

NOTES
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SEPARATION BY AND TO THE TRUTH.

(JOHN XIV. 21-26.)

WHEN Israel, after their redemption from Egypt, began their wilderness journey, they began it with the law to govern them. They had the commandments of God as a *law imposed* on them. But *we*, beloved brethren, that is, Christians looked at corporately as the church set in responsibility down here (for the church has a path down here), have the commandments of Christ, and the ever abiding Comforter. If we look at the church as in Christ there is no responsibility, all is secure; but down here she has a path to tread, and that is connected with responsibility.

In the beginning of this chapter the Lord said to His disciples, "I am the way"; it is the way to the Father, but that is the divine way for His people; they have as led and guided by the Spirit of truth to walk as He walked. His path led to the Father. In their journey Israel had not only the law, but the pillar-cloud—the presence of God—to lead them. *We* have the Spirit. We have to tread the path, Christ being the way, in the power of the Spirit.

The relationship of Christ as Son with the Father is really the key to this chapter. It is no longer a question of His relationship to His disciples as the Messiah, but He puts before them His own relationship with the Father. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" That is a relationship which is not connected with the course of dispensations in this world. As Messiah He did come in that way, and when He comes again in glory He will take His rightful place as the Head of all dispensations. But what He was leading His disciples into was His relationship to the Father outside of all dispensation, and He would have them know the Father in Him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Having put this relationship before them, the subject opens which I have specially before me; it begins in verse 15, "If ye love me, *keep my commandments*. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." "*My commandments*," not the commandments of an imposed law. Then in the verses I read we have not only His commandments but His words. We really know the Son through His words; it was in that way alone that He could be known when He was on earth by those around Him. He ever spoke the words of God though it was through human lips, and thus the truth of His Person as Son of God

could be known, if any had ears to hear. No one by natural sense could pierce through the veil of His humiliation and recognise the Son of God. When He walked by the shores of the sea of Galilee, or in the streets of Jerusalem, who could have told that the lowly Man they saw was the Son of God? but when He spoke, His words told who He was to those who heard His voice in their inner being; it depended upon having ears to hear. You find in His words the blessed, deep, divine waters of life. "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook." When He spoke, His words were the utterance of the depths of His own heart of love, and who could fathom those depths, though those who heard were conscious of the outflow? Would we not have liked to have heard a few words from His lips? The Spirit has come, not only that His words might be recorded in scripture, but also that we might drink at the well-spring of wisdom and life. What a ministry of love lay in the words of Jesus, blessed Son of the Father, as He was down here! His words express to us what He was, and what was in His heart and mind.

The special point I desire to draw your attention to is the way in which the Lord speaks of the individual in the verses I read. "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it*

is that loveth me." In connection with this, what I would bring before you is the necessity there is for us to have hearts prepared to listen to the commandments of Jesus, that they may form us as being the communications of His own mind for us ; but in order to have this preparation of heart we need to be separate from present things. It is a point of all moment for us to-day : Have we heard the words of Jesus, the Son of God, so as to separate us to Himself ? Can we say, I have heard His words and there is no one like Him ? If a man tries to be devoted by effort, he will only attain to a kind of monkism, but if the governing power be the voice of Jesus, if *His* words sound in the heart, the effect would be separating.

I ask my beloved brethren, How far are we walking as a separated people ? We may have left the religious systems, and yet we may be worldly in our thoughts and ways. This period (the church period) is that special period in which God is separating a people from the course of things on earth, that they may be linked by the power of the Spirit with an absent and glorified Man in heaven. It is important for each individual to have the sense of this, but it is at the close of this period that separation becomes more marked ; it was so at the close of the Jewish testimony, whether we look at it before the captivity or when gathered back as in

the days of Malachi. In the parable of the net in Matthew xiii. we are shewn a great mass drawn out of the sea of nations; they were of every kind and they represent what is called Christendom. It seems to me that the action of the Spirit of God is now specially in taking the good from the bad; so to Jeremiah the Lord said, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." It is not taking the vile from the precious, as it will be in the kingdom, but taking the precious from the vile. Thus it was with the fishermen; and I doubt not the special action of the Spirit of God would be in that direction, and the servant of the Lord would lead the saints in the path of separation.

My impression is that in these verses there is a kind of double meaning in the Lord speaking of the individual. It is often so in scripture. In saying "*He* that hath my commandments," &c., the Lord really opens the door to the Gentile. The Jew might have claimed Him as the Messiah, but the Lord is speaking in the truth of His relationship with the Father: "the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." That is outside of all dispensation, and could not be confined to the Jew. Ah! no; it is "*If a man* love me," be he Jew or Gentile. It is hearing the words of Jesus and keeping them, and that is individual and of moral import. It characterises the man, be he

who he may. But besides thus opening the door to a Gentile, or to whoever kept Christ's commandments, there is another meaning. While the Lord was here He was gathering His disciples around Himself in the deep and blessed power of love, because love must gather, and He gathered them to have part with Him in the love of the Father and the Father's house. When grace reaches a soul it is attracted to Christ, and when one attracted to Christ sees grace working in others, it is attracted also to them. There is a gathering, uniting power in grace, and the disciples were held together by the grace of Christ. Chapter xv. shews us that in loving one another there would be a testimony to all that they were disciples of Christ. This involved responsibility, and what is set in responsibility may fail, but then Christ our life-giving Head can never fail. His communications to the church, as set in responsibility to hear Him, may fail as to their reception, because of the state of the church; but if the individual has an ear to hear, he will get a peculiar apprehension of Christ and of Christ's interests. "I will manifest myself to him." The word of Christ separates to Himself, and this is true for the individual when the responsible body has failed. If we keep Christ's commandments, they will necessarily separate us from that which is insubject to Him; it will not be the

effect of effort but of love; it is not merely giving up this or that but gaining Christ. In Him is the deep well-spring of love, and His words are the revelation of Himself. If any one of us gets a word from Him, we do not know where it will end; it is like a flowing brook. If He gives commandments we shall find they are in connection with the circle of His own love. He loves the Father, and He would have us in the circle of that love. He loves those who believe on Him, who are His, and His commandment is that we should love them. There is not one who has ever heard a word from His lips who is not precious to the Lord Jesus, not one that He does not nourish and cherish. How dear every believer in the Lord Jesus is to Him! Has He not spoken to *us*? Does He not attract our hearts and thus separate us to Himself? The effect of separation to Himself is that we shall keep His commandments; we shall be free to love one another because it is His commandment. With the words of Jesus in our souls (and they are a deep well-spring of love) it will not be difficult to love one another and to take in all saints. When He was here the disciples who followed Him were of different dispositions and temperaments, and doubtless all had received His words in a different way according to their various needs. The words of Jesus reached them in

this way or that according to their character, and there might be all that which would tend to disunite, but there was a power in Christ which held them all to Himself. Is that power less to-day? I do not believe it is. It is the remark of another, that the disciples drawn to Christ at the beginning of this gospel are found with Him at the close. Jesus held each of them to Himself. To whom else could they go, for His words were spirit and life? Are not His words spirit and life to us to-day? Has He not held us together by the truth which His words have taught us, while embracing in our thoughts all saints?

His words come to us first to separate us to Himself, but there is another way in which they act: "To him that hath shall more be given." When we are separated to Himself, then we are in the position to receive and understand more of His communications. We may perhaps read our Bibles with more intelligence than other Christians, and we may have books and periodicals to instruct us, but it would be a sad thing to be occupied with mere intelligence; we need to be separated *to Christ*, and our desire should be to see other Christians drawn to Him also. I see a power in Christ *to gather* and to hold those He gathers to the end. Do you not believe this, beloved brethren? There is in us that which would tend to scatter; but the grace

in Christ gathers and holds, and with us there should be the more excellent way of love, the fruit of having drunk of the well-spring of wisdom.

There are two or three illustrations in the opening chapters of Luke which shew that the communications of the mind of heaven were made to those who were in a condition to receive them, and they have interested me much of late. Heaven had great interests on earth at that moment. Indeed, so it has now. But the birth of Christ, and of John His forerunner, were events on earth which set the interest of heaven in motion. Look at Zacharias and Elizabeth: they were walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and to them a glad message comes from heaven. Zacharias, too, was a man of prayer, and they were both righteous before God. They were, I may say, a separated people according to the dispensation they were in, and had the character of the righteous remnant. To Zacharias comes a heavenly visitor to communicate the words of God. Now turn to Mary, twice she calls herself the handmaiden (really the bondwoman) of the Lord. She takes the lowly place of a servant, though espoused to a man of the house of David; she is not in Zion, but in despised Nazareth, but she is "highly favoured of the Lord," and to her Gabriel is sent with the message from heaven.

It is a great thing for any of us to be servants, and to have our ears opened to the mind of heaven.

I pass on to the shepherds. They were godly men feeding their flocks in the very fields where David kept his flocks of old. They are brought into touch with heaven also, and what has heaven to speak to *them* about while Israel were sleeping? People take up newspapers to read of what is going on in the world, or to find their interest in social or scientific questions; but here I see that heaven communicates with these lowly, God-fearing shepherds. "To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour." A message from heaven comes to them which calls forth the chorus of the heavenly host: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." Such a communication was not made to the Pharisees in their religiousness, or to Sadducees in their rationalism, or to Herodians in their pride.

But what puts Christians in touch with heaven? The Spirit is given to us that our hearts might be occupied with the glorified Man who is there. The Spirit has come down *from* Him to witness *of* Him now that He is gone from earth to heaven. If this had more effect with us, would we not be more separated to Him, in order that He might manifest Himself to us? I can understand Christians saying, if the Lord

were here how I would have desired to hear words from His own lips; but He told His disciples that it was expedient for them that He should go away in order that the Comforter might come. The Comforter came to take His place and to abide for ever; He would bring, when He came, to their remembrance all things whatsoever Jesus had said to them, not exactly what He did but what He said. The miracles He did were the corroboration of the words of His lips. He was what He said; life-giving power was in His words. It was not so with His miracles (see John ii. 23), but His words speak to heart and conscience. I see grace and compassion in all that He did, but His words I value, blessed words from His lips recorded by the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit made to echo and re-echo in our hearts. In how many hearts have not His words to the poor woman of Luke vii., "Thy sins be forgiven thee," been made to echo by the Spirit? Not only does the Spirit cause the words of Jesus to be quickening power in our souls, but as come from heaven He reveals an Object, and no one of us can live without an object; though our Object is in glory, yet we know Him there and that we shall be with Him and like Him.

I will give you one other illustration from the Old Testament of a separated man getting divine communications. I refer to Abraham

after he had separated from Lot. Perhaps some of us may be tempted to speak of what we have given up. Abraham had given up country, kindred and his father's house; and afterwards he surrenders to Lot. He gives Lot the choice, content to take what Lot leaves. He is now separated from one who was both a relative and a righteous man, but earthly minded, and God comes to this separated man. See him afterwards sitting at his tent door on the plain of Mamre, and again we see how near he is to heaven. He entertains angels unawares. Do you not covet, beloved brethren, these heavenly visitations? Not by angels exactly, but now that the Comforter is here, there is a power which can enable us to understand and appreciate the manner that the Lord takes to communicate His interests to one who is separated to Him.

One word more which I feel to be important with reference to the supper of the Lord. I am sure it speaks to all our hearts as nothing else does, because it speaks to us of the death of Christ. It commands our affections, assuring us, as it does, of the depth of His love to us. It assures us that everything that is contrary has been removed in that death, so that we may be free to enjoy His deep and blessed love. We can be there in liberty. Do you believe, dear young Christian, that you can open your heart to enjoy the love of which the supper speaks to you,

because the death of Christ has removed everything as to yourself which might be a hindrance to your enjoying it? Hence the Lord's supper is a precious moment of *communion* on earth with that which opens out into eternal blessings. But there is more. If I look up into heaven, what then? I see One who has gone up there in righteousness, that righteousness accomplished in His work down here, but which subsists in heaven before God. There is not then a thing to hinder my looking up to heaven, for He is there my righteousness. If I think of Him in glory, I must think of holiness, for it is holy glory as well as holy love. The effect of communion with His death, and of looking up to Him in the glory is, that it separates us and conforms us. "We, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." Can I, may I, look at it? Yes, I may. The more I look up there, the more I see how the work of Calvary—all the deep woe of the One who suffered there, has met every claim against me, everything that conscience could charge me with. I look up to the glory, for there is the blessed Man who bore my sins and met all that I was in death. He is my title; He is my righteousness; and looking at Him you and I can enjoy holy glory and holy love. The more glorious and holy the place the better, because all that was contrary to holy glory has been removed so that we might be free to

enjoy holy love. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Let us not content ourselves with anything less than being drawn into the company of Christ by the words of His love, that they may echo and re-echo in our hearts by the power of His Spirit. Be it so for His name's sake.

T. H. R.

THE FATHER. THE WORLD. THE REMNANT.

(READ 1 JOHN II, 14-17.)

THERE are three points in connection with this scripture. The first is the Father, the second is the world, and the third is he that doeth the will of God.

God *our* Father is used in scripture to distinguish that Person from the other Persons of the Godhead, but when the Father is used it carries with it the thought of sonship.

In Ephesians i. 2 we read, "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father," but in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father;" here the two expressions are placed close together, and the context shews the difference.

The expression God and Father implies a double relationship. God refers to manhood, and Father to sonship. Thus God our Father presents *one* thought, while God and Father present two.

We constantly use the expression in prayer, and very beautiful it is, "God our Father," but in using it, God only is addressed.

The Lord Jesus said (in John xiv.), "I am the way . . . no man cometh to the Father but by me." In the thought of the saints coming to

the Father priestly access is intimated. The knowledge of sonship is necessary for the intelligent use of the term Father.

How much do we know of what this means? is a wholesome question for each one. I have myself been much inclined to take up the language of Philip, "shew us the Father." The answer the Lord gave Philip was, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John xiv. 9.)

Until Christianity came the Son had all the affections of the Father to Himself. He had the monopoly of the Father's love and all else that was peculiar to that inner circle. No one had any share in it, for it was not opened, and also no one was competent to enter into any part of it.

We read in John viii. 36, "If the Son therefore shall make you free." This intimated that that inner circle of divine affections was about to be opened, and that persons would be free to enter into them.

Thus the highest privilege is to be permitted to come to the Father *now*; but we cannot come apart from Him—the Son—who is the way to the Father.

We need to know more about the Father; we have been familiar with the expression God our Father, but "the Father" gives another range of thought, and this is what we find in the scripture we have read.

It is the highest point the Lord leads us to, therefore He said, "I am the way [mark He Himself is the way, so] no man comes to the Father but by me." This coming implies movement of soul in the saints. It is a great privilege to come to the Father; we cannot do it independently, but only as we are in company with Him who is the way, and in doing so we turn our backs on the religious world.

Now a word about the world. What is the force in scripture of the expression? In the scripture we have read it is placed in opposition to the Father.

It is well to see that the world has two sides to it, one the religious side, and the other the secular side. Like a coin of the realm which has two devices and two inscriptions, these we cannot separate, so if we accept one side we must have the other too.

Often persons have divergence of judgment, because one is speaking of the religious side and the other of the secular. In Revelation ii. 14 we read in the address to Pergamos, "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." This reference to the Book of Numbers gives very clearly the religious and social side of the world. The allowance of some part of the

religion of the world is a great hindrance to apprehending what coming to the Father means. It may not hinder us so much in coming to God, but it will in coming to the Father. If the religion of the world is accepted, the social goes with it. The children of Israel thought little of eating the things sacrificed to idols, but having done that, they soon became entangled with the daughters of Moab. Thus to-day having a little part in the religion which man has set up soon leads to social entanglements.

If we know the Father we shall discern the religion of the world never originated with the Father. There may be a great deal which is outwardly commendable in false religion, as zeal, self-denial, kindness and other features, but it is not of the Father but of the world. I fear we are not ashamed of corrupt Christianity as we ought to be, for if we were we should not tamper with it. Often some (who ought to know better) think they can see something good in the religious ways of the world, but do not ponder on the origin of them.

The remedy is to ask ourselves, Did that originate with the Father? We should imitate the ways of the pioneers of Christianity as seen in the Acts of the Apostles, and then we should not borrow anything from worldly religion.

Cain was the first recorded man who approached God with worldly religion, and failing

to find acceptance, he turned to social hatred and killed his brother. We can trace false religion all through scripture and always find its features the same, although differing in detail. A great danger for those who have had light given to them, is to tamper a little with the religious side of the world because there is something in it which appears right.

But if such could ask themselves, Did it originate with the Father? is it of Him? the snare would be broken. Every particle of pure religion originated with the Father thus: "The Father sent the Son." This is the origin, and everything that came out subsequently is of the same character. Again, if any of the religion of the world is accepted, then the social element goes with it, one must go with the other. Demas, once in the company of Paul and the light of that day, was drawn aside by the religious world. (See 2 Tim. iv. 10.) The young men in John's epistle were past the brazen serpent in doctrine, for they were strong and had overcome the wicked one in his violence, but they were in danger of the religious system of Judaism. Social things are always controlled by religion, so that nothing vexes a man so much as touching his religion. Be he a Jew or a heathen, or an unconverted man who may boast of his knowledge of Christianity. (Comp. Dan. iii. 18, 19; Acts v. 28; xix. 26; Rev. xiii. 15.)

Failure comes in amongst the Lord's people through adopting worldly religion.

Coming to the Father delivers us from taking anything from the world. As we use this privilege we shall readily discern what is of the Father, and what is of the world.

The young men were vigorous; they had passed the brazen serpent and learned that life is in Christ as the Son and the last Adam, but all this knowledge would not keep them, unless they possessed the love of the Father. Thus "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15.)

The religion of the world has ever been the snare of the people of God.

Let us now look at the third part of our subject: "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." In Revelation ii. 24 there is a remnant spoken of, and they are found on earth when the Lord comes.

What marks a remnant is, they bear the original character which marked the believers at the beginning of Christianity. This character is described in this passage as "he that doeth the will of God." Surely this marked Christ when as man He was on the earth, so those who do the will of God bear the mark of Christ upon them. This will be made manifest when the kingdom is set up. Every particle of worldly religion will have passed away, but pure religion will abide.

What an encouragement, that he that does the will of God abides for ever!

When the Lord looked at the church at Thyatira He saw the mass gone away to worldly religion with its false teaching, but also there were some who did not go, and to them He said: "I will put upon you none other burden." He might have imposed some further doctrine for them to keep; but He said: "Hold fast till I come." That was a precious word to the remnant.

It does not always follow because a few are seeking to hold fast that all who are with them are doing the same. Each one for himself must do it, and such individuals find out others, and thus a company remains which bears the character of the remnant. Then grace is needed to continue till Christ comes.

Thus the verse we have considered is very full; we could hardly find one fuller in scripture. "The Father," what a range of thought and reality that introduces. Then the world, another range, which takes in idolatry and corrupted Christianity, and, finally, "he that does the will of God," which brings in the truth of a remnant which will be found when the Lord comes.

G. W. Gy.



READING.

(REV. III. 7-22.)

A. E. P. I thought we might take up the subject of the church in responsibility.

W. J. I had before me the difference between the place which the church has in the ways of God and its peculiar place according to divine purpose, and that would include your thought.

W. W. How does the church come out in the ways of God?

T. H. R. As the house of God down here.

F. H. B. And as the new Jerusalem in the world to come.

T. H. R. The church comes in in the ways of God when Israel is for the time set aside.

F. C. Is the church set here to carry on the testimony of God?

T. H. R. Yes.

F. H. B. It is, as Mr. R. said, the vessel of testimony.

W. T. P. W. Is the candlestick still here?

T. H. R. Yes; for although it has failed, Christ holds it to its responsibility as a vessel of light.

F. W. G. Does not God still maintain the light in spite of the failure ?

F. H. B. The Spirit of God maintains the testimony.

T. H. R. Where are you going to find any light of God save in Christianity ? God made this earth, and there is a certain history in His mind connected with it, and in that history His ways in its government and order have been developed. The heavens and earth and the ordering of the earth as placed under Adam came to an end in the flood. There was no dispensation previous to the flood. Dominion had been in the hands of Adam, but that failed and Adam was driven out of Eden. After the flood God put the earth under *government*, so that evil might be repressed ; there was no evil in Paradise, but simply dominion in goodness. There was individual testimony from Adam downward, but there was not a vessel of testimony until Israel were redeemed. The ways of God, properly speaking, are connected with the heavens and earth that are now, and the church comes in, as Mr. J. was saying, in these ways of God, as Matthew xvi. shews us.

W. J. What scripture would you turn to to see the church in the purpose of God ?

T. H. R. I should turn to Ephesians for that.

W. T. P. W. What do you understand by the term, "mystery" ?

T. H. R. The church taking the place of Israel in the ways of God was not the mystery, but Jew and Gentile united to Christ now that He is glorified in heaven.

A. E. P. The mystery would be more; it would include the body too, would it not?

T. H. R. Yes; that He should have a body down here upon earth which should be united to Him by the Spirit while He is in the glory. All that was in the purpose of God, but could not come out until Christ had died and risen.

A. E. P. Would you attach responsibility to the manifestation of Christ in His body here?

T. H. R. Yes; one can see the difference between our being in Christ where there is no responsibility at all and Christ being in us and we set to manifest Him.

W. G. B. "Mystery" is a term which applies in a wider way. We get the "mystery of his will."

T. H. R. And "the mystery of God" also. There was a secret thread of purpose running underneath all God's ways and outward dealings with men. We can see that in the light of the New Testament. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" refers, I think, to this secret line. Old Testament saints did get hold of something outside of the public and manifested government of God in His dealings

with men. The mystery of God will be finished when all the result of His ways is manifested.

W. J. Do you not think it is important to distinguish between what the church is to Christ, what she is for His pleasure, and in its administration ?

T. H. R. Yes ; the first great thought of the church, as seen in Christ, is that it will be for God's own delight. "To him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus throughout all ages." God will have the greatest delight in what He has created, for in the church every trait of the beauty and grace of Christ will be before Him for His own delight. Then I think God always wanted to manifest Himself so that He might be known in His own creation by all intelligent beings in His love and beneficence, and the church will be the vessel, as formed in the divine nature by the all various wisdom of God, in which He will be known.

W. T. P. W. In millennial days or in eternity ?

T. H. R. I think it goes on to eternity. The new Jerusalem in the millennium is seen as the vessel of the glory of God ; in the eternal state it is looked at more as the dwelling-place of God Himself than as the vessel of His glory. The one is more display, the other the fruition of the divine nature.

W. J. I suppose you would say that the new

man could not be satisfied with the millennial state. It must go on to eternity ?

T. H. R. Yes ; and I understand, therefore, that when the church comes out in the eternal day as a bride adorned for her husband, it is that she comes out as the tabernacle of God, the dwelling-place of divine love.

W. J. I think there could not be a perfect condition of things in the millennium, because it is transitional.

T. H. R. I think the millennium is only to lead on to the eternal state. In Ephesians everything is in view of what is eternal. "The dispensation of the fulness of times" is, no doubt, the millennium, but the heading up of all things in Christ is with a view to the eternal state. The millennium will be the display of God's glory in government, and in the eternal state there will be the blessed repose of God's nature.

W. J. While there is a great deal about the kingdom in scripture, what the church is to Christ is a greater thing than that certainly. The glory of the kingdom is great, yet the church must be more to His heart.

T. H. R. Of course. He gave up the kingdom to have the church.

F. C. Could any dispensation be God's end ?

T. H. R. No.

W. B. Where does "the world to come" come in ?

T. H. R. The millennium. Christ gave up all the kingdom glories that He might possess the church. As a matter of fact, you could not get the kingdom brought out without the church. The kingdom is connected with glorious rule, but that is not all. In Israel the sanctuary was attached to the kingdom. Supposing I went into a house and saw everything in most beautiful order, and the administration perfect, and yet I might see a want of tone. The husband and wife ought to give the tone to the house, a tone of love which breathes throughout the whole household down to the servants. So the breathing of a heavenly tone in the millennium will be through Christ and the church. God and the Lamb are the temple or sanctuary of the new Jerusalem.

A. E. P. Where does responsibility come in ?

T. H. R. The church is entrusted with the knowledge of these things, the Spirit of God leading her into the deepest intimacy with Christ. And as having this knowledge she now is a vessel of testimony in connection with what will come out by-and-by.

W. B. When you speak of the church in the secondary sense, do you include all who are professors ?

T. H. R. No ; but as according to the mind of God.

W. T. P. W. What is the difference between

the responsibility in Adam and responsibility in the church?

T. H. R. I think Adam was set in a certain sphere of responsibility and failed, and the church is set in another sphere, as having the testimony of Christ and the word of God—the light and knowledge of God. The day will come when the heavens will open and all that has been established in Christ will come out, and the church herself will come out with Christ in that day. But the church is in the secret of God's mind and of Christ's glory now. Therefore she has the place of a vessel of testimony as to God's ways in grace, and also of His purposes for His own glory in Christ.

A. S. L. When it is a question of mystery it involves those who are initiated. There can be no answering to responsibility save as we are in the secret of a glorified Man in heaven. We are waiting for the unveiling of all that is now hid, but which will be manifested when the heavens open.

T. H. R. The apostle says to the Corinthians: "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." I understand "the testimony of the Christ" is the testimony of the exalted and glorified Man at God's right hand, and all that is connected with Him. "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Whilst waiting they had got the testi-

mony of that glorious Man, and of all that is coming out in Him in the day of His revelation out of heaven.

D. L. H. Say a word as to individual and corporate responsibility.

T. H. R. There is individual responsibility as to my own conduct, and when a certain order of things has been established by God, I am responsible in regard to that. In the scripture before us we have intense individuality: "He that hath an ear." If I belong to the house of God I cannot get rid of my responsibility in regard to His house.

A. E. P. When the church has failed in responsibility it becomes a question of over-coming.

F. H. B. The church is left here as the vessel of light, and that light is the revelation of God in Christ.

T. H. R. If I remember rightly, in the setting up of the candlestick of old, the lighting of it and attention to it belonged to Aaron *and his sons* (Exo. xxvii. 21), but in the end of Leviticus, after failure had come in, we find the responsibility devolved upon Aaron alone to maintain the light in the house of God, and that shews me that while there is the general fact of the church as associated with Christ being responsible for the testimony, yet after all Christ, as the great High Priest, maintains it, though the candlestick

has failed to give light. In Laodicea, where there is no testimony in the church, the Lord speaks of Himself as the faithful and true Witness. He maintains, as the true Aaron, the light even now, no doubt through those who have ears to hear.

E. D. The church is always in the place of responsibility until the Lord comes.

T. H. R. When Laodicea is here pure and simple then the Lord will come.

W. J. It is a very great comfort that all the resources are in the Spirit for us still, that we should be awakened out of our sleep.

E. D. Why is the angel addressed, and not the assembly, when it is a question of responsibility ?

T. H. R. My own impression is that when the Lord uses symbols, we get moral elements and not details, so that we may not be occupied with them, such as times and events. The point that the Spirit brings before us is contained in the symbol, and the angel was the symbolic representative of church responsibility before the Lord. No doubt there are those who have the place of responsibility, but I could not go beyond that.

W. T. P. W. The rapture and the removal of the candlestick are synchronous.

QUES. How far does this question of responsibility go to-day ?

T. H. R. Saints are responsible to maintain the light of a heavenly Christ.

A. E. P. It is remarkable that in a book where you get God's judgment on all, and where the church fails in responsibility, you get its revelation in glory.

T. H. R. You do not get the Lord God Almighty, names taken in time, nor is the Lamb seen in the holy city in the eternal state. It is the tabernacle of God in the blessedness of His nature, and man brought into sonship. "I will be his God and he shall be my son;" not exactly sonship as we know it in association with Christ, but He is the Head of the whole blessed family; this I gather from Ephesians i. 22 and I Corinthians xv. 28. The church belongs to what is eternal, but takes her place in the ways of God as the witness of redemption, and of the glorified Man in heaven, being united to Him; and then in the millennium she takes her place in the consummation of the ways of God, but belonging properly to what is eternal.

W. J. Do you not think that in the Revelation we have the earth in view all the time? It is heaven acting in view of the earth.

T. H. R. I would not say that only the earth is *in view*, but earth and heaven. The heavenly places have to be cleared. (Chap. xii.) Properly the church belongs to what is outside of dispensation altogether, though she occupies the

heavenly places with Christ in the millenium.

W. B. Where will the church have her eternal dwelling-place? Is it in heaven or on earth?

T. H. R. Its *characteristic* is that it descends from God out of heaven. That is the great point. We belong to the Father's house, while we take our place in the kingdom.

A. E. P. I was thinking, Mr. B., the point is not so much where *the church* dwells, but that it is the dwelling-place of God. It is where *God* dwells.

T. H. R. As to Philadelphia, as set in responsibility, to my mind the close and beginning of a dispensation are two different things. Philadelphia comes at the close. At the beginning the gospel went out in a world-wide though always in a *sovereign* way. Paul was forbidden to preach in Asia, and could not go into Bithynia because the Spirit suffered them not, still there was no hindrance to the light going out because of a failed vessel; but at the end of the dispensation, when we have the mustard tree and a leavened mass, we get an open door for those who keep Christ's word and do not deny His name, and thus the knowledge of Christ will be brought to those who are given Him of the Father. It is not merely doors opened for preaching the gospel, but for hearing His voice. It was so in the

ministry of the Lord. At the beginning we see Him as sower, scattering the seed abroad ; but at the close, He speaks of the porter opening the door so that His sheep heard His voice.

D. L. H. In Philadelphia they make everything of Christ, and in Laodicea they make everything of themselves.

T. H. R. Yes, you get intimacy with Christ in the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia, and in the world to come the promises are all in connection with this acknowledged place of intimate association. One sees all the elements of Laodicea around us, but whether, in the mind of Christ, the moment has come when He is positively refused and outside the door, I could hardly say. It seems to me that everything would be over in that event.

J. W. S. Say a word on " Hold fast that which thou hast."

T. H. R. I believe what the church has is association with Christ. That is the crown to my mind. Whatever the failure may be in the vessel set in testimony, nothing touches the link with Christ by the Spirit which belongs to the church, and which the overcomer lays hold of. What you get afterwards in the promise is thorough and perfect association with Christ—the name of *my* God, and the name of the city of *my* God and *my* new name." While we walk in the midst of the present state of things

and have to own the ruin, yet, like the remnant of Israel, such as Simeon and Anna, we have to look out for Christ. He says to Philadelphia, "Behold I come quickly," and we have to keep the word of His patience.

A. M. Is there any reason for having the temple and city in connection with association with Christ?

T. H. R. We get the two things constantly connected in scripture: we have the sanctuary and the dominion in Psalm cxiv.; the city is where dominion is administered, but God is known in His sanctuary. It is wonderful to think we are permitted to be connected with the interests of Christ down here, as we shall be in the age to come.

W. J. If we know what should have been we must mourn for what is, but we rejoice in what shall be.



THE ASSEMBLY.

(EPH. v. 25-29.)

THE words in verse 25 are more what is in my mind—what the church is, the love of Christ to the church, and the place the church has in the counsels of God. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there is a great deal about the mystery of God; it is brought to light there and unfolded before us. The apostle speaks more of it in the Epistle to the Ephesians, I suppose, than anywhere else, and of that mystery Christ and the assembly are the central point. It is what God had purposed before the world was, and it is spoken of as being hid in God from the ages, but now made manifest. But while it was hid in God it was coming out in past dispensations in various ways. The apostle turns back, you will notice, in almost the last verse which I read, to the very commencement—to innocency, to Adam and Eve. The greatest type we have of Christ and the assembly comes out at the very beginning. What Eve was to Adam, the church is to Christ. Eve was taken out of Adam. God said of Adam that it was not good that man should be alone, I will make a helpmeet for

him. She was his *like* or *counterpart*. Adam gives her one name when she was presented to him, and after the fall he gives her another. He called her "woman," because she was taken out of man; and after the fall he called her Eve, because she was the mother of all living. I think that is all very interesting and instructive to us. I will not attempt to build any doctrine upon it, but now that we know a little the relation of the assembly to Christ, and the place the assembly has in the counsels of God as unfolded to us in the scriptures, we may learn a great deal, I think, from these two names.

I will now read a few verses from chapter iv. 8-16. The church is the only thing, I suppose, that Christ is said to love. We get "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," and in the death of Christ the kindness and love of God toward man has been made manifest. God commends His love towards us, in that Christ died for us, so that the kindness and love of God are expressed towards the whole world. It is world-wide, but when you come to the love of Christ—I am not speaking of His love to the Father, but to man—the church is the only family that Christ is said to love; He loved the church and gave Himself for it. I can understand a person saying that the church had no real

existence when Christ gave Himself for it, but I think it had an existence in the volume of the book of God's counsels. It was portrayed there in all its attractiveness and beauty and glory, and such was the charm of it, if I may use the word, that Christ loved it and gave Himself for it.

Now Christ has gone up on high, far above all heavens, as the One who is to fill all things. Wonderful word! It is not merely that He is going to fill you and me, or that He is going to fill the earth, but He is going to fill "*all things*." He has gone "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." He is going to fill all things; but what with? I can understand a person saying, With Himself; but then I think He is going to fill all things with GOD.* He is going to fill the whole universe with the light of the knowledge of God. But before He went up on high He went into the lower parts of the earth, He went down to the very lowest point of dishonour, and He went there for His bride. Not only so, but He went there also in order that the whole heart of God might be declared in its

* The effulgence of God will shine forth through the assembly. It is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.)

mighty volume of love. I suppose that is why Christ is called the "Word of God," because He makes God known. In the Gospel of John we are told, "In the beginning was the Word," and that "all things were made by him;" that is, the creation was His work, and the creation brought to light something of God. Creation is always attributed to the Son. "He [that is, God] spoke, and it was done." It was by the word of His power, it was by Christ. The way God spoke at the beginning only declared His power and divinity, but that is not all that God intended should be known of Himself. God intended to declare all that He was, not only in His attributes, but in the mighty love of His heart; and therefore Christ has not only to bring a creation into existence which would declare His power and divinity, but to become a man and go down to the very dust of death in order that all that God is in love might be brought out in death's domain. He went down into the lower parts of the earth and now He has gone up again that He might fill all things, and I think He will fill all things with what came out in the lower parts of the earth. There all that God is was declared, not only His attributes but His very nature, and when God is known by His intelligent creatures, "*God is love.*"

Next, He is going to have a vessel which will

contain all that light, a vessel which is really to be His fulness. Hence, when He went up on high, you get the workmen. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets," &c. (Vers. 11, 12.) What is it for? "The perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ." He wants a body to disperse the light that is in Himself to the utmost limits of the realm of God. That is what the body is being formed for. Hence it is, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ." But then another thing. What is it formed by? It derives from Himself, just as Eve was derived from Adam. We all know how he was put to sleep and a rib was taken from his side, and of it God built a woman, and presented her to him; and he said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." You get the thought in chapter v. 29, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." The church derives from Him, and not only that, it is to be His fulness. It is of Him, it is "woman" in that way, it is taken out of man. The fact is, it is formed by all that came out when He went into the lower parts of the earth.

Now think of these things. In the first place, all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him,

nothing lacking there. He is to fill all things. Then the next thing you get is that the church derives from Him, and it is His fulness. Then, if I may refer to a verse in Colossians, "it increases with the increase of God." That is why I say it is formed by that which came out when Christ went down into death. It increases with the increase of God, and "God is love"; so here we read, "unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ver. 16.) This is what John says, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love." That is what the church is composed of—the love of God.

What a wonderful work is going on to-day! These gifts are at work, and they are all "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (vers. 12, 13), in order that we may arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ, that Christ may have a vessel in which He will be able to display Himself—an assembly which is derived from Him, and which is His fulness. It is rather remarkable, when you come to the New Jerusalem, you get the angel measuring the city with a golden reed, and what is said of it is that it is "the measure of a man." It is the measure of Christ, it contains Him, and is capable of dispersing all the light that was declared in Christ throughout the whole universe.

Where does that work go on? Here in the midst of chaotic darkness, confusion and corruption, and with the sentence of death in ourselves the whole thing goes on. This may be in the mind of the Spirit when it is said in Psalm cxxxix., "I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works . . . my substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." That is where the work began. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." This is the work of God which is going on at present. But what is the work of God for? To form the vessel which shall disperse the light of God through the universe. The holy city in Revelation has the glory of God, the light of God is there. It has the tree of life and the river of the water of life, clear as crystal. The tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits, the leaves are for the healing of the nations. The nations of them that are saved walk in the light of that city. The whole world gets the benefit of it, but I do not think it is going to stop with this little world here. Christ will fill "all things." He will fill the universe through His church. Adam filled a world, and what is it full of? Eve was the mother of all living, and

she has filled this world with what I may call "Adam." What will the church do? Fill the whole universe with the light of God. I know Christ will do it, but He will do it through His church. He will fill all things with the light of the love of God, and everything will be quickened into new life by the revelation of the love of God. All will be dispersed through the church. I do not doubt the angels to-day are a great deal wiser through the church than if man had never fallen and had no need of redemption. Peter speaks of the angels desiring to look into these things. If the One that created everything has come into His own creation and taken part in it, it must affect every intelligent being in the whole creation. The fact is this, when He ascended up on high, it was that He might fill all things, not merely this little speck of a world. He is forming a vessel for this purpose, and that vessel has to be formed by everything that is of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

Now turn to chapter iii. verses 14-21. The great desire of the apostle was that the Gentiles might enter into this and know something of this marvellous mystery. The Gentiles will have part in it; it was not to be confined to Jews, nor yet to Gentiles, but both Jew and Gentile were to be together in one body, and the great desire of the apostle was that the Gentile might in some measure enter into it, so

you find him on his knees. You do not get him speaking in this way in other parts of scripture, "For this cause I bow my knees" (vers. 14, 15). His desire was that the Gentiles might enter into the peculiar distinction of the family of which they formed part, not that they should know the place of every family, but that you and I, Gentiles, might know the place that we have. Then he says, "That he would grant you to be strengthened," &c. These things cannot be got by reading. If any person challenged me as to how it is, I know so little of these great and marvellous things, I think I should say, I do desire to know, but feel so weak, I do not seem able to lay hold of them; I am not strong enough to enter into them; we have to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Why in the inner man? Because the outer man has nothing to do with it.

Then there is another thing. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The apostle wants the Gentiles to see their place in the mystery which is the centre of this vast universe of bliss, but Christ is the centre of those who compose that company. He will certainly be the very centre of that wonderful sphere of glory in the assembly.

"Being rooted and founded in love" (ver. 17). That is where we grow, in love, that which came

out in the lower parts of the earth—all the love of God to you and me; and “may be able to apprehend with all saints;” if we apprehended you may be sure we are at the very centre of it all, and then “to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.” What for? “That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.” That God may dwell in us, and that the assembly might then be able to disperse the light of God throughout the universe. Then he commends them unto “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” No matter what you ask or what you may have thought, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all, and that according to the power that works in us. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to eternity.”

I would turn your attention to one more passage. (Rev. xxi. 3.) I think the tabernacle of God is clearly the assembly. This is where He dwells now, and He will never give up that dwelling-place; He will dwell there in the world to come and throughout eternity. God will fill the universe; it can be now said, “His presence fills that land.” That is not *now* wider than Christ Himself, then He will fill all things. I have no doubt that in the eternal state the light will be dispersed by the tabernacle. All do not enter into the composition of

the tabernacle, only the assembly is the tabernacle, it is there that God dwells with men. Read verses 3-5. "I make all things new." Who is that? Christ, He makes all things new. He made everything at the beginning, but as a theatre where all God's ways would be displayed and come to light. Christ will make all things new, and the light of God will fill every corner of that vast sphere. He will dwell in the tabernacle. He has taken up His abode there now and He will never leave it. He will dwell there in the world to come and throughout the eternal state, and the light of God will go out from that centre to every other family and to every intelligent being in God's universe.

J. B—D.



AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE AND THE WAY TO IT.

(LUKE XIX. 12-23; 2 PET. I. 2-11.)

AT first sight there may not seem very much connection between these two scriptures, but you will notice that they both speak of the coming kingdom, and my desire is to say a little as to our privilege and responsibility down here in view of that kingdom.

The parable tells us of a certain nobleman who "went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Before he left he called his ten servants and delivered "one pound" to each of them, saying, "Occupy till I come." Now we know well enough whom that "nobleman" represents, whom the citizens hated and set at defiance. We know that the Lord Jesus, who came into the world in perfect grace, went out of it again by way of the cross. But if He was hated by man, He was trusted by those who really knew Him, and delighted in by the God who sent Him. Thank God, as surely as there were those who appreciated Him then, there are those who appreciate Him still.

When this nobleman went away he left some-

thing with every one of his servants, that is, with every one who professed an acquaintance with him, and who had a link with his interests. This parable, by the way, is not like the parable in Matthew xxv., where that which is committed to the servants differs in each individual case. Here every servant was made responsible for the same thing—one pound. Now it is the practical significance of this which is the great question for us to consider. Did *our* blessed Lord and Master when He went to heaven leave anything definite behind, anything common to all those who came near Him and professed to know Him? I believe He did, and that this one thing was the declaration of what *God* is. Every person who repeats what is called “the Apostles’ creed,” and says, “I believe in God the Father . . . and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son,” makes confession of having received the “one pound.” Jesus left in this world a declaration of what God is, as it is written: “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John i. 18.) So that in chapter viii. •19 He says: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” They *professed* to know Him—“Howbeit,” say they, “we know this man whence he is” (John vii. 27)—but they did not really know Him. In this parable the wicked servant *said* that he knew his master, but every word he

uttered proved that he did not. "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man," &c.

Let me repeat, then, that the significance to us of the "pound" lies in the declaration Jesus has left us of what God is. If you think otherwise, I only ask you to prayerfully consider it. This testimony is common to us all. You have it; I have it. We profess to begin with that knowledge, and He will ask each one of us, presently, to give an account of the use we have made of it, as the parable expresses it, "that he might know *how much every man had gained by trading.*"

In the parable the first servant with whom the nobleman takes account says, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." First, notice the increase was *in kind*. "Thy pound hath gained ten *pounds.*" He did not speak of houses, or lands, or merchandise. The increase was in that which had been committed to him when his master went away. Then it was "*thy* pound hath gained ten pounds." He had held it, all the way through, in connection with the hand that gave it at first. Is not this significant also? That God has declared Himself in His blessed Son, no one here would question. Men may not like it, but whether men like it or not He has left that declaration behind Him in this world. Thank God, we do like it, we treasure it. But our exercise should be as to the way we are

using it; we are responsible to make increase, both *in* that knowledge and *by* that knowledge. (Col. i. 10.) And, moreover, we are *furnished* for the same through grace: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" is the way Peter ends his second epistle (2 Pet. iii. 18); and he begins it with "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us by glory and virtue."

If we turn to look more closely at 2 Peter i. we shall find that what he begins with is *faith*. Where faith is, as we have often heard, light has entered the soul as to what God is. Every bit of faith in God must result from what God has been pleased to reveal of Himself. In the exhortation in this scripture you will notice that a distinct moral progress is indicated, until we are told that in brotherly kindness we are to have love. (New Trans.) We begin with *faith*; we end with *love*, that is, with the divine nature, for "God is love."

Now if this increase goes on there will in the end be a definite and blessed result. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." An abundant

knowledge of God's nature and character, and an abundant entrance into God's kingdom under Christ go together. And is there not righteous consistency in this? Is not the man who knows God best the most likely to duly represent Him? God made this abundantly manifest in choosing the man after His own heart to be Zion's first king.

So that the greater the increase by trading the better fitted shall we be for a place in the kingdom; and it will be the King's delight to reward those who have given practical proof of appreciating the declaration He made to them of His God and Father.

The One whom the "citizens" hated is the Man whom God intends to honour. The One who knows God perfectly will have supreme authority in that day. *His* rule will not be measured by any number of cities. He has gone to receive for Himself a *kingdom*, and He shall as certainly return. God's universe shall be under His gracious sway. Oh, blessed prospect!

It is evident that *our* position in the kingdom will depend upon the measure in which we have "gained by trading." Our appreciation of what we do know of God may be measured by our "*diligence*" in increasing it.

Now let us look at the actual matter of "trading." After all that we have heard and

talked about, the question resolves itself into this, How far have we really made progress in the knowledge of God? Why are we here together to-day? Is it not for a little mutual trading? Have we not come together to know a little more of the God who has revealed Himself to us in Christ? Many, many are the ways in which we can gain by trading. Are we really alive to them? A good business man is naturally looking out for profit. If he were to keep all his capital locked up in his safe he would gain nothing. But he knows better: he parts with something in order to gain something. Part with nothing, and, like the man who kept his pound wrapped up in a napkin, you will gain nothing. If we have learned ever so little of God, let us hand it on to some one else, and do a little of such trading every day. Tell some poor soul what a God you have found, and if he takes it in you will find in that very person a new witness of God's love to *you*. That man will love you for all time and for eternity into the bargain.

Take another example of such trading. In Galatians v. 13 we find the apostle exhorting saints thus: "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but *by love serve one another*." From whence comes the love wherewith we serve our brother? It springs from the soul's enjoyment of the love of God in Christ. Trade

diligently with what you do enjoy, and you will increase thereby and enjoy it more abundantly.

Then may we not gain a good deal on our knees in prayer? For example, how could you put 1 Timothy ii. 1-4 into effect without getting substantial gain in the knowledge of God? "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." How could you go on your knees and hear God say such things to you without learning better what a God He is? Would God have me pray for *all* men? What a God He must be! I am constrained to exclaim, Oh, that all men knew Him, and that I knew Him better!

But more than this. There is to be "*giving of thanks . . . for all men.*" How natural for us to say, What? Give thanks for *all* men? Would He have me give thanks for that hardened sceptic? Certainly. And for that blaspheming farmer? Certainly. But on what ground can I give God thanks for such men as these? Listen! It is as though God said, I have given that sceptic innumerable mercies, yet he never once thanked Me. I sent many fruitful showers followed by warm sunshine on that blaspheming farmer's fields, yet he never thanked Me. *You* shall have that privilege, says God. *You* shall reap a second harvest out of that man's fields by glorifying Me in your

thanksgiving on his account. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

Who could help exclaiming with adoration, What a God! He not only fills that hardened rebel's orchard with fruit, but allows me to enter into His thoughts of goodness, thereby filling my heart with thanksgiving on the sinner's behalf.

Once more. There are His saints to be thought of. His ways with *one* of them you know a good deal about. Think of what He has been to you! And then remember that what He has been to you He is to all the rest of His children. Of this He would remind us when He tells us to pray "*for all saints.*" When, *in love*, we draw near to such to serve them we soon find a gracious response to our love. We are filled with wonder that so many of God's chosen ones should really love us. Not content with loving me Himself, God would have every saint on earth not only to love me, but to love me "with a pure heart fervently." "By love serve one another." What a delightful way of trading is this!

But we shall not gain in this way unless we have learned what we heard about this morning, that is, unless we know the One who has expressed God to us, and by His death has cleared away everything that would hinder our enjoying that love. Jesus has gone up to the right hand

of God, there to be presented to me as the perfect expression of every wish of the heart of God for me.

The more I know of God the more clearly I see that nothing would suit Him but that I should be a companion for His Son and the sharer of His joys for all eternity. But if we are in any measure to be witnesses here below of what God is, if we are to shew Him forth in our lives, we must know something of that which is expressed in 2 Corinthians iv. 10: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." He who has gone up on high is the perfect expression of all that God is, and it is as I behold Him there that I am morally changed into the same image. But if the life of Him who is ever delightful to God is to be expressed in me here, self must be excluded.

Take one of the oldest of God's illustrations. Think of Adam as he came out of the garden with that coat of skin upon him. He was the first man on earth to be a witness of the goodness of a Creator-God to an unfallen creature, and of the grace of a Saviour-God to a fallen sinner. He was the first to bear on his body the witness of his own condemnation, but with it the witness of the death of another in his place. Adam could have said, If the animal who died for me tells plainly of my fatal fall, the God who clothed me with its skin has made

it manifest that His desires are toward me in spite of that fall. It was the expression of God's goodness to him as a *sinner* when he had lost everything as a *creature*. Now the life of Jesus here below expresses all this and more. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." His whole life was the expression of God's grace to sinful men. And now that He has been rejected by the citizens of the world, it is as though He had said, I will leave you to be an expression among men of the same thing, a daily witness of what God has been to *you*. Therefore the apostle wrote, "*Always* bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

May our hearts be set on getting an increased acquaintance with God, so that what Christ was here below may be seen in us now. How will such an increase come out? How will our profiting appear unto all? It will come out in holiness and love, in service and self-sacrifice. When Christ was here, as another has expressed it, an atmosphere of blessing surrounded Him, so that when and where and as often as men liked they might get the blessing they needed. This is true of Him still. In a higher and even more marvellous way, we may still draw immeasurably from His blessed fulness. But do not let us suppose that we shall be a fitting witness to others if we are not growing in the

knowledge of God ourselves. There is in every one of us that which must be held in death. There must be absolute separation if we would have spiritual increase. "Be ye . . . enlarged" and "be ye separate" go together. (See 2 Cor. vi. 13, 17.) If I am to express His life here, I must learn to hold myself in death.

May the Lord give us to remember that the day of reckoning is coming, when He will draw attention to how much every man has gained by trading; not how much information we have picked up at meetings, but how much we have really increased by the knowledge of God Himself; and oh, what a blessed God He is!

The Lord give us (even the youngest heart) to know better who that God is who has so richly blessed us here, and called us to share in His own eternal glory there!

GEO. C



THREE ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

(JOHN xvii. 20-26; REV. xxi. 9-11, 20-23; xxii. 3-5.)

WE have had to-day, beloved brethren, a great deal, I believe, from the Lord with regard to this twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and I desire to say just a word or two, in conclusion, to my younger brethren, because I have heard many such say: "I do not see the point of Revelation xxi.; I do not understand it, for a city seems a curious symbol." But if you connect a few words of the Lord's in John xvii. with it—and I do not see how you can escape the connection—an immense flood of light is flung on the chapter.

You say, Was not the Lord praying for the apostles, thinking of them, and giving them instruction in John xvii.? However much you may incline to that view, as regards the early part of the chapter, you cannot so regard the end, where He says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (Ver. 20.) The difficulty is dismissed in a moment when we see that He is praying for all His own. None of us are alike, and that is a great point in the stones of the city. Who are the stones? I believe I see

some of them here to-night. We are very different looking stones from what we shall be in that day, but some of them are no doubt here this evening. In that day light will be streaming through these stones, as we have heard to-day frequently.

How do I get part in this city? a young Christian may say. There is one feature found in every member in the family of God—they all *believe*. All have different measures, and all different capacities, but one thing you can find in every member of the family. There may not be much light, perhaps, in some, and some may not have made much spiritual progress, but if I ask, “Do you believe?” “Oh yes,” you reply, “I believe in Jesus.” Then there you are—“them also which shall believe on me through their word” are those for whom the blessed Lord prayed. Hence, my dear young fellow Christian, not started on your heavenly journey very long, since you believe in Him you are in that family of God, and if we speak of the city you are a stone, and your portion is there as well as the most advanced saint of God. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” clearly shews that all believers are in the Lord’s view, as He says: “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the

world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xvii. 21.)

Referring now to what we were speaking of this afternoon—the failure of the church as the vessel of light and testimony—no breakdown is alluded to here. The Lord prays that through the oneness of believers the world might believe. If you look at the end of Acts ii. and iv., you will see that the Lord's prayer was answered for a brief moment. Oh! the blessed power of the Spirit of God, that made the Lord Jesus everything to those saints, that formed, fashioned and moulded them! You see them all one there; you cannot look at it without your heart being quickened to see such a sight; and, alas! also saddened, because it has passed away.

It has all passed away outwardly, and the world now thinks it has a very good reason for not believing in Jesus. He prayed: "that they also may be one in us: that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me." The world to-day does not believe it. Here and there grace touches hearts, and *we* have been led to believe; but, broadly speaking, the world does not believe in the Lord Jesus, because it does not see the lovely oneness that is in the mind of God for His saints. They think they have a good reason for unbelief, because Christians are so divided and have so little love to one another.

But will the Lord's prayer not be answered?

Pass on to verse 22: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may *know* that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

I apprehend that these two verses take you on to millennial days. There is a oneness which *ought* to be manifested now, but in John xvii. 22, 23, we have a oneness that will be *manifested*, and which the world will see and know. How will it know? When the church, as seen under the figure of a unique city, comes out of glory, and Christ then administering everything through the saints, the world will have to admit that the Father sent the Son, and that He has loved the saints as He has loved Him. How beautiful, yet how *wonderful* is what He says here! "Thou . . . hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (Ver. 23.) We have been loved by the Father even as His blessed Son has been loved.

We have had Jesus' love brought before us touchingly and beautifully again and again to-day. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

(Eph. v. 25-27.) We have there the three-fold aspect of His love. The bygone aspect, the present, and the future. What is the bygone aspect of His love? "He gave himself for it." Nothing can touch our hearts more than the recollection of where His love took Him, as we have been hearing, down to the lowest parts of the earth. Oh, that our hearts might be kept more in the sense of and in the enjoyment of the love of Jesus, which took Him into death that He might take us into life, and give us the knowledge and enjoyment of Himself.

But His love is unchanged and unchangeable. We have had our eyes upon Him to-day, and our hearts have been overflowing with the sense of His love. His love drew us together and has been filling our souls. You will have to say that your soul has got a thorough lift to-day. But whose doing has this been? Whose love was it that filled your soul? Christ's. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" explains it all. It is the present ministry of His love, though He may use some human vessel, and oftentimes does. But His love comes and ministers to us, that He may take away everything that hinders the intimacy of our souls with Him. He will not allow anything that would hinder our being in the enjoyment and intimacy of His love.

Another thing, love prizes company and in-

timacy. When John's feet had been washed, in John xiii., when the water had been used to wash away the little soil he might have got upon his feet, in preparing that supper what did he do? Ah! beloved, he got as near the Lord as was possible. He knew the value of the basin, and then put his head upon Jesus' bosom. The basin and the bosom always go together. If I do not know the value of the basin, which removes all that would keep me from Him in intimate nearness, I shall not know much of the blessedness of the bosom. He loves to have us very near Him. There is the object of His present ministry.

—Can you give me a receipt for keeping an absolutely white alabaster slab perfectly white and clean in this dirty world? There is only one way that I know of in which it can be kept white and spotless. Keep always flowing over it a little stream of perfectly limpid water, and the soil of dust and soot can never touch it. That is like the Lord's grace flowing ever towards us. He has gathered us here to-day to fill our souls with the thought of His present love—"the washing of water by the word."

But there is another aspect of His love towards His church yet to come. Lovely thought! He is going "to present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be *holy and without blemish.*"

You have doubtless noticed that in Ephesians i. our God and Father "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy* and *without blame* before him in love." (Ver. 4.) I think that is presented as the purpose of God, that we should be according to the blessed nature of God. When we come to chapter v. we are told that Christ is going to present the church to Himself exactly according to God's counsels, "*holy and without blame.*" It is a lovely thing to think of the presentation day, when He takes up and will present that beautiful church to Himself, *holy and without blame.* What a joy to our hearts! do you say? Leave that out. What a joy to His heart when He gets His "Eve"—His beautiful bride—and presents her to Himself a glorious church. He will take her into His Father's house, as we have heard, and He will bring her out with Him when He comes out again to the world whence He has been rejected and cast out. Hence, we read: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him *in glory.*" (Col. iii. 4.)

Now a word as to this beautiful figure of the city. (Rev. xxi.) Of course it is a figure—no one, I suppose, expects literally to see "a city" or "a river" or "a tree." They are figures which convey divine thoughts to our minds. This unique figure—the new Jerusalem, the *holy*

city—presents to us first of all what the church is in relation to Christ in eternity. This is manifest in the first four verses of Revelation xxi., which undoubtedly present what is eternal and abiding. After the first eight verses we get the details of the holy city, as she is seen in relation to earth, during the millennium, and we see this wonderful city coming out of heaven, from and having the glory of God. This glory—of which through sin all had come short (Rom. iii. 23), but which faith, on the ground of redemption, rejoices now in hope of (Rom. v. 2)—then is possessed by the church, and it shines out through its translucent walls. The light of God will be very wonderful in this scene, and the church will answer to the glory of God absolutely and perfectly. But if we are to be that by and by, what should we be now? If the light of God, the love of God and the grace of God do not shine out from us in the daily life now, we have missed the Lord's thoughts as to Christianity altogether as far as any testimony in this scene is concerned.

Another thought that is very sweet to the heart, as we look at the holy city, is this, "I saw no temple therein." The temple carries the thought of an inner shrine—an inside place—where alone God is known and worshipped. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" we read. The fact is, it is all

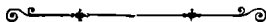
temple, so to speak. God is fully known, and deeply and eternally enjoyed. What God is will in that day come fully out and be known to all, but what He is should be expressed in the church now.

"And they shall see his face." Would you not like to see Him? Do not you long to see Him? I am sure there is not one heart here who would not say, "Yes, indeed!" And it may be this very night!

But not only so: "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." That gives the idea of character—His own hand will write it. If His character has not been well read in our pathway here, it will be seen there. Thank God! it will be; His name and His character will be in our foreheads then and for ever.

May the Lord help us to be more at His disposal, that the love, the grace we have tasted may be more seen in our pathway, for His name's sake!

W. T. P. W.



OUR LINK WITH A HEAVENLY CHRIST.

(PHIL. I. 3-11; II. 12-18; III. 13-21.)

I THINK, beloved brethren, that every one present, even the youngest, would find it an immense help if they were alive to the fact that they are heavenly—not by trying to be heavenly, but that by the grace of God they *are* heavenly. There is nothing else for a Christian at the present moment. In the mind of God it is all over with the earth in its present state. The system of this world is now under judgment, and the presence of the Spirit with the saints convicts it. The Spirit did not come to the world, but to those who believed on Christ whom the world crucified, and now that He is in heaven the present period has a heavenly character for the saints.

The youngest believer is aware that he could not have anything apart from Christ; apart from Christ you could not have salvation, nor could you have any other blessing such as God now bestows—spiritual blessings. If a soul enjoys the light and love of God, it is in connection with Christ that you enjoy it. The

power of enjoyment is by the Spirit of God, but *what* you enjoy you enjoy as being connected with Christ. Now, *He* is heavenly, and it is a great thing to see that we are heavenly, because He is heavenly. "As is the heavenly [One], such are they also that are heavenly." Who are they? You are, I am, through God's grace. It may be said, We do not much answer to it. That is, alas! true. But in effect the Spirit of God says, Christ is heavenly, and such are you; now then we have to answer to it. We do not become heavenly by seeking to answer to it, but we are heavenly by God's grace, and the Spirit is our power to answer to what we are. There is no other portion for us but a heavenly one.

I admit the difficulties which retard us, and the contradiction in ourselves to assuming such a character; but I am persuaded that the present moment is one in which we need to realise that Christians are heavenly, so that with us there may be a truly christian character, and thus real separation to Christ from the earthly-minded state of things into which Christendom has sunk. I have said sometimes that the church, that is, the general public body, has become like Micah's Levite. Micah had a house of gods, and he was well content to have a *Levite* to be his priest. The world has still its idols, and it is well pleased to have the

church for its chaplain, and the professing church has consented to it. It may seem a hard thing to say, but it is true, and such a state of things constitutes a very real difficulty for Christians.

I wish our brother, who read to us that portion as to Gad (1 Chron. xii. 8-15), had given us a word on the passage. He will not, I am sure, mind my referring to it. Gad was one of the two and a-half tribes who desired to remain on the other side of Jordan. If you turn to Numbers xxxii. you will find that "the children of Gad" are put *first* in proposing to remain in the land of Gilead, eastward of Jordan. Another point is noteworthy: when Jacob foretells his sons what should befall them in the last days (Gen. xlix.), of Gad he said, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." If we take this chapter as prophetic of the various phases of the history of Israel as set forth in the twelve tribes, then Gad represents Israel as overcome by the troops of enemies, but at last a remnant come out as overcomers. Thus Gad represents the remnant as finally overcoming; they had been overcome by the fields of Gilead, the pastures of this world; they succumbed to what was spread before them as a present possession, but in the end they overcome. In the passage our brother read to us we see them in the triumph of over-

comers crossing Jordan when it overflowed its banks, as Israel did in Joshua's time. They crossed it in the same power as at the first, and the resurrection power of Christ works towards us, as at the beginning, to lift us over every difficulty, so that we may take the heavenly position. There were great difficulties in the way, but the children of Gad were overcomers and separated themselves to David. It would be a great thing for us if we get hold of this characteristic of a remnant. The professing church may have settled upon earth, but at the last are there not those who overcome and take their proper heavenly character? Are *we* prepared to do so? It is not by effort, but the power is in Christ being heavenly: "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." What Christ is, you are. "As he is, so are we in this world."

Do you say, I hardly know I can say that I am heavenly? This Epistle to the Philippians will, I trust, help you. It has always been a comfort to me in this way; the apostle by the Spirit takes up a very small detail of christian life, for they had sent to his necessity, and in their gift to him as a servant of Christ, he saw the working of the life of Christ in them. He was not then preaching the gospel, but answering for it, and the power of the gospel was not seen in his preaching, but in the way in which he

lived Christ. "To me to live is Christ," and we see this come out all through this remarkable epistle. In chapter iii. he says, "Rejoice in the *Lord*," and again in chapter iv., "Rejoice in *the Lord* always: and again I say, Rejoice." He knew that the blessed Man who humbled Himself was now Lord to the glory of God the Father. Was not the control of everything in *His* hands? and if He had allowed Paul to be a prisoner, he recognised the Lord's hand, and could rejoice in the Lord. It must have been no small thing for Paul, energetic and earnest as he was, to have been kept a prisoner by Felix for two years, because Felix wanted a bribe, then to have been two years a prisoner in Rome, but what he could say was, "I Paul, the prisoner of *the Lord*" (Eph. iv. 1); he did not regard himself as the prisoner of man. The Lord keeps me a prisoner, "Rejoice in the Lord." What a man that is! he is superior to every circumstance or difficulty. But you say, That is Paul, how can I be such? Well, I believe the power of life in Christ, resurrection life, can lift the soul above difficulties. God would have it so, He allows the difficulties, and the way in which He works towards us is in the power of resurrection. It does not make anything of us. Paul did not look much, a poor prisoner, and yet how the life of Christ came out in him! In all the Prætorium it was known, That man is

set for Christ; they knew it was for Christ that he was a prisoner. Are we so known? It is so encouraging to see how the apostle takes up the outflow of love, and therefore of the life of Christ from the Philippians, and connects it with the same grace which produced the outflow in him. "Ye are all partakers of my grace."

I take the verse—"he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"—to refer to this outflow of the life of Christ in them. I know it is taken to mean that God's work of grace in saving us will be finally completed, and though that be true, yet the subject before the apostle was their interest in the gospel of Christ. He was, no doubt, a very special vessel in which the grace of Christ wrought, but these Philippians communicated with him when he was in the sufferings of the gospel, and Paul saw in this the springing up of christian life in them. It was Christ in them, and Paul's quick eye discerned it in a moment. He was a prisoner, only desiring that Christ might be magnified in his body whether by life or by death, and he could say to them, You have cared for me; I am set for the interests of Christ, and you care for them, and thus we are linked together in the life of Christ. Is not this encouraging and blessed?

"As is the heavenly, such are they also that

are heavenly." It is a blessed thing to have our hearts freed from the selfishness of this world, that the interests of Christ, the blessed heavenly Man, may have their place there, be it in ever so small a way. If we have a link with Him by the Spirit, thank God, His life comes out in us in some way. Oh! that there were more of it. It was brought before us yesterday, using the pound, the grace conferred on us, and gaining by trading with it. It is like a beautiful flower which casts its seed around, and it multiplies and multiplies, and we cannot say where it will stop. These are not mere doctrines, beloved brethren. We may be well acquainted with doctrines, but Christianity is not a system of doctrines, but the upspringing of life. Do not let us be occupied with points and questions, but with the power of life. How is that life of Christ to be springing up in our souls? By the power of the Spirit as the Spirit of life in Christ. Oh! thank God, that each one of us has been brought into contact with Christ, and that the life of Christ in any little measure rises up in the soul of the believer. Life springs up, it shews its energy. You see it in nature. They say that a grain of wheat embedded in rock, if it had moisture and air and warmth, would overcome all resistance: such is the energy of life.

And here, if my brethren will bear with me, I would like to say a word on the difference

between service and fruit-bearing. I have been speaking of the energy of life, and that is the real source of fruit-bearing. There are many of us here to-day who seek to devote ourselves to service, and all in some way or other desire to serve the interests of Christ. I would say to each one, If God has in grace put into your hands a little bit of service, go on with it. Do not try to be like somebody else, nor suppose that you can be anybody but yourself. Devote yourself to the service which it is your privilege to do, and go on with it to the Lord. You cannot be any one else, nor have another's grace. The Lord gives to each grace to use in service. Two men may work in the same line, but each serves according to the grace given to each. Joshua was not Moses. Solomon was not David. Elisha even was not Elijah, though he sought a double portion of Elijah's spirit; but Elijah's service was not Elisha's, nor was Timothy's service that of Paul, though he was Paul's own son in the faith. Writing to Timothy, Paul says, That good thing which was entrusted to thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. We have to go on with what has been entrusted to each.

To every individual Christian I would say, There is some knowledge of Christ, some bit of the work of God in your soul, and hence some impression of the grace that is in Christ

for you. I want you to cultivate that work—that grace. The Spirit of God would cultivate it, that thus the impression of Christ which you have received might grow, and fruits of righteousness might be produced to God's glory and praise. We might not think much of the little bit of service shewn to the apostle, but it was the effect of God's good work in them, and God watches over His own work, and it is a great deal if the fruit be through Jesus Christ to His glory. Do we approve the things that are excellent? that which was seen in Christ? Chapter ii. shews us the down-stooping of the Lord, and with us it is not doing great things, but stooping in lowliness for Christ's sake. "If any one will be chief, let him be least of all and servant of all." This is what Jesus said, and what He did. He went down to the death of the cross. Things that seem small with us are estimated by God according as they savour of Jesus Christ, and thus in the end of the epistle Paul spoke of the gift sent to him from Philippi as "an odour of a sweet smell, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ.*"

Let Christ have His place in our hearts. God would have us to be in the path which Jesus took in this world. We live because He lives, and hence down here the life of Christ in us would come out in our having the mind that was in Him. He humbled Himself to do the

will of Another, to be for God's good pleasure. His parents could not understand His path at the early age of twelve years. He was not born into this world as we are. The thought of parents when a child is born is that he should grow up and have prospects in this scene. Did the blessed Lord come here to grow up as a member of the community of this world? By no means. His reply to His mother shewed that He was only in this poor world for His Father's pleasure. It was as if He said, I am here that I may do my Father's business—only that. Oh! what a child! What a blessed Man! Think of it, beloved brethren, that there was in this world One who as a child had only this sense in His soul, I am here for my Father's pleasure, here to do His will, and make Him known. His was a blessed path of obedience. He answered to what the prophet said: "He openeth my ear morning by morning, he openeth my ear to hear as the learner." What was the end of this path of obedience? He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and thus He has made God known to us in that death. And now He is exalted, and every tongue will have to confess that He is the Lord to the glory of God the Father. He will fill heaven and earth with the knowledge of God.

Now the gospel has come from God into the world to make Christ known. He was here for His

Father's pleasure, and now that He is exalted as Lord the gospel concerning Him is preached. It is this blessed gospel of Christ which the Philippians had fellowship with. In it was contained the glad tidings of God's salvation. We get it spoken of here as the full and final triumph of God in grace—grace manifested in Christ—over all the power of evil. We see how blessedly Paul was superior in the life and grace of Christ to the evil around him of every kind; and would not we like to be connected with this gospel? We may not be able to preach, but in our measure we can be set for it, if only it amounted to communicating with those who preach Christ. I do not want you to set to work as a duty, but to have a heart for Christ and His gospel. I speak of the gospel in all its breadth as the testimony of our Lord, the setting forth of Christ.

The end of chapter i. shews that though these Philippians had a heart for the interests of Christ, yet they were not of one mind in furthering it. Perhaps one thought the service of the gospel should be carried on in one way, and one in another; they had their own opinions, and in chapter ii. the apostle teaches them the pathway of Christ Jesus. He was here to make good God's glory, He was only here for that; then in verse 12 the apostle says: "As ye have always obeyed." Christ obeyed, and because He

was obedient to death God has put everything into His hands as Lord, and the result will be that everything will be subjugated to the One who was obedient, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness will dwell, and God will be all in all. In the spirit of obedience, now that the apostle was absent from them, they were to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. I have said that salvation looks on to the triumph of good over all the power of evil. In the midst of evil, they were to be the children of God without rebuke. Christ was here for God's good pleasure, and God's work in them (which had its beginning in their care for the gospel) would go on in the line of His good pleasure. "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Verses 14, 15 allude to Deuteronomy xxxii. 5: "Their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a crooked and perverse generation." Israel did not answer to God's thought in setting them in the midst of the nations. By them "His way should have been known upon earth;" and so it will be in the future, and His salvation among all nations. But with us it is a present thing. As children of God we are to be "without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Christ is the word of

life (see 1 John i. 1), and we are to hold it forth; the word is to be living in us, not a set of doctrines, for it is that by which the life of Christ is formed in us.

I call your attention once more to the beautiful way in which the apostle links up these Philippians with his own path of devoted service. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me." It is as if he said, You Philippians, you live for Christ, and if I die for Him it will be as a drink offering poured out on your service. Let faith, beloved brethren, carry your hearts to the Lord Jesus in heaven, and having Him as the light of life, do you, and may I, live for Him here. Surely Paul was a wonderful example of how the life of Christ wrought in a man of like passions as ourselves. It is a great comfort for us to see what grace can do with a man of Paul's energy; content that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death, and then to see him linking up these Philippians with his own large heart for Christ is most encouraging for us.

Do you say, We are not up to it? No; but Christ is sufficient. Do you not see how the power of resurrection life in Him can lift you, as it did Paul, above the whole scene? and that is salvation. You may look at salvation as to its

present effect on us in two ways. I would illustrate the two ways by the two storms on the sea. In the one case the Lord is with His disciples in the ship, and He arises at their cry and stills the storm. They could have said, We were ready to perish in the watery waste, but He was our salvation. Now look at the other storm, He is not with them, but on high praying for them, a figure of His present position, and when He comes to them, He does not still the waves and winds, but He comes to them in a power that is above all the adverse power. The storm was all around, but He was walking on the waves in all the calm of heaven: "As is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." Do you not think that the power of resurrection life in Christ can lift us above the power of evil here? It is true He was not actually yet in resurrection life, but the power of life was there in Him in virtue of which He did rise from the dead, and you see Him on the water walking in the calm of heaven. It is not, as in the first storm, "a great calm" of wind and waves, but the calm of another scene. Never was such a thing before, and the Lord can give us to know the same calm. There we see a fuller effect of salvation. My comfort is when I see that Paul said, "I follow after;" and, however feebly, I can go on that line and follow. As to his experience and knowledge of Christ—how far

ahead Paul was ! but can we not each say with him, "I follow after" ? What has kept any one of us following ? Nothing but the grace of God, and the spring of it is in Christ our life. When I think of Paul, I feel how little I am up to it ; but when I see what Christ can be to me through grace, I can say that *He* could give you and me to walk in the calm and light of heaven where He is. I do not speak to you save as one who desires it for himself and for you.

One word more. None of us can live without an object. The second chapter gives us the life of Christ in humiliation. Nothing touches the heart like the humiliation of the blessed Lord, He came down to where we were. If any of us know something of Job's experience when he beheld himself in the presence of God, and we have been made conscious of the place that Christ took in going down to death, where in the depths of Calvary He bore our sin and shame—His humiliation has touched our hearts as nothing else does. But however deep the love shewn in His death, Christ in death could not be an object for us. He has set Himself apart in heavenly glory, that we might have an object apart from the whole scene of sin and shame. What charms me in knowing Christ in glory is that He is Lord to God's glory, and that in Him all is *perfection*. I thank God for the grace in which He died for my sins,

and in His doing it all was perfect, for He was perfect; but in looking at the Lord's glory I see that glory is the expression of His worthiness and of God's delight in Him. He is there according to the perfect delight and satisfaction of God. Every attribute has been glorified, and love has its resting-place without a disturbing element. That is perfection, and we can be occupied with perfection. We can look away from ourselves and from the imperfections we see in one another, and see perfection in Him. It does not touch us perhaps so much as learning His love's deep woe, but God knows we need an Object outside this scene. And we are to be like Him. I look around me on those I am speaking to, and it is blessed to be able to say we shall be like Him. Not only are we heavenly because He is heavenly, but we are also going to bear the image of the heavenly. Meanwhile God has given us this Object—the Lord in glory.

Well, Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." What does perfect mean there. I think perfect as to the mind in us, we have to be "thus minded" with the apostle, perfect as to the Object before our souls. We have perfection before us, and we are not satisfied with anything short of conformity to Christ in glory.

The labour of the apostle was in that direction, "That I may present every man perfect in Christ." Do you say, I am so disappointed in myself? You would not be disappointed had you not been looking at yourself. We all know something of the bitterness of soul which arises from the sense of what we find in ourselves. But did not Christ know what we were when He took us up? How often have we been told in bygone years, God is not doing great things by us, but working in us that we may know what we are, and what He is to such as we are.

If we let the Spirit occupy us with Christ, it will make us perfect as to our Object, and our desire will be to be conformed to His image. Paul could not be satisfied with anything less for himself and the saints than to be presented perfect in Christ Jesus.

"Our citizenship is in heaven." You have no idea how many things would drop off without an effort if the soul only got hold of the fact that it is heavenly! "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We should then be more ready to take up our citizenship. It is in heaven, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."

T. H. R.

THE WAY OF LIFE IS ABOVE TO THE WISE.

(PROV. XV. 24; COL. I. 3; II. 4.)

I LOOK to the Lord, beloved brethren (and I trust you will do the same), to enable me to say what is on my mind. I have it much on my mind to refer to what comes out here. It presents itself to me in the line of the way of life. You may remember what was said to us yesterday in regard to the world, and separation from it, but I feel that we have to be established in the way of life if we are to depart from the snares of death.

It is a most interesting point that of crossing or re-crossing Jordan. I was much interested in it this morning, and very much struck by what has come before us as to Gad. (1 Chron. xii. 14, 15.) I always felt very sorry for Gad. They chose to go back to their fields on this side of Jordan, although they fought with their brethren for the land. It is most cheering to see that they went over again and separated themselves to David. I had never noticed it before: they overcame, and retraced their steps. It is a great cheer to think of it, because the same way is open to all of us. If we have

failed in any way of the grace of God, failed to take account in the enjoyment of our souls of the place in which divine love has set us in Christ, and thus have missed the mark, it is open to any one of us to retrace his steps. When the word of Christ is ministered we may hear His voice and listen to His sayings and keep them. It is very blessed, surely. We may go over again, so to speak, give up what has hindered the power of the truth in us, retrace our steps, and take our place as separated to Christ, and thus be found in the power of life as having followed Him over Jordan.

Christ is the true ark. He has gone through Jordan, when it was overflowing all its banks, and emptied it. These people of Gad had been content to go back and stay in their own fields; but now it has come to a time when they must decide for David (Christ in figure), and they come back again with power. It is most encouraging.

I want to say a word on this epistle, but except by the supply of the grace of God I shall not be able to get it out. I look to Him to help me.

I see the apostle would have these Colossian Christians in the way of life, the way of power, in order that they may depart from the snares of death. There was an enticing and beguiling, a robbing and spoiling going on. He says, "Beware lest any man rob you," and he presents

to them the Christ, Christ as life, Christ as Head of the body, the church, and more than that Christ as Son of the Father's love in all His glorious pre-eminence. He presents Him thus for the attraction of their hearts. And if I may so express my thought, as the heart is drawn after Christ one desires greatly to take account of wisdom.

The Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She had heard of his fame, and she came to reach him in great style, with a great retinue, and with a great idea of her position; she came, too, with hard questions to prove him; and she got a great deal more than she bargained for! Every question was settled; everything in her heart opened up—a thorough exposure of what was there—and she went back without any spirit left in her. She was subdued indeed. She blesses God and she praises Solomon. She admires his wisdom. It was the wisdom of Solomon that affected her, and the Lord says, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!" We may have it too. It was Solomon's wisdom in his domestic circle that so affected her; it was when she saw "the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel . . . that there was no more spirit left in her."

I feel so strongly about it, I would like to help all my brethren to feel about it too. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." The riches of the Christ are *unsearchable*. I do not think that word "unsearchable riches" is in connection with the gospel, but with the mystery.

The wonderful way of divine love is that God would acquaint us with what is in *His* mind. Jesus calls His disciples "friends." He says, "All things I have received of my Father I have made known unto you."

The Holy Ghost ministers great things to us. Safety is a great thing: salvation much greater; peace is great; everything necessary on our side is great; and He ministers these things to us; but above and beyond all are the riches of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in the mystery of God. The apostle in the Spirit is praying, suffering, agonising, striving according to the power that works in him. He is engaged in mighty combat for the Colossians and for us, "that our hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God; in WHICH are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

I feel I can only just draw attention to this great thing. If it reaches us from the Lord

we shall be set for it. We shall see our place the other side of Jordan as risen with Christ, and set our minds on things above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God; and thus we shall indeed be delivered from the snares of death.

I would just allude to the apostle's prayer in chapter i.: "praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." I think they were on the ground of John xiv. They kept His word. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." What is His commandment? "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." They were in a state to receive the manifestations of Jesus, as we were hearing yesterday. They had received the Christ, and they were exhorted to "walk in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith." If He is the way, we must walk in Him; if He is the truth, we must be built up in Him; if He is the life, we must walk in the way of life, and so we shall escape the snares of death.

I cannot explain it, but I want to call attention to it. One may hope to be able to speak better about it another time, if the Lord will; but however that may be, its importance is great. After

all the apostle has unfolded in the Epistle to the Romans, he brings in the mystery at the close, in relation to establishing them (Rom. xvi. 25, 26), attributing the power for this to "God, only wise." We want to know the way of wisdom, nor can we be established in the present day if we have not wisdom. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, *and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* are hid in the mystery of God. These Colossian Christians were not an ordinary company. "Faith in Christ Jesus." You may say, We all have that! Have we? If we really have "faith in Christ Jesus," it shuts us out from confidence in any other man—that is quite simple. I cannot trust Peter any more than Judas, but if I have faith in Christ Jesus, He is to be relied on for the working out of all blessing for His saints and the working out of all God's thoughts and purposes. Peter denied Him, and even John ran away. Whether it be Peter or John, even they cannot be trusted. There is no certain reliance to be placed on a gifted brother, or teacher, or on a nice company. We must trust in that living, blessed Man who is gone back to His Father in the power of resurrection. He has gone back to the Father, but He has left very great interests down here.

They were not a common company, and the apostle prays for them, that they may have very

remarkable privileges: "that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." *We* would like to walk worthy of the Lord and to be fruitful in every good work—the practical part, that is—first, but the *way to it* is to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

The will of God is the glory of Christ in relation to God, and of the church in relation to Christ. I would like to be able to understand and express it, but I see most remarkably the "will of God" in Colossians and in Ephesians is connected not merely with the blessing of man but with the glory of God, and Christ setting forth all that glory. This is beautiful and precious: the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; walking worthy of the Lord, and in every good work bearing fruit. That precious fruit of abiding in Christ, and understanding intelligently the will of God. "I have called you friends," the Lord says, "not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." But you are my friends: I have made known to you precious things—the things My Father has made known to Me. And His thought for them (John xv. 11) is joy:

"that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And again (John xvii. 13): "these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Surely it is a blessed and happy line, not an abstruse line. It is open to the youngest Christian who has faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints—who trusts the Lord, who does not expect to walk as a Christian or serve as a Christian save as he knows God's will. It is all open to him—the way of life, and it will preserve him from the snares of death. No man will catch him or beguile him; he will be rooted and built up in Christ and stablished in the faith, his heart taken up with wisdom, with the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We should be more careful as to divergence creeping in if our hearts were knit together in love. It is easy to divide, to make points and difficulties, but if the Head is precious to us we shall seek to be knit together in love; it is not merely the body, but He is the *Head* of the body. He is the pre-eminent Person in all things, whether the body or the bride. If He is thus before us, we shall then desire that our hearts should be knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God. There is no divergence or misunderstanding on

that line. If our hearts have gone out in faith to Christ Jesus and love to all the saints, we have got on the line of life. If we walk in Him, having been rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith, we are free to apprehend what is suitable to Christ, what is suitable to Him up there in that scene outside this world. We shall not only be separated from this world but in Spirit outside of it we shall desire to take account of that scene, and shall be very much interested in what is suitable to the Head, and to our Father's mind and will.

The illustration is a poor one, but in a well ordered family, one would not expect to find the children marking out paths for themselves. The inquiry of rightly ordered affections would be—What is father thinking about, what is he about to do, and what would he like us to do? So, in like manner, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit, we need to covet for ourselves what the apostle prayed for, even that we may be “filled with the knowledge of the Father's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, in every good work bearing fruit, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

A. E. P.



READING.

(COL. II.-III. 17.)

W. J. Do you think that we have the true Urim and Thummim here?

T. H. R. Perhaps you will say what you refer to.

W. J. I was thinking of what was said this morning: "filled with the knowledge of his will." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—that is the Urim; and "ye are complete in him"—that is the Thummim.

F. W. G. The Urim and Thummim mean light and perfection.

W. J. Epaphras prays for them in the last chapter that they might stand perfect in the will of God.

T. H. R. I quite agree that the knowledge of God is the Urim; but it is not exactly, I think, the knowledge of God which you get in Ephesians; but it is here the knowledge of His will.

W. J. When it speaks of the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him, does not that go beyond the knowledge of His will?

T. H. R. Yes; I think so.

W. J. It is very beautiful that it is all within the compass of a Man.

W. T. P. W. Is it what He can express, or what we can apprehend ?

T. H. R. You must have the wisdom and spiritual understanding to apprehend.

G. W. G. Therefore only the priest could explain the Urim.

F. H. B. There is a somewhat similar expression in Ephesians, where it says: God "hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and intelligence."

T. H. R. Colossians hardly goes as far as that, I think. The knowledge of His will is that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

F. H. B. I thought the knowledge of His will was that you *might* walk, &c.

T. H. R. Yes. The moment you get the knowledge of God, as in Ephesians, you come into the knowledge also of the whole scheme of His counsel, and the power by which He gives effect to it. Colossians does not take you off the earth. There are three things in connection with His will. In Romans xii. you get His will with regard to the individual; in Colossians, His will with regard to believers as a company who were to be descriptive of Christ down here; in Ephesians, the mystery of His will for the dispensation of the fulness of times.

F. H. B. Would you explain the difference between those three ?

T. H. R. The first is connected with my in-

dividual pathway: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." That is what I have to do personally. When you come to Colossians it is collective—you touch the truth of the Head, and we are members of His body, and I want to know the will of God in regard to that; another thing comes out, that side of the mystery which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and you have to walk in relation to that. You have got a company of saints to walk with.

QUES. What is God's will in connection with the body?

T. H. R. I think I have to act in regard to my fellow Christians, as the body of Christ.

REMARK. The body is here really to display Christ.

T. H. R. Exactly. I think I see three things with regard to Israel of old. They came out of Egypt and the law was given. Each one was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and they had to submit to the claims of God upon them as a redeemed people, saved by His mercy. If they were to go through the wilderness, God must propose the terms on which they are to

be with Him. But then you get another thing—the tabernacle of witness and of the congregation, and they had to accompany it through the wilderness and to pitch their tents with regard to it. I have to recognise that there is something on the earth belonging to Christ, His body, and I have to walk properly in relation to that and in relation to Him as the Head of the body, the assembly. Then in Ephesians you get a further thing—the whole range of the counsel of God, and there you come to the understanding of the mystery of His will for the dispensation of the fulness of times, to head up everything in Christ, and I believe that goes on to what is eternal.

A. E. P. I thought the will of God in Colossians included the expression of Christ in His body, every feature of Christ coming out in His body here during His absence ("Christ in you, the *hope* of glory") and ultimately in glory.

J. S. O. The Head is in place already, and the sphere exists.

A. E. P. He is the Head of His body.

T. H. R. I think it is a great thing to see that the will of God is in relation to other saints. You have the individual side in Romans.

W. H. Do you get what is spoken of in Ephesians set forth in Israel?

T. H. R. There you come to the land across Jordan, the purpose of God.

J. S. O. I think it was a very important remark this morning that the entering into the will of God here is the power to resist both ritualism and rationalism.

A. E. P. What I was thinking of this morning was "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." (Prov. xv. 24. See also Prov. xiii. 14.) We may try to get free of the world apart from the way of life, but my impression is that apart from the way of life we must fail.

F. H. B. I suppose the great point in Colossians is that everything is really in Christ. If we have the fulness of God presented to us in Christ on the one side, and on the other, "ye are complete in him," we have got everything, and the object of ministry is to open out to us all that there is for us in Christ. It is Christ who is the great study of our hearts, and the great work of the devil is to divert the mind and get us occupied with something else.

W. J. What was the nature of the conflict here?

T. H. R. I think they wanted to bring in something that was not Christ, and the apostle was resisting it. What he wanted was to present every man perfect in Christ, and there is the tendency in us to add something to Christ, even religiously. For example, I might think

something of my own fervour in prayer or hymn singing. But you come to God in Christ. Everything is in Christ, and you cannot add anything.

R. M. It takes a very subtle form, and there is no preservative except in the life of Christ.

H. D'A. C. The conflict is confined to the servant in Colossians, and in Ephesians it goes wider.

T. H. R. Yes. I think the conflict was very much what the Lord says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, and of the Herodians. If you are not awake to what you have in Christ, you are open to be leavened. In Mark it says they had with them in the ship one loaf. I have no doubt the one loaf was Christ if they had apprehended it. What we want to know is Christ, and then we would not be caught with the leaven of man.

W. H. The leaven of the Pharisees is ritualism; and the Sadducees, rationalism; and the Herodians, worldliness.

T. H. R. Christ is the One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. These Colossians were Gentiles, and the apostle speaks of them as having received the Christ. He had been presented to the Jews, but had been rejected; among the Gentiles He was received. (Chap. ii. 6.)

E. D. What is the force of the "Lord" coming

afterwards: "As ye have therefore received the Christ, Jesus the Lord"?

T. H. R. I took "Jesus the Lord" to be explanatory.

F. H. B. The real object of ministry is to be rooted and built up *in Him*.

E. D. "Rooted" is the past—having been rooted. Has it not regard to life?

T. H. R. When the apostle speaks of "the Christ" it is the Head. We have had that pressed upon us, and although the term is not often used in scripture, yet the moment you get the word "the Christ" it means the anointed Man, and He is the Head.

F. H. B. I thought they were synonymous terms.

T. H. R. Not quite. Where we have spoken of the Head (and quite rightly) you will often find that the word Paul uses is "the Christ." "Lord" indicates a divine Person, and you have no part there save as under Him; but Christ is His title as Man—the anointed Man.

F. H. B. He is God's Christ. I could not say my Christ; but He is my Lord.

A. E. P. When you have "the Christ" you have come to a great system of things of which He is source and centre. I was thinking of it in relation to the Queen of Sheba. It was what she found in Solomon that emptied her of her self-importance. You get a vast system of glory

that is connected with Him as "the Christ"—all that pertains to Him in that relationship. The Person that is above attracts our hearts surely, but the things that are above are the proper subjects of our attention. The Queen of Sheba had no spirit left in her by beholding what pertained to Solomon in his domestic surroundings and his relationships to Jehovah, not merely by the glory of his kingdom in an outward way.

D. L. H. I remember Mr. Stoney making a remark that it was very difficult to say much about *the things*.

H. D'A. C. We are told to seek them.

F. H. B. And the things which are above would be pretty much what God has established in Christ in heaven, that which will come out of heaven another day.

T. H. R. It is put in contrast to things on the earth.

W. H. B—TT. Do not the things above have a present moral meaning? Is it not in these things that our life is now?

T. H. R. Exactly. But the things above are what are going to come out in Christ by-and-by, only they have a moral effect upon us now.

J. A. Referring to the Queen of Sheba, in a certain sense she is established in Solomon—rooted in connection with him because of his exceeding lordship. I think I see that in Jesus

really. We are rooted and established, because in Him everything is set up and fixed. As Lord He is entitled to everything, and we are rooted and built up in Him.

W. W. Does not the term "Prince of life" in Acts iii. 15 mean the Originator?

A. E. P. The things that are above are all moral—the very expression shews it—"things above"—not things in heaven. The thought of a *place*, as we think of it, is excluded by the expression used.

W. T. P. W. What is the meaning of moral?

E. C. Would you not say spiritual?

D. L. H. The idea of "all things" is pretty common in scripture. Mr. Raven said it was almost a technical term—I suppose, referring to moral things.

F. H. B. That is what I think. We often get the "all things" used in that sense as really looking on to the universe of bliss, the result of God's divine counsel.

T. H. R. With regard to things above we read, "All things that the Father hath are mine." As the eternal Son, of course the Father's things were His. He was the Son and had become Man, and He goes up to the Father, and then He claims the Father's things as a Man. To hear a Man say, All the Father's things are mine was most wonderful. Not the things of the kingdom, nor the things of

Messiah, which were His according to promise as Son of David and Abraham, but He, as the Son going back to the Father, could claim "all things that the Father hath are mine"!

QUES. Does not the term "all things that are in heaven and that are in earth" prove that they are material things? Moral would be the opposite to that.

T. H. R. "By him were all things created;" but when scripture speaks in detail it does not speak of material things, but it says, "thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." All that is created for the moral order of the universe is the great thing. What we see even in the order of creation at the present moment, the heavens and the earth in relation to one another, is all marvellous. The ordering and government of the world to come will be from heaven. Every principality and power must come under Christ, as Head over all things. A risen Man has gone up there from the dust of death above all principality and power.

F. H. B. He created all things, He has reconciled all things, and He is the Head over all things.

T. H. R. Consequently everything is ranged under Christ, and the whole order of rule and authority is changed; Christ, having by the death of the cross gone out from under the

old order, has gone up above every principality and power, so the law dispensation which was put under angels has no claim in regard of us. No one can judge us in respect of meats or days or seasons, they only shadowed the good things to come, but Christ is the substance. In Ephesians we read that He went into the lower parts of the earth to break the whole power of evil, and then ascended on high and gave the gifts of the Spirit. And thus He can fill the universe, and fill it with the power of good. Nothing can stand against the power of Christ now that He has gone up above all principality and power. A man goes out and preaches the gospel, and Satan cannot hold his captives against the gift given to the evangelist. "All things are yours; . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The latter clause is wonderful, Christ is God's, the One by whom He will fill all things, and we are of Him.

D. L. H. There is a way into these things.

A. E. P. It is very clear that if we seek for the things we shall find them.

F. C. You could not with a pencil define them on paper.

T. H. R. In Colossians you are not raised up together and made to sit down in the heavenlies in Christ, but you see the way is opened to you—Jordan rolled back, in a sense.

J. S. O. I was just going to say that you get

circumcision, and they were quickened with Him who was there.

T. H. R. Yes; though it does not go on to being seated in the heavenlies; it looks at you as risen with Christ, but not in the same way as in Ephesians. There it is that we may sit down in the heavenly places, here it is that you might walk on earth as risen with Christ, seeking the things above.

W. J. In order that we might know what is involved in verses 9 and 10, we must know the cutting off that is spoken of in verses 11-13.

T. H. R. In order to understand the things of Christ, and to seek the things above, you must have realised circumcision with Christ, that is, the cutting off by the cross from the life of flesh.

A. E. P. Is not the great point all through the passage that you have got everything in Christ—nowhere else? Everything is bound up in Him.

J. S. O. The church's fulness, and the Christian's fulness is there.

W. T. P. W. Am I complete in Him when I understand it?

T. H. R. "Complete in him" is the truth of Christianity, but I would never lower the truth down to suit my own experience. I would own my failure to apprehend it, but, please God, I would never lower down the truth of scripture

to where I was. The deliverance of Israel on God's side from Egypt was complete at the Red Sea ; but on their own side they were not clear of Egypt. They talked of making a captain and going back there. They carried the idolatry of Egypt with them all through the wilderness. After they crossed Jordan the reproach of Egypt was rolled away.

F. H. B. So that on their side they were not completely delivered until they were over Jordan and circumcised.

A. E. P. And to get through the Jordan they followed the ark.

W. J. Then, Mr. R., we have to take it up in soul history ?

T. H. R. Yes, only I go with what Mr. Pridham says, they were in company with the ark. I do not wish people to be exercised about *attaining* things, but about the things. You are circumcised in the circumcision of *Christ*.

F. H. B. But to be in the truth of that I must take it up.

W. T. P. W. What is the reproach of Egypt ?

T. H. R. The mark of the brickfields.

E. C. But explain that.

T. H. R. The slavery of Egypt, where Satan held us captive by our lusts ; but there is more, naturally we like the world and enjoy things here ; that is right, for God gives us richly all things to enjoy, but what I have got to come to

is that death to things here is a gain to me, and that is Jordan.

A. E. P. We have to follow the ark. The ark went ahead ; there was a great space between it and the people. Christ has gone over.

R. M. Christ opens the way for us.

T. H. R. I think it is an immense thing to follow Christ as gone to the Father. John xiv., xv. and xvi., which connect us with Christ as having left the world, are really no comfort to us until we come to this, that we miss Christ here. That was said in this room years ago. If I miss Him here because He has gone away, then I know the good of the Spirit, as my link with Him there.

A. H. Then Colossians is clearing away what hinders our having part in what is on the other side.

GEO. C. Do you not think that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is a thing that grows upon us, and as He becomes attractive to us we want to get rid of that which hinders our going in for and enjoying the things where He is ?

E. C. We might have them administratively and yet not vitally. Baptism puts into the one, and the Spirit puts us into the things vitally.

W. T. P. W. Is it true *of* every believer that he is circumcised ?

F. H. B. It is true *for* him.

D. L. H. With regard to death with Christ,

would you not say that it is true for you, but may not be true of you ?

T. H. R. Yes, the ark has gone before, and Jordan is dried up, there is no water. Hundreds of Christians look at it as full of water.

E. D. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood"—that is in order to pass to the other side. We must not lose sight that we have to appropriate the death of Christ. That is the first thing we have to do, it seems to me.

F. H. B. Yes.

A. S. L. And do I understand that in seeking to help a young soul, I should be doing him a service in taking him to Colossians ii. and inviting him to stop at this verse, and telling him that this is for him to take up ?

T. H. R. I do not think you must put it in that way. We must lead a soul on. I should like the youngest believer to understand the Lord's supper, the gain of being in the fellowship of Christ's death. I think we who take part and lead in any wise in the meeting should have this in view, that a young soul should have the sense that it has been brought into the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a great preparation for the land. In the wilderness the tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens. An Israelite marching through the wilderness had in the tabernacle the light of heavenly things. A young Christian coming into the assembly ought

to see our faces shining with the light of heaven.

A. E. P. Christ has gone through first.

E. D. Yes ; but in the second place I never follow Him unless I have affection for Him, and that would lead me to appropriate the death of Christ.

A. E. P. I have no doubt of that. Only I see we get occupied with how we get it, and the way to get it is to be occupied with the way in which God presents it. "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." Are we not entitled to look for understanding ?

W. T. P. W. What is understanding ?

A. E. P. "The knowledge of the holy," and we ought to go in for it. It is said of wisdom : "She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her." I think all this line of things is connected with understanding.

REMARK. I suppose you get the knowledge of the holy as you are sitting at the feet of wisdom !

A. E. P. Ah, but it is all open to us ; that is the great encouragement.

T. H. R. In Colossians I believe you must keep the idea of the christian company before your mind. I do not want to take it away from the individual, for all is apprehended individually, but it is for the company. Everything that is true for the christian company or assembly is

the property of each Christian, but the devil has blinded men's eyes to it all, and we are terribly hindered by the great system around us.

R. M. You come to the company as risen with Christ.

T. H. R. I think so.

W. J. When you come to Christ you come to the company.

W. T. P. W. Regarding verse 13, when is quickening true of one?

F. H. B. I think the great point is that he says it of persons in whom there is evidence of the truth of it. Would the Spirit of God use such language in addressing any company of Christians? .

T. H. R. What I understand by quickening is that you live in what Christ lives. Quickenings is always out of death, and here it is that we may be in the sphere of Christ's life. It is more than new birth. In Ezekiel xxxvi. you get what one may call new birth. (Ver. 26.) Then in chapter xxxvii. the question is asked, "Can these bones live?" Can dead Israel live in relation to God again? There you get the thought of quickening coming in. It is the difference between the third and fifth chapters of John. In the latter you get quickening out of death that you may live now in the things of Christ.

F. H. B. But then to live in the things of Christ, I must be in the life of Christ.

T. H. R. Exactly; that is the subject of the epistle.

W. T. P. W. Given a person who has faith in Christ and love to the saints, is he not quickened?

QUES. Is "quickened together with Christ" spoken of as individual?

T. H. R. The Lord speaks in John v. of quickening an individual. Quickening *with Christ* involves the whole company, that we live in all that Christ lives in, and I know no other life of the church than the life of Christ. I would say to a young Christian, the truth of your baptism is that your life is closed as to all the things in this world, and where have you life? The answer must be, in Christ.

W. B. Does it not apply to the company, and by the company do not you mean the whole church?

A. H. Is not the apostle presenting things here in the reality and truth of them—not to occupy us with ourselves?

T. H. R. Yes; I think it is a great thing to see that God has given us the christian company, and so a circle of divine affections of which Christ is the centre. When Israel came out of Egypt, God did not say, Now make your way as well as each of you can to Canaan, and I will

meet you at the other end. No; He gathered them round Himself. He made for them a tent of meeting, and they went through the wilderness as an assembly.

O. O'B. "You hath he quickened," is it applicable to all?

T. H. R. Well, you use the truth of God according to the state of those to whom you present the truth.

F. W. G. Should we not recognise that these things are only true in Christ?

T. H. R. Yes; but they are true to you in association with Christ. We enter upon it in the energy of life. There is no taking it up apart from that.

REMARK. In connection with Mr. O'B.'s question, what we have here is what is properly characteristic of all saints.

F. C. Does he not touch the truth of Romans in verse 12, and the truth of Ephesians in verse 13?

T. H. R. Yes, he does.

W. J. Would not the difference between Romans and Colossians mean this—that in Romans you change your man, and in Colossians you change the place?

F. C. In Romans you die to live, and in Ephesians you are quickened to live.

T. H. R. Yes, and you die to live really in Colossians. If man is alive in the flesh, that

man must die. He must go out of sight. The circumcision of Christ was Christ's cutting off from the life of flesh, and everything lies for me on the other side of Jordan.

D. L. H. These things are all proper to Christians, but many Christians do not apprehend what is proper to them.

A. E. P. Should we not apprehend things better if we went in for the mystery? We should want circumcision a great deal more than we do. We may spend a great deal of time in thinking of how we get on, but the great point seems to be that Christ has passed over and gone up, and we are associated with Him in life. One finds in this epistle that God has great communications to make to us, "to whom God would make known," and one desires to have ears to hear.



THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE MYSTERY.

(ROM. xvi. 25-27.)

BELOVED friends, I do not doubt that in this postscript there is an immense amount of instruction for us, especially in regard to the establishing of the saints. "To him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery." It is a very great thing to be established to-day. The waves will be stronger yet; the tide of evil will increase and people will be carried away on every side, and it is of the utmost importance that souls should be established. Evidently the apostle wrote the Epistle to the Romans to that end. He speaks (chap. i.) of his desire to impart to them some spiritual gift to the end they might be established. And having given this wonderful epistle he closes it with this grand word of ascription of praise "to him who is able to stablish you." But how? "According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ," &c. We need to look at these things which he here brings before us—"my gospel" and "the preach-

ing of Jesus Christ." I have a great impression that we shall want more the preaching of Jesus Christ ; not merely "my gospel," but the "preaching of Jesus Christ." "My gospel" I suppose is given us in this wonderful epistle where he brings out the righteousness of God, the power of God, and the love of God, and then leads you on to a people who respond to the gospel, for before he closes you find those of whom he says, they love God, a striking contrast to the first chapters, where you get an awful description of what man is. It is wonderful to think that in such a world, owing to the preaching of the gospel, there should be a people in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given to them, and that there should be a grand answer, on the part of those who have received it, of love to God. . It is wonderful such a state of things could be produced, but that is what the gospel of God, preached to the heathen world, effected.

If souls are to be established they have to go on to the closing part of Romans viii. In connection with those who love God, it speaks of them as the "called according to his purpose." I do not think we ought to withhold the purpose of God and election, in connection with the preaching of the gospel. They are important words which we get in chapter viii., "We know that all things work together for good to them

that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Vers. 28, 29.)

But besides the gospel, he introduces here, or rather, connects with it, "the preaching of Jesus Christ." I am persuaded we want more of the preaching of Jesus Christ. I would ask—Who is the One whom God has chosen to carry out His will? It is Christ. There is a great connection between the Christ and the chosen of God. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." If everything failed here, and there was no man who could secure the glory of God, God had His own resource—He chose His Son. He it was who was to bring about His glory. He only could, and if we are to have our part against the overflowing tide of evil to-day, we must have a greater sense of who that One is whom God has anointed and whom He has chosen. I think that is involved in the preaching of Jesus Christ.

He could say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." No other man was ever so accessible to the poor; no other man ever will be. No other man has expressed or ever will what Jesus expressed here in this world. In the church the grace of Christ comes out in the most blessed

way, but you could not substitute any one man for Christ.

It is a very simple thing I am bringing before you, but I think we shall have to go back to simple things. The world is making nothing of Christ to-day; Christendom is pretty well ignoring Christ. It is a great thing to see what the apostle has in his mind when he speaks of the preaching of Jesus Christ. He may well speak of it! "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Beloved friends, we ought to be able, and we shall have to be able, to say to the world that in every possible way Christ is alone! Christ is unique, there is none like Him! You could not put any other man in His place or side by side with Him. From first to last there are glories attaching to Him, which could not be attached to any one else. See the way He came into the world, as none other did or could. He cannot be classed among our sinful humanity, as if He were sinful like us. It was "that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." When He came into this world He came in holiness, and He brought all the grace that marked Him from heaven. He did not owe any of the grace that was in Him to Mary. Mary could not say as she studied all that came out in

Jesus that it came from her. He brought it with Him from heaven. The glory and the grace came with Him from heaven. The birth of Jesus was wonderful, and there was any amount of witness to it. It was not merely one shepherd but several shepherds, who heard the angels make that announcement: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," and who heard the multitude of the heavenly host join in the magnificent chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in man."

He was the only babe ever born in this world that could be rightly worshipped. It was right for those wise men to come and bring what they did, gold and frankincense and myrrh, and to worship that Holy Babe.

We have had His early life alluded to to-day; no one else at twelve years of age was marked as He was; of no one else could it be said He was about His Father's business. And when you come to His ministry, no one spake as He did. How we are impressed in reading it! and we shall be more impressed if we study and meditate upon it more.

Look at Him on the mount. (Matt. v.-vii.) There we see the Prophet greater than Moses, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are ye poor!" How different from Antichrist!

Do you think he will have a word of blessing for the poor? He will have many flatterers, but he will persecute the poor and oppress the afflicted. There was that in Christ which marked Him off from every other man. You could not put an apostle in His place, great and honoured as they were. We are very thankful for their ministry preserved to us to-day, but you can put no one beside that Man. Oh, the grace that came out in what He said! No one could produce the sweet sense of heavenly grace like Jesus. No man gave the impression in his own person of heavenly grace come down here in a man as He did.

Do you think that is what the world is waiting for? No, indeed! The world is waiting for a man who will express the entire opposite. Not that he has come out yet. Think of heaven's grace and mercy come down in a Man and the world refusing it!

Whilst the world may glory in Antichrist, oh, the vanity that will mark him! oh, the pride that will characterise him, the impatience, the will; oh, the schemes, the tricks, the fraud that will mark that man! He will dig a pit for the godly. A striking contrast between our treasure—Christ—and the one the world expects, and is about to receive! I trust God will impress our hearts with the greatness of our treasure. I want to be under the influence of

Christ. Much as we are looked down upon—we Christians—we have a treasure that nearly two thousand years does not make us ashamed of. Twenty centuries have not produced another man that you can put beside Jesus.

I am only throwing out these thoughts, I trust under the guidance of the Spirit. Look at all the grace that marked that blessed One. How He is distinguished! None can take His distinction from Him. Think of the meekness that marked Him! When did He retaliate? Do you think that Antichrist will appreciate the meek? Think of the comfort Christ had for those who never expected comfort! They found grace and help in a Man who brought them all they needed, and that from heaven. There never was such a sense of heaven come down to earth in a man, as when Jesus was here on earth.

Then it is the preaching of Jesus Christ I have before me, because He is God's chosen One. God alone could choose, and there was no one to choose but His own Son, and everything goes to prove that He chose One equal to the work He came to do. I want Him to fill my own soul with the sense of it, and I trust your heart will be carried with it. God "laid help upon one that is mighty," for He chose His Son, and all that followed justified God in so doing. Oh, the grace that marked Him! Oh, the comfort

He was to the poor! Look at Him as He closes His path on earth. How He held His own around Him in spite of every difficulty; He gave them no temporal advantage; His disciples were poor. There was no worldly advantage for them, and yet He held them; but how? Did He hold them as Antichrist will? Oh, I pity the people that will be near him, in his special society. Think of the immediate connection with hell that will mark that company! Think of the loss to Europe and the world in general, when they accept a man who will deny that the Father sent the Son! Oh, the Satanic malice and influence when He is denied. Antichrist will persuade the people that the Father never sent the Son. He will deny that Jesus is the Christ. He will take the place of the Christ, and people will give it to him. That is what people are in for who, in London and in the great towns and villages of Europe, and all over Christendom, are turning their backs on Jesus, and are studying the times, carried by the opinion of the world, instead of coming to Christ and studying Him.

Then take the death of Jesus. Take the Lord Jesus as He goes into death. How different from any other man! Whoever went into death like Jesus? I admit the way saints go into death is most wonderful and beautiful; but they owe it all to Christ; they are carried

through by the grace of Christ. But look at Him! No one will ever go into death as He did; no one will ever suffer like Jesus. How He served others, too, even to giving His life for them. Antichrist will not serve others; he will oppress. Christ delivered from oppression. He took into consideration this groaning world under the influence of oppression. What does it mean when it says, He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses? How He suffered all through His pathway through this world! but when you come to the atoning sufferings of the cross there they culminate. There He suffered as never before, for He suffered for sin. The One with whom God says He was well pleased went to the cross. How we glory in it! We own none could have undertaken that work but the One in whom we believe. How He met for us the judgment of a Holy God against sin, and then when all was accomplished He could say in perfect peace: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The time would be too short to go into detail. I merely want to suggest how He finished His course. He could not come under—He never accepted—the influence of the world and their ways. The world could never say they educated Him. He never borrowed the thoughts of man. I trust what practically marks us is something the world could never take credit for, something

they could never say we got from them. Jesus, from first to last, never accepted their thoughts or ways. He was entirely apart. There was no sense of having to give in, He was never conquered, He laid down His life. He knew where the victory was. His last triumphant words, "It is finished," proclaim the conqueror. You might look at Him as John presents Him in a majesty that marked none other. None could even arrest Him, none could judge Him, everything when He comes to the cross gives testimony to Him. They cast lots for His vesture, but it only gives testimony, for it fulfils the scripture. Everything that transpires around that cross only gives testimony to that Man. In His death they could not put Him among the violent; they had intended to make His grave there; but 700 years before, God had allotted His grave with the rich (Isa. liii.); and when God wants a rich man He brings him out to provide His tomb. But He could not be held by death. I like to think we have the light in our souls of a Man that could not be held by the power of the grave. He is to fill everything. He will fill all creation. I do not believe God would have created heaven and earth but for that Man. I think God had Christ in His mind, Christ in vision from the very beginning.

That leads me to the latter part of this wonderful postscript: "according to the revelation

of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest." Is all that marked that Man to be lost? If He was unique in the way He came into the world, unique when He was upon earth, then see Him those forty days in His resurrection body, how He comforted and held His disciples. Their sorrow vanished and gave place to a joy which they never lost. He made them know He had got the victory over all evil. He presented it in His living Person. No one ever rose as He did. No one called Him out of the grave. He rose in His own power. With us—we shall be called out of the grave. The Lord Jesus Christ, our own blessed Lord, has the right to awake us from the sleep of death and it will be His joy to do it. But who called Him out? He rose in His own glory. He ascended to the right hand of God, nor then did He give up His service of love. He has been carrying it on ever since. From on high He gave the Spirit. He did things no one expected. He sent the Spirit and enabled a few unlettered men with courage and power to go forth with His name into the world, and He has been carrying on the ministry from that day to this.

Now as to the mystery. We are not to lose sight of Christ. Christ presented what never was presented before, but in the church God brings it about that the grace of heaven mani-

fested in Christ is still presented to man. If souls are to be established they must not be content with the gospel, or the preaching of Jesus Christ, they must know the mystery, the way God has brought it about that the grace of Christ should still be presented to the world. The service is not to close. It is not to be a bygone thing. God will still have that grace presented, but how? Christ personally is at the right hand of God, but His body is here—the church—and He is to be expressed in every member of His body. The Holy Ghost is given by Christ in heaven, and every member of the body is to express in His absence on high some feature which came out in Christ when down here. The world thought they could get rid of the testimony, but what came out in Him came out still more after His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. It comes out still, thank God! Not perhaps in its collective character, seen as one body, as at the beginning, but it is open to every saint still to learn his place in Christ, and the place he has in connection with the body. That is the reason for the gifts, in order that we may learn our place in the body.

I can understand the day is rapidly approaching, the day of glory, when we shall have no more evangelists, no more pastors or teachers, but when shall we not have the assembly,

that wonderful assembly formed as the body of Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"? Thank God! that will go on to eternity.

These gifts are for "the perfecting of the saints." I do not think you could have the "work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ" unless you first have the perfecting of the saints. The perfecting of the saints, the setting of them in their true place in the body, is the first definite object, in order that the saints should have their part in the edifying of the body of Christ. We have our place and should take our place in the body of Christ, that the members may be in living connection one with the other, and enter into what it is to be part of that body, that should express Christ here. It is for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. If the saints are not perfectly in gear, properly articulated, or set, in reference to Christ and to one another, how are you going to get the advantage of the gifts and grace Christ has given? Christ has given gifts to every one; every one has some gift from Christ. I refer to Ephesians iv., "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." To my mind that grace is even greater than the gifts, and will be found when the gifts mentioned lower down are no longer needed.

There are the gifts, evangelists, pastors,

teachers; but to every one is given grace; and the object of ministry is that we may enter into the truth of the church and our relationship to Christ and one another, so that the spiritual machinery, so to speak, may be in real working order, that we may minister the grace of Christ to one another.

That is a splendid way to stem the tide. The ministry of Christ's own grace to one another, the members ministering the grace of Christ.

The Lord only knows where they are! You could not invite them to any conference. You cannot point to leading brethren or those distinguished for gift and say these are the ones most distinguished for the grace of Christ given to every one. No; it may be some poor old saint in a back alley that is most distinguished; but though in a back alley she knows her intimate, precious, living connection with Christ and with His own, and is constantly expressing that grace that only contact with Him can produce.

Behind the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ lies the mystery—lies the truth of a company who can present to the world the very same grace Christ presented when here on earth, that through these saints should come out that same grace. All His glory is treasured there. Where else is it? The Jews have it not, nor the heathen. It is presented and treasured by His people.

But I have said enough. The Lord grant that we may observe that word at the end of this epistle. He is encouraging the Romans, telling them his journey will not be without purpose. While he then unfolded the gospel he has yet more to tell them, he would unfold the mystery too, which lies behind it. He encourages them to expect still further ministry.

I think, beloved brethren, we want more of the preaching of Christ and more understanding of what the mystery is.

May the Lord give it to us for His name's sake.

H. D'A. C.



STABILITY.

(MATT. VI. 1-8; 16-18.)

MORE than once while we have been together the word "feebleness" has been used in prayer as descriptive of our state, and more than once we have asked that we might get hold of truth and be swayed and formed by it, subdued by it.

I read these verses because I think most will agree that the secret of the feebleness is the little measure in which the Father's eye upon us is realised. And the reason people have to ask many a question at the readings about young Christians is found in this, that the side of privilege is so much before us and the very old-fashioned word "duty" has been dropped or very much obscured. The Lord takes up certain principles with His disciples, and it would be a bold man who would say these principles have no application at the present day to every one of us. Now if there be any such thing as the practical shewing forth whose we are and whom we serve, and if there be any such thing as being retired from the system of lusts and passions which we call the world, then surely these principles and their application go on; and it becomes us to ask, with all the light and the wonderful things we have had before us, whether we have kept in the balance the solemn truth of responsi-

bility as regards all these practical things. We need to do so if there is to be growth in these things in which we desire to see the saints established.

Three times in this passage the Lord speaks of the Father seeing in secret. It is the great principle of living not under the eye of man but under the eye of Him who has taken us up in blessing. That principle has been before us from time to time, but the Lord means it to be not fitful, but abiding. And if it be so, if three times He refers them to the Father and doing everything in reference to that eye, as under it, surely we should have it constantly before us. How needed this is—but it is nothing new—to give calmness and stability.

Let me remark further, if these inward things are under the Father's eye, how it brings home His interest in each individual believer! There is no such thing as a small Christian. If what we have been hearing to-day of the glory of Christ linked with His people be true, there is no such thing as an insignificant, a small Christian. What was morally lovely in the course of the Lord Jesus should be set forth in its place and proportion by each one; alone could this be known by a conscience exercised as to pleasing Him. And then I think as an example you would easily recall the words of the apostle—that is what he means when he says to

the Thessalonians : " Ye have learned of me how ye ought to walk and to please God." He had been with them but a very short time. It is walking under the Father's eye, knowing His affection toward us, His goodness toward us, and taking instruction from Him as He is pleased to give it by precept and example. In that direction lies the way of growth. There is nothing to fear, but everything to welcome in the opening out of the heart under the Father's eye ; Christ lives for you, He has done the greatest thing possible that you might walk in confidence before God and please Him.

There are in contrast to this persons marked out who walk before men and do so very much to their own satisfaction. These Pharisees did their righteousnesses to be seen of men. There is such a thing as walking before God now and the being able to say in our little measure as Paul did, " We are made manifest unto God." We seek to please Him who sees in secret. How the Lord would encourage even the babes by revealing the great heart of love that is bent upon your welfare and blessing. He says you shall not surrender anything but you will get a reward for it, and you will get the reward of public approval. Nothing can be a greater reward than to have the sense of God's approval. As we have often been told by those whose ministry we look back to with reverence and

affection, the form that approval takes is *the increase of light*: it is to know Himself better, to know the thoughts before Him and in His mind.

How it comes out in Romans, even to "the shewing mercy with cheerfulness," all in connection with the body. Look at the subjects brought before us in this chapter, Matthew vi., doing alms, praying, fasting—I do not read them all. These are the subjects that should draw forth our intercession—not for ourselves but for His interests.

What a maintaining power for the conscience! "I've now to please but One," we often sing; but what a wonderful moment when you begin it, to live for and seek to please but One, under the eye of the Father that sees in secret.

I do not want to mix up dispensations. You shall judge if they are legal assertions. We call it in our failing way "duty" and it is carried out imperfectly. The pressure does not decrease but we are under the Father's eye. Take the Father's minute care, He does for us more than one would do for oneself: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." All your smallest things are under His eye; and then think of what His thought is to hold you in conformity to Christ!

May the Lord increase our interest in these things and lead us into them and give us to grow in them for His pleasure!

W. W.

“HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST.”

(HEB. II. 1-3; 2 TIM. IV. 3, 4; 14, 15;

REV. III. 11-13.)

I THINK, beloved brethren, if ever there was a day when this word in Revelation iii. should come home to our hearts and consciences it is this present moment: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” It is a day which is characterised by the giving up of everything that is vital and true in the professing body of God’s people generally, everything of God revealed in Christ. The leaders of Christendom to-day (speaking generally) are unitarian or infidel, and those who are led by them are content to accept such a teaching as they get; it is the fulfilment of 2 Timothy iv. 3. It is characterised by the profession of having new light and the deliberate giving up the truth. Everything is tending as fast as it can to apostasy. It will end in the giving up of the very profession of Christianity. The tide has set in and is running hard in that direction.

And if all this is going on in the professing body of which we are a part, there is grave

danger of our being affected in the same way ; doing what others have done and are doing, letting slip what God has given to us. We ought to take heed and it applies very forcibly at the present moment: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Do not surrender ! Do not let Satan rob you. "Hold fast till I come."

We must be deeply conscious that we have received immense grace from God, great light ; an immense deal has been committed to us. It seems to me the whole scope of God's mind and ways has been recovered and brought to light in our days as it has not been known since the days of the apostles. We have had the testimony of the Christ, that is, Christ has been set forth ; this includes three parts, first in what He is to us personally—every one begins with that. I might speak to every one here and say, What is Christ to you ? You say, He is everything to me, the One in whom the grace of God has reached me, in whom the light of God has shone to me ; He is my Saviour, my Lord, my support, my Priest, my all. Let us cultivate the thought of this more and more ; let us seek to realise more and more what Christ is to us personally.

Then another thing has been brought out very strikingly, what Christ is to the church, His body. He is the Head from whom the whole body having nourishment ministered increases

with the increase of God. He is the Head of the body, and the body while here on earth has in Him all it needs as resource and support. All that sustains the body, the nourishment, comes from Christ, and the grace that knits together comes from Him. We have come together in the faith of it to-day. If we did not know Christ in relation to the church, something of what He is to the church and what the church is to Him, we would not have come to these meetings. We came together counting upon His unfailing grace to the church. If we fail He never fails, and never will fail any who look to Him. However small a company may be, if they are in the faith of the Head, they will prove that the grace of Christ is sufficient to supply all that is needed to sustain and knit together. We cannot knit ourselves together.

Again, He is in a way the Husband of the church, as we heard last night; He lives now to nourish and cherish the church; He is always thinking of the church; His interests are there; she is the object of His love. The church, the object of His undying love, is here, and the church will never lack whilst it looks to Him. She will always prove His sufficiency; He will never fail. The servants may go—one and another through whom He has ministered to us—and they do go; but He does not pass away, He remains, and He lives to nourish and cherish the church as well

as to cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and He will present it to Himself another day not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but holy and without blame.

That is part of the testimony of the Christ that has been ministered to us very distinctly.

And then one point more, that may have come to light more recently: Christ in what He is to God, Head over *all things*, the great Sun and Centre of the universe of God. The One in whom God will establish everything according to His mind. In the administration of the fulness of the times He will head up all things in Christ and ultimately will establish the new heavens and earth, where God will be all in all, and all will answer to His pleasure and satisfaction, everything originating from Christ and sustained by Him who is Head of all. That is another part of the testimony of the Christ and gives us great thoughts of His glory, and the greatness of His Person.

As I said, I believe the whole scope and purpose of God's will has been manifested and kept before our minds through the Lord's grace. Now the great thing is, what are we going to do with it?

I am not looking for anything new; I think the whole scope of truth has been revived. We have been left a little longer in responsibility, do we value what we have received? A man

will not cling to or hold fast very much what he does not value. "Hold that fast which thou hast;" are we conscious of having received anything? do we appreciate what we have received? "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The words themselves shew there is a great deal of opposition, a great effort of Satan to lead us to drop and to give up, as Christendom has done; the word says not only, Hold it; but, Hold it fast. And He gives the reason: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." What does He mean by "quickly"? The force of that is, the time of testimony and conflict will soon be over; testimony and conflict always go together. If we are seeking to be here in testimony for Christ we shall be in conflict certainly. We have heard to-day of the apostle's conflict, and how he sought to identify the saints with him in the conflict. It must be opposition and conflict in this world, but the time of testimony and conflict will soon be over. Hold on, He says, as it were, do not give up the conflict now; hold to the colours; do not let down the flag; I come quickly.

Then another thing. Not only the conflict will be over, but there will be a day of reward; see that no man take thy crown. If you give up just before the end you will lose your crown, the approval of the Lord which will be mani-

fested in the day of glory. Let us seek grace to be faithful to the testimony of the Lord, to hold fast, to keep up the flag, and stand for Him, that when He comes we may be found faithful to what He has committed to us. That is the great thing to be exercised about.

One more word. There is only one way in which we can hold fast. It is not enough to have the truth as doctrine. Orthodoxy will not stand against the wiles of the devil. We must have it in the power of the Spirit of God and in connection with the person of Christ and maintained as life in our souls, or we shall surely let it slip.

It is a day of letting slip, and giving up. May we, by grace, be found holding fast till He come.

F. H. B.

NOTE.—I should like to add a few thoughts which were in my mind, but which I was unable to bring out at the meeting. The passages read indicate a gradual decline in departure from the truth. The beginning is what is spoken of, Hebrews ii. 1, 2, that is, neglecting, or letting slip, the things which we have heard. It was so with Israel, they did not hearken to the word spoken to them. If the Holy Spirit is speaking, and He will never cease to speak as long as He remains here in the church, it must be a serious thing not to hearken to His voice, or to be

negligent of His ministry. If we let the word slip, we shall ourselves slip away. The next step in the downward path is the refusal of sound teaching, and the deliberate turning away from the truth, 2 Timothy iv. 3, 4. Then the next step is quickly reached, that is positive opposition, as we see in the case of Alexander, of whom the apostle says, "He greatly withstood our words." (2 Tim. iv. 15.) It is painful to think of those who once professed to value the truth and to proclaim it, being found in such a path as set forth in these passages. This should serve as solemn warning to us all, what others have done and are doing, we are liable to do. We need to pray continually that the truth may be maintained in us in living power by the Spirit, and that we may not compromise it in our ways, so that we may be prepared as good soldiers to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The Lord grant we may be found so doing when He comes.



READING.

(PHIL. IV.)

T. H. R. suggested that the subject of the power of life should be continued, and proposed that Philippians iv. should be read.

W. W. How does this chapter speak about the subject of life?

T. H. R. The subject of the whole epistle is the development of the life of Christ in the believer. This chapter brings it out in a wonderful way. It spoke to me as it was read. This is so practical that one feels almost afraid to say much about it.

We have had the subject of life a good deal before us, and the way in which life comes out is not in what we can say as to it, but in what we are. This has often been pressed on us. In this epistle we see the life of Christ coming out in various persons; in Paul in the first chapter, then in the second we see it in what Paul says of Timothy, "I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state." While others were seeking their own, it was *natural* to Timothy to care for those who belonged to Christ. In Epaphroditus it came out in his anxiety because the Philippians had heard of his

sickness. His thought was for *their* grief, not for himself. In the Philippians themselves, too, we have seen that the fruits of life came out; it is what is proper to the divine nature. John's epistle speaks of this, it is natural for the Christian to practice righteousness and to abide in Christ.

F. H. B. Chapter iii. is the energy of life.

R. M. Do we not get in chapters ii. and iii. the food of life; manna in chapter ii., and the old corn in chapter iii.; the humbled Christ and the glorified Christ?

T. H. R. In one sense chapter ii. has more charm for me than chapter iii., because it is the downstooping of Christ. The effect of this downstooping will remain to eternity, not only because through it the work of redemption was wrought, but because He became a Man, and remains a Man for ever.

W. T. P. W. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." That was in His downstooping to death.

W. J. I see salvation in three aspects in this epistle. (1.) Saved from our own wills in chapter ii. by having the mind that was in Christ, by His going down. (2.) Saved from the glory of man and the world by having Him as an Object in glory. (Chap. iii.) (3.) Saved from pressure and care by the sense of the Lord's care for us. (Chap. iv.)

T. H. R. In chapter iii. "the *Lord*" is before us. "Rejoice in the Lord." In the two previous chapters we have more the expression of the life of *Christ*, but in chapter iii. He is the exalted One, and that because He humbled Himself and was obedient to death. One who is obedient is fit to be in power, and Jesus went into death in obedience, and all administration is put into His hands to carry out the purpose and will of God. It has been said that the moment He rises from the Father's throne the first wave of His power will be to change our bodies of humiliation and conform them to His body of glory.

A. M. Is not Joseph a type of what you are saying? First he is in humiliation and then in the place where everything was subjugated to him.

T. H. R. My impression is that while the Lord subjugates everything to Himself, yet that administration of blessing is the great end of His Lordship. In the details of the work of the testimony down here, the apostle recognises everything as being in the Lord's hand. The apostle was not depressed by his being a prisoner, it is the Lord's ordering and turns out to the furtherance of the gospel, and he says, "Rejoice in the Lord."

F. W. G. In the life of Christ we are lifted above the pressure.

T. H. R. I have no doubt that at this moment

the Lord administers everything for God, though in a hidden way. (See Mark iv. 27.)

GEO. C. So the apostle says, "I trust *in the Lord* that I also myself shall come shortly."

T. H. R. Yes, everything is in His hand, we need to have the sense of that.

F. H. B. Salvation is realised in the confession of Jesus as Lord.

T. H. R. I think chapter i. 19, 20 shews that Paul had on the helmet of salvation as being in conflict for the testimony. It seemed as if Satan had prevailed in the conflict, by having Paul in captivity, but it was not so; all turned out to the furtherance of the gospel.

W. J. I connect Philippians with the verse in the Second Epistle to Timothy—"Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience but out of them all the Lord delivered me." (Chap. iii. 10, 11.)

W. T. P. W. The Lord never changes.

T. H. R. With early brethren there was a faith in the Lord as having all in His hand which I fear is lacking now. They were men of faith. Mr. Darby came out when there was nothing to come out to but the Lord. I am afraid two or three gathered to the Lord's name is held as a dogma, with very little faith in the Lord Himself.

R. M. Because it is so, we little know how to use the Lord.

T. H. R. I have no doubt that at the beginning of any special movement of the Spirit of God, a special energy of faith accompanies it, and afterwards decline sets in.

D. L. H. Do you connect responsibility with it?

T. H. R. We must admit responsibility though I dread talking of it. I feel it is such a moment of weakness, and we are so little capable to meet our responsibility, that I feel all we can do is to get close to the Lord.

G. W. G. Many things are allowed which we cannot go on with. We are in danger of dropping down in our thoughts, and praying for certain servants instead of *for the gospel*.

GEO. C. We are in danger of not separating the precious from among the vile. When we see something which is of God in what we have outwardly separated from, we ought to be ready to own it and thank God for it.

T. H. R. Things around are very confused and people get chafed at what they meet with, but after all the Lord holds the reins. We often have to wait to see what He is doing in the midst of the confusion. Mr. Darby used to say, The Lord has a long look out. He sees all that is going on, and we have to be patient. The first mark of an apostle was patience.

R. M. We read, "Strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Col. i. 11.)

T. H. R. It is said that the man who waits is the man who wins.

H. The practical effect of confidence in the Lord would be patience.

T. H. R. There may be difficulties in the church from one thing or another, where you can do nothing but groan it all out to God, and He will come in according to His own wisdom.

QUES. What is thanksgiving connected with?

T. H. R. When we think of need, we pray; but when we think of what God is, thanksgiving flows forth. The soul is so impressed with the Person with whom all the need has been left, that it can give thanks.

F. W. G. We get a sense of His faithfulness.

A. E. P. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

W. J. That is "bed rock."

A. M. What do you mean by "bed rock"?

W. J. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

T. H. R. It means that you have gone below the surface of loose earth to the solid rock beneath.

A. E. P. That ground can only be taken in the life of Christ.

A. H. It is a great thing to be careful for

nothing, when there is so much to make us careful.

D. L. H. Explain your remark as to the life of Christ.

A. E. P. R. M. can tell more about it than I can. What little I know of it I have learnt through him.

R. M. There is no other way in which we could take that ground but in the life of Christ. We could not take it in the life of Adam. It supposes that we are in the good of the cross and set free.

A. E. P. Pressure and care and need bring you to God, it is the effect of the life of Christ in you that you pray. Christ prayed.

T. H. R. That is very important. Everything that becomes an occasion of our going to God in prayer is really a blessing. No creature can live without an object, and Christ as our Object becomes the power of life. Even the Lord Himself when He became Man lived because of His Father. "He that eateth me shall live because of me."

W. T. P. W. J. N. D. said the law gave neither life nor an object, but the gospel supplies both.

A. H. Riches in glory by Christ Jesus, what does that mean?

T. H. R. The apostle wanted the Philippians to be enriched by something in heaven. They had given to him of their earthly possessions,

and he could pledge to them the supply of all their need by a God he well knew, "My God," out of His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. He did not pledge any supply from earth but from heaven.

W. T. P. W. Which is greater, one's communication to need or the spirit in which it is done?

T. H. R. If a man is affected by the truth himself, then his communications are greatly coloured by what he himself is. We have to hold things here with a light hand.

W. J. We could not let our yieldingness be known to all men, if we did not know that God is for us.

QUES. How do you take "The Lord is near"?

T. H. R. It is of little moment whether we refer it to His present nearness to us, or that His coming is near. The fact that there is but a thin veil between us and Him should affect us. He is to us within the veil, but we are brought nigh. Still I could not eliminate the thought of His coming from the verse. If we are near the Lord, His coming is before us.

QUES. "Supply all your need." Is not that spiritual rather than temporal?

T. H. R. Well, *all*. But my impression is that in parting with their temporal goods, the apostle desires that they might be enriched with the wealth of heaven.

QUES. What are riches in glory ?

T. H. R. The expression "riches or wealth of glory" occurs several times. In one sense it is, so to speak, the multiplication of the glory of Christ in the saints. Just as a sunbeam is made visible by the thousands of motes which float in it, so the light of the glory of God which shines in the person of Christ will be displayed in its fulness by its reflection in thousands of saints. It gives one a thought of the wealth of God's glory, that it can enrich so many.

A. L. We may go to God as to temporal pressure, and whilst waiting on Him, we may get such a sense of what He is, that in that way we are helped.

T. H. R. Anything which leads us to pray is good. We need to be enlarged ; J. B. S. said that no man was really beyond his prayers. You acquire knowledge by meditating upon scripture—there God speaks to you, then you pray, and thus you speak to God. In Luke x. and xi. we have the word of God and prayer, and it is this having to do with God which fits one for testimony. In Luke xi. we get the testimony of salvation in Jonah, and of divine wisdom and glory in Solomon.

A. E. P. We are set on a line of things which is good. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, and so on, are to be thought on and then

we may do the things so described. We ought to cultivate good thoughts.

R. M. All around us is a sink of iniquity. If we are occupied with things around, where should we go to ?

QUES. Where do we get the good things ?

A. E. P. In the new man.

R. M. It is a great thing to take a matter to God, and to pray about it.

GEO. C. If you are walking in the truth, you will be true to the centre and you will not wobble. Any vehicle will wobble if the wheel is not true to its centre.

A. E. P. The man who can deal with evil is one who is occupied with the truth. One who thinks much of evil will get under the power of it.

REMARK. One hardly detects what is evil, if we do not know what is good.

GEO. C. The apostle rejoiced at the way things would turn out ; we need to have our eye on the way in which the Lord can cause things to turn out, and meanwhile to pray.

