father, and that it was the relationship of Father and Son that He was unfolding. But they did not understand it. He could consciously look up into the presence of God and say, "Father"; and God could say, "This is My beloved *Son*, in whom I am well pleased." But He was alone.

The apostles, during the Lord's lifetime on earth, were not consciously with Him in the enjoyment of this relationship. They did not even enter into the fact that He came from the Father; and this marks off distinctly the time before the cross from the time after, when redemption's work was accomplished, and the Holy Spirit given. Until then He was alone in the enjoyment of the Father's love. They were born of God (John i. 13), but they did not enter into the relationship until Christ, raised from the dead, can say, "My Father and your Father" (John xx. 17), and breathe on them the Spirit of life in resurrection power. Then, because they were sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, "Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Thus they were ushered into the conditions in which Christ stood upon earth before redemption, *i.e.*, conscious sonship; the Holy Spirit as power, and the heavens opened to them.

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (v. 2). He was God as well as Man. He comes not only as the fulfiller of the promises of God, but also as the unfolder of the counsels of God, and to declare the Father. This verse proves His

existence before His manifestation. In verse 1 He is very Man ; in verse 2, very God. He was such a One as was with the Father. But this "life was manifested," this speaks in general terms ; "and *we* have seen it" gives the particular result. "It was manifested unto *us* !" But this perception of what He is brings the heart into communion with Him, and His desire that others should share it, and John enters into this desire of His heart.

John xiii. shows that Christ's heart cannot be satisfied without those whom He loves, and who are in this world, having part *with* Him, *i. e.*, communion with Him, where He is ; and shows also that He now lives in order that this communion may be maintained. John there reaches this blessed end, and is found leaning upon His bosom.

In verse 3 of our chapter he comes out in the sense of the blessedness of it, and says, We want you to enjoy this communion,—the highest privilege ever conferred upon man on earth. It is nothing less than communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Communion with the Father about such a Son ! Communion with the Son about such a Father !! And do *they* desire this ? Yes, beloved ! they desire it, and have thrown it open to us to whom they have communicated life, in order that we might enjoy it. The apostles had tasted it, and knew its sweetness, and they also desire that all those to whom life has been communicated should rise to their privileges, and enter into this communion, "that you also may have fellowship with us." Do we value this communion ? Are we ready to sacrifice everything for it ? Alas for hearts that are satisfied without it !

“Our communion is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Was there anything on earth that delighted the heart of God like the life that was manifested? No! Jesus was the alone object on earth that drew down the smile of the Father in heaven. Gambold says:

“There has one object been disclosed on earth,
That might commend the place: but now 'tis gone,—
Jesus is with the Father.”

God could open the heavens, and say, “*This is My beloved Son: hear Him;*” and “*Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.*” We try to find out what the Son is to us. Is this the communion spoken of here? No. Communion with the Father is to enter into the Father's thoughts as to what the Son is to Him. We have to get up to the Father, and learn what that Son is to the Father. On the other hand we have communion with the Son. Who is the One that He was thinking about? His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. He delighted to do the Father's will. But here also there was obedience. Eternal life in Him expresses itself in obedience, for the commandment of the Father is life everlasting.

Communion with the Father and with the Son is after this sort. To speak of it with human lips is poor, but the result of the thing itself is fulness of joy (v. 4)—always full while we abide in Him. How full the joy must be in such a communion! But, alas, how often those who have life have no joy!

How is this? Is it not a proof that we are not abiding in Him? That we have allowed something to come in between us and that Blessed One who still waits upon us, still covets the affections of our hearts? Which affections can only be satisfied in communion. The fathers have learnt that this is worth everything; they "have known Him that is from the beginning," *i.e.*, they had learnt Him—it is *objective* knowledge. And this is very important in connection with verse 6 of chapter ii.—"He that saith he abideth in Him ought Himself also *so to walk, even as He walked.*" It gives a high standard. We cannot raise the standard too high when the object is Christ—the eternal life. It is impossible. Let us see to it that we do not discourage each other from abiding in it. Let us cultivate that which will lead us into it.

Supposing one who had fulness of joy does something that Christ would not have done, he is not abiding in Him then. Take an instance recorded of the apostle Peter when he dissembled at Antioch (Gal. ii.). When he "walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel," he was not then abiding in Christ, and at that moment he had not fulness of joy. It was his portion, and there was provision for immediate recovery. But we cannot arrive here at a perfection from which there is no decline.

Communion with the Father and the Son, fulness of joy, is the thesis of the epistle. It is open to us

also, whether babes or young men or fathers; and the apostle urges us to cut ourselves off from all that which would hinder it, and to go on into the enjoyment of it. May this blessed portion be ours.

We now come to the second part of the chapter, which commences at verse 5—"God is light." It is not now the Father, but it says, "*God is light.*" This is God's nature. Communion with the Father and the Son can by no means be enjoyed unless consistently with the nature of God. His claims cannot be set aside, and I know that there is in me that which is contrary to God. Sin is in me. How then can I have the enjoyment of this communion? The answer is in the latter part of this chapter.

Light cannot bear anything but what is itself. If I have communion with God, who is light, I must partake of God's nature. It is the *nature* of God which is here. There are two things predicated of God—*light* and *love*, as shown in this epistle; but in this particular verse it is, "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*" And there is one scripture which shows that we are made partakers of this, the very nature of God—"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. v. 8). But how can I be maintained in communion with Him, there being sin in me? The answer to this, in the latter part of verse 7, gives us the most magnificent apprehension of what the value of the blood of Christ is. We cannot do without the blood. It is well

when the value of the blood is brought home to us.

In this part of our chapter there are three parts of an anti-Christian position taken up, and contrasted with the Christian position; they are introduced by the thrice-repeated phrase, "If we say," in verses 6, 8, and 10. We cannot get hold of the truth in these scriptures until we see that they are the sayings of those who are not Christians at all, but of men who are seducers.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (v. 6). The man that walks in darkness is not a Christian. Look at him in his life. It is not that he has got *out* of the light, but he *walks* in darkness; there is no ray of light in nor around him. He is of the world, and there is no light in the world. Such take up Christianity only to help them to get on in the world. They talk of communion, but, walking in darkness, they "lie, and do not the truth." This is an anti-Christian position.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (v. 7.) That is the magnificent position of the Christian. It answers the question, "How can I, who am a sinful creature, have fellowship with the Father, who is God, and who is light?"

First, the *position is in the light*. We are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the

kingdom of the Son of His love. Our standing before God is in the light, and God is in the light. We must note that in this seventh verse, it is, God is *in* the light." It is not here, "God is light." He always was light, but He was not always *in* the light, as here. In Solomon's days, he could say, "The Lord hath said He would dwell in the thick darkness, but I have built a house of habitation for Thee" (2 Ch. vi. 1-2). Yet there God dwelt behind the veil, a thick curtain; and when the priest did go in, which was only once a year, he had to burn incense, so that the cloud of the incense might be between him and the glory over the mercy-seat. He was hidden in darkness, and no one saw Him; but He *was* light. Look at what happened to the priests—the sons of Aaron—who "offered strange fire before the Lord" (Lev. x.). "There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." God would not tolerate anything that was contrary to His nature.

God came into the light after the thickest darkness that ever hovered over this earth had passed away. This darkness was at the cross, from the sixth to the ninth hour. It was a symbol of the awful power of darkness that overwhelmed for the moment the Sin-bearer, but its power was broken in the very act, and as Christ died the thick darkness rolled away for ever. "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." God could come out

into the light, and *we* could be brought into the light. Everything gets its true value in the *cross* of Christ.

I learn what God is *there*.

I learn what the devil is *there*.

I learn what man is *there*.

I learn what sin is *there*.

I learn what the world is *there*.

We cannot discover ourselves until we are in the presence of God. Bring a man into this light, and he will understand what he is and what God is ; and no man that is in the light can say he has fellowship with God, and at the same time be walking in darkness.

Now, God is "*in* the light," but also He "*is* light," and as light He cannot brook sin ; and sin is one thing that hinders the enjoyment of communion. We are in the light, and the thing enjoyed there is communion. Here it is a question of *position*, not of *practice*. It is not walking according to the light : the Christian *position* is *in* the light. Let us lay hold of the fact that what God is presenting here is *position* and *tests of the position*. He does not use these tests in order to drive a soul back from God, but to encourage that which is true.

Secondly, we have communion one with another. In this communion we have a perfectly unselfish kind of thing—we give and are not losers by it. But in earthly things, if one shares with another, he has no longer that which he gives. In the world, if one gives any thing to another, he is the richer, and

the giver is the poorer. In *this* communion, if any gets, all the others rejoice. In the light there is no such thing as envy. Christ said, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Christ brings us into all that He has as Man. As "the *only* begotten Son of God" we never can share with Him.

The "first begotten" is another thing. As such He shares with us all that He has, and we enjoy it one with another. I have heard of one who said, Heaven *must* be a happy place; everybody is happy there, and nobody is happier than his neighbour. And if it were possible that anyone could be happier than his neighbour, then everyone else would be happier to think that he was happier, and that must be a happy place. In divine things one is happier to know that another is happier than oneself. If you have more, I have more. In that position we have communion one with another.

And then, thirdly, "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! God is light, and God is *in* the light. But we also are brought into the light, and sin is in us. Then the light discovers that sin is in us, and we have to be honest, and say so. Let me repeat this: The man (*i.e.*, the believer) is in the light, and sin is in the man; and the light discovers that sin is in the man. What then can be the ground upon which God and such a being can be held together?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all the sin the light discovers. It is the eternal, ever-speaking efficacy of Christ's blood which brings and maintains us in the light, in communion, and enables us to walk there. Without it none could be in that position ; and no one could maintain it, when in it, but for the eternal efficacy of that precious blood, which has spoken at the throne of God, and which still speaks there continually, perpetually. Before one soul was there the blood spoke there.

But if I sin, am I to have recourse to the blood again? It is no question of the sprinkling of the blood as it applies to me, but as it applies to God. *God* needed the blood. He would not have wanted the blood but because He wanted me, and He sent His son to become a man ; and His precious blood was shed, in order that I might stand before God for ever. God and the believer are both in the light ; and here all the divine efficacy of the blood is brought out. Can anything alter the value of the blood? Nothing! It is not the blood as it speaks to me at all, but as it speaks to God. John lays hold of it from the divine side ; so in the types God begins with Himself, as in the burnt-offering. It was in order that God might have a righteous channel to show out all that was in His heart of love toward us that He gave His Son, that we might be in all His acceptance before Him.

We have thus, in verse 7, the efficacy of the blood

which cleanseth from "all" or "every sin," to maintain us in this *position* in the light.

The "If we say we have no sin," in verse 8, refers us back to verse 7. The light discovers the sin, and the truth must express it. It will not do to say we have no sin; and if one is in the light one could not say it. The person who says it lies, and does not the truth. This, too, is an anti-Christian position, as is that in verse 6.

The contrast to this is in verse 9, and here it is practical. "If we confess our sins." The value of the blood, as spoken of in verse 7, is judicial; but in verse 9 it is what is practical or governmental. The blood is of efficacy before God to cleanse us judicially from all sin. But then, supposing I commit sins, I cannot therefore carelessly presume I have forgiveness. There is a difference between God seeing the *person* in the value of the blood judicially, and His governmental dealings with a soul, to cleanse from the effects of a *sin* committed now. The judicial cleansing sets forth the value of the blood, as it enables God to hold the person in that position in which he can enjoy communion. But in His governmental dealings with us God marks every sin. After the blood has been shed, and God has given such a marvellous display of His nature and character in the cross, and demanded satisfaction for sin from that holy Being when on the tree, will He pass over it in me? No! But you may say, then I am out of the

light at once. Well, you will have darkness in your soul ; but this is your state. You must confess your sins. " If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Asking God for forgiveness, and confessing your sins to Him, are two very different things, the latter being much deeper than merely asking to be forgiven. Nothing humbles a soul like it. When the will is broken, and the heart goes to God confessing its sin in all the details of it, it is made ashamed of itself in the presence of that blood, and finds out what it is before God. The result of this is, that we are forgiven, and cleansed " from all unrighteousness."

Confession is God's principle from His first dealing with the soul right on to the end. It is His unchanging principle in His governmental dealings with His people upon earth. In all dispensations it has been the same. We get an instance of this in Job xxxiii. 27, 28, before the law, where it is written : " If any 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." Also in Psalm xxxii. 5, with David under the law : " I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." This is what a godly soul wants, and it is well to keep a short reckoning with God.

How often shall I confess my sin ? Seven times a

day? Yes; and, if necessary, seventy times seven. God forgives, if we confess, because of the value and efficacy of the blood. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Not only does He forgive—and the soul that confesses comes out with the sense of forgiveness, believing this word—but He cleanses from all unrighteousness. He finishes up His dealings with us about it, as the Lord wiped His disciples' feet as well as washed them, rendering them less liable to contract defilement again. This is the practical application of the sin-offering to us. The sin-offering in Leviticus was provided for a people in relationship with God. It set forth the value and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as well as showed the heinousness of sin.

We now come to the last verse: "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." This again is an anti-Christian position. No Christian would say he had not sinned. It is a denial of the Fall, and makes God a liar; for He says we have sinned. His word is not in us, if we say we have not sinned.

To glance back for a moment at this thrice-repeated, "If we say."

In verse 6 the apostle says of such, "*We lie*, and do not the truth."

In verse 8, "*We deceive ourselves*, and the truth is not in us."

And in verse 10, "*We make him a liar*, and His word is not in us."

The apostle says "we," with Christian courtesy, transferring to himself in a figure (see 1 Cor. iv. 6) that which he leaves others to apply. "We lie," "we deceive ourselves," "we make Him a liar." Surely such a one is not a Christian, let him *say* what he will. "He practises not the truth," "the truth is not in him." "*His* word is not in him." Such is the solemn judgment of the apostle as to those who, speaking of Christianity, are not in it.

Now comes another thing, without which the subject is not complete. We have had the value of the blood, and the governmental dealings of God in forgiveness when confession is made. Now he says (chapter ii.), "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." If, when tempted to sin, we were to remember that it demanded the precious blood of Christ, and nothing less, to cleanse from sin, how would it deliver from the temptation? But the Christian may be tripped up, as sin is in him. What then? "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." When is the intercession of this Advocate put in operation for us? When we *confess*? No; but when we *sin*. We should never confess unless we had that Advocate, and we are brought to confession through His intercession.

This word "Advocate" is the same that is used

for " Comforter " in John xiv. xv. xvi. It is " Paraclete." These two Paracletes have the same mind one with the other ; that is, the one that is below—the Holy Ghost indwelling the believer—and the one that is above—" Jesus Christ the righteous." Their object is, that we may be in communion, and the believer that has sinned is not in communion for the moment ; the Holy Ghost is grieved when the believer sins, and He at once causes communion to cease. A man that keeps a sensitive conscience would know at once when anything went wrong between his soul and God. God is light, and communion with the Father and the Son must be upon this basis. " We have an Advocate with the Father." But the Paraclete here, jealous of the character of God, and of the moral uprightness of the believer if he sins, stops communion, and sets him searching to see what has caused it. When discovered, He leads to confession ; and the blood always speaking in God's ears, He at once forgives.

Here we see that the Advocate is *with the Father* ; we are not put out of the *relationship* of children. *I am still a child*, although a naughty child, and for the time *out of communion*. The Advocate is "*with the Father*," and not with " God." The Lord said to Peter, " Satan hath desired to have you ; . . . but I have prayed *for thee*." Here the intercession was before the sin ; in our case it is, " If any man sin."

The advocacy and the intercession of Christ are at

the moment of our sin. There can be no more perfect provision made for us than has been made—not indeed for sin, but to maintain us in communion.

In that wonderful scene recorded in John xiii., not only did Jesus wash His disciples' feet, but wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded. He cleansed them from the defilement, and then wiped them, in order to keep them free from any dirt that would more easily cling to them if not wiped. They were thus less liable to contract defilement again.

We have an Advocate with the Father; we are still children. That Advocate is "*Jesus Christ* the righteous."

He is "*Jesus*," as having, down here upon earth, entered into all our feelings and experiences as a Man, and He has sympathy with us in our weakness, though not with sin.

"Christ" is His name as exalted to the right hand of God in power, and He there intercedes for us.

The ground of His pleading is a righteous one,—the blood speaks there. He has satisfied the righteous claims of God about sin. And every sin can be forgiven.

"And He is the propitiation for our sins" (v. 2). It is *propitiatory sacrifice* here. All Christians are included in the "our" of this verse. And there is value in that propitiation for all the world, if they would avail themselves of it.

God has thus made perfect provision whereby we

may be maintained in this position and in communion with the Father and the Son, consistently with His nature, in spite of the fact that we have sin in us ; that we have sinned ; and that we may sin.

This provision consists of two main parts, viz. :—

1. For maintenance in the light ;
The ever-speaking efficacy of the precious blood.
2. For restoration to communion :
 - (i.) The advocacy of Christ ;
 - (ii.) The unchanging principle of confession of sins.

Beloved, are we thus in communion? Surely there is too little of it. It is, however, a possibility. It is the enjoyment of the eternal life, which He who was with the Father manifested, in order that it might be imparted to us, and that we might enjoy it. It is a high standard,—nothing can be higher.

Do not, I beseech you, go out into the world for your enjoyment, into that which denies the Father and the Son; do not run into that which is unrevealed and unknown.

Jewish ritualism, Gentile philosophy, combined with Christian terms and expressions, ends in the Gnosticism of former days and the Agnosticism of to-day—knowing, yet knowing nothing.

Let us keep to what God has revealed ; for God *has* revealed it. We have not to discover it ; and He has given us a new faculty, that we may enter into it. It is a new life, expressed in the “Logos” (Word) down here, and imparted to us.

The Lord give us to enter into this, that our joy may be full !

LECTURE II.

I JOHN ii.

LAST week we saw that one object for which the epistle was written, was, that His people might know that God had brought them into fellowship with Himself. Communion with the Father and the Son is the wonderful privilege that has been accorded to believers; and this has been opened up by the apostle in order that we may be preserved from seducers, who are seeking on every hand to draw away the heart from that which Christianity gives, and which alone is Christianity. This, which is the thesis of the epistle, is contained in the first four verses. Those who are in it have fulness of joy.

Then the latter part of chapter i. raises the question, and answers it in so blessed a way, as to how we, in whom sin is, who have sinned, and who may sin, can enjoy that communion.

I recapitulate this, because it is of the utmost importance that the subject of the first portion of the epistle should be borne in mind as we go through it; for no soul can stand the tests applied by the apostle in this epistle as to communion and the reality of the pretensions to it, unless he is really grounded in the wonderful provision which God has made to maintain creatures such as we in the light.

One may say, I have sin in me; I don't under-

stand how a being with sin in him can be said to be in the enjoyment of that wonderful communion. We see here what God's provision for the maintenance of this communion is. Not provision for sin—God never made provision for sin—that would be to deny His character; but He does make provision for the maintenance in communion of His own poor feeble people, who, while they are in this world, have sin in them, and from whom while here it will never be eradicated. Alas for those who think that they can get rid of it!

We have seen that there are two main parts to this provision, the second being again subdivided.

First of all, there is "the blood of Jesus Christ," God's son, which "cleanseth us from all sin." This is the judicial aspect of the blood. The eternal, abiding efficacy of the blood before God. Because of that, we, who have sin in us, can be maintained in the light. The man that is in the light is shown by the light that he has sin in him. If we were not what we are, the blood would not appear in all its divine excellency. If the blood could not maintain me in the light, of what value would it be? God's estimate of the blood is such, that although there is sin in us, yet there we stand in the light. It is our place, and He gives us no other place than the light to walk in.

The two other things are connected with governmental order; they are the confession of sins,—this is God's unchanging principle, as we see in the case

of Job and David,—and the advocacy of Christ; these are for the Christian to-day. This advocacy is with the *Father*. When communion is spoken of, it is said to be with the *Father* (i. 3). This is then shown to be maintained upon the basis of the nature of *God* (i. 5). But if any man sin, there is a return to the wonderful and blessed term “*Father*,” to assure our hearts that this relationship is not broken. These are the parts of God’s perfect provision for maintenance in the light, and in communion; and they answer to the three solemn facts that we have sin in us, that we have sinned, and that we may sin.

Unless we are grounded in this we shall be thrown into confusion when the apostle brings forward his tests as to the reality of those who pretend to this communion. Let it be noted that the apostle does not use these tests to create doubts, but to expose false pretensions, and to produce assurance in every soul born of God. If there is eternal life running through any soul, even if it be in a little child,—the feeblest believer, the Lord grant that Satan may not be allowed to take hold of the tests to make that one doubt, but that, abiding in what he has heard from the beginning, he may grow from a babe to a young man, and on into a father.

We noticed last week that in chapter i. the expression “If we say” occurred three times. The things brought in under that head give us an anti-Christian position. Now in *vv.* 3-11 of chapter ii. we have three times the expression “He that saith.” This also is a test, but perhaps applies itself more generally, including what a Christian may say.

The first is, “Hereby we do know that we know

Him, if we keep His commandments. *He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in Him* " (vv. 3-5).

In order to understand this part of the epistle we must remember what the subject of the epistle is. Moreover, we must have the thing that is spoken of ; and this is supposed in these verses. " Which thing is true in Him and in you " (v. 8).

Eternal life is the subject. What is eternal life ? In the first chapter *Christ* is presented to us as that Eternal life which was with the Father. He was also the expression of it—" the Word of life "—when down here. I do not think there is any other *definition* of eternal life. "*He is the true God and eternal life.*" John xvii. 3 is hardly a definition—" This is life eternal, that they might know Thee [the Father] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Nor is John xii. 50—" And I know that His commandment is life everlasting : " but these seem to be *characteristic* rather. There are two things which are characteristic in these scriptures—knowledge of God as the Father and of Jesus Christ as the sent One ; and obedience. This life has been imparted to us, and it is woven into the very texture of this part of the epistle, so that no man with a mere logical mind, to whom this life has not been imparted, can understand the sequences of this part of the Word of God.

Christ was the eternal life manifested here, and He

was what He *spake*. Jesus said unto them, I am altogether that which I also say unto you (John viii. 25). His words expressed Himself the eternal life. Under law life was *promised* upon obedience, but in Christ (true also in us) eternal life *expressed itself* in obedience.

Now he writes to the fathers thus: "I write unto you, fathers, *because ye have known* Him that is from the beginning" (v. 13). He has no warning for the fathers except "abide" (see v. 28); they had got beyond the snares; they "knew Him."

How do we know that we know Him? "If we keep His commandments" (v. 3). What are these commandments? They are the commandments of the Lord Jesus. The words which He *spake* were the expression of His life, and, being the expression of His life, assume the form of commandments to every one that has that life, because if you and I have that life, it must express itself in that self-same way—obedience; keeping His commandments. Do we not express anything else? Yes, we do; for we have another nature; but this is not in view here. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, *is a liar*, and the truth is not in Him" (v. 4). That man is not a Christian. Men will say anything; the devil is so subtle that he gets man to say anything. Even to-day you get the terms of Christianity used, and yet the thing denied. This is specially so in the case of the term "atonement."

They use this word, but fritter its meaning away entirely. They will not have atonement by *blood*. Now, I ask you, Can a man be a Christian without faith in the blood of Christ? Impossible.

The opposite of this is in verse 5: "But whoso keepeth *His word*, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him." There is a difference between "the commandment" and "the Word." They are the same in character; so that the commandment in verse 7 is said to be the Word. But the Word is a broader thing than the commandment; it is the whole Word of God, the whole of that Word which has been spoken by the blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We not only know that we know Him if we keep His commandments, but, if we keep His Word, the love of God is perfected in us, and we know that we are *in* Him.

The love of God is perfected in the one who keeps His Word, and this test thus brings out the two great characteristics of eternal life—*love* and *obedience*. In ch. iv. 12 the same thing is said to be true "if we love one another."

The word "know" in these verses (3-5) signifies "objective knowledge." There are two words used for "know" in the epistle; one is as above, the other is "conscious knowledge." Conscious knowledge goes with life; objective knowledge goes with growth or ripeness.

The word he uses when speaking to the little children (*vv.* 20, 21) is the same word as is used by the Lord Jesus when He says, "The sheep follow Him: for they *know* His voice. And a stranger will they not follow . . . for they *know* not the voice of strangers" (John x. 4, 5). It is conscious knowledge. It is not that which is presented before their hearts for them to learn, but that which comes with life. All the sheep know the voice of Christ; but "they know not the voice of strangers," and will not follow them.

In verse 6: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." This is a test that applies itself to those who are fathers, as well as to others; for the only word to the fathers is, "Abide in Him" (see *v.* 28, where it applies to all). If a man, even a father, does not walk as He walked, in anything, he is not *abiding* in Him then. This is a most searching test, and reaches all.

"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the Word which ye have heard from the beginning" (*v.* 7). What was that? It was Christ, because Christ was what He spake. Seducers were coming in with something new, something that they had not heard from the beginning. So much the worse for them. A Christian should at once set aside such a pretension, and say, It is not that which I have heard from the beginning. We do not want new things, modern

ideas, and advanced thought. This is the very thing that the apostle is warning against in this epistle. And what is it? Not that which we have heard from the beginning. It is therefore simply a lie.

May God preserve us from being drawn aside by advanced thought. God has nothing else to present but *Christ*, "that which was from the beginning"—God Himself manifested in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The old commandment does not go back beyond Christ, "the Word which ye have heard from the beginning." There is no thought of an Old Testament commandment here; but the beginning is the new beginning of the eternal life manifested in His own blessed Person. But, on the other hand, he will not stop short of that which was from this beginning. Anything that has come in since is not of that source, and can only defile the pure stream, if it be attempted to commingle it, a thing in itself impossible. It may be hoary with antiquity, or it may be dressed up as new for the nineteenth century. It is alike an imposture; it is not the old commandment, the Word which we have heard from the beginning.

But this verse (7) refers to Christ, who, when He stood on earth, was that "eternal life, which was with the Father." Was this true of anyone else? No; there was not another being like Him. Christ, as He was here upon earth, was a Man of His own order. Well, you say, if this is so, then none of us

can have hope of eternal life. But look at v. 8: "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." What "thing" is "true in Him and in you?" The thing which the commandment expressed; *i.e.*, the life true in Him and in you now, because "the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." The world would not have Christ as its light, so they put Him out of it. In the very spot where they put Him out God came in; the veil was rent from the top to the bottom. After the moment of thickest darkness—the Cross—God came out in light, and it is the true light which shines now—there will be no other in heaven, and we who are Christians are in it. Shall we allow anything to shut out this light from us? Shall we sleep as among the dead? This is the desire of Satan, the enemy of God and man.

Before he touches upon the family, which commences with verse 12, he draws attention to this: "Which thing is true in Him and in you." The thing is true. What thing? The thing commanded, or the eternal life that expresses itself in obedience to the command. This was "true in Him," and was "manifested unto us" (the apostles). Now, also, since redemption's work has been accomplished, it has been communicated, and is "true in you." Believers have eternal life, though not independently of Him who is its source.

Take an illustration. Life is in my arm, but not independently of me. Sever the arm from the body, and you will see then where the life lies. It is true that my arm has life, but it is not in my arm asolutely, as though it could use it independently of the heart and head. Thank God, it is impossible to sever one member from Christ.

The life that we have is that which expresses itself in obedience. The Lord greatly multiply this, that there may be a greater manifestation of the life that He delights in upon earth among His beloved people.

There are two things in connection with this life. The first is full of blessed comfort to us. The life that was manifested in Him is true in us since redemption's work has been accomplished. The other is most solemn for us. We have that in us which can only express itself in obedience. If we abide in Him we shall walk as He walked, according to *v. 6*. We cannot be what He was, but we are exhorted to walk as He walked.

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (*vv. 9-11*). Here is another test which would expose the pretensions of one who is not a Christian: “He that . . .

hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." On the other hand, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light." Not only is God's love perfected in him, but it expresses itself towards his brother, "and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." If we live Christ, and one stumbles, that is another thing. We are not to hide Christ in order not to be a stumbling block; but so much the worse for him who stumbles at that. Christ Himself was a stumbling-stone to some; but no Christian should be stumbled by another who is living Christ; although there are some who would lead us not to manifest Christ. There is no real occasion of stumbling in one who is walking in the light, and loves his brother. Thus light and love are linked together, as they are inseparable.

Now let us look at the chain of sequences here; it is very blessed:

If we keep His commandments,
 We do know that we do know Him (v. 3).
 If we keep His word,
 The love of God is perfected in us;
 We know that we are in Him (v. 5).
 If we abide in Him,
 We walk as He walked (v. 6).
 The thing is true in Him and in you (v. 8).
 If love expresses itself towards our brethren,
 We abide in the light;
 There is none occasion of stumbling in us (v. 10).

We come now to the family, to the three different

stages of growth or ripeness which he recognises as in the family of God. In order that all might have the assurance that belongs to the family, he commences with that which is characteristic of the whole company—"I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (v. 12). The word "children" in this verse is the same as that in *vv.* 1, 28, and it includes all the family. Where it occurs in *vv.* 13, 18, it is a different word; it means babes or little children. All that are in the family have their sins forgiven. Thus we see the apostle begins at the lowest point.

But the forgiveness of sins is connected to-day with eternal life, in scripture. Thus, it is written, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. ii. 13). Now this quickening "together with Him" is the communication of eternal life; it is making alive together with Christ in the circumstances in which He lives,—a life out from among the dead.

Godly Jews before Christ were quickened, but they were never quickened together with Christ in resurrection life. But the soul which believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is put into the same conditions of life as those in which the Christ of God exists—the conditions of eternal life. It is true "in Him and in you." Now what goes with this? "Having forgiven you all trespasses." The two things are put together.

Here, in John, where the subject is eternal life, he begins with forgiveness of sins, and it is a ground of assurance to every one. "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Note, it is not here *through* His name that we obtain forgiveness of sins, but it is *for the glory of His name*. God the Father will not allow the devil to say—There is one of your children on earth, and he has not his sins forgiven.

Forgiveness of sins is one quartering of the family coat of arms, and it would be a blot on the family escutcheon if one of that family had not his sins forgiven. So for His name's sake they are forgiven.

Let the feeble believer who doubts as to this, look at that which God has presented here—"I write unto you, children, because your sins *are forgiven* you for His name's sake."

After the twelfth verse the apostle goes on to the characteristics that mark the various degrees of *progress*, and he exposes that which the devil is introducing in order to hinder this progress. There never was such an implacable enemy as Satan. See how he dogs the steps of a Christian. He will do all he can to prevent you coming to Christ; and if he cannot prevent you doing that, as soon as he knows that you have come to Him he will try to make you believe that your sins are not forgiven, or he tries to lead you away by false teaching, or by offering you something in the world. He offered Christ *all* the

world. But the Father says, Go on to know Him that is from the beginning; even the One that was with Me before any beginning.

Now the three classes of the family are twice addressed.

The thirteenth verse includes all three classes—the fathers, the young men, and the babes. They are then addressed a second time thus, viz. :—

1. The first clause of *v.* 14 is to the “fathers.”
2. From the last clause of this verse to the end of *v.* 17 the “young men” are spoken to.
3. From *vv.* 18-27 the apostle addresses the “little children.”

Notice that in *v.* 13 there are no warnings at all. Each class is addressed, and the apostle tells them *why* he wrote them for their encouragement (as in *v.* 12 also). There was in each class some characteristic, some trait of eternal life.

He wrote unto the fathers *because* they knew Him that was from the beginning. This was a characteristic of eternal life.

He wrote unto the young men *because* they had overcome the wicked one. This was a characteristic of eternal life.

He wrote unto the little children *because* they had known the Father. This was a characteristic of eternal life.

The second time he addresses them he has nothing else to say to the fathers, no warnings for them; but

the young men and the little children he warns, for there are peculiar dangers that beset their path.

The fathers "have known Him that is from the beginning"; *i.e.*, they have come to know Christ, the beginning of Christianity, as One who substitutes everything. There are no warnings for them. They had been babes, and, as such, subject to the wiles of the seducers, but they have passed through it; they have recognised that the false teachers were not of Him that is from the beginning. They had been young men and strong in the Word, had overcome the appeals of Satan and the world. Christ was to them better than these, and than the self to which they appealed. There was nothing to them worth living for but Christ. Self! Let it go. The world! Let it go. False teachers! Let them go. Nothing but Christ. And what then? Fulness of joy.

The word "know" in *vv.* 13, 14, is objective knowledge.

A hymn by a French writer reminds one of this progress. It is composed of four stanzas, the last lines of which run thus:—

The first, which describes briefly the experience of unconverted days, ends:

"All of self, and *none* of Thee" (Christ).

The second, when Christ had made for Himself a place in the heart, says:

"Some of self, and *some* of Thee."

The third indicates growth, and ends:

"Less of self, and *more* of Thee."

Until at last the soul finds Christ better than all, and says :

“None of self, and *all* of Thee.”

The Lord raise up fathers amongst us ; we want them. There are many hoary heads amongst us ; but are there not some hoary heads which cannot be called fathers ? May the Lord constrain us to rise up before the hoary head, not simply from natural reverence, but because of the manifestation in them of the characteristic of the fathers. The fathers have known Him that is from the beginning, and can say that beside “Him” there is not any thing else worth knowing. Some souls go out and learn other things but they come back with the experience that it is all bitterness and ashes. The fathers can say, It was Christ that satisfied me to begin with, and *He* brought me the knowledge of the Father. It is God’s Christ that the fathers have known, and in that knowledge they have fulness of joy.

Is this fulness of joy continuous ? *It may be* ; but it is not necessarily so. While they abide in Him (v. 28) it is so. But you may then apply the test of verse 6 to the fathers : “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”

Look at the instance related of Peter, in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians.” He was in this fellowship, and he was a father. Impetuous, as he ever was, he went down to Antioch, and he dissembled there. Therefore at that moment he was not walking as

Christ walked. He was not abiding in Christ, and he had not fulness of joy; but as soon as Peter got right again—and there is provision for that—he got back into that place where “He knew Him that was from the beginning”—into that place where there was “fulness of joy.” How necessary in such a case the word “abide.”

We now come to the “young men.” In *v.* 13, where the three classes are spoken of, there is no word of warning to them: “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” What the apostle says here is, that they have this characteristic of divine life; they have overcome the wicked one. It was not so advanced a characteristic as that of the fathers; there had not been such growth. But it was as distinct as that of the fathers.

But in *v.* 15 the apostle gives a solemn warning to the young men. He says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” They were strong by the word of God abiding in them. This was the means by which they became strong. See how the Word of God abode in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Him when tempted of the devil in the wilderness. How ready He was with Scripture!

In many cases *we* have to turn to the Book to find the word suitable for the occasion. In that case, it is not abiding in us. It should be in our hearts, in our memories. If we want to be young men, we must feed upon the Word of God continually, and

have it abiding in us. People say, I can't do that. Then I am sorry for you. Of course, this is not in any way referring to one's occupation and duty in the world. We must be good servants, and do our duty, in whatever position He has given us, to His glory. But is there no turning back to the things of God after we have done with the things of this scene? If you allow your leisure moments to be occupied with any literature that does not tend to help in the understanding of the Word of God, you will never be a "young man," and never be ready to meet the temptations of the devil.

The Word was in Christ, and when the devil came with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, He was ready to meet him with, "It is written," and the devil was foiled. You will find that it is impossible to overcome if the Word is not in you. It is no good to be wise after the time; the Word must abide in you. But the young men *had* overcome the wicked one. Probably in his first attacks upon them, through the seducers, when they were babes. Yet still the "young man" is in danger of the world. Satan never gives up his intention of hindering the manifestation of divine life in this world; and if he can hinder that manifestation, he glories over it, because it has brought dishonour to God.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (v. 15). Neither the world as a whole, nor the things that constitute it. We may not love

it in its entirety, but how often something in it attracts our hearts, and we love it! Yet, "if any man love the world, the love of the *Father* is not in him." The apostle goes into detail: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world" (v. 16). It is not the world as *God* made it, but the world as a system, that has grown up under man's hand, and that is opposed to the *Father*.

All that is in it appeals to me; and hence going with the world is *selfishness* in some form or another. It is something *I like*, something that aggrandizes *me*. The devil is always presenting it to us.

Mark, that the young men had overcome the wicked one. Now he says, young man, don't love the world; it is your snare. May the Lord deliver the young men from the world! The devil offered Christ *all* the world; but there are many Christians who have been turned aside for a *very little bit of it*. The world has got into their hearts. If they could only see in the light that little bit which seems so great to them, and compare it with the grander thing which God has presented, would it not look a poor thing? God is light, and God is in the light. Bring the world into that light, bring it to the cross of Christ; you will get a true idea of it there, and you will pour contempt on it. The cross stands between us and the world; but it is a continual snare, to

which the young man is exposed. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and began this world, building a city, without God. It was judged in Christ's cross. Here it is passing away, and its lusts; "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Now take the babes. He has a warning for them also. They had known the Father. He says to them, "*Little children*, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (v. 18). You have "known the Father," little children; you have the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father." But there is danger for you in this scene. You must grow in strength.

If you look at the eternal life as it was manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot say there was progress in it. There was progress in Christ as a man (Lu. ii. 52), but that was not progress in eternal life. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jno. i. 4). Eternal life always expresses itself in the same way. When eternal life is imparted to us we have to set aside everything in us that would hinder it, and there is progress in this. When we get into His presence, and are before Him, then eternal life will burst out in us in all its splendour; but here there must be progress in overcoming all that which in us by nature and around us is contrary to it.

The little children are credulous; they know that what they have heard has given them a distinct lift. It has taken them out of the world, and they are in a place where they know the Father. The devil knows that they are ready to hear, and their danger is in their credulity and the character of the seducers. Let us see what the seducers are: "As ye have heard that antichrist shall come." He does not warn them against *the* antichrist, but against those who were already there: "Even now are there many antichrists." See where they came from: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (v. 19). They were not "the antichrist." He is spoken of differently; but they were antichristian in spirit.

Jude speaks of evil men and seducers creeping in unawares. That is corruption. John speaks of their going out from us; that is, they were apostates. They were not Christians. The devil begins by introducing them among them, and then they go out. He introduced them to gain the ear of the babes, and they attracted the babes; and when they went out the babes had ears to listen to them. The apostle warns against them. The very worst errors that have swept over Christendom, and those that have carried away most people with them, have come from those who have occupied the highest places as teachers in

the church; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us.

What is the safeguard of the babes? It is this: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye *know* all things." They had conscious knowledge which comes with life. They had the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit as coming from the Holy One. It is not simply a holy anointing. The holy Father has sent His Holy Spirit as an anointing, giving intelligence and power. That is what the babes have. They were conscious of all things connected with these false teachings, because they knew the Father; and they knew that this seducing spirit, which presented something else to them, was not of the Father.

But they had more—they knew the truth. He says, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (v. 21). They had an anointing from the Holy One. They knew the truth, and now the apostle says, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life" (vv. 24, 25). He teaches the *babes* what it is to abide in Him; it is to let that which they had heard from the beginning abide in them. As they did that, eternal life, which had been the subject of promise before, becomes now fulfilled in them.

Now see how the seducers act. There are two forms of the denial of the truth here—"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" They do not deny there is a Christ, but that Jesus is that Christ. The antichrist presents *himself* as Christ; but the denial that Jesus is the Christ does not constitute a man the antichrist, for every unbelieving Jew did that, but he is a liar that does it. On the other hand, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and Son."

They talk about the Father, and they will not have the glorious manifestation of the Father in Jesus Christ. They deny the Son in whom the Father was manifested, and the apostle says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" (v. 23).

"Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning." It is often a difficult question as to how we are to abide in Christ. This is it: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." That is simple. Not that it is brought down to the understanding of the human mind, but the feeblest child of God may surely lay hold of it. What you have heard from the beginning, let that abide in you, and this is,—with its consequences, "ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father"—eternal life. Happy babes! The Lord give such to apprehend how to abide in Him!

"Now," he concludes, "children, abide in Him."

Here it is all the three classes. The grand word for all is, "Abide."

Fathers, what are you to do? You have known Him that is from the beginning. Abide in Him!

Young men, ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world. Abide in Him!

Little children, you have known the Father; you have an unction from the Holy One; you know the truth. Beware of false teachers. Abide in Him!

And this is in order that when He shall appear we (the apostles) may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

May the Lord give us to see where we are, and give us to go on in this divine progress from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers!

May the Lord give fathers! The church wants fathers. Not that it does not want young men and babes, but there is too much settling down with us. Let there be no settling down, but a going on to know Him that is from the beginning, and to be satisfied with Him and with nothing else; to know the Father, and the Son who manifested the Father. He is the true God and eternal life.

LECTURE III.

1 JOHN ii. 28 ; iii. 24.

THE apostle returns to the testing of the pretensions of those who said they were what they were not, and who said it evidently in order that they might draw aside those who were really Christians from the knowledge of the magnitude of the gift that God had bestowed upon them. They were seducers, deceivers, as *v. 7* says : “ Children, let no man deceive you.”

This third chapter is one of the most difficult for souls that are not established ; but the apostle is most anxious to *assure* the hearts of those that were really the children of God. That is noticeable all through the epistle. There were the two things : He would have those who really believed on the name of the Son of God conscious that what they had was eternal life ; this is one object of the epistle. On the other hand, he would have them delivered from those who, pretending to be what they were not, endeavoured to turn them aside from the truth, by presenting something else as superior to what they had from the beginning.

He presents at once, in the first part of the epistle, that which in itself is perfect—“ That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto

us." This is perfection. There is no advance upon it. It is impossible.

Moreover, it is *revealed*; it is not left to any human mind to discover. It is as impossible that the human mind could reach perfection as it is that man by wisdom could find out God. In the wisdom of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God." So, here, man would enter into the domain of eternal life professedly, and present to his fellows that which was superior to what God had revealed. Alas for man! Never be moved, says the apostle, from "that which was from the beginning."

Before entering into this chapter, I would again refer to what we learnt from the previous portion of the epistle, because we have a verse here which, unless this is clear in our souls, may upset us. We have, in chapter i., three things, viz. :—

1. We have sin in us ;
2. We have sinned ; and
3. We may sin.

These three things are true of those who are brought into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. If you keep this in mind, you will not be upset by such a sentence as—"Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin" (iii. 9).

It is evident that that verse refers to one that is *born* of God *as such*, and abstractly, as John usually presents the truth. Is that to say there is nothing in him that can sin? Not at all. Still, in the

chapter we have read, we do not get the two things looked at as in the same person. Perfectly true they are in the same person, but he does not so look at Him. He is looking at a person who is born of God, and he looks at him abstractly. He allows no other consideration for the moment; and he says that man does not *practise* sin.

I draw your attention to the word translated "commit," or "do." It should be, I believe, invariably rendered "practise." This at once gives a clue to the understanding of this chapter. It is the person whose *habit* is such. For example, "He that practises sin is of the devil" (v. 8). It is not a person who knows he may sin, who dare not say he could not sin; it is one who *practises* sin; whose habit is such; he is of the devil.

We will now go a little into the details of the chapter. It is introduced by the two last verses of the previous chapter, "Children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (ii. 28). We saw that this is what he presents to all three classes of the family. "The fathers" were to "abide in Him," the "young men" were to "abide in Him," and "the babes" were to "abide in Him." They had no other safeguard. It was not that the fathers had attained to sinless perfection, and had no need to keep guard. They were still to "abide in Him," and unless they did so they lost their joy and, for the

moment, their privileges as fathers. Why were they to "abide in Him"? He says, "*You* [all] abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

The "we" refers to the apostles. It shows the care—the apostolic care—of John for his converts. Just as you get exactly the same thing in Paul; who says to the Thessalonians, "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. ii. 19, 20). They were Paul's crown, and in like manner John says, You abide in Him; that *we* may not be ashamed of our work when He comes. See to it that we get a full reward. He brings in here the thought of the coming of the Lord, and this he develops a little in the chapter that follows.

Then he begins His testing again: "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (v. 29). Last week our attention was drawn to two words translated "know"—one objective knowledge, and the other conscious knowledge. We have both in this last verse. The first "know" is conscious knowledge, which goes with life. The second "know" is objective knowledge; something that is presented to us from outside. In this verse he introduces the *nature*—"born of Him"; and this is followed by,

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God: therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, *now* are we the children of God” (iii. 1, 2). Here we have the relationship.

When we take up the term “adoption,” which we have in Scripture, we often give the word credit for no more than is meant by man when he talks of adoption; but you cannot give a child you adopt your nature. God does not do a thing in that way. Before he adopts us *He gives us the family nature*; we are *born of Him*.

Here is a test as to whether we are born of Him: “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that *doeth righteousness* is born of Him.” (ii. 29).

It is remarkable how you get in John the pronouns “He,” “Him” applied to one of the Divine Persons when the other is the antecedent; so that one scarcely knows who is spoken of. In this verse, “If ye know that *He* is righteous” is Christ evidently; then, “Ye know that everyone that *doeth righteousness* is born of *Him*.” This is God, without any other antecedent. It shows how thoroughly, in the apostle’s mind, they were one in nature. See also iii. 1, 2.

This is again the first characteristic of the divine nature—*righteousness*. In the early part of ch. ii. we

saw this same characteristic, only there more in the way of obedience, and love is linked with it. We have them both here again as proofs of the fact that the person who exhibits these things has the new nature, and then, in the last verse we read, He has given us the Spirit. There are thus in this chapter three things that prove a man has eternal life—1, Righteousness; 2, Love; 3, "The Spirit which He hath given us."

Mark you, there is nowhere found in Scripture the term "*Christ's* righteousness." We hear a good deal of it in theology. Scripture speaks of *God's* righteousness. They are confounded in theology. The nearest approach we have to Christ's righteousness is in this verse, "If ye know that He is righteous." He was a righteous man, certainly. But if we ask, What was Christ's righteousness?—Remember, we are speaking of His life as a Man down here,—What do men call righteousness to-day? Well, one who acts uprightly with his fellows is called a righteous man. But was that Christ's righteousness? His was infinitely more than that. He did always those things that *pleased the Father*.

It was not simply that in His walk He did what was right, but that He always *obeyed*. The life of Christ was of that nature that He never did a single thing because *He* would do it, but because the Father told Him to do it, "He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"

(John xii. 49). Thus even the very words that He spake were the fruit of obedience, and we learn that it is not only that we are to walk rightly, but to walk in obedience to the commandments of the Father.

We thus get at once a test as to what is right; it is a question of motive. A man may do a right thing. Why does he do it? Is it from obedience? If not, it is not of the nature of Christ's righteousness. Righteousness with Christ was to give *God* always the first place.

If we look at what was given in the Old Testament as the measure of human righteousness, but which, even in Christendom, men have lost the idea of, we find it consisted of two things—my duty to God, first: and my duty to my neighbour, second.

Man only speaks of righteousness as the fulfilment of his duty to his fellows; but what about God? People say, "There's a righteous man; he fulfils every relationship in life rightly. But if one asks, What does he think about God? he may be answered, I fear his thoughts about God are very unscriptural. Is this righteousness? It is *unrighteousness* of the very worst character. Only let a man be righteous to his neighbor, and he may think anything of God, and may wrong God in any and every way. That is not righteousness. The righteousness spoken of here is the answer to God's demands; and Christ obeyed, because God demanded it. But this is *never* said to be *imputed to us*.

He did always those things that pleased God, and because of that He could say, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 42). But this connects itself with the latter part of the chapter.

"Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him." Then he has the family nature. It is a marvellous thing! Before entering upon relationship, or, if you will, *position*, he presents the *nature*. We are not put into the relationship without the nature that delights in it.

Suppose you were to take a black slave, to free him, and bring him into your family circle, making him sit down at your table with your children, would he be happy? True, you would have done much; liberated him, and adopted him, and brought him into your family: but you could not make him feel thoroughly happy with you, *because you could not give him the family nature*. He would rather ever so much be outside cleaning boots than sitting with you at the table. He feels he is not a child of the family. The better the father, the more he feels it. Ask him, Is he *your* father? Ah, no! he says, I wish he was.

It would be the same if God were to introduce us into the family without the nature; we should be miserable. Should we be happy in the glory, without the nature? We should want to get out of it as soon as we could. But we *have* the family nature, nothing less, beloved friends; God hath created in us

the nature of a child. Therefore we get in the next chapter, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *children* of God." (John speaks of children; Paul of *sons*.) Now we are in the enjoyment of the relationship.

In ch. i. of John's gospel we get, "As many as received Him, to them gave He [the] right to be the children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (v. 12, N.T.). "Who have been born," He goes on to say, "not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God" (v. 13, N.T.).

Such were born of God; they had the nature, and they had title to take up the relationship. This is the place the disciples occupied before Christ died and rose again. But now John can draw attention to the marvellous character of the love of God toward us, that *we*—who have sin in us; who have sinned; and who may sin—should be called the children of God; put into a place of relationship similar to that which Christ occupies. We are the children of God, and *consciously* such down here.

The first three verses of ch. iii. give a wonderful compendium of truth in themselves. This is the manner of the love of the Father that "we should be called the children of God." The first result is, "the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." The world did not know Christ. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world

knew Him not" (John i. 10). (Here the "know" is objective knowledge). What a wonderful condemnation of the condition of the world that it did not know its Creator. He—the Creator—passed by as a pilgrim and a stranger in the midst of those men who at that very moment were drawing their breath at His hand. And how distinctly we are put into His position in the world! There is another position we are to occupy; but first the world does not know us. You say that you are a son of God. The world does not recognize it. But the day will come when the world will know. The blessed Lord says, in John xvii., "That the world may know that Thou hast sent me, *and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me*" (v. 23).

That day is coming; but at the present moment we are in the world, occupying the relationship He has introduced us into with the Father, although the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Does this satisfy us? The Lord grant it may; that we may be *as* pilgrims and strangers down here!

There is no mistake about our present position. "Beloved, *now are we* the children of God." That is true now. It is not yet manifested 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. We are to be like Him in glory! We have not now the glory, but glory is our hope. We *are* righteous in Christ. We wait for the *hope* of righteousness, and

the hope of righteousness is glory. We do not wait to be made children of God; we do not wait to be made righteous; we have also the new nature, which acts righteously. It is not that we have not another nature; but here it is put abstractly. In ch. i. he supposes that we *have the old nature*; but here we have the nature that practises righteousness. We are consciously in the relationship of children, but we wait for glory. We are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, "*as He is*;" it does not say *as He was*. He was a Man of His own order; there never was, and never can be, another like as He was.

To *walk* like Him is a different thing, because we have His nature; but we have also what He never had—an evil nature.

In v. 2 it says, "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is"—this is not His coming for His saints, but it is His manifestation with His saints. "We shall see Him as He is;" and we must be like Him to "see Him as He is." It is impossible for any natural eye to behold Him in the glory. When John in his mortal body in a vision turned round and saw Christ, not in the glory in which He exists as Son of the Father, but in a position of government over that which was responsible to Him down here upon the earth, he "fell at His feet as dead." I must be made like Him in order to see Him as He is. But we *shall* see Him as He is. What did He say?

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John xvii. 24). It is the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father referred to here. But in order to see Him, we must be like Him.

What a hope for the Christian! It is spoken of in Phil. iii. 20, 21; also in Col. iii. 4. Many scriptures speak of it, but never in exactly the same way. It is true that we shall go to be with Him before He appears. See 1 Thess. iv. 13-17. There is just that one blessed act that awaits us—an act common to every saint of God from the day of Pentecost to the moment when it takes place. It is the act of going up to meet the Lord, when He comes, in the air; body, soul, and spirit made like Him. “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.” This is not what is presented in these verses in John’s epistle, but it is preliminarily necessary to it. When we are manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

He (the Lord Himself) “shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.”

Notice—

The shout of Christ;
The voice of the archangel;
The trump of God.

All heaven is interested in that event. But all earth; what do they care about it? And many Christians; what do they care? May the Lord put that hope more fully and blessedly into our hearts!

Shall we not be interested in that in which all heaven is interested? That moment when Christ shall get the outward confirmation before assembled worlds; before principalities and powers; of the marvellous victory that He has obtained over death. Every sleeping saint shall be raised, every living saint shall be changed; all shall stand for one instant upon this earth together, and all be caught up *together* to meet the Lord in the air. This is an act common to all.

“Won’t Paul go up first?” you ask, “or John before us?” No, we shall all be “caught up *together* ;” every act dependent upon the work of the Lord Jesus is common to all believers.

Why will Paul be caught up? Because he is a saved sinner.

Why will you be caught up? Because you are a saved sinner. Thank God, we all go up together.

It is God’s expression, God’s manifestation of the wonderful victory of the work of the Lord Jesus over death, whether as applied to the corrupt body in the grave or to the mortal body that we exist in here upon the earth. We shall be like *Him*. *Then* good-bye to sin, and good-bye to the whole sphere in which it exists. We are with the Lord for ever. Amen!

“Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.” Mark that, beloved friends. It is of the utmost importance. At the very opening of the chapter in which the pretensions of those that are not real are tested he says, You are children; you have the nature of Christ, but you need purifying. That supposes an evil nature. Had Christ ever need to purify Himself? If a man knows he is going to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, do you not think he will wish to be morally conformed to Him now?

One may say, Then you believe in *progressive* sanctification? Yes, with all my heart. Do we not see that old Peter could do what young Peter could not? Young Peter declared that he would die for his Master, and then he denied Him with an oath; but old Peter *did* die for his Master. Was Peter, then, perfectly sanctified when He died? No; but at that moment when he—with all the saints—meets the Lord in the air, he will be for ever like Him. We need no more purification then.

What do we see before the throne of God? In Rev. iv. 6, “A sea of glass.” In Rev. xv. 2, it is “mingled with fire,” and occupied by those that had gotten the victory over the beast. Why is it not a sea of water, as was the case with Solomon’s temple? Why is it solidified? Because for those who are on the sea of glass there is no more need of purification, but those who stand there are purified. They

were purifying themselves down here, but they *are* pure when they are there. The fire mingled with the glass may set forth the fiery process through which, under God's government, those on the sea were purified; but *we* by the hope of being like Him. It is a daily progressive sanctification. The process goes on day by day, hour by hour. What is the standard? "*As He is pure.*" The Christian knows nothing less. Ask him, Has he attained to it? Beloved friends, it is impossible while in this body.

If any have accepted the thought so largely abroad in Christendom to-day, of holiness by faith, perfection in the flesh, I beseech you, upon the authority of the Word of God, to let it go. It is not the truth of God. How can you purify yourself, if you are pure? This verse—one of the most blessed in Scripture—does not apply to you; you do not want it. The purifying process goes on day by day. Undoubtedly there is progress in this. The Lord give us more of it!

With *v.* 4 come the tests again: "Whosoever practiseth sin practiseth *lawlessness*: for sin is lawlessness." This reading is generally accepted. Accept the word "practise" for "commit," and you see it is not a single overt act, but a course; though if a man be guilty of a single act, he *commits* lawlessness. It is the same word used in Rom. ii. 12, of those who have sinned "without law." You must have a law in order to transgression; but if there is

no sin without transgression of the law, then there was no sin from Adam to Moses. Yet the proof that sin was there is that every one died. Sin is not the transgression of the law, but lawlessness. It is doing my own will. People boast in that. They say, I do as I like. Very well; you are lawless. You have no right to do as you like; no creature has. The Word of God is plain. Where are God's righteous claims? They are nowhere to a man who says he does as he likes.

"Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" (v. 5). "Know" here is conscious knowledge again, which goes with life. If a man sins not only does he commit lawlessness, but he does the very thing for which Christ came to die. But, "whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (v. 6). This "know" is objective knowledge.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (v. 7). We have already had, "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him;" but now we have, that He is "Righteous, even as He is righteous." That is the measure of our righteousness. Is the measure of our righteousness that to which we have attained? Not here. If it were so, we should come very poorly off. It is *Christ*. "Righteous, even as He is righteous."

Does not that lift the standard for you? What is the proof of the life being there? *Righteousness; practical righteousness.* What is the measure of our righteousness? Here is one who has attained to righteousness above his fellows. Is he more so to God? Yes! in one way. No! in another. For the measure here is, "As Christ is righteous." It lifts the standard so above the head of every one that no one can suppose it to be the measure of attainment. This verse combines both practical and judicial righteousness.

We have had, "Purifieth himself, even as He is pure; here now we have, "Righteous, even as He is righteous." We shall see the same thing with love presently. It is always so. Eternal life as manifested in the believer knows no other standard than Christ. But the truth advances and unfolds itself; so that in ch. iv. 17 we have the wonderful expression, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, *so are we in this world.*" Think of that. All His acceptance before the Father, the relationship of Son with the Father—all that He is in the glory is ours now, while we are upon earth. Beloved, let the truth in; accept it. It is but to believe it, to grasp it with the firm grasp of faith. We must not only *know* the truth, but *hold* it. The truth will not hold you, unless you hold it. A man may have his head stored with truth, whose walk

declares he is not righteous.

But there is something more. The apostle turns now to the other side, and traces—for the believers to whom he wrote—the old, evil nature up to its source. “He that practises sin is of the devil” (v. 8). The devil is the source of sin. He said to Eve, “In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” There was the pride of life. Eve fell: and from that moment, man, as such, is a fallen creature.

God made man innocent; He made Him upright. The devil suggested disobedience, holding out the hope of being like God. Eve was deceived; both transgressed and fell. Satan had himself, being lifted up with pride, fallen into condemnation. Now he seeks to suborn man in the same way, and, alas, succeeds! Thus, sin that characterises the fallen nature of man is traced up to the devil.

In v. 8 “the beginning” is not as it is in other parts of the epistle—the beginning of Christianity; it is the beginning of the devil as such. But “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now we have the verse that troubles people so much: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (v. 9). After what has been said about this, much more need not now be added; yet much repetition is needed in learning

the truth. You do not like repetition? Very likely; but, possibly, what you need is repetition. We often hear a thing that we are not at the moment prepared for, and it passes over us; if repeated, it may strike us. The Lord cause it to do so. Here, then the apostle looks at the thing abstractly. He looks at the man as born of God. He does not, for the moment, suppose the other nature; he has already supposed that, for he says he needs purifying. But as born of God he does not practise sin. Can a man born of God, as such, practise sin? Impossible! "He cannot sin, because he is born of God."

The other characteristic of the eternal life is introduced in *vv.* 10, 11. What is it? *Love!* It is introduced negatively at first, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that *loveth not his brother*" (*v.* 10). And then it is positively inculcated, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should *love one another*" (*v.* 11). "The beginning" here is again the beginning of Christianity. The message in *ch. i.* was, "God is light." The message in this chapter is, "Love one another." The eternal life that has been communicated to us expresses itself towards those with whom we are brought into daily contact.

Cain is given in *v.* 12 as an illustration of the man who sins. "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It is a very searching word. Do we not love our

brother? Why not? You may depend upon it there is a sense in the soul *that* brother's works are righteous, mine are not. *That* brother is in advance of me. It is envy. The first trace of it is in Cain; but there is that principle in us also. It speaks against myself if I have not love to my brother. We should rejoice when our brother is in advance of us. If we are in communion with the Father and the Son, we are thankful to find in another that which is like Christ, but which may be lacking in our own soul. It is always so if eternal life is in activity. It is not in activity if I envy my brother. Love may have to manifest itself in an unpalatable way at times; but when a brother's works are righteous, it never envies. This is not the new nature, but the nature of Cain.

“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. *We* know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (*vv.* 13, 14). The “know” is conscious knowledge again; and an emphatic “*We*.” We do not belong to the world. Let it hate us. “*We* know” we have passed from death unto life. Love is a characteristic of eternal life, and is a proof that a soul has “passed from death unto life.”

More than that, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (*v.* 15). He “abideth in death,” but not only so, he hates, and is in spirit the activity of death;

he is a murderer. There are three things here ; viz. :

1. He " abideth in death " ;
2. He is a murderer ; and
3. " No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Man brought in death by his sin, and now, alas ! he is ready to execute the sentence, not only upon the lower creation, but upon his fellow-man ; he becomes a murderer. God detects the *thought* of evil. " He that *hateth* his brother." He has that in his heart which, if not restrained, would end in murder. There are three steps in the progress of sin :

1. The thought ;
2. The word ; and then,
3. The deed.

We get it in Cain. " Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Here was the angry thought.

Then " Cain *talked* with Abel his brother." Here the angry word.

" And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and *slew* him." Here, alas ! the angry deed. Thought, word, deed ; that is all ; and how terrible an all ! God judges the thing in its root, and He says that the man that has the thought of hatred in his heart is a murderer. The thought makes the man a murderer in the sight of God.

This verse says, " Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." This is negative ; but there can be no doubt it does suppose that eternal

life abides in some. Granted that here it is negative, and it is not always fair to affirm a positive from a negative; but if we turn to ch. ii. we read, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." That which they had heard was Christ; Christ was the eternal life. "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father; And this is the promise which He hath promised us, even eternal life" (vv. 24, 25). There you have it. We see that a man may have eternal life abiding in him. Not, of course, that he has it in him as a source or spring of life. That is the difference.

"Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (v. 16). We have seen that

Christ is the standard of our purification;

Christ is the measure of our righteousness;

and now

Christ is to be the measure of our love.

Is there any other? None! Towards whom was this love manifested? Towards us. How are *we* to manifest it? Towards each other. You say, How blessed. Christ—"the eternal life, which was with the Father"—loved us so that He became a Man that He might lay down His life for us. It is exceedingly blessed; but it makes us exceedingly responsible. How? Because we *ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren. And then see how this

comes out in practise. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (v. 17). No! there must be the outcome, if the love of God abides there. One may say, I could lay down my life for the brethren. Ah! but can you communicate your goods? Do we not need this word about love to-day?

Not that one would advocate community of goods, or going beyond what one has faith in God about; but if we want a heart that maintains confidence toward God we must do the things that please Him. "Children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (vv. 18-22). Thus alone can we maintain a heart that has confidence towards God.

The word "condemn" here does not raise the question of the condemnation of those for whom there is "no condemnation." It is here a question of the outflow of eternal life in one of its characteristics—love. If one with this world's goods see his brother

in need, there is an opportunity for love to flow out. If the opportunity is lost, the result is, that the heart loses its confidence in God in speaking about its own need. It is a fault of omission, rather than of commission. The natural flow of life has been stayed; yet confidence toward God is not restored until one has to do with Him about it.

The word is literally "know against." It is translated "was to be blamed," in the case of Peter, in Gal. ii. 11; the only other place in the New Testament where it occurs.

If my brother is in need, and I shut up my bowels of compassion, I have something against myself; my heart condemns me. Can my heart be purified by faith, and not condemn such an act as that? And what then? "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." It is a wonderful way of expressing it. It does not say that He "knows against," or that He "condemns;" but that He knows. I "know against" myself, but God "knows." You ask, "If my heart condemns me, does not God condemn me? It is a penetrating, searching word for one who shuts up his bowels of compassion. God condemns *the thing*, but the Holy Ghost has guarded it in not saying God condemns us; because, if we go back to ch. i. we see we are sheltered by "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," and cannot be condemned. The *thing* is condemned, and we shall never get into *fellowship* again until we

have all out before Him.

But what a thing for the condemning heart to have to do with an uncondemning God!

We see that we have not done what is right; we have not let our heart flow out in the channel God presented; we must get our heart relieved in His presence, and most likely we shall then, if possible, go and do the very thing that we omitted before.

We go to Him, then, and "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (v. 22). That is what Christ did; He always kept God's commandments. And, on the other hand, He got the answer to it, "*I knew* that Thou hearest Me always."

This is what we want, brethren, in order to maintain that confidence toward God, and to be in the position that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him." This is always qualified, although it seems to be stated in unqualified terms; but there are conditions necessary to it. If we turn to John xv. we read, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (v. 7). There it is a question of service; here one of letting love flow out in order to confidence in God. If I give the very last thing I have to a brother that has need, I have confidence in going to God and saying, O God, I want my need

met. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him.

This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment" (v. 23). And this, mark you, is *God's* commandment." We have had commandments that are the expression of the life in Christ, and which govern that life in us. Now we are brought to *God's* commandment; *i.e.*, "That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment." How God values faith and love! Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love to all the saints.

"And He that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him." This is a practical thing. We abide in Him; He in us. Then he goes on to give an additional proof that He abides in us: "And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (v. 24). This leads up to ch. iv.

What a wonderful thing! We are begotten of God; we have eternal life, which manifests itself in righteousness and love; and we have also the Spirit of God.

When speaking to the little children, in the second chapter, he says: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you" (v. 27).

Here he says, "We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."

In ch. iv., "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us *of* His Spirit" (v. 13).

And in ch. v., "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the *witness* in Himself" (v. 10); that is, the Spirit.

There is thus a great deal about the Spirit in this epistle. Here it is an additional testimony to our hearts that God abides in us.

We have, then, in this chapter—

The family nature.

The relationship of children.

The Father's love is bestowed upon us.

Moreover,

We have Christ's place in the world.

The hope of being like Him in glory.

We purify ourselves as He is pure (vv. 1-3).

Then, eternal life manifests itself in righteousness.

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (v. 7).

And, love—

"Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (v. 16).

And we have the Spirit of God.

Christ is the standard of our purification, the measure of our righteousness, and the measure of our love.

What more do we want?

Thus, in this chapter, which presents tests for the unmasking of deceivers, we have also the most blessed ground of confidence for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord not only lift us into the consciousness of what we have, but enable us to manifest that eternal life towards each other and towards all men in the name of His Son Jesus Christ! Amen.



LECTURE IV.

I JOHN iv.

WE were looking last week at the tests of the third chapter, and the way in which the Christian is looked at as a light in the scene through which he is passing; and we saw that in that chapter *persons* are in view; persons who, on the one hand, are looked at abstractly as born of God, apart from other circumstances, and who exhibit the traits of the divine nature as manifested in Christ; in contrast to that which is contrary to God on the other.

They are righteous as Christ is righteous. They purify themselves as He is pure. They love as He loved. So that the Christian is here looked at as a light in this world.

In the first chapter he is put into the presence of God who is light, and the purity of that uncreated light discovers to him the darkness that is in him. An illustration of this has been used which is very much to the point; viz., If one puts a lighted lamp into the bright sunlight at mid-day, the light of the lamp will be so effectually hidden that little will be seen but the smoke and its black wick. So when one is put into the presence of God, that which is of us will be seen, and the measure of light

that we give will go for nothing in the presence of the Perfect Light that is there. But in the third chapter it is like taking the lighted lamp out of the sunlight and bringing it into the dark night, and then it throws its beams all around it, and the contrast between its light and the darkness which surrounds it is very distinct.

Such is the light that makes manifest the darkness of this world. Such is the Christian. He is the same person in the two places; and while before God he discovers that He has sin in him, and he may sin, yet is he a light in this dark world. Man put out Him who was the light of the world while He was in it, and now, having gone up on high, He has, through God's mercy, left others here to show the truth of that word, "The darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth."

In the third chapter there are three proofs of eternal life; viz., righteousness, love, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. This last is brought out at the close of the chapter.

Before further developing the love of God, he gives a warning in the first six verses of the fourth chapter as to the spirits which are abroad in the world, and the way in which they may be known. It is an important thing for us to see that there are other spirits than the Spirit of God in this world. It is not a question here of *men*, but *spirits*, and it is of the utmost importance to distinguish between them.

In the second epistle, when he writes unto the elect lady, he says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (v. 10). There it is the man, but in our chapter it is the spirit: "Try the *spirits*."

If we only see *the man* we shall be led aside by that which the spirits present to seduce us. Not only had these spirits gone out into the world, but they had intruded themselves into the Church, to turn away God's children from the truth.

No doubt there is a spirit world, and there are spiritual manifestations; and the apostle here gives us the tests of what the Spirit of God is. In these verses there are two great tests; and all the error in the world may be detected, if tried by these two tests. When our hearts know what it is to cleave to the Word of God we soon distinguish between what is of God, and what is not of Him.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (v. 1). It is a very solemn statement. We are not to believe every one we hear. It would be far easier if he could say, Believe the spirits. If there were no power above man but that which sought to lead him in the right way; but this is millennial. The fact is, Satan and his legions are in this world, and the tendency of every effort of his is to deceive the saints

of God, and lead them aside from the truth. If God's every act is pure blessing, Satan's every act is to help on the curse, as at the first. He wants to bring us, practically, into opposition to God.

Here is the first test of the true spirit: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God" (v. 2). It is not here "that Jesus Christ *is* come in the flesh:" not the fact of His having come, but confessing Him thus come. That is the point. It is the soul that holds to Jesus Christ come in flesh as the blessed Person in whom all the truth of God is centred, and who displaces entirely the first man before God.

"Jesus Christ *come in flesh.*" Could this be said of us? Impossible! *Come in flesh* could not be said of mere human beings. We are in the flesh, but we had nothing to do with our being here in the flesh.

But what does it mean? It sets forth the fact that is the *act of Him who was God*. "Jesus Christ *come in flesh.*" Who had *power to come in flesh*? No one but God. Therefore Jesus Christ is God.

But it also exposes the error that was in the world that it was the mere *appearance* of a man. He was a *real man* on the earth; the One of whom he had said, in the first part of the epistle, "That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have

looked upon, and our hands have handled." Thus it was not the mere form of a man, but a real man. Therefore we have embodied in this statement the two truths which we find in the first chapter of John's gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (vv. 1, 2). He is said to be God; with God; and in the beginning. That is to say He was co-existent, co-eternal, and co-equal with God.

But that is only part of it. In the fourteenth verse we have, "The Word *became* flesh, and dwelt among us." It was His own voluntary act. That is what we have here.

Who, then, is Jesus Christ come in flesh?

He is *very God*:

He is *very Man*.

Do you confess Him thus, beloved? That is one of the tests of truth in this world. Every thing revolves around the Person of the blessed Christ of God. Deny the *Godhead of Christ*, and you have no Saviour! Deny His *Manhood*: have you a Saviour? Impossible. He must be God in order to render satisfaction *to* God; and He must be Man in order to render satisfaction *for* man, and meet his need.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh" means, then, that He who was God, and with God, and in the beginning with God; existing before there was a beginning;

voluntarily created in Himself another beginning. He came in flesh into this world; and He is the One who was "from the beginning," who is spoken of all through this epistle.

What need of such a Man here upon the earth? Because the first man was utterly gone before God, save that He must answer for broken responsibilities. He came, the second Man, because the first was utterly corrupt in the sight of God. He is the last Adam because there is no other head of a race to appear.

What hope is there of the first man as such? None. He has gone. And "Jesus Christ come in flesh" means that the first man is displaced before God by the Second. Is it education he wants? Nicodemus thought he wanted education; but man did not need that: that would not suit him. God had educated man for four thousand years before Christ came in flesh, and now again, under Christianity, for nearly two thousand years, he has had an education of an entirely different kind; but he is not one whit the better.

It is the honest, upright confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh," with all that it involves, that proves the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit owns nothing else. The first man has not a vestige of anything to sustain him before the living God. He has not even a rag of righteousness. He is like Cain, and *he* was of the devil. "Cain, who was of

that wicked one;" and it involves the entire displacement of the first man before God. Wherever you find man out of Christ, the Spirit of God testifies nothing of him, except of his depravity and ruin, and of the hell he must necessarily enter if he refuses that which, through God's infinite mercy, is now presented to him.

The Spirit that thus confesseth "Jesus Christ come in flesh" is of God. One not so confessing Him is the spirit of antichrist, and is not of God.

"Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (v. 3). These spirits connect themselves with the antichrist and the world. The devil has led the world on to its own destruction, to crucify the Lord of life and glory, and now he would deny the reality of that crucifixion. He would say that Christ came only in the *form* of a man to teach us that something good could be evolved out of the first man, who is not so utterly corrupt but that he may be made fit to be presented to God.

Men of the nineteenth century in Christendom may plume themselves that they have risen in the scale; but they must not forget the fall, nor the fact that they owe their present assumed elevation to the light of Christianity, though now they claim a position of superiority to it.

The devil thus links himself with the world ; but "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them : because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world " (v. 4). The Spirit of God is in you, and the Spirit of God is, after all, greater than the devil.

In the next two verses we get the contrast between them and the apostles. This is the second test :

They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. *We* are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error " (vv. 5, 6). The word "*we*" refers to the apostles.

This second test—the truth of *inspiration*—is specially claimed here with regard to the writings of the apostles. But while, in a specific way, the apostle claims it for themselves (us), yet it is true of Scripture generally. It is the Word of the Living God that is the test of everything. The Word of God testifies to Christ. All the questions that have arisen range themselves under the head of these two tests, inclusive of the six questions which have been recently propounded to Christendom.* The man that has these first six verses of 1 John iv. has an able answer to them all.

*They are these ; viz. :—

"1. Do you think it essential to Christian fellowship and co-operation that all Christians should believe in the inspiration of the Old and New

We may recapitulate briefly. The two tests are these; viz. :—

(1) The person of the Christ—"Jesus Christ come in flesh."

(2) The inspiration of the apostles (true of the whole Word of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16)—"We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us."

The first test is really the confession of the true deity and manhood of Christ. No one but God could "come" in flesh. We *are* in flesh, but we did not *come* in flesh. Jesus Christ did.

It is the truth of John 1. He was co-existent, co-eternal, and co-equal with God (v. 1). He *became* flesh (v. 14), not He was "*made*." It was His own voluntary act.

He was God manifest in flesh; a real Man, but a Man after a new order, who entirely supplants and displaces the first man before God.

Testaments? and if so, in what sense?

"2. Do you think it essential that any particular theory or view of the atonement should be held? or do you think it is sufficient that a Christian should believe that 'Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures'?"

"3. Do you think that any special view of the *Deity* of Christ should be insisted upon? and if so, what?"

"4. Do you think it essential that the future of the wicked should in any way be made a test of Christian fellowship?"

"5. Do you think it essential that the two Christian sacraments should be observed by the followers of the Lord Jesus? and if so, should they be observed as they were observed in Apostolic times?"

"6. Do you regard definite articles of faith as necessary? or is the Word of God sufficient without a formulated statement of doctrine?"

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The second test is that of the inspiration of the apostles and of the Scriptures.

Now, question No. 1 raises the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and

No. 6 opens the door to human creeds to supplement them.

No. 5 goes with these, as the sacraments (so-called) may or may not be necessary, according to the *credo* of the person interested.

Nos. 2, 3, and 4 hang upon the Deity of Christ (3.) If He is God, then the Atonement (2) demanded and rendered is an infinite one, and the punishment of the lost (4) is infinite or eternal.

If He is not God, Atonement is not infinite, and punishment is not eternal.

What do the mass of the answers disclose? Could there be a more lamentable exposure of this boasted Christendom of ours?

How many of them hold to the integrity of the Person of the Christ as very God, very Man? How many to the integrity of the Scriptures as given of God? A few; oh, how few! But thank God if there is one.

The mass of those in the place of teachers in Christendom cannot stand the test of 1 John iv. 1-6.

By what spirit are they led?

The characteristic truth of this dispensation is, that God the Spirit is here. If His Presence is practically denied, other spirits are abroad to deceive.

Christians, Awake! The truth of God is at stake.
Hold to it, and it will hold you.

Let it slip, and you make shipwreck of the faith.

Spite of all the boasted activity to-day in gospel work, so-called (God grant a thousand times more real activity in this blessed work), the foundations are being sapped, the truth is being undermined, if not openly denied. Other spirits than the Spirit of God are at work. Scripture says they are "not of God;" they are "the spirit of error," "the spirit of antichrist;" they are "of the world;" and that they dwell in "false prophets." Strong language, do you say? "He that knoweth God heareth *us*," says the apostle; he that is not of God heareth *not us*."

Spirits and men are thus tested and proved to be either of God, or not of God; and it is the Person of the Christ and the writings of the apostles which detect the truth or falsehood of their pretensions. Alas! for those who say, "That is only the apostles;" "That is only Paul;" or, "That is only John." Do not they speak the words of Christ from the glory? How solemn to think that, when a question of truth is allowed to test a large body of professing Christians, the greater number of them are always led away from the truth! They swallow the error. Thank God if *any* so hold to the truth as to refuse all ungodly compromise; although such may not have all the truth that might be had, being revealed, yet one can thank God for any who stand against

the spirit of error. Old bulwarks are being broken down, old landmarks removed. Oh, the mercy of being able in any measure to seek, under God's blessed hand, to get his saints to hide behind *His* bulwarks, and to respect *His* landmarks!

We must ever remember, in seeking to do this, that it is not enough to have the form of the truth; this may be mere dogma, and will not hold us—Rome has all the truths, as mere dogma. But we must hold the truth, if we want it to hold us. It must be mixed with faith in us, admitted into the soul, made a living ingredient of our spiritual life, the food of our souls. The Word of God! How can we do without it? "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Better starve than let go the truth of God. That is the test for us.

Look at what Christ did. The devil said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Does He do it? No. He answered and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It was not wrong to be hungry, and He could have made the stones bread; but He loved the Word of God more than the food necessary for His body.

We, too, are often tested thus. It then becomes a question of truth; *i. e.*, food for the soul, or that which would go to minister to the need of the body.

Oftentimes the devil presents it thus to-day, and most men are ready to excuse one who gives up the truth for a loaf of bread. But if I hold the truth, the mighty God Himself is at my back, and all the devils must tremble before a weak mortal such as myself. The Lord give us to hold the truth, which revolves around the Person of Him who was God manifest in flesh, and the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

The first division of the chapter closes here with verse 6, and the second part includes verses 7-19.

In this second part the apostle turns to the blessed subject of God's *love*, which he develops in a very wonderful way. He had spoken of love in ch. iii. 16; and here he returns to the subject, and presents it from God's side so marvellously that those who have studied the epistle have asked, Why is this episode brought in here apparently so contrary to the object of the epistle, which is to test the truth or falsehood of the profession of Christianity? This question has been answered thus: God gives us this complete cycle of His love, in order to reassure any heart that may have been shaken by the tests of ch. iii. There it says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (v. 8). And a real, though uninstructed, soul may say, Well, I commit sin, so I must be of the devil; and can God love me? This the devil is ready enough to suggest. But a full answer is given in these verses (7-19), where we have presented, in

a threefold way, the all-embracing love of God towards its objects, thus ; viz. :—

1. His love was *toward* us when we were dead in our sins (vv. 9, 10).

2. His love is perfected *in* us now (vv. 11-16).

3. His love is made perfect *with* us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment (vv. 17-19).

We can turn to this chapter, beloved, and rejoice in it, sheltering ourselves from all the enemy's suggestions, and all our own fears, and joy in the perfect love of God, which is without measure, without end.

I. It is introduced by, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (v. 7). Here, there are two things. First.—We are born of God if we love, indeed we cannot love one another unless we are born of God; that is to say, unless we have His nature. This underlies the whole of the epistle. We have seen that the epistle supposes the life and nature in the persons to whom it is written. He would guard them from fear and doubt on the one hand, and from mysticism on the other.

Secondly, "Everyone that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God."

He has the nature, and he knows God. It is here *objective* knowledge; *i.e.*, he has learnt God in the way He has manifested Himself in love. The proof that the nature is in him is that he loves. He must

love. It is *love*, divine love, here; not the word Peter uses, and which might be translated "affection" (John xxi. 15-17). The converse of this is, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (v. 8).

But then, lest we should be occupied with ourselves, with that love in us, and trying to fathom the depths of the divine nature in us, which is mysticism; or lest we should be searching to know whether the love is there to prove that we are Christians, the apostle turns us out of ourselves for the manifestation of love. He gives us an object outside; he does not want us to look inside. If one says, Am I not to examine myself to see whether I am in the faith? (quoting Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 5). Let it be observed that this is simply that they might know that Christ had spoken by Paul (v. 3). They had no doubt of their being in the faith: they ought to have had no doubt of his apostleship.

If we *are* born of God love is there; but we must look outside to God for the love which is alone to occupy our hearts. "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 (v. 9). And "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins" (v. 10). That is where love is manifested;—in Christ.

God *is* love. Christ's coming did not make God

love. This is another error that is taught in Christendom; that Christ died to propitiate an angry Deity; to make God love us. But, on the contrary, in that gift of Christ was *manifested* the love that was in God from all eternity. It never found an adequate expression of itself until man had been proved to be DEAD; not simply lost in the sense of a wanderer, but dead; and when thus proved to be dead, there was an opportunity for God's love to be manifested towards him. No movement of love could be found towards God from a dead creature. The manifestation of this love was from God's side. And what did God give? "*His only begotten Son.*"

God thus manifested His love. He gave His Son. Is not that love? Can any human words express what it is? Can any heart compass what it is? Yet there it is in all its immensity, its magnificence, and its divinity. It stands out alone, and will stand out alone throughout eternity. It is the great moral hinge of the universe of God for ever and ever.

But this manifestation of the love of God is made *toward us*. This is very practical. It is not simply the fact of the love of God being manifested abstractly; but the apostle applies it to its objects "toward us" (believers). It might have been manifested towards others, and we left out; but blessed be His Name, it is not so. It is toward *us*; we are partakers of it; and now we *live* through Him.

We were dead, now we live. With what life do we live? We are born of God. We live through Him who manifested the love of God. We have eternal life. God works, man lives. But man is a sinner. What then? We have that dealt with afterwards. Life comes first here, and then the question of our sins is settled. He "sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." There was no movement in our hearts towards God. "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us." Here the question of sins is met; they are put away.

Which is the greater—forgiveness (v. 10) or life? (v. 9). We have had it impressed on us again and again of late that there is no "excess" in forgiveness; *i.e.*, we can only be forgiven what we owe. But the excess is that we have the life of the One who died for us. But here life comes first, and with that goes the forgiveness of sins, based upon the propitiation. In ch. ii. it comes the other way about; *i.e.*, sins are met first, then life is shown to be communicated. In God's dealing with souls He may begin anywhere. He is sovereign. He does as He will. But if you have neither question settled, may God make you begin somewhere, and to begin at once. The believer through mercy has both. The love of God was "toward us" even when we were dead in sins. Some, when they wake up to the fact of the awful character of the sinful nature they possess, are told by Satan, God cannot love you when you

are so bad as that. How can you think He loves you? The answer to this is, He loved us when we were dead in sins. Oh! is this so? Did He love us then? Yes, beloved; and we are not worse now than then. Ah! no; and He loves us still. Why should we tremble? If we look in for love we may well do so; but Oh, look out! look out!!

God is dealing with *souls* to-day. Young souls; you who are not established, look out for love, not in. "In this was manifested the *love of God toward us.*" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, *but that He loved us*, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." This settles all the *past*; it is all gone, and gone for ever. Our status of death has passed away for ever. Sins are gone! Jesus lives! He is the One whose precious blood has value in the eyes of the holy God—He who measured and met God's claims and our necessities. Yes! The sins are gone, and *we live* before God through Him. You cannot have anything more assuring.

II. Now comes the *present*: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (v. 11). This is the application of it to ourselves, and shews it is perfected in us. There is a moral obligation upon us to love one another. Why? Because we are loved by our brethren? No; naturally we love those that love us. That is not the way; but "if *God so loved us*," this imposes a spiritual obligation upon us to love our brethren.

What makes us love some strangers—some who are of a different nationality—better than our own countrymen, our own kindred, otherwise dear to us? Because we see in such the traits of the divine nature, that they are born of God.

Mark, it does not say, If God so loved us, we ought to love God. On the contrary, it says we *do* love Him. "*We love Him*, because He first loved us." The obligation is towards our brethren, because, naturally, we would not love them. We should choose to surround ourselves with those that were socially, or in disposition and taste, suitable to us.

If we were rich, we should not choose those that were poor; if educated, we should not choose the uneducated to love. We desire those around us to be like ourselves. But, beloved friends, the blessed Lord, when here, went down amongst the poorest. With whom did He link Himself? With publicans and sinners at His baptism. He saw in them the first movement of the Spirit of God. Show me a man who really loves God, and I will show one who is at home amongst the poor. We *ought* to love one another. There is an obligation upon us to do it.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (v. 12). The word "dwelleth" here should be "abideth." We have noticed the importance of this word in the epistle. Young men, fathers, and little children were all to abide in Him.

In the verse quoted above, the apostle speaks of God abiding in us. He then goes on to say, "Hereby know we that *we abide in Him*, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (v. 13). The difference between God abiding in us, and our abiding in Him, is, that the first is a doctrinal fact, and true of every real Christian; and the second depends upon our practical apprehension of it.

The expression, "No man hath seen God at any time" is twice met with. First, in John i. 18, where we have connected with it, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" But here, "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us;" is linked with it, which goes on to, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." We get in these two passages the difference between the gospel and the epistle. "No man hath seen God at any time" is followed in the gospel by, "The only begotten Son"—who was then in the bosom of the Father—"He hath declared Him." Here we see that Christ, even when down here upon the earth, never left the Father's bosom, but declared the Father. He declared Whom He knew.

In the epistle it is followed by, "If we love one another, God abideth in us." *God* whom no man hath seen! In the one case Christ was in the bosom of the Father, and declared Him. In the other, He

who is thus declared abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us. We have the nature here in perfect, present enjoyment of the love, and of God as the source of it.

This present apprehension of His love is enjoyed in communion with Himself in the power of His Spirit. We have, then, the nature that loves, the Spirit who is the power of love, and God who is love.

“Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.” It is not simply “*the Spirit*,” but “*of His Spirit*.” It is something *of* that which He has.

“Of His Spirit” indicates communion. We participate with God of His Spirit. That Spirit would lead us into all His thoughts of love.

This is love **IN US**, and is the manifestation of the divine nature in man.

This is followed by, “And *we have seen* and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (v. 14). Here again we have the glorious manifestation of love outside ourselves.

As Christ saw and declared the Father, so we have seen and declare that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. It is the love in its broadest aspect; not God sent Christ, a Saviour of the Jews, but the Father sent the Son, a Saviour for the whole world. Let us occupy ourselves with this. Shall we ever get beyond it? No! If we think this, we may get back to it, and gaze at that

manifestation of love in the cross of the Lord Jesus, until our hearts are so full of it that we can testify of it.

Christ in the bosom of the Father declared Him. Now, we, abiding in Him, and He in us, have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. What a blessed portion! His place with the Father abiding in Him! His place in testimony in the world! Oh! for this present perfecting of His love *in* us.

We get now a general statement which makes God's abiding in us true of every confessor. What is the statement? "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God" (v. 15). This is very blessed. The subject here is God abiding in us, and we in God. A person may look in and say, I don't find the *love* in me; but you get here the statement that God abides in every one who confesses Jesus as Son of God. This is true of every believer.

It is important to see the way the truth is guarded. When it is a question of enjoyment the practice is needed; but where it is a question of fact, that fact is stated in a way which shows it is true *of every Christian*. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." That is true of every Christian; but every Christian does not enjoy it, and hence we get two objects of this epistle presented to us here. The first is to

assure our hearts of what God has communicated to us; and the second to bring our hearts into the enjoyment of the privileges thus opened up to us.

Unless it is made good in our souls, the Word of God is like a dead letter; but as soon as faith has grasped it, it becomes in us a living Word, and we have a practical realization of it every day.

“We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (v. 16). Mark the difference between v. 14 and this. In v. 14 it is general, and leads to testimony. “We have seen and do testify.” Here it is specific, and is enjoyed by *us*. “We have known and believed.” It is present enjoyment.

One can but be struck with the fact that the apostle Paul, after some twenty years of service, and two years of prison life at Cæsarea, could stand forth before Agrippa (Acts xxvi.) and declare in all the freshness of His first love, what God had done for him at the beginning of his course.

This finishes the section that speaks of the *present*. His love is perfected *in us* by means of His Spirit, and our occupation with it in Him, and thus abiding in God, and He in us.

III. Now we have love perfected *with us*. “Herein is *love with us* made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world” (v. 17). This is not

manifestation towards, nor perfection in, but love made perfect with us. What for? In order that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. The apostle presents perfection from the first, so that we do not need to go on to something to find perfection, but to go back to that which was from the beginning. And all God's love has been revealed in Christ in order that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. "Because as He is, so are we in this world." This settles the *future*.

Now we have had already that we purify ourselves as He is pure, we are righteous as He is righteous, and we are to love as He loved; but here we have the absolute statement made, that "As He *is*, so are we in this world." He is the accepted Man upon the throne of God. He is a Son of the Father there. The love of the Father revolves around Him. All the acceptance of His perfect work is manifest in the position he occupies. "As He *is*, so *are* we in this world." It is not simply thus in reference to judgment, but in all things as He is, as a man, so are we in this world. Can anything be more wonderful?

It is not as He was. When He was here He was not past the judgment;—though, personally, never subject to it. But where is judgment with reference to Christ now? It is behind Him. Thank God, it is behind us too! And this knowledge that we are clear of it gives us confidence in the *day* of judgment

which is future. Yet it is not perfect righteousness that casts out fear, but perfect love.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment” (v. 18). Love goes beyond righteousness. I might be perfectly righteous-before the throne of God, and yet fear that I might infringe in some way ; but there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts it out.

“He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” That is to say : that he has not really by faith grasped the perfection of the manifestation of God’s love to him.

How can one be made perfect in love ? Is it that one must look in to see if it is perfect in oneself ? No ; but I am made perfect in it by gazing upon its perfection in Him. I see that God loves me perfectly, and I cannot fear Him. If any have not been made perfect in love, may God give to such a deeper sense of what the perfection of His love is.

It is not perfect righteousness that casts out fear, but perfect love. If left here in this world, we may have a fear that we may fail in righteousness to-morrow. But assure me that I am as He is before the Father, and I say perfect love has done that, and fear is banished. Gaze on perfect love, and you will be made perfect in love. Can it be otherwise ? To see what God’s love is, and not to love God, is a moral impossibility. And so we have :

“We love Him because He first loved us” (v. 19).

It must be so. No heart could really ever grasp what the cross was without loving God. But if occupied with His love, we can say more than Peter did. He said, "Lord, Thou knowest that I have affection for Thee." He was looking at the denial. But I defy you to look at the manifestation of the love of God,—at Christ on the cross, and not be able to say, I love Him.

Yet "if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." Here we return to the tests again. We have thus had in this chapter—

I. The double test for discernment between the Spirit of God and false spirits; viz. :—

1. The Person of the Christ; and
2. The inspiration of the apostles (*vv.* 1-6).

II. The complete cycle of the love of God; viz. :

1. The *perfect* manifestation of that love *toward us* when we were dead in sins.
2. That love *perfected in us*, and manifested toward each other.
3. That love made *perfect with us*, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

LECTURE V.

1 JOHN iv. 20 TO 1 JOHN v. 21.

WE were looking in ch. iv. at the perfect love of God as manifested towards us; it is perfect in its manifestation, and perfect in its result to usward. It could not be more perfect. We get some idea of what the value and efficacy of it are in that wonderful verse which presents the climax, rising higher as to us than any other verse in the epistle;—"Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (v. 17).

The last clause of that verse is marvellous: "As He is, so are we in this world." It is not simply with reference to judgment; many limit it to that, but it is more than that. *We are now here*, as Christ is there. It is more than righteousness. Righteousness is in it, and righteousness sets us free from judgment; yet not only is righteousness there, but life, and love, and acceptance, and sonship, and inheritance, and glory. That is not all that is in it; but these things are in it:

1. We are righteous as He is righteous (iii. 7).

2. We have the same life as he He has. "Which thing is true in Him and in you" (ii. 8). And "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (v. 11).

3. We are loved with the same love. "Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23).

4. He is the measure of our acceptance. "Accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).

5. We are sons as He is a Son. "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father" (John xx. 17). This is not as the only begotten Son; but as the first-born from the dead, He brings us into the same relationship with God as He is in.

6. We have an inheritance in common with Him. "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). And

7. We are to share His glory. "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them" (John xvii. 22). "That we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17).

There is, of course, that which is peculiar to Himself, for he is ever God and pre-eminent. Yet the Christ of God, who has wrought all the will of God, has linked us with Himself, and gives us His glory, as He says, "That they may be one, as we are."

What a wonderfully comprehensive clause this is! How well it is calculated, as everything that the Spirit of God dictates, to accomplish the purpose God has in view! What is the object here? To clear us from fear when we think about judgment. If I am as He is, and God tells me so, where is the room for fear? If we fear, we are not made perfect in love.

It is God's love spoken of here, that casts out fear. Yet that love "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 5). Trembling heart, why dost thou fear? We look *behind*, and see God's love manifested in the gift of His Son. *Now* we have that love perfected in us. We look *forward*, and see the whole sphere of judgment clear before us.

We were noticing that there is an obligation laid upon us to love one another. It does not say that we ought to love God,—we do love Him, because He first loved us, but by reason of the love manifested towards us we ought to love one another. Naturally we should not do this.

This blessed parenthesis in the epistle ends here. And now the apostle returns to test the reality of our love to God, by our love one to another. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth 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?" (v. 20). Note, it is *If a man say* again, but the thing is impossible; for if the divine nature in our brethren, who are near us, does not kindle love, it is not possible that we can love God, who is afar off.

Further, "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (v. 21). While in the previous part of the epistle we saw that the two characteristics of eternal life are love and obedience, here we see how they combine

and intertwine, so that the one *is not* without the other. It is impossible to have one characteristic without the other. If the one appears to be manifested in a person without the other, it is not the true thing. There is no true love without obedience, and no true obedience without love. Love is the result of obedience in this twenty-first verse. Not only is the moral obligation imposed upon us by reason of the magnitude of the love of God towards us, but there is the direct commandment. The life in us demands that which will guide it, and in this epistle the commandment is the guide of the life. Even in the exercise of love, not only does life *delight* in it, but the *moral obligation* is upon us, and the *positive commandment* is given to us.

This subject is continued in the next chapter. If a man raise the questions, *Who* am I to love? *Who* is my brother? the first verse answers it: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him." He is your brother. Wherever you find one believing that Jesus is the Christ he is born of God. You will remember that when going through the second chapter we saw that two distinct truths were denied by the false teachers; one is, that "Jesus is the Christ," and the other is, "The Father and the Son." The former of these gives the Jewish form of unbelief, denying that Jesus is the *Christ*. Here he takes the

lowest form of the truth. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The nature is there. There is your brother; and if you love Him that begat, you cannot help loving him that is begotten of Him. We have here the traits of the new nature, of that which is born of God. We find elsewhere that there is another nature; but here we have the traits of the new nature.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (vv. 2, 3): and His commandments are not grievous. Here we see the two things again intertwined. Obedience and love are the characteristics of life; but to love is to obey the commandment; and to obey the commandment is to love; you cannot have one without the other. Not to love a saint of God is to show that I am disobedient. To talk of loving a saint of God, and to follow him in paths of disobedience, is to show that I have not true love.

What a wonderful position it puts us in! We are bound to love every child of God. Not only morally bound, but by distinct commandment. Yet it will not do to follow a child of God in paths of disobedience. Do not I love him because I do not follow him? I should *not* love him if I followed him where God commands me not.

Then the apostle goes further: "For whatsoever

is born of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith " (v. 4). He knows that there is a certain sphere through which we walk, whose claims, if allowed, hinder the expression of this love and obedience. That sphere is *the world*, and he gives us here three characteristics of the child of God in connection with the world.

1. "*Whatsoever* [not *whosoever*] is born of God overcometh the world." That is, wherever the new nature is, there is that which in its expression overcomes the world. It is not only that there is capability to overcome the world, but that this nature *expresses itself* in that way, and cannot express itself in any other way. Every form of life has its own laws, and this is a law of the nature that has been communicated to us as begotten of God.

The world is contrary to the Father. That world which has grown up under the hand of man apart from God ; the world in which we are, and which appeals to us naturally, and to which everything in us naturally answers. But if we are children of God, there is in us a nature begotten by God Himself, which partakes of the character and nature of Him who begat, and the law it follows makes it rise superior to the world. It is not mere capability, but *whatsoever* is born of God *overcomes* the world. It cannot express itself without overcoming the world.

2. But it acts upon a certain *principle*, and that is

what you have next. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The principle of this new nature is faith, not sight. The world governs the old nature, but it governs it by sight.

"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world;" it appeals to my own fallen nature; but faith does not see that, and faith is the principle by which the new nature manifests itself; for, after all, the new nature in us is dependent, but whenever it expresses itself it expresses itself in victory over the world. Faith lifts us above the scene; it does not see the world. The devil may intrude something before my sight, but faith looks *up*, looks *out*; never *in*, and never *around*.

3. But then faith must have an *object*, and faith has its object: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (v. 5). Now here you have the man. Not *that*, but "*he* that overcometh." What does he believe? That "Jesus is the Christ?" Not that here; he has something really beyond that now: "He that believeth that Jesus is *the Son of God*." This, too, is what Paul speaks of in Gal. ii. 20: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." "I live," this involves the nature; "By the faith," there is the principle; "Of the Son of God," there is the Object. It is the life expressing itself in a sphere where all is contrary to

it. Beloved friends, do not let us say that we are guided by principles that God can approve, unless we are acting up to what we believe to be the truth. Faith always acts upon the truth of God in a way that shews it has hold of its object, and is superior to the concerns of this world.

The life of faith is, alas ! too little known amongst us, but I would ask, If we are not living the life of faith, what are we living ? What is faith ? Is it simply trusting Him for bread ? No. Faith grasps with a firm grip the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and overcomes the world that hates Him and murdered Him. Christ is now at the right hand of God ; He is the Son of God, and has gotten the victory over everything. Faith says, I live by the faith of that blessed One, who has thus overcome, and who Himself lived a life of obedience and love when He was down here.

Take an instance in that life : " Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence " (John xiv. 30, 31). You do not want a full stop between the words " do " and " arise " ; let it read, " As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do, arise, let us go hence." His arising to go from that spot proves as ever that He was the Eternal Life ; that He loved the Father, and did His

commandments. What was before Him? The prince of this world was coming with his hosts; he was at the very door. The Lord knew everything that was coming upon Him. He knew of the betrayal; He knew about the kiss; He knew of the band of men that would follow Judas; He knew of the devil that led them on; but nothing could be brought out of Him but love and obedience. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Let us not sit here any longer. Let us go forward. I go to meet it all.

The devil twice tried to turn God's blessed Christ from the path of uprightness; twice tried to cause Him to disobey God. It was impossible. Forty days He was hungry in the wilderness. The devil comes, and says, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." He had power to do it; but He had not the word for it, and would not do it. But some would say, But if you are hungry; are you going to carry your principle so far as that? Yes. Ah, may be you do not know what it is! You tell us, perhaps, that we are to live in obedience to the Word of God in every case, except we want bread. If we make any exception we sacrifice everything--truth, obedience, everything. But if we are living by faith we sacrifice everything for the truth. But suppose it is for another, for wife or family? Then the very fact of making love to another the excuse for breaking the

word of God, only shows that we have not got real love! "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."

Where is God, beloved? Where is the God of the Scriptures? If we ask, Where is the God of Israel? it would shame many of us as to our principle of life down here. But if we ask, Where is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have we grasped by faith that Jesus is the Son of God? Then let us express it in victory over the world. Let us not talk about faith if we cannot thus act. Faith expresses itself in confidence and obedience.

The devil, the prince of this world, sought to *seduce* the Lord at the beginning of His ministry, and to *suppress* Him in the end. He was as unsuccessful in his attempt to suppress as in his endeavours to seduce. It was natural to Christ to get the victory over difficulties.

Faith, too, cares nothing for difficulties. They are like physical difficulties to the engineers of the present day; what do they care for them? No, it is the other way. They say, Give us fresh difficulties that we may show you how we can surmount and get the victory over them. We have bored through Mont Cenis, let us now go under the British Channel. Faith acts in like manner. It lives in difficulties. We may be perfectly sure that the world will overcome the man that has not faith, and perfectly sure that the man that has faith will over-

come the world. This, because of the Object that faith ever presents before the soul. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Mark the words—"The Son of God," and He overcame the world. The Lord give us to know what the nature is that He has given us, and what faith is, that we may cultivate acquaintance with that blessed Object.

It is not that we have not another nature; and, alas! beloved, we may say this, that we know more about that other nature than we do about the nature which, in every expression of itself, overcomes the world.

What has the world done for us? The apostle tells us in the next verse: "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood" (v. 6). That is what the world has done for us; it has murdered our Lord. The water and the blood are, on the one hand, the attestation of the fact of the death of Him who is Jesus the Son of God. The world put *Him* to death, and the water and the blood that followed the thrust of the Roman soldier's spear (whatever that spear may have imported as far as man was concerned) were the attestation of the fact that Jesus Christ was *dead*.

The previous chapter spoke of His coming in flesh, and we saw that was a proof of His humanity as well as His divinity; it was His own voluntary

act. What did they do with "Jesus Christ come in flesh"? They murdered Him. Here He came by water and blood. This is characteristic of His coming in a new way; that is, He comes through death. The world put Him to death, but on the other hand God had to say to it. It is not enough that He became incarnate, but "Jesus Christ come in flesh" must die, in order that He may communicate eternal life to man. This life is not to be found in the first man; not in Adam, but in Christ; and He is presented in this chapter as communicator of that life upon the basis of death and resurrection. Quite true He gave life before the Cross, and this upon the same basis, anticipatively; but eternal life in the conditions set forth in the Lord Jesus Himself, *i.e.*, conscious Sonship, the Holy Spirit, and the opened heavens, was never known by any other until *after* redemption was accomplished.

In Mat. iii. the heavens opened above His head; the Spirit descended like a dove upon Him; "and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." These are the conditions of eternal life as set forth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man down here.

But we must look a little further at this verse, for every clause of it is important. First of all, there is death—water and blood. Now he says, "Not by water only." Water signifies purification. The believer recognises that there is a necessity for

purification, and those even who are not believers admit it. Some propose to attain holiness by faith, and try to purify themselves in that way, by means God has never provided. Ah, beloved, what do we need to be purified from? It is the effects of an evil nature; and we get in ch. iii. that Christ is the pattern; "*Purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*"

How is this brought about? Here the water comes from the side of a *dead* Christ, indicating that purification as far as a believer needs it, is by the application of death to that which necessitates the purification of the person. If it were not that we have an evil nature we should not need purifying; but we have, and hence we do need it. This purification is by water, and the water comes from the side of a dead Christ; *i.e.*, we are to reckon ourselves dead to all that which the flesh delights in. This is the only purification God knows. *We* cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. The world and the flesh put Christ to death. We apply the Word of God, and reckon ourselves dead to both. "I am crucified with Christ." Purification is by death.

But purification is not all that is needed; expiation for sins must also be provided, because we are responsible for the sins we have committed; and this comes, too, from the side of a dead Christ, "not by water only, but by water and *blood.*" This is Godward. Man put Christ to death, expressing his sinfulness thus; but God gave the Son, that He

might put away all our sins in that very death. The blood is for expiation for sins. So that the death of Christ furnishes all that is needed, not only for purification, but for expiation also.

Next in historical order is the Spirit bearing witness. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." The water and blood indicate the judicial ending of the first man for faith; (The man that is not in Christ has yet to answer for what he is); and the Spirit, come from an ascended Christ, is a testimony to the fact that the Second Man has a place in heaven. Fifty days after Christ had accomplished redemption, and ten days after He had ascended,—God for those ten days delighting in His Christ without any testimony on earth as to His place in heaven—the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and the mighty Spirit of God came down here to take possession of every soul that believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and to testify to the fact that all such believers are linked with Him in heaven. So that for them the first man, who is earthy, is for ever gone, and the Second Man, who is heavenly, lives at God's right hand. This forms their character, for "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 48).

How marvellous the fact, that eternal life is communicated to us from Him who is the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, now ascended as Man into heaven. He lives there in the presence of God.

Because He lives, we live also.

Notice:—*v.* 7 should be omitted. There is no real authority for it, nor does the evidence of the epistle demand it. There are three that bear witness, and testimony is upon earth. You do not want testimony in heaven. This seventh verse has been interpolated, and is generally rejected as uninspired and unwarranted.

“There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (*v.* 8). Observe here that the order is reversed. Historically the order was the other way, but the Spirit takes the first place as the witness. What should we know about the water and the blood if we had not the Spirit? The Spirit brings home the truth in power to us, as testified by the other two witnesses, the water and the blood, which otherwise we should not know. And these three witnesses are to one thing in their testimony; that is, that there is no life in the first man, and that Christ coming into relationship with man was slain for man, in order that God might give eternal life to all who believe in His Son. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” A simple, blessed, but most profound truth.

He proceeds: “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son” (*v.* 9). We are ready enough to receive the witness of men,

but here we have the witness of God about His Son. It was none other than He who was the Son that endured the death due to man; and He now, as Man, is in the presence of God that His life may flow through us.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself;” that is, the Spirit, not the thing witnessed; but he has “the witness in himself”; the Spirit of the living God has taken up His abode in the man. How? Is it apart from the sign of death—blood? Never! You can never have that. Look at the case of the leper in the type. “The priest shall take some of the *blood* of the trespass offering, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot: and the priest shall pour of the *oil* into the palm of his own left hand . . . and shall put of the oil that is in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering” (Lev. xiv. 25-28). Thus we see that the oil was not applied to the leper until the sign of death had been put upon him. First the blood, and then the oil. The oil was put where the blood was, and nowhere else. The Spirit of God is in none but those on whom God sees the sign of death. It is a testimony to God’s estimate of the blood.

To this agrees also the doctrine of the New Testament. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*" (Eph. i. 13). Also Paul asks the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or *by the hearing of faith?*" (iii. 2.) By the hearing of faith, no doubt. Thank God I may suppose that everybody in this room who really has faith in the Person of Christ, and on whom God sees the blood, has the Spirit also. It is no good mixing up truth and experience, and trying to make truth answer to our experience; that is wrong. It confounds the soul. Let the truth stand out in its grandeur against everything that experience may seem to teach. The only way to get *true* experience is to let faith accredit the truth. The fact is this, that the witness is in the man that believes on the Son of God. He "*hath the witness in himself.*"

"He that believeth not God *hath made Him a liar*; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (v. 10). "Hath made Him a liar!" One cannot sufficiently express the solemnity of such a thought. Either one does believe the testimony He hath given of His Son, and has the Spirit, or one does not believe God, and makes *Him* a liar.

Was it not, do you think, an awful thing when they sat down by the cross and watched the Son of

God there, and this cry ran through the crowd, taken up by all classes in it?—They that passed by said, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. *If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” The chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. *If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.* He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.” The thieves, also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth, saying, “If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.” What did it mean? It meant, You are not the Son of God. You are not the King of Israel. You are not the Christ. You are a liar! You are a liar!! That is what they said to the Son of God; and, beloved friends, he that believeth not God “hath made *Him* a liar.” Will you make Him a liar? Will you not receive the whole of the record? May the Lord open your heart, and put His Spirit within! If any have not peace, let such look out, look at Christ, listen to God’s testimony, and believe it, and peace must flow in.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (v. 11). Do you not believe it? “God hath given to us eternal life.” “To us.” To whom? To us who believe in the name of His Son. What has He

given? "God hath given to us eternal life." How? As He gave Adam life? Thank God, no. He put life into Adam, and put him into responsibility; he was liable to lose his life, and he did lose it. But *this* life is locked up safe; it is in His Son. We have it in us as flowing through us; but it is not in us as a source or seat of life. "*This life is in His Son,*" and it is in us, we being in Him.

Thank God that it is in His Son; the source of it is there, and as He has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Can you touch Christ? Then you can touch my life. Can you not touch Christ? Then you cannot touch my life. You cannot touch Christ, and, thank God, all is secured in Him. But that life expressed itself in Him in obedience and love, and He looks that in us it should exhibit itself in the same way.

Probably no people have so boasted about being in the possession of eternal life as we have. Has that life been enjoyed? If not, is there nothing due to God? Beloved, is not God speaking to us? And if so, why? Is there no ear to listen to His voice? Open Thou our hearts, Lord! Scripture declares that we have eternal life, but we have another life. Which life have we expressed as a company? Which life have we expressed as individuals? Where has been the love for a brother turned aside? Where the desire for his recovery? Thank God there has been much love exhibited in many cases,

but before the whole world in many cases such love has not been shown. Beloved brethren, God desires that the eternal life which He has communicated might be expressed, and there is no excuse for our not getting the victory over the world. Shall we be afraid of its seductions? Why? Can the world show us anything that will vie with the love of God? No, nothing. Gaze upon it. Let it flow into our hearts, and we must get the victory.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (v. 12). Life is in the Son, and we, in Him, have the life (v. 11). But in this verse the Son is in us as life. In this epistle, in every case except one, where the word “life” is used, the article is before it—“the life.” The exception to this is: “He shall give him *life* for them that sin not unto death” (v. 16). Here it is not “the life,” but life of the body.

“He that hath the Son hath the life.” What a wonderful thing! The life is in the Son of God, and the believer hath the Son. Thank God, all is secure! People say, “*While* we have the Son we have life.” Yes: but who can lose the Son? Or on the other hand, who can cut off a member of the body of Christ? “He that hath the Son hath the life.”

“These things have I written to you that ye may know that ye have eternal life who believe on the name of the Son of God” (v. 13). “Know” here is conscious knowledge, “have the consciousness.”

How often this verse has been used to help souls to the knowledge that they have eternal life! And who would deprecate such a use of it? God would indeed have His people assured of this. But there is more surely in the verse. God, by His Spirit, would bring those who have this life into the consciousness of the immensity of the blessing that has been bestowed upon them, even eternal life, with all its capacity for the enjoyment of communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; than which nothing can be greater, spite of the pretensions of those who would draw believers aside by the presentation of that which was professedly greater. And, alas! how easily we fall victims to such seductions, if, when we are brought to know that we have this life, we settle down as though that were enough, without rising to the sphere that now is open to us, and in which this life finds all that it delights in. Oh! that our hearts may be greatly aroused to this blessed consciousness.

This, the last of the three objects for writing the epistle in the order of their presentation, is necessarily first in our apprehension. When we have the consciousness that the life we have is eternal life, we are careful lest sin mar the communion and hinder our knowledge of Him that was from the beginning; and the necessary result of this, the manifestation of this life here on earth.

We now turn briefly to the remaining verses.

“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (*vv.* 14, 15). We have here again conscious knowledge which goes with life, and which the apostle elaborates in these verses; *i. e.*, what we who have life are conscious of. How blessed this confidence! No one would wish to have what was not according to His will, and everything we ask that is, we have. How are we to use this confidence? For ourselves alone? Ah, no! We have this life in common with all the family, so that we use this confidence for others also, as in love to a brother who has fallen.

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death” (*v.* 16). You see your brother sin. Have you prayed about him? That is the first thing. Pray about everything that is short of sin unto death; and what is the result? God shall give him life. James says, also, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him . . . and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James *v.* 14, 15). Beloved brethren, do we believe in the power of prayer to recover a brother from sin? Have we prayed about

him? or are we ready to trip him up? Are there not cases that we ought to be praying about? There are in our very midst. Pray! pray! pray! Ask of God, "and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."

"There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (v. 17). The death here is death of the body. Any sin may be a sin unto death. "All unrighteousness is sin." Ananias told a lie under dreadful circumstances, which roused the horror and indignation of those who had eternal life in them; and Peter did not pray for him, but, actuated by the Holy Ghost, pronounced his doom, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Sapphira, also, who with her husband had agreed about this matter, came in; and Peter says, "The feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." God will not be mocked. "There is a sin unto death"—the death of the body.

In these verses the apostle supposes that any one may sin, and he does not refer here to the precious blood of Christ, but he puts the responsibility upon the brethren, because *we are our brother's keepers*. It is Cain-like to try to get out of it. It is not here a question of the judicial value of the blood of Christ before God, or of the confession of the individual, that he may get governmental forgiveness, but of the

responsibility that is put on every one of the brethren to pray for a brother that has sinned. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Now the apostle sums up, and presents abstractly what Christianity is. "*We know* that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (v. 18). Here is life's consciousness again. Some might ask, "How then does the apostle say, I may see my brother sin?" He is speaking in the most abstract way. As born of God, he does not sin; as born of Adam, he may. He is both. Could the wicked one touch Christ? He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." And if we are touched by the wicked one it is not as "born of God," but as having the flesh in us. It is because we allow the old nature to act.

Further, "*We know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one" (v. 19). The whole world lieth in the power of the wicked one. We have the consciousness that "we are of God," and everything else is not of God. What a wonderful consciousness! This "we" includes all Christians, not a certain company. "We are of God." There is nothing in the world but what is under the power of the devil. When the devil showed Christ all the kingdoms of the world, saying, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and

to whomsoever I will I give it;" there was a measure of truth in it, as he ever mingles truth with his lies, to make them attractive. He had usurped the power.

"And we know that the Son of God is come." This "know" is life's consciousness, but the "know" that follows is objective knowledge. "And hath given us an understanding, that we may *know* Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ" (v. 20). This is the grand object of writing the epistle. Not only do we know the Son of God has come, but he would have us go on to know that blessed Object. For this He has given us an understanding.

"That we may know Him that is true." This, as to the nature of Him whom we know, *i.e.*, the *true* One. But "we are in Him that is true," and this brings out the Person, it is "even in His Son Jesus Christ." In Him we partake of His nature and rejoice in His perfections; ever adoring His blessed name.

The epistle seems to present eternal life in us, as giving an inward conscious knowledge of relationship with an outward blessed Object, so grand, so vast, that all the while we live we may go on to know Him; and in the joy of this knowledge, manifest Him down here.

"*He* is the true God, and eternal life." This is John's definition of eternal life. There is much in

other parts that is characteristic ; but John closes by drawing our attention to Him who is " the true God, and eternal life," as he begins by attracting us to the life that was manifested in Him.

" Little children, keep yourselves from idols " (v. 21). Everything else is an idol. " Though there be that are called gods . . . many, and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father . . . *and one Lord Jesus Christ.*" May the Lord keep our hearts from idols ; everything that militates against Christ's supremacy in the heart is an idol.

Born of God, we have the nature. In Christ risen from the dead we have eternal life. By the Spirit given from an ascended Christ we have power to enter into all that He has opened up for us ; and into which as a Man He has entered for us.

The nature tends to one thing, and acts on one principle while here. One blessed Object rules the life. That one Object is Christ, the Son of the Living God.

May the Lord order for us a deeper knowledge of Himself, for His name's sake. Amen !

LECTURE VI.*

LEVITICUS ii.

WE have been considering, on former occasions, at another place, the eternal life, as presented to us by the contemplative John in his first epistle; let us now turn to the Spirit's occupation with Him who was that eternal life before there was a John to contemplate Him, and long before He was manifested on earth, or that human eyes *could* see, or hands handle Him. It is a marvellous thought, that God was ever occupied with that blessed One as set forth in the types of the Old Testament Scriptures.

These types show that God ever had Christ before Him in some way or other; that He was the object of His heart; and that every detail in connection with His life and death has intense interest for God. If you consider that, two thousand years before He came into this scene, God gave such types of Him as we find in this "meal-offering," it shows us what a place He has in the heart of God, and how all the purposes and counsels of God meet and find their fulfilment in Him—the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the great moral centre of all God's dealings. From all eternity God was occupied with Him, in His life and death down here.

When we come to the time of the Lord's sojourn

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on earth, if we get into the secret of it as we have it disclosed in the mount of transfiguration, we find it is the same. Moses and Elias were talking of His decease. His life and death were the occupation of heaven.

And in the Revelation we read, "To Him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be glory and strength to the ages of ages. Amen" (ch. i. 5, 6). All here turns *back* to Christ and His cross.

In the five sacrifices recorded in these first chapters of Leviticus, we have set forth before us a complete Christ, as I suppose is well known to us all. But what is remarkable about it is, that when God thus sets forth that which represents His Son as a man on earth, He begins not with the meal-offering, which presents His life, but with the burnt-offering, which typifies His death. Why is this? If we were to write the history of a man we should not commence with his death, nor is it so in the history of our Lord in the Gospels; yet this is the way in which God here begins. And necessarily so. It was the object of His coming into this world—He came to die. John's testimony about Him is, "Behold the Lamb of God, bearing away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). This was what was characteristic of Him.

The life of every great man on earth is marked by some one act; as when we think of Wellington,

immediately Waterloo rises before the mind. So although Christ's every act was in the same devotedness that led to the cross, yet it is that one act of that one life that God delights to bring prominently forward as vindicating Him amidst this scene of ruin and death, and enabling Him to fulfil all His thoughts as to man. In Ps. xl. the words of the blessed Lord are, "Lo, I come I delight to do Thy will, Oh my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (*vv.* 7, 8). That will did not stop short of death, and there was not an act of His life that was not done in the same spirit of devotedness that eventually led Him to die.

In John iv., when meeting the need of a poor sinful woman, He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (*v.* 34). Thus assuring her poor heart and ours that not only did He delight in what He was doing, but that it was the Father's will also—a double assurance.

In John xi., when He heard of the sickness of Lazarus, He abode two days still in the same place. Did He not love Lazarus? Yes, in a way we do not understand. We cannot measure the energy and force of the Lord's love for Lazarus at that moment—for us, too, in the same way. Blessed thought! But He abode two days still in the same place where He was. He had not the word from the Father; but directly it came, in spite of the Jews, in spite of the danger, and of the threats of the Pharisees, He

says, I go. It is the devotedness of His being to God. And this is what led to the burnt-offering.

In the garden of Gethsemane, when the devil came upon Him with the power of death in His hand, the words of the blessed One are, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11). It was as He said, "Your hour, and the power of darkness." Yet to Him His Father's will was everything.

Further on He said, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (xix. 30). All—all was accomplished, and all in the savour of this last act.

And this is why the burnt-offering comes first. It is not a question of wrath or imputation, otherwise it could not be a sweet-savour offering. But it sets forth that one act of that one life in which God finds all His delight.

The meat-offering then follows this as leading up and necessary to it. Phil. ii. presents this, though it compasses more. We have there the Lord's coming down lower and lower; seven steps, indicating *complete* humiliation, from heaven, the throne of God, down to Calvary's ignominious death of the cross. It is not redemption's work that is there set forth, though redemption was accomplished in that act, but the blessed obedience of the Lord Jesus, that led Him always to do the will of Him whose will He came to do. He went steadily on in that path which ended

in death. And this without any demonstration. Not as Luther, who said, when warned not to go to Worms, I will go, though there be as many devils there as tiles on the houses. That marked Luther as a man zealous for the truth; but what we find in the Lord Jesus was, that He went quietly on doing the thing He came to do, as in John xi., without any external demonstration. He did it without boasting of it. In this way every act He performed was in the value of His death.

In the meat-offering there is no imputation of sin, no judicial wrath, and no blood-shedding. It is the presentation to God of a perfect life on earth, so that He could at all times delight in it as a sweet savour. The word is properly "meal-offering," not "meat-offering." In that day flesh was not so much eaten as it is now in this country; meal was the common staple of food, and set forth the common means of life.

The chapter is divided into three parts, which set forth three stages of the history of Christ as a man upon earth, from the manger to the cross. They are—

1. The meal-offering.
2. The cake-offering.
3. The firstfruits-offering.

There are also four ingredients mentioned as composing it, viz. :—

1. Fine flour.
2. Oil.
3. Frankincense, and
4. Salt.

And two are mentioned as excluded from it, viz.:—

1. Leaven, and
2. Honey.

But before considering these things which open up to us some of the glories of that holy mystery, God manifest in the flesh, let us notice *v.* 1.

The opening clause of this verse shows us it was a voluntary offering. "When any *will* offer." This sets forth Christ's voluntarily offering Himself. In the volume of the Book it was written of Him, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." It is what we have also in John i. 14, where it should read, "The Word *became* flesh;" not "was made." He became flesh; that was a voluntary act on His part, and only He could become flesh. Yet there is a sense in which His people may present themselves also as a meat-offering in their measure. But primarily this is only true of Him.

Another thing to be observed is that, lest there should be any unholy tampering with Christ in His life here, this offering is jealously guarded by the Spirit as "most holy" (*vv.* 3-10).

We will now consider, first, the ingredients of the offering, and, afterwards, the three classes of the offering.

1. Fine flour was the basis of the offering, and in that is set forth the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus. Flour is a product of earth, and in this respect the meal-offering is of the same nature as

Cain's offering. But that which Cain could not do, Christ did. That which no successor of Cain could do—for Cain has his successors, who are spoken of thus: "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain"—*Christ* did. He alone could. *He* presented of the fruit of the earth an offering that was acceptable to Jehovah. Yea, it was a sweet savour unto Him. It is not here the pouring out of the life's blood to render acceptable, as in Abel's sacrifice, but the presenting a life on earth that was perfectly acceptable. It was a product of earth,—*but not by earth's power*, as we shall see when we consider the meaning of the oil,—an answer to Job's question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (xiv. 4.)

Now, fine flour is perfectly even; there is no coarseness or inequalities in it. And this aptly represents the humanity of the Lord. It has been said of Him that He had no character; that is, no special quality characterized Him; all was in due proportion. But, then, what a process the corn passes through to be reduced to fine flour! In the mill, what trituration! In the sieve, what elimination of all the coarser particles! How, too, was He brought down, Who, "being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, and became in the likeness of men!" And how were all the coarser parts of human nature excluded from His *holy* human nature, begotten by the Holy Spirit! In Him humanity was in perfection—*holy* humanity.

Before there had been *innocent* human nature in Adam; Christ's was not that. There had been *sinful* human nature in all those descended from Adam; but it need not be said there was no sin in Christ. To say that would be to deny His Godhead, and they who say it have no Saviour at all; as, if that were so, He must die for Himself, and could not die for us. Then there was in Christ, *holy* human nature as He stood a man on earth. And now in Him, at God's right hand, human nature is *glorified*.

The Lord Jesus was a real man down here, but there was no special trait of character that marked Him. He was always ready, always equal to the occasion, and nothing was in excess. He was the man of Ps. i.: "Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." We may mark the zeal and energy of Paul; the ardent affection of Peter; and in John that intense love of its object, but which at times led him into excess to vindicate that object. These traits gave these beloved men their character. In Christ there was zeal and energy and love all combined, and all in proportion. What zeal for the glory of God! So that it was written of Him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." What love to the sinner! Look at Him in the Pharisee's house with the woman, who was a sinner, attracted by His grace to His feet, pouring into her soul the comfort of His love, and sending her away in peace; but at the same time re-

buking, with what decision and energy, the Pharisee at whose board He sat.

Everything was good in Him and in its season. They came to Him testing and tempting Him on every hand, and He never was anything but Himself. He was the only man who could say of Himself, as He does in John viii. 25, I am "Altogether that which I also say to you:" My words express myself. Would that this were more true of us! but who of us can say it? Language with man is used generally to hide his thoughts. Even among Christians how little do their words express themselves!

2. Oil is the next ingredient, and, where used as a type, it is always a figure of the Holy Spirit. Here the oil is poured upon the flour, which was thus permeated with it. It sets forth this, that the human nature of the Lord Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit. "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Why? Because the "Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee." As a man born into this world, He was begotten by the Holy Spirit. He did not need to be converted. When *we* are converted we get a nature that is begotten by the Holy Spirit, but then we have also a nature that is utterly sinful. Christ never had this latter. When we come to the cake-offering, we find that He was anointed also with the Holy Spirit, and this as a Man, and for power for service, as at John's baptism; in

this He was unlike us also, though we receive the Spirit after conversion. He received the Holy Spirit without the sprinkling of blood, or before redemption's work was accomplished. We never could until the blood was shed, and redemption's work is made good in us. The Spirit of holiness declared Him to be the Son of God with power during all His life, as did also the resurrection of the dead.

But there never was another man like Christ, as born into this world, nor ever will be. It is not said, We shall be what He was. We cannot be this. But looking at Him in the glory now, it is said, "We shall be like Him" in the coming day; as also, "As He is, so are we in this world."

There is a third way that the Spirit is spoken of in connection with Christ; *i.e.*, when as a man He ascends up on high, and receives the Spirit, as the promise of the Father; and, as Peter says, "He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts ii, 33). In this way only are we in connection with Him. In the other two ways He is alone. In His human nature, being begotten by the Holy Spirit, He was alone. As anointed as a man by the Spirit, apart from redemption's work, He was alone. But ascended on high, the accomplisher of redemption, He receives the Spirit, and sends Him as power to dwell in those who are redeemed.

3. The frankincense comes next. One thing is remarkable about this ingredient, that while a hand-

ful only of the flour mingled with oil was burnt, the whole of the frankincense was burnt upon the altar. This was for Jehovah alone. The Lord Jesus Christ offered His life to Jehovah; *i.e.*, He never did a single thing that had not Jehovah as its object. Eph. v. 2 shows this: "Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself *for* us an offering and a sacrifice *to* God for a sweet-smelling savour." Christ loved the sinner. He gave Himself for him. But it was not the sinner as such who was His object. He had God ever before Him. Let us consider this. If the sinner becomes our *object* we are below the level of the "meat-offering." God is the source of everything; by Him everything is accomplished, and He is His own object. He can never work for anything lower than Himself. In man this would be the essence of selfishness; in God it is perfection. He cannot have an object higher than Himself. He loves the sinner, and He stoops down to him; but it is to lift the sinner to Himself. Of Him, and through Him, and *to* Him are all things; to whom be glory.

The priests had none of the frankincense; they could stand at the altar and partake of the *fragrance* of it as it ascended up to God, and we may share in it in this way. Must we not admire as we gaze on the beauty of this devotedness? Christ having only God for His object in everything He said and did!

4. The last ingredient is salt. This is found in v. 13: "And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt

thou season with salt." Salt is that which supposes the power of perpetuity. If you salt anything, it preserves it in the state in which it is when salted. The thought of preservative power is in it. There is the pungency of the truth but the preservative power of that pungency. This life is continually before God as a sweet savour. Do you think it is ever absent from Him? The salt of the covenant of thy God is in it. This covenant of salt is referred to in Num. xviii. 19. The heave-offerings of the holy things were given to Aaron, his sons and daughters, by a covenant of salt *for ever*. And in 2 Chron. xiii. 5 we read, "Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David *for ever*, even to Him and to his sons by a *covenant of salt*?" Here the idea of perpetuity is plainly brought out.

We cannot surely make too much of the *death* of Christ; but at the same time there may be a tendency of making too little of His *life*. We cannot do without His death. Some have made union with Christ to be in incarnation; against that error it was necessary to insist that apart from His *death* there could be no union; but we are creatures of such oscillation that there is danger of pressing this at the expense of the life which was so absolutely necessary to it. Now God is so satisfied with that life that He says, I want it reproduced in My people. How do we get power for this reproduction? Is it not by feeding upon Christ thus? As soon as we become priests it

is our privilege to feed upon the meat-offering, which sets forth Christ in His life down here as suiting God. As we feed upon this we get power to live Christ.

Now precious as dispensational truth and church truth is, it is not all. We may have this, and not be feeding upon Christ, as presented to us here in His life, as suiting God. It is possible to soar into what is called heavenly truth, and yet to have to acknowledge that we do not know how to walk down here. Surely it is better to be without it than professing to have it not to be able to walk up to it. What God wants is life, and that is only to be sustained by feeding upon Christ. Perfectly true, we must always own we are not up to the standard; but is it not a comfort to the soul to be able to say, There is a life which has perfectly answered all God's desires? When the devil trips up a saint, and then goes and boasts of it in the presence of God, how blessed to know that there was a life upon earth which has gone up wholly as a sweet savour to God, and it is presented in this offering for me to feed upon. One would not make little of being tripped up, or of failure; nor will God pass it by without having to say to us about it. But how blessed to our souls to remember that there was a Man who, in all the circumstances of His life down here, from babyhood until taken up out of it, and exalted to the throne of God, was perfectly acceptable to Him. Not only did Christ die for our sins, but He lived here a

life that was ever an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God, the memorial of which could be burnt upon the altar at all stages; and this still exists before Him. What a complete answer to the enemy!

We must glance now at the excluded ingredients. "No meat-offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be *made* with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (v. 11). Here *leaven* is excluded from the composition of any meat-offering, and, with *honey*, must not be burnt in any offering.

1. Leaven is always a type of evil in Scripture, *without exception*. It sets forth the evil principle that permeates fallen human nature, and with which every man is leavened as born into this world. "Born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." But in Christ there was none of this. He was that holy thing born of a woman. The old way of leavening bread was to put a piece of the old leavened batch, reserved for this purpose, into the new batch, and thus to leaven it. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. No man was ever born without this old leaven in Him, and Satan had something to work upon. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, but he had the old leaven in him. In Christ there was none of the old. He was an entirely new order of man upon earth, in whom the prince of this world had nothing.

Israel is likened, in Hosea vii. 4, to a baker who, having heated an oven, "ceaseth from raising," (or waking) "after he has kneaded the dough, till it be leavened." He had lit his fire and set his dough, and gone to sleep, and the dough had risen and gone down again, and become sodden and sour, and if still left would breed worms, showing the corrupt principle of the leaven. It is that flatulent, sour, acrid principle of human nature which tends to moral corruption. Christ was absolutely free from it, and necessarily so, or He could not be a meat-offering.

2. Honey, while it was not excluded from the composition of a meat-offering, was not to be burnt upon the altar. This sets forth that which is good and sweet in human nature, as natural affection, which it is a sin to be without, and a sign of the degeneracy of the last days. This was in Christ in perfection, but never allowed to come between Him and the performance of that will which He came to do. At twelve years of age we hear Him saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" while His earthly father and His mother sought Him sorrowing. Again, He said when in service, and His mother would have suggested that which would display His power, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" In like manner to His brethren, on a similar occasion, "Your time is always ready, but My time is not yet full come." Yet who so obedient to His parents? Who so loving to His mother? "He went

down, and was obedient to His parents." On the cross He could, amid the personal agonies He endured, and the full weight of the work of redemption, rise above all in His loving care for that mother, and say to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to his disciple whom He loved, "Behold thy mother!" Truly there was honey in Christ, but it was not offered in sacrifice to be burnt upon the altar. May the Lord enable us to hold the sweetness of human nature in its right place, and to preserve it from deteriorating into leaven, which it may so easily become in us!

We come now to the different forms of the offering. There are three, viz. :—

1. The meal-offering (*vv.* 1-3).
2. The cake-offering, which divides itself into three parts (*vv.* 4-10).
3. The firstfruits-offering, which is of an exceptional kind (*vv.* 14-16).

I.—The meal-offering represents what Christ always was essentially, and includes the time of His youth and manhood up to the time of His ministry, but the ministry is more set forth by the cake-offering. He is not typified here in an official way, but what He was in nature and life as manifested upon earth in the seclusion of the family and daily occupation. This began, as John speaks of it in his epistle, when the blessed babe Jesus was born in the manger. Even before the child was born, heaven was occupied with the event, long before purposed; and an angel

announces His conception. When born, a company of angels proclaim to the shepherds the birth of a Saviour, Christ the Lord. It is striking to notice in the early chapters of Matthew's gospel how intense is the interest expressed in "the young child." Where an ordinary writer would have substituted a pronoun the Holy Spirit delights to put again and again "the young child." Why was that? Because there was a life on earth now in the person of that young child that was the object of heaven. God stooped to look down through all angelic hosts for His object; for none could be found to hold His gaze amongst them. His object was found on earth in the Person of that young child. The presence of Jesus on earth commanded the interests of God.

Never was there such a babe, or such a child. All the passions of fallen man, so early manifested, were entirely absent from Him. No temper exhibited, no raising the hand against the mother; another life, a divine life, shone through all His ways. And it is remarkable that the greater part of the Lord's life—*i.e.*, thirty out of thirty-three and a half years—was spent in the daily duties of the home circle. We get the idea that eternal life is manifested only in testimony, but this is a mistake. The difficulty with a young Christian is to live it in the family circle. Display it there, and, it may be, God will enlarge your circle. Christ began at home, and was obedient to His parents, and knew all the trials of the place

He had taken in grace ; nor did He use His power to shield Himself from the vicissitudes of the situation. But " Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man " (Lu. ii. 52). As a child His only thought was to do His Father's will, and He lived so as to grow in favour with God and man.

Now, there is a stage in one's history when one can be in favour with God and man ; *i.e.*, when not called into testimony, but in the family, or in one's earthly occupation. To live eternal life then will not, as a rule, call forth much opposition ; though at times it may call out the natural hatred of the heart. We need to consider this subject ; it needs to be pressed upon our hearts, especially the younger ones amongst us. There are unconverted masters who can appreciate a Christian servant, and be glad to have one ; he knows he will not tell lies, nor rob him. Here we may grow in favour with God and man. But if one turns round to rebuke his master, this is testimony, and he will not be in favour. Some servants think they are called upon to rebuke everything around them ; but what we have to do is to live Christ. If called upon to do wrong, we are not to do that. If one's master should wish one to tell a lie, that cannot be done ; but it does not follow that one is to rebuke him. Just let him know that you have a conscience about it, and possibly he may respect you the more. Christ, then, lived eternal life from His birth ; and at the time of His entering upon His work of testimony,

He becomes,—

II.—The cake-offering. This takes up the Lord's life at the time of His coming to John to be baptized of him, when, as it were, He presented Himself at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. Now, while the ingredients are the same, what is necessary to the production of the cake is the action of the fire, which sets forth the trial and testing that Christ endured in His life of testimony here. This trial or testing came upon Christ with different degrees of intensity during His service.

§ In the first offering the meal was mingled with oil. Here the cake is not only mingled with oil, but there is the additional thought of the anointing, for the oil is poured upon it. This we find at His baptism, where in Matt. iii. we read that John "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (vv. 16, 17). From that time on, everything He did was in the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and this as a man, and before redemption was accomplished. It was in the power of the Holy Spirit He was led into the wilderness to be tempted, and in the power of the Holy Spirit He was led back again triumphantly. In this power of the Holy Spirit also He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

1. The first kind of cake-offering is that baken in an oven. Here the action of the fire is unseen, though how real! When the Lord took His place with Israel, as He did in Jordan, He identified Himself with the remnant of Judah, and passed through all the circumstances they were called to pass through in connection with the nation. He is then immediately driven into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, and for forty days He is there, and we do not know what He passed through. These were sufferings of Christ which no human eye could see, which no heart could enter into. There is a prayer by an old writer which pleads the sufferings of Christ known and unknown. This latter is of the sort typified by the oven. There He endured the action of fire, tempted of the devil, but all hidden from human eye. Others, it has been objected, have fasted forty days; but under what different circumstances! Moses and Elias were abstracted from what was natural to them to be alone with God. Christ was abstracted from what was natural to Him, which was to be with God, to be alone with the devil; and, unlike Adam, He was surrounded by the *wild* beasts. We know not what He passed through there; but we know that He came forth conqueror in the power of the Holy Spirit. He proved the power of the anointing.

2. In the three temptations at the close of the forty days we have what is more open to view. Not less in

trial and testing, but more open ; and this *may* answer to the cake-offering baked in a pan. Here also we find it parted in pieces, and oil poured upon it ; *i.e.*, each piece. In these three temptations we find the Lord tried in three different ways, answering to three different offices which He filled, and thus we see what the parting in pieces may mean ; but all was in the energy and unction of the Spirit.

a. The first temptation appeals to Him as man. He was hungry ; had fasted forty days, and they were ended. Now He might surely satisfy His hunger, and He had the power to do it. The devil said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. iv. 3). The Lord answers him in effect, I am here as a man, not to command, but to obey. I have no word from God ; I live by His word. And the devil was defeated. The unction of the Spirit was in this.

b. The next temptation is as Messiah. The devil says, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down : for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee" (v. 6). But he omits, "To keep Thee in all Thy ways." Quoting a Psalm that rightly applied to the Lord as Messiah, but tempting Him to take Himself out of God's hand in this particular way. But all is in vain. Christ, in the power of the Spirit, rightly quotes a scripture that utterly defeats the enemy.

c. Then he tries Him in another way. His title as

Son of man is universal. He is to reign over all the earth. Satan therefore shows Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, saying, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me" (v. 9). In other words, His universal title should be owned without the suffering of the cross. But here his true character of adversary plainly appears, and the Lord treats him as such, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan," at the same time quoting again the Scripture in the power of the Spirit, and the adversary is silenced. All the pieces are anointed with oil.

3. Satan does not again come personally to the Lord until Gethsemane, though the sufferings of the blessed One go on in other ways all through His service; but at the end he appears again, with the power of death in his hand. A character of testing this which is still more open to the action of the fire, and may show what is set forth by the last kind of cake-offering. Satan comes threatening death if He does not bow to him; and the Lord says, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." But, at the same time, while accepting death, He will not accept it at the devil's hand, or man's, but from the Father's, saying, "The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Christ was tested to the last, and was true to the last. But did not God know beforehand who and what Christ was? Perfectly. Then why the need

of the testing? It was in order that God might have a complete answer to the devil in this marvellous life upon earth. You have done your best, and you have done your worst, but the result is the display of the absolute perfection of the blessed Lord. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." Perfect love and perfect obedience was all the devil brought out of Christ.

Alas! beloved, He brings something very different out of us. Look at Job, a man perfect and upright. What was brought out of him? His vileness! He says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." In Christ's case, all that came out was perfection. Take a handful of the meal, the life of Christ in His youth; or the cake, His manhood, and burn it on the altar; it goes up before God an odour of a sweet smell, and all the frankincense is God's.

But this is what God is looking for from us in our measure, to whom He has given eternal life. So the apostle says, in Eph. v. 2, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Now this is not an impossibility, but the manifestation of the life that has been communicated to us. The man who is living eternal life is the one who will know most about it, for it is one of God's principles that to him that hath, shall more be given.

It is not having the knowledge of it in my head simply; as well might the monks in Luther's day boast of having the Bible, which was lying on their shelves covered with dust! Quite true, I may have more than I am called upon to exhibit at the moment, but I must exhibit nothing different in character. The acquisition of truth has been compared to a man with his hand upon a ladder. Say to him, Why have you your hand there? In order that I may put my foot there. That is the practical thing. Faith apprehends the truth first, like the hand; but faith makes it good, makes it my own; I plant my foot there.

III.—The third and last stage in the history of the Lord Jesus is set forth here in the first fruits. In *v. 12* they were to be offered unto the Lord, but not to be burnt; but there was an exception made in *v. 14*. *V. 12* probably refers to the Church, as in *ch. xxiii.*, typified as at Pentecost. Leaven is there; it cannot therefore be burnt; but this is not our subject now. The exception here sets forth what transpired in the last act of the life of Christ on earth. It was to be "green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears" (*v. 14*). It is Christ who, having arrived at maturity, the full vigour of manhood, was cut off in the midst of His days. He was not suffered as an old man to fill His days under the smile of God's favour, but they were closed under the governmental wrath of God, not

against Himself personally, but against Israel. As Messiah, He was cut off and had nothing. The ears were full, but green, and beaten out and dried by the action of the fire. The Psalms have many references to this. In Ps. cii. 9, 10, Messiah says, "I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath: for Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." This was not judicial wrath, but governmental. As King of Israel, He, a perfect being, was perfectly fit to reign over His people; but *Israel was not fit* to be raised to the head of the nations. *He* has to suffer on account of *their* unfitness. He was lifted up as Messiah; but when it came to the time of reigning He was cut off, and had nothing. Jehovah's sword awoke against His shepherd, and He was smitten. Beloved brethren, that is not atonement, though atonement were wrought in that act; but it was governmental wrath in connection with and against Israel. It is the ears of corn, full, but green, which must be dried by the action of the fire.

In vv. 23, 24 of the same Psalm we read, "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Was it nothing to the Lord to be cut off in the prime of life, at thirty-three years of age? In Ps. xci., the one the devil quotes, He is promised long life because He set His love upon Jehovah. See vv. 14-16. This He gives up, but

under the governmental wrath of God against Israel, and He was not indifferent to it. His very perfection as a man made Him more sensible of what it was to be cut off. The blessed Lord was the only One who passed through in reality what Hezekiah describes so graphically, knowing it only in anticipation, and which shows what a dreadful thing it was for a Jew to be thus cut off. "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world . . . from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones: from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me." (Isa. xxxviii. 10-13).

This language describes what the Lord Jesus only knew in perfection. Hezekiah had fifteen years added to his life; but Messiah was cut off, and His very perfection as a man made Him feel the circumstances He was in in so acute a way as none other ever knew.

"Thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat-offering" (v. 15). The unction of the Spirit was here, and the savour of the frankincense; all was accepted by us it was done to God; and "the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frank-

incense thereof" (v. 16), could be burnt upon the altar, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Such was Christ as the firstfruits offering; and this, not as in Lev. xxiii. 10, where the wave sheaf is Christ as firstfruits in resurrection, but this is firstfruits as a product of earth, before and up to death. God has produced from earth that which is acceptable to Him—a life which in its last act, as in its first, was an offering of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

In this offering God had a part, and the priests, Aaron and his sons, have what remains (v. 10). The church, as a company of priests, share in fellowship with their Head this blessed food, which is most holy unto Jehovah. If I am speaking to believers here to-night, you are priests of God, and as such your food is the meat-offering. It is what Christ was on earth as suiting God. Every act of His life was worthy of being recorded, and John says if all were written, the world could not contain the books; but all that is necessary for us as priests to feed upon is written. May the Lord enable us to feed thus upon Him, that we may have sustenance, and the strength and vigour which that gives, so that we may be able, in our measure, to present a meat-offering to God in our lives down here.

G. J. S.