

TRUTH FOR THE TIME;

(PART IV.)

BEING

NOTES OF ADDRESSES

AT QUEMERFORD, MAY, 1891.

REVISED.

LONDON:

G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1891.

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THE HOUSE OF GOD, ITS NATURE, CONSTRUCTION, USE, AND GLORY.

(1 TIM. III. 15.)

I WOULD, beloved brethren, that each one here might be conscious of the gravity of this subject, namely the house of God. I would say first a word on what it is.

When once God had a redeemed people His word is, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." This you get in the end of Exodus xxix., "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God." As has often been said, He did not dwell with Adam in the garden of Eden. The wonderful thing is, that when redemption came in, it was marked by this, as He says, "I will dwell with them, and they shall be my people." The more you study the Old Testament the more you will find how great a thing it was, and how much God made of it. Well, it is not a lesser thing now but a greater. Of this I would speak first. I am not going to dilate on it, but merely to touch the headings of this vast subject, so that each one may work it out before the Lord, and learn what the Spirit is leading us to at this present

time. I do not think any one can ponder it without great satisfaction of heart.

I turn to Exodus xv. 12. As soon as you are in rest of soul, as expressed in the first verse: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously," then comes the second: "The Lord is my strength and song; . . . he is my God, and I will *prepare him an habitation*; my father's God, and I will exalt him." I know there is a new reading, but the thought is, God is to be exalted where I am in peace. Therefore I can understand the language of David in another day: "I will not give sleep to mine eyes nor slumber to mine eyelids until I find out a *place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob*." Beloved! are we really sensible that God has an habitation on the earth? As we read in Ephesians ii.: "In whom we are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." But we shall come to that passage further on, I only just allude to it now. I know that the Spirit of God only can lead us up to it. Thank God, it is His work. The work of the Spirit is to make true *in* me what is true *for* me. *All* is true for me, but all is not true in me, and the great characteristic of the real servant is that his heart is set on this work of the Spirit in the saints, as Paul says, "That

we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily." That is the labour of the servant; and the earnestness of the individual who enters into it is expressed in *prayer*.

I need not dwell more on this; when once you get a divine idea by the Spirit of God, He by the Word will be always adding to it. It will be getting fuller and fuller; if you are occupied with it, God will open it out to you.

Well then, God has an habitation on the earth. I turn now to see the order of it. First, what is the qualification for being of it? You may say, every baptised person is in the house; but I am not speaking of man's building, but of Christ's building, and of your apprehension of being builded together for an habitation of God. There are many in it who have not the apprehension of what it is; I mean the apprehension which one acquires when really of this great structure. It is a point of deep interest to us all.

I turn to a few verses in the New Testament. First, Matthew xvi. 18. One very simple rule in scripture I will give for the sake of the younger ones here; and it is well to keep it in mind. When anything is mentioned for the first time in scripture its great characteristics are given. For this reason I turn to the passage where

the assembly is mentioned for the first time. This is not the first mention of the *word* "assembly." We read of the "assembly" in the wilderness, but here it is peculiar. It is "MY assembly." The Lord says, "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, beloved friends, this is a new structure on the earth, and after a different order to anything that had been before. It was not that God had not a house before. The temple was His house, and our blessed Lord cared for that house. When He found it made a "house of merchandise," He made a scourge of small cords and drove them out of it. As it is written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The glory had departed from it, and yet the Lord calls it "My Father's house." With what adoring reverence the heart is moved in looking at Him there in the midst of all the ruin, all the defection, still refusing to allow anything that was inconsistent with the "holiness that becometh thy house for ever." His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Would that *we* had this zeal!

Here, then (Matt. xvi.), we learn what constitutes each of us, a part of that divine structure. I would that the Spirit of God would conduct

every soul here into it. If any one has not begun at the beginning it will be well for him to begin now. What was your apprehension when you came into the assembly? How did you take your place there? I ask you earnestly. I want to know how you know that you are a part of that great structure. Here the Lord accepts that He is rejected. He had been educating His disciples for this great structure, and when He had ended, He says, "WHO AM I?" That is the first question when you come into the assembly. To whom are you coming? You say, to the meeting; but are you coming to the company where the *Son of God* is, where Christ is supreme? Then you are truly built in. That is the great point; and that is the education that the Lord had vouchsafed to His disciples in the previous chapters. See from chapter xiv. 10. The world rejected Him; He walks on the water, He is above it all; and the man of faith *joins Him there*. (Vers. 28, 29.) In chapter xv. His grace is sufficient for you, and in chapter xvi. I come to the building, His assembly, where He is supreme. Now let me ask you with what sense do you come to the assembly? Is it with the sense that it is not merely to a meeting of saints, but to where *Christ is supreme*? "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, . . . ye also as

living stones are built up together a spiritual house." You may say, Is not every Christian a living stone? Yes; but every Christian is not built in—has not taken his place in happy subjection to Christ's supremacy. That is the point. He has not learned what it is to be a part of Christ's assembly—His building.

It is a great thing to apprehend the Lord's words, "Thou art Peter"—a stone. It was not that he was not a stone before, but he is now a stone in its place. You are a stone in your place when you believe in the supremacy of Christ in the assembly. Then it is that you are gathered together to His name.

I pass on now to the *state* connected with owning the supremacy of Christ. Turn to John xx. 19. There we get the first opening out of Christ's own circle on earth. The Lord is risen; and He comes to His first circle of interest; it is on this earth; according with Psalm xvi., "The saints . . . that are in the earth, in whom is all my delight." He is now risen from the dead. Mary Magdalene sets forth what I may call the *heart* of the assembly. She has an ear to hear and she receives from Him. But, further, He comes into the midst of the assembly. (Ver. 19.) I need not tell you that this is only a pattern. Christ's circle of interest marked the opening of the new day, the new creation day. The old

creation *finished* up with a man. Everything failed in that man, and the whole creation was made subject to vanity. Now the Lord is risen from the dead, and has become the Head of the new creation. It *begins* with a Man now ; it opens with the risen Lord. Every living stone now dates from the assembly. One might say, I date from my own house or from my country. *No* ; you date from the *assembly*, because it is the first circle of Christ's interest ; He is Head of the new creation, and the assembly is of Him. It will come out eventually as the new Jerusalem.

We read, He comes into the midst of His disciples, and says, "Peace be unto you." That is the state you are to be in there—PEACE. I am supposing an individual coming into the assembly. He comes to the company where Christ is supreme, and his own state through the work of Christ is PEACE. There is not a disturbing element between God and you. Christ has risen. It is nothing that you have done, but what He has done, and there is not a disturbing element now ; He has made peace.

Now what I want to set before you is—what is our gain from the assembly, and what an object the assembly is to the Lord. First, as I have said, you are in peace ; a peace effected by Himself. The disciples see Him there as the One who had been dead, and they were "glad when they saw

the Lord." Now is fulfilled what you get in John xiv. Would that I could convey to you more fully the nature of this enclosure. The disciples are apart from the world, at the supper table; the Lord is instructing them, preparing them to be missionaries. In chap. xv. they leave the supper table and come out.

In Matthew xviii. 20 we read, "Where two or three are gathered together to my name there am I in the midst of them." I think there is often great defect in looking at that passage. There is not enough stress laid upon the word *name*—"my name." You cannot bring in a second name: if you are in the name of the Lord everything else is shut out. So here (John xx.) "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews." That is the pattern of it. The religious element is outside. Now they are in that enclosure, the fulfilment, as I have said, of chap. xiv., where they learn what He confers for the first time—PEACE and LIFE. And from thence also they are sent forth—"As my Father hath sent me even so send I you."

I turn now to 1 Corinthians x. Perhaps nothing has been a greater index of the state of souls than the way the Lord's supper is received in Christendom. Many of you here may have not studied church history, but you have all heard of

the sacrifice of the Mass. The Romanist would tell you the "real presence" is in the bread and wine. They have some idea of the Lord's presence. They say you partake of it in eating the bread. They do not give you the wine, it is what they call the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. Much is borrowed from Romanism. You may say, None of us are Romanists. Yet there is not one of us who has not been leavened with it. It is very difficult to get leaven out, very easy to get it in; and no *man* can get it out; the Spirit of God alone can. Well, What has the perversion come to? An Israelite feeding on the slain lamb, was looking for salvation. I am not so bad as that, one will say. Well, take care of the leaven. There are pious men who call the Lord's supper a means of grace, and even go so far as to have it the last thing before they expire. Every one here would say, I am beyond that. Well, I go on further. Do you see your sins of the past week gone in the remembrance of His death? If that is your thought you do not understand the Lord's supper. There is nothing about your sins there. But it is better to present the right thing than to dwell upon the wrong. Now look at 1 Corinthians x. 15. The apostle had been speaking of the house all along up to this; he does not touch on the body till verse 16. Then in verse 21 he dwells on the Lord's table. It is

the only time in scripture that it is mentioned. The *Lord's* table, mind you. Mark the distinction between that and *Head*. He is Son over His own house. The way you are at the Lord's table is an index of your state. The Corinthians had been giving themselves a loose rein. Now the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" That is identity with Christ's death here. Who is in this identity? Beloved friends, See what a place you are in, that of identity with Christ's death! If His death had not relieved you, you would be chargeable with it. But having been relieved through His death you are now identified with it here. I know how people try to explain it away, but it cannot be done. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" You are identified here with His death. You are the other side of Jordan (the figure of His death), and you are walking on the heavenly side of it, all the time keeping your eyes on the stones that lie in the bed of the river, not only on the stones on the other side of the river; they are in remembrance of His death.

The effect the supper has on me is, that my heart is drawn out in the sense of His love in

dying for me ; and the more it is, the more my heart says, No other path would suit me on earth but to be identified with His death. You do not get properly the supper here. (1 Cor. x.) It is the responsible side, but the apostle deduces from it that you cannot have any other place here ; it is not that you *must* not, but you *cannot*, it is impossible. You cannot have the two, any more than you can be light and darkness ; it is impossible if you are light to be darkness. You will find great help in reading those chapters. The apostle says in chapter xi., "You despise the church of God." In all these chapters you find he is opening out the church. I think I have now said enough as to it. I can look to the Lord to make up for my lack, and to lead your souls into this wonderful subject--the knowledge of the assembly. The Lord is able to make much of very little.

It is a great thing to apprehend your place in the assembly. You are where He is supreme. You know where you begin. You remember Him here taking the lowest place on earth. You are in identity with His death, and you shew forth His death until He comes. The glory of man is gone. *What* are *you* where your Lord died ? You seek nothing here ! Many a sorrow saints have heaped to themselves by looking for something on this earth where Christ died. You

are right when you are truly shewing forth His death "till He come." There is nothing between the two—His death and His coming—nothing to intervene. Many a one speaks of His coming to appease his conscience, who has no idea of being identified with His death. But there is no fidelity of heart in looking for Him to come unless you can say, "Where Thou diest, will I die." I am identified with His death, therefore my heart looks for the only bright day here, when He will come. You are not looking for Him, if you are not in company with Him.

I have spoken so far about ourselves. I turn now to the Lord in the assembly. (Heb. ii. 12.) His delight is to be here with us. The Lord's treasure is not in heaven, it is on the earth. You are in spirit with Him in heaven, and the more you are with Him, the more you will be occupied with His interests here; it is the only consolation, and it is the greatest to every true heart in the midst of all the dilapidation that Christ's treasure is here. The missionary comes from Him to be found here for Him. In Hebrews you do not get anything about the Lord's supper. The great object in that book is to detach you from the earth, though you are still on the earth. The one thing to establish to a Jew was, that all had been accomplished; therefore in chapter i. 3 your sins are purged. Chapter ii. 12 is a quota-

tion from Psalm xxii. Twenty-one verses of that Psalm describe Christ's death. From verse 22 He is in the midst singing praise. At the Lord's table we are calling Him to mind, in His death; we remember Him who has done it all. If you are not in the benefit of His death you cannot remember Him in it, and you cannot be in company with the Lord if there be any soil, any shade between you and Him. In Christendom there is a week's preparation for the Lord's supper. To you the word is: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat."

Well, in Hebrews ii. 12 we read: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." That is Psalm xxii. 22. Now you are in the Lord's presence. What do you expect? I find it a very useful question to put to souls: What do you expect in coming to the assembly? Possibly you will say, I am going to meet the Lord. That, so far, is a right answer; but do you expect to enjoy His presence? I cannot conceive anything that would more delight a young believer (I need not say an old one) than His presence. Would you like to be in the presence of your Saviour? I could understand a true-hearted believer saying, I would go any distance to meet Him! May you, beloved friends, seek to enjoy His presence. I do not think that

it is enough to have the right doctrine. It presses much on my heart at the present moment that so many know in letter the right way of meeting and accept it, without seeking for the Lord there, without enjoying the presence of the Lord. How do you know that you are in His presence? The answer is very simple. If you are in His presence nothing will occupy you but Himself; everything else is excluded. I do not enter into the immense gain from it, but I trust you are conscious of it. He says: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." I think a great many go to the meeting for breaking of bread only. I do not believe that they are occupied with the Lord, or they would know that there is something more. First, you are calling Him to remembrance in His death. Then you are receiving from Him. He is not only your High Priest, greater than Aaron; you come in as the consecrated company with Him, as Aaron with his sons; all come in in the one common fragrance. We have often a poetic idea of it, without the divine reality. You must be there first before you can know the effect of it.

In Hebrews you find that the Lord from heaven, higher than the heavens, vouchsafes His support to you in your infirmities, so that you are borne above them, be it sorrow, afflic-

tion, bereavement, or whatever it be, in order to be in company with Himself. There is nothing said of communion in Hebrews. There you are in company with Christ as High Priest, but you are entitled to go to the very brightest spot, like the consecrated company, going into the holy places. As we sing,

“His presence is our home,”

—there is not a cloud—

“In Him we stand a heavenly band,
Where He Himself is gone.”

“Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. ii 18.)

In the holiest of all there is no cloud, no sense of any moral discrepancy.

I have already referred to John xiv. The preparation is in chapter xiii. There your feet are washed; there must not be a shade of distance. Would to God we knew it better! I desire it for myself, and for others, to be sensitive as to the least shade to interrupt or hinder communion. If you are not conscious of the shade you cannot be conscious of the removal of it. I believe the failure of every Christian originates here—a shade or soil being allowed to remain. You are not practically dead to sin. I am speaking now of always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus. You must carry it out to the full

measure of Christ's death, otherwise you make your own death the measure of it, and you are legal. It is accomplished *for* you, and the Spirit's work is to make that true *in* you which is true *for* you. Here is the beginning of decline in every Christian; and as to myself I look back and see it has been so. One's feet were not washed. Peter was already cleared as to his conscience; but in John xxi. the Lord washed his feet. He was restored in heart. You may walk with a good conscience and yet you may not have unreserved intimacy with the Lord. Possibly you never had the intimacy. Well, it is plain that you cannot enjoy the Lord in the assembly without it. You must have your feet washed that there may be no hindrance to it. If one of Aaron's sons had a blemish, though he could "eat the bread of his God," he could "not go in unto the veil." (Lev. xxi. 21-23.) Many a one is not ready for the Lord's presence. You must be as fit for the Lord's presence as for heaven. Through Him we go in. Thank God! through Him we have access unto the Father. And what then? He declares the Father. (See John xvii.) He says, as it were, I have removed all on your side, I will declare now to you God's side. "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."

Now, in conclusion, I would say, How great is His house where He makes known His interests! I must add that the organisation of the assembly is derived from the Head, who is Son over God's house. 1 Corinthians xii. is the body in function. "As the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is *the Christ*." It is the only allusion in Corinthians to the mystery. "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." I can understand it, though I may not be able to convey it. If we were all conscious that we are under the same Head we should be fully under His direction. If He directs me to give out a hymn, I do it. It then comes from the Head, and not from me. What a beautiful organisation that would be! I am not able to elaborate it as I desire; if I knew it better I should be able; but I am sure that there is not one in this room who delights in the Lord who would not like to enjoy His presence and to be impressed with the effect of it. "They that dwell in thy house shall be still praising thee." "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." You come out from the house of God impressed by His presence even if not a word was said; you are beside yourself; and the effect of His presence is that you are so in-

terested in Christ's interests on earth that when you come out you take a distinct course here. If a man wants to know how he is to serve the Lord, I say to him, Stick to the assembly. It is there you will find out your mission. In the circle of the Lord's interests you are near the Lord, and surely He will tell you what to do. Knowing Him in your own room is not the same thing as knowing Him in the assembly. In the first, I know Him about *my own* interests; but thank God, in the assembly I know Him in *His* interests.

Have you read the songs of degrees? Have you taken those steps experimentally? You will have to do so in this day. The last step is, you have arrived at the house. "Bless the Lord, ye servants of the Lord, that stand in the house of the Lord." Out of all the confusion and dislocation, I have arrived at the HOUSE.

Beloved friends! I need not add more. The Lord grant that each one of us may be more deeply interested in that spot where He is here upon earth for His namesake!

J. B. S.



GOD'S HOUSE AND THE WAY IN.

(Heb. x. 14-22; xii. 18-24.)

IN reference to what we have just heard, I suppose, beloved friends, we know that the Old Testament proclaimed that man could not go in, that he could not come nigh, and the New Testament declares that his place now, through the blood—his only right place now, is in God's own presence. He was shut out in the Old Testament. When God came down to dwell, consequent on redemption, He proclaimed by the veil being set up that man could not approach Him. The New Testament, that is, the gospel, starts with the veil rent; and it is rent in order that we should find our place in God's presence; that we should be at home there in perfect rest. That I believe is Christianity. It is Luke xv. The prodigal, away in the distance, is now brought right into the circle of the father's presence and affection; not half way, but home to the father's heart. The Father's desire for the prodigal is that he should be at perfect rest in His own blessed presence at home. But I think we have to learn step by step; and to be at rest there, we must understand what the Holiest of all is; and we

must see that in the cross God has maintained His holiness. Although there is a new and living way, and God's desire is that we should be, in spirit, now at home and at peace in His own blessed presence, yet that which is due to God must be maintained. That we see has been done in the cross.

We get a great deal of instruction as to the "Holiest of all" in Leviticus xvi., in the directions as to the way Aaron is to go in, once a year, on the day of atonement, "not without blood." The blood is that which removes from God's presence everything that is inconsistent with His holiness. Although it is not brought out in the Old Testament, not only are our sins removed, but we ourselves are removed too. Aaron goes in with blood, which declares that everything inconsistent with God's holiness must be kept outside; but he also goes in with incense. The cloud of incense covers the mercy seat. He who sits on it has before His eye now, not Aaron, but Christ. The incense is Christ (Ex. xxx.); and Aaron, who thus represents the whole company once a year, is before God on the ground of the blood and the incense. Not only are our sins gone, but we ourselves are gone, hidden, as we get in the type. I am not refusing Aaron being in another aspect a type of Christ; I am speaking of the way into the holiest and what

was necessary to enter in. Not only must our sins be removed, but what we are in ourselves must go. Hebrews ix. says: "The way into the holiest was not yet made manifest." There was no way in. God must work from His own side, and remove everything inconsistent with His own eye—that is the cross. If we saw what has been effected in the cross we should be more at rest in His presence. God sees us exactly what He has made us in Christ; therefore He often has to speak to us of our inconsistencies. Not only are our sins gone, but *man*—man himself has no standing before God, as seen in the veil; he is excluded. Everything is done in the cross that we may find our rest in God's blessed presence. The moment Christ died, the moment it was settled, "the veil was rent from the top to the bottom." There was nothing now to keep man out of God's presence. We want to know more of the Holiest of all. The Father's house is our home, but how much do we enjoy it? We are there through God's grace, brought in by the work of Christ. Now the question is, do we live daily in the enjoyment of this new place? There must be consistency of life with the truth for enjoyment.

Does anything crop up of the old condition? Is it allowed? If so, do you understand what the Holiest of all is—that God had to remove

once for all everything obnoxious to Himself, and that that has been done? It will never be done if it has not been done: "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We could not be in God's presence happy, as long as we think what is obnoxious to Him is not dealt with. But it is removed. If I see what the cross of Christ has effected, I see it has removed everything inconsistent with His holiness, and I am there in His blessed presence at home; I have no question, because I see what HE has done. I am not so relieved anywhere else. We know how self crops up again and again, and spoils everything; it spoils the feeding upon what is above. You know Colossians says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above." What are the things above? Let us ask each other, and then we soon find out how little we know about them. We are in the place—the holiest of all, to be occupied with what is there, with things that are there. I believe they are typified in chapter ix. in this book; it tells us what is inside: "The golden censer, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory." (Vers. 4, 5.) All these things speak of Christ, they are the things that are inside, they all

belong to Christ. The soul is occupied with the excellencies of Christ. It is like the prodigal in the father's house; all he has to do is to enjoy the father unfolding his affection. He is there according to the father's heart; he is clothed with the best robe, the shoes, and the ring, seated at the table, and the father's heart is delighting in him. If any question is raised, the father says, "This my son." I believe that these unfoldings of the father's heart reveal to us something of the things above; the soul is occupied with the new scene, the new sphere, and I am learning of the Father something of His heart, and purposes for Christ; I have got out of the old condition where I would fain feed upon the husks. Where are you now? Brought right in, and feeding on the fatted calf. Christianity is—I am *brought* in, not I am *going* in, or going to *heaven*, but I am *brought in* from the far distance, where I was feeding among the swine, right into the Father's own presence, to enjoy that presence throughout eternity. "We have boldness" as it says here. There are two places where the Spirit speaks of us as going in. One is, into the Father's house (Luke xv.); the other is into the Holiest. Do you think the prodigal could be happy to go in, or when he was in, if he thought of himself or his character? It would mar his enjoyment. But God has

made us to come in by the rent veil, and has made us in Christ all He would have us to be, in order that we may be there in perfect rest and perfect peace.

In reference to John xx. it strikes me how it came out there. The Lord says, "Peace be unto you," I have done everything. To you it is *peace*. God's holiness has removed everything obnoxious, and we have boldness to go in; that is our place; and what we want, beloved, in these days, I believe, is to understand the meaning of the Holiest of all. I could never be in God's presence at the expense of God's holiness; I should be always thinking, "Ah! there must come a tremendous opening of my eyes, an awful something to be settled one day." I could not be at peace. But God wants us now to be happy in the enjoyment of His own blessed presence, as we shall be throughout eternity. He wants us to have that *now*. On what ground? Simply on the ground of what the cross has effected. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." We want to know something of that while going through this wilderness, where trials come, and difficulties arise, and depressions burden the spirit. We want to know our portion. May the Lord teach each of us the *fulness* of it. When He came down to have a house here, He said to man, "You cannot come into my presence;" but now

(chap. iii.) the Spirit says "Whose house are we." So in this chapter x. If God has a house sanctified by His blessed presence it must be fit for Him. God has not laid aside His holiness because of our unholiness; He has brought us in, in consistency with His own heart, that we may never have another question, or anxiety, or misgiving.

I believe a great test for us would be—Where are our affections? If you want to see a soul that has entered in, what is he doing? He is setting his affections on things above. All is closed on this side, all is open on the other side. The soul who has entered in says, "Christ is all." That is the holy place; there is nothing but the gold inside. You have come to a unique spot; that is why I read these verses (chap. xii. 18-24) where there is nothing but Christ's interests. You have not come to where God exacts, but where He gives; where He commands His blessing. Look around and see to what place and company you "have come" in this chap. xii. "I have found David," He says, "a man after mine own heart." That is mount Zion, and from there He delights His heart in communicating to us. Christ has gone in with His own blood. The Forerunner has entered in; my place is secured. God wants me to enjoy it.

May the Lord teach us what is the first necessity of the house, namely, "The holiest of all;"

that He has not laid aside one particle of His holiness; there is *removal* (by blood), and *delight* (by incense); and He has satisfied His own heart in doing it, in order that we may be eternally blest.

H. C. A.



WAKENED UP TO THE INTERESTS OF CHRIST.

(ZECHARIAH IV.)

IN the first chapter of this prophet, beloved brethren, the Lord speaks thus—"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, and my house shall be built in it." It is a beautiful word, and shews what Jerusalem was in the mind of the Lord. (See also chapter ii. 10-12.) In Haggai we see that they had lost the sense of the interests of the Lord; they ran, we read, every one to his own house and did not think of the house of the Lord that lay desolate; they did not think of the interests of Christ (if we speak in our own way), not of the interests of Jehovah in their day; and you remember in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (it is very beautiful and may we all take it to heart) they kept the feast of tabernacles, but before they kept it there was a good deal of sorrow occasioned by the reading of the book of the law, which shewed them their failure, and the word to them was "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet This day is holy unto our Lord, neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." As I

understand that passage, it was that they had the deep sense of their own weakness and brokenness and nothingness and failure, and that made them weep; but if God had a delight in a people, if it was His joy to bring a people back to build His house and to be interested in His thoughts, He would still their sorrow with the thought of this joy of His, and it should be their strength. If our hearts while sensible of the failure and sorrow get hold in these meetings of this sense of God's joy, that joy will be our strength. If He takes up a poor people, and says, I want you to take hold of the joy of My heart, that is a great thing for *our* hearts.

Well, in the second chapter he says, "Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."

What this feeble remnant were building was a small thing; their enemies taunted them, saying that if a fox ran up their wall, it would be broken down. (Neh. iv. 3.) It may be a very small thing to look at, two or three gathered to the Lord's name now; if I look at that side I shall be occupied with the weakness, but if I look at His thoughts, His mind, and what will yet come out in the New Jerusalem (we have had it

before us this morning), the two or three gathered to His name will be of very great interest to me.

In chapter iv. the angel shews him a candlestick, and the two olive trees by it, "I answered, and spake. . . . What are these my lord?" The angel does not tell him, does not explain, but says, "This is the word of the Lord, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." He carries him at once away to this wonderful fact that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah was at work, and what would be accomplished would not be by might, nor by power; it was not what the eye could see, but the Spirit of Jehovah would surely accomplish all the interests of Jehovah. Is it less so in this day? Have we faith that the Spirit of God is down here to care for the interests of Christ? Is that the faith of our hearts? If we had not the sense that the Spirit of Christ was down here to care for the interests of Christ, and to interest our hearts in them, I do not think the most powerful or eloquent discourse would much affect us. But if the Lord lays upon the heart of even the youngest here that the Spirit of Christ is down here to care for the interests of Christ, I believe it would be a wonderful lift to us.

Let us look for one moment at chapter iii. Perhaps that is what we all like the most; it touches us individually. Joshua stands before

the angel of Jehovah as the representative of Israel, and he was in filthy garments; that is where Israel was; utter defilement and failure. I know it may be taken as the case of a sinner, but it was really that everything connected with Israel was defiled, the Lord's honour dragged in the dust. Now Joshua stands before the angel, and it is very beautiful to see how the iniquity is caused to pass from him, and as the representative of Israel he is clothed with a change of raiment, and a fair mitre set upon his head, everything beautiful. We can look above (what has been brought before us) and see how completely we are set in all the acceptance in which Christ is; grace has set us before God in Him. Have you and I the thought, beloved friends, that we are as clear from everything as Christ is? We had the cloud of incense in the Holiest brought before us just now; that is really our place. The high priest went into the Holiest in the cloud of incense, and that is our place, our acceptance; not merely that the blood is carried in; that is carried in *for* us. The priestly company is *inside with* Aaron, inside with the incense; that is the place of the church, accepted in the Beloved; that is where *we* are, though not what we get here. That is our place, and we delight to think of it.

I go on now from what, as I have said, satisfies

us individually, and consequently makes it of such interest to ourselves—that I am represented before the Lord, and we can say accepted there. In the end of chapter iii. the final result as to Israel's interests is brought out, "In that day . . . shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree." So far it is our place, our blessedness, our enjoyment, and it is a blessed thing; but in chapter iv., "The angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man is wakened out of his sleep." That is the point that we all want. If I understand the difference, it is this. In chapter iii. *my* interests have been attended to, but in chapter iv. I am wakened out of sleep to think of what the *Lord's* interests are; and to my mind that is a great point. They had all been asleep as to the Lord's interests. The Lord used Zechariah and Haggai to waken up the people as to the Lord's interests. Why had Satan dragged Jerusalem into all the filth and iniquity portrayed by the filthy garments on Joshua? Because Jerusalem was in God's purpose to be the vessel of His glory, and Satan's present opposition to Joshua as he stood before the angel was on that account. But the word was, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem." Joshua not only represented what had been plucked out of the fire, but Jehovah's choice for His own

glory. The filthy garments were taken away, and Zechariah says, "Let them set a fair *mitre* upon his head." It is the same word as in Isaiah lxii. 3 is spoken of Jerusalem, "a royal *diadem* in the hand of thy God;" and now he is wakened up out of sleep; and I would ask, beloved brethren, Are you and I wakened up out of sleep? What does he see, then? He sees a candlestick all of gold with the seven lamps and the pipes. No doubt that was what Israel should have been in their day, what they will fully answer to in the coming day, and what the church has been set up for in the present day, to give light for God on the earth. We get here the power of the Spirit as it will be when Jerusalem fully answers to the mind of God as a candlestick. The oil is supplied by the two olive trees, "the two sons of oil" (margin), the priesthood and royalty of Christ. The power of the Spirit will be with Him who is a Priest upon His throne. It refers to Israel in the coming day, I am only using it now to call our attention to a deeper thing, that we may have, indeed, the sense not only of how our interests have been attended to, but that Christ has something very dear to Him down here, which is in His own acceptance up there, and which will come out as the heavenly Jerusalem in the future in glory and and beauty for Him. I feel that is a subject of

immense importance. We all like, as in chapter iii., to think how blessed it is that the precious Saviour has settled everything for me, all is clear, I am going to heaven; but are we wakened out of sleep to think—then *I* ought to be for Him down here—and the church is set as the vessel, the candlestick, what we had read to us, the “pillar and ground of the truth”? There is no other. What has Christ got for Himself down here in this world? He has been cast out, and has He nothing to care for Him? Can you and I answer and say, Well, it is the church, and if it is broken, and has failed, *I* want to be wakened out of sleep, *I* want to take it to heart? Spite of all the brokenness I do not believe there ever was a moment when it was more dear to the Lord to have two or three gathered to His name, the expression of His assembly. He delights to come into the midst, to have a place where He can say, “*There* I am welcome, there they want me, there I can come to open out my Father’s name and all my interests.” I do not think there is anything more wonderful than that there should be a place where He can come and open out all that is of the Father. It was brought before the saints forty years ago in the first break up, and it is the great thing for the present moment, that there should be a place, two or three gathered to His name, where

Christ can come into the midst and sing praises. I know, thank God, the gospel is preached, what will make a person sure, safe all the way from the ruins right up to the glory; but have we not been asleep to the sense of being gathered to His name? I know we have it in theory, but have we the sense of what it is, that that is where Christ delights to come and open out all His interests, and the name of the Father?

I believe if we had the sense of the Lord's presence in the midst one great effect would be that it would control us, we should have the sense He was there. All the ministry would be in His hand. But there is another thing; I believe if we were consciously in His company He would so lead us into worship that our hearts would rise up to the Father. We have often a great deal in our meetings of speaking to the Lord Jesus, but how little are we so in the conscious company of the Lord Jesus, everything settled as to ourselves, that we are able to enter into His thoughts, He leading us to the Father, opening out the Father's name to our hearts, and leading them up to Him in worship. I put it before you. If I am able to realise His presence and be in company with His thoughts, I feel how He carries me up to the Father. We want to have this peculiar sense—there is a place where He delights to be. Can it be less now than

in Zechariah's time—"Sing and rejoice: . . . for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." (Chap. ii. 10.) What a wonderful thing that there should be a place where the Lord Jesus can come. I do not know how to impress you with the magnitude of the thing. We may see the "two or three" and say it looks very feeble; that is *our* side; but what if He comes into the midst and opens out these things of the Father! It is immense!

It was all feebleness with the returned remnant, but the prophet is awakened out of sleep, and sees all this wonderful organisation—the olive trees and the lamps and so on. What Israel should have been, what they will yet be, what the church is set to be down here as a witness. I do not mean to say you will get the church in this chapter, but it is a wonderful organisation when you think of it. If we look around we see a broken-down thing, weakness, and failure. We (the church) have not "our counsellors as at the first, our rulers as at the beginning;" we see brokenness even amongst ourselves, but the word of the Lord still is, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" and we look on and see the heavenly Jerusalem coming down. There it will all come out, but I ask myself, I ask you, Am I awakened out

of sleep? Am I impressed with the sense of what the interests of Christ are, and that the Spirit of God is down here to take care of and carry out those interests? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit." The Spirit of God can do this for our hearts at this meeting. How soon may we be with the Lord! But, beloved friends, this little moment down here, while the interests of Christ are here—are we wakened up to them?

I should just like to put these two things before you, the coming of the Lord and the presence of the Holy Ghost here on earth. You get it in the parable of the virgins; they all went out to meet the Bridegroom; His coming was their hope. But there was this also, that the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. The church had the hope of the Lord's coming and the presence of the Holy Ghost. The wise had the oil, but the foolish had no sense of the presence of the Holy Ghost, though they joined in the same profession with the wise. They all slumbered and slept, they had forgotten the fact of an absent Lord, that He was coming back, and with that the presence of the Holy Ghost was forgotten by the church also. They *all* went to sleep, and both these facts were forgotten. But there came a moment of waking out of sleep. To what? To their own blessing? No; but to the BRIDEGROOM. Not merely

that He was coming; but that He was the BRIDEGROOM. I do not doubt a great deal is involved in that word Bridegroom—the whole sense of the marriage day, and every blessing for earth and heaven. It is not my blessing merely, or that *I* shall go in to the marriage, but there is a BRIDEGROOM. It should not be read, “Behold, the Bridegroom *cometh!*” But “Behold the *Bridegroom!*” As I ponder that word I am struck with the magnitude of what is in it; the whole sense that Jerusalem and the land of Israel will be blessed and called Hephzibah (my delight is in her), and Beulah (married), all glory and blessing for heaven and earth, the church in glory the Bride of the Lamb, and the vessel of the administration of heavenly blessing to the earth. It would waken up all these realities in our souls if the Spirit of God gave us the sense of that word—the BRIDEGROOM. There were these two blessed truths for the slumbering virgins to be awakened to. There was a coming Lord, and the wise virgins went on with what was at the beginning—the company of the Holy Ghost; they had the sense of the Holy Ghost on earth; and the result was, they were ready—ready to go in with Him to the marriage. The Lord give us this sense of the presence of the Holy Ghost, known to us in a much fuller way than in the word

to Zechariah, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit," because sent from a glorified Christ.

And do we speak of the difficulties? "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!" Oh! what a wonderful thing it is when we have got the sense of the God of all grace! May the youngest here have the sense of "the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

Will not all that is to be for His glory be accomplished? Most surely. Are you and I wakened up out of sleep to see that there is something in which Christ is to be expressed for ever and ever—the new Jerusalem, the vessel of glory? It may be the day of small things, but we need the sense in our souls that the church is dear to Christ. If saints of old had the sense of what Jerusalem, even in its desolations, was as the place that Jehovah had chosen to dwell in, much more should we desire, however feebly, to understand what the assembly is as the house of God, where all the interests of Christ are, and where He has His place in the midst of His own.

The Lord waken us up to this, so that we may care for His interests and seek to be descriptive of what is so near to His heart.

T. H. R.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

(1 Kings viii. 18-28; Neh. ix. 4-8, 32-38.)

IN the first scripture read we have Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, when the glory of the kingdom was still untarnished. The second scripture is the prayer of Nehemiah under circumstances the exact contrast of the former, circumstances of the deepest distress of the people when all was lost to them but God. The comparison between these two prayers is of great interest, and first remark that Solomon prays because he has the mind of God. (Vers. 25, 26.) *He knows why he prays and what to pray for:* as on a former occasion (2 Sam. vii.) David prays in a similar way. The Lord first communicates to him His mind and purposes (2 Sam. vii. 17), and then David rehearses all this before the Lord and turns it into prayer that the Lord may establish His word to him. This is an important principle; for if I have from God what He is going to do, I can then assuredly pray about it intelligently and confidently. And so Solomon, knowing what God was going to do to the house, prays.

The subsequent history of the house is given in the following chapters with all its sorrow and

humiliation on account of the people's sins. They failed miserably, and judgment must begin at the house of God. Amongst the first things that go are the golden shields, the glory of the place: and I suppose that as a principle it is the best thing that always goes first. This history goes on until in due time we find ourselves in Nehemiah's day: and here we find them praying this remarkable prayer of which I have read a part. If we have something glorious in Solomon's day, we have something strikingly beautiful in Nehemiah's day. Look at the distress in which the people are, but look at this prayer at such a time. We could all pray with Solomon in his day, but could we find faith to join with Nehemiah in this prayer? Look at the opening verses (5, 6); there is nothing in scripture more beautiful, more majestic, than the style of this opening address here. Israel was down at their lowest; they will put the Lord their God at the very highest. A great crisis needs a great Saviour, and they know here who He is whom they are addressing—the Shepherd and Hope of Israel in the day of difficulty.

“ And the Levites said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of

heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

What of the feeble remnant now? They were feeble enough surely, a contempt to their enemies, a fox walking on the wall they built would throw it down, forsooth! But what of God, the covenant God of His people, the Creator and Preserver of the universe? They would talk of their own weakness and confess their sins, and their disobedience and their provocations, and their rebellions and their justly merited chastisements, and their low estate in consequence; but of Him they had no words to speak of His glory and of His blessing, and of His praise as regards Himself, and as regards them of His manifold mercies and His long-suffering patience and kindness and pity. The deeper down they were the more they rejoiced to exalt Him, and that in the true spirit of self-judgment and confession. They have God before them in the reality of what *He* is, and therefore they are before Him in the true acknowledgment of what *they* are.

This prayer of the remnant goes farther back than that of Solomon. Solomon goes back to Abraham the beginning of all things to a Jew. Here they go back to God Himself. (Compare Isa. lxiii. 16.) Abraham's "God" is a higher

title than "the God of Abraham," and this is the source of all things, the resting-place of faith; He abides the same when all else fails. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble." (Ps. xlv.) It is not uncommonly said that "all is gone," "all has failed." Yes, in man's hands, all has failed, deplorably failed; more than many of us have any conception of, perhaps, more than any of us has any right conception of. But that is man's side of it: and we must ever remember this—with God nothing has failed and His word abides to-day as ever: and faith clings to it as when first it was uttered. He may deny us, and He will if we deny Him, but He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.)

Now mark the way in which they go through in detail the history of their own failures and iniquities. There is no use trying to cloak that which cannot be cloaked. They go through their whole history, and they say, "Here we are this day." Nor would the Spirit of God cover up to-day what must come to light; when a soul comes to God according to the truth of what He is, then it can, *it must* go to the very bottom of what it is itself. There is no use trying to go on with God while covering up that which is contrary to Him.

Paul says to Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself," "Study to shew thyself approved unto

God." He could not help others otherwise; and amidst all the ruin "the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And while all has failed with us, God's word abides the same as ever. And where there is faith to-day it rests on His word and gathers to His name. If I am gathered to His name, He cannot deny His name nor His word either. If I am according to His word, then surely He will be so also. But my business is to see that I am really gathered to His name and holding fast His word. This is the place of Philadelphia (Rev. iii.), the name of Jesus and His word, and this alone withstands the storm amid the wreck of all else besides. The Lord keep us trusting Him to-day, as Solomon did in his day, and as they did in the days of Nehemiah.

E. C.



SOLOMON'S PRAYER.

ONE would count upon the forbearance of others while seeking to offer a few suggestions, in connection with what has already been said, respecting Solomon's prayer. (1 Kings viii.)

How careful we need be in approaching the scriptures lest we mistake our portion, and merely get a head full of knowledge, instead of a heart full of Christ.

"Search the scriptures . . . they are they which testify of me." (John v. 39.) The Psalmist also says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." (Ps. civ. 34.)

After visiting a number of cottages, some time ago, in a small town in H——, the following remark was made to an aged woman as she stood at her doorway, waiting to receive a gospel book. "The people in this place cannot do with Jesus, it appears." To which she replied, "Well, there's the difference, for I cannot do without Him." This christian woman then went on to say she had been speaking to some school-boys, who appeared to be very happy because they were going home for their holidays. "I asked them," said she, "what they would do

when their holidays were up." "We shall come back," they replied. She then assured them that she hoped to go home soon, but not to come back any more, but to "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Ps. xxiii. 6.)

It affords one joy to think of Solomon's prayer in connection with the present position of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose intercession is unceasing, and whose advocacy extends to both the worst and last of His people's sins.

We know how ready Satan always is to assail the people of God, as was seen, for instance, in the case of the apostle Peter. It was in view of Satan's temptation and Peter's sin that Jesus said to the latter, "I have prayed for thee." Mark the word "*have*," not "*will*." The Lord's prayer in behalf of Peter took the form of advocacy, and was both provisional and prevailing.

Solomon's prayer was similar in character to the above. It was prophetic, as well as provisional, and pitiful, as well as prevailing: *prophetic*, by foretelling the future history of Israel; *provisional*, by meeting them in their worst condition; it was seen to be *prevailing*, by the return of the remnant from their captivity in Babylon; and *pitiful*, because it extended to "the stranger." (Ver. 41.)

This last touch is a beautiful one as regards

“the stranger.” It shews Solomon’s prayer was of a *gospel*-like character, and therefore so calculated to give largeness of heart to the people of God. In addition to which we find its application was to “whereinsoever” a person might be, or “whatsoever” disease he had, and even “the mildew” which fell on the land as a sign of God’s displeasure, was also taken into account in this remarkable prayer. What a contrast we have in the above with “the dew” which descended so freely as a sign of His favour towards Israel in Gideon’s day. (Judges vi. 37, 38.)

There is a great deal of difference between “high water mark” and “low water mark” in the history of God’s earthly people Israel. We shall find *both* in the chapter before us. The former is marked by the following words: “The glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord” (chap. xi.); the latter is seen towards the end of the prayer, when the Lord would be “angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives.” (Ver. 46.)

The first part of Solomon’s prayer reminds us of the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, when all the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, when Christians were united in heart and effort in worshipping and serving the Lord, and places were shaken in answer to prayer.

“The high water mark” of the church’s history on earth may be traced to Acts iv. 31–35, and the sense of failure leads us to look back with shame, and yet at the same time with lighter hearts and brighter hopes than ever Israel had in their best days.

It was “low water mark” with the remnant when they hung their harps on the willows, when they found themselves in Babylon as a consequence of their sins; and weakness and defeat had taken the place of triumph and praise, when they refused to sing in answer to the request of their enemies for want of power to do so, and looking back to the bright past, they say, “Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.” (Ps. cxxxvii. 1–4.) “The willows” upon which they hung their harps were emblematical of themselves, and are to some extent of God’s people now. The prophet Isaiah tells us of a time when the Lord would pour out His spirit on their seed, and His blessing upon their offspring, and they should spring up as among grass, as willows by the water courses. (Chap. xliv. 3, 4.)

The weeping willow is both green and graceful in its appearance. It bows its branches and owns its dependence on the streams which flow beside it for the beauty it possesses, “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose

hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green." (Jer. xvii. 7, 8.)

"The ebb tide" was running in Habakkuk's day, and he tells us what he would do if he lived to see "the low water mark." Habakkuk was like "a weeping willow," he mourned and was comforted, he was brought low and lifted up, not only above the trouble that distressed him, but also above the blessing which he proved he had regard for by what he did in chapter iii., in praying for a revival of the work of God. The heart of the prophet is seen rising higher and higher until he arrives at the source of all good in God Himself, and then gives expression to his joy so as to encourage the hearts of others to follow his faith and patience under similar circumstances of trial in the following language, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The foregoing words contain a divine remedy for the dire diseases which are often prevalent among the people of God "in the cloudy and dark day." (Ezek. xxxiv. 12.)

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," is both the language and experience of one who, having proved the value of the above himself, could

recommend it with such confidence to the Philippians, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord alway and again I say, Rejoice." (Chap. iv. 4.)

As to whether we have quite come to "low water mark" in the history of the church on earth I must leave; but even if such be the case, one thing is evident, there will always be enough water in the river of His grace to keep us afloat until Jesus comes; and if the channel we are passing through is small, the skill of the Pilot is as great as ever, and the more we confide in Him the more we shall know what it is to be blessed with that peace which the sense of His presence produces in the soul when all is in confusion around.

We have often heard it said, "The history of the people of God repeats itself," and therefore we often find what applies to one is also true of another, as we shall still see as we go on with our subject. Solomon first prays for a trespassing *person*, and then for a trespassing *people*. (Vers 31 and 33.) The above may be traced to the church of God as well as the children of Israel. But, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And ever welcome are His gracious words to the hearts of His erring people, as they hear Him say, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Had the people of God nothing better than their own failures to

dwell upon, or the history of the church to be occupied with, sighing must have taken the place of singing long since. But dark clouds have sometimes silvery linings; and the word of God records the fact that the more His people degraded themselves, the greater was His compassion for them. As for instance, when it was said, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." (Judg. x. 16.) Jeremiah tells the same tale of grace, saying, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." (Lam. iii. 22.) This was written for our encouragement also, and when it was "low water mark" in their history, so as to assure us that His grace ever rises higher than His people's sins.

In conclusion, let us bear in mind that Solomon's was a *demanding* prayer, for neither a trespassing person nor a trespassing people could have the full benefit of it until they ceased their trespassing and confessed their sin. We shew how light we make of sin by mourning so little over it. We do not lay it to heart, and learn to hate it by forming a true estimate of what it is in the sight of God. But to confess it, and then to repeat it is worse than all. Solomon's prayer demanded what was due to the holiness of God, namely—that His people should both confess and forsake their sin, while returning to God "with

all their heart and with *all* their soul." (Vers. 47, 48.) We gather from what we have been considering together, that restoration of soul and communion with God is brought about first by means of what the advocacy of Christ has done *for* us, when we have sinned; and secondly, by what the Holy Spirit produces *in* us, by leading us to humble ourselves before God. And when this is done, and confession is made, He leads us into communion, and fills our hearts afresh with thoughts of Christ and His changeless love, by means of the word of God.

H. H.



THE MAN OF GOD'S RIGHT HAND.

PSALM LXXX.

It is very evident, dear friends, that this Psalm refers to Israel, therefore we cannot apply it strictly and properly to Christians. Nevertheless we may learn great principles from this scripture and blessed truths. We can see the ways of God, and what God has in His own heart for His people, and that while everything may go to ruin on the one hand, on the other, God has His resource, and that never fails. This is a great comfort to us in such a day as this. The Psalm describes a day of ruin; of which there could hardly be a more complete picture. The Spirit of God puts all these things before the eye of God and pleads with Him on that account: "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it." That is the state of Israel. He had cast out the heathen and planted this vine in the beautiful land He had designed for them; but what a terrible condition they were now in! Instead of their being the witness to Jehovah's faithfulness in blessing, they were an exhibition of His righteous judgment. "You

only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Still while all is as dark as can be on the side of man's failure, faith knows where to turn for light. We have been hearing to-day about looking at things from God's side. The question is, What can God do? Has He no resource? Is He surprised at the state of things that has come in? No, not at all. We look at the ruin, and our hearts are broken and ashamed, and God grant we may be more so, as we look at our part in it all! But there is no resource on man's side. God, however, is not taken by surprise; He knew it all, and has His own resource. So we get at the end of the Psalm His resource brought in. God has a "Man of His right hand," and in connection with Him everything is secure.

I suppose most of us here know that God only takes note of two men in scripture—the first man and the Second. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the Second Man is out of heaven." It is a remarkable statement. Why the "*Second Man*?" Because until Christ, the first man alone was under treatment or on probation. It was the proving of the first man, the fallen man. Centuries elapsed after the fall, and all the time the first man was occupying the scene. The con-

sequence is that all the history is a long dreary one of sin and failure ; and as time goes on it gets worse and worse. You may say, God came in and acted in grace. Quite true ; there was a gleam of light across the darkness now and then, but the Second Man had not as yet come in at all. There were faithful and blessed men of God, and there were holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But it is still the first man's history, and he is being put through various tests and trials, with the constant result of ruin and failure ; a result which makes us ashamed as we think of it, because it tells us what our hearts are.

Let us run through the familiar summary. Man was tried in innocence ; he fell and became a sinner, but he was left with a conscience. The end of the trial of man under the advantage of the possession of conscience was the flood. Man was so vilely wicked that God set the world free of such an incubus by an overwhelming judgment, and began afresh. Noah was set up to exercise government, but he failed, not being able to govern himself. Then by-and-by God called a people out from among the nations and gave them His law—the perfect rule of life both Godward and manward. They broke it instantly in the very first two commandments. He gave them priests. They offered strange fire, and

died before the Lord. God gave them a king, and there was ruin immediately. Then after a while there is Solomon, this very man of whom we have been hearing. He marries strange wives, multiplies horses, and falls into idolatry; his history is a grievous one. God sent prophets pleading with His people, "rising up early and sending them," but they would not hear; and "last of all he sent his Son." What then? We know the story well; it is wonderfully humbling. When the Son of man came into the world in grace, the Son of the Father's bosom, the sent One of the Father, the perfect expression of God's heart, men took Him and nailed Him between two malefactors. We cannot conceive anything more dreadful, but that is just the expression of the heart of man. Well then at the cross, the history of that man is closed. The final judgment of course is to come; the man of sin is yet to be revealed; but the chapter, so to speak, telling of the first man is closed. There is not a bit of good in him; there is none in us as children of Adam. It is a great thing to be clear in our souls as to that, and so never to look within ourselves for a single bit of good, because it is not there.

Well now what is God going to do? He opens another chapter, which is never going to be blotted or marred by man's failure, because it

is all about Christ. He is God's reserve. God brings forth a Man—how blessed to think of it—a man after His own heart. Here is a Man absolutely perfect in contrast to man utterly sinful. God bears witness to Him, "My beloved Son;" His delight and complacency rested upon a Man on earth. What a blessed thing! After all the ruin that man has brought in, our hearts turn away from ourselves to look at *that* Man now on the Father's throne who is the object of faith. He lived for the glory of God, did His blessed will, manifested the Father's name to the men given Him out of the world, and on the cross finished the work God had given Him to do; and now as glorified, glorifies the Father. God owes His highest glory to a Man, not the first man, but the Man of His reserve. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Man who ever gave a motive to the Father's heart: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again;" and that Man was the Son of His bosom. The Person was ready in eternity, and ever in the intimacy of a Son with the Father, the Son of God, He who became a man, the Man of God's counsels. I need not say that He never was a man as to fact till He became a man, but He was ever before God in purpose. And thus when all was ruined as to the first man, God is not taken by surprise, but just brings out what

He had purposed all along, a Man out of heaven, and for heaven, and now actually in heaven—a heavenly Man. This is most blessed !

We know where and who He is. He is the "Man of God's right hand." That is referred to here, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." One delights to think of Him in this way. The first thought in connection with this Man of God's right hand is that God has got something for Himself in Christ as Man. We first think when converted of what *we* can get, and very naturally. When there is the consciousness of guilt and sin, and need, it must be met ; we must begin from the side of our own need ; but when the conscience is purged by the work of Christ, the heart satisfied and at rest in Himself, then our thoughts are expanded and we begin to find there is another way of looking at things altogether, and that is God's side, what He has found and gotten in Christ. It is a new view altogether. That is what we get here ; a Man made strong for God Himself. It reminds one a little of that word of Abraham to Isaac, "My son, God will provide *himself* a lamb for a burnt offering." How blessed that God has His portion, that which meets His heart, His own delight in Christ. Is that not sweet to think of ? That the Lord Jesus Christ in His

death has met our need perfectly is all blessedly true, but are we not glad to think that God, who has been so dishonoured by man, by our ruin and failure, should have that which delights His heart, something for Himself in that Man of His right hand ?

Nothing can break down in His hand, blessed be His name. And what God is doing in connection with that man of His right hand is, that He is going to have a heavenly people, a heavenly company to share the glory of that Man in the place where He now is. But that is a very surprising thing.

People often talk about hoping to go to heaven when they die. But what right have they to this, even supposing they had never sinned ? Man, the first man, was not made for heaven, he was made for earth. "The first man is of the earth, earthy." "The earth hath he given to the children of men." But what about the Second Man ? He is *out of heaven*. He is a man of a different order altogether, a heavenly Man. He could speak of Himself "as the Son of man who is in heaven." He belongs to it. He has now gone back to heaven, having first of all made atonement, glorified God in it, borne our sins, and put out of the way everything that hindered our approach to God ; as the corn of wheat He abode alone, but dying, He bears much

fruit—a people deriving from Him, of His order, and to be associated with Him in glory. We are one with Him already. We belong to Christ, to the heavenly family; and the Spirit of God is come down to fill our hearts, and lead them up there, that while we are in this world we may be as those who belong to heaven, with one object alone, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a blessed thing to look at things in that way, and see what God has got for Himself. If all is ruin here, there is what will never fail connected with this blessed Man of His right hand—the Son of man whom He has made strong for Himself. If it is the earthly display of glory, Christ will have the reins, and reign gloriously. If the heavenly, He is the centre of it all, “He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” All will be to the glory of God through Him.

Christianity then tells of the entire setting aside of the fallen and ruined man, and the introduction of a new Man—Christ. He is “everything and in all” to faith.

The Lord give us to know more of this blessed, heavenly Christ, for His name's sake!

D. L. H.

THE PLAINS OF MOAB.—THE LAND.— THE HEAVENLIES.

NUM. XXII. 1-7; JOSH. V. 13-15; EPH. VI. 10-13.

I HAVE read the passage in Numbers, beloved friends, because it seems to present a very striking picture of our present position. It was the last march of Israel through the desert, and they were on the very confines of the land of promise, just about to cross the Jordan, and enter the promised land; I will refer to that presently in another way. Whilst it is distinctly the wilderness, the desert, I think it does present a remarkable similarity to our whereabouts at this present moment. Surely if we take in our bearings a little correctly, we have reached very nearly the end of the desert march, and in that sense are we not on the very confines of our leaving, as to our bodies, the desert for the place where, shall I say, our hearts have already gone before? But in the passage in Joshua the people are across the Jordan and in the land of promise, and have to fight every inch of the road, as we say, to hold the ground that God has set them upon; so that I think if you put both the passages together they present a striking

resemblance to our present position; in one aspect at the very end of the wilderness journey, about to be caught away to the Lord Himself who is coming, that bright and blessed prospect, our only to-morrow, and one blessed hope of our hearts. On the other hand, in another sense we are there already, and we have to maintain the deadliest conflict to keep possession of the place God has in His grace set us in. I think they might both go together in that way; not perhaps in the strict interpretation of the scripture, but in the moral character of it. The nature of the opposition they met with in Numbers xxii. is exactly the nature of the opposition with which we are confronted at this present time: that is, it is distinctly Satanic, though in the desert; for them it was with Amalek, flesh and blood. If I understand the contrast rightly in Ephesians vi. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood," as Israel did in Canaan, or, for that matter, in passing through the wilderness. I understand the nature of the conflict, the opposition we have to contend with is entirely in contrast, both as to greatness of power and deadly opposition; it is infinitely beyond that which confronted Israel in the desert or in the land. Now we ought to take this a little to heart, that the moment we rise to the mind of God for the time, and that we accordingly seek to maintain in faith the position that God in His

infinite grace has set us in, *there* expect the most deadly opposition of the devil.

Not for a moment would I lessen the thought of how we may have contributed to our sorrows, or of how we may have brought ourselves through inconsistency of testimony into a strait place. God forbid that any of us should be without the sense of responsibility as to how far we have contributed or may be contributing to the difficulties and trials through which the testimony has passed in these last days; but this I do see clearly—the more distinctly we approximate in faith to the position in our souls, and the more we seek to carry out and maintain what is the true calling of the church of God at this moment, the more deadly will be the opposition of the devil. On the other hand, the lower ground you take, and the more you conform to this low position, and occupy it in a religious pious way, either as an individual or a company, the devil will let you alone; but seek to occupy that position in faith and reality, seek to maintain it in faith, and seek to carry it out in faith—not merely as truth, but seeking to carry it out in the power of the Spirit of God so as practically to maintain it; let this be the ground taken, however feeble the occupation may be, and Satan, as it were, says, I will *fight* and dispute every part of that ground with you.

I want now for a moment to contrast the desert path with the heavenly position that through grace is ours now. I know the attempt is made, and largely made, to account for things in a way in which my own soul does not account for them at all. The real opposition is against our heavenly position, as one with Christ in heaven, our calling in heaven ; that is where the whole fury of the present battle rages ; and the object of the devil is to tarnish that, to cast some slur on that. It is far better to speak the words plainly out.

There may be side issues of various kinds, but I think we ought to be discerning and seeing where we are, so as to read between the lines, as it were, the tactics of the devil. If there is the mind of God expressed with regard to His people at the present moment, that is the very thing Satan will seek to set aside. You know at an earlier stage of their journey Israel had conflict ; they were no sooner fed with the bread from heaven, refreshed with the water from the smitten rock, than they had to confront Amalek. What was the object of that conflict ? I am greatly struck with it. They had to be tested all the way, but the whole point of their journey was that they were to be *going on*. If I understand the character of the wilderness journey, it was a journey, a going on. Then observe when

that was the mind of God and His purpose with respect to them, Amalek comes forward to interrupt and hinder it. I believe Amalek is Satan. It has been said Amalek is the flesh, but I think you will find it is rather Satan working on the flesh. The flesh never came properly to the front for testing till Sinai; up to that the principle was grace; at Sinai came the testing of the law, so that Amalek could not properly be the type of the flesh. The object, I believe, of Amalek was to hinder them *going on*. The devil has not the smallest objection to our settling down *here*; he does object to our settling down *in heaven*—he will give you the largest possible scope to deny the character of the desert journey. I see it all through Numbers how they went on. It was a temporary order of things, a passing on. Amalek comes and says, as it were, I will stop them. Just as was the case with Jacob; he denies his pilgrimage, he goes and settles down here. May the Lord keep His own from settling down here!

You have no doubt often noticed how the victory was obtained by the uplifted hands of Moses, sustained by Aaron and Hur. True dependence gained the victory in wilderness conflict. Where there was true dependence, being cast on God, there the victory was gained. Though Joshua took men and went out to fight, the conflict really remained with Moses' uplifted

hands. The uplifted hands of our High Priest on high never could grow weary ; how blessed the contrast !

I think you will see the difference when you look at Joshua v., where the wilderness journey is over, Jordan past, they are brought in, set down in the land, they had partaken of the old corn of the land, kept the passover in the plains of Jericho, they were circumcised, they ate the manna for the last time, so that before ever there was a battle fought they had everything. But the moment they reach the collective power which they had to confront—Jericho, there you find the preparation for battle; that is what is so interesting in Joshua v. He gets an intimation from God as to what the nature of the conflict is to be : it is to be a deadly fight. There meets him an armed man with a drawn sword in his hand ; as much as to say, this is to be an encounter hand-to-hand. I don't mean to say there is not dependence ; you find that in Ephesians vi. "praying always." That is the atmosphere in which the sword is wielded. But the principle of the thing is now a hand-to-hand fight *to maintain the ground* God had set them upon. Satan's great object would be to dislodge them from this ground, hindering them from settling down, from being at home in what God had given them ; just as he would promote their

being at home in the wilderness ; Satan will promote your settling down here, and prevent your settling in heavenly places up there. That is the nature of it, if by any means, no matter how diversified the character of his opposition may be, and apparently different, his object will be gained if he diverts us from God's thought for us at the moment.

There is the armed man, and then the intelligence of the servant comes out at the same time. He challenges him, and says—I know this is a sort of warfare in which there can be no neutrality ; I see the character of the warfare, the nature of the fight, but I see also the intelligence of God's servant in understanding and entering into what the nature of the conflict was. It is either *for* or *against* ; and is it not the case now ? The man who seeks a “*via media*” must go to the wall, as is said. It is either *for* or *against*. That is the peculiar nature of the conflict at the present moment—*for* the truth and the testimony of God, or else it is *against* it. Many a man tries to persuade himself that he won't be either *for* or *against*, that he can be *for* both, but it is impossible ; you cannot help yourself ; it is of that peculiar nature that there is no neutrality. The leader of God's people says : “ Art thou *for* us or *for* our adversaries ? ” recognising that there was no middle way. Oh ! may God give us the divine

intelligence of Joshua about this! I believe that is greatly wanting at the present moment, seeing the issues that are at stake, and knowing the character of the warfare, seeing it is impossible to take a middle ground between being for God or against Him. You must be for God and fight His battles or against Him. I have no doubt many would say I am not going to be against Him, but the nature of the conflict is defined here by the Lord Himself as that.

It must have been an immense surprise to Joshua and at the same time an immense comfort to hear the answer to his question; and I believe also it is a comfort for us. Art thou for us or for our adversaries? Oh, no; he says quite a different thing: "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." You are not going to enter into this conflict without a leader. "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Oh, beloved friends, what an immense comfort to know that before we enter into the deadly fight, or cope with the dire nature of the opposition of the unrelenting foe, we are met by the One who places Himself at the head of His believing people and leads them on to victory, even the risen Lord Himself. I am come as leader, He says: I am Captain; I am Head. We talk of *leaders*: there is only *One*! *He* comes to lead. How

much depends upon the character and strength and prowess and power of the leader. Thank God! Here is all the cheer and all the comfort; there can be no failure in that direction; if there is only earnestness of heart with His people to follow His lead, to recognise He is there with a drawn sword in His hand as Captain of the Lord's host, victory is secure. "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth." There you have the divine intelligence again, recognising who the mysterious Person is, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Now let me revert for a moment to the opposition of Balaam. I confess I feel very strongly about this opposition, but I do not know that I am able to enter into it as much as I wish. I think I see in it one of the most awful pictures of the character and kind of opposition that we have to encounter at the present moment. How well it is said as to Balaam, that at the end of a dispensation based on any knowledge whatever of God, when faith is lost and profession retained, this obtains a renown of which men glory, as now of the name of Christianity. Satan uses it. It is not a little remarkable that the

meaning of Balaam is, swallowing up people. The amount of religion, of piety, of *cant* that there was about that man was perfectly appalling! He was one of the wickedest of men. What strikes one so much in him is the way he seeks to retain the place of a prophet, all the character and prestige of a prophet; and he would fain persuade them he was really in connection with God, that he was going to get the mind of God, whereas the whole thing moving in his mind was of another kind, and not at all in connection with God. Oh! is it not solemn to see that thus under the direct instigation of Satan there can be a combination of the most tremendous wickedness and the utmost parade of external piety? It is dreadful to listen to the expressions of piety that come from the lips of a man sunk down in the deadliest opposition to God and His people. He would have cursed them with all his heart if he could; it was only the power of God restrained the man. I think we need to take this to heart. God forbid that the evil of the moment should be exaggerated in any way, but with the word of God in our hands we ought to be separated from what is going on at this moment; we ought to be prepared for the wiles and deceits, and what is called the "methodism," of the devil; the awful malignity of his will to set aside and defeat the

purposes of God. In Balaam the greatest opposition to the truth of God is covered over with the expression of external piety that possibly deceives many of the people of God. That is what makes Balaam such a wretched character. Quite true, it was not as yet in the land, but it was the very last stage of the desert journey; they were just on the eve of stepping across the river of death into the glorious land beyond. Moab is in the place of the power of the world. A solemn word is said of Moab in Jeremiah xlviii. 11: "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." The power of the world and all that belongs to the world is connected with Moab, and Moab is anxious to crush Israel because of their fear; and Balak, the king, says: There is a man who is a true prophet, yet who (awful to think of) can be hired; that is the man for me. And so Satan says: the man with the greatest amount of external piety, and of a show of religion, that is the man for me. If he was a man who was above board, who threw off everything of the kind, that would not succeed; but this religious man, this prophet, will just do for me. Therefore Balaam becomes the most terrible order of

opposition to the people of God, just on the eve of their passing out of the desert into the land of promise.

Now observe, that while Balaam throws up and casts off all connection with the people of God, yet he claims to keep up with God. It would not suit his purpose to throw overboard all connection with God. But you cannot have the one without the other. If you have connection with God it is shewn by suffering with His people. What a terrible wile of the devil which proposes to stick to God and curse His people. That is the principle of it. I am speaking now of that which is presented in the opposition of Balaam.

Another thing, they were at the end of the journey. So are we, and we have to meet the fearful imitations that are abroad on every hand, and are most productive in effect. It is Satan's opposition to the truth at this present moment, and nothing is so difficult to meet. I see Jannes and Jambres reproduced in a greater way in Balaam, because there was a great profession of going to God and getting His mind. It makes one tremble to think of it, this man who seems to refer to God about everything !

Just one other point. It is in truth a great comfort to turn from this terrible

picture. As I said before, we are at the end of the journey, and I believe in my soul that we are just on the verge of going out of the wilderness. It is very blessed to see in these chapters in Numbers that it was no question of Israel and Balaam but of God and Balaam ! That ought to be a great comfort to us. God and Balaam—God steps in and answers for His people, according to His own purposes. That is what is so blessed ; He answers for His people, not according to their thoughts, but according to His own purposes and the thoughts of His own heart, and the accomplishment of those purposes in the grace of His own heart, the full accomplishment of all His counsels. We have often read it. He brought them out from Egypt, He provided for them ; He did it all, and the whole history, as we have often heard, is a picture of the full and final blessing of God's people in the day that is coming. The whole thing is God from beginning to end. We have God in the fulness of His grace and Balaam. He puts Himself between that man who had all the garb of piety on, and the people He had blessed. If God took those people up for purposes of His own, He will bring them in, He will do it, He will have Israel blessed and beautified, and to be for His praise in the day that is coming.

I merely bring these points before you because

we ought to remember what the opposition is. I see the failure and shortcomings, and God forbid one should lessen the sense in our souls of that. But I believe that in proportion to the truth of God being held in our souls, and the desire to give it its true place and weight, there is the most terrible hatred and opposition of the devil, and of such a nature as you will not find elsewhere.

May God in His infinite grace give us to know who is leading, who is the Leader, who is come as Captain of the host of the Lord. The Lord give our hearts to know it better, for His blessed name's sake.

W. T. T.



HEAVENLY LIFE.

(John xii. 24-26 ; xx. 17 ; xiii. 8 ; xvi. 12-14 ;
xiv. 1-3.)

WHAT has been brought before us already is that the whole object of Satan's opposition is to prevent us from entering into and enjoying the calling of God—that which is our true place and portion by the grace of God in connection with His blessed Son. I am quite sure that any one who has sought to enter upon and enjoy in any little measure this heavenly association with Christ, who is not content with merely accepting it as a doctrine, must be conscious of the persistent opposition of Satan which meets us on every hand. But what I have before me in these scriptures is to present the other side. The great object of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the present ministry of the Holy Ghost, is to lead our hearts into the enjoyment of association with Him in that place where He is. I believe this, too, is intimately connected with our service and with waiting for the Lord. The more we have the sense that we are one with Him where He is in heavenly glory outside this world, the more we shall realise that we are only down here to serve

Him—our only business down here is to follow and to serve Him. We don't belong to this place, our life is hid with Christ in God; we are here only to serve, and the more we are in company with Him, and have the sense that we belong to Him where He is, the more truly we shall be waiting for Him. The more we know what it is by faith and in spirit to be with Him there, the more we shall realise how apart we are from everything here and long to be with Him. I believe why we so little wait for Him is that we have known so little of present association with Him where He is. The object of the truth is to connect us by the present power of the Spirit of God with the Lord Jesus where He is, and to lead us into present actual association with Him there where He is.

Turn to John xii. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." If we think of the Lord's death—What was in His mind when He laid down His life for us? What was His object? If each gave an answer to these questions we might get many different replies. With many it would be limited to the thought of securing pardon for their sins, or in some way meeting their need as sinners, securing their salvation from eternal wrath; and no doubt all

this was included, but that was not the chief *object* of the Lord Jesus in laying down His life. Just before He had been acknowledged as Son of David and Son of man, and everything appeared as if the time had come for Him to take His earthly glories; at once He turns away from it and begins to speak of His death, with a view to a totally different object. Here in John xii. He says "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die" He turns His back on all this earthly glory, and speaks of His *death* as that by which He would have a *heavenly* company associated with Him in the place He was about to take with the Father in heavenly glory. It was that He might not be alone in all the blessedness of His own life in the favour of God, and as Son with the Father. He was ever the Son dwelling in the bosom of the Father; but while on earth He was alone in this blessed life. The answer to this is verse 17 of chapter xx. Having accomplished redemption, gone down into the place of death, and having glorified God there under the judgment due to sin; rising from the dead He meets the one whose heart was so devoted to Him, and says, "Go tell my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He is not alone now. As He ascends and takes His place before God in heavenly glory, as Son

before His Father, in all the blessedness of these relationships, He identifies His people with Himself. He says, "Go tell my *brethren*." They were no longer His earthly brethren, but identified with Him now in this heavenly relationship. He can say, My Father is your Father now; He makes His home their home now. That is a present thing. He brings them in spirit and in faith to His own home, not yet in body but in spirit. How does He bring them to His home? By revealing the Father to them; by introducing them to the Father. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." Have we entered into *this*—that we are brethren with the Lord Jesus Christ in that heavenly relationship, in that heavenly place He has taken before the Father; that all that God is as Father to Christ, all that He was manifested to be to Him as man down here, He is now to us; that we are brought into all the fulness and blessedness of that relationship *now*—that we are in the Son, and thus in the Son's place before the Father? The object of His laying down His life for us is that we might be one with Him in His place before the Father, and enjoy all the present blessedness of this relationship as now one with Him, and introduced in Him to the Father to enjoy the communion which belongs to this relationship. The whole of this heavenly company is one with Him now in all

the fulness and blessedness of that place. Every believer is made one with Him in that place.

That is the first point.

Chapter xiii. is the *present* ministry of the Lord Jesus, the expression of His present care and love and interest in us as His people. It is a great thing for our hearts to have the sense of the Lord's *present* care and interest in us, and to know His thought about us. He is there, and we are here in this world. He says, "I pray for those whom thou hast given me out of the world." There He is in all the present activity of His love. What is His thought, His desire for us? what is He seeking to do? It is expressed in the word to Peter, when He is about to wash his feet: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It is not a question of getting blessing through Him, but He is seeking by this present service on high that we should have part *with Him*. It is not merely seeking grace for us to travel through the wilderness; it is not His service as the Advocate or the Intercessor on high, to secure for us restoration of soul when we have sinned, or to obtain for us the grace and help we need for our wilderness path; it is more. It is that He may lead our hearts by His Spirit into the enjoyment of present company with Him, that He may fit

us for present communion with Himself, that we may enjoy this part with Him. I will not say any more on this point, but would ask, How much do we know of this? However little we may enter into it, it is the great thought and desire of the Lord Jesus for us. His great object is to dissociate us from everything of this world, and of man, in order to lead us into present communion with Himself where He is; the enjoyment of the relationship in which He has set us with His God and Father.

Now I turn to chapter xvi., where we find what is the present ministry of the *Holy Ghost* which is to this same end. "I have many things to say unto you when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." By what means does the Spirit seek to connect our hearts with the Lord Jesus Christ? "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." This is a different thought from the end of chapter xv., where it is the public testimony of the Holy Ghost. The Lord speaks of Him as the One who should bear witness to His glory in a world where He had been disowned and rejected. But here it is His testimony to the individual believer. To us He bears witness to the glory of the Lord Jesus; He presents from the Word the Person of the Lord Jesus

in the glory, and He takes of His things and shews them to us that we might be occupied with Him; He seeks to engage our hearts with Him, and thus to lift us above all that would occupy and engage us here or occupy us with ourselves. When the heart by the Spirit's ministry is occupied with the Lord Jesus, we cease to be occupied with ourselves. "He shall glorify *me*." We get a figure of this in Abram's servant going to Rebekah—he sought to attract her heart by revealing all that belonged to Isaac; all the greatness of Isaac. "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." What the Lord enters into as Man risen and glorified He shares with us. We share in His things; all He has He causes us to share with Him, all His own things, what characterises the portion of the Son now. Nothing less than this. Therefore we can only know and enjoy it in communion with Him; we have nothing apart from Him; all is in Him: His joy is to share with us His things. The Spirit reveals them to us to connect our hearts livingly with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make them good in our souls so that we may enjoy present communion with Him where He is gone to be with the Father.

Lastly I turn to chapter xiv. He is coming again. What is our thought in connection with His coming again? Is it simply a desire for

relief, that we may be free from labour, toil, and suffering? He says, "I will come again, and receive you *unto myself*: that *where I am*, there ye may be also." That is according to His prayer in chapter xvii.: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." That is what is in His heart; nothing else will satisfy the love of the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ than that the whole company of His brethren should be with Him where He is. Will nothing else satisfy our hearts? Have we no other thought in connection with the hope of His coming? To be in His company, to behold His glory? If His love fills our hearts and we are drawn into present company with Himself, to taste in any little measure the blessedness of communion, nothing could satisfy us but that where He is we shall for ever be, nothing to hinder the enjoyment of His company, where He will have His joy in the company of His own. It is the present portion of every saint, and what the Spirit of God seeks to lead us into now, present association with the Lord Jesus Christ; and the hope of the future to be with Him where He is, to see Him, and to know that *His* home will be our eternal dwelling-place! The more we enter into the truth that we belong to heaven, that all our blessing is there, the

more we enjoy this heavenly life in communion with the Lord Jesus, the more shall we realise that we are on the earth only to serve Him ; this is our one business, and the more shall we be as those who have no portion or hopes here, really awaiting His return. If we are not practically dissociated from the world and earthly things we cannot be really looking for the Lord to come.

May the Lord give us to see what is in His heart, and to enjoy it now by His Spirit.

F. H. B.



THE LIFE OF FAITH.

(HEBREWS X. 38; XI. 10.)

I DESIRE just to say a few words on faith as the great principle of the christian life, and by which alone we can enter upon, and know and enjoy all these heavenly things, relationships, and blessings which are properly ours. We all of us look back to an act of faith as having believed in Christ, and found salvation, but I think perhaps we do not some of us sufficiently enter into the truth of what the apostle is here stating, that “the just shall *live* by faith.” This is the principle that is to characterise the whole life of the justified man, and therefore if you and I are not living by faith every step of our journey here, we are not living like Christians. I do not mean, of course, that we are not Christians; I do not mean but that we may do a great many things perfectly right in themselves, and what other people do; but God does not merely look at what comes out; *we* can see what comes out in the life, but *God* looks at the motive that produces the action; and unless we are living by faith every step of the way we are not living like Christians, because we are not going through the circumstances through which we are passing with God Himself.

Then again one sometimes hears the expression "living by faith" applied to a certain class of individuals ; but what I have said will I hope make it clear that the life of a Christian is every step of it, every day of it, a life of faith ; and a life of faith that connects us with God, receives everything from Him, goes through everything with Him, and has to do with Him. We do well to ask ourselves whether this is the case with us ; whether we are day by day walking by faith, not merely looking back to one act of faith whereby we know we have the salvation of our souls, but *living* by faith, entering into the truth of it, reading the word of God in faith, so that we are thus applying it to ourselves, and having for ourselves the enjoyment of these things that are properly ours.

There are many young Christians here this evening, and it is for them I would speak just these few words, because I am sure that there is not the sense that there should be, that every day of our lives we ought to be living a life of faith ; in the simplest circumstances, the common things of everyday life ; we ought to go through them in faith, faith that connects me with God. If I accept what I have to do as being given to me by Him, whatever the work, or business, or position may be in which I find myself, I walk through it like Enoch, seeking to *please Him*, that is, the Lord.

What does this scripture say? "Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that *he is*." It is a great thing, beloved brethren, to be living in the sense of this blessed truth that we are living under the eye of God, and our business is to live for Him, to walk with Him, to please Him in all the little matters of our everyday life, and though you may meet with difficulties that try you, yet if you go through it in faith, *i.e.* connect it with God, receive it from Him, go through it with Him, my brethren, the bitterness will be taken away; you will only find in it the sweetness of having done His will; you have gone through it with Him, in His company, and you have the blessed sense in your soul of having His approval. That is what I understand by the life of faith; everything connected with Him; not only peculiar and extraordinary circumstances, but the most simple and everyday things, all are to be gone through with Him, for faith connects the soul with God; and thus it is we get distinct blessing to our souls, and by having more to do with Him, shall grow in acquaintance with Him.

Perhaps I may, on an occasion like this, as I have touched upon faith in connection with our life in this world, human life and circumstances, as there are so many present who are engaged in the Lord's service, say a word as to the

faith we need in all that we thus undertake for Him, and go through with Him. I suppose I need not say to any here that faith brings in the power of God; faith counts upon God alone; faith has no confidence in any natural means or human energy. It is the mighty power of God that is at the disposal of faith to-day, as much as it was in any day that we read of in the scriptures of truth; and the more simply we are cast on God, and depend on God alone outside all human energy and means, the more shall we see how God will come in, and work for His own glory; not perhaps in a way that the world can stand by and admire, but in a way that is worthy of Himself, and will bring glory to His name. Faith has nothing to do with nature. It may be there are some who are not unconscious of the time when, in preaching the word of God, there was something of natural energy, something that appealed to the natural senses, something that was not the working of the power of the Spirit, the energy of faith, dependence upon God alone. It is that that we need—dependence upon the mighty power of God, upon God Himself, trusting no other instrument or means but His word, and His Spirit that can make His word fruitful according to the varied needs of souls.

Thus far I have referred to faith in relation to the circumstances of our natural life, and again

I would press that word: "Without faith it is impossible to please him." If I am not living by faith, and acting by faith, I may do things that appear very correct and right, and that may be greatly applauded, but I have not pleased Him. It is that that I desire to press upon my own soul and yours. I would remind you of another verse in Romans: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Whatever is not of that principle partakes of the nature of sin. When a soul is brought to God he is introduced, so to speak, into an entirely new world, a new scene and a new sphere, new relationships, new objects, new joys, a new state of things altogether; and if I may so express it (I hope I shall not be misunderstood), faith is the new sense of the soul, the new sense of the new life. I mean this—we are not to be thinking of our senses, but just as when a person looks out upon a beautiful landscape, his sight is in exercise; another reads something that captivates the imagination, his imagination is in exercise; another hears what charms the ear, his hearing is engaged. These people are not thinking of their sight or imagination or hearing, but it is the object that that bodily sense can take cognizance of and enjoy that is before them. So faith is that mighty and wonderful sense by which alone we can understand, and apprehend, and enjoy these heavenly things and

heavenly joys that have been brought before us to-day. That is what I mean when I say, we have been brought into a new world outside this region of sense; nothing for sight or sense to take cognizance of. Faith is not imagination; imagination is not faith; they are as distinct and different as they can possibly be; as far removed the one from the other as possible. Faith is that divinely given sense which brings before our souls those things that the eye has not seen nor ear heard, which are revealed to us, brought home to us, by the Spirit of God, so that we may enter upon the enjoyment of those unseen things.

I would just allude to two or three scriptures in which, though you may not have the word "faith," you have the thing itself. 2 Corinthians iii. 18: "We all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord." Who imagines that the beholding there is with these natural eyes? It is by the action of faith; by faith alone we behold the glory of the Lord. So in the next chapter: "our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." It is the unseen

things, beloved brethren, that bear upon them the stamp of eternity. All these things that the eye can see, that can attract our natural senses, bear upon them the stamp of time, it is the unseen things that are eternal. Have we not been having these unseen things brought before us to day? the glory of Christ and the Person of Christ? Have we not been having before us our destiny as going to be with Him and like Him in that blessed scene? And that is what the apostle says, "While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Are those the things that engage our hearts, that draw out our affections for Him who is at God's right hand? Is this what is before us day by day? So, if we speak of setting our minds on "things above," it is nothing severed from Him; it is all in connection with Him. It is Himself and the things that are His.

Another passage: "We see not yet all things put under him." (Heb. ii. 8, 9.) We have not yet seen Him rising up to take His own throne, to put down all that rises up against the authority of God. We have not seen that, "but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." He is in the place of glory and honour where man had never been seen before; and it is for the eye of faith to behold Him there, and for our hearts

to be engaged with Him there, for the place where He is is the place to which we belong. He is not content to be there alone. He will have His members with Him; He will have His joint-heirs with Him; He will have the children of the family in the same place with Himself at home in the Father's house, everlastingly to enjoy Him there. But it is now during our time-state, while we pass through this world, its sorrows, its trials, its dangers; it is *now* that it is our wonderful privilege to walk by faith, beholding these unseen things and realities, and having our souls engaged with them. And these are the things, beloved brethren, that will lift us above the things here, and that will save us from the dreadful neutrality our brother has spoken of. If there is one thing that is more abominable and evil and despicable than another, it is to be neutral when the interests of Christ are concerned. Oh! if we are walking in faith it is the very opposite. It is faith that nerves the soul, that invigorates the man, energises the soul to follow Christ, to follow Him wherever He may lead. May the Lord grant that we may be walking in the energy and exercise of faith!

Let me not be misunderstood when I speak of the exercise of faith. I do not mean that we are to be thinking about our faith, but as I illustrated it, the man who looks upon the land-

scape is not thinking about his eyesight; and so, dear friends, you may be in the exercise of faith (I say it for the encouragement of the youngest) without one single thought about faith having crossed your mind. Some evil is, perhaps, presented to you, and you say, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Or some pleasant thing is presented to you, and you say, "That will not please the Lord Jesus Christ, will not suit Him." You did not think of that as faith, but the Lord looks upon it as such, and accepts it as the exercise of faith.

Well, if we are going on to these heavenly things as we meet with one and another who have a larger intelligence and deeper communion than ourselves, let us not be discouraged! But let us remember there is no intimacy of communion, no measure of enjoyment that is not open to every believer, the youngest and the feeblest, and the Lord will give it to every one that presses on after Christ, having Himself as a living Person before the soul. If we refer everything to Him, look at everything in the light of His presence, it will put all our associations and circumstances in their right place. It will give us a right thought and right judgment such as will stand in His presence, and who would desire anything less than that, so that there should be no cloud or distance between our souls and Him?

Oh ! may we be in that state that we can say, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus "—that we can invite Him to come ; and we know we cannot, if we are conscious of anything not in accordance with Him.

The Lord give us to be walking with Him in that faith that connects the soul with God in all the circumstances of life here, and that opens the door to heavenly things, brings them down into our hearts, and thus irradiates them even here with something of the brightness and blessedness of heaven.

" This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith."

F. S. M.



THE NATURE, OBJECT, AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST.

(EPH. I. 15-23; III. 14-21.)

I SUPPOSE there is hardly an exercised soul but would admit that we are in the difficult days, the perilous times; yet it is one thing to see the difficulty, and another to understand the remedy for the difficulty. Are you exercised as to the remedy for the difficulty?

In 2 Timothy iii. we read of the perilous times. The apostle did not live in those times, but he prophesied of them. The remedy that he gives is "my doctrine" or teaching, and the holy scripture. Many are ignorant of Paul's teaching, both as to the gospel and the church. I do not say that the gospel is not preached; but Paul's gospel and the church came out in Acts ix. That was the first time either the one or the other came out; and these two are embraced in Paul's teaching. Paul thus encourages Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

Now note, that that day was a darker one than this day. All in Asia had turned away from Paul; there was only one man whom he could in any measure count on. And see how the saints forsook him! In chapter iv. he writes, "All men forsook me." He foresaw the spiritual wickedness that would obtain. Now from what had they declined? From the truth specially committed to Paul. They did not depart from Christ nor from the hope of salvation; but what they gave up was holding the heavenly position, which has been already spoken of (effectively I trust to many), as the truth against which the power of the enemy is specially directed.

Let me explain that when you hold your heavenly position, it is not merely that you go to heaven, but that you cleave to Him who is in heaven. That is the secret of true love. "Whither thou goest, I will go." Here the church at Ephesus failed. It is a great help to read the Old Testament; you get there the great principles of truth. God is the same there as in the New Testament, only He has a different circle of interest. You will find all the way through, that the man who adhered to God's circle of interest for the time, was specially supported by Him; while the one who deviated from that circle, even though seeking another dispensation, was powerless and disaffected. Many a pious

man now sticks to the dispensation when Christ was on earth. They love Jesus, are devoted and zealous, do many good works, but they are not in the line of God's chief interest.

Now in the difficult days, what is the remedy? There is no remedy unless you adhere to the truth as it has been given. You may say, we are a feeble few. True, but that is all the more reason that we should adhere to it. It is an immense cheer to us in our insignificance, to feel that, feeble as we are, we are identified with God's chief interest. The remnant is always most exemplary where the departure began. Like a man out of health. Supposing he has a bad eye, what would mark his restoration? Would it not be an improvement in his eye? Thus, the point of departure is the point of restoration.

See how the church of Ephesus failed after all the favours shewn to it. You find that church spoken of four times in scripture. In Acts we have the church of Ephesus in their first fervour, where they burned their books. Then in the epistle to the Ephesians, where the greatest revelation of truth ever committed was given to them. Again, to Timothy, the servant at Ephesus, the apostle writes of the two great evils—popery and radicalism. Lastly, we have the epistle to the church at Ephesus in Revelation ii., where John joins with Paul. It is

important to note that John always gives us the essential nature of the divine quality. It is not easy to explain it. The Spirit and the Bride say "Come." Mark the recovery! The true remnant is most exemplary at the point where the failure began. If the church (represented by Ephesus) has left its first love, the remnant is marked by the love of the Bride. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." How could any one know the feelings of the Bride but the Bride? The Bride in company with the Holy Ghost is distinguished for her personal attachment to Christ. This is paramount. True affection never overlooks its responsibilities. It is an immense cheer that the great thing that marks spiritual power in a day of ruin, is that you are true to the truth which the Lord has committed to you.

Now as to the scriptures which I have read, the first subject which I would press upon each one here is Christ's first circle of interest. I am addressing many of His servants. Surely His first circle of interest must be yours also. I dare say that you have heard some say that the corporate thing is over. Christ's chief interest is unknown to one who can say that; and if it is unknown to you how can you understand His mind about anything? If I have a friend am I not interested in his chief interests? Do you know *Christ's* chief interests? Remember that

His treasure is here, hid in the field, as we read in Matthew xiii. The field is the world, Christ's treasure is in it.

I have read these two scriptures that we may see our calling, that we may have "conscious knowledge" of our great position. However we have failed in our corporate testimony we cannot escape from corporate responsibility. The apostle writes: "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you; making mention of you in my prayers." You may say that every one is not up to the knowledge of the mystery. This I admit. But why are they not up to it? Where is the defect? Because they are not established and restful in the gospel. You are not up to the mystery until you know that you have a Saviour in glory. You would not enjoy union with Christ if you did not know Him in glory; that is, if you did not know that all the distance between God and you had been removed on His side, so that the nearer you are to Him the more assured you are of His grace. You have a home in the Father's house. That is the gospel. That is the gospel from God's side. The prodigal found that the nearer he came to his father, the better off he was. The apostle presses upon the Corinthians that they would be transformed into the same image by beholding the Lord's glory. I would

ask the youngest believer—Are you at home in the glory, and do you enjoy a Saviour there? That would be “transformed into the same image.” No one can tell how it is effected; but it is not merely by reading the word; it is by beholding the glory. The glory is God’s satisfaction, according to all His attributes, resting upon the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour. The effect upon you beholding the Lord’s glory is that you are altered completely. It is not only that your judgment has changed; we find *that* in Psalm lxxiii., but you are personally changed.

“ Yet sure, if in Thy presence
My soul still constant were,
Mine eye would more familiar
Its brighter glories bear.
And thus Thy deep perfections
Much better should I know,
And with adoring fervour
In this Thy nature grow.”

You may taunt me and say, If that is true, why are you not more there? I am ready for that, for I am assured that if I *were* more there, I should be more affected by it, and then I should be a more effective servant.

I have not yet touched on the church, the mystery. If you are fully in the grace of the gospel, you will be ready and glad to know that you are united to the One who has wrought

all this blessing for you. It may be said, All Christians are united to Him, and so we are, the moment we receive the Holy Ghost; but how many of us consciously know union? Believe me, union is a wonderful reality. The first sense of union is—He is my Head, He dictates everything. No doubt you will feel humbled at times that you are not under His dictation.

But before I proceed I call your attention to the exercises indispensable to the Christian. The first is, you know that every purpose of God has been accomplished *for* you. There is immense satisfaction of heart as the light of this is known to you in detail. The second is, that the Holy Ghost's work exclusively now is to make true *to* you the grace which is yours, to form you into the reality of all that which has been done for you; and for this the servant of God ministers the word; and finally, your own soul waits upon God in prayer, that you may apprehend that for which you are apprehended. The apostle prays that they might be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I would press earnestly upon you the value of these words. Often as I have read Ephesians those words seem to be increasingly wonderful to me. You may know every word of the epistle, you may know what is stated in

every line of it; but if you have not the spirit of wisdom and revelation, it is no good to you; you will not grasp God's thought in it. I am lost in the immensity of it; and I am glad I am lost in it, because then I turn to God. The mystery is that when Christ was rejected here, then was divulged that His body was here. John says of the things that Jesus did, "If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Nothing of Christ will be lost; all will come out in His body—the church. Can any one compass the vastness of the structure which has been here over eighteen hundred years; and all will come out in the New Jerusalem, each of us being a part of it.

I do not dwell upon the hope of His calling, it begins with the place (ver. 4); then the state (ver. 5); then the relationship. (Ver. 6.) That is the calling of God. Now I turn to verse 19: "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," &c. The word "know" in verse 18 is the same word used in other places for "conscious knowledge." It is important to apprehend that you should have conscious knowledge of the power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from

the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. All the members went up with Him then in God's mind. To give an illustration—all the feathers of a bird go up with the bird, and every feather came from the bird. Just as Eve came from the rib of Adam, so every Christian derives from Christ. The body is the complement of Christ. No one can know his place as a member of the body of Christ until he has conscious knowledge of the power which is to usward who believe.

Now I turn to chapter iii. 14. The subject is quite different. In chapter i. it is that you may have the conscious knowledge of the counsel of God—of His calling. In chapter iii. you have the Spirit's work in you. Here you are made heavenly in tastes and interests. Hence we read "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ might dwell in your heart by faith." Do you note the greatness of the power to effect this in you, and that nothing but the power of God could displace what you are in nature? The old has to be displaced. God only can displace the old, and God only can erect the new. He has made an end of you in the cross, and He only can make this which is true *of* you true *to* you. When we contemplate this passage, we can

account for the small number of Christians who know that they are heavenly, however true it is of them before God. You must be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, that the Christ may dwell in your heart by faith. It is not merely heaven which is brought into your heart by faith, but it is the Man that is in heaven, who is dwelling in your heart by faith; and, thank God, when the Christ dwells in your heart, you are heavenly in life, and tastes, and interests. Many have thought that they would become heavenly by renouncing the earthly. No; the real way to renounce the earthly and to be heavenly in taste is by Christ dwelling in your heart by faith; the Man who is exalted to the right hand of God dwelling with all His tastes and interests in your heart. Blessed be God, it requires the mighty power of God to accomplish this for you. You are in Christ. That you get in chapter i.; and now in chapter iii. Christ is in you. You have first to learn that you are in Christ, and next Christ is in you. If you do not know that you are in Christ, you will never know that Christ is in you. No one can explain the blessedness of Christ dwelling in your heart by faith. Think how He would control you, according to His own will and pleasure. What a truce it would be to your

will! Christ Himself swaying you in everything, for His service and testimony. In Galatians Christ is your life. In 2 Corinthians iii., Christ is your object in glory. In Colossians, Christ is your Head. But great as He is as your Life, or as your Object in glory, or as your Head, there is much more here (in Eph. iii.) "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height"—the whole domain of glory; *then*—"to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." If the church at Ephesus had continued in the work of the Spirit in them, they would not have left their first love. Here you have come to the acme of the Spirit's work in you; and the consummation is, "that ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God." Christ is the fulness of God. It is only now that you realise the power which wrought in Christ. You are now by the Spirit's power in the heavenly position which was pressed upon us last evening. The blessed One who is in heaven is dwelling in your heart by faith. You are not merely made acquainted with the heavenly scene where He is, but Himself dwells in your heart by faith; so that it is not the scene of glory that is in your heart, but the Christ who is there. Divine

power has brought you into this heavenly position. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." The power is now *in* you ; it is not merely that you are in the conscious knowledge of it as in chapter i. 19, but you are in the power now. Hence the doxology—"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen!" You have power now to be descriptive of Christ in this world. It is most blessed. In the house aspect you are fruit-bearing, and going forth as missionaries, as in John xv. But here it is more John xvii. Christ first sets us as Himself in the presence of the Father, and then He sets us as Himself in the presence of the world. One might say—Is not the body in the house? Yes, it is ; the body is the organisation, like the machinery of a clock, it is inside. In a clock you do not see the internal working, but if the machinery is in good order the time is correct. If the time is not correct, you know that the defect is in the machinery.

I would now dwell on the heavenly ground, which evokes the terrible opposition which was presented to us last evening. We heard then that the whole force of the enemy was concentrated on the heavenly position. Now that

you are in heavenly power you are to be on the earth descriptive of the heavenly man in every detail of life. Then you must begin at the beginning. Every good thing comes *down*; you come out now with Christ dwelling in your heart, and you begin with the church (chap. iv.), "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." If you fail in the first you will fail in all the rest. As you enter on the heavenly ground, all the force of Satan will be arrayed against you. Nothing aggravates Satan so much as to be descriptive of Christ in exaltation in the place where Christ's rejection—the most diabolical act—was perpetrated. I say with deep sorrow of heart that I never made an attempt to accept the heavenly ground that there was not a bait thrown in my way. Satan has only two forces, like a double-barrelled gun; the one is a bait to allure you; if that does not succeed, he will try to crush you. If he allures you he need not crush you. You see it in the children of the captivity in Daniel; he first offers them the king's meat, and when they refuse that, he says, 'I'll burn them.' The same God who delivered them from the one can deliver them from the other, and in a more distinct way. May every one of you be so assured in spirit of your heavenly position that Balaam may not succeed in diverting you from it. Balaam is

the social element and corrupts. I have seen it. Where did our children pick that up? In association, in company with others. I suppose there is not a father in this room who does not know what damage his children have got by association, social intercourse with the children of worldly Christians. It is the social element that corrupts the church.

What is your vocation, brethren? What could be so dear to a man of real affection for his Lord as to stand for Him where the many are declining and lukewarm? The hardest conflict manifests the deepest virtue. You have heard of the officer who in face of the enemy tore down the colours and bound them round his body, saying, "You will take me before you take the colours." That is what I call fidelity. Take me before you take them. You must not give up the colours, however things go. If you have reached your heavenly position in divine power, you will maintain for Christ in His exaltation as long as you remain here. I do not ask you to surrender anything; I ask you to have Christ dwelling in your heart by faith. You may say: Shew us a pattern man. We all like to copy; but there is no gain in copying. You have to learn the Lord for yourself. All you learn for yourself will remain, and nothing else. Every one has his own history.

In closing I would refer to the evangelists and the last three parables in Matthew xiii. They are deeply interesting. I can rejoice in the evangelist's work, and I think his gift is the highest. The evangelist is given by the Head, but if he does not know Christ's chief interest he will not fit his converts for their right place. Formerly, a recruiting officer recruited for his own corps; you may be sure he selected his man. If you do not understand where or what the corps is, you have not the object in recruiting. Many an evangelist thinks only of saving souls. It is right, surely, to seek to save souls; but this would not the less interest and absorb him if in his heart he could say of him—he is a member of the body of Christ. An evangelist is sent from the Head in heaven to rescue every member of Christ's body; to sweep the house diligently, not for the benefit of man merely, but to find the silver piece, and to put it along with the other nine silver pieces. (See Luke xv.) You must know where the other nine are or you cannot put your converts with them.

The first of these three parables is the treasure hid in the field; the second, the pearl of great price—the value of the church to Christ; the third, the net. I would ask you to sit for ten minutes alone and meditate on Christ's interest in the church—the one beautiful thing dear to

Him in this world ; the one thing that His heart is set on, hid here in the midst of all the distraction and evil. As an illustration, think of a man who had a beautiful garden which a horde of robbers had devastated. When asked why he retained that garden, he would reply, I keep the garden because of the arbour in which my wife sits. The church—Christ's interest, is still on the earth, notwithstanding all the devastation. If evangelists do not keep this before them, they will not gather the good—the converts—into vessels. We read, they "sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

The Lord grant that each of us may so enter on our heavenly position, that in the power here made known to us we may be ready to withstand all the force of the enemy, and "having done all, to stand." The words which are used in chapter i. 19, are the same words that are used in chapter vi. where we read, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." No man can face Satan until he knows the power of God for Himself, as we see in Joshua iii. 10, "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you," &c.

The power which has brought you over Jordan is the power by which all the force arrayed against you will be overcome. You must be first in your heavenly position, before you can face the enemy. In the type (Josh. v.) you do not meet

the enemy until you are met by the captain of the Lord's host. You are in the heavenly position yourself. The same power that brought you there is the power which enables you to resist all the power against you down here.

In conclusion, I give you Stephen for an example. (Acts vii. 55.) The Holy Ghost "ope'd (for him) the heavenly door:" that is your privilege. Union with Christ was not *revealed* to Stephen, but he knew the power by which he was united to Him. He first faithfully declares, "I see . . . the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." This is the true testimony: and now in the same power that made him a witness, he can encounter all the varied power of the enemy unswervingly, so that the finest quality of grace—overcoming evil with good—was expressed in him in divine lustre ere he died. The more they pressed him, the more Christ was manifested by him. The greatest virtue comes out most under the greatest pressure. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

The Lord grant that you may believe that you are called to a heavenly position, and that you may not be discouraged by the dilapidation with which you are surrounded. Though all is failure on our side, may our hearts be faithful and true to Him who has called us,

and who is as true to His own, and as ready to help them as ever He was. May the sense of His love be revived in our hearts! The better you know His love, the better you will love Him; and as you love Him you will keep His commandments, and thus He will be able to treat you as His "friends," because He can safely trust in you.

J. B. S.



THE REMNANT SPIRIT.

MAL. III. 16-18, AND IV. 4-6.

I AM sure, beloved brethren, our hearts must be unfeignedly thankful to God for the encouragement He has given us, because we are all conscious of the discouragement and of the break up. There is a tendency to look at the discouraging circumstances, but it is very blessed to look up and see how everything will come out, "The deep eternal counsels" of which we were singing, and we shall be conformed to His image. What I feel is so encouraging, is not only that we can say all will yet come out, and every saint be conformed to the image of Christ, but that there is a *present* power, so that even *now* here upon earth, where we are, there should be something to answer to the heart of Christ. I do feel that in these meetings the Lord would have us think of that. It is very blessed to look **back** at the original thing and see what it is ; because, as has often been said to us, the remnant goes back to the original thing, if, as in the illustration given to us, only "an arbour" is left of the once beautiful garden. That is a very small thing compared with the first estate, but if it is something which

answers down here to that blessed Christ in glory, then in whatever feeble measure we are able to enter into it, would we not like to think about what is precious to Him, so as to answer to His mind down here? The overcoming is down here. There will be nothing to overcome when all is perfect in glory. The remnant character belongs to a people down here, not when in glory.

You get these two things running side by side in scripture. There is what can never fail, and will surely be accomplished by God according to His own counsels; and though the general body to whom they were made known failed to lay hold of them, yet spite of all the failure, He always had a people who through His grace took hold of those counsels of His heart, and sought to answer to them; and the great thing for us, is, whether we are that people at this moment. Not merely whether we are on the right ground, nor whether we have the right way of meeting, but whether we understand a little about what the heart of Christ is, in His thoughts for His own. Can we say, "I want to get into those thoughts, and answer to Him?" Whatever *we* may think about it, I believe God always did work to have a remnant, who should answer to His thoughts. It is a great thing to look at truth from God's side. When we can do this, it

carries our hearts out of all the failure. We have to be humbled, but still I feel greatly encouraged this morning. When God brings His truth home to us, I think it always humbles us, because it affects our consciences, but though we get humbled we get encouraged, because we have to do with the Lord. When we look at things from God's side it encourages our hearts because there can be no failure there, while our consciences are affected in the sense that we are indeed witnesses of the failure, while desiring to answer to the mind of Christ.

Turn to Matthew xi. It is the moment of the Lord's rejection; the moment described in Isaiah xlix. "I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain;" the moment, as we should say, of the greatest discouragement. Do not misunderstand me, I do not mean that the Lord was discouraged, but His ministry to Israel had been in vain; even John Baptist expresses doubt. Jesus accepts the place of rejection, saying, "I thank thee, O Father! . . . so it seemed good in thy sight." At the same time He says, "All things are delivered *unto me* of my Father," and then, as the One who knew the Father, and could reveal Him, He takes the place as a new gathering centre, "Come unto ME." I do not want to weaken that for the gospel, but I believe it is a great deal more than the mere fact that Christ is the Saviour for a

sinner to come to. "Come unto ME" speaks of One into whose hands the Father had put everything, all His counsels. "COME UNTO ME."

I turn you to one more passage, Matthew xii. 46-50. Those who wanted to speak with Him were, we may say with reverence, His Jewish, earthly relations, those of Israel, with whom He was connected after the flesh. He replies, when told of their desire, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" I ask, dear brethren, have you and I ever had our hearts touched by this action of the Lord's? They were a few feeble disciples, but they were those of whom the Lord could say in John xvii. "They have received thy words." They were the people He owned, to whom He stretched forth His hand. When He was on the mount of transfiguration there they were in fear and asleep, but He came and He *touched* them. Oh, the touch of the Lord! The sense that I am having to do with *Him*! Moses and Elias had passed away, and they were with "Jesus only." These actions of the Lord are very beautiful. The stretching forth His hand to those who did the will of His Father in heaven. The Father's will was that they should come to Christ. Now if we are conscious of having found in Christ the new centre,

and of being in His company according to the will of the Father (it is the portion of every saint), the love of the Lord in these touching actions will come home to us.

Though we cannot get in the Old Testament the fulness which we find in the New, yet we get beautiful principles in it. Turning to Malachi let us see how the Lord opens it. There had been fresh failure; they had been brought out of the consequences of the original break-down—out of the captivity of Babylon; they had the sense of the Lord's mercies to them. The Lord had not failed; neither had His love failed; He did not give them up. He had brought them out, and had brought them back to Jérusalem; He had returned to Jerusalem with mercies; and here sometime afterwards, if we take this book, what a failure! What a breakdown again in those who had come back! What a loss of all sense of what God's thoughts were about them! But God does not give up His thoughts. If we open the Book of Malachi what do we find? "I have loved you, saith the Lord." How could He give them up? Again, in Hosea xi. 1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him," and therefore (in ver. 8), "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" In the epistle to Laodicea, the last church addressed by the Lord, what does He say? "As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten."

Are we conscious of the love of the Lord? "I have loved you, saith the Lord." Well we shall all of us have to own—I have not answered to it! But that is how He begins, "I have loved you;" and then He has to go through their conduct, and tell them what they had done, and point out where they had not answered to His love. Perhaps to many of us while we have been at these meetings the Lord has been pointing out where we have not answered to the blessed communications of His grace; where *we* have failed. "Every man knows the plague of his own heart," as we have it in the prayer of Solomon: but here are the Lord's words, "I have loved you." Have we not been conscious of it while together? Have we not been conscious of the present interest of Christ in His saints? *That* has not flagged. He has to go through all their conduct and bring it home to them. What is the effect of it? "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." They thought on His name and what was due to it. Their own blessing would surely follow if that is put first—"a blessing poured out that there is not room to receive it." But that is not the first

thought, nor would we go away from these meetings with merely the thought that a blessing has been ministered to our own souls ; but able to say, "I have found out a little more than ever what a centre *Christ* is ! I was more than ever drawn to His interests and to Himself." The Lord had challenged them by saying, "If I then be a father, where is mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ?" In those that *feared* the Lord, it had produced an answer, and they thought upon His name. And now the Lord as it were stretches out His hand to them. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." I do not want to give any sort of feeling that we are *the people*, but He can, in the service of His grace to us, make us conscious of what His love is to His own. I want those words "They shall be mine" to greatly affect us. The consciousness of His love will link us more with the circle of His interests. We shall be more drawn to Him.

Those verses (chap. iii. 16, 17) give us the character of the remnant. Then in chapter iv. there is the promise to this remnant that the Sun of righteousness should arise, but they are meanwhile called to "Remember the law of Moses . . . which I commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments." The

glory had not come in yet; and as a present thing they had to abide in the dispensation God had established. We are in that which began at Pentecost. There is the house in ruin around us, and we have to go back to what was at the beginning, and learn what was Paul's teaching and doctrine about the house of God. It is not that the Lord has set up anything fresh. The glory has not come yet. There was nothing fresh in those days; they had to turn back to the law, the statutes and judgments given to Moses; and when you come to the book of Luke, that is just where you find Zacharias and Elizabeth, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." It is to that remnant the Lord comes according to the promise here given: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Chap. iv. 2.) Every saint will be taken up when the Lord comes for His own, but the promises come in a special way to the remnant—those who overcome. Then He says, "I will send you Elijah the prophet." That to my mind is very beautiful. Moses brought out the dispensation, but there never was a moment when God had not a witness. It was at the darkest moment of Israel's history that prophecy came out. When Ichabod was written on everything, then Samuel was raised up, and so the Lord reminds

Israel (Hos. xi. 10): "I have also spoken by the prophets. And I have *multiplied visions* and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets." It is most beautiful to see before them thus the sense of His first love to them and of His ultimate purpose. Elijah was to come and prepare the way of the Lord. John came in the spirit of Elijah a witness to Israel that the dayspring from on high had visited them. We have to go back to Paul and learn what the church is to Christ, and what it is as the house of God. We have been recalled to that, but is He not also calling us to remember that the virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom? Is He not giving a ministry which will have the effect of waking us up to meet Him? He is shewing us that we have not only a Saviour, but a Saviour in glory? We have all His tender ministry, all His grace, all His compassion, calling our hearts back. Only let us be in this state, fearing the Lord, receiving the ministry, thinking upon His name! The Lord grant it!

T. H. R.



HEAVENLY ENDOWMENT.

(ACTS I. 6-8; LUKE XXIV. 49-53.)

I JUST desire to connect a little these verses and the truth they present with what has already been before us this morning. I am struck with the fact that after you pass the first part of Ephesians, particularly the parts already alluded to, it is all power—power in chapter i., power in chapter iii., power again in chapter vi. Shall I say in chapter i. it is *pattern power*; that is the character of the power that works *in us* in chapter iii. for communion, and that works *for us* in chapter vi. for conflict? I believe it is so; and I believe it is an immense help to get the sense of that in our souls. The moment we come into the sphere that is here so blessedly unfolded to us, we must expect, as we have had already pressed on us, the *deadliest conflict*; the *moment we reach the circle of God's interest*, not merely in doctrine but being, in our souls' intelligence, in the circle of God's present interest, there expect the deadliest and hottest part of the fight. But then that is where the *power* as it were awaits us to conduct to victory. That is an immense lift to the heart, and we find as well all the power that is neces-

sary to keep before our souls all the blessedness of the Person where He is.

But there is one especial point I really want to dwell upon. As the Person is in the place and Christ is the heavenly object in the place, the heavenly Man now in heaven, so here we have the heavenly power, and that is a person too, even God the Holy Ghost. It is a great cheer distinctly and clearly to get the sense of that in our souls. It is not the Spirit of God as an *influence*, as we may have thought in former days; but He, the Comforter, is a *heavenly power*. "When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father." He is a heavenly Comforter; but that heavenly Comforter is in heavenly personality presented to us as Comforter and power here. Not only is there a Person in heaven and in glory with whom and to whom we are united, but the power that united us to Him is the One who has come from Him in the scene where He is as the exalted One. He knows what surrounds Christ there, and unfolds all that to us here in the place where Christ was, is not, but where we are. It is not only a power on earth that connects us with Him in affection and heart, but the power on earth has come from heaven, as sent directly from Christ.

What is so striking in Acts i. is that their

thoughts were connected with earth; they were looking for something on the earth. Are we? We can easily enough detect how that in past times their minds and thoughts were detained in connection with the sphere of their blessing, and that they were too slow to allow themselves to be carried into the new sphere; but were they not in their day truer to their blessing and the character of it, whose sphere was earth, than we are to what is ours? I see how tenaciously they clung to the earth, the more so as they embraced in their hearts promise of blessing here, as is said of their worthies: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Look at Hezekiah. What an agony he was in! Why? Because he was about to leave the sphere where all his blessing was. I do not think it was the thought of judgment, but he was pre-eminently an earthly man in the sphere of his blessing down here on earth which death would terminate for him. It was intolerable to him to have to leave the place of his prospects with no links outside it.

Reverse it for a moment—it ought to be the other way with us: that it would be a terrible loss to us not only to be dissociated

from the sphere of our blessing, but from the blessed Person in that place. If you look at it in that way it is an immense thing. Wherever there was faith and trueness of heart to the revelation of God's mind for the moment, real divine affection of heart, there they tenaciously clung to the thing God had given. This constituted the great difficulty with the disciples, even to take them out of earthly things; the great difficulty was to get them to enter into the new sphere and order of blessing which God was introducing, and which was not bounded by times and seasons.

Verse 9, "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." I think that word in Acts i. is important, as shewing the complete close of the previous order of things before the new order was introduced in its full power in connection with the Holy Ghost. As He spake these words a cloud received Him out of their sight. I confess to my mind it is a distinct intimation that now has come the complete close of the previous order of things, which was one of sight and sense, and which sight and sense took cognizance of. He was removed from sight and they saw Him no more. The new order is in the power of the Spirit, and is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Second man, risen from

the dead, the last Adam. But it is the power of the One who was to come from Him who is exalted I want to direct you to. The Spirit had not yet come here in Acts i. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." To me that is an important point. He turns the heart and eye off what is visible to what is invisible, and it is not only power, but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you. Heavenly power; power from the One Himself really who was going on high into the Father's glory, as the last Adam, into the new sphere of blessing, new for man, There never will be any other order of man that He will recognise; the risen Man is not merely the *Second Adam* but the *Last*. It is everything to be possessed by this! I believe we have sometimes confounded the two expressions, and have thought they meant the same. The "Second Man" is the One who has displaced the first. The first has no history now before God. The "Last" is the one, permanent, abiding order of man before God. There is no other order now. There is nothing beyond or after Him; and we are of that order. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me:" the word is literally martyrs.

I feel convinced of this; that along with the positive blessedness of being with Christ there, and all the glory and blessedness that belong to

Him in that scene where He is, if in affection and heart our souls were carried up to Him where He is, we should be descriptive of Him here. Of course it would all come out by the power of the Spirit of God. What would we look for here? Nothing but to be martyrs, witnesses for Christ. What would we expect as passing through this world? To be let alone? I don't speak now of the conflict in fighting God's battles, but is it quietness and rest that we look for in our pilgrim life? Is it ease we are looking for? I believe if we were in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, connecting us with the blessed One who is gone up, it would be martyrdom in this world we should look for; it would be suffering. What is the church in this world but a witness for God, a suffering testimony? The church is a called out company for God here in the midst of the hostility of a world departed from God, and if we have the sense in our souls of being energised by that heavenly power, we realise the only power to bring our souls up to Christ in heaven, and as well to occupy us with that blessed, glorified Christ as a living reality, to bring Him before our souls. I say again, what other power is there? whether it be for service, or worship, or testimony, or communion? I am sure we must all agree that the only worship suited to our calling is heavenly, the

only service, heavenly service, the only witness, heavenly witness.

In John xv. the Spirit's witness is spoken of in two ways. "The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me," that is, "of Me" in glory, of Me in heaven. He is the only power by which we can know anything of Christ in heaven; the only power by which we can be united to Him—and thus it is that the glories of Christ as there, are opened to us.

That raises a very serious question, and one which we would do well to consider, namely, how dependent we are upon the energy and power of the Spirit of God as to our souls' apprehension of it! Also how dependent on Him we are as to communion, or reading the scriptures, or knowing Christ where He is, His present interests, all that surrounds Him in glory. If the Spirit of God is not that power that works in us as we get it here—that very power we have in Ephesians iii., what weakness must be ours!

Just a word now to connect this with those closing verses of Luke xxiv. I think there is a beautiful, tender touch of the Lord in those closing verses. Having announced the coming of the Comforter, the promise of the Father (how sweet that He should be promised as sent from

the Father and the Son, as well as from the glory where the Son is, ver. 49), the Lord says, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued (or endowed) with power from on high." This, I believe, is not merely the endowment of the individual, but true church endowment; the true proper endowment of the church, though it is the endowment of the individual too. There are both aspects of the Holy Ghost's presence: He is in the individual, and in the church. He is the power of the individual; but here, I believe it is properly church endowment. Then, we are told, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." I do not want to dwell in any sentimental way upon Bethany, but I do think it is remarkable that the blessed Lord found only in this spot that which was congenial to Him. I feel that that imparts a meaning to the fact that it was from Bethany that He left this world. Bethany was the only place on earth, the one place where, if we might say so, He had a home. He who was a stranger all through this world, found only in this place that which was agreeable to Him. Such was Bethany. I feel as if that imparted an immense character to His leaving this world.

He departed out of this world to the Father from Bethany, where alone His heart had been ministered to: this place was the platform of His exodus. How touching the whole scene here is, as

we follow in company with the risen Lord and His disciples, and see Him leading them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands in blessing. To me it imparts a distinct character as to what this world was to Christ.

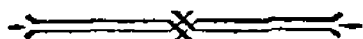
I was struck lately in reading the gospel of John with the fact that it is not His death, *as such*, that is brought before us in it, but His leaving the world, and going to the Father. I think you find it all through the gospel; it is the character of His departure. No doubt He went out by dying; but it is the fact of His going back to the Father, out of the world, where He had come from the Father. Is there not a great deal in this one thing more, namely, in the expression, "He lifted up his hands and blessed them?" I cannot but feel that there was a peculiarity in that blessing bestowed upon them by Himself as the departing One. What He then gave was to remain with them until the power came that was to unite them to Him. That is the way I read it. He gives them His parting blessing: it was the earnest of the grace in His heart that remained with them from Himself until the power came down from Him in the place where He was.

Some one has said that for that kind of blessing and for that character of blessing we must be "led out." I believe it is perfectly true. It is a peculiar, distinct kind of blessing that connects

us with the Lord Jesus Christ (anticipatively) in the place He has gone into; and after its fullest and most perfect expression, with the heavenly character that He could give from the place of exaltation, "He," the exalted, glorified One, "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Oh! how dependent we are upon Him in that way.

Some have said lately (by way of reproach to us) that we do not honour the Spirit of God in these last days as saints did in earlier times. May we be exercised that it should be so said. Assuredly it is a question for our hearts to weigh and consider. One thing is clear, that we are not always, nor are we all ready, to follow His gracious lead into the heavens where our Saviour is, and thus to taste in all their sweetness of those true grapes of Eshcol, those heavenly joys, 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. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Thus the heavenly things *are revealed*; may they be further revealed *to us* by the same blessed Spirit for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

W. T. T.



“THE LORD—OUR SHEPHERD.”

(PSALM XXIII. ; HEB. XIII. 20.)

I FEEL, beloved brethren, free to say a few words on this wonderful Psalm in connection with what we had brought before us this morning. It was much impressed upon my heart, the thought of where the Lord brings us (we have had it before us too, in this hymn), close to the side of the blessed Lord :

“Close to Thy trusted side
In fellowship divine,”

which surely should be true of us even now.

What does the Lord bring us to that wonderful place for? We see His gracious, loving shepherd care in it all. “He led them out as far as to Bethany,” the place where He was “at home.” He has brought us to that spot, and it is as the risen Christ He has brought us there. That is the reason why I read that verse in Hebrews, where we get Him as the great Shepherd. Three times He comes before us in scripture as the Shepherd. The good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. We see Him giving His life in Psalm xxii., the good Shepherd; and we may say in Psalm xxiv., connected as it is.

with the glory, as the chief Shepherd, as Peter presents Him; and we get Him as the great Shepherd surely here in His wondrous grace and love. The great Shepherd who goes before in grace and love in resurrection, leading on His sheep. And then in Psalm xxiv. we get Him in all the glory and dignity of His Person entering in.

A few thoughts in reference to the place we are in, in risen life. He leads on each one of us. That is why I would link the thought of the great Shepherd with this Psalm (not the chief Shepherd, that is more in relation to the servant), but here as the great Shepherd He leads on the youngest as much as the oldest. He goes before each one of the flock; it is surely common property. What a place it opens out for us, between the cross and the glory! Psalm xxii. gives us the cross; Psalm xxiv., the glory; Psalm xxiii., the present pathway, led on by a risen Christ in glory. "The Lord is my shepherd." "He led them out as far as to Bethany." What for? To make us lie down in green pastures, to refresh our souls, to lead us beside the still waters, to make us satisfied in His presence. What wonderful pastures they are! Am I at home there? Yes. Why? Is there no question; none to question my right? No; because He leads me. He has me by the hand, He is there in front of me.

No one can question the right of each lamb in the flock to be in the Shepherd's presence. He leads me; He makes me to lie down. How blessed that is! The gentle pressure of His hand upon the shoulder, as it were, to make me lie down at rest in the green pastures, and beside the still waters. At rest! we know the animal never lies down till he is content, is satisfied. What a thought for us to lie down satisfied in such a place. Green pastures, still waters, everything speaks of rest and blessedness for the soul.

We were a little reminded of it this morning in Matthew xi. in its fullest sense. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "Learn of me." That is rest, learning from the Shepherd, the One to whom we have been brought; learning in His own presence. It is the place of each lamb to be in His presence. It is the only place where we can learn Him. Of course it is from the word we learn of Him, but it must be in His presence, and in company with Himself; and then He feeds us. "He leadeth me beside the still waters." They were not "still" when He passed through them. It is what His grace has made it all for us. It is all "still" that we may get all the blessedness of it.

"He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." It

seems to me the end of verse 8 is a kind of passageway out from verse 2 to verse 4. I think this Psalm xxiii. is going out. You know in John x., where we get the good Shepherd, we get these words: “I am the door, and . . . he shall go in and out and find pasture.” I think we may see that a little here. There is a bad kind of “in and out” which we ought never to know; I mean “in and out” of His presence as to communion; but there is another kind of “in and out.” We are in His presence in a special way in meetings like these; but if He does not come before they close we have to go out and face the every-day life with all its trials and difficulties. Then see where He leads us—“in the paths of righteousness.” A path is a very different thing from the grass. You get the grass in verse 2, “green pastures.” The sheep cannot lie down in the wrong place there; they are perfectly safe, perfectly secure; they can lie down anywhere. But now He says, “I am going to lead you out;” and what we have had so blessedly brought before us to-day is that we have abundant power to meet all the need, but it is in His presence and from Himself. He still goes before us. When you get the thought of the path it is not at all the same thing as the grass. That brings you down here again to this present scene, and then we have to beware of the

grass. All right when we have it in His own presence *there*, but when we come to the imitations of Satan down *here*, the best thing we can do is to keep off the grass and keep to the path. You have often seen a notice put in the parks, "Keep off the grass," or "Keep to the paths." It is what the Lord says to us. The path is the only safe place for us. Why? Because it is the only place where He leads us. He does not lead us where Satan is ready to allure, because he has his counterfeits—there is Balaam as well as Cain, seduction as well as open opposition. Keep off the grass! Keep close to Christ. He leads us in the path.

Where does the pathway bring us? It may be to the very same spot where it brought Him—to death! Have you ever noticed in verse 4 the change in the pronouns? "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for *thou* art with *me*." It is no longer "*He*" and "*me*." It is very intensely personal. He leads me, and it may be to where I have to meet death in some form or another. I am speaking of the principle, of death as that which leads to the cutting off of earthly hopes and earthly joys. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." It was more than the shadow for Him; it was the substance in all its reality; it was real death for the blessed Christ of God.

We have often thought of those two scenes ; the one in John xix., “ they came to Jesus and found that he was dead already.” He was the Prince of Life, but it was real death. The other, Stephen, we have been reminded of to-day, and what we get unfolded in that wondrous scene. He kneeled down and prayed for his murderers ; and “ when he had said these words he fell asleep.” The Master must *die* that the servant might fall asleep. It was real death for Christ that it might be the shadow of death for us.

We all know there are two kinds of shadows ; there is the shadow of what is coming and the shadow of what is passed. God grant that for each in this room it may be the shadow of what is passed ! It is an awful thing if it is the shadow of what is coming. For the unsaved soul it is the shadow of coming death. This world is the valley of the shadow of death. It is the thing that makes this world wretched. It is the shadow that is over every soul that has not got Christ ; it is the shadow of his own death that is over the life of every unconverted soul. Men say death is the only certainty, and so it is for man *as man*. Is it so for us ? No ! We can say, “ O death, where is thy sting ? ” For the Christian it is the shadow of what is past ; it is the shadow of *His* death all over this world for

him ; not the shadow of our death but of *His*.
As we often sing :

Death and judgment are behind us,
Grace and glory are before ;
All the billows rolled o'er Jesus—
There they spent their utmost power.

It is the shadow of the past, not of the future.
Is the shadow of His death for me, now tinging
everything in this world and making it look
different ? The death of Christ is the only thing
that can make things different here ; His death
casting its shadow over everything here.

I wanted just to say a word on those pronouns.
Of course there are times of change with us.
Not with the blessed Lord Himself. He was
always the same ; no change with Him. He was
the same, passing through the valley or on the
mount of God. But there are times, alas ! we
know it too well, when we cannot in honesty of
soul say much about "*He*" and "*Me*," because we
are not up to it ; we cannot say much about His
dealings with us, because we know so little of
them. But I believe there is not a moment when
I cannot look up and say "*Thou*" and "*I*." "*I*
will fear no evil, for thou art with me." There
may be times when I cannot say much about
what I find Him to be to me, but there is not a
moment when we cannot speak to Himself.

The Lord gives us seasons of encouragement

such as we have had these two days. What is it for ? It may be that we must expect worse difficulties and trials than we have had ; but whatever it is we can look up and say, “ I will fear no evil, for *Thou* art with me.” This is just what I specially wished to bring before your hearts ; and then what a blessed ending ! “ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” (Ver. 6.) What follows life ? Men say death, but there is not a word of death here. Goodness and mercy all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. That is what I have got now ; that is the Shepherd’s care all the way home. The great Shepherd ever before me. If He was the Shepherd to Israel, is He not for us now in a greater way ? No greater really, but greater to us, because we know more of it. It is all there for us. All that He has, He has for each one of His own ; the same love, the same tender care for each one ; the “ rod and the staff ” for each one ; the rod of power to go before me ; the staff of correction which we all often need ; it is all for us as we go along. Ah ; we can say indeed, “ My cup runneth over.”

“ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” It is His hand we recognise. May God give us to recognise His own hand in providing for us ! In the

presence of enemies, conflict all round us on every hand, He provides us a table. Who spreads it? The great Shepherd. It is not, I think, the Lord's Table here; but the table provided by His shepherd care. His sheep need sustenance, and He takes care they shall have it. The Shepherd will have His sheep led on. I think we have a proof of His care in what we have had before us these days. He wants us to sit down under His shadow in His presence: He leads us there. Then in the presence of the enemies, the head is anointed with oil. Who are they who have the head anointed with oil? In the Old Testament, the king, the priest, and the leper were the only ones anointed with oil. We are there in His presence as kings, as priests; and with all our failures may we not say we are there as lepers, in the sense of often needing His restoring grace? There is our place. "Our cup runs over."

And then He just sums up: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And the end? No death here; no; the only death Psalm xxiii. speaks of is *His* death. It will be death for those who do not know Christ, but not for those who know His death. His death has ended all the sad, sad history of the first man; and now what is before us?

Life. “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” It is the answer in a little way to what we had before us—the Holy God dwelling with His people. As if He said, “When the time of following is over, when I get you home with Myself, it will be for *you* to dwell with *Me*.”

May the Lord give us to know what we often sing together—“His presence is our home.” “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” It may be He sees something before us, some sorrow we know nothing about. God grant it may not be so! Perhaps the next thing may be His coming. Psalm xxiv. is where Israel comes in with the King in all His glory and brightness; but if it be conflict, may it still be “His presence is our home.” The way to get strength for conflict is by being in His presence. May we know the tender grass, the green pastures of His presence! May He make us lie down in peace and quietness there! May we lie down in His presence and know where He leads us for His name’s sake!

J. R. B.



“THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON.”

(JUDGES VI. 6-14 ; VII. 2-7 ; MATTHEW XVII. 14-21.)

WE had before us this morning, beloved brethren, remarks as to the power of the Holy Ghost, the power and the resources of God for His people in an evil day ; and we had last night the Captain of the Lord's host with His drawn sword in His hand ; and also the subject of faith.

I have read this afternoon a passage, where, as often in the Old Testament, we find for our comfort how the people of God, having brought themselves into the lowest condition, the most distressing circumstances, by their own sin and foolishness, so that there is no excuse whatever for them, are yet brought out of it in answer to their cry, by the intervention of the power of God ; and I want to draw attention to the link there is between faith, our state, and the power of God.

They were suffering under the hand of their enemies, as we read here : “ Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites and they cried unto the Lord.” It is a beautiful opening ; as you get in Psalm cvii. : “ Then they

cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." Be it only a cry, and a very unintelligent cry too; and perhaps they did not know what was to come next; yet "*they cried unto the Lord,*" and He heard them, and, as we had quoted yesterday, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." Well, He is unchanged to-day, and all our resources are in Him.

But if we speak of the state of the people of God, and how God works, and the way His power must take consistently with His own holiness, we must always remember that, whatever may be their actual condition, nothing can touch or alter the wonderful standing before Him in which His grace has set them. We are accepted in the Beloved, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and nothing touches our blessing *there*, whatever our condition may be *here*. That we must hold fast. But God must have reality in us here. The enemy's object, as we heard last night, is to hinder our settling there, and to make us settle here, and then we suffer loss; and one cannot too strongly insist upon the principle in Galatians vi.: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Now that we have already had the heavenly line of things so fully brought before us, I may freely talk about our state without its being supposed that I am dwelling upon it to the neglecting or setting aside of standing. To ignore the question of practical state would do deadly mischief to the people of God. Depend upon it, God's dealings in government have to do with the state of His people; and, speaking with all reverence, what sort of a God would He be who would be indifferent to the state of His people whom He has redeemed by blood?

What follows the feast of the Passover? The feast of unleavened bread. And what does the apostle say to the Corinthians? "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

I conclude that no one will suppose, that if for a moment I look at *the way* the resources of God can be used, and *the way* the power works, and *the way* the people of God lay hold of and practically enjoy their blessings—I say, no one will suppose I am raising any question as to the favour of God towards us, or as to His love, or making little of the standing or the place of His people before Him. I am raising no question as to that, nor as to the bright and

blessed future before us. Here was a moment when the people were in dire distress and suffering for their own ways under the government of God. We have to know and own that this is the case with us.

If I were asked what is the state of God's people on earth now, I must answer, without in the least forgetting His grace, that they are all suffering for their ways under the government of God. Peace is a settled thing, and, in one aspect, sins are never imputed to the saints ; but that is not my subject now. If we want to be intelligent as to the character of God's thoughts for His people to-day, and as to the state of His people, we must be prepared to take up things from God's point of view, and must not be afraid to look at that side of things in the light of the sanctuary.

Take the prayer of Daniel, his full confession before God. Is not the actual state of the people before him ? " We have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled . . . neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets . . . neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his laws which he set before us ;" and so on. It is a blessed thing that the man who can take it up, and all the shame and sorrow, is the very one who can say, " To the Lord our God belong

mercies and forgivenesses:" he is the one who can draw upon grace.

Look at Moses—it is another instance of the same thing. He says they are a stiff-necked and rebellious people, and on that very ground he would have God go up with them. *He* would be the one to be cut off and blotted out that the people may be taken in. The very ground that God knew all about the people was the ground he could take up that God should go on with them. What will the heathen say? Why should they say that God brought out a people into the wilderness and was not able to bring them into the land?

So here in the same way, the cry goes up from the people of God, and God hears the cry.

But how does He work deliverance? What is the first thing? Does the power come in at once? Are they at once delivered from the foe? Oh, no! What is the first step? The Lord sent a prophet to them, and the true state of the case is exposed, and the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah. It is a beautiful passage. He sums up their history: "I brought you up out of Egypt; I delivered you," &c., in fact it is an account of all that God has done. As if He said, There is nothing on *My* side; no fault on *My* side; I have done all this; I have done everything for you; turned out every foe, and brought you into this

land—and what then? Now the truth must come out: "*But ye have not obeyed my voice.*"

Is not that the secret with us individually and collectively? Disobedience—departure from the path of obedience, the path the word marks out. It is the lamentation right through the prophets, "Ye have not obeyed." Read Jeremiah—read the prophets—read the pleadings of God's heart with His people in the Psalms and the prophets: "Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, that Israel had walked in my ways! . . . I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock would I have satisfied thee." "My people would not hearken to my voice." "Israel would none of me." "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts." And in Isaiah again: "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me." Departure; that is the one word. I have brought them up and they have departed.

Then we find: "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was at Ophrah." The character of Judges is, there was no king in Israel: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The people sin repeatedly and turn again to God, and He

raises up deliverers—a left-handed man, or a timid man, or a woman. “Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.” Just where God chose, in the sovereignty of His grace to raise up an instrument, there He worked and acted.

And God had now His favoured instrument in this man, whose family was poor in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house. This man was passing through exercise of soul. He is a timid man, but an exercised man: “Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” Well, he was an exercised soul and interested in the people of God, and he saw the reality of the state in which the people were. Where are all His miracles? Where is the outward display of His power? And Gideon in a way inclined to give up, says, “Why is all this befallen us?”

But he is not rebuked for contrasting the present with the past; the Lord takes notice of it; He takes knowledge of the soul that is exercised. We were praying for exercise of heart and conscience; well, the Lord takes knowledge of it. After, we find He is educating him. He looked on him, and said, “Go in this thy might.” Signs are given him, the confirmation of his faith. Everything must be put right between Gideon and God.

After he has gone through his education he goes on in faith ; though he did it by night, he throws down the altar of Baal that his father had. It is another proof of where the people were. Gideon has to face all the full result of his act, and the persecution that would have come upon him but for the intervention of God. God uses this vessel, but the vessel has to be set right in his own circle and to be brought into moral correspondence with the claims and character of a holy God. This is the kind of man He is going to use for the deliverance of His people.

I want to bring out the way God deals with the instrument of His power, the way the power works in the instrument. If God is going to use a people or an individual He will bring that people or that individual into a state that owns all His claims, with a self-judged state that is consistent with Himself and which recognises what is suitable to His glory.

The same principle applies to the people who accompanied Gideon in chapter vii. : "The people are too many." Numbers are nothing to God, but state is. The fearful are dismissed first, and the rest are tested. No doubt in bringing them down to the water we get (in the water) a figure of mercies by the way ; He brings them down, and the result of the testing was that God

chose those who lapped and went forward, those only who received mercy as something by the way. "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you."

I do not go into the details of the victory, the broken pitchers with the lamps and the trumpets; the barley-cake that tumbled into the host of Midian; the cry—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" but the victory was won and the people were delivered from their enemies by the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

I merely touch on Matthew xvii., to shew that the state of the disciples was the real hindrance. They had been on the mountain, and when they come down they meet the power of the foe. We have to meet the power of the foe; and the evil state is not only without but within. This is the terrible feature of the day: it is what Paul spoke of when he left them at Ephesus: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." The evil enters from without, and the evil breaks out within; and in the presence of evil without and within, the power is unchanged, but there is inability to use the power.

The man brings the child to the disciples and

they cannot cast the devil out. But had the Lord not committed power to them? Had He not sent them to cast out devils? Did they not come back with joy and say, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name? Why, then, this inability? "I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him."

Now look at the rebuke that falls from the Lord's blessed lips: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? *bring him hither to me.* And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief . . . howbeit, this kind goeth not out but *by prayer and fasting.*"

We have had prayer already before us, now it is prayer and *fasting*. Their state was not up to the mark, and their faith could not reckon on the power.

We have the same principle of testing of state in the passage in Luke where you get the great supper. The invitation is world-wide, all are invited to come into the house, and the house must be filled. "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled." Then great multitudes

followed Him; and what did the Lord say? "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

First we have the world-wide invitation of grace. But next He says, there is a path for the disciple; and *who* will be my disciple? That is the next thing. There is the world-wide gospel that gathers and brings in; but what have we come to? Well, you say, we have come to all the blessedness of the shepherd care, and of the green pastures that we have been hearing of. That is quite true, we have come to the blessedness of the One on high, to the High Priest too; but we have also come to the path and to Him who has trodden it; we have come to the One who can say, "Follow thou me;" we have come to a pathway of power, and how does the power work? It works inwardly first.

What do we find in 2 Corinthians iv.? After he has dealt with and corrected all the grossness and corruption of the flesh in the first Epistle, and the rod has done its work, what do you get in the second Epistle? I get, in this chapter, the manifestation of the power of life in these mortal bodies, through death working in them; and that is the way the power works.

Therefore we have the two things. The most perfect confidence in Him whose resources are unbounded, who wields all the power of God,

whose arm is not shortened that He cannot save. There is no limit to the power of God, and no limit to what He can do for the souls that wait upon Him. But what does He want? Broken material, clean vessels. Look at 2 Timothy: "A vessel unto honour," which is outward purging from the vessels to dishonour; but that is a result; it is the effect of inward self judgment as to what is inconsistent with Himself—the practical application of the cross to the flesh in us.

Our brother, last night, took us up to putting on the armour, but he did not touch on the details. We have power *for* us in Ephesians i., power *in* us in chapter iii., power to be *for* God in chapter vi. We have had it to-day brought before us. But what is the armour? The armour is not standing, though I must be in the heavenlies to put it on. The armour is just the link between faith and power, so that the three are always together—faith, state, power.

Let us look at it for a moment, for I want to press it upon our hearts, in connection with that verse: "The people are too many for me."

A great many things happen which we can only understand in a day of ruin and brokenness, if we bring to bear upon them the light of the government of God. I make a distinction between the government of God, His ways with His people, and His grace. God's own sovereign

power can come in and act for His own glory, no matter what the state of His people. Still the principle abides, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If I sow suspicion and distrust of the brethren, I shall reap the fruit of suspicion and distrust of the brethren. And if saints sow sects and parties, they will reap the bitter fruit of sects and parties. There is not an individual amongst us who in his or her own history does not know that what we have sown that we have reaped. It is in measure as we sow the things of Christ that we shall reap the things of Christ.

I would not put a burden upon any soul in this room, but this principle applies to us in our walk here, and, as surely as that principle applies, so does another: that the pathway of blessing is the pathway of obedience and self-denial, walking as Christ walked.

Our brother made a remark this morning about John's writings which I wish he had unfolded. How John fitted in with Paul. I have no doubt in my mind but that the blessed God has had a purpose to teach His people more of the blessedness of the writings of John, and that the great object of the devil has been to hinder the people of God getting hold of the truth, whether in the Gospel or the Epistle. They are in truth the deepest writings in the word of God. I would

I had the competency to unfold a little of them! Blessed as Paul's doctrine is, and blessed as all the book of God is, I do not believe there is anything like John, where the glories of the Son of God, a divine Person revealing the Father, shine forth. The Son, one with the Father in heaven, and still the dependent Man down here, wholly unconnected with man and with earth, come from above, the Word made flesh, dwelling amongst us! I know the gospel is peculiarly dear to every saint of God. It speaks to the heart. The Son of the Father is the rejected One by the world, is not of the world, is apart from the world, yet His moral glory shines fully in the world, light in the midst of darkness.

Am I casting a shade upon the other blessed writings? No indeed; they all unfold Him in different aspects; but I get them in John in heavenly relationships, a new order of things entirely, though He is alone in His own person; and it is all preliminary to what is going to be brought out in the Epistle: the nature of Christian communion when we know Him in resurrection as the One who has ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

I have wandered from my subject, but you will forgive me. I was struck with what our brother said in reference to the verse, “The Spirit and the

bride say, Come." He said, "John gives us the essential nature and attributes of the being." May the Lord give us to understand and enter into it, for as we enter into what John teaches, I am sure we shall value Paul's writings all the more.

And now a word more as to the armour in Ephesians vi.

You have the soldier here in conflict in heavenly places, and that is the reason I read those chapters in Judges. They were in the land; it is not a wilderness scene; it was the great breakdown of the people in the land of blessing. The captain of the Lord's host had led them on to victory, and they were in the place where the walls of Jericho had fallen down before them; but evil had come in, and it is the breakdown of everything, till you come at last to what is recorded in the end of the book: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Where was the leader now? Oh, what a terrible scene! Where are we now? You say Ephesians vi. is high up. I admit it. Therefore we get, "Put on *the whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It is not here that a roaring lion, or wilderness circumstances have to be faced; it is one who is a *dead* man, a man who has not only gone through the Red Sea and wilderness trials,

and knows that he is seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but who is over Jordan in spirit, has tasted the old corn of the land, and knows what Canaan conflict is in the presence of all the power and subtlety of the foe.

Art thou for us or for our adversaries ? shews that there can be no neutrality. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." It is *there* the wiles of the devil are. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. *Stand, therefore*, having your loins girt about with truth."

We get in Psalm li. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." The truth now judges everything that I am as of the first Adam and leaves no place for it. It is the power of the truth inwardly. The loins are the place of strength, they must be braced up, girded up ; no looseness will do here ; the truth does not allow of it, but braces up the man in the place of strength.

Then, the breastplate of righteousness ; that is outside, my outward conduct, my ways with my fellow men, those whom I meet with every day, so that people may have nothing to say against me, and Satan may have nothing to point at.

Then, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: though a soldier, what I bear is the gospel of peace. War is not natural to me, though forced to be a warrior because of the character of the day, because of the foe that is there, yet what I have in my heart is the gospel of peace.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith.” Confidence in God is the shield of faith, but there must be a good conscience to have confidence in God. “That ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” What a blessed thing for the soldier!

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” There is the weapon of power, but it supposes that the word that is to be used in conflict with the foe, has been used against myself first and has had its full effect and power on me. How could I use it against another if there is that which is unjudged in myself?

You see I want you just to connect the two—to see the state that is inseparably connected with faith and power. “This kind goeth not out but by prayer *and fasting*.” So with Gideon: self-judged and separated from evil, and then “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” So with David: victory over the lion and the bear in secret with God, Saul’s armour refused, “I have not

proved them." All he had learned with God gave him implicit confidence in God, so that the practical state and condition accompanied his faith.

And then verse 18 shews that there is no dependence upon the state, but only upon God. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." It is all closed up with prayer.

Now I end with one single word on the last verse we have had already before us to-day: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," and specially on the words, "Let him that heareth say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

We get there, I believe, the true and normal position of the church on earth in the character of the bride: it is not only that she is *waiting*. The Lord had said before those beautiful words: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." It is His own voice that has touched the chord; it is He that strikes it. It is He who has said, "I, Jesus!" It is His own presentation of Himself that strikes the chord in the heart of the bride. It leads the bride to answer to Him in the special and unique character in which He is known in the dark night on earth—"Come." Then, "Let him that heareth say, Come."

This is the true state of things in the church, when it is in a happy state, and what is true col-

lectively would be true individually. The heart which is satisfied with Him that is coming is sufficiently at leisure from itself to be considering for others, and to be occupied with others. Therefore the mark of a revival in our hearts would be deeper activity, more care and consideration for the whole people of God, and more going out in the gospel to gather out the many, or the few, that remain to be gathered out before Christ comes.

But as surely as we settle down and allow the things of time and sense to come in between the heart and Christ, so surely will the activities of divine affection cease in their measure, and there will be no going out to those who are gathered, or to those who are scattered.

God forbid that we should not feel the solemnity and the heart-breaking sorrow of being separated from those with whom we have, as I may say, "walked to the house of God in company;" but remember that many who have never been gathered, and with whom we have never walked, are as much members of the body of Christ as those we have walked with; and God can bring them into the place of blessing which has been despised by others who have gone out.

Oh! if the saints, when troubles and difficulties arise, would only say, I will wait upon God till He give something that will satisfy my conscience, some evidence that He has taken up

matters and guided those gathered to His name. He *has* gathered us to His blessed name, and do you suppose He is going to give us nothing of that kind of action flowing from His presence in the midst which is to carry the hearts and consciences of His people? I do not believe it! God has not left us merely leaders, however much we should esteem His servants for their works' sake. No, thank God! “There am *I* in the midst,” remains. Beware of having the eye on any servant of God, or on any leader, however devoted and faithful in the past! Nay; our confidence should be in that word, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am *I* in the midst.” Where He is in the midst He will surely make His presence known and communicate His mind to His gathered assembly as to every trouble that may come into our midst. Let us have that confidence to the end!

May the Lord graciously bring home what I have been seeking to bring out; the link between faith and power. The way His power must work in us, and the way the blessing must ever flow out from us, is by the application of the cross to all that is of the flesh. There must be the “bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus,” and at the same time there is the power of the Object. “We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are

changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Let us make up our minds to it: if we want blessing there is only one way in which God's resources can come in. He makes good the truth in our hearts and consciences, and fits us by the power of the truth, that He may be free to use us to others, whether it be those who are scattered or to His gathered saints, in these closing moments of the church's history.

May He work in our souls and give us more "purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord"! And may He give us to cry to Him to raise up labourers to develop gifts, no matter how small, amongst the gathered ones, that there may be more going out to the scattered ones on every hand. May there be the going on in communion and in more real personal enjoyment of Christ, so that the Christ enjoyed may be a real, living power to act on others, and many may be found waiting with us for His Son from heaven. And may the Lord give us to be upon our knees, that we may be a praying people, so that, as we had this morning, "To him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!"

J. S. O.

THE PERFECT HEART.

(2 CHRON. XXV. 1, 2.)

I FEEL the utmost diffidence in reading this scripture, but to my own mind it is a divine confirmation of what the Lord has brought before us.

We have had words of encouragement and of warning too. We have been reminded of the character of the foe, and of the state of soul in which the foe is to be met. I was much struck by the brother who has just sat down, shewing how it is the *state* of the people that has to be remedied.

In the case of Amaziah, the Lord looked at the heart, and though we read that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," we find it was "not with a perfect heart." (Compare ver. 2 with 1 Sam. xvi. 7.) Still, God opened his ear to listen to the prophet, and that is the state He would have us in—our ears open to hear His voice. As we read, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." "They know not the voice of strangers." This is our blessing and safety—nearness, and the opened ear: obedience and affection.

Passing on, we find the king proposes to go to battle without taking counsel with the Lord. It was perfectly right that he should go to battle; it was against Edom, the enemies of God's people, who opposed their progress on their way to the possession His love had prepared for them; and who pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity. But there was this mixed principle with Amaziah, that he went and hired a hundred thousand men of Israel to help him. However, when God sent a man of God to reprove him for this, he hearkened to the voice of the prophet and sent them away. They had ceased to be in the testimony of God. One thing distressed him (ver. 9), the loss of the hundred talents; but the word of the prophet was, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." Present loss is future gain as we prove God's resources and learn that He is for us.

Beloved, how our hearts have been distressed of late, going in and out among the people of God; we have passed through exercises that have been of the deepest character. If there ever was a day in which His word has become precious to us it is to-day. It has brought us real, deep cheer and blessing; it has carried us right up above the sorrows; it has lifted our hearts right up to God Himself, so that

instead of sighing, it has awakened a deeper note of worship than has ever gone up to Him before from these poor hearts of ours.

If one may speak for another, I would say, God has made up for it all. What a sorrowful thing that the prophet should have to say, "O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim." This has a voice to my own soul, and I am sure to yours. Were not all Israel God's people? Were they not brethren? Every one. But now the time has come when the prophet has to say, "The Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim." The people may become such that in His government God has to say, "The Lord is not with Israel." They must be set aside. What boundless grace it is for us to know that the Lord is with us. What a wonderful thing that His grace should preserve a company answering in moral condition to that which surrounded Him in Matthew xii. 49. But were the two tribes in that condition? Brethren, are we? God might use them to conquer Edom, but what was the result of their success? They brought home and worshipped the gods of the Edomites. And if His grace has preserved us in a day of trouble and difficulty, let us be watchful lest we follow the example of the two tribes in

turning away from "The fountain of living water."

The Lord give us so to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, refusing everything of the first man, discerning His will in things that differ, so that we may not call good evil, or evil good. May the word of God be quick and powerful in us, dividing asunder soul and spirit, and cut down to the marrow in each one of us, keeping our whole heart open to Himself. If there is not real manifestation and openness of heart before God, we are on the edge of a precipice, and the next movement may be that we shall have the most terrible fall. May we know what it is to be more willing to be delivered to death for Jesus' sake. It is thus only that we can know the nature and character of the power that is ours, the power that can give us the victory over the foe, and fit us both for service and testimony, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us now in the place of responsibility where His love and grace sustain us.

H. D.



“HEAVENLY THINGS.”

THE TWO VOLUMES.

(JOHN xiii. 1-3.)

I DO not read more, for my thought is to give a little sketch of John's gospel. I read these verses at the beginning of the second volume of the book. There are two great volumes in John's gospel ; the first relates to *us*, “heavenly things” for oneself ; in great measure the gospel. The second volume relates to *Christ*, “heavenly things” for *His* service. You may not see this division at first ; but I think when you look into it more closely, you will find that I am correct.

I begin at the public ministry of the Lord. In chapter ii. man in his best estate is a failure ; and in his relation to God in a ritual appointed by God, he is a scandal. Man is unmendably bad.

Chapter iii. You must be “born again.” “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” When the Son of man which is in heaven is lifted up, heavenly things are offered to faith.

In chapter iv. the work begins. The Lord announces to a Samaritan, one by birth and

character degraded, and in every way most pitiable, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." The blessed Lord offers to this miserable woman heavenly things, which characterise John's gospel; blessings which are outside of earth, and outside of man; to start with—they are beyond all human conception. It is wonderful to behold! Here is a poor sinner in the most deplorable condition, shrinking from the face of man, but the Lord is waiting for her. His grace will set her up in this world in a style which transcends all human conception. "Never thirst!" Brought into a region of satisfied desire. Let a natural man even read that offer, and he would have to admit that such a thing was never heard of before, and that it is a state altogether unknown to man. A soul is taken from the lowest conceivable condition, and given the highest conceivable condition. Beloved friends! all this blessedness belongs to you. Chapter iv. is the contrast to chapter ii. where the wine is out. Now you are to receive "heavenly things" where there is no lack, and no sense of deficiency. Now instead of worshipping God according to the ritualism of chapter ii., you worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Chapter v. You have the impotent man, incapable of availing himself of the “house of mercy.” The Lord tells him to take up his bed and walk. Until man has been relieved from the terrible judgment of death of his body there will be no real sabbath. The Son of God has come to bear this judgment. “An hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live,” so that he does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. You are passed out of that state of death altogether. “They that have done good to the resurrection of life.” You shall never come into judgment; all the consequences of sin are gone. Heavenly things for the body, as well as for the soul.

Chapter vi. is the practical enjoyment of that life by feeding on Christ’s death. There is no other way of reaching life but through death; not your own death, for your own death would not remove the judgment, but Christ’s death. You must appropriate it or you have no life in you; you have the sentence of death in yourselves. “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life: (therefore you ‘eat his flesh and drink his blood’) and I will raise him up at the last day.” Heavenly things in their divine nature are now enjoyed.

Chapter vii. is the contrast, as to natural

things, to chapter iv. The feast of tabernacles is the celebration of the highest order of blessing on the earth. The Lord had made the earth to teem with its produce for man. Now the best thing on earth is superseded by "heavenly things." The Lord says, "If any man thirst let him come *unto me* and drink." I will do better for him. From the earth? No; the feast had been the celebration of God's favour to them on the earth. The Lord now offers heavenly things, which are outside of earth, and outside of man. In chapter iv. you see a woman in the deepest misery raised to an inconceivable state. Now in chapter vii. we find that to a man in the brightest circumstances on the earth, the Lord announces "I can give you better." "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." This heavenly thing on earth, and from the glorified Man, surpasses (it is always so in John) every earthly blessing.

In chapters ix. and x. you find the flock of God. I would just shew you the position the flock holds. Look at chapter x.; it describes the position in which the man who was blind finds

himself. He is outside of the old fold, cast out, and the Lord finds him, and says to him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?” And Jesus said unto him, “Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.” I trust your heart takes in the greatness of that moment—“he *worshipped him!*”

Chapter x. describes the new position of the sheep on the earth, and it is very sad to have to say that it is this that Christendom has lost. The Lord leads His sheep out of the Jewish fold. He has given His life for the sheep. They are still on the earth, but of an entirely new order. They enter in by Him, and are saved, and go in and out and find pasture. There is the fullest intimacy between Him and the sheep. (Vers. 14, 15.) “I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father.” These two verses must be read together: the mind of God is plain in the passage, even that the same kind of intimacy is to subsist between the Shepherd and the sheep, as between the Father and the Son. If any soul apprehends this he apprehends what is inconceivably great. “Heavenly things,” and, blessed be His name! which are to continue for ever.

Chapters xi. and xii. I pass over.

Now in chapter xiii. a new volume opens. The Lord is going away. Do you miss Him? It is a very simple question. Are you here for Him? Is the first volume quite enough for you? You may truly say the first is wonderful! *Indeed it is.* Heavenly things given to yourself. It answers to the gospel; but the second volume recounts the heavenly things given to you in relation to Christ. He has gone away. There comes a moment in the history of every loving soul when the heart exclaims—*Where is He?* He is not here. What are you doing then? Are you disconsolate like Mary Magdalene before she finds Him? That is a very good beginning, I admit. But if you have learned His grace to you in chapter x. you must know Him; you are in *His hand*; no one can seize you out of His hand, “My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father.” You are in an intimacy with Him which can be created and sustained only in the Spirit.

Now to return to chapter xiii. I ask each one of you, Do you miss Him? No one cares to see Him who does not miss Him. If you say, I *do* miss Him, then what are you doing? The true answer is the key to these five chapters, xiii. to xvii. I know but little of them, but I know

enough to be delighted with them. It is a wonderful revelation ! I might use the tabernacle as illustrative of them, beginning with the supper, a figure of His death—the brazen altar. Then He washes His disciples’ feet—the laver. Then He feeds them inside. (Chap. xiv.) Then they are outside, His witnesses—the candlestick ; everything in heavenly order ; while chapter xvii. answers to the holiest of all. This sketch may help some here who have not studied it closely, so that they may be attracted to the study of these wonderful chapters.

The first thing is, your feet must be washed, in order that the intimacy may be maintained. It is here that all failure begins ; you have not kept up the intimacy by having your feet washed. If I review my own history I see that is where failure begins. You may not have given up a good conscience. I think many keep a good conscience, that is, a sense of forgiveness of sins, who do not know intimacy ; you may be quite clear that on confession you are forgiven, but that is not intimacy ; and you cannot maintain intimacy if you do not know it. You are not intimate with Christ until your heart is assured of the love of His heart. You are intimate with Him when you know His perfect love. “We love him because he first loved us.” See how Peter learns His love when he fell

down at Jesus' knees. The Lord said, "Fear not." These words have a great effect on Peter and on all of them. They brought their ships to land, forsook all, and followed Him. The most exemplary conduct, and a remarkable instance of divine favour, had not removed fear from Peter's heart; but the words of Jesus, of His perfect love, cast out all fear. When His love is thus known, you seek His company, and in His company you know intimacy. That is where the church of Ephesus failed; and where we all fail. If you have known intimacy, and do not maintain it, your love has waned. You have "no part" with Him if there be any shade of reserve between Him and you. Peter's conscience was relieved in chapter xx., but his heart was not at ease till chapter xxi. Many are untroubled at the Lord's Table though they are not in communion with Him! Such can say, there is nothing on my conscience; but, though there may be nothing on your conscience, you may not be in intimacy with Him. The Lord grant that you may see the importance of intimacy. If you do not maintain intimacy, all the heavenly things which follow, and are unfolded to you in these chapters, will be practically unknown to you. When you are impressed before the Lord with the importance of any truth you are sure to pray; you are conscious that no one can enlighten or lead you into this grace but Himself.

Chapters xiii. and xiv. are one; mark, they are inside; it is not the world at all; we are inside with Him. As an illustration---Aaron and his sons feeding on the consecration offering is a representation of it. They ate it in the holy place, “For seven days shall he consecrate you.” They did not come out to serve till after that; so in chapter xv. the disciples come out to serve after chapter xiv. Judas is seen here as the worst specimen of mankind, because he was making merchandise of Christ with the design of getting the money, thinking that the Lord would escape. It is such a combination of wickedness, that I cannot explain it. It requires a man to be well versed in wickedness to understand wickedness, though one can stamp it at once as evil. The man who best knows the good at once detects evil; a banker knows when a note is bad because he thoroughly knows a good one.

You have to learn in this chapter the Lord's provision for His disciples on earth during His absence; the elements of disturbance and distraction *inside* come out: the treachery of Judas, and the unfaithfulness of Peter, and the Lord Himself going away, an epitome of church history. But, blessed be His name! in view of all the distraction, He provides “heavenly things” for His servants. In chapter xiv. He

says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He says this with respect to Himself. He was going away. There are three circles of blessings which He gives to support you in His absence. The first is—*The Future*. He has a place for you where He is in the Father's house. This will have a great effect upon your heart. It is like a man emigrating, who says to his wife, I have a beautiful place for you in Australia, which is my place; thus all her thoughts are turned to Australia, and her tastes are formed by this prospect. The Lord adds, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Knowing the Father, makes us feel even now at home in the place. We are at home in the place because we know the Owner of the place.

The second circle is *The Present*. In verse 20 He says, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." That is, as it were, You shall know Me as I am in that place at the present time. You know Him as He is in heaven. The Lord is in heaven. Look at the way Paul sets us in heaven in Ephesians. The parallels between John and Paul are very striking. It is very interesting to study them. Besides, He comes to us individually and collectively: individually—to the one who keeps His word. Marvellous! "We will come

and make our abode with *him*.” And He also comes to us collectively—“I will not leave you orphans, I will come to *you* ;” that is plural.

The third circle is *The Past*, verse 26—“The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you ;” that is, that you may know Him as He was here where you are. Now put these three circles together. First, He has prepared a place for you where He is; that has a wonderful effect. Naturally, one likes to be connected with the earth, but now you have a place outside of this world where He is. How it dims the glitter of everything here! It is the place most attractive because He is there. Then, the second circle is, you know Him as He is in that place ; and the third, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father to make you acquainted with Him as He was in *this* place where you are. We all know that the moment a person is not present, no human power can bring back the effect of his presence. You can recall his words, but you cannot recall his presence ; he has left a blank. In absence the heart discovers the value of the presence which it has lost. No one can fill the blank but the one who made it. No one can fill the blank caused by our Lord’s absence but Himself ; therefore He says of the Holy Ghost,

“He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The Holy Ghost has come to make known to you all that Person was down here.

Thus in chapter xiv. you are inside. In chapter xv. you are outside, you have left the supper table. Chapters xv. and xvi. are the testimony, the candlestick.

The word now is, “Abide in me.” Here the servant fails continually. The Lord says, “If ye abide in me and I in you.” Here it is responsibility. “Abide in me.” He takes up the vine as a figure. Israel was the vine, but had failed. Christ is the true vine; all through John everything presented before on the earth is surpassed by Him—the marriage, the passover, the feast of tabernacles—all is surpassed, because the Son of God is come, and heavenly things have come down here. The Holy Ghost is sent down from a glorified Christ. (Ver. 26.) Here we have Paul’s ministry in parallel, “He shall testify of me.” He will declare and testify on the earth of the glorified Man in heaven. It is not, “*You* shall testify,” as we might think, but “*He* shall testify of me.” “He” is emphatic. If the Holy Ghost testifies there is no use in human means. The only power upon this earth to testify for Christ is the Holy Ghost. Nothing is effective

but in the power of the Holy Ghost; no matter how beautiful or how admirable, it has no divine effect because it is not in the power of the Holy Ghost. “*He shall testify of me.*”

I do not dwell long upon chapter xvi. There are two displays of the Holy Ghost. His great object is to testify of the heavenly Man. This testimony began with Stephen, “I see...the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” We have heard to-day that a witness is a martyr properly speaking. The highest honour ever possible for a servant of Christ in this world is to die for his Lord. It is a great favour to die in harness, and to be in fellowship with the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the rejected Christ to the end. Many Christians as to their career have fallen on the earth; as with Israel, of whom it is said, “their carcasses fell in the wilderness.”

I have said that there are two displays of the Holy Ghost in this chapter. In one He demonstrates what the world is in the eye of God. “And having come, he will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” Having received the Holy Ghost, you are outside of it; you are in a new line outside this world. The world is thoroughly exposed. “Convict” or demonstrate is a forensic term. Many a one is convicted who is not converted.

The world is the culprit, and the Holy Ghost is the incontrovertible witness against it. If you are with the Holy Ghost you are outside of the world. Christendom has abandoned the power of the Holy Ghost, and has accepted the power of the world. This began in the days of Constantine; and the end will be the beast will carry the harlot—Babylon. If Saul spared Amalek, Amalek did not spare him. If you spare the world, the world will not spare you.

The second display is in verses 13 and 14. If you are with the Holy Ghost against the world He will compensate you. "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." "All things that the Father hath are mine." Mind all the *things* of the Father. What "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Heavenly things are made known to you while you are on the earth. What a portion! "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." A wonderful compensation! If you look at Paul he is occupied with the saints; and if you look at John he is occupied with the resources of God. However great the lack in the saints may be, all you require to maintain you in Christ's service

is as true now by the presence of the Holy Ghost as in the brightest day of the church.

One word as to verse 23. “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” Have you ever entered into the greatness of that verse? It should afford you the greatest consolation, that in this world where Christ has been rejected, if you ask the Father in His name for anything for His service, you will receive it. Peter could say, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee.” You should have the greatest confidence that anything you require for the Lord and ask for will be given to you. If you want a room for His service you will get it. “Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” What a cheer in the universal opposition!

Now I come to chapter xvii. for one moment. It opens by saying, “Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” How wonderful to make known the Father to us as He is in heaven! “I have declared thy name, and will declare it.” What a portion! What heavenly things! I shall never forget when the light of it broke in upon my soul; it was in a lonely place, and on

the Lord's day. "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." Here it is the Father's love for the Son; His love as He loves His own Son is to be in them. Could you get a greater portion? Heavenly things indeed! If all the emperors in this world joined together to say—we can do something for you, we can say, No, you can do *nothing* for us; all that *can* be done to satisfy and delight us *has* been done, and made known to us here on the earth. The Lord delights to declare the Father's name. I wonder at myself, and I wonder at others, how little we are surcharged with this divine blessedness.

May the Lord grant that each one of us may have an increased sense of the wonderful portion, the heavenly things the Lord has given us, and a deeper sense of all to which He has called us.

J. B. S.



GRACE.

(ROMANS III. 24.)

It was very much on my heart, before our beloved brother spoke, the same general line of things which he has brought before us, and I just want to say a few words on "grace." All we have just heard is connected with it, for the Gospel of John opens with the announcement that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and this great fact runs through the whole of the Gospel, so that all we have just heard is closely bound up with it. It is a wonderful thing—grace. It begins all for us and will consummate all for us, and it will sustain us and maintain us all the way through.

We used to sing :

" Grace, 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear ;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear."

We remember the verse as an old familiar friend.

Grace! oh, the depths of it! oh, the heights of it! oh, the length and breadth of it! who can speak of it? It surpasses everything. All that

we have been hearing—it is all grace. All this wonderful thing that comes out, we look at it, we contemplate it, it is before us in its greatness, its immensity; there it is! it is all grace! It was grace that taught our feet to tread the heavenly road, and grace it is that sustains us on it, and will right on to the end.

That is why I turned to this verse, Romans iii. 24. We have the gospel starting here when every mouth is stopped and all the world is brought in guilty before God; then grace comes out—the grace of God. “Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Grace settles everything; not a spot left; not a stain, not a charge: “Justified freely by his grace.” That word “freely” is a remarkable word. It means, for nothing at all—gratuitously—for nothing at all. It is the same word as is used John xv. 25, “They hated me *without a cause*,” freely. There was no cause for the hatred of man to Christ, and it is as though God said here, “There is no cause for my love to you.” It is pure grace—we are justified *freely* by His grace! If you refer to Romans v. 2 you will see the same grace again. We stand in it now. It first took us up and now we stand there, having free access into it by faith. It is like the poor man in Luke x.: the Samaritan found him by the

roadside wounded, bruised, half dead. He pitied him and he undertook for him, and having bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, he set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And there we are, having free access by faith into the grace of God in Christ; and there is our standing-place while we are waiting, until by-and-by we shall see His glory. If through sin we have lost much, we have by grace gained more—our present place and our future portion in the glory of God. But it is all grace.

I shall now turn to another scripture in Ephesians i. 6. I would just refer to verses 4 and 5 as pickets on the road on which to hang that word “grace.” Well, now that is the top of all. (Ver. 6.) You cannot get beyond that. Not through the endless ages of eternity (compare chap. ii. 7); not in all the highest, brightest place in heaven; not in the innermost circle of divine blessing and favour; not for ever and for ever. But God can do this. It is to the glory of His grace to do it. “To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

The word “glory” I could not define. I never heard a definition I considered a full one. It is, I think, an indefinable word. What is glory? It is the top of everything: the tip-

top. When you get to the summit of it, that is glory. When grace is capped, it is "the glory of the grace of God." And what is that? That we are "accepted in the Beloved." "He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children unto himself by Jesus Christ." We have lost our standing in the first man through sin, and, thank God! the condemnation attached thereto; and we have found our place in the Second Man with the blessedness belonging thereto, and all "to the glory of his grace."

In verse 7 we have the riches of His grace when He speaks of the forgiveness of sins, and then we can well understand how in verse 12 He can bring us before Him to the praise of His glory—the glory of God. We shall be there to the praise of His glory. Surely we may say, "Grace, 'tis a charming sound." I thought it a good subject with which to finish up these meetings.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Truth is beautiful, blessed, we could not do without it; but I do not remember such an expression as "the glory of the *truth*," however precious and important the truth is. But it seems to me the Spirit delights to dwell in a special manner on "the glory of his grace." Grace is a wonderful thing, we can never come to the end of it. Love is what God is, His

own essential, divine Being. Light is the character of God, but love is essentially His nature. God is light and God is love.

I shall now turn to 2 Timothy ii. 1. Here we are in different circumstances; difficulties, and times, and circumstances, which have been already brought before us in one form or another while here. They are terribly trying times. One of the leading characteristic words of 2 Timothy is, I think, "suffering" and "suffering evil;" you get it in chapters i. 8, 12; ii. 3, 9; iii. 11; iv. 5. In chapter ii. 3 "endure hardness" is really "suffer evil." Suffering evil, enduring hardness, hard times, is the character of 2 Timothy, and hard times tend to make men hard. Ah! but says the apostle that must not make you hard. You have begun with grace and you must continue with grace. Therefore he says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." What can keep us in such circumstances as these? You must "be strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus." It is a sufficiency; it is enough. Paul could say he gloried in all that humbled him here, because grace was sufficient for him; so that in the place where otherwise what was of nature would come out, there the power of Christ might rest upon him, and there Christ was to be glorified in him. And here as Timothy is in these circumstances, what is to

support and sustain him? What is to give the servant of God strength needed for these difficult times? "Be strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus." Remember what you were, a poor, guilty sinner, and how the grace of God took you up, and that same grace will take you to glory: and now in dealing with others remember what God's dealings have been with you, and let these be before your mind. We need it, beloved brethren, and never more than to-day. We know what we are naturally, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." That is the law; but *He* says, "Resist not evil." (Matt. v. 39.) Grace shews itself in another way altogether. If we shewed more of that kind of thing to our beloved brethren it would do them no harm and would do us no harm either, and it would, I think, glorify God too. God grant that in these difficult times we may know more of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

One more verse, Revelation xxii. 21. Here again in the closing book of the Bible we find grace again. The subject is so beautiful, so full, that, once opened, the Spirit of God has never done with it. What put it into my mind now was the hymn our brother gave out at the beginning of the meeting. (Hymn 331.) What a magnificent hymn, I thought, what depth of thought, of feeling in it! What a wonderful

thing that the Father should take us up and make us like His Son, brought to Himself, by Himself, we so unlike Him, we who had cost Him so much, brought nigh, as like as we unlike had been ! I was only delighted that the grace of God had been so unfolded to us, to set off all the rest that had been before us and to bring it home.

Revelation xxii. 20 : "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen : even so, come, Lord Jesus." Then mark how it ends : "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Three times His coming is mentioned in this chapter. In verse 7 it is connected with keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book ; but though he is pronounced "blessed" who has kept them, the coming of the Lord awakens no response. Again, verse 12, there is reward to every man according as his work shall be ; but neither does that awaken a response : for when I think of my work—oh dear ! my work !—I am inclined to say, "O Lord, don't come yet a while." But in verse 20 it is pure grace. The Lord Himself is coming, and our hearts at once respond, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." It is neither keeping His sayings, nor reward for works, but Christ Himself who is coming, and the heart at once responds. The Old Testament

ends with "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The New Testament ends in the presence of all He has pictured in this book, all the evil and the judgment of it, with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." May it indeed be with us, and fill, and keep, and sustain, and comfort our hearts until He come, for His name's sake.

E. C.



READING.

JOHN XVII.

J. B. S. The very opening of the chapter, as has often been remarked, gives the character of it. "He lifted up his eyes to heaven."

Q. In what way?

J. B. S. You see if you revert to chapters xiii. and xiv. that the Lord is inside with His disciples. In chapters xv. and xvi. they are walking on the earth; those chapters have reference to the path of service. Now in chapter xvii. He connects them with the Father.

G. G. Is chapter xvii. not at the supper table?

J. B. S. No; nor chapters xv. and xvi. Only chapters xiii. and xiv. are at the supper table. At the close of chapter xiv. the Lord says, "Arise, let us go hence." He then refers to the vine. Israel had failed as the vine; the Lord is the true vine. The Lord could say at the moment, "I am the true vine, and ye are the branches." The vine is for the earth. He was going away, and He uses the figure of the vine in order that they should abide in Him though He had gone to heaven. They are branches, and

they would be of no use except they abide in the vine. A branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine.

D. L. H. You were saying yesterday something as to the comparison of this part of John with the tabernacle. You spoke of the brazen altar and the most holy place; we should like to know something more of it.

J. B. S. I only used it as a sort of illustration. Chapter xiii. opens with the supper—that was the passover. The supper prefigures His death. Then He rises from supper to wash their feet. The supper answers to the altar, the washing the feet to the laver. Chapter xiv. is like feeding on the consecration offering in the holy place. In the holy place was the candlestick and table of shewbread. The candlestick would be the place of Israel on earth. Chapter xiv. you are inside feeding.

D. L. H. Does chapter xiv. answer to the table of shewbread?

J. B. S. Well, though you are inside feeding the effect was to be seen outside. The candlestick and table of shewbread were in one place. We have to learn, and this is very interesting, the way, as we read in Hebrews, the tabernacle, or heaven itself is thrown open to us, and we are the priestly company to accomplish His service. In John you get the essential quality

of the grace imparted to you while on the earth ; but nothing from earth, and nothing from man.

G. G. But on earth ?

J. B. S. Yes ; that makes the grace the more marvellous.

Q. No veil in Hebrews.

J. B. S. No ; heaven is thrown open to you ; therefore if you enter the holy place as the consecrated company ; you will find the "most holy" thrown open to you.

F. H. B. While on earth we are brought to the enjoyment of what is in heaven.

J. B. S. In a sense heaven is brought to us ; and not simply the place, but we are introduced into it morally by and through Him who is there. In this chapter the Father is the subject. In chapter xiv. the Father was made known as Christ was seen here, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Now the Father is declared as He is in heaven.

G. G. In John xvii. everything is looked at as accomplished ?

J. B. S. Yes ; it is all anticipation. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." To use a theological term, He is giving them a charge. You see it makes it a wonderful thing to be on this earth, and not of it. A Jew could not understand that you were to be on the earth in unbounded blessing, and

yet nothing to come from the earth nor from man. It seems to me there is a break at verse 13, "And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." That verse gives the turn to the chapter. It is connected with "I come to thee," not with "Now I am no more in this world." The great thing is acquaintance with the Father. There are two ways in which we learn the Father. You learn Him as Christ personally declared Him on the earth, and now as He is in glory. The last verse of this chapter embraces both; "I have declared unto them thy name," that He *has* done; "and will declare it," that is what He is now doing.

D. L. H. Is that in connection with the operation of the Spirit of God now?

J. B. S. Yes; it is all by the Spirit. It is only by the Spirit we can say Father. As you get nothing from earth, and nothing from man, you must get all from God. It is very definite. If you are outside man and earth, you cannot receive from either.

E. R. The important thing to see is that He is doing all by the Spirit. It could be in no other way.

T. H. R. Only He is doing it from His place in glory.

J. B. S. Everything comes down from heaven

even the manna must come down from glory. Some read the gospels and think they are picking up manna; they are not; you cannot get manna except down from heaven. I must get the manna fresh from Himself in heaven, where He is. The manna is Himself, what He was; but I must get it from Him. He is made higher than the heavens. Some leave out the last part of that verse, "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, *made higher than the heavens.*" If you receive anything fresh, any comfort at all, it is from Christ, fresh from heaven. That is very important. I knew a brother who used to read the gospels to imitate the Lord. I think some know very little of what is in the gospels; they know much more of the epistles.

T. H. R. We all go to the epistles first.

J. B. S. It is the way to learn, but you must go to where He is to get Him. If you want to know the ways of the Lord on earth you must go to the gospels. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." You must receive it fresh from Himself in heaven. The Holy Ghost is come down to us from Christ in heaven, and He makes Him known to us as He was down here for our help and comfort; and He makes known Christ in glory that we may be able to testify of Him. Everything comes from heaven now.

F. H. B. The great thing in John is, that we are brought now into what will be our eternal portion.

J. B. S. There is nothing we shall have by-and-by but we are given to taste of now. John gives us the essential quality. John is looking at the gold, so to speak, and not at the quartz. Paul eliminates all the quartz.

Q. What is the difference between Thy word in verse 6 and in verse 14?

D. L. H. J. N. D. says in a note on verse 14 it is "the word of God in testimony."

F. H. B. Is it not always the Father's testimony?

T. H. R. In verse 8 it is a different word, the divine communications.

Q. What do you mean by divine communications?

T. H. R. There are special communications in those "words." The word is the whole scope of verses 6 and 14.

Q. When you speak of the whole scope, you mean the whole scope in connection with the Father?

J. B. S. We shall come to that presently. The first thing is, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." He will declare the Father in glory; the last verse of the chapter embraces both. In two ways you learn the

Father: one is as Christ when on earth turned to Him about everything; the other is as you learn Him in His own circle. In chapter xiv. He says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To make this known to us the Father sends the Holy Ghost in Christ's name. (Ver. 26.) In chapter xvii. He is declaring the Father in His own circle. In the gospels, Mark's Gospel for instance, the Lord, instead of altering your circumstances helps you by altering you in them. The Lord never changed a circumstance for Himself. He shewed that the Father would always raise a man superior to evil. Even when He was at the lowest point, deserted by His own, He says, "I am not alone, the Father is with me." People generally look for help in natural things by the removal of troubles. As I understand the word "Father," I derive from Him. It is the great point in John. I am brought into the divine circle. We constantly are looking for Him to come down and alter our circumstances here to suit us naturally, instead of rising up to His circle and entering on His things. The Lord when down here ever turned to the Father, and He was ever above things here according to the Father's circle. He had no model but that. Thus in the storm He is as placid and as quiet as if there were no storm; as restful in the care of the Father in the storm as in the calm.

He was ever in communion with the Father. He brought everything into consonance with the Father, and He did not seek that the Father should bring anything here into consonance with man. God was displayed in man's circumstances. You cannot know Him in glory, you cannot enjoy Him there, if you have not learned Him in your own circumstances. If you do not know His sympathy in your own circumstances surely you cannot be in communion with Him, in His circumstances.

W. B. What is "We will make our abode with him"? (Chap. xiv.)

J. B. S. The idea is He has a room in your heart. The word "abode" is the same as "mansion" in the early part of the chapter. We, as a rule, think most of His path down here; He *was* down here; but how was He sustained down here?

F. H. B. We are called to go through the circumstances down here in the same power that the Lord went through them.

J. B. S. When I am in a storm the natural wish of the heart is that the Lord would remove it. If I were in company with Him I should be as He was in the storm; He did not look for the removal of it.

Verses 1 and 2 are wonderful words. "Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son

also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh," etc. He now takes the place of the last Adam. The first Adam gave names to the animals according to the special quality of each. He gave them nothing. He was a man of great ability to discern their qualities as they passed by him. He designated them. The name was descriptive of the quality. But the last Adam can say "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should GIVE eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." He has all power in heaven and in earth, and His will is that those whom the Father has given Him should share in company with Himself. You cannot share with Him but in the circle where He is. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." He gives it. "The last Adam is a quickening spirit."

D. L. H. So we derive altogether from Him.

J. B. S. Every one in Christ is a new creature. We all derive from Him. Christ the first fruits, then they that are His at His coming. We did come from Adam; we come now from Christ. It is not only identity; we have His life where He lives. I have the life of Christ. I *enjoy* all that Christ is, but I am not all that Christ is. This verse shews I have a capacity to enjoy the Father and the Son. A little child in the com-

pany of his father hears and sees and in a degree enters into the things of his father, he has some of the tastes of his father, he is in a sense in communion there. We are often seeking something down here, instead of seeking to enter into and to enjoy the things of the Father.

F. H. B. In connection with His giving it is important to remember *how* He gives: "not as the world giveth give I unto you." He shares all that He possesses.

J. B. S. It is important to note the mode in which He imparts life. He breathed on them. He is a life-giving spirit. He shares with them of His own.

F. H. B. And does not the mediatorial manner in which we get it come out in verse 21?

J. B. S. We derive from Him; we are of His order. "Members of his body." It is not anything of Adam improved and made suitable to Him; it is all new. Some think that the old thing can be reconstructed, but that is not Christianity. Dear Mr. Bellett used to say, "Sublimate the flesh as much as you will, beloved, it will never yield spirit."

"I have glorified thee." The work is finished, all is done. It is important to apprehend, and a great help in the gospel, that Christ finished the Father's work, not merely the work for the sinner. Generally it is said the sinner has an

interest in the gospel; no doubt he has, a very great interest; but the Father, blessed be His name, has an interest in the gospel. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Everything that the Father desired for the sinner has been so done that the Father can kiss the returning prodigal. It is wonderful that all was finished for God before the sinner knew of it. All has been removed; all has been done to God's infinite satisfaction, so that the reception of the prodigal is boundless. The nearer you are the better off you are.

Q. Was it not too to bring out all the Father was to the sinner?

J. B. S. Until the work was finished God could not make known His heart to the sinner. Hence the gospel of the glory must be known before union with Christ is known. I do not say for the soul's salvation. Many a one is saved who never yet had a taste of the gospel of the glory. Here (John xvii.) all is done, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." There is nothing to hinder everything of the Father coming out. The love flows out of the mighty volume of His own heart, and according to His own righteousness. No "live coal" now, as in Isaiah vi. He has not abated His holiness one bit. Now that the work is done He can fulfil all that He had purposed from eternity.

W. B. What is propitiation ? (1 John iv.)

J. B. S. He had to make propitiation. Man was under the judgment of God ; all under judgment must be removed in judgment. All has been removed in the cross.

J. S. A. The entire question between God and man had to be settled, and then the Father's heart could come out.

J. B. S. That is the gospel of the glory. You find, as you approach the glory, instead of it repelling you, it invites you. In chapter xiii. you have a Man glorifying God. In chapter xvii. the Son glorifying the Father.

Verse 5: "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He goes up to the essential glory. We do not share in that.

T. H. R. Still it is wonderful that a Man has gone up there.

J. B. S. Yes, and that we belong to that Man.

Q. Is that the glory we shall behold ?

J. B. S. Yes, but not what we shall enter into.

Q. In doing the work for us He has obtained glory.

J. B. S. He obtained glory because He glorified God in doing the work. He obtained glory in bearing our judgment, and the glory He thus obtained He shares with us.

T. H. R. Is it not wonderful that God has taken a Man up there, and is going to be displayed in that Man.

J. B. S. Yes it is. I often say the Bible is the history of two men—Adam and Christ. Which man do you belong to? It is uncommonly hard to get rid of the old man; only God can do it for us.

T. H. R. You were saying, No one can take down a stone out of the old building but God.

J. B. S. You and I may try to get rid of ourselves, but God only can pull down or break the will. When you would like a stone to be taken down, God takes it down for you; but I do not think that He will remove it unless you desire it. "We who live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." If you really feel anything a hindrance, God will take it away. "We who *live*;" mind He rolls in death on the *living*. It is the stone before the wheel; it is relief to you when removed.

Q. What produces the desire?

J. B. S. Walking in the Spirit. The purpose of heart is to go on, and then the hindrance is discovered. Bearing about in my body the dying of Jesus is connected with 2 Corinthians iii. You are so transformed, so blessed, in beholding the glory of the Lord that you shrink from everything which interrupts you. You are glad to be

dead, insensible to every distraction. You like to keep in the sun.

F. H. B. What is the difference between manifesting the Father's name, in verse 6, and declaring it, in the last verse?

J. B. S. Manifesting is not the same thing as declaring. Declaring, is rather explaining or teaching, the word exegesis comes from it. Manifesting is presenting a thing whether seen or not. The Lord was manifested here, yet few saw Him. Manifesting is in chapter xiv. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

F. H. B. Then the declaring His name is His ministry by the word.

J. B. S. The word translated "declare" at the end of our chapter is properly "make known," and not the same word used in John i. 18. The Holy Ghost brought to the remembrance of the disciples all that had been manifested.

Q. What is the force of—"I have kept them in thy name?"

J. B. S. They were under a peculiar kind of protection; they did not comprehend it; they were under this divine control. I think we have but little idea of the effect of the Lord's presence with the disciples on earth—His great moral influence.

D. L. H. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," and "Did not our hearts burn within us," would be an illustration of it?

J. S. A. If they could not know the Father, except by the Spirit, why did the Lord say—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"

J. B. S. It shewed their dulness; they were qualified to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," because they had seen Him in Christ; they did not enter into it, but they were entitled to it. He did not put words into their mouths that they were not entitled to use. Faith could use them then; if that prayer was suitable to them then, it was not suitable to them when the Holy Ghost came.

D. L. H. With regard to the mode of expression, "Our Father which art in heaven," does not that same word characterise the mode of revelation which characterised the Lord on earth?

J. B. S. Exactly so; we could not speak in the same way now. Luke does not say "in heaven."

G. G. Does the expression "in heaven" give an idea of distance?

J. B. S. Yes, it shews you are looking up to heaven as though you had no access to it. Literally speaking we know very little of the Father. I am surprised how little we turn to the Father—pray to Him. You feel more confidence in turning to the Lord who knows all about you; but "the Father," when He is apprehended, carries you into a divine order of things; you

know you are in another circle. I don't think I could ask the Father for a fine day.

Q. "My God shall supply all your need."

J. B. S. Yes, God loves us; He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things. But the moment I say "Father" I feel I am His child belonging to His order of things. In chapter xvi. praying to the Father in Christ's name plants you in another order of things—Christ's things.

T. H. R. His name carries you there into His own circle. I ask for things concerning Himself. The Father has set His Son up there in His own circle.

Q. How does prayer come into that?

J. B. S. When you seek to be acquainted with the things belonging to Him. All things that the Father hath are mine.

T. H. R. He has gone to the Father, and that makes a new circle altogether, because the Son is gone to the Father. In His name you pray now; you are in a wholly new circle, and you are asking for those things that concern Him. You are not praying for the benefit of yourself down here.

J. B. S. That explains clearly the force of the Lord's words, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you." I ask

for the church, for all that concerns Christ. It is a wonderful thing to be assured that in the place where He was rejected if you ask the Father in His name *He* will give it. You ask in the interests of Christ. Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: In the *name* of Jesus Christ." &c. . . . He has gone to the Father, and you rightly take His name here. Ever so small a thing; for instance, a meeting room, if you can ask for it for Christ, it shall be given to you.

A. C. Who is the Lord of the harvest?

J. B. S. Christ, of course. I look to Him now as the Head of the church to send gifts according to His pleasure. I believe He has sent many gifts, but they are not all developed. There is a lot of "bearing" that hinders the gifts from development. If you lived in a coal district you would understand the word "bearing." You must remove the bearing before you can get the coal. You must get rid of the hindrance to the gift before you can exercise it.

Q. Would you go to the Lord or to the Father about that?

J. B. S. I think that gift is chiefly developed in the assembly. As to your service you should pray to the Lord. We should find out as we were near Him. A child soon finds out whether it should go to its father or its mother about a

thing. I could not lay down a rule. You may change in a moment from the Father to the Lord.

Q. What of chapter xiv. 13? "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do."

J. B. S. That is connected with power for yourself. Stephen is an example that you can be brought up to Christ where He is. There can be no greater work than that you should be superior to yourself by divine power.

It is not service in John xiv.; it is preparation for service; it is individual. It is lying down in green pastures. It is preparation for service. Stephen is prepared; he is in power for the work; he is for Christ now. It is like walking on the water. Christ is above everything; and it is not now with you, your own circumstances, but Christ's service; and you are so fitted, that you are able to rise above everything and stand for Him here in spite of everything.

G. G. "Full of the Holy Ghost." We ought to be that.

Q. You often hear people address God in prayer as "God and Father." Is that right?

J. B. S. I like it. I think they ought to be connected. I am rather afraid of saying Father without God. I am afraid of losing the sense of His greatness. In history you read of a prince who addressed the king as "Sire" in the begin-

ning of his letter, but ended it "your dutiful son." You have both the dignity of the Person and the knowledge of relationship. You would not like to lose the sense of who He is.

D. L. H. Ephesians begins with "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and in the two prayers (i. and iii.) he divides them.

J. B. S. The reverse of the order in John. John puts Father and God. Paul puts "God and Father."

The way to learn to pray is in Luke xi. I know that I can come to Him. I have confidence in Him. I know that He has what I want; I have it not; and I cannot get it anywhere else. I must continue asking until I get it, for I have no other resource. That is the way you learn to pray.

Q. We must remember, too, we have the Spirit of His Son.

J. B. S. There are two ways to pray: one way is, as a man on earth I make known all my requests to God. I may not get any answer at all, but I get much better, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. The other way is, I am asking according to His will; I am asking for the Lord's things. You do not know *how* the answer will come, but you know that it *will* come.

Q. How are we kept in the Father's name?

J. B. S. The Father has children. You are to come out in this world as of a new order, a new stock. "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." A new constitution, a new order of being according to the counsels of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" There are two conditions in sanctification. The one is, you are a new kind of being in the old place according to His workmanship; the other is, that as Christ has left this place altogether, you are dissociated in heart from this place. You are in nature not of the man here; and positionally your heart is apart from it because Christ has gone away.

You get the principle in Philippians iii. The apostle says, I prefer Christ to everything in man; that I call constitutional; you are a new creation. But then also you are "forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth to those things that are before;" that I call positional.

E. R. The truth made good in us by the Spirit.

A. H. The truth of the Father. The truth, as worked out in us; it is progressive.

J. B. S. You are a new creation, formed according to His own mind, *naturally* outside of this world, and *positionally* also outside of it. I said to Mr. D. when he was speaking of it, "Then

sanctification is immeasurable." "Yes," he said, "it is immeasurable." To be as much apart from this world as Christ is.

A. H. Did you not once say our present sanctification has all the elements of the future glory in it?

J. B. S. We have now morally all that we shall have actually. All that belongs to heaven, all that we shall have by-and-by forms us for heaven now. Nothing has the same effect on the world as sanctification. There are two things which should mark the saints, unity and sanctification. The more truly we are sanctified the more are we in unity, the more are we one. The more you are sanctified the more weight you will have with others. They may sneer at you and refuse you, but yet they respect it, and are impressed. It reminds me of Isaac and Abimelech. Abimelech did not seem to think much of Isaac when he was in his country, but when he left his country he sought him out and honoured him. True separation from the world has the greatest effect on people. Years ago the comment on us was, "how uncommonly separated they are." The testimony breaks down when we are not what we bear witness to.

A. H. What is the difference between the Father keeping us in His name and the Son having kept His disciples in the Father's name?

J. B. S. Christ was now going away unto the Father. While He was here He kept His own in the Father's name. They learned the Father from the Son upon earth. Now He has gone to the Father, and you are brought to the Father in and by Him; and now you are directly kept by the Father, kept here as the children of the Father.

Q. Is the "I will declare Thy name" in the last verse identical with the first?

J. B. S. I think in the last verse He is carrying out what He referred to in the first—I have made known and will make known. Then follows "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." That is the love that keeps you from the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If I know the Father loves me, that I am the object of His love, it is wonderful the dignified separation from the world which it confers.

Q. What is "I in them?"

J. B. S. We are never apart from Him. He is the source of everything to us. Your greatest gain is that He should dwell in your heart. His tastes and pleasure would then be yours. This is to "win Christ." You get it in Ephesians iii., and in Colossians, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

A. H. Will you say a word on the three unities in the chapter?

J. B. S. Verse 11 refers to the disciples alone ; verse 21, "one in us," that takes us all in. It is not so much unity as *oneness*. It is unity of mind, "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." What a spectacle to the world the saints of God would be if all were of one mind ! The Son had one mind with the Father. That is the pattern of the oneness. I believe this chapter will be fulfilled in the New Jerusalem—every one in his place ; no dislocation. The nearer we are to the Lord the more unworldly we are. If you could find two brothers equally sanctified they would be exactly of the same mind. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Many a thing a man does not understand because he is worldly. If he got out of the world he would understand it. Many a thing that is abstruse to him, if he were out of the world he would see clearly. There will be no such thing as any difference of mind in heaven—all perfectly joined together in one mind, one judgment.

D. L. H. "All the mind in heaven is one."

J. B. S. Exactly so