

# THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY.

BEING

NOTES OF ADDRESSES

REVISED.

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“ The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings’  
palaces.” (Prov. xxx. 28.)

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## INTRODUCTION.

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WITH the hope that these notes may supply, in some measure, the truth needed at this time, it has been thought well to print them. The notes have been revised by the speakers.

Commending them to the Lord for His blessing, they are sent forth.

J. B. S.

*September, 1887.*

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# WE ARE HEAVENLY.

JOHN III. 12, 15.

WHAT I desire to bring before you is what we are; not the practical side, but what we *are*. I will divide it into two parts—one respecting the gospel, the other—respecting the assembly.

We are made for heaven, we are heavenly, not *of* the earth, though *on* it. When the truth first came out, we tried to carry it out in the wrong way, turning away from this thing and that thing in order to be heavenly. That is legality. I remember the effect it had on me when some one said, “We *are* heavenly.” We do not like to say it, because we so little act up to it.

In the gospel we are entitled to heaven, our joys come from heaven now. In the church we are placed there now. It is the devil’s device to separate the gospel from the church; it is the masterpiece of iniquity so to separate the two that one can hold the gospel but ignore the church. You cannot divorce what God has put together. The lack I find in souls is, that while they know that their sins are forgiven, they do not know their new place.

What place have you? Is it earth or heaven?

It could not possibly be earth, for Christ was rejected from the earth. It has a great moral effect upon a person to be able to say, "I have a place in heaven, I have no property on earth at all, it is all in heaven." Who will give you that which is your own? It is the Lord's property I have on earth, but in heaven I have my own.

In the garden of Eden, man lost his place; man is lost; the question to him then is, First—Where art thou? then—What hast thou done? Every believer seeks to be clear as to the latter, but very few are clear about the former.

In the Old Testament I do not find that the man driven out of Eden is superseded by a man in a new *place* with God. In the Psalms I get a sense of shelter and care, and I get the glory of the Lord dwelling in the cloud in the midst of His people. But in the New Testament I am not only relieved from my misery, not only have I got pardon and acceptance, but I have a *place where God is*; for this I must be a new man. Is this on earth? No. Christ has been rejected from the earth. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." This passage makes it clear that the Old Testament saints had no place in heaven. The lost man could not enter heaven. How could the man driven out of Eden ascend to heaven?

When the new thing came out, it was said of Stephen, "He looked up stedfastly into *heaven*." The heavens are opened: the first time they were ever opened upon man, except on Christ. True, Enoch went to God: he was the seventh from Adam, in type the completed man (who is really Christ)—"God took him"—he got a place with God.

I turn now to Luke's Gospel. (Read the end of chap. vii.) Every believer knows that he is forgiven, that his offences are cleared away; but the lack is this, that while he knows that he was guilty, and that he is now clear of guilt, he does not really know what it is to be found, as one once lost. We were not only guilty but lost, and we are not merely forgiven, but we are given a place with God; one who had been at the greatest distance, the lost one, is made meet for the Father's house. In Luke vii. the woman, the sinner, comes to Jesus; an affection is established between her and the Saviour; her sins are forgiven, but with no sense of a new place with God and fitness for it. That is where thousands are now; they know they are forgiven, but they have not the joy of being brought to God. Now in Luke x. 30-37 the sinner is cured, carried, and cared for all the journey, until "I come again." Very blessed, you may say; so it is, but there is no new place with God there; it is all man's benefit in the place where he is. We must bear in mind that

man was driven out of Eden, and in order that he should obtain a new place with God he must be a man after a new order.

Now look at chapter xiv. 15. "And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." What did that man mean? He meant that when God had full sway, the earth would be a beautiful place. The Lord replies by saying, "A certain man made a great supper." That was a greater thing. The supper was in the house; the house gives a character to the supper; it is the *finish* of the gospel; we have come to our *place* now, to the festivities of the Father's house. So the prodigal in chapter xv. is not only forgiven, but he is fitted to enter the house, and to be merry there. If you have not reached to the place for which God has fitted you, you have not answered to the delights of His heart, you are keeping the place of the lost man. The prodigal, as to himself, only wanted to be saved from misery, he had no thought of a new place with his father. If you have not got to the Father's house, you have not met the desire of your Father's heart for you. The great point of Luke xv. is the joy of the finder—the joy of the Father's heart in having you; not merely in *saving* you, but in *having* you; and for Him to have you, you cannot be of that order of man who was driven out of Eden; you must

of necessity be a man of a new order. You will never have divine joys in your soul unless you have got to the new place. What hinders it? Earthly things, not sinful things; no saint wants sinful things; but *earthly* things are the hindrance; the bit of land, oxen, wife, &c.: beautiful things in themselves. I have another place, and I draw my joys from *that* place. I know it is inconceivable. I feel at times as if I must bow under the weight of the fact, that the blessed God delights in my company. Do not believe in love that does not desire your company. If you give up things here, what is the recompense? The Lord's company; that was what Peter started with in Luke v. You will not understand your place with the Lord till you understand this. The Lord grant that we may enjoy our place.

I turn now to John iii., the doctrinal side of it. Jordan was just as much a type of the death of Christ as was the blood upon the lintel and the Red Sea. Every believer knows something of the first two, but how much do you know of the last two—the brazen serpent and Jordan? I have the life of the One who has died out of this place. This is not the sphere for eternal life. “He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should *live together with him.*” (1 Thess. v. 10.) Do not look at Jordan as something afar from you. You are just as much entitled to be

over Jordan as out of Egypt. It is a blessed thing when your heart finds out what Christ is. First, He never leaves you; that is the manna—what Christ is to you; next, Canticles,—the reciprocity of affection; but that is not union. Affection prepares for union, but it is not union. Many are up in Ephesians who have not much enjoyment. Why? Because there is not the affection which can only be satisfied in union. But I want you to insist upon what *you are*, not on your experience, but on your title to what that death has effected for you. It has given you a title to a new place. Paul was caught up to heaven. (2 Cor. xii.) The thief on the cross was a practical example of it; he was taken from the depths of sin and degradation to the greatest delights in paradise. Can anything affect your heart so much as the way the man in Christ is received in the new place? What I press now is the *right* that we have to be in the place, and that it is not only that *I* delight to be there, but the ineffable thought is that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ delights to have me in His place, sharing His joys.

Turn to Colossians iii. There I find heaven is my place, I have a right to it. So in John xiv., the Lord says, "I go to prepare a *place* for you." Adam was driven out of Eden, but I am come now in Christ to another place, the Father's house; I have a place in heaven.

In every departure from the truth the heavenly thing is given up. There is nothing so difficult to retain. Peter in his first epistle, begins with "the hope." (Chap. i. 3.) In his second epistle he says, 'the Lord is coming; do not let your heart rest in things on the earth, all these are to be burnt up;' and of Paul, he says, . . . "In all his epistles speaking of these things . . . hard to be understood," &c. Paul says, as it were, to those in a ship, 'You had better go on shore—to heaven.' Then Peter adds, 'Do not stay, the ship is on fire.' Saints are settling down upon the earth. They have the wrong place before them. If you have not your place in heaven before you, you cannot run right. The Epistles of Peter and the Hebrews both speak of running to the place. Do your ways declare that you are running to heaven? Why do you not throw aside the weights and run swiftly?

In Romans vi. I find I am "dead with Christ," dead to sin; now pursue this, and you will find you are dead to the place too. This I get in Colossians ii. 20; and in chapter iii, the apostle instructs them about entering the place. In Romans I get "newness of life." Romans does not go beyond that. Thank God, I have a new life, and I belong to the new place. I know how disjointedly I am bringing this out, but the Lord often fits into the soul a very disjointed statement.

In Joshua v. you come to Gilgal. In the wilderness it is Marah; that is, I refuse the thing for which Christ died, I do not gratify myself; but at Gilgal the whole thing is gone. Were you ever there? But that is what you *are*; you *are* dead with Christ; the reproach of Egypt rolled off in the circumcision of Christ—the cross; it cannot be resumed. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God . . . . mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” You are out of earth and in heaven. Like a recruit, he drops all of the civilian at the barrack gate in order to be made into a soldier. The old cannot disappear anywhere else but inside the barrack gate; that is Gilgal; there is nothing there but the new order; nothing there but Christ. We are raised up together, we are all over Jordan; all raised up, but we do not all enjoy it. Thank God we have tasted it.

If you do not reach the place you do not feed on the corn of the land—Christ in glory. Paul says, “Lay hold on eternal life;” that is Christ in glory. If I do not, I do not know present association with Him. Souls are occupied with Christ where He was, that is the wilderness; but how many know Christ where He is? Nothing satisfies the heart but present association. I want to know Him where He is at this moment; that is Philippians iii. How little one’s heart knows of Him up there! You do not satisfy His

heart about you if you do not know Him there, nor can you be truly in service either. You must get direction from Himself. No one can rightly serve, but in communion with Him where He is. As a member of His body I am placed there, and as I am there *with* Him, I learn to be here *for* Him.

The Lord grant that we may know truly how the gospel entitles us to heaven, and that in the church we are placed there for His name's sake.

J. B. S.



# THE LESSON BOOK OF ANGELS.

EPHESIANS III 1-12.

I WOULD desire, the Lord helping, to say a few words in continuation of the last part of the subject which has been before us. I do not believe it is possible to exaggerate the importance of the truth of the church ; it is around this truth at the present moment, that all the battle in its fury is raging, and that not in the way of denying it in doctrine, but the most deadly effort to set it aside in *practice*. The church is that which occupies to a great extent the ministry of the Holy Ghost on earth ; it is the prime thought of God, and the peculiar testimony of the present moment. The more we are established in our souls as to our own place and portion, the more important does this testimony become to us, and the more clearly, too, is it seen in its own peculiar blessedness, because it is only from a *heavenly* standpoint that it can be seen aright. The church is heavenly, both in origin, destiny, association, and in all that concerns it. Now, in reading the scriptures of the New Testament, we shall find four great subjects treated therein, namely :—

I. The manifestation of eternal life in Christ,

and the communication of the life to believers. This occupies to a large extent John's Gospel and Epistles.

2. The promises of God, from Adam downwards, and especially to the Jew, made good to that people, and accomplished in Christ. This occupies Paul's Epistles, especially Romans.

3. Mercy to the Gentiles. This also is Paul's subject, and chiefly in Romans.

4. The mystery. This further is treated by Paul, and especially in Ephesians.

Now when we speak about the mystery, it is well to be distinct as to what it is ; it is not *only* the union of Jew and Gentile in one body, and Christ, the Head, in heaven by the Holy Ghost ; I fear at times our limiting the mystery to that which, however precious, is but part of it. I would say the mystery comprises two great parts : first, Christ, as the glorious Man, is set as head over everything, earthly and heavenly ; next, Jew and Gentile united and brought together under Him as Head to the church which is His body.

It is very blessed to dwell on those verses in Ephesians i., and to see Him who had gone down to the very lowest, far above all principality and power and name, those terms which are to us, as it were, boundaries and termini, are points of departure for Him in ascending, glorious exaltation.

There are two things of deep interest which tend to shew the vast and far-reaching importance of this subject: first, when the apostle contemplates himself as the communicator of it, he asks that he may have a *divine utterance*, in making it known; he was conscious, blessed man that he was, that no power of man could adequately set it forth, that there was no capability in any vessel, ever so gifted, without divine power, to make such a subject known; how different from all that we see around us! But, secondly, observe for those to whom he thus ministered, that they might have a divine enlightenment in their hearts so as to take it in, apprehend it, and so he prays that the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened; nothing so unfolds the divine and heavenly nature of this great subject as the great apostle of the Gentiles seeking a *divine utterance* for himself and a *divine entrance* for them.

I would call your attention to another scripture as to this, namely, Colossians ii.—where we are instructed in the agony and exercise of soul through which the servant was made to pass as to this great reality; it is wonderful to see in the exercise of the servant's heart the divine expression of the magnitude of the truth he was commissioned to make known. Now it is well to be reminded again and again that the security of the saints amid the manifold snares and

delusions of the moment, lies in their apprehending in soul the mystery. It is not mere credence of that which is true, but the knowledge in faith of the soul of it. It may be plainly stated that none are safe in whose heart the mystery does not dwell; but there is another truth here as well, namely, that at this present moment the church is the lesson book for angels, that wherein His manifold wisdom is set forth. Creation is the witness to His eternal power and Godhead. Israel was the witness of His wondrous ways in government, but now is made known by means of the assembly, to creatures beyond us in intelligence, the "many coloured" (πολυποίκιλος) wisdom of God; what a place that puts the assembly and its administration into at the present moment—"now."

There is one other point here of great moral and value to which, beloved brethren, I would direct your thoughts, and I do so with great searchings of heart, being fully conscious of how little it is so manifested now; it is the position of the apostle in this world in connection with the truth; how touching to think of him as a *prisoner*, or, as elsewhere, an "ambassador in bonds." Oh, what a testimony to the unearthly character and nature of the church! the ambassador of nations to the courts of other countries is a man in high repute and esteem; but Christ's ambassador is in chains! Yes, beloved brethren,

if we were truly and rightly ecclesiastical we should know and taste more of the world's hate; you might be evangelical and earthly or worldly, but if you are ecclesiastical according to God's mind, you must be apart, and share the sufferings.

May the Lord open our hearts to take in somewhat of the vast blessedness of what has been before us, and as Christianity works by what it brings, may He Himself so bring and convey these things to us at this time, that we may be found on earth in some more marked suitability to a suffering testimony.

W. T. T.



# REST.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 14-21.

I WOULD say just one or two words on the commencement of the christian life in this world. It is, indeed, the soul's apprehension of that, which tells on all afterwards. Some begin by looking at their own believing, their own faith, and thus they rest in a sort of faith in their own faith—in other words, faith in themselves, more or less. Such are always dwelling upon their own feelings, their apprehensions, and the like. There is no growth until that stage is gone by.

Now, in Christianity the soul begins with God—this is true—but there is another side also, and that is that God has begun with the soul. He has apprehended the soul, and has brought it from darkness to light. If we are His, it is because He has singled each of us out as special sinners that He might have special mercy upon us, and make us special examples of His grace. He has singled us out that He might make us His own, and have us for Himself. Thus it is He begins with us.

Now in Hebrews and in Peter there is the same thing: that is, rest—two sorts of rest.

There is that which the soul enters into now: that is, the finding itself in the hand of God—apprehended of Him according to the desires of His own heart, and the exercise of His own power—and that is rest. We have various experiences, but if we have apprehended that blessed position as a reality to us, we have rest of soul, rest for the heart, and rest for the conscience. Of course, it is all through the work of the blessed Lord, and thank God it is so, and only so; but to find oneself in the hand of God, and to know the heart that guides that hand, is perfect rest—"God so loved, that he gave." Now no one is fit for conflict who has not entered into this rest—a present, real thing to the soul.

With regard to the second sort of rest—the rest of God, in the unclouded light of His presence—who can tell the blessedness of that? The presence, unclouded presence, of that One who is worthy, eternally worthy to be eternally praised? That rest is before us, and awaits us, and we are on our way to it. But do we know what the other rest is? Do we know what it is to be in the hand of God, stretched forth to us in infinite love? The Israelites were in His hand. He took them up when they were in Egypt, and He brought them forth; but that was not all. He brought them to Himself, and He held them in His hand. If they had apprehended this, they would have gone through the

wilderness in perfect confidence and assurance in His love and in His power—in what He was in Himself.

Look at Moses in Numbers xxxiii.: “If thy presence go not, carry us not up hence;” and at Joshua and Caleb in Numbers xiv.: “If the Lord delight in us,” &c. Moses learned his own heart, that there was nought but evil there, and that Jehovah’s heart and Jehovah’s presence were alone to be trusted in. Caleb and Joshua too learned that all depended upon Him and His favour, His delight.

When we speak of ourselves, is it the power of God upon us and in us that is before us, or is it our own power? His power holding us, and bringing out what is of Himself, alone can be to His glory. The soul must lay hold of, enter into this, or else it is powerless to us. The apprehension of it, indeed, is of vital importance in this day. We thus enter into rest now, and thus we are fit for conflict. In the rest our own hearts are at rest with God and in Him, and then in conflict we have to do with the wiles and devices of the enemy. Who is so weak as the one who has to do with them, and yet not at rest with God? God is going to do with us according to and for His own glory. The blessed Lord never entered into this rest, because He was never out of it. “Contradiction of sinners against himself,” He suffered, yet was with God in it all.

Moses brought the people out, and then the evil that was in them was manifested, and they turned away from the land and the promise, they turned away from God, and despised the land; look at Psalm lxxviii., and yet after all this despising, tempting, provoking, speaking against God, there was His heart and His hand, their sole resource and hope. Two, and two only, got into the land, and what a record they gave. "The Lord hath kept me alive . . . four-score and five years old, I am as strong this day, as in the day Moses sent me." "If the Lord be with me, even now I can drive the giants out."

We talk about heavenly truth—surely we can thank Him for it and for preserving the taste for it in us; but have we apprehended this, that we are in the hollow of His hand, to do with us as seems good to Him, according to the love of His own heart towards us? If so, there will be rest, and calmness, and ability, to look at things which oppose, and to weigh them according to how they affect Him and His interests. An individual or company in the present realisation of this is fit to be led and guided of God, in the enjoyment of His presence, for the fulfilment of His will.

I do not believe in the salvation army, but I do believe in an army for Christ, around Himself here, and led by Him, and satisfied with Him, and doing His will. We speak of a glorified

Christ, and, thank God, He maintains Him before us thus—but look, for a moment, at Him humiliated here, that “poor Man,” in this world, and what a lesson it teaches us. “Father, I thank thee!” We are here in the world where He was humiliated, rejected, and crucified—to be here for Him, to be used for Him; but, too, to be with Him through it all in heart and spirit. When difficulties arise, they always test the soul, whether we really are where God would have us to be as to them or not; but it is not emerging from them that is before us, not deliverance from them, nor even sustaining in them (though that has its place), but learning of Him what He is doing, and thus, through infinite grace, getting nearer practically to Him in heart.

If we have learned what we started with—that we are in His hand—there is not a circumstance but He has a blessing for us in it. To turn to Him in all the simplicity of a child, and to look at Him and His ways, and to say really before Himself, “Shew me now thy way,” is a wonderful thing for us, for man, once a rebel and a hater of God. And what does He do? He just presents Christ to us, His Christ—He is “the way.” That is why I read this verse, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” We tasted something of that in the gospel. His love to us—that love that could unweariedly seek us, and find us, and give Himself for us. Now He gives

us another view of that love—it constrains us. It is not a matter for reason, for the mind to get hold of; but it is what lays hold of the heart, and what the heart appreciates. “The love of Christ constrains us,” that we might live unto Him. Surely when we read that verse, we are stirred to the depths of the soul—the love of Him who gave Himself, who died for us, and rose again! Thus we have to do with a well-known love, a well-known Lord—not Saviour only, though He is that fully, blessed be His name—but a Lord, a well-known Lord, to whom we belong. One who has a right and title over us, who gave Himself for us. And that is the motive he brings to bear on the heart, and when the heart is conscious of that, and in the power of that love, who can prevent its acting for Him? “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Ah! that is true; but He has taken us in hand, and we have to do with Him, and “all things are of God.” How difficult to realise that! Evil gets the upper hand, souls turn aside, are led astray, cast down, disheartened; but “all things are of God,” and this is ever true to faith. It is by His hand we are kept, we are upheld, we are nourished, and what guides that hand, but the heart that gave Jesus to die for us?

“God so loved . . . . that he gave.” Souls get rest and peace there, and, alas! some stop there.

They measure the love by their sins, their forgiveness, and pardon. But there is the other side—the measure of that love. “He gave,” but what did He give? “He gave his Son,” “His only begotten Son”! Here there is no lamenting over the past, but a rejoicing in the sovereignty of that love. He loved, He is love, and He gave His Son, this is the first sample we have of it. How cold our words seem as we speak of it. It is fathomless. He sought in His own heart for an expression worthy of His own love, and He found it in giving His only begotten Son to die for us. Now I begin to learn what it is to have to do with that God. All the trials of the way, when we have begun there, only shew us ourselves as apprehended of God of His goodness and in His love. Now I can go on, and I know all is perfect, and perfect love. Satan may come in and suggest doubts and difficulties, unbelief and lies, as he always has done; but having to do with God, individually, I am not disturbed by them—my resource, my rest, my joy, my strength, is with Him and in Him.

Look at that blessed Man in this world—that poor Man—“Blessed is he that considereth” that poor Man—the Man who stood for God in this world. Was His rest ever touched, ever broken in upon for one moment? In the garden, when the sword was drawn and used, He said, “Suffer ye thus far,” and He healed the wound, and

undid His follower's act. You bring other things into the cup that I receive from my Father's hand, and shall I not drink it? He gave it me to drink. Do not let us say that rest is beyond us, that it is unattainable. His desire is that we should be with Himself in heart and spirit in this world now. The Spirit of God brings Him and His things home to us that we may know them, the blessedness, and reality, and power of them.

There is one more thing in this chapter, "Ambassadors for Christ." Do you think the Church or the saint is going to have better treatment in the world than He had to whom they belong? Not unless they are unfaithful. "Marvel not if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Is the ambassador to have better treatment than the blessed One, whose ambassador he is? Why is it so little known, this persecution spoken of in the Word? If we knew what it was to be faithful to Him, we should have all the hatred of the world brought out. Only touch, as it were, faithfulness to Him, however lightly, and at once the hatred of the world to Him shews itself. Alas! we try to avoid it, and we lose the blessing of it—lose the blessing and sympathy of that Hand that alone can hold and lead us along for Himself and with Himself. God has given us wonderful truth—only think

of it—"accepted in the Beloved," "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," "Ambassadors for Christ," and yet saints are groaning along in this world. "Groaning" there should and would ever be; but it is "groaning" of another kind—taking up and bearing the sorrows of others, of those who, maybe, cannot groan to Him for themselves.

"God beseeching by us," God handling us for His own glory, is a wonderful place to be in. There never was a moment so wonderful as the present for the saints of God upon earth—just before He comes. The church in ruins—we in His hand. Ah! I do not speak of feebleness there. We are feeble in ourselves, but no feebleness in His hand. There, there is power, strength, and blessing—held by Him for His own honour and glory, whilst He beseeches by us! What a place! What an honour! What a blessing!

May He give us to know more of what it is to be here, in this world, with Him, whilst going on to the "rest that remains."

P. A. H.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HEAVENLY MAN.

EPHESIANS IV. 20 ; v. 1.

WE are here to-night by the grace of God, and I have no doubt that each one of us present desires to be better qualified to please the Lord, and to serve Him acceptably while here below ; the one desire of our hearts to answer to the heart of God, and to this end, to have our souls fed on His word, and thereby refreshed. This morning we had brought before us a great and important truth—our heavenly *place*. (Eph. i.) Without that, we should not have that which constitutes Christianity. The church's place is heaven. Then we had Ephesians iii., the ambassador of this testimony, and his place of suffering here on the earth—a prisoner. As this was going on, I was struck with the desire that some one would go on to the heavenly *man*—to the positive actual photograph of the heavenly man. We have the place, but we want to know something of the Man who is to adorn that place. Here then, in the passage I have just read, we have the picture of the heavenly man.

This morning was brought out a very important

truth, namely, the first man shut out, crucified with Christ: then this new life, alive to God in Christ; then in Colossians the Jordan, and we are across it; Christ has gone in, and we have our title to heaven, being identified with Christ in death; and, as quickened together with Him, in life; and, as raised together with Him, His place is ours. Now in Ephesians we have, besides the power—the energy that qualifies us for this new place; that is, the Spirit. Without this corresponding power, of what avail the place? What use to identify a cripple with a marching regiment? Accordingly we have two things in Ephesians: first, in chapter i. 19, &c., the power “*toward* us who believe;” and in chapter iii. 20, “the power that *worketh in* us.”

The Epistle to the Ephesians is full of *energy*, as may be seen from the following passages where the word occurs.

Chapter i. 11, “who *worketh* all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Chapter i. 19, the energy that He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

Chapter ii. 2, the energy of Satanic power working in the children of disobedience.

Chapter iii. 7, the energy of the grace of God working in the apostle.

Chapter iii. 20, the energy which *worketh in* us.

Chapter iv. 16, the energy in every joint.

Energy is one of the characteristics of the Epistle: and the Christian is in the enjoyment of this energy of life: his soul is always on the move—not restless, but in the energy of life.

Now God is styled, “the blessed God.” He suffices for Himself. None can set Him a model. What attracted Him most on this earth was that which was most like Himself—Jesus, His beloved Son. And of created things in the universe, that which will delight Him most is the church, as one with, as most like Christ, in fact, as deriving from Him; it is, as it were, part of Himself—bone of His bone—“we are members of His body.” See how the Lord speaks of this mystery to Peter. “Thou art Peter [a stone], and on this rock I will build my church.” I am the Rock, and you are of it. The same truth comes out in his Epistles; we are “living stones,” and “partakers of the divine nature.” In John we have absolute identity with Christ in life and nature, “as he is, so are we in this world.” That is what the Christian is here. “At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you;” while Paul adds the great mystery of union.

Then God, the blessed God, in whom is all blessedness, reproduces, so to speak, the very same colours in the Christian. Thus in the passage I have read, Ephesians iv. 20, &c., we have the nature of God and His character re-

produced in us. His nature is love, His character is light. This is the delight and glory of God in redemption: and this is the heavenly man. Thank God, the first man has gone in the death of Christ; there stands between God and that man the cross of Christ. They part in judgment to meet no more. The son of the bondwoman has to go, that the true Son may remain (John viii. 35) in the true and blessed liberty of sonship; that is, Christ and those who are Christ's. And now God has before His mind the man of His purpose, of His delight; Christ and the "new man." (Eph. ii. 15.) That is the Man who is the delight of God, in whom He is glorified. The old has gone, and we have put on the new—Christ. What a robe to appear in, in the presence of God and of the angels! we have put *Him* on. So in Luke xv. the prodigal is arrayed in the best robe, and the Father is leading the joy of His own house—music and dancing—the Father's heavenly joy!

Now in the description of this heavenly man (Eph. iv.), we have a good deal of what is negative as well as what is positive; "put off the old man"—that is, as I might say, negative; "put on the new"—that is positive; that is what we have put off, and therefore what we have to put off practically, and what we have put on, and therefore are to put on practically. Now the Spirit of God speaks to us as we are and where we are; but He speaks

according to the truth in Jesus. Accordingly he says, "putting away lying, speak every man truth," &c.; you are a Christian, a heavenly man; you must not lie, it is not heavenly. Such are not the jewels that adorn the new man. You must put that away. Now that shews what we are. The man that lied has gone; he did not please God; and Christ is there instead of him, and His Spirit. So again with respect to anger. "Be ye angry and sin not." You can be angry and not sin. The Lord looked round about on them with anger. (Mark iii. 5.) He was rightly angry. (Compare also Mark vi. 6; vii. 6, 9, 18, 34; viii. 12, 17, 21, 33; ix. 19; x. 14; xiv. 21.) But we are told, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil." Righteous wrath in *us* often ends in acidity, bitterness, malice, &c. Begun in the Spirit, ending in the flesh. This is unsuitable to the heavenly man. And so on with stealing, corrupt communication, grieving the Holy Spirit of God, &c. And "let all bitterness and wrath, and clamour and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Such things are not of God; they belong not to the new man. Now this is all negative thus far.

Then, verse 32, we come to the positive side; what you are to be, "Kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you." That is the heavenly thing.

These are heavenly manners. And this, as it seems to me, throws light on a word in Colossians iii. 1, 2, "things that are above." What are they? In contrast with the things of the man of the earth below, these very things we have been looking at. When I think of the earth, and the first man, I think of his things—things we are to put off, as we have put him off. When I think of heaven and Christ there, and the things above, I think of kindness and gentleness and love, and the like. Philippians iv. 8 seems of the same order. Here we have the heavenly man in the full force and energy of the Spirit, running his course. "Finally brethren," he says, "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, praise, think on these things." These are the atmosphere of the Christian's life: in them he lives, on them he thinks. And then, what then? "The God of peace shall be with you"—the very presence of God Himself with you. What a place! what company! Let us think of these things. Every one of us has to go through the vanities of this world. But where is your mind? on what is your heart fixed? Our thoughts, our mind, are outside of these things with Christ. And the apostle encourages them. "The things you see in me do." As the heavenly man has Christ before him, so he is the exponent of Christ in his daily walk—tenderhearted, &c. And the

style of it! "As God has forgiven you." "Be ye imitators of God as dear children." That is what he sets before us. How can I be that? It is all in Christ; and Christ is in us; He has given us of His Spirit. What a place heaven is! Jesus is there; and what delight for me to be there also! God raised Him up, that He might dwell in our hearts by faith down here; that is the heavenly thing.

Then from chapter v. 3, &c., we have the *character* of God—light. "Walk as children of light." "The fruit of the light." The Lord increase it in us, and strengthen us to be in the power and blessedness of this life as our present heavenly portion, our hope without alloy. Then see how it comes out in all the details of daily life. Husbands, wives; parents, children; masters, servants. How beautiful! It permeates every relationship of life, it gives its character, its colour to all. The Lord lead our hearts more into it.

E. C.



# THE TESTIMONY.

JOHN XV. 26.

I FEEL I must bring before you what we are called to—the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

John xiv. 26 is what relates to ourselves—“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send unto you in my name,” &c.; chapter xv. 26 is testimony for Christ. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father . . . HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME.” These go together. If you do not make God’s interests yours, you are not going on rightly: if you do not carry out chapter xv. 26 you will not have the comfort of chapter xiv. 26. Many would like the latter who avoid the former.

The doctrine of Christ is divided into four parts: First, His death and resurrection. Every believer owns this.

Second, He is gone to heaven.

Third, He has sent down the Holy Ghost.

Fourth, He is coming again.

Every one owns the first, but many skip the next two and go on to the coming. The second and third parts relate to the present. If you are

right for the present, you will be right for the future. Many drop the present. The tendency of every one is to turn back to a dispensation which he is not in. Why is there reluctance to be in the present? Because you cannot be there without the power of God—the trade winds, that is, the line in which He is working, and from which He does not diverge. This is what we get in chapter xv. 26, “He shall testify of me.” It is all *He*; not one bit of man will bring you out for an exalted Christ.

In chapter xv. the Holy Ghost is sent down by Christ to testify of Him. In chapter xiv. He is sent by the Father for your comfort; but both Christ in heaven and the Holy Ghost on earth are the present parts. In chapter xv. it is not only to comfort us, but “to testify of *Me*.”

What is really the interest of Christ now? The exalted One is to be testified of by us; the assembly is the vessel; the power is the Holy Ghost.

The church is in ruins; that is, what man has built, not what Christ has built; but the Holy Ghost is here to maintain the name of the One who has been here, in the same power and energy as the first day in which He came.

Are we in “the fellowship of the Holy Ghost”? We know something of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the love of God, but what do we know of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost? There

are two forces opposed to one another, the Holy Ghost and the world. The Holy Ghost is the direct witness against the world: the world is the culprit in the dock, the Holy Ghost is the witness in the witness-box. You must be with one or the other. Christendom would like to have a leg in each, in the dock and in the witness-box. Unless you have dependence and surrender (see Luke xviii.), you are not kept from the world. If you are with the Holy Ghost against the world, you will meet with opposition; but all the resources of God are upon the earth to maintain the testimony in all the force in which He came down. Our testimony exposes us to collision. You do not know the force against you, because you are not in the force of the Holy Ghost. If you are, the devil will oppose you. It is those who go right on their way that he wants; he *has* the others. The one stepping out most is the one the devil marks for ruin; he tries to bribe him; if he cannot succeed that way he will try to crush him. But we have One for us who is greater than he that is against us. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

I do ask the Lord that each may know that all the resources of God are upon the earth to maintain the testimony. What will exasperate the devil more than seeing a company here setting forth the One who was rejected here?

Why have you not come in contact with the power of the enemy? Because you have never been in the testimony of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost comes down from the exalted Christ. Babylon is the aim and acme of the world; they expect a future for the world; that is Babylon. As I walk down the street I see every man contributing to either of the two cities, Babylon or the new Jerusalem.

God always had an interest on the earth. Abraham is called out; God takes an interest in man on the earth. The testimony of Abraham's day was—No possession here, but to walk with God in separation from natural claims. As he adhered to that simple call, he was in the power of God.

What is the first trait of a man walking with God on earth? He has faith in God. Abraham leaves country and kindred, he looks "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." As long as he adhered to that testimony, how well and happy he was! When he went down to Egypt he got out of the line of the testimony. The moment you are diverted from God's line you are out of the trade winds. Look at Jacob in Genesis xxxiii.; he had been twenty years out of the land, and has now come back. God meets him and blesses him. Now he says, as it were, Why should I not have a little resting-place? he buys a piece of land

and settles at Shalem. People say, Why should I give up what I have? Well, if you are seeking your own comfort you may be on the right ground, like Jacob, but you are not in the testimony—you are not walking in faith. A man of faith obeys God, trusts in God, waits for Him. We all know something of Genesis xxxiv., though we would like to draw a veil over it. Jacob was brought to shame in the place where he had sought ease. If we are not in the trade winds, we are in the doldrums. Many are like Jacob. They have retired from the world, but are living in comfort, living for themselves, and they are not in the trade winds.

The next testimony is possession. How many who came out of Egypt got possession of the land? Six hundred thousand were saved out of Egypt, and only two got into Canaan—they would not go on to the finish, they never had possession; you may start well, and yet not go on to the finish.

In Judges ii. a third testimony comes in; that is, to *keep* possession. You are not only to be a man of faith, having no possession here, but you must go up and possess, and in that very place where you were tested. Caleb got Hebron, where the giants were. If you walk with God, the spot that most intimidates you is the spot of your greatest victory, and you not only get possession but keep it. The extermination of the old man is keeping possession. If you attend to God's

interests He supports you. The Book of Judges is typical. We find there that Israel did not keep possession because they did not drive out the inhabitants of the land, and these were left as thorns in their sides.

God's interest in David's time is the city, in Solomon's time the house. In the Book of Haggai I find that God's interest is the house, and that is the thing the man of God is set for. Wherever a man of God failed, you will always find it was when he diverged from God's present interest. I see over and over again in this day, that when one has departed from the line of interest in which God is, he is like a bird with a wounded wing, cannot fly and only complains. Once he could fly, and now he is a deplorable object. You lose the power if you do not use it; using it really strengthens it. What a melancholy picture we get in Haggai i.; they had come up to God's land, and had begun to build, but they had ceased. What had hindered these returned captives? See chapter i. 9: "Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house." You have not God's interest before you. You can never attempt God's interest without getting opposition. We find in Ezra that they were opposed by the false brethren. Do not be

surprised by opposition; but do not give up God's interest. What is the matter with you? You have given up God's interest. There is a touching word in chapter ii. 19, "Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you."

The case of Daniel has helped me much. In Babylon he opened his window and prayed towards Jerusalem; his heart was there. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." You say, What a broken up condition all is in! Yes; but are you going to let it be more so? No, beloved friends, let each one say—if no one else stands, I will stand. An officer in the army has been known to tear the colours from the staff and put them in his breast, and say, "You'll have to take me before you take the colours."

Look at the Lord in His day, when He comes to the temple and finds the state of things. (John ii.) "And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out. . . . And said . . . Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Turn to Luke xxi. There I find a poor widow casting her two mites into the treasury (widows

were different in that day, they had no provision), giving all her living for the temple—God's interest. There is an instance of a heart that is set for God. If you are set for God's interest, all the resources of God are at your back; but we are like a general who has all the resources for war, but has not the men. We are each of us called to the conflict; be valiant for Christ.

Now I come to the Church—God's interest *now*. (Read Matt. xvi. 18.) "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it." That is the house; ostensibly it is in ruins; but the fact remains, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Nothing is more dangerous than to sentimentalise about Christianity. Get hold of a fact. If you talk about your feelings, you will lose them; the fact remains. The fact here is, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There is an impregnable fortress on the earth. Matthew xvi. is the house in relation to His rejection on the earth. Acts ix. 4 is the body. If you have not simple faith about the body on earth, you play into the hands of the devil. The truth of the body came out on the persecution of His saints, as the truth of the house had come out on His own rejection. Where He was bodily refused, His body is. I cannot shew it, but I believe it. Satan has *not* gained the day—His body is here. The house was to

be the setting forth of His pleasure. The body is the inner working of the organisation. In Ephesians you get "compacted together." "*The Christ*" is the great word in Ephesians, the whole structure. You will not understand the unity of the Spirit if you do not see this. The Holy Ghost *is here*; we have to exercise our hearts about it. He dwells in the house and in each believer.

I come now to where the trouble comes in—2 Timothy i. 15. "All in Asia be turned away from me." The masterpiece of Satanic iniquity is to separate the heavenly truth, or the church, the body of Christ, from the gospel. "Those in Asia" did not turn away from the gospel, but from the truth for which Paul was the ambassador.

You say to me, perhaps, "Are you opposed to the gospel?" No. But it is a lamentable thing how little the church is thought of now. I am a great upholder of the gospel, but I see the effort of the enemy is to separate the gospel from heavenly truth. You cannot separate them. Where does an evangelist get his commission? From heaven. Do you bring souls to heaven? If you come *from* heaven you must bring souls *to* heaven. It is a remarkable thing that the servant who was greatest for the church was the greatest evangelist. I do not ask an evangelist to *preach* the church, but to *be for it*. The Lord

has given the evangelist a commission to go and preach for His great interest here on earth. What is Christ's chief interest? Could you spend a day with any friend without finding out his chief interest? If you do not begin with the church in service of any kind, you will blunder. I start from the point where Christ's heart is, and work from it, till I work back to it. That is the true servant.

I will just refer to Matthew xiii. 44, but it is not in the direct line. I do it to confound the opposer, but not to enlighten the lover of the truth. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Well, His treasure is here. How little one's heart gets hold of it! *His treasure is on earth.* Every one walking in the Holy Ghost would be in fellowship with the heart of Christ, and used for this purpose—"to testify of *me*."

Whatever I do, let me stand up for Christ's interest; no matter if the company be reduced to a handful. The sun that sets is the same sun that rises. The remnant, the bit left, has the beautiful traits of the beginning; the sun must go down in its own beauty. Turn to John xxi. 22, "If I will that he tarry till I come." The Lord says, as it were, Why should I not have a John when I come back? People think

nothing will tarry till He comes, but He will have a John.

Turn to Revelation xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." No one can invite the Lord to come who is not occupied with Him in His present interests. It is not becoming for any one to say "Come," who is not ready for Him to come. A true-hearted wife would cast her eye all round, to have everything in order for her husband who was coming home. The Lord is coming. It is a beautiful thing to be able to say, "Come." The bride is the administrative exponent of Christ on the earth. She turns round to one who is not ready, and says—*You* say, "Come;" then—"let him that is athirst come," and "*whosoever will*," &c. She proclaims to every one on the earth, she must gather up every one belonging to Him—have every one ready for His coming.

The Lord grant we may know truly the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth, and be His instruments here.

J. B. S.



# THE CAPTIVE EXILE'S MEMORY.

PSALM CXXXVII.

THIS is the language of the Israelite in exile. Remember how they got there; an intensely interesting subject for our hearts, a subject which does not enough occupy our attention.

We often forget that *Christ* is the centre of the scriptures, not *ourselves*. Precious as the church is, it is the church in relation to Christ, *His* interest, *His* object. We put ourselves too much in the foreground. The scriptures are for us. I do not desire for a moment to lessen one word of what has searched us this morning: we should be more affected by the word if we saw, as our beloved brother said, that it is the church in connection with Christ's glory.

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Have you ever thought of this in reading Revelation xxii.? The Lord does not begin with saying, "I am the bright and morning star." There is no *response* till then, but He begins with, "I am the root and offspring of David." We might say, That is not for us, but He counts on every part of His interest and glory having an interest for us. I press the

importance of getting Christ before our souls as the centre of all scripture. It is Christ, hence it is I believe that He begins with this word, "I am the root," &c. I count on your affections responding to every part of My glory. Alas, we must reflect on the feebleness on our part, in hearing just now of the power. The captives in Babylon were so alive in their hearts' affections to what was God's interest, that it kept them as strangers and exiles. The memory of their hearts was so alive, and so centred on that spot where God's heart was, that nothing could obliterate it from their affections. I do think one of our greatest difficulties at the present moment is not so much in connection with the opposition (God knows how little we are the subjects of it), but the greatest difficulties are the *enticements*, the *allurements*. In Babylon they were surrounded with allurements, &c. They did not drop down to the level of their exile—no allurements could obliterate from their memory Jerusalem.

What was the secret of it? Turn to Exodus xxiii. 9. It is a great thing to know the *heart* of a stranger—that is, what we want. We shall never have the ways of strangers if we have not the hearts of strangers—everything works from within, if God has worked within. God says, "Ye know the heart of a stranger." God always had His eye on the stranger. He specially

guarded the stranger among them, as if He would ever keep up in their hearts the sense of strangership when captives. In Babylon they were not in their true place; they were out of their own element. God preserved in the memory of their hearts that which no allurements could ever obliterate—Jerusalem. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” Think of these words! Exiled though I be, out of my true country, I have the beauty and glory and preciousness of that city before me. How it reflects upon *us*!

Think of that poor company, superior to the land of their exile. What a contrast to us! for with us it is not the memory of the *past*, but the fact of the *present*—the presence of the Holy Ghost. We are, thank God, the subjects of power; but in connection with the Person. It is not connected with joys once enjoyed; but with a living Person on earth, now at the present moment. He is spoken of as the Spirit of truth—His one object here is to maintain the truth—a divine Person here just as the Lord came down, the perfect expression of God in a man, so a divine Person has now come down from the Father and the Son, to maintain the truth, the testimony in the darkest day, as truly as the Son of God was the expression of God upon

the earth. It is not memory now, but the power of the Holy Ghost on our souls and affections. The Spirit unites us to that blessed Person where He is. If we were vessels in His hand, the whole thing would be sustained in all its beauty and power.

Acts i. 6-8. The power of the Person. It is the Person who is the power—therefore the exhortation not to grieve Him. How little hinders that power! He does not leave us; but we cannot know His power when we have grieved Him. There is a widespread sense in saints that there is power in the Spirit, but not that He has come and abides, and therefore they speak of a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost. He has never left the earth. I see the power of the enemy with regard to the Spirit. They pray as if God had not sent down the Spirit. He has come and abides. There is any amount of power upwards or downwards—whether you think of communion or service. The real truth is, the power is grieved. Nothing grieves Him like a bit of the world, kept and clung to; because it is out of the testimony—out of the line of the Holy Ghost.

Acts i. Observe the kind of vessel here. You must go back to the original to see the order. What kind of vessel was there for the Holy Ghost to fill? Verses 13, 14. There are two things here. They were a poor unknown com-

pany of people, their outward circumstances had no affinity to this world at all. This character is suitable to the power now come. There is an isolation as regards this world, but an occupation with what is outside it.

An upper room! What a reproach to Christendom with its large, imposing buildings; how unlike it all this is! It is quite possible to be *earthly*, even if it could not be said we were *worldly*. The world is the *age*—what the devil has cleverly manufactured since Christ's rejection. The earth is what God has made and given to the sons of men, the portion of the earthly people. Many shun the world who go in for the earth. The contrast is between *earthly* and heavenly, not between *worldly* and heavenly. How well it is said: "Heaven is the metropolis of Christianity." The thing that hinders us is the earth. Look at the company in the upper room (Acts i. 13), are they not unearthly? It is beautiful to look at them before chapter ii., the character of their souls waiting on God. As there was but one nation formerly, so there was but one tongue; but now it is, ye shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Let us not be inferior, as having that power, to the poor exiles in Babylon, whom the memory simply of Jerusalem kept superior to every other blandishment.

W. T. T.

## “OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD.”

NUMBERS XI. 4-23.

WE find the Israelites only took one journey rightly. (Chap. x.) They start on their journey and the ark goes before them: they start in order; the ark moves out of its place in grace. That was the only journey taken in divine order, and then they break down; man always does break down. The Spirit of God is with us. The question that comes out is, Have we faith in His present power? Here we are not dealing with heavenly things, as actually possessed; but it is the journey to heaven. They were brought out of Egypt to be with God. In what power were they going through the wilderness? Was it their own resources or the power of God? They murmur and fall a-lusting, and weep sore. It is complete break-down. God and His resources were not sufficient.

“ Art thou wean'd from Egypt's pleasures,  
God in secret thee shall keep,  
There unfold His hidden treasures,  
There His love's exhaustless deep.”

Though the people broke down, there was the

power. The Lord's hand had not waxed short (ver. 23); there is no limit to that. Do *we* believe that? The power of the Holy Ghost on earth with us—in what power are we going on to-day? Do we realise that the flesh is gone, so that we have no confidence in it? The spiritual man is fed by the manna. The flesh is sure to turn back to the old things. What is the power, then, in which we are going on? We must not say the power is not here. What we want is faith, that there may be confidence in Himself.

A second thing comes out, perhaps more solemn; the minister breaks down also; he fails, blessed man though he was! The people had previously complained (ver. 1), and Moses prays to the Lord. He was in his proper place there; now Moses is displeased. There is the break-down. Paul could say, "Ye are not straitened in us." Moses had not the Spirit of God dwelling in him, but he had the Spirit, according to Haggai: "My Spirit remaineth among you"—the Spirit of prophecy, communicating the mind of the Lord. In his displeasure he says, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? . . . that thou layest the burden of all this people upon *me*?" The moment self comes in, what is the result? I see my own wretchedness (ver. 15), instead of being occupied with the Lord's grace and power. What a contrast

in the blessed Lord! He carries each on His bosom, not the feeblest but is laid up there, and for ever, on the breastplate of His love. Never a word of complaint from Him that the burden is too heavy. Need I have confidence in the flesh if I apprehend that?

The Lord says, "The purposes of my grace must be carried out, though it be too heavy for you, Moses." The Lord tells him to take seventy elders, and He would take of the spirit of Moses and put it upon them. There it was—the power and energy of the Spirit—sufficient in the day of break-down. Have we really faith in that? That the Spirit is sufficient? We come into all kinds of trials for the saints; in what way do we meet them? We have this simple confidence that the Lord cares for His saints, and the power and resources of the Lord are the same as ever. It is a weaker state of things, when the elders are taken and associated with Moses. It looked a weaker state of things, but the Lord comes in to meet it. There is now not the open persecution as formerly; the church has mingled with the world, and that has produced the state of weakness. Hence we have not so much the *direct* ordering of the Lord, because of the church's condition. The path of the public professing body is now more providentially ordered, and that is a weaker state of things.\*

\* In Sardis the Lord presents Himself as the One

The people were not in their first estate, but that does not hinder the power and resources of the Spirit of God. Have we faith in it? The seventy elders prophesied, and ceased not, that is why I said a spirit of prophecy; it was the divine means of communication. When there was failure, God would keep up these communications, by the Spirit of prophecy, He must do so, although Moses fails. The Lord is there, He has not given up His people, though things may be broken down. We talk of recovered truths. Has the church recovered them, or is it the Lord blessedly communicating them to us, in spite of break-down? Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, but the Lord's power was acting in sovereignty of love, because there was the break-down in the people. The proper place to prophesy was at the door of the tabernacle. The Lord thus teaches us to have no confidence in the flesh, but that His grace and power are sufficient. Turn to Psalm lxxviii. 8, 9, and see the utter break-down of man according to the flesh. In verse 18 we have this very circumstance

having the seven spirits of God; that is, full spiritual energy in government for the ordering of the public body. Instead of owning it, Sardis, that is, Protestantism, accepted the help of kings, and national churches arose where there was no room for direct government in the energy of the Spirit. The Lord providentially overrules all.

of Numbers xi. referred to, "They tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust; then in verse 41 (the climax of the Psalm) "*They turned back*, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." That is something for our hearts to ponder.

The Lord's power, love, sufficiency for His people is the same; have we simple faith to trust Him and go on? We are brought out of the world, weaned from Egypt's pleasures. Yes; and in the wilderness, but there with God. I bring it before you that the Lord may lay it upon our hearts.

T. H. R.



# CHRISTIANITY.

JOHN X. 14-18; XVII. 20-26; XX. 17-23.

It is more and more important for us in these days to understand what Christianity is.

If we look back a little in the past history of the church, it gives us a deep sense of the goodness of God to us in the present moment. Some of us may remember when the preaching of the gospel, and the truth that was known by Christians generally, was limited to the forgiveness of sins. But little was known of the resurrection side of things, and of a new place for man. What was generally looked at was the benefit derived by sinners from the cross, or man's need met by the blood of Jesus.

But Christianity, in its grand simplicity and beauty, must be looked at from God's side to be understood, and, if thus viewed, what stability it imparts to the soul! Christ and His cross then become the centre of everything, and God's glory instead of man's need.

The garden of Eden is an illustration of this. It was a scene of creation glory—a scene for God, where He had made everything very good.

There He put the man whom He had created. Everything centred in and circled round Adam. But the scene was still incomplete. God had a thought for Adam. Eve was God's thought for him. Of the rib taken from the man during sleep, God formed the woman and brought her to the man, for He saw that it was not good for the man to be alone, and He said, "I will make an helpmeet for him." Eve was to be Adam's companion ; she was to enter into and share his joys and his position. What a moment for Adam, when he awoke out of that sleep, to find himself no longer solitary in that glorious scene ! What a moment when he gazed on one before him, the very reflex of himself, who was God's thought for him, God's gift to him, a companion to share his joys, thoughts, feelings ; and one of whom he could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." All this is typical of a new creation scene of which Christ is the centre, and in which the church will be His bride.

We have already had brought before us the heavenly place of the church, and our place as being that of *strangers* here.

Now I believe nothing helps us better to understand this place of strangers than the cross of our blessed Lord, and the place it occupies in the history of the world.

There are two aspects of the cross: one in relation to the responsibility of man; the other in relation to the sovereign grace and goodness and love of God. In connection with man's responsibility, the cross is the end of the world, which began with Cain and ended with the death of Christ. It began with murder and it ended with murder. Its moral history ended at the cross; for there all that the first Adam was in his nature in relation to God came out, and Christ crucified on that cross was the open breach between the world and God. God was in Christ on earth, reconciling the world unto Himself and not imputing trespasses; but the cross was man's answer to this attitude of God in grace. Christ, then, has now no place in this world, and the Holy Ghost is here, a witness to this fact, that Christ has been rejected, has been refused.

The world was tested by Christ's presence in it. He Himself, the true Messiah and the Father's Son, was the last test for *the Jew*: "Having yet one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son." And as the offered Saviour of the world, He was the last test for *the world*.

Then, as to Jesus Himself, He, the second Man, was tested in this world where Satan was, and the testing only brought out, only proved, His perfection and His obedience: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not

drink it?" "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

The first Epistle of John gives us the result of the testing of the world: "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." The blessed Son of the Father, the object of His perfect delight, was rejected, and the world was left without excuse. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." And, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Everything bore witness to Him: the Father, Moses, John, the scriptures, His words, His works; yet He had to say, "They hated me without a cause;" and, "They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." This was proved at the cross, where the history of the responsible man was closed morally and judicially.

It is a great thing fully to accept this truth. I trust every one here has settled peace and accepts the fact, that *the old man has been totally condemned*. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned*

*sin in the flesh.*" We have to go down to the depths of our own moral being, and find nothing there but sin; but in doing this we only discover the depravity of a nature already condemned and judicially dealt with in Christ's cross, so that we are entitled to say, "Our old man is crucified with him." He was a sacrifice for *sin*; and for us it is put away before God, and our history as children of Adam is ended, for we have died with Christ. But for the unbelieving world the breach is complete. God can have nothing more to say to it. It crucified His Son. Relations between God and man as such are impossible.

When we come to this verse, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again," we are on different ground. That very cross, which is the measure of the distance between the world and God, becomes by Christ's work the ground on which God can have to say to the world. One Man has glorified God where sin was in question: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." The Man of God's purpose, His only Son, comes out in beauty and perfection where the first man was judged and set aside. The righteous ground for setting aside the first man is the righteous ground for glorifying the second Man.

The first man, in enmity against God, lifted up upon the cross, between heaven and earth,

Jesus, the blessed Saviour come in grace. But raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and seated at His right hand, that same Jesus is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. The Father has given all judgment into His hands. Having obtained His present place through obedience, and gone into glory as Man as the result of the cross, then, when it is all over with the world, comes out the grace.

We have this one blessed Man. He, by His obedience, the laying down of His life, draws down upon Himself all the fulness of His Father's love. At the cross, the place of our shame, man was morally glorified in the Person of the Son of God. We have got another Man now. The first is displaced for ever. Let us keep our eyes on this One, and we shall see how the blessing flows down to poor sinners from God's own heart. People say that they are so unworthy: but there is only One who *is* worthy; and the only ground on which God can have to say to any one is that of His cross.

In John's Gospel I see a divine Person coming out from the Father into the world, and returning from the world to the Father. The only effect of the first man crossing His path in the world was to draw out his hatred to Him. Yet it was a pathway of light and love, the Son walking down here in relationship to the Father as a dependent Man. "We beheld his glory, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I get this blessed One in the world. He is come. A *Man* and a *Son*. On these two things hang all our blessing, though we do not know Him after the flesh, and can only get into the place and relationship through redemption. But if I want to understand relationship, here is the place to learn it: *His Person*. I enjoy it by the Spirit.

On the cross He must be alone. The corn of wheat must die or abide alone. He must drink the fearful cup of judgment. Then, when the work is done and the Father glorified, He returns to the Father. After the storm is over, which is all gone through in Psalm xxii., and He has been heard from the horns of the unicorns, then He says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." He is no longer straitened, and all can flow freely down as the fruit of His sufferings and the travail of His soul. The One that has made a path into the glory, through the cross, is the blessed channel through which the grace and love flow down from above. He is the revealer of the Father, and a worthy object Himself before God. I see God and man together, no distance between, when my eye rests on Christ in this world—a perfect Man, the Son of God.

But after the cross, where He settled the question of my sin and responsibility, I see Him in a new place, the result of having glorified God

in the place of sin, and that goes far deeper than human responsibility and forgiveness. The One who so glorified God is the Man of God's purpose, and the question is: What will God do for Him?

Now we have here, instead of the garden of Eden and an innocent man, one righteous Man and a new creation scene of which He is the centre. God had counsels before the world concerning this one blessed Man. The cross is the setting aside of the fallen man. All is now, centred in Jesus. The Son of God's love came into the world, and went down into death in obedience; and what will God do for Him? Is He to be alone in this new creation scene? No!

In Ephesians I see the church, that is, something for Christ, as the fruit of His travail and sorrow. Think of Adam waking out of that sleep, type of that death by which Christ gets His church: we are "quickened together with Christ." It is entirely new creation—out of Christ. Hence there is no justification in Ephesians, for God cannot judge His own creation. The Holy Ghost dwells in each believer, and thus the body is formed on earth and united to the Head in heaven.

In John xx. we get the Father's name declared according to Psalm xxii.

Thus we have the two characters of blessing in Christianity: the church for Christ in glory;

and many sons, the heavenly family of God, for the Father.

John xx. and Ephesians i. seem to meet. In the former I see the Son passing out of the world on His way back to the Father, going into a place in redemption glory, and, ere He ascends, unfolding to His own the new place and relationships: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Then He breathes on them, communicating life "more abundantly" in resurrection, in the power of the Spirit, associating them with Himself in His new place.

In Ephesians, it is more the new creation coming out from God's side; the new scene for God's glory, of which Christ is the centre, bursting upon us, and we blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

If we do not understand eternal life, that is, our position as sons in the family of God, we can have no true apprehension of the church. The knowledge of a glorified Christ, and the redemption He has accomplished, is the key to the understanding of both. The Lord comes into the midst of His disciples in John xx., having accomplished redemption, and unfolds to them their new place. In Ephesians i. 3-6, we have the new place first; and then verse 7, "in whom we have redemption through his blood," shews that by redemption we are taken entirely

out of one state and brought into another. Our place and standing are thus on the other side of death and in the heavenlies.

Christianity, in its true character, has its existence in and flows from Christ the other side of death. The church, in its relation to Christ, is not a thing of this world; it is a new creation. Our only link with this place is the body. Our position is above, and the Father's love to Christ is the measure of the Father's love to us. In fact, as to our place and our position, that one word "Christ" expresses it all. All here is displaced by Christ, and it is God's purpose that we as individuals should be conformed to the image of His Son, and that the church should be like Christ in glory. Christ shares the glory given to Him with His own. There can be no other glory, no other love, no other place but His: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." And as with the love, so with the intimacy: "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father." The character of His intimacy with the Father is the character of the intimacy between Himself and His sheep.

We are brought into communion about all this now. We know the Father and His love: "This

is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." In this life we have communion, holy thoughts, holy joys, holy feelings. Every evil thought interrupts communion. We have not only new life, but we have been cleansed, as has been said, from our past history; we have been morally cleansed. And now we have to be careful that communion is maintained. This is where the danger comes in. We get defiled, and then communion is interrupted, and joy is hindered. Yet there is preventive grace, as we see in Hebrews, to *keep* our feet; and, in John xiii., restoring grace to *wash* our feet when we get defiled.

It is a comfort to remember that we are suited by God's grace to be in company with the Holy Ghost as witnesses for Christ. Christ is our life; but the life we have in Him is a dependent one. We read in John vi.: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." And, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." We need to feed continually on Christ. But alas! the place of dependence is what we do not like. Yet it is the only place of power. It must be moment by moment feeding on Him, a perfect object before us, and the sense of His death kept alive in our souls. He says, "Abide in me, and

I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

I know how feebly I have put out these thoughts, but I feel that we need to look more continually at things from God's side, and thus better understand what comes to us from the cross through the travail of His Son. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." In the eye of God nothing is before Him but Christ, and we in Him. And the measure of what God could pour out upon Him as Man, who had glorified Him at such a cost, is the measure of what flows to us through Him who has brought us into the most intimate circle of relationship with Himself and His Father.

J. S. O.



# SERVICE.

1 COR. VII. 21.

I DESIRE to say a few words on service. The first thing is, I am Christ's bondsman. Many dwell on the benefit of Christ's death more than on what He went through to effect the benefit. Nothing would touch us so much as the Lord's supper, if we really entered into the death of Christ. If we did, we should shrink from everything here for which Christ died. No death could put me into the same character of isolation as His death; it isolates me more from this world than the death of every relative I ever had.

Under the law there was not the ability—the power—for true service; now I *have* the power. You are freed, in Christ's life, from the old man. You are His bondsman; everything you have belongs to Him; you ought to be sensible of your duty to Him, and besides this, that your heart delights to serve Him.

Turn to another scripture: Proverbs xxxi. 10–31 —“Who can find a virtuous woman? . . . . The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,”

&c. I am not only Christ's bondsman, but I am in the closest tie of relationship to Him ; there is therefore both responsibility and affection ; and I am thus ready to do exactly what He tells me, to serve under His direction, and in concert with His mind ; not like an officious servant who is always suggesting, instead of waiting for direction.

The Holy Ghost is the only power for service. Anything of man is a hindrance. The Holy Ghost must do it all. You have no link with Christ but in the Holy Ghost. It is not merely what Christ has done, but He Himself, in the glory of God, is the testimony. The servant of Christ has two motives in serving Him : one is that of duty, and the other, that of affection. His service is my greatest gain. The apostle Paul thanked God for putting him into the ministry. "If any man serve me, let him follow me." You are a true servant in proportion as you follow in the path of death ; the servant must be a sufferer. When Abraham heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants and went forth to rescue him. The check to service is the lack of self-denial ; there is very little of it amongst us now.

First, then, I start in service from duty and from affection. Everything right is founded on righteousness. I start with the sense that it is my duty to serve Christ, for I am His bondsman

to do His will ; and, besides this, affection to Him makes His service my interest and delight.

Secondly, I act under His direction, and according to His pleasure ; not because opportunity offers. I require His direction, and the knowledge of His pleasure, however favourable the opportunity or the occasion. Opportunity is not to guide me. I see a servant in Acts viii. taken away from an interesting field of work, to meet one man in the desert. It is not a question of how you do the work, or how you succeed ; but have you got the assurance that you are doing your Lord's pleasure ?

In Numbers viii. we find that the Levites were a *gift* to Aaron and his sons. They were offered up before the Lord instead of the firstborn. In Hebrews xii. 23 we are "the church of the firstborn ones" (plural). We are all priests to God and Levites, and we are to be the expression here on earth of what we are inside the veil. No Levite could act but from the priest. You are a priest inside and a Levite outside. It is lamentable indeed when you cannot carry on your business outside, according to what you are inside. The Levites were occupied with heavenly things. A Levite could say, "The tabernacle is my business." Though he had a family and secular business, yet he was known as a servant of the tabernacle. Christendom gets out of the difficulty by making two classes :

the laity and the clergy. God's paramount interest here is the testimony to Christ—the exalted Man in glory. That is the Levite's business. Am I to give up the fact that I am a priest inside to God, and a Levite outside in the place of service? *Never!* I must be consistent here with what I am before God. If you own the dignity of your place inside, you must be in keeping with it outside. You could not be a canary on Sunday, and a sparrow on Monday. You must sing with one and the same note. The place of service is where the beautiful notes sound out. Everything, the very air you breathe, is against you here; but are you going to give in to it? It has been said that there is no finer sight than a great man struggling with his difficulties: I say it is a far greater thing to see a Christian—a servant of Christ—superior to his difficulties. Some may say—I must give up secular business if I am to serve the Lord. No such thing; Paul worked with his hands while he was Christ's bondsman. Look at our blessed Lord during those thirty years of private life—the heavenly traits which shone out; in the workshop—everywhere; He was divinely beautiful in every detail.

We are all priests to God. Get hold of what you are inside, and you must bring it out. If you understood the place of unutterable blessing in which you are placed, you could not come out

and soil your cloth. Heaven is our element, but we have to do our work down here, like a diver in a diving bell. You cannot live in any element except heaven. If you have been too long in the diving bell, go up, ring the bell—pray.

Now I turn to another point. Where does service *begin*? With the body of Christ; it is there our service begins. I see deficiency in this. Turn to Romans xii., "I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Your body is the Lord's—"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable." Now see verses 4, 5: "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Your responsibility begins with the body of Christ, as a member of it. You must begin with the top, with the first circle. You will find that, if there be a flaw in you as to the first circle, that flaw will surely appear in every other circle. A servant properly begins at the prayer-meeting—not with preaching. The man who begins at the prayer-meeting in the assembly will be the best evangelist. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul," the Holy Ghost said in the assembly. You get your instructions there. Gift is another thing: gift, in my judgment, is a certain presentation of Christ. Many a man has a gift not manifested, but which would come out if he were more separate. If you clear off "the

bearing," as they say of a coal mine, you would come out in power for the Lord, and you would also prove His care. Many a one who is now grinding in prison would get signal marks of favour from God, if he were more separated to Him. And as to service, nothing produces so much effect as devotedness and separation to the Lord in the servant. It is not truth that has the greatest effect, but holiness.

Some are fresh and bright when they come out from the Lord; but when they lose the sense of what they are inside, they fail outside. If you are not consistent with the light you have, you dishonour the Lord, and you do not receive more light. In this chapter (Rom. xii.) there are seven distinct gifts; the first is prophecy, and the last is "shewing mercy with cheerfulness." Every one can have this last gift. I would rather have the last without the first, than the first without the last. It is far better to have a tractable pony than a first-rate horse which is unmanageable. The moral quality is higher than the greatest gift.

Turn to Luke xi. 36: "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." The servant should be the living transcript of the truth—of Christ Himself. A body full of light is one who is fully brought under the power of the word *inside*; everything comes from inside;

the Lord begins with us inside. Do you know your dark part? If you are walking with God you will know it. He teaches us by the word and by providence. If you are close to the Lord, and watching His dealings with you, you will know what is the dark part. There is a moral influence about a person whose body is luminous; it does not repel you, but makes itself felt; the company of that person is a help to you. "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The company of spiritual people helps you, they draw out the good; the natural man draws out the bad—what is of the natural man.

I am seeking to shew you what the nature of divine grace is and what is the character of the servant of the Lord. Paul says, "My manner of life;" that corroborates the doctrine—is the living proof of its virtue: so in 1 Peter ii. 1, the unbelieving husband who will not listen to the word, is won by the conversation, the manner of life, of his wife; he cannot refuse the *effect* of the word. There he sees the trace of this new creation; he is broken down. "The manner of life" proves the virtue of the word.

I conclude with Luke xviii. In the end of chapter xvii. this world is under judgment, and the Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife." She was brought out of Sodom, but turned back. There is always a tendency to look back. Did

you ever look back? Often perhaps. Well, how are you to be preserved? Be dependent on God, and surrender every hindrance. In chapter xviii. these two things are brought out—"dependence" and "surrender." There is the widow, the publican, and the little child. In these three we have dependence fully exemplified. The widow sets forth how faith in the power of God is answered. The publican sets forth the blessing of counting on His mercy. The little child is fully dependent—it clings and it cries.

Then comes the young man; he is not dependent; he is sorrowful because he will not surrender his riches. In order to be truly dependent, there must be surrender of all hindrances. Peter says, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee." Look at Peter in chapter v. He gives up his time and his ship for the Lord's service, but in the midst of it all, he finds out that he is a sinful man; his conduct was exemplary, he was highly favoured of God; but, notwithstanding all, he felt he was a sinful man in the presence of Christ, and he cries out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The Lord's words—"Fear not," re-assured him. "And when they brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him." Well might their neighbours say, "What fools." They had left their property, directly given to them by God, for the company of a poor man in

human eyes. Company is better than property. Now, after a few years, Peter says here: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee." And the Lord replies: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." Never was a promise so fulfilled. When He asked them, "Lacked ye anything?" they could reply, "Nothing." It is impossible in such a world as this not to be playing a losing game in following and serving Christ; but you will have compensation—the company of Himself. But in His company we must not be like Martha acting from our own judgment; but waiting to receive counsel from Him, walking before Him in all well-pleasing.

J. B. S.



# THE NAZARITE.

JUDGES XIII.

IN connection with what has just been said about service, I believe the history of Samson supplies the type of a servant raised up by God for a special character of service, in a most difficult day; and is full of instruction, encouragement, and warning, for those upon whom, through the faithfulness of the Lord to His church in these last days and perilous times, the mantle of Samson has in any measure fallen.

The bondage in which the people of God found themselves to the Philistines at this time, had this peculiar character and voice, that it was to a people grown up over them from their midst, because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God—a bondage of forty years.

A Nazarite is the deliverer raised up; one who was a Nazarite from his birth. The *vow* of a Nazarite is found in Numbers vi.; he was to drink no wine, no razor was to come upon his head, he was not to touch a dead body. Failure in *any* of these defiled, and closed his Nazariteship for the time.

On certain occasions Samson was so led to use

his strength against the Philistines, that they hired Delilah to entice him and draw from him the secret of his great strength—a secret which a Philistine could neither appreciate nor partake of, and which she only valued as the paid servant of the Philistines to use against Samson. They observed his link with Delilah, and how they could use her as a bait for their trap—alas, a successful one, as the sorrowful sequel shews; and the one who could rend a lion that roared against him, as he would have rent a kid, having nothing in his hand, out of the eater getting meat, and out of the strong sweetness, is now, his secret betrayed, his hair cut, a blinded prisoner, bound in fetters of brass, making sport for the worshippers of Dagon, while they praise their god for delivering them from their enemy. And whence this change? how comes this same Samson to be in such different circumstances? Lightly esteeming the gravity of his holy calling, and the secret between God and himself with which his power was connected, self-pleasing with its blind infatuation, gaining power as it is ministered to, soon finds his head in Delilah's lap; her treacherous heart wielding to this end the power he himself had given her, draws from him his secret; and his seven locks gone, he awakes, goes out as at other times to shake himself, but to find that the Lord had departed from him.

The conduct of the people too, for whose

deliverance Samson was raised up, speaks ; because when the use of his power against the Philistines on a certain occasion (chap. xv.) provokes the wrath of their oppressors, they bind Samson, and deliver him up to them, saying, " Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us ? " But however foolish he had been then, and trifled no doubt with his power, yet through the longsuffering of the Lord he is still a Nazarite. Israel's cords are soon broken, and with the jaw bone of an ass he slays a thousand Philistines. Surely his course was little calculated to win the confidence of Israel, but their state was low, and their eyes blinded to what was of God in him, and for them.

Amos ii. 11. The Lord's controversy with Israel many years later makes their treatment of the prophets and Nazarites an index of their low condition. " And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel ? saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not ; " proving indeed the words of Jeremiah, " And my people love to have it so." The ministry of the prophets was to the conscience, and presenting God as waiting to be gracious ; this they refused and silenced, not wishing to be intruded on, and for the same reason gave the Nazarites wine to drink.

What a history of God's faithfulness and purpose of blessing for His people in their low estate, does the raising up of these vessels speak of—deliverers with power equal for the sad condition of the people. But in the vessels, what weakness and breakdown! In the people, how little response! On the part of the enemy, what energy and enmity!

The power of God acting effectively connects itself with a moral state in the vessel, and works in the subjects of deliverance a true response—repentance and faith—the fear of the Lord. Ephesians vi. 10, 18, connects the power of the Lord with a moral condition; for “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” is not apart from “the whole armour of God,” each piece of which describes a moral state. And though I be strong in the Lord, and have on the whole armour of God, yet if I would stand and withstand, I must abide in the attitude of dependence.

The present state of the church of God as the result of man's responsibility, has not been unforeseen by Him who knows the end from the beginning; and, in view of these perilous times, has furnished the man of God with instruction for his path, in a way that manifests how He is above all the weakness, and evil, and confusion; and knows how to call out and maintain a *true* testimony that speaks, and that with the energy

and definiteness of faith and communion, of the unchanged faithfulness and sufficiency of the church's Head. In a day of imitation, when the doctrine of Balaam and its fruits abound, a form of godliness without its power, what rest it is to be cast upon One Holy and True; and His word, which separates the precious from the vile, and in the power of the Holy Ghost forms the servant. It is found, eaten, rejoiced in, filling the exercised heart with indignation, and leading the vessel to separate from all that is contrary to that word, and so fitting him to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work—yea, furnished, proving what is acceptable to the Lord, understanding what His will is; a servant whose heart has, through grace, responded to the Spirit of the living God, saying of Christ, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Christ dwells in his heart by faith. His Nazariteship is not the fruit of effort, or a vow, or attainment; but the grace of Him who for our sakes has sanctified Himself, that we also may be sanctified by the truth; a servant sanctified by the Spirit unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. One who rejoices in being Christ's freedman and His bondman, not his own; his body the temple of the Holy Ghost, which he presents as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God—his intelligent service; "transformed

by the renewing of his mind, that he may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;" thinking *soberly* of himself, "according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith; for we are members one of another." Communion with the Father and His Son in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, is that which alone can maintain him in such a path; it is the secret of his power to be for God.

The suffering which is given to the faithful servant as been before us, if he would live godly in Christ Jesus; but in this, the soul and testimony are wont to flourish. A prophet may be put in a dungeon, or an uncompromising John the Baptist pay with his head the penalty of not winking at the Herodias of his host; but these bear blessed fruit to the glory of Christ, and He is magnified in the servant's body by life or by death. There is no word of rebuke for Smyrna, only encouragement; but the changed tactics of the adversary in Pergamos, with his doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, calls forth a sharp sword with two edges, with its answering portion for the overcomer, of the hidden manna, and white stone, with its new and private name. So is it to-day; there is more real danger for the servant from the allurements, whether it be the proffered *wine* cup, or Delilah's lap, each equally fatal. The path of luxury, and ease, and self-pleasing, is troubled by the

Nazarite life; his joy is his Lord's, and it is *full*; it is the "joy of the Holy Ghost;" he knows without regret that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father."

The moral testimony of his path reproves (exposes, Eph. v. 11); he is a trouble to the worldly; but if they can draw him into their joys, in any measure make him as one of themselves, give him "wine to drink," the edge of his testimony is blunted; his salt is without savour. "Come in to sojourn," he must not be a judge; they can listen with untroubled conscience to his ministry, he is charmed and charming. Or it may assume the form of Delilah's lap, which is not merely immorality, for I may be very clear of that, and yet fall her victim by whatever may lead me into circumstances, where the secret of my Nazariteship is jeopardised; and I may have to learn how short is the road between "being filled with the Spirit," and being "drunk with wine;" and that communion, and not knowledge keeps me; for in communion of heart with the Lord our desires are *formed*, not merely corrected. We understand what His will is; our liberty and joy is to do it; in His light we see light, look at things as they affect Him and His.

There we learn what His body, the church, is *now* to Him, and thus it gets a right place in

our hearts. There we learn from Himself His joy in being in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, and have our faith, and energy, and purpose of heart, formed to minister to that joy. There we learn how He waits with desire for the moment when He will present to Himself a glorious church; and our energy and service are formed by it among those for whom He cherishes these desires; and as He sends His servants forth, it is with grace and strength supplied by Himself. This condition is a tender plant; growing, and bearing fruit only in this holy atmosphere; very sensitive to the withering breath of the world's influence, which so readily intrudes itself into the hearts, and homes, and assemblies of God's saints.

If these be the things, and their character of holiness, in which the servant of the Lord serves, one may well say, "who is sufficient for these things," and gladly welcome the answer, "My grace"—"the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

May He keep us with loins girded, and lights burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for our Lord; redeeming the time, knowing that the days are evil.

J. B.



# GOD'S MANIFOLD WISDOM.

COLOSSIANS II., III. 1-11.

It is clear from the beginning of the chapter that this was a truth much opposed, and one which your nature and mine very much opposes, because it sets us aside, and we cannot bear that; no, not even when Christ is all. We think sometimes that we can, but we must not trust ourselves. The real sign that we are willing to be set aside is, that we adopt this truth—that we *are* set aside. I want to set before you this mystery, which embraces all the will and counsel and purpose of God. Christ and the church form the centre of it, but it radiates all round. You cannot tell the limit of the mystery of His will; it is all that is comprehended in the purpose and counsel of God. It extends to the utmost bounds of heaven and earth. God has given us the richest portion of it. Be content with nothing short of it. If you had property left you, you would like to know all about it, how much the man who had left it to you had loved you; and you would judge of his love by his gift. If you judge of God's love that way, you will never get to the end of it—you will never get to the end of the treasury. The more we explore it, the more we find it beyond what

we ever reached or suspected. The more you spend, the more you will have. God delights in our getting into His debt deeper and deeper. Never be afraid of that. In Romans we are told not to be debtors to the flesh, not to owe it a thing; we may have forgotten that; we never got anything but bad from the flesh, so it is our simple wisdom not to get into debt to it—to owe it nothing. Whatever demands it makes upon us, we should repudiate them. Does not that come into the subject of self-denial? The cross must be taken up before Christ can be followed. Self-denial is to say, "I do not know the man," as Peter denied the Lord. That is a plain case; can you and I deny ourselves in that way?

God's manifold wisdom is all treasured up in this wonderful mystery of the Head and the body; it is wisdom for us to learn and to use down here in every-day things—wisdom suited to us—this mystery of Christ being the Head, and we, the church, His body; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in it. That is the reason why all the infidelity of man's mind becomes exposed to us as so wretched; it has no hold upon us because we have a wisdom superior, the wisdom of God; not that we are full of it, but there is the treasury in which it is all hidden. The moment we get hold of this truth, all the wisdom of man's mind is nothing to us: we get delivered from all the

infidelity. All God's counsels and plans are here, it is the very centre of them. We are members of His body; we are united to that Head in heaven, and we get all from Him now. *All*, mark! and that by the Holy Ghost. We must not trifle with the truth, brethren, we must not miss our opportunity. God is, I believe, answering still the agony and conflict which Paul endured, by bringing the matter before us, pressing it home to us, seeing if we have really laid hold of it. One who does not know that he is accepted in Christ, cannot of course occupy himself with it, and ought not; but saints who have through grace got thus far *ought* to occupy themselves with it. It is the grand thing in God's mind. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in it. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God—that Christ who down here was crucified through weakness; but all God's manifold wisdom comes out in this wonderful mystery. We enter into it little by little. God feeds us in that way. He knows that we cannot digest much, and He is very patient with us.

These Colossians were in beautiful order, and God notices it: "Joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ;" and yet they did not know the mystery. A person may be very stedfast in faith and yet not know it. It changes the whole aspect of everything.

The things of earth, the best and the brightest, are excluded from it. We are brought on to a new platform. It is not only our sins that are done away with in the cross; the thing is extinguished that did the sins, and Christ only is left. Do we apprehend that that Christ up there is the only One existing before God—He the Head, we the body?

If our minds get filled with this wisdom of God, we cannot take in all the childish infidelity of man. It takes you away from ritualism, because it does away with *you*. God puts you out of this scene, and Christ is everything. He has set the thing aside that did the sins. How? He condemned it, condemned sin in the flesh; He did not forgive it; He forgave the *sins*, but condemned in the cross the thing that did them: there is only Christ remaining now. We are raised up together, made sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Do not talk about that being "high truth," it is what God says. God does not see us in the flesh. Thus in verse 11, we have "the putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ." Do we enter into the cross in this way, that it has put us aside, condemned us altogether, and we live now in a new life? The one who is living this life—living Christ—is the one who has full liberty. Liberty is nothing short of that. Death is not liberty, though it delivers you from

the law and from sin ; but it is the living this life of Christ that is the freedom to walk.

Christ is our life as much as our righteousness ; He has not left one little niche to be filled up by nature. He does not want us to stumble along as we do sometimes. It is our simple wisdom to look at things as God looks at them. God has done away with us, we are so leprous. Leprosy was in the head (see Lev. xiii.), the head of the race, and the nature is a poisoned thing from the beginning : it is too bad for God to do anything with. He has condemned it in the cross of Christ. What a wonderful way of getting rid of us ! We do not like to be swept out of the scene altogether. But if you have faith, and in the power and intelligence of the Holy Ghost, hold this other truth—that you have the life of Christ, you have an infinitely better thing ; no comparison—a life with its own joys and delights, no limit to them in the new creation, and nothing to darken, everything to brighten, all pure, all spotless. That is the only life that we have to live, the only life that exists before God. The other is condemned and buried. And how is this life to be supported ? There is nothing here to support it—nothing whatever. The One whom the manna and the corn of the land represented is our food, our life ; nothing will sustain the life but Him who *is* the life. It is all provided for us, and ought to be known

and enjoyed, and delighted in, by the Holy Ghost. You have not more capacity than I, nor I than you; it is all dependent on the Spirit of God. As we are in His presence and count on Him, He makes it all so real to us: the moment we have got possession we do not want it explained; we know it because we possess it.

Now see verse 16. These feast days come in for the flesh. People like to be subject to ordinances: "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," You get it all in Leviticus xi.; but that is for man "*alive* [not "*living*"] in the world;" God deals with us as having *died*, and though we may not know much about the power of death, that is how God looks at us, and it is our wisdom to do the same. We are without spot before God in Christ, we glory in *that*. Well, cannot we glory in that same Christ being everything, and we gone? We are brought into this newness of life by the Spirit. The baptism of water is all death, the baptism of the Spirit is all life. God has set us in this wonderful body. If we are true churchmen, what a delight for us to be part and parcel of such a church as this—the body of Christ, the body of Him who is Head in heaven.

These Colossians were affected by some who were not holding the Head, who had got something between their faith and the Head, and the supplies were a little short. The apostle found there was

danger of their getting away from the Head, and he is agonising about them lest they should lose their hold. If it were not such a wonderful truth, Satan would not oppose it as he does. Paul was not in conflict for nothing. He was in great conflict about these Colossians and Laodiceans, and you, and me, for he knew what we should be when our turn came, and perhaps we have lost more the touch of the Head than they had. If we have not laid hold of this truth, how can we act as members of the body of Christ? To act as a member of the body is not merely to act as a servant. I may preach or visit without knowing it.

All baptised into one body by the Holy Ghost—all believers form part of this wonderful body. And see how it comes out in practice! We are not to lie to one another (chap. iii. 9), because we are part of this body: "Members one of another," not because it is beneath my character as a man. We should gather motive power for obedience in every detail from the truth, and not from any inferior source. The simple details of obedience are linked with these truths and flow from them. Some of us have thought much of our characters and would not lie for anything. The nature that gives forth that motive God has condemned. The practice would be brighter and purer and would bear God's inspection if it

flowed from this truth. I must not lie to you because I am a member of the same body as you are. It comes out in the commonest things of daily life. Do not separate them. The truth must be known as motive for our duties. We may do them in an outward way from some other motive, but that does not pass with God.

If you are dead and risen "Seek the things above;" you and I and the earth are to part company now. Do not talk about God *sparing* you here, you do not belong here, and you are not to *think* of the things on the earth. Will that make us do less? We are children, servants, fathers. These very people are to fulfil all the relationships down here in a new way, in a way which pleases God, carrying out His will, His pleasure, in all things. We have motive power which will never leave us. Does God tell us to seek these things above because they are out of our reach? No; our Head is above, and that makes it all simple. People look up to heaven as if there was nothing there. If I have a Head there, what have I to do with the things on the earth? I cannot have another head here. What *are* the things above? There is the beautiful city up there; I do not know much about it—would that I knew more—but we ought to know more about it than we do about this place. That is our own—our own place. Paul does not say, "Do not set your mind

on *bad* things on earth," but on things on the earth. We belong to the new creation, and no matter what you take out of things on the earth, they are unsuited; nothing but the new things will suit us. He says, "Behold, all things are become new." Does that mean presently? If we think so, we have never got into our new place, our new creation. It is a different kind of creation to what we are in—the first; *that* creation went to corruption, *this* has no flaw. There is no chance of this new creation ever corrupting.

Verses 9, 10—"having put off the old man, and having put on the new." The point here is—*you* are put away in the circumcision of Christ; then you have this new life, and have to live in it now. We have the flesh in us, but God reckons us in this new life. He sees us in no other. Therefore we have to walk in the Spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. I should like each one of you to see how clear the ground is of the first man. Christ, the Second Adam, fills the whole place before God, and we are part and parcel of Him. God has made us so, and now we have to live that life, not to listen to the old thing: it is in us still, but it is condemned. The "things above" are our own; they are congenial to this new nature. It delights in them. It is all eternal, this life, nature, the things above, are all eternal, or they would not suit the nature; and you have begun living the eternal now; you

have eternal life as much as ever you will have it. It is Christ—that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. He is that eternal Life. Now it is all *Christ*. Have we got simply hold of that? Do not let Satan cloud it by your own reasonings and his suggestions; but take it as God puts it. Do not suppose that we have to solve every difficulty. Difficulties will come, and if Satan gets us occupied with them he has got his aim. Leave them to God to solve. We have to be like simple little children.

The old man is put off, the new put on. Mark the difference between this in Colossians and Ephesians. (Col. iii. 10 and Eph. iv. 22.) Christ the image of the invisible God. The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him. That is in Colossians. In Ephesians it is, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” It is *God* in Ephesians, and *Christ* in Colossians. It is all wisdom and knowledge in Colossians, and all contained in this wonderful new creation; and God will display us—His workmanship. The work shews the kind of Workman. In Ephesians God has a wonderful piece of workmanship. He will shew it presently; the time of display has not come yet, but we are privileged to have a sight of it before the day of display. It is all new creation, made after one pattern, one form, one measure—the pattern of Christ; it is all

Christ from top to bottom, within and without; not a bit of the old material could He use—all new creation, “after the image of him that created him.” Are we not going to have a look at it before the day of display? We all have to act our part in it; and what is that? To live Christ. Is that difficult for a member of His body? You do not find it difficult to live the life that you have naturally if you are well and hearty; and to live the eternal life is quite as easy *in the Spirit*. Christ ever walked in the power of the Spirit. He always knew what to do, never halted to discover it. We halt, because we are feeble things, and the life comes out feebly; but never mind if it is the life of *Christ* that comes out. It will always be feeble compared to what was in Him; but let it be His life, the same that came out in Him.

Now if we would discover more of the “things above,” we must do what Christ tells us, and that is to “*seek*” them. Have we done that? God has set us above, so the “things” above are all around us. If you tell a man of energy to go and seek his fortune in the world, he will go, and succeed too. God has told us to seek certain things, heavenly things, those that constitute this new creation, the food that sustains it. The point for us is to be obedient—to “*seek*” them. We stand still, and wonder what the things above are! God has not told us to do that; but to seek them, and with the certainty that they

are to be found. The Holy Ghost is given to us, and He searches the "depths of God;" "That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." They are not above our reach, because He is *with* us and *in* us. He is our power now. That is how we must measure our power and capacity.

Epaphras prayed that these Colossians might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." A wonderful prayer for one another, and now especially when we see so little holding of the Head. Oh the wonderful greatness of this! We cannot conceive how blessed it is. The choicest thing that Christ has is this church, His body; He nourishes it and cherishes it. He loves us as He loves Himself. Each member is united to the Head, the nourishment comes straight down from the Head to each, and we have the wisdom of the Head to direct and control the action of the body. How wonderfully beautiful! Notice, it is all *Christ* that comes out.

May we refuse all the old thing that God has condemned and put away. People say, If God help me I will do better; God will not help *it*. He has condemned it and buried it in the grave of Christ, whether saints believe it or not. Thank Him for it! If you accept God's way, you will have done with yourself as God has done with you; Christ will be "*all*" to you as He is before God—a wonderful exchange! CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL."

W. T.

# THE CALLING.

## EPHESIANS IV.

HERE we have one of the new bottles to hold the new wine ; the old bottles spill the new wine. Paul, John and Peter, those who have written the New Testament, are new vessels with new wine in them. Here is a splendid vessel, one which just suits God, with " Prisoner in the Lord " written on it. God has marred the vessel in man's esteem, that it might be manifest that all the grace poured therein was of Him. He exhorts us to walk worthy of the vocation. Then he draws the character of Christ ; no lesser one would do—" with all lowliness," &c. The calling is connected with chapter ii. Chapter iii. comes in between. Here he is a prisoner *in* the Lord, not *of* Jesus Christ, as in chapter iii. 1. There he is Jesus Christ's prisoner ; here he tells why he was a prisoner ; it was about the Lord's things, just as in Philippians i. He exhorts us to " walk worthy of the vocation ; " he was walking worthy of it himself. He is the only man who could say, " Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ." It is a great thing to be in front, and to say to others, " Come on," but you

must be in front to say so ; if you are lagging behind, your words have no meaning, you are only a drag yourself. We are no use to other Christians unless we are in front, not a bit of use, because we profess to have a front place. We know too much in one way, because we do not practise it, do not live in the light, power and joy of it. "Walk worthy of the vocation . . . with all lowliness and meekness." Are we up to that ? Not to show off on nice occasions, but "with all lowliness," *out and out*. Nothing short of Christ will do for any day of the week ; we want Christ for the hay-cart, as much as for church ; it is not only for Sunday we want Him, but all through. There is no half and half in this walking worthy. "Forbearing one another in love:" it is the full character of Christ. We shall never have His measure though we should aim at no other, but we can have the fashion and manner of it. In communion we learn it from the word. Where do we learn the word ? Is it from one another, or in school, or in communion with God ? If we learn it in communion with Him, we shall get the fulness of it, not the form merely : the form is beautiful, but there will be a fulness, a heart, an inside to it, if we learn it in communion, which we do not get if we learn it any other way.

The form is beautiful here : it is the house and the body. In chapter ii. 21, 22, we are "an habitation of God through the Spirit." That is our call-

ing. Have we walked worthy of it? He says, "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit." I do not know who put in that word "endeavour." It should be, keep it with diligence. It *can* be kept, and it ought to be kept, and we are called to keep it. It is not, we will try our best. If we take it that way, we shall be apt to say that we have tried hard and cannot keep it, others have hindered us, and so on. The word is, "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." The devil likes a disturbance. It is a great thing to be going on in peace. The warman is the most peaceful man; look at the material his shoes are made of—"The preparation of the gospel of peace"; he is walking in peace with his war-shoes on; no man so peaceful as the warrior. "The uniting bond of peace." We have drawn our own idea of unity in a bit of a circle; we have not got wide enough in thought. If I share with another that Christ's precious blood has blotted out all the guilt, it is a part of this unity. I can keep the unity with that soul *as far as it goes*, but if he ask me to go into his chapel I cannot, because it is outside the unity of the Spirit. Some take the name of Independents, some Congregationalists; what does that mean? A congregation gathered because they agree about some form of church government.

What a thing to gather us ! People like such a centre, but it is like a maypole in a village ; the children gather round it, and the old people say, how foolish they are ; but the old people are just as amused with their church things, and ten times more foolish. Some want a clergyman almost to say their prayers for them, cannot get on without him, he stands somewhat in the place of the Holy Ghost to them. Christ is the Head from whom all nourishment comes to each member of the body, and *direct* to each member. The unity of the Spirit is wrought by the Spirit. He produces the same affection in you as in me. It is the same Spirit, never diverse ; the gifts are diverse. Why ? Because the body needs so many kinds of administration ; one member to walk with, one to hear with, and so on. The service is very different, but there is never any schism in the body ; the body is tempered together that it should not have any schism in it. The gifts are all for the perfecting of the saints.

I just refer to that word in verse 12, " Perfecting of the saints," by ministerial work, for the edifying of the body of Christ. You may think it a strange illustration, but if you turn to Ezekiel xxxvii. 7, you will see what I mean. " As I prophesied there was a noise, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." Bone to bone came together, and fitted in well. That is what *we* call " Taking

our place," in conventional language. Bone to bone, the moment prophesying began. So here in Ephesians iv. The moment we heard and believed this truth, we took our place in relation to others. In Galatians vi., there is a bone out of joint, and you get the hospital treatment for it. "Ye which are spiritual restore." The word used for "restore" is just the one used for "perfecting" here: communion is stopped, you must restore him, put him in joint again. The word "perfect" in Ephesians iv. 13 is very different; it is to grow up to be a man instead of a baby. "Perfecting" in verse 12 is the same word as is used in Mark i. 19 for "mending their nets." The meshes are a little broken, and they are putting them in right connection with the others. All the ministry is for this end—"the perfecting of the saints"—putting members in articulation. If you are an arm-bone, and I am an arm-bone, our work will be pretty similar; you may be a right arm, and then you will have the most work to do, but you will not be more needful for the body than the other.

Many are always thinking of work, so that they have "no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark vi. 31.) All right if you have work to do, set to and do it, like the servant in Genesis xxiv.; he will not eat till his work is done. But there is something besides work, which is far more precious to Christ—His own

body. He likes being served, and He sends men to work, but that is not the first thing; you must be fit for it. How do you get fitted? By separation from vessels to dishonour. Then you will be a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use. If I mark out a path for myself, that is not being about the Master's service, though I may be preaching. I am doing it on my own responsibility. Our responsibility in everything we do should be to Christ, not to ourselves. If it is to ourselves, we make ourselves a kind of centre. Here is this "one body and one Spirit"; we cannot form it, we cannot fashion the members. The man who brought the message, Paul, did not do it; God does it. We have no communion in that, He does it by Himself, and He lets us know by what power; by the same power that works in us—the Holy Ghost. How it is wrought we do not know, but we get the assurance from God that it *is* wrought. He is the spring of it all.

One body, one Spirit, one hope; that is the inner circle. Some of us may think that to say we are in this circle is to boast; that is because we look at ourselves in nature. If God has put us there, we cannot help it. Am I to find fault with what He has done, or disown it? But we ought not to be content with owning it in word, but endeavour to be suitable to it.

There are three unities, three circles. The

first unity is—One body, one Spirit, and one hope. The body would not be complete without the Spirit, and the hope fills it. Then a wider circle comes in—the lordship. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” That is common to all Christendom. This is water-baptism, it puts you on christian ground, on the ground of the death of Christ. You can tell water-baptism from the baptism of the Holy Ghost easily; one is all life, you have no hand in it; the other is all death. In the death of Christ you are gone. What a grand clearance! That is what baptism means, and nothing more or less. You say, “How about getting out of the water?” Then you *have* got out. Water-baptism is connected with the Lordship of Christ; He has bought all. If you are Christ’s slave, what business have you to hold your children? They do not belong to you, but to your Master, and you ought to own it. A slave has no right to anything, and we are Christ’s bondservants. Then, the third circle, “One God and Father of all;” that includes every one. This (Ephesians) is the highest epistle, and the very widest; the widest because it is the highest. Saints belong to all three circles.

Then—“Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (ver. 7); grace put in each one, and it is *according* to the gift of Christ. This is not grace common

to all—the grace by which you are saved, or the grace of the Father to you, or the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, or from the seven spirits of God before His throne; you have grace from all these, and they are different. Do they disagree? No; but they are diverse. Take one, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; you know it, “He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” That is not the grace of the Father, *He* never became poor for you. His grace comes and nourishes you, nurses the child. (See 1 Thess. ii. 7, 11.) But here it is grace *given* according to the measure of the gift of Christ. You and I are responsible; there is not one saint here but who is responsible. Every one has grace given; it is the gift of Christ. The grace given you may be different in character to what is given to another. You may have to perform the office of an ear, to hear for the body; another of an eye, but does not each member of your body act for all the rest, and without being told, because it is natural to it? Our members do not need to be instructed, they act from our babyhood naturally. We do not need a set of rules as to how our members should act; one spirit in us moves it all, and each member moves for the rest, not one action is done for themselves, they cannot help acting for the whole. The body of Christ is a grand, living mechanism, set in order by God, moved

by the Holy Ghost. What a place to learn in ! We put things out of order as far as we can in the assembly ; we cannot touch the body. The Holy Ghost is not said to dwell in the body, but in the house. The assembly is the place where the action of the body comes out. It is not that the members are not to act at other times. You are always a member, whether at home or in church ; we should always be acting for the whole. That takes you out of your own thoughts. You cannot dwell on your little trials if you are walking worthy of this wondrous calling ; it lifts you above it all. It must do so, because the Head is above it all.

In verse 7 grace is given to every *one* ; in verse 16, grace is given to every *one part* (see New Trans.), that you may not suppose there is the least little bit of the body that is not of use. No other member could possibly fill its place rightly. Put your middle finger in the place of your little one, it would be very clumsy, though a much better finger. But it will not do to change its place. Why ? Because God has put it there. He has made no mistake in our bodies in creation, nor in the body of Christ. Are we carrying out this ? It is our calling.

“ According to the measure of the gift of Christ.” The measure is different. You see the members at work in 1 Corinthians xii., according to the different measures, but all in harmony. If

you are an eye, are you to despise a smaller member? And is a little member to say, "I am not of the body," because it is not a hand? Sometimes envy gets in. What do we read? "With all lowliness and meekness." No envy there, because God has given one member a little greater measure of gift than another. It is a terrible thing for the flesh to be working among us, being in the light as we are; but let us not think about the failure, but about the right thing. If we have that before us, we shall carry it out. To fill our place is the way to help others. Let us be diligent in filling the place God has put us in, and not be trying to put others in their places, or to fill two places when we are scarcely up to filling the one we have got. How do we know our place? How do the members of our natural bodies know their place? They act in the place where God has put them, directed by the head. If connection between any member and the head is broken or enfeebled, it ceases to be under control. In the body of Christ, if there is "holding the Head," supply and direction come down for every action, healthy action too. If "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;" if one is out of joint, it is a terrible thing to all the rest. Do you feel it so? The action of it is in the assembly, the body cannot be touched. God be thanked! He has not put that in your hands or mine; if He had,

we should have torn it limb from limb before now. See what a state we have made the *house* in, which *was* put into our hands! Wood, hay, stubble, and I do not know what else, vessels to dishonour, are brought in upon the right foundation. (See 1 Cor. iii. ; 2 Tim. ii.)

In Psalm lxxviii., Christ's ascension is given first, before He enters Psalm lxxix., though it happened second. God lets you into the end of it before the beginning. That is His way, almost throughout His book. You should always look at the place where a verse is quoted from. In Ephesians it is put a little differently to the Psalm. Christ was anointed by the Holy Ghost personally when on earth, and the Spirit was given to Him again in heaven, when He got there, on purpose to give to us. He received gifts for men. In the Psalm He receives them; here,—in Ephesians, He gives them to us. “Yea, for the rebellious also,” those are the Jews, “Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” (Eph. iv. 8.) Christ goes up above all heavens, and from thence these gifts come. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” The great thing here is that the gifts come down from heaven, while the body is on earth, and they will not cease so long as the body is on earth. He will not cease to nourish and cherish

His body. In Ephesians v. 29 it should be, "Nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as *Christ* the church," not "as the *Lord*." The Headship of Christ is the ministry part, discipline is from the *Lord*. All flows from the Head to each member directly, not merely through other members, each member is in direct communication with the Head, and receiving its directions from Him. That shuts out ordination and all the rest of it. They say, "Where is your authority?" They do not know where our authority comes from. I would not turn aside one step to disturb them, the Spirit does not lead in that way. The apostles never did: they let the temple service, &c., go on, and never expressed themselves about it, but carried out their Lord's will.

When a simple soul comes to the fountain of living waters, how they strengthen, cheer, refresh, and cause him to grow up into Christ. God delights in simple souls, and He takes a great deal of care of them. Christ has such wonderful care for His body. He has given these gifts, for "the perfecting of the saints"—to put them—His members, in perfect articulation with Him, the Head, and with one another. That is done through ministerial work and through edifying. The body is edified by love and by gifts. We do not make of the body what Christ does, and what God does. We think we cannot afford to see all those souls going down into hell, and that

we must occupy ourselves with the gospel. But the Lord never called the brethren out to go and preach the gospel. I do not speak about individuals. Let any one whom God has made an evangelist go and do it, and let him do it in communion with his brethren. God has communicated this truth to us. The gospel was preached long before we were born. Who has saved all those souls? God has, by evangelists, all over the world, these last eighteen hundred years. What a mistake it must have been not to call us out before, if it were especially for that kind of work He called us! No, He recovered the truth to us; let us hold it fast. The church did not hold it. It is an immense thing to hold the truth; we do not know the immensity of it, because we have let it go anyhow, so long as we got a little brightness for our own souls and a few to listen to the gospel. The church was made the depositary of the truth; if it had held it, it would have been standing to this day. You and I will lose it if we do not take heed to it. The gospel will not be preached with less power if we give this truth its place, but with far greater power. If we are to do any work, we must work from the centre of the very highest truth, then we do it as being true to Christ. If we let that go, our work will suffer, and be exceedingly feeble. This is why we are such "babes."

The apostle says, "That ye be no more babes;" that is contrasted with "perfect," in verse 13, "full-grown." People like to be fed always with spoons, instead of growing up to Christ, and being full-grown men. What characterises babes here is being "Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." They are not proof against "the *wiles* of the devil." (See chap. vi. 11.) He has method in all his deceit, he has drawn up a consummate plan to deceive; that is how the babes are "carried about." When you are drawn aside, it is because you do not keep on growing. The ministry should be of such a character as to promote the "perfecting of the saints." Christ gives it for that. It is given for the whole body, and it is what those who really care for the edifying of the body should be about. They have no business to stop in one place, they are for the body, not for one little set here and there. That is Christ's love to His body. He loves it so wonderfully, nourishes and cherishes it.

One word more about verse 21, "As the truth is in Jesus." The truth in Jesus is, "Having put off the old man, and having put on the new;" not preaching the gospel. Having put off the old man is that you have got out of the old man; you are in the new, and you have not had one finger in doing it. It is true in *Jesus* about us, not true in *us*. If you look in, you will

see enough of the old thing there. The truth in Jesus is this: every one *in Christ* is a new creation; not a bit in *ourselves*; that is all the *old* creation. The Spirit of God dwells in our bodies, and we have a new nature, but if you look in, you will find that the old nature is there. You cannot bear being looked at. If you look in for the new nature, you will find a deal of the old, and it will throw you on your beam ends if you do not know grace. Do you think it is a long way off? No, it is in *Jesus* that these things are true, and we are united to Him—to Christ; we are new creation, all is of Christ; all new creation; He the Head, we the members. Now that is what God has before Him. What a reality it is! What a calling! God has Christ for everything, all and in all; man is gone. When the greatness of this wonderful truth comes in, it makes the man fall on his face. He is gone then; all the expression of a man is in his face; that is what is meant, I think. May God give us to enter into it better, and to keep things in their place. The body is the first thing in nearness to Christ; let us put it first. All I can say is that Christ loves this wonderful body so intensely, that there is nothing to compare to it; and if we are following Christ, we shall have things in the same order in our minds as He has them in His.

# THE LORD'S GLORY AND ITS EFFECT.

2 CORINTHIANS III. 18.

BEHOLDING the Lord's glory in His unveiled face we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Beloved friends, this shews the wonderful effect of association with the Lord's glory, and this is in connection with the gospel—its finish. The apostle is here shewing the contrast between the *demand* for righteousness from the glory in the time of law, and the *ministration* of righteousness from the glory now through grace. What you seek, conscious of your need, would be to be thoroughly clear in the glory. Now, instead of glory making a demand upon you, there is actually a ministration of righteousness to you from it. Hence the apostle argues, if the ministration of condemnation be glory, how much more shall the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory! That is the wonderful grace we have to-day, not only clear of everything once against us, but made to correspond to the very glory where we are cleared. Nothing can be more wonderful than that such language could

be used concerning us—"changed into the *same image*." No English word would properly express the meaning of the word for "changed." Beholding the Lord's glory we are assimilated to it. It is not equality, but similarity; and the more you ponder it, the more you will understand the greatness of it.

Now turn to Isaiah vi. 5-7. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

The prophet is perfectly clear before the throne; that is the most you get before the gospel of the glory of Christ. Now contrast with that verse 18 of the chapter before us. How immense is the advance! Isaiah is perfectly clear before the glory; but now the glory makes me correspond to itself. It is not simply, I am free, and there is not a charge against me. That is quite true, and so it was with Isaiah. Here we see one of the seraphims took a live coal from off the altar, and coming to Isaiah, he says, as it were, 'I utterly refuse *you*, but on the ground of

the coal taken from off the altar, I entirely clear you'; and he was cleared, his iniquity taken away, and his sin purged, but that was all.

That is a great deal, but that is not the gospel of the glory of Christ. In the gospel I am not only cleared, but I am made to correspond to the glory of the One who cleared me. Therefore in the next chapter we have "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."

I have no doubt, speaking of separation and taking a separate place here, that nothing can give the same character of separation as any measure of correspondence with the glory of God. I am sure it humbles us to think how little we are transformed into the same image. The greatest potentate on this earth might allow you into his presence, but he could not make you to correspond to his dignity. It is one of the most wonderful expressions of the grace that has come to us, that not only are we cleared from all that is contrary to the glory, but transformed into the same image in the very place where we were so contrary to it.

Transformed is a word we cannot fully express in English. It is metamorphosed. It means you are transformed as in Romans xii., "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." Among the Greeks it was understood as being turned into a new being. Of course, I could give you but a very feeble idea of it. A caterpillar turned

into a butterfly is an imperfect illustration. It is not an addition to a person, nor a great alteration, but you are entirely changed.

Now, you behold the Lord's glory with unveiled face. There is no veil on *His* face. It is not that there is no veil on *us*, but there is no veil on His face, and the full glory of God rests upon Him. He is the antitype of the ark of the covenant. The effulgence of the glory that was over the ark of the covenant now rests in fulness on Him. He glorified God in death, and now every ray of divine glory rests on Him. Hence we get in the next chapter, verse 6, that remarkable word, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Glory is fully come out now. There is nothing undeclared now. God always had love, but He could not declare it without righteousness. Now there is a ministration of righteousness from the glory, and there is no hindrance to the outflow of His love. "Beholding the glory of the Lord"—the expression of God's satisfaction according to all the attributes of His nature, now all resting on a Man, and that Man, the Lord Jesus Christ! And the practical effect for us, beloved friends, of beholding the Lord's glory without a veil, is that we are changed—metamorphosed into the same image.

The practical point is, How is this effected? Let me give you examples. I could give you

some idea of it from the Old Testament. Look at Psalm lxxiii. 17, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." Compare that with verse 4, "For there are no bands in their death; their strength is firm." The psalmist has changed his mind altogether. And what has caused this complete change in him? It is produced by God's power and glory in the sanctuary. It is an illustration of the change we have been speaking of, and shews that the place he now occupies is entirely outside of man. He had been looking at things here as a man, but when he gets inside with God, all is reversed. Instead of modifying his judgment, he reverses it completely.

I will give you two more examples from the New Testament. We often use the words, "changed into the same image." Did you ever make proof of it? We may always prove a thing by its effect. As people say, Taste and see. If you are not changed you are not "beholding."

It is a wonderful statement, and I am often confounded by it; "Beholding the Lord's glory, we are changed into the same image." But I have proved it for myself; I have gone to the Lord about a thing that I thought looked proper; and I have gone a second time, and still it looked

the proper thing; and a third or perhaps a fourth time, and have found that it was *not* approved of, that it was *not* the proper thing at all. Thus I was brought into moral correspondence with the Lord's mind about it, and that is how it is brought about.

Turn now to Philippians iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

I know this is a very familiar passage to us all, but come now, tell me how many have you seen in the peace of God? Did you ever know it yourself? Oh yes, you say, I have been to God about a thing and come away quite resigned about it. Oh! but that is not what we get here—"the peace of God that PASSETH ALL understanding." It could not be comprehended by the natural mind. It is such an amazing thing; you would not know yourself. It passeth ALL understanding. Well, how do I get it? I go to Him. I get so near to Him, that I actually acquire the very state in which He is Himself! I can understand a person saying, Oh, now you are speaking parables! No, I am only saying what is written; I know very well how far short I am of it, but that is what it is. The word "make known" does not mean that God does not

know, but I know I told Him. I do not say you get it the first time you go, nor the second, nor perhaps the third, but I know it can be got. Philippians used to be a very trying book to me till I saw it was the experience of a heavenly man. Now I see that I am in another order of things, and there I am morally transformed "into the peace of God that passeth all understanding"—what no human mind can grasp.

Turn now to 2 Corinthians xii. 7-9. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Once you get a principle from scripture, you will find it confirmed everywhere. Now in this verse 7, it is extremely interesting to see the apostle. He is come down from the third heaven, the highest scene, and is immediately assailed by the messenger of Satan, no doubt to hinder him, and the Lord allows it. He goes to the Lord about it, and asks Him to remove it, but He does not do so. He goes a second time, but still the Lord does not remove

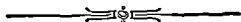
it. He goes a third time, and now he is an entirely changed man. A while ago he was trying to get rid of the thorn, but now on the contrary, he says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." Why, I say, how is it you are so changed? Well, he says, I have been with the Lord and His order of things, and it is by beholding His glory that I have been brought right round to His mind. It was not that I did this thing or the other, I simply went to Him and He morally transformed me to His will. Thus a very extraordinary change takes place in you, you are quite altered from what you were.

I only give you these examples just to prove the effect of beholding the Lord's glory, and I desire that the Lord would fasten on your heart and mind the wonderful excess of grace that has come to us through the gospel. It is not only that by the blood of the Lamb I am without a spot, and can go into the Holiest of all, but what I say is, and it is the height of all blessedness, beholding His glory I am transformed into the same image, into the very highest condition, into consonance with His glory—the expression of His satisfaction according to all His attributes. Not love apart from righteousness, nor righteousness apart from love; but now not a single attribute of God is wanting, the circle is complete, and I am made to share in the whole range of it. And how? By looking at the Lord's glory.

I have no doubt in my mind by the way people speak, that they do not reach this. They say they are looking at the Lord, and thus their speech bewrayeth them. I say, You have left out a word. What word? *Glory*. It is looking at the *Lord's glory*. Why is it necessary to put in that word? Because it is the expression of God's satisfaction according to all the attributes of His nature, resting on the One who has accomplished my redemption. And beholding it, I am transformed into the same image, into conformity to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—in the face of the One who bore my judgment, and glorified God under the weight of it! And beholding His glory, I am changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Lord grant we may not only hear about it, but understand it, to the praise and glory of Him who wrought it, for His name's sake.

J. B. S.



# COMMUNION.

1 JOHN I. II. 1, 2.

I HAVE read these scriptures with a view to speak a little of what communion is—communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is very important to note in the beginning of chapter i. what is proposed—that it is not merely to shew us that we have forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and a title to heaven; but that we might have communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ; and all that is written here is with a view to unfolding that.

Beloved brethren, it is a wonderful thing to get with God, and hear what He has upon His heart for us; for we shall find that our sense of need, and even our best desires for blessing, fall far short of what God has for us; and we never get into real blessing until we let Him speak to us, and learn from Himself what He has for us: and that is what is brought out here.

The subject of John's Epistle is eternal life; not how we get it: that his Gospel gives. Here we get the traits and characteristics of it as they were manifested in a Man down here, who was the

eternal life, and in Him we have eternal life. Now many people value eternal life simply for the security it gives. Others refuse it, and say you cannot have a life *now* that will never come to an end. Truly it is secure, and it is eternal, but that is a small part of what eternal life is: the great thing to see is, the characteristics which belong to this life; that is what John's Epistles unfold, and one of the chief things it points out as belonging to it, is communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Now, for communion with the Father there must be two things: first, the Father must be declared to us, and that was done by the only-begotten Son who dwelt in the bosom of the Father; and, secondly, we must have a nature capable of knowing the Father so revealed: that is eternal life, and eternal life only can understand it; and we have eternal life in Christ risen from among the dead. He was always the Eternal Life; before He was incarnate He was the Eternal Life, but not then for us. Man had not then eternal life in Him. He was the Eternal Life when He came down here upon the earth, and there manifested it; but not until He had been into death, and closed our connection with the first man, having accomplished redemption, could He impart unto us eternal life in Himself. Therefore if I want to look at eternal life for myself, I find it in Christ risen, and I have it in the power of

the Holy Ghost; and what we have before us here as the character of eternal life is communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

We shall find in looking round upon Christians how much, for the most part, they are occupied with the negative character of blessing—the clearance of their sins, and what was once against them, and deliverance from the power of sin. Quite right, and most important surely: there could be no communion without both of these; still, neither the one nor the other, nor both together, are communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ; it is not what we have been delivered from, but what we are brought into, the relationship in which we stand. The former is merely like a convict who has been set free, there is now no charge against him, and he can walk about the place without a bit of fear of the policeman touching him, he is all clear. But if that is all we get from the gospel, we leave out altogether the blessed relationship of children with the Father, and communion with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

You will find a similar thing in relation to what may be called one's church position. People are often more occupied with what they have been taken out of, and the evils they have escaped from, than with what they are brought into. But what God unfolds here is His thoughts

of blessing for us ; and that it is not a matter of attainment, not only what belongs to some Christians who have got high up, but what God has for all His children, in this dispensation—Christ the gift of God to us, and eternal life in Him, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is what is unfolded to us here as our portion, and it is communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Well, this is how it begins: "That which was from the beginning"—that is the beginning of Christ—Christianity. It is not what you get in the opening of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word," nor the beginning as you get it in Genesis. The beginning here is Christ manifested upon the earth. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard," &c., that "declare we unto you." And to what end? That you may have your sins forgiven? That you may have peace with God? No; that "ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Quite true, we shall find the question of our sins brought in and settled; but let us keep before us what God has before Him.

We have all had our need as sinners pressed upon us, and we have fled to Jesus as a Saviour, and have obtained forgiveness of sins; and then a little further on we found sin working

in us, and were brought to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me," and we have been able to thank God for our deliverance; but here we get with God, and find what He has for us. I see how He looked at me in my distance from Him, when walking in darkness, and that it was His purpose to bring me to Himself; and that, not merely that I should not be afraid of Him, but to have communion with Him. Not being afraid of God, is not communion with Him. Communion is a great deal more. True, all between God and me must be settled first; but the thing here is oneness of thought with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. We are surely brought into the presence of God without fear, or any question of our sin being completely and for ever settled by the work of Christ; but we are there to sit in His presence, and hear the Father speak to us about the Son, and to hear the Son speak to us about the Father; and we have got a divine nature which delights in that. Until a sinner has the question of his sins settled, he could not enjoy that; if he got into the presence of God, he would want to hear about himself, and that is where such a large proportion of listeners are. Even when the love of the Father and the Son is presented, there is a need in their consciences not met, and they are always listening for something that will meet

that need. But here it is not the question of need, nor of meeting need, but of God's desires for us to have fellowship with Him and with His Son Jesus Christ. "That which we have seen and heard [of the Lord Jesus Christ, walking down upon this earth] declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us"; "and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full;" oneness of joy, and fulness of joy, is what the Spirit is unfolding here.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him," &c. You know who the "Him" is to whom he refers. It is the One who is the Lord of life, and he is going to tell what He declared. "God is light," &c. It is very beautiful to see that when God comes out to us to bring us into this wonderful relationship—this communion, He first settles the question of our responsibility, and therefore the title "God" is introduced. You will always find when the name of God is used, responsibility is brought in; when the name Father is used, it is relationship: here it is God. He is going to shew us where we are, and how we stand with God, and he says, "God is light," &c.; and the consequence of this is, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

Perhaps I ought to say a word here to any who may have a difficulty in understanding this passage, because of the abstract way in which

John presents the truth. By this I mean his way of speaking of things by themselves, not in their relation to other things, and not as they are affected by other things. Certain truths, or statements of truths, complete in themselves, and which you may take out and place by themselves, and they are complete in what they convey apart from everything else, abstract statements, abstractedly true. For instance, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." You may read this, and if you know nothing else, it stands true thus, apart from everything else. For the soul cast upon God it ever remains true that the "blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then I have another statement: "God is light." Here are the persons to be brought together, God and the sinner. God is going to bring to Himself a people who are walking in darkness, who have sinned, and who have sin in them; and they are not merely brought to Himself so as not to be afraid of Him, but to know Him as their Father, and to have fellowship with Him and with His Son. Hence we have statements first, shewing who God is; then, who *we* are as God sees us; and then these two are brought together: God as He is in His true character, and we as we are, in our true characters and histories, and then the blood of Jesus Christ His Son is brought in so that we may be together.

Then in verse 7 we read : " But if we walk in the light," &c. People are often misled by a wrong thought about this verse. They make it conditional, they think that it refers to a Christian sometimes walking in the light and at other times not so walking. But it is not so, it is a question of being a believer or an unbeliever, having eternal life or not. " He that hath the Son of God hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He that has the Son of God does not walk in darkness, he walks in the light, always in the light. As a believer he can never walk out of the light. I may not walk according to the light, but if you say a person is not walking in the light you unchristianise him. If he is not walking in the light he is not a Christian at all. Here the question is of a person possessing eternal life having communion with another who has got eternal life.

For instance, you know very well there may be a person very near and dear to me by the ties of nature, one my heart is very much attached to naturally ; but if I have eternal life and that person has not, there is no communion between us ; not the communion there is between me and a stranger I may have met to-day on the railway platform for the first time in my life who has got eternal life. I am not speaking now of the Christian's walk. John is not speaking of that

here. He is speaking of the characteristics of communion between one who has eternal life and another who has eternal life. When it says, "As he is in the light," it means as God is revealed. It is come out now the truth of who God is fully; we are brought to God—revealed in His true character, and we in ours: the one is consequent on the other. The moment God is revealed as light, everything in me comes out—it must. I may appear very well where there is no light; but the moment I come into the presence of God, all I am is brought out; then I want what will meet that, and nothing will but the blood of Jesus Christ. So He says, "If we walk in the light," &c. You see how beautifully it is brought in here, and though it is a scripture which is often taken and used with other scriptures, one has to be very careful, because its beauty, its special excellency, arises from being set in the place where it is, and it is that which gives it its own special meaning. It is what we need every day, to have communion with God, to hear God's voice thus speaking to us. If the Bible is merely to be taken up as a science, as a subject to lecture on, and handle very skilfully and please people with, that is another thing. But if God has given us His word, it is that which is to speak to us; and thus ministered, it conveys the thoughts of God distinctly, but only as we

get each word where the Holy Ghost has set it. This scripture has special beauty to our souls when we see the way it is brought in. We are to be brought to God, and this discovers what we are. And what is it? "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." Then another thing, "If we say we have not sinned . . . . we make God a liar." Suppose I say I have never sinned, it would be a lie; but then I should not be making God a liar unless He had said, "All have sinned." But seeing He has said so, if I say I have not sinned, on the face of it, I have made Him a liar. But when God says, "all have sinned," He does not say all believers have sinned. It is in Romans iii. 23, where He is speaking of the natural man, that He says, "all have sinned," to bring in every natural man—all the world—guilty before God. But what we have here is God bringing us from our position in darkness, and walking in darkness, and having no communion with God, and consequently taking into account all that we are and all we have done, and bringing down to us all that God is, and then bringing the blood of Jesus Christ His Son to meet our condition and enable us to be together. Here the whole case is opened up and spread out before us, and how the conditions have to be met. That is why we get, in verse 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Now that is an abstract statement about God. It tells us what God is towards the one that confesses his sins. It is true of God. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth." "God is light." God is willing to forgive. It is not the Father here. If we look at this passage as the Holy Spirit has written it, we shall see there is no question of failure contemplated. It is quite true every Christian who does fail delights to know that "God is faithful," &c. ; but that is not the purpose for which it is stated here: failure is not contemplated in chapter i. In chapter ii. it is; and that is why I read the two first verses of it. But when I say failure is not contemplated, a person may say—why, is not sin failure? No; not for the sinner: for the child of God it is; the sinner does nothing else. What do I expect to find in a natural man but sin? He is in his old nature, and all that he manifests is sin and enmity against God, and I cannot speak of him as failing. But when God speaks to a believer, He says: "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not," &c. With him it is a question of failure. But in the first chapter it is a case of a sinner, in his sinful state, coming to God in the light, and he wants to know how God will treat him, and he says, "He is faithful and just to forgive," &c. Of course the Christian rejoices to know this too. But we are apt to jump at a passage we want, and tearing it away violently,

because it suits us, from the place where it belongs, we fail to get the truth entirely.

Suppose, for instance, God had proposed to bring angels into communion with the Father and with the Son. He would not require to tell those angels that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin, because they have none. They would not understand it. No use to tell them that God was faithful and just to forgive sin. But it is because of who the people are who are addressed, and because of the history of those people, that they have all sinned, and all have sin in them, and because the light that God is must expose such a state of things ; hence, either God must sink His character for holiness and dim the light, or else my sins and sin must be met. Therefore God speaks of the blood of Jesus Christ as meeting it, and that He is faithful and just to forgive the one who comes to Him confessing his sins.

Another thing that causes the difficulty many have in understanding John's Epistles is that they do not look at what is proposed. Here, as I have said, it is the bringing souls into communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

There are scriptures, Romans for instance, where the history of man as a sinner is brought out ; but that is a different subject altogether. God's purpose in Romans is to justify man here

upon the earth, and give him righteousness. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is not merely that, but quickening a man dead in trespasses and sins, with Christ, and raising him up, and making him sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The question of communion is not brought in in either. But this is what John gives us, and it is the essence of Christianity, the relationship we are brought into; and how a man is kept in this scene who accepts it. I believe it is the absence of this, the non-acceptance of this that is the cause of all the worldliness around us, and which is eating out the very vitals of the saints. I believe that ninety-nine out of every hundred of the troubles among saints are caused by worldliness. The condition of soul becomes worldly, and then troubles come in. Because if a man is merely thinking of getting clear from his sins, and from the power of sin, and getting happy in his soul and perhaps clear about his ecclesiastical position, that man has plenty of margin to go on with the world. It does not interfere with his getting on in it, and he may become wrapped up with all sorts of worldliness. But the moment I get what I have here, communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, I have what tests the world, and what is the only true test. Therefore John says, in the next chapter: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh . . . is not of

the Father." That is the way he settles it. One brought into this atmosphere of the Father's love, to enjoy communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, tests everything as to its suitability to that.

Do you remember, beloved brethren, the prayer of our Lord for us when leaving this world? Do you remember the measure and the character of the keeping He asked for us? It is, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." The Lord knew the Father's mind perfectly as none else could, but He lets us hear His desires for us, and would have us know that that was the character in which we should be kept down here in answer to that prayer. And how kept? "Through thine own name," the name of Holy Father; therefore He comes to make known that Father to us. So when He says, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth"—What is the truth there? The Father made known to us. He has declared Him, and brought us into this relationship; therefore the test for what is of the world is that it is not of the Father. And a soul in the atmosphere of the Father's love will soon find out what is of the world. When he gets into communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, with His desires thus set before him, he learns all else is of the world, though it may be presented under disguised forms.

You get a somewhat similar thought to this when the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking in John xv. of service. He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," &c. That is a wonderful place to bring us into. Now I say to myself—to you—Have we an ear for such things? Is there anything more welcome to our ear than these communications to us, by the Son, of the things which He has heard of His Father? Do we delight to listen for them, and value the confidence which they manifest—colouring, too, our service? The Lord Jesus says, I have brought you into this place of friends, for "all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you."

And thus it is we know a little of what it is to have communion with Him in service. I may be an *aide de camp* on a field of battle, and have to carry a most important despatch from one general to another general, upon which perhaps the issue of the battle may depend; I have to go at the greatest risk to my own life; but I do not know what is the nature of the message; I only take it out of one man's hand to deliver it into the hand of another, and having done that, my business is accomplished. But that is not the way of the Lord Jesus with His servants. He takes us into the quiet of His own presence, and the presence of His Father, before He sends us, and He makes known to us the

nature of this despatch and all about it. He would have us to be concerned about what He is concerned about; He opens it for us that we may thoroughly understand what we have to carry, and now He says, You may take it for me. Gladly I take it, a willing servant I take it across the desert, rejoiced to have part with Him in the carrying out of His mind. That is communion in service, and that is what the Lord has brought us into. I once came across what just illustrates this. An aged servant of the Lord who had been a remarkable missionary, and a very valued servant of God all his life, was drawing near his end, and many of his fellow-labourers and friends came to see him, and they thought they would get some useful hints, culled in his long experience, that would be useful to them in carrying on their work. But as they came, old ones and young ones too, they found him occupied with one thing, this one thing wholly engrossing him, and it was told in few words—"What a Father; what a Son!" "What a Father Christ has got; what a Son the Father has got in Christ!" That is what communion is.

Supposing we had an audience for five minutes with the Father and with His Son—though it is not a case of five minutes, for we are brought into abiding communion. But suppose for illustration, I was permitted for five minutes to

go into the presence of the Father and His Son ; and while there, the Son spoke to me of nothing but the Father, the love of the Father, and unfolded to me who His Father was ; and then when I turned to the Father and heard Him speak to me, what He spoke to me about was the glories of His Son, and of all His purposes concerning Him, how He had blessed Him, and how He delighted in Him, and how He intended to glorify Him ; and I went out of His presence, having heard nothing else ; would I be disappointed because He had said nothing about *me* ? No, I should have been brought into the highest enjoyment a saint could be capable of. I should welcome it above everything else. Well, that is the enjoyment of eternal life. I have a nature which listens, and delights to listen ; and not only that, but which understands what the Spirit of God in me unfolds to me of those things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” &c. That is what the Father has for us ; it is the enjoyment of all that which His Son is to Him. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth ; what was written upon everything He said and did down here was what the Father was—it was all declaring His Father. If it was the words, it was the Father’s words ; if the works, it was the Father’s

works. If He was here meeting the wants of suffering and needy ones, &c., it was all declaring the heart of the Father who sent Him; and He could say, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life," &c. The Eternal Life who was with the Father was manifested down here upon earth. He spoke of His words and His word; because His words are one thing, His word another. His word was the whole tenor of His life: every single thing in His life manifested the Father.

And now I know the Father. But whom do I know Him from? Whom do I learn Him from? Suppose I go to some fellow man, and ask him to tell me about the Father, it does not help me a bit. The soul who really wants to know about the Father learns from the only-begotten Son who dwells in His bosom. He has been down here walking on this earth manifesting the Father, and the apostle says, "We have seen, heard, handled," &c.; you see there what communion is. It is quite true that the facts that we have sinned, and that we have sin in us, are not ignored. I come into the presence of the Father and of the Son into all that light and holiness, and know I have sin in me, but it does not hinder my communion. If I allow it to act, that is another thing; *that* hinders my communion until I am restored; but otherwise the sin-

ful nature in me does not hinder my communion. I am in the presence of the Father and of the Son, and I know that neither have the least sympathy with sin in me. I know He is holy, for His Son has had to shed His blood to put away sin from before Him, and I am in His presence because His Son is there; with the pierced hands and side and feet, and soon I shall be with Him where He is. But the life I have got now is holy, because created in righteousness and true holiness. It is God's creation, God's workmanship. He has taken into account all that I was; His righteous claims have all been met, and I have a nature which is holy, which hates sin, which turns away from it, and loves what is good; and therefore, though I know I have sin in me, it does not hinder for a moment my communion with God.

Well, now being brought into communion, the apostle says, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." How long is that going to last? In the first verse of the next chapter, he says, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." God has brought me into this wonderful place of communion, how long shall I continue in it? Does He say you *must* sin? No; I hear men say that you cannot help sinning, but scripture does not say so. God brings me into His presence, and says, there is no excuse for your sinning, but

He says, "*if* any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father."

Well, now, we have got to failure; but what people do is, they begin legislating for the failure before they have got into the place of communion with the Father and His Son. The apostle puts this first, and says, "These things write I unto you, that your joy may be full." *Then* He takes up the question of failure. But people reverse this, beginning to legislate for the failure first, and actually want God to do so, by bringing in scripture, and applying to failure what has reference only to communion. Scripture reveals God to me before it speaks of sin—reveals Him as I need to know Him. No use telling me what God is to an angel, you must tell me what He is towards one who has sinned, and who has sin in him. And what is the answer? "He is faithful and just to forgive," &c.

Then you get the provision for failure in the advocacy of Christ. If I fail, what meets it? Blood? No; water. It is the advocacy of Christ, and the washing of water by the word. It is the ashes of the red heifer brought in and applied with running water to the one who has failed, and that restores the communion. Quite true the heifer has been killed and burnt before God; and so as to the advocacy of Christ; it is based upon His work on the cross. But when the Lord in John xiii. sets before us His service, in the

removal from His disciples of that which hinders the communion, He puts into the basin not blood, but water ; and He took a towel, and wiped their feet. It is the washing, of water by the word.

Suppose a person says, But how do you apply the truth of the ashes? Simply in this way? Suppose as a child of God I fail to walk in this communion—I fail—call it by its right name, I sin ; well—“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And what then? The Advocate goes to the Father, but before He goes to the Father, He has been to the cross about that very sin. Then He goes to the Father as the advocate, and the Holy Ghost works in me the sense of what I have done, and brings to me the remembrance of Christ’s sufferings and death upon the cross. And to what end? Lest this sin should bring me into judgment? No, I know that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ;” I know the “blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin ;” and more than that, “in whose spirit there is no guile.” But a person says, Then why be troubled or exercised about it? And another says, But you will be careless. No ; I feel now about sin as I never felt before. I see now that I have allowed that thing to act which caused Christ His agony on the cross. That sin connects itself in

my mind with the sufferings of Christ for me upon the cross, and brings them before me, and these sufferings shew me what a horrible thing I have allowed to act. I know it is all perfectly met on the cross, and I have a purged conscience, but that really exercises, and makes me feel the sin. Not because it is coming against me in judgment—I know it is not—it cannot, but I hate it, for I see that if Christ had not agonised on the cross on account of it, it would have brought me into judgment. That is really what is set forth in type in the ashes of the red heifer. Ashes are remembrance. If I look at a grate in the morning where there has been a fire over night, it tells me two things. I see there are ashes there, and that tells me that there has been fire there ; but it tells me also that the fuel has been consumed because there has been fire there. Therefore the moment I get the ashes before me, I think of the Lord Jesus Christ having been down under death and judgment ; I see the fire of judgment has been poured out upon Him, and what has been brought and applied to me is—not blood, but—ashes with the running water. There is no fresh application of the blood for failure.

What is applied to us for failure helps to shew the true character of what I spoke of at first, as to our being brought in the first instance to God ; then it is the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. But when it

is a question of failure as a believer, I get the advocacy of Christ, and I have Him presented as the propitiation—two totally different things. It is an advocate with the *Father*, not with *God*. It is a child who has failed—failed as a naughty child; and the Advocate, Jesus Christ, the *Righteous*, is with the Father. In Romans He is the Righteous One, and I am righteous in Him. My righteousness remains untouched as surely as He is there. Thus we see the provision for failure; but I do not want to occupy you with the failure, I only turn to it that you may see how distinct the two things are, and that we may be clear as to what communion really is, and what the thought of God is in picking us up as poor sinners who have sinned, and have sin in us, and who were walking in darkness, not knowing God, and bringing us to walk in the light as He is in the light, and to have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and fellowship with one another.

You find people talking of being before God. Well, we *are* before God, but a great deal more than that. A servant may come into my room, and be before me while I am at dinner, but that is a totally different position and relationship to that which my wife occupies towards me. So I may be before God, and not know what communion with Him is. But the wonderful thing is, that we are not only brought to be before

God, and to be happy with Him, but to have communion with Him as our Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Well, beloved brethren, I feel the more one looks at this subject, and the more one sees what the church of God is, the more one is made to feel how much people are taken up, and satisfied to be taken up, with the mere getting clear of their sins, and deliverance from the power of sin, so as not to be afraid about it. They want God for their sins, God for their cares, and they do not want much more from Him. If only they have God to go to about their sins, and when in trouble to be able to turn to Him, it is all they want of Him. Surely we can go to Him about our sins, and with our troubles, and He will not send us away; on the contrary, He invites us to come. And that is how He has come, and made Himself known to us, meeting us poor things where we were, and He presents Himself to us still, telling us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us; and we know He remembers us, as in that verse where He tells us, we are of "more value than many sparrows." It is beautiful to take the two scriptures, John xiv. and Luke xii., and see how blessedly He has, and does think of us. In the former, He tells us of the Father's house, and the place there prepared for us, and how He is coming back to take us there

—to bring us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. And then in Luke xii., He speaks of the kingdom and things down here, and says, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" and if it is a question of your wants and cares, He says, "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of these things." He says, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." He comes down to the smallest things on this earth. That Father in whose bosom I dwell I have declared unto you, in His house and home prepared a place for you, and that Father careth for you in every single detail of your path down here.

Oh, beloved brethren, where does it put the world !

I open the word of God, and I see everything settled about myself, and I am walking in the light, as He is in the light. But if there were one sin unsettled, one little link missing, and you and I were to stand in the presence of that light, that sin would be magnified like as a drop of water is magnified under a powerful microscope, and we should be occupied with nobody but ourselves. It is bad enough the way in which people get occupied with themselves down here, but if it were possible for a person to get into the presence of God and be occupied with himself, it would be ten times more dreadful. The wonderful thing is, that all I have done, and

all I am, has been all out in the light, and all perfectly met, so that God has not a word to say to me about it, and all He wants is to have me in His presence, occupied only with His love. Just as it is expressed in our hymn:—

“ Mercy and truth unite,  
Oh, 'tis a wondrous sight,  
All sights above!  
Jesus the curse sustains!  
Guilt's bitter cup He drains!  
Nothing for us remains—  
Nothing but love.

“ Love that no tongue can teach,  
Love that no thought can reach;  
No love like His.  
God is its blessed source,  
Death ne'er can stop its course,  
Nothing can stay its force;  
Matchless it is.”

That is what I have been brought into. And that is the blessedness of that scripture in Romans viii., “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature”—shall not be able to take me to hell? No, that is not my comfort—“*shall be able to separate*

*me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

I am not thinking of the security from going to hell, and that nothing can possibly take me there, but I am thinking of the wonderful place I am brought into, in the knowledge of this love, and that nothing can ever separate me from it, "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

J. B.

