

TRUTH FOR THE TIME;

(PART II.)

BEING

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THE POWER FROM ON HIGH.

JOHN XIV. 26 AND XV. 26.

ANY simple reader can see the distinction between these two verses, but there is much involved in that distinction. In the one, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father; in the other, the Holy Ghost is sent by the glorified Christ. If you accept the distinction, and then wait on the Lord, He will open it out to you. What is the importance of it? What is involved in the distinction? I am not going to say much upon the distinction, but to record the history of the Spirit's services.

In chapter xiv. 26 the Father sends Him. That, you remark, is announced at the supper-table. The blessed Lord announces to the disciples the sending of the Holy Ghost by the Father whilst they were at the supper-table. Chapters xiii. and xiv. both give what transpires there. He and His own are seen there, as in a family circle, apart altogether from the world. Indeed, all John's Gospel represents Christ and those brought to know Him by the Father, as altogether outside man and earth. There is nothing in this Gospel relating to our being subjects on the earth, such as we find in the Epistle to the Romans. John presents Christ

and His own—God's circle. In chapters xiii. and xiv. we have God's people; we are inside. True, there were elements of disturbance; there was the treachery of Judas, and the unfaithfulness of Peter. But we are there inside. The last verse of chapter xiv.: "Arise, let us go hence," intimates leaving this enclosure for a more outward course. We are in the street now, outside the enclosure of chapter xiv., where the Lord is with His own. You get all the comfort inside, the preparation for confronting the world outside.

I do not think of interpreting these scriptures, but I desire to dwell especially on the resources which now belong to us. I would seek to arrest saints, even the youngest, with the immense importance of those resources.

John's Gospel, if not the last book written, was very nearly the last, and God sets forth there how His support remains the same. It is not a question of what *we* are, but of what *God* is, and of what we have in Him. It is an immense comfort to turn to the wonderful resources we have in Him. There may be great deficiency in availing ourselves of them, but it is a great cheer to my soul to know that (as a general might say) "My resources are complete." Talk of feebleness or of declension, I admit it fully; but I do not admit that there is any lack in the resources. I look up to God and see the resources as great as ever. It is as true for the believer this day

as it was the first day, that the Holy Ghost is here sent from the Father to glorify Christ. You remark, the Father sends Him in the Son's name. It is not so much to support them on the earth, as to lift them out of it; to make them realise that which Jesus Himself had when here, though they were in a place in which they could expect nothing, either from the place, or from the man. It is a wonderful thing to learn that I am in a place from which I get nothing, or from the man that is in that place. I am here as an Australian might be in this country. I ask him, "Where are your interests?" He replies, "They are all in Australia." We are sent here for a purpose; we are all missionaries. Your duties are only discipline to fit you for the Lord's service. It is our Lord's will to fit us for His own service, and He puts us in different circles and responsibilities. The more you are for Him, the more He will cut away from you all that debars you from being for Him fully. Do you think Paul knew when in the third heaven, "I shall lose all my great abilities when I come down." He never dreamt of it! But when he comes down, he says, "Lest I should be puffed up there was given me a thorn in the flesh." "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." *"Always."* I never saw any man yet get any advance in the knowledge of Christ who did not get at the same time severance from the thing that would

hinder his being the expression of it. A monk or a nun thinks he can sever himself from it. All ascetics are on that ground. But no! nothing but God's own hand can do it; and He will touch something that perhaps you know nothing about; something you little expect; but He knows all about it. He knows how to touch, and His own hand does it. This is a little away from my subject.

To return, I propose to go on with the history. Chapter xv. 26: "He shall testify of me." The word "He" is very emphatic. Any ordinary writer would have said, "*You* shall testify of me." We get that in the last verse, where it is said, "Ye also shall bear witness." But it is not only that the disciples who had known Him on earth should bear testimony to Him, but there should be the distinct testimony of this divine Person from heaven. We have to do with a testimony from *heaven*. "*He* shall testify of me." He uses the vessel, but He shews it is not *you* but the Holy Ghost. He is the "power from on high." Most books on this subject do not go beyond the sending of the Holy Ghost by the Father. But that, as I have said, is more in relation to yourself. Here (chap. xv. 26) it is in relation to Himself. I do not think you can have the comfort of the Holy Ghost, as sent by the Father in chapter xiv., if you do not know Him as sent by the Son in chapter xv. I do not, of course, mean

that you have not the Spirit of God ; but you will not have the power of the Spirit to comfort, as in chapter xiv., if you avoid the position of a witness of Christ on earth, and do not accept Him as sent in chapter xv. In chapter xiv. it is all for yourself individually. In chapter xv., the Holy Ghost makes you a witness of Christ ; you can effect nothing yourself ; the Holy Ghost witnesses through you.

I turn to chapter xvi. to explain what I mean. We are not inside now, where we are *prepared* for service. There is a difference between preparation and the testimony. You have to learn inside, you are there prepared, but you go outside to bear witness for Him. If you are not prepared you will not be in testimony ; you are prepared inside. A soldier does not go to battle to learn to be a soldier. He is taught that in barracks. Chapter xvi. is the battle field. The Holy Ghost is in distinct testimony against the world. What then is our position ? We should be like the armed men going round Jericho. Which are *you*, Jericho or the armed men ? They never struck a blow, but there was a very distinct declaration—*that* is Jericho—*that* is the obstruction ; they were witnesses against it. There is God's organisation and man's organisation. The world is man's organisation. I am here for a glorified Christ ; I come out from inside, having learnt the blessedness of

His comfort ; I come out as a witness of the exalted Man. And what is my position ? I confront the world because I belong to another order of things altogether. I am the very opposite of the world. What has the church done ? She gave up the power of the Holy Ghost, and accepted the power of the world—Rome—the fourth Beast. She will get plenty of it. The Beast will yet carry the harlot, and will turn round and hate her, and burn her with fire. The church gave up the power of God and accepted the power of the world. We cannot, as witnesses for Christ against the world, use the means and power of the world. If one were to say, “I use every means I have at my disposal for the service of God,” well then I should say, you weakened your work. Paul, when he came first into Europe (Acts xvi.), is a voice to us. Paul would not accept countenance from the woman with the spirit of divination ; consequently the world opposed him, but God signalised him. Instead of any concession to the god of this world, he is a witness against him. The Holy Ghost is an incontrovertible witness against the world. He exposes the guilt of the world as an advocate would expose the guilt of a culprit. I would not read the statistics of crime to find out what the world is ; this one scripture tells it. The Holy Ghost is here, an abiding witness of the state—the sin of the world. You must go to heaven for righteousness ;

there is none here. As to judgment, the prince of this world is judged.

Correspondingly with this, let me turn to verse 14 of chapter xvi. A remarkable communication is there made which we do not get in chapter xiv., and which is only known to the one who is standing in testimony. "He shall glorify me." But that is not all: you have lost the world, but He will take of mine and shew it unto you. In chapter xiv., you get your place only. Now you find that the One your heart is set upon will be glorified. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you." It is in keeping with Paul's word, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but *God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*, for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God." You say, If I were with the Holy Ghost I should be outside the world? Yes; but you would find that He would delight your heart, for He would glorify Christ. The things where Christ is would be made known to you. You have lost the world; but heaven and heavenly things are given to you. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." I have heard that passage quoted as if it were

said, "He shall take of *me*," as if it was Christ Himself. But no, it is "take of *mine*." "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." You see he is bringing in heavenly things in contrast with the world and its things. It is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost to bring our souls into acquaintance with these heavenly things. You are confronting the world, standing in opposition to it; I do not say aggressively, but you are standing in moral distinction from it. The world is man's organisation, and I am standing apart from it; I belong to another order of things; I belong to Christ in heaven; and practically, I am called to be here for Him on the earth.

The gospel narrative shews how the Father can lift you out of every pressure here. Will He feed me? Yes. Will He clothe me? Yes. He cares for me perfectly! What I learn is how the Father's heart is for me, not to set me up in the world, but to lift me out of it.

I turn now to Acts vii., going on with the history of the Holy Ghost. Here we have our charter, if I may so say. Read verse 55: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Here I get a very distinct work of the Holy Ghost, and one of the deepest importance. Until you un-

derstand this, you do not understand your position in Christ on the earth; and you could not understand the new order of things, the new centre. Here the fact is disclosed that the old order of things is over; not the world simply, but all here nominally for God. It is not only the pagan world, but the religious world as we call it. The old order upon earth comes to a close. A most wonderful thing happened. The first witness who had been recounting to Israel how they had failed up to that moment from the days of Abraham, now discloses, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." What now? That man, a man of faith, inaugurates an entirely new order of things. Stephen is the first witness of the new order. Witness and martyr are the same word. He looks up stedfastly into heaven; he sees Jesus, "the glory of God, and Jesus." That is the first time that ever a man on earth saw a Man in heaven. And now a Man in heaven is seen in connection with the glory of God. It is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Ezekiel. In vision, Ezekiel saw the appearance of a man in the brightest spot of the glory. (Ezek. i. 26.) I trust that every one here is delighted to know that there is a Man in heaven. This witness—Stephen saw Him, and he turns round and tells what he *knows*, not what he has read, but what he knows. He says, "I see the Son of man standing on the

right hand of God." Do you believe that? It is a solemn question for us here. The word of God tells us what to believe. In believing, we have the virtue of it; not only the food, but the food appropriated. I believe that there is a Man in heaven. The old order is over. Stephen in a moment is transformed. A wonderful moment! He himself had, like the rest, been looking for the Lord to come from glory that the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord. But now he has a new centre, a new metropolis; and that is, the Man at the right hand of God. He turns round and says, "I see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." What did the religious world think of it? Not the mob, remember, but the concentrated ability of the Jewish system. What did they do? They ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him. The religious world would not accept the Man in glory, but stoned Stephen the witness of it. And it is the same to this day. People may enjoy forgiveness of sins, and approve of good works, perhaps even separation from religious systems, but there is a great reluctance to leave earth for heaven. Hence it is only the man that has crossed the Jordan who is able to conquer the man here. Those who crossed the Jordan (Joshua iii. 10) were able to confront the seven nations of Canaan—the complete power of man. You cross

Jordan as a dead man ; dead with Christ. Stephen crossed ; he reached his place in heaven, given him of God, and hence he could triumphantly surmount everything here, even unto death. We *are* brought to God ; Christ is in heaven, and as we are dead with Him, we are over Jordan. But I say, Who *likes* to be dead ? to be out of the world altogether in spirit ? to break company with things here, and find that he belongs to another scene—who likes it ? Well, it is the Spirit's work. Flesh does not like it. The Holy Ghost in me desires it. The company of the Lord there makes the heart, led by the Spirit, to delight in being there.

I turn now to Acts ix. The new order is begun ; the old order is over. Everything comes out new from this, the gospel and the church. You say, The gospel was preached before this. Yes ; but not the gospel of the glory of Christ. At Paul's conversion you get the gospel and the church. The new order is come. It is the break of day of the new order ; it shines upon the earth. And what is it ? A Man in heaven ! I have but one Man, a Man in heaven. He is my life ; He is my joy ; He is my counsellor, my all ; He is the One I have to study ; and as I do, I am right upon the earth in everything. I get all my instruction from Him. He is the *only* One.

In the conversion of Saul of Tarsus the light came *out of heaven* ; that is, the light of the gospel

of the glory of Christ. That is the first part ; and the finish is, he received the Holy Ghost. That is power from on high. When the Lord said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" the church was revealed. Christ can call the saints "*me*" because we are His body. But let me try to explain this wonderful thing. I learn from Stephen that by the Holy Ghost he saw Christ in heaven. And next, that I am to describe Him on earth ; that is my simple duty. The first desire of love is to be in the company of its object ; the second, to be like Him, conformed to His image. We first enjoy company and then identification. That is the consummation of love. What Elijah could not do for Elisha the Spirit does for us. The Spirit desires that we should be descriptive of the heavenly Man here. How can that be ? Now I come to Ephesians. The body of Christ here upon earth in the power of the Spirit is descriptive of the heavenly Man. If you catch the idea it will be wonderful cheer to your heart. The important thing is—Christ is rejected upon earth ; His own are here in the place of His rejection, but are united to Him in heaven. What then are you ? You are a member of Christ's body ; you are here to describe Him who is in heaven. One member could not do it ; hence, every member is necessary, therefore it is the *body* ; and the more you understand it, the more you would labour that the body should be in order. The very contemplation

of it does one good. The church, as has been said, is like a beautiful full-blown white rose; the very thought of it helps you. The world has rejected Christ. The church is to be a beautiful expression of what is entirely unique. The apostle had this in his mind in Ephesians iii., when he says, "To make all men see what is the administration of the mystery," not the "fellowship." The body of Christ is to be the expression of the Man in heaven, in heavenly beauty here in the very place where Christ was rejected. It is this that exasperates Satan.

The Apostle having prayed in chapter i. that the saints might know the power that had wrought towards them, in having borne them up in Christ to the heights where He is, he prays in chapter iii. that they might know the power that works *in* them, to enable them to express Him here; and in verse 17, you get to the highest point: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Now you are learning the power that brought you into association with Christ, and that same power enables you to express Him down here. But like Stephen you must enter into the effect of this power. That is the prayer in the end of Ephesians iii. The power is there *in* you.

From chapter iv. to vi. 10 you are told the character in which you are to behave in every relationship of life.

I pass on to verse 10 of chapter vi. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, &c." "Stand therefore." How are you to stand? What is your position? I have already tried to describe it. It is like the armed men around Jericho. Many preach and lecture upon the armour who do not enter the battle field. You may know all about the weapons without facing the foe. True you have to learn them. "He taught them the use of the bow." But do not think you are facing the foe when you are earthly, and occupied with earthly things. If you are in the battle field you have taken the place of a dead man. *Now* you can face the foe. What sort of a man are you now? You have the armour on. "Take unto you the whole armour of God." The characteristics here are very striking. In the face of Satan I am armed, but to God I am praying; that is my place with God; for Satan armour, for God prayer. The Apostle asks for himself "that utterance may be given unto me." If this prayer was necessary for him, how much more for the servants in this day.

I ask for you, and I ask for myself, that we may understand the nature of our position now for Christ on earth, and be ever assured that the Holy Ghost is here; and that all the resources are with us, for His name sake!—J. B. S.

THE SPRING AND END OF OUR RESOURCES.

EPHESIANS II. 19-23 AND IV. 1-16.

HERE, beloved brethren, we get another consequence of the Holy Ghost being down here, and another character of responsibility connected with it; and it is very blessed to see the way in which the resources answering to this responsibility have their spring and character in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His desires for His body—the church.

Chapter ii. is the house aspect of the church of God rather than the Holy Ghost forming the body; it speaks of the saints being builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Chapter iii. brings in the mystery—the body of Christ; and in chapter iv. we get an exhortation embracing both thoughts. The saints are exhorted as to the character, tone, and spirit which becomes them in giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

The truth in chapter iv. is an immense comfort to our souls in connection with what our brother has been bringing before us, and I deeply thank

God for any sense we get of the resources of God for His people in their individual or collective need. While one is sadly conscious of our individual and collective history, in their failure to answer to our heavenly calling, surely we need to refuse the thought that this has in any wise altered the character of our calling, or the abiding sufficiency of the resources for faith, and a faithful walk, that are ever found "in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Then I can look at failure in its full light; I am not afraid to look at it, or to allow my heart to be rightly touched by it. I have no need to hide from myself the state of the church of God when I have in my soul a distinct sense that *the Lord is equal for the moment*.

We find what is prominent here in Ephesians iv. 7-16 is the heart of Christ as the *giver*, with His body, the church, before Him here on earth in all the reality of the need of each member with a view to the blessing of all. He has first led captivity captive, and receives gifts as a Man, now uses this fruit of His victory for the edifying of His body, the church, in this scene where Satan's seat is; and the comfort to the hearts of those who would keep His word, and not deny His name in an evil day is, that however sadly the church in leaving her first love has failed to answer to His desires for her here, yet His love and its resources are unchanged and

unchangeable, and in the exercise of this same love and power He will "present to himself a glorious church." But will our faith embrace only that bright day for the heart of our Lord, and deny Him the joy now of being found here in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, whose hearts, in communion with His own, have learnt to feel becomingly the present state of His church; and giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace would practically say "Amen" to the voice of the Spirit—"One body and one Spirit?"

He who has seen the end from the beginning has forewarned us of the day in which our lot is cast, and, in doing so, has marked out for faith and the faithful His path for us in the midst of the confusion which the will of man has wrought, setting before faith an *opened* door that no one can shut; so that we may *do His will*, and, as "the fruit of the light," "proving what is agreeable to the Lord." Our loins girt about with the truth, neither our thoughts nor our feet partake of the confusion.

In chapter ii. Jew and Gentile have access by one Spirit to the Father . . . builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. We also know that we are members of the body of Christ, and members one of another, and you will find that the first part of this exhortation has reference to that calling. Chapter iv. is

divided into two parts; the first part, which I read, closed at verse 16. After that it is individual, and you get the moral character of the individual saint down here; but the former part of the chapter has to do with our corporate calling.

In Ephesians i. I get the counsels of God. The blessings are individual till we come to the last verse of chapter i., where the thought of what is corporate is introduced with the place given to the Man of God's counsels. Not only has God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, but also He has made Him head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. But the first part is God having chosen us in Christ Jesus that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; second, He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus unto Himself; and then the third thing is the inheritance which comes in, in connection with redemption.

In Colossians you get the worthiness more connected with an individual path—to know His will and to walk *worthy of the Lord* unto all pleasing, fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God. Here it is that we should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, in all lowliness and meekness, &c. That is what touches us very closely. I

think you will bear with me if I say, I think there are many who can make a bold stand with reference to the world in some of its associations, who act with the Holy Ghost in regard to the spirit of the world generally, and freely own to having failed in going along with the Spirit of God as to the exhortation we have here. Our own souls have to feel it and own it in looking at things as they are to-day. Nothing comes in to hinder the giving "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" so much as links with the world, where avenues are open to the world, in one form or another, and through them has been introduced the spirit of the world, which is one of selfishness and independence, and not one that contributes to walking together in the uniting bond of peace. It is only as we are walking in the presence of God that we can know anything of the spirit in which this unity is maintained. It is the sense of whom God is, forming me; the sense of where we are, that will produce this spirit of lowliness and meekness which you see in perfection in the blessed Lord down here . . . "With long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

Well, I have a feeling about speaking of this, beloved brethren; it is so plain, so searching, it comes so home to us. One does not like to

attempt, even if one could, to unfold it in any way. It speaks so solemnly to us as to what this other responsibility is in connection with the Spirit of God down here.

Most of you will have noticed (Acts iv. 32-35) what was one of the first manifested *moral* results of the presence of the Holy Ghost down here—*unselfishness*, finding its expression in temporal things; and you will also have seen that the first publicly manifested sin in the church was a selfish breach by Ananias and Sapphira, who *lied* to the *Holy Ghost*, in seeking to get a credit for devotedness without the cost. Truly, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.”

The same spirit of selfishness betrays itself again at Corinth, only there in a worse form, in using the manifestations of the Spirit of God for self-display, rather than the edification of the church; though 1 Corinthians xii. 7 shews the profit of all to be the end of the Lord through these manifestations. This is most instructively rebuked in the voice of 1 Corinthians xiii., where they are confronted with *Love*, God’s essential character, and presented here in fifteen lovely qualities, which are each the opposite of the spirit manifested in the assembly at Corinth. Every pretension to what is spiritual is tested here by *Love* in its spring and fruit. *Love edifies*. And in the fourteenth chapter, where this principle is applied to everything done in the assembly, it is most

profitable and searching to learn the place that the edification of the saints has in the mind of the Lord. He is jealous for it. Where the Spirit of God is really free and unhindered by selfish flesh, it is thus He manifests Himself.

One might ask what bearing has the truth of 1 Corinthians xiii. on the state of confusion in that assembly ? It cuts the root of it all by introducing God, whose Spirit was acting among them, in His true nature, and thus supplying the only true test by which what was suited to Him might be known.

It is instructive to notice how distinctly individual privilege and responsibility are in view side by side with the three circles of unity in verses 4, 5, 6, for in verse 7 we learn how *each* member has received gifts according to the measure in which the ascended Head has been pleased to bestow them ; and elsewhere we learn that the purpose of the Lord in bestowing these gifts is for the mutual edification of the body ; and if these gifts are from the ascended glorified Man at God's right hand, we are reminded that He received them as the One who in death led captivity captive, and thus our hearts are touched with the sense of the cost at which this ministry is supplied, and He fills all things. He not only sets us free from the captivity in which He found us, but, as His freed ones, cares thus for us. And to this end has given to the church the gifts of

verse 11, that His saints might one by one be led up to the knowledge of Himself, where, and as He is, to the unity of the faith—the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, to a full-grown man; and this is individual and present, the same thought as in Philippians iii. 15, 1 Corinthians ii. 6.

Now we must stop and ask ourselves how far we are laid hold of by and respond to these desires of our blessed Lord; for it is only as we have, through His grace, risen up to this, that we are each free and fitted to fill our place in the church here to His glory. If I turn to chapter v. of this same epistle, again I hear His desires, acting from and for His own heart, who “loved the church and gave Himself for it, *in order that* he might sanctify it,” &c. It is this which lifts us out of ourselves and the world, as I learn what Christ has done, is doing, and will yet do for His own glory. And then I can say, “And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?”

Not only has God been pleased to make known to us the mystery of His will concerning the Man of his counsels—“to head up all things in the Christ,” “in him, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance.” But the Lord Jesus is pleased to take us into the secret of His desires for His church here, this little while, and for eternity, and also to give us to know the end which the love of God has in dwelling among

us by His Spirit, even the edification of the assembly; and surely it is that we might be formed here by the knowledge of the activity of such love. There is a moment when God "will be *silent* in His love"; now it speaks and acts so much to call out its activities towards the world and in the church. Have we not to own what narrow thoughts we have of the love of God? How prone we are to make our sense of our need (and how little we know even that) the measure of God's thoughts for us; how little is the capacity for the enjoyment of His love cultivated by us. Are our desires for ourselves and for each other up to this measure of the Lord's for us? Paul was an able minister—"not of the letter, but of the Spirit"—and could say, "*Now the Lord is that Spirit.*" He started from there—"The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This he knew to be the full purpose of the Spirit, and seeing he had this ministry he fainted not; he desired to lead the heart of every saint up to that "mark" which gave himself energy and purpose of heart. This treasure he had in an earthen vessel; and his consciousness of what the purpose of the Lord was for each of His saints, worked in him mightily, to lead each heart into the knowledge and enjoyment of this treasure; and his two prayers for the Ephesian saints tell how he had read and believed in the Lord's measure for them,

for the only true desires that we have for each other are such as we have read on the heart of Christ; there they are suggested to me, even as David could say for himself (2 Sam. vii. 27-29), "With *thy* blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever" . . . "therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." What a reality is communion with such love!

There were two motives that moved the apostle's heart to agonize for the saints that they should rise up in their knowledge to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; one, the most powerful, he knew it was what the Lord desired for each; and another, that this only was the place of *safety* for their hearts—"for you it is safe." Ephesians iv. 14 is the danger of every one who has not risen in heart to this point, and is the solemn answer of the Spirit of God to those who from various reasons, best known to their own hearts and consciences, are saying "carry us not over this Jordan." In the Epistle to the Colossians, too, the danger and its remedy are most instructive. Before that place where Christ sitteth becomes the home of my heart, I must learn the language of those rays which shine from His face, how they draw out and encourage every desire of the new man, while they burn up and refuse every movement of the flesh. I welcome their effect; I desire no veil to

stop them shining into my heart, nor medium to dim them; they are all for me; no spot so welcomes me; my desires are formed and strengthened there; I joy in God. "Thou art my hiding place;" and so, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, we are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory. *Thus we grow.* I have reached the point and the power for growth. When I allow my heart to be led by the Spirit of the Lord into His thoughts for me, I find *enough*, but I cannot do with *less*.

Now, if the painstaking of the Lord's love is so manifested for each individual saint, it is with a view "to work of ministering," with a view to the self-edifying and increase of the whole body, as that lovely sixteenth verse describes "in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth;" and this thought of *self*-edification and building up in love, to which each member contributes, maintains each in communion with and dependence on Him from whom alone the manifold grace is ministered through the members, for the body; and hence the agony of the apostle lest the Colossians should be beguiled from holding the Head. One delights to see that whether this truth is presented from the Ephesian side, where the love of Christ as the triumphant Man desires and gives suitably, or from the Corinthian view, where the Holy Ghost distributes to every man severally as He

will, the purpose and issue is one, for the edification of the body of Christ. While one sits before the Lord, and allows these things to speak to our hearts and consciences, we soon find ourselves on our knees, and thankful for such a result, and that we can count on the same grace that awakens these desires, to meet us, in giving them practical expression, and fitting us better to be able to help each other to answer to His desires for us.

J. B.



FAITH'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN EVIL DAYS.

JUDE 17-25.

It is quite clear the Apostle Jude writes for and contemplates the last state of things: what comes under the Lord's eye, and what the saints have to meet. He is shewing the resources are the same even to the very end, when such a state of things arrives as is depicted in the earlier verses of the epistle. This we see thoroughly fulfilled in the history and present condition of the church. But the Spirit of God gives us a word of cheer, to carry us on at this time, when things are outwardly and inwardly so depressing. In 2 Peter the Lord tells us what would be the condition of things outside, in the world generally, whereas Jude unfolds the corruption inside, which is the worst kind, because it is ecclesiastical. In reality we have the apostasy here, that is departure from first estate.

Jude turns round, however, and says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; keep

yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Four sweet words—"Building," "praying," "keep," "looking." "Building"—take care you do not pull down. What the Spirit prescribes here is building; this is beautiful, because he is describing decay, and dissolution, as the fruit of the corruption all around. Faith is peculiarly sweet to the eye of the Lord when all is going to ruins. What is the warrant for a meeting like this? "Building yourselves up."

It is the end here, and there is a resource which is competent for the state of things, and enough to keep the saints joyful. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the position of the saints always. Is it not to be the same now? Surely. As the history of God's people darkens, God ever raises a light; the deeper the darkness, the brighter the light. This principle is sweetly illustrated in the Old Testament, and I turn to three scriptures which shew that the greater the ruin, the brighter the light, where faith was operative.

First, 2 Chronicles xxx. Things were bad enough in Hezekiah's day, with doors shut, and lamps put out, but he addresses *all* the people of God, and they got together and kept the pass-over on the 14th day of the second month, taking advantage of a privilege God allowed. (See Num. ix. 13.) "Great gladness" prevailed, so they determined to have other seven days, and we read

"they kept other seven days with gladness." (xxx. 23.) Hezekiah got simply before the Lord, and as a simple and natural consequence, "there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem." (Ver. 26.)

They were very palmy days in Solomon's reign, doubtless, but these were even better than they. You find, too, that when all were thoroughly happy before the Lord, they began to get occupied with the Lord's interests. The people brought in the tithe of all things "abundantly," and the priests and Levites were "encouraged." (xxxi. 4, 5.) When they began to give, the Lord began to bless. As the joy in the Lord rises, the interest in and care for His things break out, and "heaps, heaps" (vers. 6, 12) meet the eye of the gladdened king. The Lord has given us a brightening up many a time, but, alas! how soon we sink down. So was it also in Judah's history.

Secondly. Things got very low indeed till Josiah's time. Then there was another revival. Evil was judged. (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3, 7.) Then "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord," and "Shaphan read it before the King." (Vers. 14, 18.) The word of God produced repentance and humbling, and thereafter "Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem." (Chap. xxxv. 1.) And the record is

given " And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet, neither did *all* the Kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept." (Ver. 18.) It was the most remarkable passover since the kingdom had been established. Not even Solomon's could approach it. What an encouragement for faith!

Thirdly. But, alas! enjoyed blessing will not keep the soul unless the eye be single; so deeper failure follows; the people go away again from God, and then into captivity. God's grace, however, never gives up His own, and through mercy there is partial recovery in Ezra's time. A remarkable revival occurs, and many return from Babylon to God's earthly centre. This is but a type of what has happened in our days, in which the Lord has worked blessedly by His Spirit, revived interest in His word, and gathered back His saints to divine ground. Nehemiah, following Ezra, begins to build his wall. That was separation. Ezra built the temple, Nehemiah the wall, and many true helpers had he. Nearly all were in the work, sisters and all. Some built two bits, notably the Tekoites (Neh. iii. 5, 27), though of them it is said, "but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." (Ver. 5.) *Verbum sap.* But the Lord notices every mark of devotedness, evidenced by repairing the wall, whether it be "Shallum and his daughters" (ver. 12), or Baruch, who "*earnestly*

repaired," (ver. 20), or the priests "every one over against his house" (ver. 28), or Meshullam "over against his chamber" (ver. 30), for I suppose he was but a lodger.

Again does the word of the Lord become precious, and heeded (chap. viii. 1-8), and what good cheer it brought verses 9, 10 indicate, as "this day is holy to the Lord" twice fell on their ears, and "the joy of the Lord is your strength" was the trumpet call of the Spirit. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." How beautiful! If our hearts are delighting in Christ there is always strength and power, and understanding too, so the next thing is, they kept the feast of tabernacles. They anticipated the millennium; in fact, there was more apprehension of the mind of the Lord at this moment than there had ever been in their previous history—for "all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." (Ver. 17.) Never in the brightest day of kingly power did such a thing happen. I just shew this principle in the history of God's people, that if there be faith, and a desire to follow His word, the darker the day, the brighter will be the blessing, if there is only obedience; and the further into the

ruin you trace them, the bolder does faith become in its action.

In Jude, who speaks of days of church ruin and failure, we are encouraged to expect great things, if only faith be in exercise. "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves *on* your most holy faith." This evidently is the revelation of God. Christianity as such—on which we are to build. The trowel is ever to be in the hand; "building up," not pulling down, is our business.

Our brother was speaking this morning of the Holy Ghost as the Testifier of Jesus, and here the Spirit of God is the abiding spring of power, evidenced by our having none, and, therefore, in dependence, we are to be found "praying in the Holy Ghost." Joy in the Spirit, is the result of our yielding ourselves unreservedly to the care of this abiding Comforter of our heart. We shall thus only be kept to the end, walking in "the communion of the Holy Ghost" and "the comfort of the Spirit." We were exhorted to love this morning, but how can it be maintained? Here we get it: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." *Yourselves* the objects of love; born of God, you cannot help loving. If kept in the enjoyment of the Lord's love, it flows out, you cannot help it, it is no effort. No apple-tree *tries* to grow apples. Do not try to be anything; you keep yourself in the love of God, and you will be like the Son of God; you cannot

help it. The atmosphere we live in will tell upon us, just as the ointment on Aaron's head went down to the skirts of his garments and diffused an odour wherever he went. If we get near to the Lord we shall carry away some of the savour of His presence. We always become like the thing we are occupied with.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not the Lord's coming exactly, but the effect of it. It is connected with our being taken out of this scene, and into our home—heaven. We know we are welcome there—that it is our home: the Spirit even now conducts our hearts there; the more you go, the more you get the sense of the welcome there.

Christ is there, and Paul was always pressing thither by the pathway of resurrection from among the dead. It was his goal. When you wake up in His likeness you will say, "Bless the Lord, His mercy endureth for ever." The deepest desire of the heart will be gratified when we reach the spot the Lord is carrying us to. Do you mean it is not a mercy? It is the greatest mercy the Lord can bestow upon us. We have to serve here, and He is to be manifested in us. But if every saint here were caught up this afternoon before four o'clock, each would draw a deep breath and say, "Thank God, that is the greatest mercy I have ever known; I am out of the world for ever, I am with the Lord, and like

Him, and shall never wander from, or be unlike Him again." The Lord, in His grace, keep us, and encourage our hearts to go on "Looking."

How beautifully the epistle closes with a doxology of triumph, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Is not that thought lovely? "With exceeding joy." That is not ours, but the joy on His part, when He presents to Himself that Church He has loved, and cherished so faithfully these 1800 years. It will be the day of the gladness of *His* heart.

The Lord keep us "building" (do not drop the trowel!) "Keeping" "Praying in the Holy Ghost," and then "looking." That fills up the whole life of the saint, and the next thing is, we find ourselves gathered there in the cloudless perfection of His own presence.

Well may we sing,

"Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray,
That prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine in light divine,
In glory never fading."

W. T. P. W.



STANDING AND STATE.

NUMBERS XXIII. 1-23; XXV. 1-3, 10-13.

OUR brother has been bringing before us the resources of faith in an evil day, and revivals in the history of the people of God. A revival in the hearts of God's people is, I think, connected by faith with original standing, and is a result of going back to the start or beginning. I have read these two passages, because one brings before us the standing and the other the state of the people of God.

God never changes: "I am the Lord, I change not;" and it is of all-importance in an evil day that we should never forget the original ground on which God had to say to His people, and which enabled Him to give them a standing in grace before Him suited to Himself. Faith invariably goes back to the beginning, not only to the unchangeable standing in grace, but to the start upon earth, and this is the way to measure departure in an evil day.

Now what is the meaning of an evil day? Well, one thing is certain. It is a day of departure from God, a day in which the state of the people of God does not agree with their standing, or rather is a denial of their standing through unjudged evil. We have two things:

the unchangeable standing which grace gives, and the start or original day on the earth.

You get an illustration of the principle in the history of Israel and the churches. Israel is brought to God, and freed from the power of the foe, to go on with God into the place of His purpose; and God has to say of Israel in Jeremiah, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to me?"

The church has a perfect standing before God in Christ, and then it is set up as a witness on the earth. You get its history in Revelation ii. and iii. It leaves its first love, allows evil and false doctrine, and gets into association with the world, until it has a name to live and is dead, and the threat comes: "If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

That illustrates the principle. If we know the ground on which God has given His people a standing in grace suited to Himself which is unchangeable, we never can rest satisfied with a state of things which denies both the standing and the ground of it; so faith reverts to the standing and the ground on which God gave it, and that is the cross.

Confession marks a remnant; they are in the

reality of the state of things; they take up the true state of the people of God as a whole; but we must get into the light of the presence of God to judge of our state and the state of His people. God must have reality. It is when His people get into the place of reality before Him that He is able to bless them. If we take up the state of His people our faces are in the dust, and we confess. Are we then going back in faith to the beginning and taking up our present state and the state of the church as a perpetual shame?

I am not going into the detail of these passages, but only refer to them to illustrate the point. In the first we have God and the enemy of God's people. "Come, curse me Israel," Balak says; but God sees His people on the ground on which grace sets them before Him. They are blessed and shall be blessed. "I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel." "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel."

It answers to the place we get by redemption; the unalterable standing of a people chosen by God for Himself, so that it can be said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The saints need to have faith in divine principles, for they never vary, and nothing can

be more important than that we should get hold of and cleave to principles of truth in a day like this. The standing is a necessity ; it is of God, it is due to the glory of Christ. The individual or the church, I do not care which you say, has this unalterable standing before God. It is the fruit of God's having been infinitely glorified in the cross by the death of His Son. The cross has freed Him to bless His people according to what He is in Himself. This is a cardinal principle about a foundation truth never to be forgotten, and a sheet anchor for the feeblest to cleave to in a day of difficulty. The standing is divine, as the foundation on which it rests is divine. God's glory has been established by the work of the cross. If I lose this, what do I lose ? Why, everything.

But then comes the other side, the state ; not God with the enemy, and who shall condemn His people ? but God with His people, and who shall excuse in them what He has condemned ? It is the same God in Numbers xxv. as in Numbers xxiii. ; the same people, yet how different. In the one "the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them ;" in the other we have "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel," and the special commendation of the one who unsparingly judged evil amongst the people of God, and thus turned away Jehovah's wrath and His jealousy from them.

The very standing of the people, and their relationship to God, necessitates the judgment of what is unsuitable to God. He must forget His character, and the cross which gives His people their standing, if He can be indifferent to evil in their midst. But no; the principle applies: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I chastise you for your iniquities." "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire."

Now what have we got to do in an evil day? What have we left undone? What did the church omit to do? It failed to judge itself, and that is where we are to-day: failing to judge ourselves. If I am really walking in the sense of my standing and acceptance, I cannot be indifferent to my state. Why are the people of God mixed up with all sorts of evil? They do not judge themselves. They are not subject to the word. They do not act on divine principles. They do not go back to the start.

There are heaps of difficulties which would be overcome if the children of God only walked by faith in the divine principles of truth found in

the word. Many of the saints mixed up with evil would find the path of faith, if they only brought a divine principle from the word to bear upon their circumstances. There is always light for the path if we want to walk in it. "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Details and questions often only blind the eyes; but the principles of the truth, received and acted on, clear the way and guide the steps in dependence on God.

One great hindrance is self-occupation, or it may be my own interests instead of the interests of the people of God. "Getting fed" is often the extent of the soul's desire, instead of thinking of what is due to God from His saints. Nothing is more dangerous than being the centre of a little circle of my own—whether it be my service, my ministry, my efforts, or my circumstances—instead of having the eye outside my own circle on the glorified Man on high, and the circle of His interests on the earth.

Absence of self-judgment leads to all the departure that is the cause of the evil day now upon us. There is nothing more insidious than self, hence it has to be discovered and judged. God has left nothing unsuited to His eye unjudged. Christ is the measure of our beauty in the eye of God; His death the measure of the condemnation passed on the old man. The power of death is abolished, and life and in-

corruptibility brought to light. We see the One in the glory of God who is His delight; His eye rests on Him with unchanging complacency.

Now we may travel along His perfect pathway on earth, but where is the standing of the church which is united to Him by the Holy Ghost? In heaven, not on earth. But being on the earth, what is the truth as it is in Jesus which affects the Christian's walk and practice? What says the apostle? "That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Ye have not so learned the Christ if ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, your having put off the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts . . . and your having put on the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

That is our position as Christians. Our standing before God is in another Man. That blessed One is the measure of our acceptance: "Accepted in the beloved," and He is the pattern for our walk. And as there is practical putting off and putting on according to this truth, there will be the exhibition of what is according to the new creation, though we need grace every step of the way. If we think we can do without grace we get puffed up, and legality and pride come in. May we be preserved in the sense of what grace is, and our constant need of it.

I only wanted to present and press these two points: the perfectness of the standing in Christ and the ground on which it is given, and the necessary judgment of everything inconsistent with that standing and the original position in which the church was set up. Turning to God in an evil day on the ground of what He is in Himself, and of what He has made us to be in Christ, and confession and self-judgment go hand in hand together. I believe we ought to cry to God for a ministry that deals in conscience work. What is wanted is not more knowledge, but to reach consciences. Why is there so little result amongst saints and sinners from all the preaching and the ministry of the word? The answer is, conscience is not reached; the lack of conscience work is the secret of all the looseness and laxity of the present hour, and this I would press on myself and others.

Let us never lower the standard to suit ourselves or the day we live in—a common snare at the present moment; but let us go back to the foundation God laid in the cross, where all that He is was glorified, and up to Christ in glory, where we see the answer to the cross. God cannot take a lower standard than what suits Himself in His dealings with His people. The Spirit of God dwells in us and makes our bodies His temple, on the ground of the value of the blood shed for us, and accomplished redemption.

We must make the Spirit of God a party to ignoring the work of redemption if we allow the flesh. Well may we give heed to the apostle's word: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by which ye have been sealed unto the day of redemption." Can He be indifferent to evil? Far be the thought! If we allow the revival of the old man in any specious form, He is grieved and has a controversy with us, for the ground of our blessing was the condemnation of the flesh. May we learn to call flesh flesh, and to judge it as such in the sight of God.

Phinehas would make no terms with evil; he was zealous for his God. But we must begin at home. How can we help the church if we do not judge ourselves? The Lord grant that there may be a ministry of Christ to reach hearts and consciences. We shall not have to tell people then to walk in a certain path. Where the conscience is reached and the heart is satisfied with an Object in heaven, the going outside the camp bearing His reproach soon follows. It is comforting to remember, in spite of all we see, that God is preparing a people to wait for His Son from heaven.

J. S. O.



THE FATHER'S THINGS.

JOHN XVI. 13-16, 23, 28.

I do not think there is any one who would not admit that we can recognise in the New Testament what might be called two parts in the ministry. Paul speaks of it distinctly; there was that which he ministered to those not established, and what he ministered to those who were "perfect;" he did not minister to the unestablished what he ministered to those who were "perfect." "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect," whatever the word "perfect" may mean; I do not go into that now. One point distinguishes one part of this ministry (I do not quite like to speak here of ministries) from the other; namely, that what he ministered to the perfect were "the deep things of God": what we are accustomed to understand by that is, that he ministered to them the counsels of God, the things God has purposed for His own glory—our glory too, as far as that goes. In connection with that he brings forward the subject, not of what saints *had*, but of what they *were*. The condition of a vast number of souls is, that they need to understand deliverance; they do not apprehend the meaning and power of the work of Christ as deliverance. They know it as justification, but I do not think

they know it as deliverance. So long as they are in that state, I do not doubt the apostle would talk to them, and we ought to do the same, of what they have *got*; but with the others, the "perfect," it is what they *are*. When I come to God's purposes, and look at saints in reference to those purposes, it is no longer a question of what saints have got, but of what they are in relation to them. In Ephesians it is, "May grow up to him in all things," &c. That is not what I have got, but what I am. Growth is in what I am for God. "Holding the truth in love," and so on. I think, in another line, we get both things brought out in this chapter. (John xvi.) The Lord tells the disciples what the Holy Ghost will do. He is referring to the time of the Holy Ghost, and is telling them what He would do. On the one hand, He would bring before them the Father's things, that were the Son's; and on the other hand, they would have the freest access to the Father, in the name of the Son. I want just to suggest these things. I do not feel I can give a very orderly address, though each of the subjects is vitally important. If we intend to go on, that is what we have set before us.

One thing is very noticeable in this chapter, and distinguishes it from chapter xiv. You do not find in it a single "if," not a single condition introduced; it is a chapter of privilege; it brings before us God's sphere. It is not a

question of our responsible walk, or anything of that kind; it is the sphere of the Father's things which the Holy Ghost is to bring before the disciples; and what marks the end of the chapter is, that they would have the freest access to the Father in the name of the Son. You will find all the latter part of chapter xiv. is conditional; it is all on the ground of their walk down here. I can understand it. The great subject of chapter xiv. is comfort; and even what comes out—the Son manifesting Himself, and the Father and Son making their abode with saints—is all as comfort in the pathway down here. Therefore it is, in a certain sense, conditional on our keeping Christ's word. It is not attainment or anything of that kind; it is all simple. But if they were going on in that pathway the Lord brings to their minds the comfort they would have in it. But here (chap. xvi.) there is nothing conditional. You get, if I may say so, the free power of the Holy Ghost, but it is in connection with the sphere and range of the Father's things; and this is what I want to say a word about for a moment.

Jesus says, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He says of the Holy Ghost, "He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you." If I understand the expression at all (and I only suggest it), when the Lord speaks of "all things that the Father hath," it brings before us the

whole universe of bliss, the Father's purpose, which is to be filled by the Son. Another point is, this has been revealed to *us*; it is *real* to us. I could hardly say the same thing when the Lord Jesus was down here, although He did say, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father;" but now He is exalted, glorified; and therefore the whole range of the Father's counsels comes to us as truth. That is a very great expression, "He shall guide you into all truth." You say—You are leading us on to the ground of imagination? No. I would seek to lead you on to the ground of *faith*. Christ is in glory; everything is established in Him. I am not dealing with imagination, but I would seek that our souls may understand that expression. "All things that the Father hath are mine," and all the range of the Father's counsels and purposes which He will display in His blessed Son, who is glorified. That comes to us in the way of *truth*. It is for *faith*, and not something to minister to imagination. It is revealed by the "Spirit of truth." "He shall guide you into all truth." He would bring before the hearts and minds of the disciples the whole range of the Father's counsels. That was to be the world in which *faith* was to live.

I should like to say a word in connection with this. This present world is not truth; the principle of the world is not truth; there is nothing

truthful about it ; the world is a great falsehood, there is no doubt about that. The god and prince of this world is a usurper. We have to pass through it, and the Spirit of God carries us through it, and the grace of God keeps us, and we experience many a mercy of God as we pass through, but the character of the world is false. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, everything false and evil, nothing of truth in it. The prince of the world is, as I said, a usurper. There is nothing of truth in this organisation which we are accustomed to think of as the world. But everything is truth in the Father's universe ; the Father's world is what is truth. All the counsels and purposes of the Father are to be fulfilled in the Son, on the ground of redemption. He has exalted Him far above all heavens that He may fill all things. Christ has not only cleared the ground, but He is going to occupy the ground He has cleared. He fills the whole of God's universe. That is what the Father has purposed, and what will be accomplished in the Son ; and the pledge of it is, the Son is no longer here in the place of weakness, but in the glory of God, in the highest place, as we get in the next chapter : "Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee." He was to give the fullest effect to all that was purposed.

That was what the Spirit of truth was to bring before the minds of the disciples. If we are in

the power of the Spirit, that is the world in which faith lives. It is not a world of imagination, but a world of truth. Christ is in the place of power and glory. If we are living here in the faith of Christ, in the power and energy of the Holy Ghost, I have no doubt faith will delight itself in this vast universe of bliss. We sing of it sometimes :

“Of the vast universe of bliss,
The Centre Thou, and Sun.”

Not only is He the Head of it, He is to fill it all according to God's counsels. He is the Lamb of God ; He has died for it all. He takes away the sin of the world, and He establishes the universe according to God, and fills it with blessing. He brings us to a scene of blessing of which He is the Centre and Glory.

I only say that much to bring in the latter part of the chapter. We may put ourselves in the place of the disciples in this chapter. We find ourselves in the presence of God's counsels. The first thing is this: Jesus goes to the Father. He says, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and, again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.” A puzzle to them! The reason He gives is of all moment—“because I go to the Father.” We should say, naturally, that would bring to an end their seeing Him. But no; His going to the Father really meant

their going to the Father. He did not go back to the Father merely for Himself. He did go back to the Father; His place was there. He might have gone alone for the matter of that; but He went back in the value of redemption, and so made a way for us there. His going there means our going there. We have free access to the Father. He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And the first thing that comes out here, is this : He is gone to the Father, and we now have joy, *because* He is gone to the Father. That is a wonderful thing. Not only the whole range of God's counsels revealed, but we have access to the Father, as the apostle puts it, "By whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." The Holy Ghost not merely conducts us through our responsible life down here, but maintains us in liberty with the Father, in the name of the Son. "Through him, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Jesus went to the Father. Because of that they would have joy ; they were not to lose Him. It is a wonderful chapter, as opening out a new order of things. They had known the Lord Jesus down here, coming down, if one might so say, to the level of their weakness. They had valued His company ; He had revealed to them the Father's name. But this chapter is in contrast to all that ; it opens out the range of divine

glory. He was going to the Father, and because of that they would have liberty there.

I come to another point; and mark, there are no "if's," because it is a question of the free power of the Holy Ghost. He connects us with this new order of things. "In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." It is illimitable; and why? Because now we find ourselves in connection with the scene that is to be filled with the Son. "My name"—that name represents the Son in His absence; and whatever we ask in the name of the Son, the Father will give it to us. But we must lay hold of the first principle of the chapter, that the Son is to fill God's universe. The moment has not come for that (in display), but the Son is to fill *me*; we are to be filled with Him, and now we have the freest liberty to ask whatever will promote the Son in us.

It is a blessed thing to go to the Father in liberty. I am bent upon one thing; I do not want to do the best I can for myself in this world; in fact, I do not care so very much about this world, but I do care that the Son should fill me, that He should be promoted in saints. I want Him to displace everything in me that is

not of Himself. It is practically "the truth as it is in Jesus." The having "put off the old man and put on the new." There is the displacing of the one thing to make space for the other. The great point is, that the Son should be promoted in me, and the same in every other saint of God.

If you want to seize the idea, I think you must get hold of the first part of the chapter, that is, all the counsels of God centred in the Son. The counsels are of the Father; the accomplishment of those counsels is by and in the Son; the Holy Ghost indwells the believer, and gives effect subjectively in the believer to those counsels as established in the Son.

It is just those two thoughts I desire to bring before you: what the Spirit of God would do in the disciples; the world of faith He would bring before them. Truth is a real thing, and these counsels of the Father are revealed and made true to us by the Spirit of truth. "He shall guide you into all truth." What a thing it is to live in the presence of this wonderful revelation; to be led by the Spirit of truth into these eternal divine secrets! And then to know what the Father desires us to be; what the Lord desired for His disciples down here, that He might be promoted in them; whatsoever they asked the Father in His name He would do it.

I cannot improve the world, but I can seek that the Son should have His fullest place in me,

and in every saint, and that everything else should be displaced. There is a complete end of the old man in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; and all that has to be worked out, practically in detail, in every one of us. We want conscience, as we have heard, that the truth should do its work practically, and that the truth, as it is in Jesus, should have its place—the disallowing of the first man, that there should be the fullest room for the Son in our hearts.

I only want to indicate these two thoughts in this chapter of deepest import; it paves the way for the prayer in the next chapter. (Chap. xvii.) Chapter xiv. is the comfort of the Holy Ghost; chapter xv., the testimony of the Holy Ghost; but in chapter xvi., the Lord shews what the Holy Ghost would do in bringing before the minds of the disciples this new and wonderful order of things established in Himself.

May God give us to apprehend our place in this realm of faith—to *live* there. It is not a question of what we have got; we have everything. It is a question of what we are to grow in, and of what is to be promoted in us by the power of the Spirit of God.

F. E. R.



MORAL CLEANSING.

LEVITICUS XIV. 1-20; JOHN XIII. 1-11.

IN John xiii. we get the action of the blessed Lord down here that we may have part with Him. What has been brought before us already this evening, is that wonderful place where the Son has gone, exalted there; and now what we learn is, that we are to have part with Him there. This is what I desire to bring before you, and it may be a help to many here who are young, to see how this is brought about; because sometimes people say, "All that is over my head, I do not understand it." They would understand, perhaps, more about the forgiveness of sins, or what would give them peace, and rest content with that; but it is not what *I* want, or what *you* want, but what *the Lord* wants; and the wonderful thing is, He wants our company, He wants us. It is not only in the deep love of His heart He has done a work for us to give us peace, but He wants us there, and there according to His own mind and heart. In order to this, we all need to learn the tender grace of His heart in stooping to fit us for such a part, and not only that He died to make atonement for us, so that every question has been met, the question

of our sins and of our sin. It is not now a question of my sins; all that is settled, and now we have to learn what He is, in the tender grace that takes us up, and all the provision He has made that we should be with Him in His own company. I know some might say, "All that wonderful range of the counsels of the Father I do not understand much about." I do not suppose any of us understand much about it, but through God's grace, perhaps some of us may have a little apprehension of what a wonderful scene it is that has been brought before us.

Now what I desire to bring before you is, first, the process by which we are brought into the position of being at home in the Lord's company, and then, in order to give us part with Himself where He is gone, how He takes us up each one in grace. "He took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." (John xiii. 4, 5.) In the passage which I read in Leviticus, notice how constantly the word "cleansing" comes in; indeed, we call it the "cleansing of the leper." The word atonement does not come in there, nevertheless we cannot leave it out, but the subject is far more the moral cleansing of the person than the putting away of sins before God. The Lord's service in John xiii. is to wash from earthly de-

filament those already clean. We could not enter into the comfort of chapter xiv., nor the testimony of chapter xv., nor the wonderful range of the Father's things in chapter xvi. unless we know this washing. Now the blessed Lord can take us up, each one, just as we are. It was settled for me many years ago. It came to me just in this way. If the Lord could not take me up just as I was, He was no Saviour for me. But He did. He died for us, and He gives us the sense that we belong to Him, and He has fitted us to be with Him, and now He can so handle and deal with us that everything unsuited to the scene where He is, should be removed by His own hand, so that there should be nothing to dim the sense that we belong to it, to that wonderful range of things. We are often much hindered in our apprehension of it, but He can take us up so as to give us the sense that we belong to it; and I believe it is a wonderful thing when the soul gets hold of that. It is not merely that I am going to heaven, or that I know it belongs to me, but I belong to it *now*.

As to the leper, I will point out two or three things which shew how we are set upon the new ground of being morally clean before God. The priest went forth out of the camp to look, to determine that the leprosy was stayed, that there was no longer the working of the leprosy, that is, of sin and will in us, which answers

really to what we call conversion. The power of God had come in, and stayed the leprosy, as it must the working of the will and the flesh in me. Now the point comes, how can I, who had this working of the will, and was rendered thoroughly unclean, have altogether a new position? Not, how can my sins be put away? but, how can *I* have that part? The first point is, we are put upon totally new ground. There we first get liberty. It is not a question of what *I am* now; I am taken off that ground. We see the entire condemnation of what we are in the cross, and then we see where grace has set us.

And now, beloved young believers, just see where grace sets you! It sets you upon the ground of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two birds were taken. One was to be killed, and the living bird was identified with the dead bird; it was dipped in the blood of the dead bird, with scarlet, cedar-wood, and hyssop; all that signified what was of this present scene; and the living bird was let loose in the open field. As I understand it, you are free in the life of Christ. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Sin in the flesh is condemned. What makes you practically free is, that not only have you been sprinkled from an evil conscience by blood, but you are alive in the life of Christ. The blessed Lord Jesus went

down into death under my sin and guilt, and sin was condemned. "In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God;" and I am alive. It is a blessed thing now that we can reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." That blessed One was quickened out of death; I am alive in Him; He is my life. The only proper life I have is the life of Christ, all else is gone in death, all that is of the world; and now our life is hid with Christ in God. What a wonderful thing it is to see where grace sets us. I do not look into myself for life. Christ is alive out of that whole scene of death and condemnation in which I was, and I am alive to God in Him.

Then the next thing brought before us is the two washings. First the leper is washed, and then reckoned as belonging, so to speak, to the people of God. He is brought into the camp, but he is not yet at home; therefore there are the two washings. If I take this home practically to myself—I am washed, that is, I get the cleansing power, not now of the blood, but of the water. He was sprinkled with blood first, now he is washed, then his hair shaved off. His hair represents all the beauty and strength of man; that is laid aside; his clothes are washed, that is, all his surroundings, his circumstances; it is the washing of water, but it is on the ground of

death. You have the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ first, and death has come in as the separating power that puts you on a new ground. Now the man comes into the camp among the people of God, but he is not at home. Therefore in the type he has to be washed again, and this time more scrupulously; his hair is shaved off even to his eyebrows, and now he comes into his tent; he is what we may call domiciled, he is at home. What we have in these two washings is figured also by the Red Sea and Jordan. In the one case the people of God are free, washed from Egypt; they have passed through the Red Sea, "Baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," free from Egypt, outside it, and brought to God. But in the second case (Jordan), they are at home in God's land. It is the same death of Christ, only I apprehend it in a different way. The first washing brought the leper from the outside, the second made him at home inside. We do not get it, beloved friends, by any struggle of ours; it is by the death of Christ. It is apprehended in the power of the word. The power of the Spirit brings the word home to my soul. It is not that I have to die, yet it is quite true I died. I died with Christ, and that being so I have to enter into it; not simply that Christ has died for me, but that I died with Christ. And where am I? At home. The washing of death has become the way of

life, and home is where God's centre and interests are.

Then I pass on to another thing, the trespass offering; which entered not into the great question of sin, but into the question of acts, what I have done: and you will find in the trespass offering that it went down into the smallest details. For instance, if an Israelite touched the carcase of an unclean animal, he was unclean, and would have to offer a trespass offering. I give you an instance, because I want to bring it down to the details. I want to shew you what the power of the trespass offering is, applied to us, what holy ground it puts us upon; we see the holiness of the ground on which we are set. I do want that every one of our souls should see where that precious blood sets us. You know that in Leviticus you have a list given of clean and unclean animals. If a person touched the dead body of an unclean animal, he was unclean. I do not doubt that the unclean animal represents to us certain habits. These animals had certain habits, and so have we oftentimes, habits not suited to the sanctuary, because when the man was at home, the next thing is, he could go to the door of the sanctuary, he belongs there. A great many habits in us are not at all suited to the place where we are brought. The animal, to be clean, must chew the cud, etc. Many things pass

muster and are current among us, that we do not take much notice of, but which are unsuited totally when we come to the sanctuary. Where was the blood of the trespass offering put? It was not merely a question of forgiveness, but of consecration. It was upon the ear, the thumb, the foot. Is everything to be consistent with that? It is the holiness of the grace of God. It is not enough that I know grace, but that I realise that I am on the ground where the grace of God has set me; we are on new ground, for this took place on the eighth day. We have put off the old man and have put on the new; but is that merely positional, beloved friends? Am I not suited to my position? Perhaps I allow a number of things that are totally unsuited to the place where I am brought. The Israelites were not circumcised in the wilderness, but that would never do when they got to the land, and were at home there. The blood here was not looked at so much as cleansing, as consecration. God consecrates according to the power of the blood, and that comes down to the smallest detail.

The next thing is, the priest took the oil, and poured it into his hand, and sprinkled it before the Lord. What was that? I believe what our brother was saying just now, this free energy of the Spirit of God. I am brought into a place where there is the power and energy of the

Holy Ghost. Jesus is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, but if He takes away everything that is offensive to God, what does He fill it with? "The same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The whole scene of the universe of bliss is to be filled with the energy and power of the Spirit of God. Now that the blessed Lord is exalted, the work being finished, and sin put away by the sacrifice of Himself (not out of the world yet, but on the cross the work for its putting away was done), He has taken His place on high and the Holy Ghost is sent down. We are brought into the place of the ministry and power of the Spirit; then upon the ear, the toe, and the thumb the priest puts the oil. Now we ourselves are consecrated by the anointing of the Spirit according to the power of that blood, so that our thoughts, our actions, our walk—all ought to be now in the power and energy of the Holy Ghost. A person may say, "That is a very high thing." Yes, but beloved friends, what I would say is, if I look at power in myself I have none, but the Holy Ghost is here, and dwells in us. We have the anointing of the Spirit of God. Well now, it has often been noticed, the proper energy and power of the Holy Ghost is to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us; for remember we belong to the eighth day. He seals us for the day of redemption; but as we were hearing, "He

shall glorify Me." But, beloved, how often has He to be, not the Spirit of comfort to us, but instead, just the One that makes us uncomfortable. We have the Spirit of God, but if we are walking carelessly and not according to the grace in which we are set, for we are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," He has to be the Spirit of rebuke and not the Spirit of comfort. Now the Lord, in the tenderness of His grace, washes our feet because He desires that everything should be removed from us that hinders our enjoying the blessing. But, alas, how often do we say, like Peter, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" What a blessed thing it is if we take the first part of John xiii. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands." "*All things!*" It is a wonderful expression; but then if it takes in the whole range of the Father's counsels and that universe of bliss—the Father has put *everything* into His hands, and if there is a foot to be washed, you must let Christ do it. God has put everything into His hands—and oh! think of that—that He came here to do all the will of God, and to bring us into that scene of glory; and what He does practically with us down here, in order that we should know even now what it is to be at home there. In what holy grace does He act towards us! The Father has put you and me into His hands, that He

should bring us there, and He takes our feet and washes them so that we should have part with Himself, according to the counsels of the Father and according to His own ministry of love.

The Lord grant that we may know better what this tender ministry of Christ is to each one of us—the youngest here, so that we may be free in spirit to enter into these wonderful counsels of the Father, of which the Son is the centre.

T. H. R.



THE BODY OF LIGHT.

LUKE XI. 33-36.

THE body of light is one of the traits of the new company on the earth. I was speaking yesterday of the heavenly character of things. Now I want to shew you what the new company is here. From the end of chapter x. to the end of chapter xviii. of this Gospel you get the traits of the new company. I present this to you—the body of light, as one of the traits. The first trait is the word of God and prayer. That we have in chapter x. 39—xi. 13. The second great trait is the body of light. A “body *full* of light” is not the right idea. The idea is a *body of light*. In the original there is only one word, and that means the body is luminous. It does not say that the mind is luminous, but the body is luminous. I can give you no better illustration than that of a glow-worm. The whole body is luminous. That is the subject I desire before the Lord to call your attention to, and I count upon Him to make it intelligible to you—divinely intelligible.

The point in verse 33 is, the candle has been lighted. In the previous verses we get two types

of our Lord which it is most important to connect together. One is Jonah, which gives us in type the sufferings of the Lord ; the other is Solomon, which is the glory of the Lord. These two properly make up the light. That is the light. The light that was lighted was not to be put under a bed or under a bushel. You must remember that the same words in another gospel may not mean the same thing. Scripture never repeats itself. Now the Lord has a people upon earth, and the character of that people is, they are light—that is an expression of Himself ; as Paul puts it in Philippians ii., “Ye shine as lights in the world.” Light is the first trait of the New Jerusalem. “Her light was like unto a stone most precious ;” and what marks the administration of the church in the millennium is what marks it in the eternal state.

I desire now to draw your attention to the light. I am sure the more you enter into the mind of the Lord here in presenting this trait of the new company the more you will understand the blessedness of it.

The great point is, that if you have no part dark, the whole shall be luminous. It is not *full* of light as a tumbler is full of water ; nor is it the *mind* full of light ; it is the body luminous. You “glorify God in your body.” Your body is the Lord’s : it belongs to Christ for the earth, and it is to be transparent—a light for Christ on the

earth. It is to be the Lord's servant—a body of light, *having no part dark*. Why are we not more luminous? Because there is some part dark; and the saddest part of it is that you do not know what your dark part is, and when you do, you rather conceal it; you do not expose it for removal; you try to hide it. The "foolish woman" says, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." We often enjoy something in secret that is obscuring the light. Thus the dark part is concealed. We think no one sees it, forgetting that it really hinders the shining out of the light. Hundreds of people like something they would not let another know anything about, but "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." What I am speaking of is the hindering of the light. The compromise with one's family, and society, and many other things, are all at work hindering the expression of the light. We all fail here.

Well, how is the luminous body brought about? You will find there is a twofold action in the word, and this double action produces it. You have no hand in producing it. I do not mean that you are an automaton—that you are not interested in it, you are thoroughly interested when you really desire to be a light for the Lord, and it is according to your desire for it that you will be blessed.

Well, there are two actions, and I turn now to the first action, which we get in 2 Corinthians iii. 18. It is uncommonly easy to speak to souls who are exercised themselves, because they know what you are at, and they are going in company with you. The difficulty in ministry really is to acquaint souls with what the word of God presents, and it is not effectual unless you learn it yourselves. Many a person knows this passage by rote quite well. I ask, Do you really know what it means? Did you ever prove it? I will read the passage correctly: "Beholding the Lord's glory without a veil we are transformed into the same image," &c. Now this is open to all. The wonderful thing is, all this is the gospel. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ. The gospel is now come out in its fulness. You find in the next chapter it is the light that comes out from the glory; the light comes down from the finish, and comes to the most distant spot, because God has been perfectly glorified in the most distant spot. In Acts ix. I see a man going on his way and a light from heaven arrests him in the moment when he is most adverse, most distant from God. A light comes from the top down to the very bottom; there it arrests him; he falls to the earth, and he hears a voice. That is the Lord! Now I know where the light comes from, and I am drawn to the light; not like Isaiah, who shrank from it. What then? Surely a great

transformation has occurred. You have dropped the uncomely clothes; you have found yourself in divine righteousness—in the light of Him who has accomplished everything; you come in knowing that He has accomplished everything; that now “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now you can look up to the glory of the Saviour. As the cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat, so now every ray of the glory of God shines in the face of our Saviour. It is not now looking upon Him as down here, glorifying God in the most distant spot, turning death into an occasion for glorifying God. All that is blessedly true; but now my Saviour is crowned with glory and honour. I look at Him *there*; my heart is drawn to Him. A Man brought glory to God, and, as has been said, God is indebted to Him for glory. That Man is my Saviour!

If I look at the history of a soul, the first thing is forgiveness. The effect of forgiveness when known to the soul is to beget a measure of love. You see this in type in Jonathan, and in the woman of Luke vii., but that is only love for service rendered. Do not stop there! As sure as you stop there the day will come that you will be tested, like Joseph's brethren, who were living on Joseph's bounty for seventeen years without having learnt the love that did the service for them. The apostle says, “The

love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." If I know His love nothing will suit me but Himself. You get that beautifully exemplified in the case of Peter, Luke v.—"They forsook all and followed him." The Lord would rather have your company than your property. The Spirit of God is within you, and He would occupy you with an Object. Your heart has an Object. It is not only that your Beloved is yours, but you have learned this wonderful thing—"I am His. His desire is towards me." That is the finish in Canticles, as any of you know who have studied it. What is the consequence? My heart is towards Him. It is not a question of effort. I know how easy it is to deter people by that. The moment you are in the presence of the Lord, you are dismantled. Self can have no place there. It is one of the most significant things that we find all through the Old Testament, that the Lord, when He comes to speak to any one, comes with such a glare of glory that they are dismantled. The effect of His presence is to remove what would interfere with the action of Himself. This is one of the traits of the new company. I have said that the traits are to be found in chapter x. to xviii. Look at chapter xvii. Of the ten lepers who were healed, nine of them went on to the priest—to ritualism. One came back and fell

down at the Lord's feet. Self was dropped. There is not one of us who does not know this if we travel the road. The day when you touched but the hem of His garment you were relieved ; you knew it. But when you fell down before Him and told Him all the truth, what did you wake up to ? I must take a new course. Ah ! exactly. Then it is that you find that there is no place for you in the flesh. That is a great moment. I drop self altogether. You never can face glory otherwise. Do not talk of being occupied with yourself ! "No flesh shall glory in his presence." You are never occupied with yourself in His presence. There could not be a shadow of you there. You may be occupied with yourself afterwards, and that very often happens. In principle it is the same with the apostle, as he tells us in 2 Corinthians xii., he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it. You could not know up there ; how could you ? Self has no place in His presence. It is monstrous to think that what Christ suffered for *could* have a place in His presence.

Well, "Beholding the Lord's glory," what next takes place ? You are changed. The word here translated changed is only used four times in Scripture. Twice it is translated—"transfigured." In Romans xii. it is "transformed." Here it is "changed." The true meaning is transfigured. Do I know when I am trans-

figured? No; I do not. All I know is, I have been occupied with the transfiguring power. Moses did not know when his face shone; so with me, I am not conscious of the effect that is seen in me; I am only conscious of being with the Lord; and without effort I take a new course. Beholding the Lord's glory, I am transformed into the same image from glory unto glory. Instead of the glory repelling, which it did until God was glorified, it now transfigures me. The blessed Lord was transfigured before them on the mount; His face shone as the sun; His raiment was as the light. The character of this transfiguration with us is, that the body is luminous. I do not see the effect in myself, but others see it. I can own that a different course is preferred.

Here let me remark the difference between this and what we have in Psalm lxxiii. There we find a man of God, who really did not know how to reconcile things, as he looked at them here, until he went into the sanctuary, and then he saw all clearly. We all know something of that experience; it is a poor thing for us if we do not; for the experience of an Old Testament saint went as far as that. But now we are in the church, and there is a very great difference between a servant and the heir. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." In the Psalm

your judgment is changed. That often happens, thank God. You form a judgment, perhaps a good one in a human sense, but when you go to the Lord and get near Him, your judgment is changed, and you see you were not wise. Just as a judge might give a very elaborate judgment, and then it may be all reversed in a higher court. But being transfigured is a much greater thing than that. It is not only that your judgment is changed, but you yourself are transformed.

I will give you one or two examples of this. Look at Acts vii. 55. Stephen is a sample case. He saw the glory of God and Jesus. All his thoughts and interests had been connected more or less with the earth, but now he sees Jesus in the glory, and he turns round a different man altogether—a thoroughly changed man—transfigured. It is not a question of his judgment being changed, but he himself is transformed. His body is luminous. The body is the Lord's. We should glorify God in our *body*; "And in your spirit" has been put in, but that shews that the copyist did not understand that it is in my *body* that Christ is to be magnified. It is not how I preach, but how I act; therefore when Paul speaks of himself, when writing to Timothy, he says, "Thou hast fully known, not my doctrine" only, but "my manner of life," &c. (2 Tim iii. 10.) Peter says, "That they also may without the

word be won by the conversation of the wives." If your body—your appearance here, is not in keeping with what you announce, you weaken what you announce; because it proves you are not mastered by it. I know this practically myself. In times gone by, I have often had a gleam of light, and have run away with it, and been extreme about it. It had not mastered me. You must be not only an expounder of truth, but an exponent of it. And you must have a straight course. The world would have you amiable, glossing over everything, in no way separating the precious from the vile. That is not of God. I cannot be the same to two brothers. I see one going on thoroughly for the Lord, and I long to go on with him, and another who is not so; I may be interested in him deeply, but I cannot be the same to him. Saints do not sufficiently understand that word—"Have no company with him." That was said with reference to one who was doing no great wrong; he would not work. No doubt if we were more in the activity of divine grace ourselves, we should be more straight in our course and faithful to the Lord. We heard yesterday of a man zealous for the Lord—Phinehas. That was a wonderful example.

Now let me go on. Another thing comes out in connection with this, which is also exemplified in the case of Stephen. The moment you are in

the first action of the Spirit, that is, occupied with Christ, you know that the Holy Ghost is your power. And now comes out the other action. As you are by the Spirit set for Christ, God by discipline clears you of everything which hinders this occupation, and thus hinders the expression of the light. He removes the hindrance. Perhaps you do not know what the hindrance is; but God knows, and He removes it. There are the two processes: one is, you are attached; the other, you are detached. You get both completely in the case of Stephen. He, full of the Holy Ghost, was absorbed with Christ in glory, and eventually cleared of everything here that would hinder that blessed occupation. These two go hand in hand; I am attached and detached by divine power. It is not that I get rid of the flesh in glory. The flesh is not allowed in there at all. No flesh can glory in His presence. But when you come out of it, you may be like Paul, who was given a thorn lest the flesh should be puffed up. The flesh is not gone. But God by discipline comes in and keeps you straight. He gives a thorn to keep the flesh from acting. If you study Paul's history carefully, you will find that many a hard day he endured before he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians in the prison at Rome. We do not understand the wonderful way God is bringing us up to this. He is not bringing you

up to a thing you have not possessed ; but the Spirit having shewn it to you, He removes hindrances out of the way that you may know it continually. Many a time I have thought, when I heard a person praying—If you get an answer to that prayer there will be a severing of things here. Do not be sorry for it ; you are gaining more than you lose. Do not be afraid of the discipline ; God only removes what hinders. The apostle says, “ We who live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be magnified in our mortal flesh.”

Well, we were speaking of the Lord’s presence and the wonderful effect it has. Look at Mary Magdalene in John xx. She was desolate, and felt it was insupportable to be here without the Lord. John went home, Mary is inconsolable, because she did not know where He was. The Lord likes love. The question to her was, “ Where is He ” ? The Lord sees this ; He appears to her and speaks to her ! What a change takes place in her. She can leave Him now and go at His bidding with His message to His disciples.

I will give you one more illustration. I believe many read the Scriptures and yet do not enjoy the Lord ; they do not get into His presence ; they are not transformed. Look at the disciples going to Emmaus. (Luke xxiv.) They had heard the most wonderful exposition of the

scriptures. He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. I am sure there are many here who would have liked to hear that exposition. I believe it is not given to us that we might study the word for ourselves. I do not see among the younger brethren of to-day the study of the word that there used to be. We used to study every word and write upon every word in private ; and there is consequently little freshness in the ministry ; it reminds one of that word, "no rain," although they were in the land. (Deut. xi.) There should be the sense—I have learned that word for myself. It is not being able to describe it, or to put it in dispensational order ; but having that word for myself from the Lord.

Well, to return. Here was the most wonderful exposition of Scripture ; but these two disciples were not transformed by it, though their hearts burned within them. They were attracted to Him, and asked Him to come in ; then He manifests Himself to them at the breaking of the bread. Now they rise up the same hour and go to Jerusalem. A few minutes ago it was too late to go further, but now they go all the way back to Jerusalem, and there they find Him. Did He tell them He was going there Himself ? Not a word of it. But there they go, and there they find Him—His presence had transformed them. We know this ourselves

in some little measure. Sometimes in prayer we get a sense of being near the Lord; then we get His peace—"the peace of *God*, which passeth all understanding." You cannot tell how it came, but when you get near Him, you get it. You did not get it from Scripture; Scripture tells you of it, but you have to prove it. You get near to Him and make all known to Him yourself. It is not like having a petition sent up through the Secretary of State, or the like; but that I have communicated it to the Sovereign myself, and I know that he knows it. In English we have to put two words, "make known," in expressing this; in the Greek there is only one word, but the meaning of that word is, "I told Him myself." It is not a question of getting an answer to a petition, but that I have made all known to Him, and the result is, I am in divine tranquillity.

I turn now to the other action. It is wonderful how God helps you by discipline. There are two kinds of discipline: one, when faithful; and the other, for unfaithfulness. There is discipline on the body for unfaithfulness: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you." In Hebrews xii. you get the Father's discipline, that we should be partakers of His holiness. I must speak very briefly on this point. I see the wonderful way in which it occurs. As soon as you are set for the right

object, God comes in and helps you by discipline ; and as your heart is led by the Spirit to Christ, He who knows the hindrance to the purpose of your heart, removes the obstruction. You may be surprised at times at His way with you, but it is all to this end. Besides, there is a discipline not easy to explain even—the discipline of jealousy. God brings you perhaps to the very confines of death because you have been going on in a course of worldliness and unfaithfulness. But what God delights in is, to help you when you are set for the Lord, in order that your body may be luminous. The body is His, and He deals with you that it may be more distinctly for Him. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power should be of God and not of us.” As with Gideon’s men, the lamps were in the pitchers, and when the pitchers were broken, the light came out. God’s thought is, not to get rid of the vessel, but to get rid of the will. If the will is got rid of, the light will shine out. That is practically the discipline that souls go through. Jonah is an example: he is called to serve ; he goes off in self-will ; then he is cast into the sea. He is brought to say, “They that seek lying vanities forsake their own mercies.” Now God says, “Do what I tell you.” A well-broken horse will turn the way you wish. But all is not done yet. No, his heart must be broken. This is done by

discipline—the gourd dies. The first discipline was to break his will; the second, to bring him into God's sympathies, to make him tender-hearted. Then he is a servant fitted for the Lord's use. Do not be distressed, beloved friends, at what the Lord may be bringing you through; you are not losing but gaining every step. It is that the life of Jesus may be manifest in your mortal bodies. Surely that is not to lose but to gain. We have not an idea of how God puts us through things. Do you think that you are sent into this world to be a father or a husband? That is the necessary discipline to fit you for God's purpose. You are sent into the world to be a missionary for Christ. But the will must be broken. God only can bring this about; you could not. If you were to look in for ever and try to do so, you could not; but walk with God, and He will bring it about. Your discipline may not be like that of Jonah, who was thrown out into the sea; but learn it you must in one way or another. It may be like Job. Job did nothing wrong; yet he had to learn to say, "I abhor myself." Nothing really breaks the will but the sense of sin in God's presence. Affliction in itself does not break the will. Never is your will broken till you come to this—I am disgusted with myself. Often have I seen people come out of affliction harder than ever; but when one comes to this:

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing," I have no confidence in myself, but, because I am brought to God, I have full dependence on Him. This is what Job was brought to. Like the Syro-Phœnician woman; (Luke viii.); she says, I have no claim on you, but you are too good not to give to me. When I take that place, I know that it is all grace, for I have come to the true estimate of myself and of God. I am in a state for grace. Like Jacob, when he was brought to the lowest point, with a stone for a pillow; then God comes to him and gives him a great revelation.

One word more as to this. I want to explain how it is that you are sometimes surprised by the way you are tried. Sometimes, after you have been enjoying the Lord greatly, some unexpected trial befalls you. You see it with Abraham. When Isaac gets his right place in the house, the one who would be his rival (Ishmael) must go out. Sarah says, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." She was right. The Lord says to Abraham, All that Sarah said unto thee, do. Have not some of you known, that when you were really bright with the Lord, God has touched something that you thought to have saved—some idol. He knows this is the time for it to go; it must go to-day. It may not be that it is cut off by His hand, but He makes you sensible that death is on it. *You* could not roll

in death, but *He* does. Do you not know in your history, how He has come in and made you sensible of death on your side, though never more conscious of the brightest day with the Lord? Have you never felt, after enjoying Him, that things here, that had been much to you, had lost their interest? It is not enough with God to fix your heart on what is most attractive; He must remove the hindrance to your enjoying it fully. The standard rose-tree appropriates everything that belongs to the briar on which it is grafted; so God appropriates all of me for Christ, my brains, my power, everything, it is all His. But not a bud of the old stem must be allowed. The gardener, in cultivating the rose to perfection, will not, if he understands his work, allow a single bud upon the briar. There is no similarity whatever between the stem of the rose-tree and the stem of the briar; there is distinct separation even as to appearance. Of course no simile can be complete; but still, I say, this may shew you what I want to convey; for as the rose is brought to perfection, the briar is not to appear. Be it a briar or a crab-tree, if it is allowed to grow, there is no bloom in the graft.

The apostle brings out this in his Epistles to the Corinthians. He writes two epistles to them. He was not in Corinth between the two, but he shews them, in the second epistle, what would be the effect of what he had said in the first. They

were Epicureans; they gloated in indulgence of every kind. They disgraced themselves in every circle of society; whether at home or abroad; in the church or the world. They were indulging their body, giving rein to the flesh. Therefore the apostle says of himself, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." "I do not even give myself the liberties that I might." The Corinthians thought that they would never see their bodies again. This we find in chapter xv. There were some among them who denied the resurrection of the body. This self-indulgence leads to the principles of Babylon. It is said of Babylon, "She lived gloriously"—keeping up her position; and she lived luxuriously, feeding herself without fear. Then the apostle goes on to say, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his *body*."

As you are here for Christ in the present moment, in that measure you will be for Christ in the kingdom. He will reward every man according to his works. You are not here only for service, but as you serve here, so will be your position in the New Jerusalem. All, even the youngest babe, will be alike in heaven, "conformed to the image of his Son." But there will also be a position in the city corresponding to your works, "Counted worthy of the kingdom of God."

One example more, which shews how the faithfulness of God comes in. I see Jacob suffering for his unfaithfulness. In Genesis xxxiv., he is scandalised before the world; but when he comes to Bethel (chap. xxxv.) he suffers when he is in faithfulness. He has come to the right spot, and now the Lord says, "I will set you right as to the original hindrance." First Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, dies. There is Allon-bacruth. Then Rachel dies.

The Lord does not press you into the path, but the moment you are on it (no doubt the Spirit of God has brought you there) the hand of God will help you.

May the Lord grant that we may know this double action of God, attaching and detaching; that we may come out in the body of light, and we ourselves be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." It is dangerous to the last degree for a man to propound what has not come out in himself. I would say one word to you—Do not speak of anything beyond what you know yourself. But the moment you accept it before the Lord, He will bring you into conformity to it.

The Lord grant that we may know it, and be found for Him here on the earth, for His name sake.

J. B. S.



THE SECRET OF EFFECTIVE MINISTRY.

OUR brother's prayer that the Lord would give something to those who are younger here, encourages me to say a word, and I desire to bring before you the following scriptures: Luke xi. 31, 32; 2 Corinthians iii. 18; iv. 11, 12; v. 14, 15.

I am sure you have felt, as I have, in hearing what we have just listened to, that the word of exhortation which we had yesterday from a brother, and the prayer this morning have really found an answer in our meeting: I mean that, the conscience *has been* reached. Our brother was saying yesterday that what was wanted in the present day was a conscience-reaching testimony.

There is a question which must often have forced itself with sadness upon many of our hearts in connection with the Lord's work, namely, How is it that there is so little effect from our ministry in the hearts and consciences of those we speak to, whether saint or sinner? It is not that many of us do not put things simply and plainly and in words easy to be understood; but when we come to the effect of it, alas! what a deplorable tale has to be told, and the question arises, Why is it so? Surely it is an honest

question to ask each other in the presence of the Lord, and we can well afford to be plain with each other on occasions like these.

Now let us briefly glance at these verses in Luke xi., and see how they touch us as to this question. Jonah was a good preacher; nay, he was a *very* good preacher, if we judge by the effects of what he did and said, though he was not prepared for the result. He stirred the whole city; but, mark well, he had to be reached and stirred himself first; he had to taste death, as we have just heard; had to go down step by step, as you get it in the book of Jonah, until he cries, "Salvation is of the Lord."

If I am to reach the conscience of any one myself, my own conscience must be reached by the truth I am speaking of; and I believe that this is true whether in speaking to saints or to sinners. If our own consciences have not been reached by what we say it is a very serious thing both for us and for our hearers.

Here is a man then that tastes death; he goes down to death. Now we need have no difficulty in the application of this, for the Lord uses it as a figure of His own death. We have, therefore, to accept the cross of Christ in all which that cross reaches. Everything that God gave His Son for on the cross must be dealt with in unsparing judgment. He, our blessed Lord, was dealt with in the judgment of God; and is God to give His

Son in unsparing judgment for those things, and we go on with them? Is that the way of power? No; God would say to us, If I am going to spare you from judgment to come, I cannot allow you to spare in yourself that for which I did not spare My own Son upon the tree. Can we think of a solemn thing like this without wondering greatly at the Lord's patience with every one of us? Is it not a fact that the Queen would not tolerate in her service what the Lord puts up with so constantly in His? A military man told me the other day that when an officer is cashiered this sentence is written across his commission, "No officer of mine for ever." Is it not, I say, a marvellous thing that the Lord has not, long ago, written across our commissions, "No servant of mine for ever?" Is it not a miracle of grace that we are still left here to serve Him? It is only *His* patience and grace that would put up with us for five minutes! But if we are to be effectual servants in giving out the truth, we must first taste it ourselves; and Jonah, I think, is a striking figure of it. There he is unmistakably in the place of death, and he comes out to be a wonderful preacher; he comes out for God and from God, and the result is, a mighty cry goes up from that repentant city to God.

Then having learnt this, we have something else brought before us in the next verse. The Queen of Sheba heard of the glory of Solomon,

and went to him. First she *heard* of his fame (1 Kings x. 1), then she was drawn to *hear* him. (Luke xi. 31.) What is the power to attract others to a glorified Christ, if it is not to be attracted to Him ourselves? There must have been some one who had told this queen of Solomon's greatness and glory, one who knew something of it himself, and who told such a tale of it that this woman could not help going herself to see it.

Is this not what we want—to be so filled with His love and glory, that the tale we have to tell shall attract others to that place, and to the Person who, for us, makes that place what it is.

We have seen, then, that it is in being "delivered to death for Jesus' sake" that the life of Jesus comes out; and it is in beholding the Lord's glory that we are changed from glory to glory; but there is another thing, and it is the mainspring of it all. We have referred to the cross and to His glory, but there is His *love*. It is *His* love that wins ours, and that is the mainspring of everything.

Many a person can outwardly put his hand to the different religious activities of the day; but what moves us really for God is the mainspring—"*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" Every one of us has tasted, little or more, of His love, and we well know there is nothing like it. "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" If we are to

enjoy that love we must get back to the cross, to that which brought Him down to meet everything against us for God and His glory. At that cross everything was judicially removed that could hinder us from enjoying His love. How is it then that we are cold and down sometimes, and do not enjoy His love as at other times? If I know anything about it, it is because I have allowed something to come between me and the source which hinders my enjoyment of what is there. It is not that the love is dried up, but my enjoyment of it is hindered. I was talking to a miller one day in the country, when he said, "I can't stay with you this morning; there is something wrong; the mill will not work through lack of water, and I must go up the stream and see what is the matter." Thus it must be with us; we must go back to the unjudged hindering thing and remove that. If five yards will do it, thank God that is all the distance we have to go back; but if it is five years, or even fifteen years, we must go back to the hindrance and judge it.

The Source is not altered, blessed be God! God will never love us more, and never love us less than He does this morning, but we must judge the thing that hinders the enjoyment of that love in our souls, if we would prosper ourselves, or be used in the blessing of others. Then, with the judgment of the cross upon everything

that grieves and hinders His blessed Spirit, with consciences at rest, our eyes upon His glory, and our hearts burning with His love, what servants we should be !

Geo. C.



OUR FAILURE AND HIS GRACE.

JOHN I. 35-45.

ONLY just one thought, brought before us here in the history of these two disciples. We read of them again in two other places in this Gospel, and it will illustrate the tender grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in His way of dealing with souls. We get in their history a little instance of the way He deals with us in His grace. The Lord wants to have us go along with Himself; and in His tender love, He seeks to remove everything that hinders, whatever it may be. It is only to shew how the Lord deals with us, as we see it in these two disciples, that I say this word.

Their hearts were attracted to the Lord; it was not His death, nor His service for them, but *Himself* attracted their hearts. Then their first thought is to bring others to Him, and how graciously the Lord uses them! They each brought one; the Lord blessed the one they brought.

. In chapter vi. we have these two again (vers. 5-10), and what do we see here? Do they help the Lord? No; but He gives them the oppor-

tunity to do so. (Ver. 6.) It was not that He needed their counsel. And does not He try us sometimes like that? Our brother has been pressing upon us only to speak of what we know. Well, we *can* speak of what we know, in speaking of this, the tender grace of the Lord in seeking that we should be of the same mind as Himself; and how often we find we are not up to it. The very two He had dealt with so tenderly in chapter i. were not. Philip was not looking at the One who was there, but at the surroundings; and if we get looking around us, or if the eye gets off that blessed One Himself, we begin to measure things, and compare things, and when we begin to measure and compare we soon get into a mess.

Andrew then comes forward (Philip was daunted by the numbers around). Andrew says, "We have a little, but where will that go? It will soon be done." The Lord tells them to make the men sit down. We know the rest; not a word of reproof; but does not the action speak for itself? Get them there; I will come in and bless them. If you cannot act in concord with me, you shall see that I can do it all apart from you, but you are to be the instruments in My hand to convey the blessing. *He will use us.* How their hearts must have been touched by His grace! What grace! that when they had shewn they were not up to Him, nor in His

mind, yet takes them and makes use of them according to His own thought.

In John xii. 20-22 we get them again. Surely the lesson had been learned. Though the enemy had caught them off their guard, and they had failed to use such an opportunity as the Lord gave, we may now suppose the matter has been set right. Who brought these Greeks in their way? Was it mere chance that brought them to Philip to ask *him*, "Sir, we would see Jesus,"—or that Andrew should be associated with him in that work. What grace! He gives another opportunity (and what an opportunity!) in His love.

Chapter xxi. 4. We do not get these two specially mentioned here, but what we learn and see in this scripture, and which I want to press on my younger brothers and sisters, is the grace that bears with us in spite of the blindness of our hearts. "They knew not that it was Jesus" till He proved Himself by His power. If, as so often happens, we find ourselves, as to our experience, in chapter vi.—the opportunity presented and we not up to it—let it not discourage us. What a Master we have got! *He* does not cancel the commission. No; He reproves us by the very way He does without us; we lose the blessing surely for that day that is coming, but it all fits in through His grace, in the way He is here training us in view of the future. Do not

let it discourage our hearts. Let us keep fast to this—the love of that Master who seeks to have us in company with Himself, and the love which, if we are not up to it one time, gives us in His grace another opportunity. If we fail this time, then let us seek that, through His grace, we shall be so with Him, that the next time the opportunity is presented, we may be able to meet His mind and will, and act for His glory. Do not let any *distance* that we may get through our carelessness, drive us any FURTHER from Himself.

If you find you need some special coming in of Himself to prove He is there, or if perhaps you do not know Him in the sorrow He brings you into, to bring you back, *wait for Him*.

It is as easy to get ahead of the Lord as to get behind; then wait for Him to come up. Do not let us take a single step further away. A step further from the shore will not help us; but let us cast ourselves into the sea, as Peter did, with the one longing desire to be side by side with the One who deals with us in such tender, wondrous grace.

J. R. B.



PREPARATION FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE TRUTH.

JOHN XIII. 1-17.

THERE is a preparation for the reception and appreciation of the truth, and without it there is no real advance in the understanding of what God has revealed to us. It is real affection—attachment of heart—to the Lord Himself. I feel that this is what we should seek above everything. Without this attachment of heart to the Lord Jesus Christ all reading and teaching are unavailable to help in the truth. We see this state of heart in Mary Magdalene, who received the greatest divine communication ever given. It was not natural ability or knowledge which fitted her to be the subject of this revelation, but simple attachment to the Lord, and on this account she was chosen before even the apostles to be the recipient and communicator of this great revelation. Jesus said to her, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." She was ignorant, but she loved Him with all her heart, and therefore she valued the fact of her identification with Him; nothing could be more precious to the heart that loves the Lord.

Then there is the question—What will awaken in us more of that devotedness to Christ Himself? There is only one thing that will awaken it, and that is to be near Him, to understand and be occupied with what is in His heart. All springs from this—"Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It flowed from His own heart. He loved his own in spite of everything, notwithstanding all that they were, and all that they had done. He loves them unto the end; nothing can alter His love, whatever my conduct may be; His is an absolute unchangeable love. What is His desire? What does love desire? Surely the company of His own. Do we desire to be in company with Him, to be in communion with Himself? He desires that our joy may be full, and this can be only as we are in communion with Him, and in order to that He takes up this service—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." The hour was come. He is going to the Father. He went back to the Father, able to identify us with Himself as brethren. He laid down His life, not merely to save us from hell, but to bring us into this place with Himself; an absolute unchangeable thing, one with Christ now—"My Father and your Father." His death has given us that place. He has left us in this world. He goes to the Father, and we are one with Him in all the blessedness of that relationship. He looks upon

us as treading this scene ; we cannot touch this world where sin is without getting soiled. He seeks practically to cleanse us. He washes our feet. It is His present ministry by the word, occupying us with Himself, and with heavenly things ; thus we are separated in heart and spirit from the things of this world—the thoughts and ways of men. However foolish Peter was, there was affection to Christ : “ Wash me all over,” he said. The Lord replies, “ He that is bathed needeth not, save to wash his feet,” &c. There is no repetition of that work which gave us our place before the Father in Him, but there is a need of practical washing for our daily walk. The natural tendency down here is to get defiled ; that in coming into contact with men we should imbibe their spirit and thoughts. If my heart were filled with Christ I should not get defiled ; I should pass through the world without partaking of its spirit. He washes our feet. He ministers that word to us which attaches our hearts to Himself in His own sphere. He desires our company, and that there may be nothing to hinder our communion with Himself.

In leaving us here, He expects that we should be like Him morally, doing to others what He has done for us. How little of this grace is exhibited in us ! What lack there is of this love and care one for another ! The reason we are so little like Him is that we are so little in His company. We

must be there, near to His heart, drinking into His spirit, if we would come forth to walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us. Without this, the mere knowledge of the truth will produce no practical result. It is really humbling to think of how, with all the truth which has been so graciously communicated to us, and of which we can speak so freely, there is so little practical conformity to Christ, walking as He walked. We cannot imitate it by any effort. It is in His presence that we are transformed. Therefore let us seek above all things to enjoy more of His company in that place where we have our home and portion in Him, and we shall become morally more like Him.

F. H. B.



“AFTER THESE THINGS . . . AND ON THIS WISE.”

(JOHN XXI. 1.)

WE have been told on a former occasion that there are two classes of Christians—the “perfect” and those that are not established. It is to the latter I would address myself, and not simply to those that are *going on* either. It is when I have been *going off* that I have found “a word spoken in due season how good is it.” (Prov. xv. 23.) And as I would address myself to the unestablished, I feel pressed to appeal to my older brethren for their prayers, and to cast myself upon the indulgence of my younger brethren and sisters; as to speak to profit I must use “words easy to be understood.” (1 Cor. xiv. 9.) It is the most learned of the apostles who enjoins this—the only college man amongst them—and I am not a learned man.

The *supplementary* character of this chapter is shewn by its first three words—“After these things.” Only last night I heard that learned sceptics say so, and that therefore it is not of John’s writing, and so it is not scripture. That only shews their ignorance of what is of God,

for it unmistakably bears the divine stamp. By "supplementary" I mean that it is a kind of *postscript*. Just as we add an after-thought to a letter, so here the blessed Lord had an after-thought on His heart for His own. I am sure our hearts could not do without the manifestation of Himself which we get here, and if our hearts could do without it, *His heart* could not.

The Gospel concludes, as to its formal ending, with the last two verses of chapter xx. Then we get, "After these things." After what things? After the mighty Victor had risen in calm triumph, and had shared the spoils of His victory with His own. In the first eleven verses of chapter xx. we get one word repeated nine times. And why so often? Surely that it might attract our attention. That word is "*sepulchre*." We have it in the last two verses of the previous chapter as well. In verse 41 it is an *empty* sepulchre, "wherein was never man yet laid." In verse 42 it is an *occupied* sepulchre—"There laid they Jesus"—occupied as never sepulchre had been before, or since, to receive the body of the Son of God! In chapter xx. 1, 2 it is an *emptied* sepulchre. Emptied as never sepulchre had been before. He had called Lazarus forth from his sepulchre, but only to natural life again, to die once more and return to corruption. But here we have the Son of God risen in the power of an endless life, taking

again the life He had laid down; manifesting His power to take it again, as He had already shewn His power to lay it down—"He *gave up* the ghost." (Chap. xix. 30, x. 17, 18.) "The beginning, the firstborn from (among) the dead." (Col. i. 18.) The Beginning, Head, and Centre of new creation.

Let us look then into that *emptied* sepulchre. What do we see? No sign of strife or struggle. The grave-clothes all in order. "The napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." Loving hands had wrapped them tenderly around His body. They had served their purpose, and now, in rising, He lays them aside as done with, as calmly as we might fold, and lay aside our clothes after rising from sleep. In calm triumph He rises; He could not be holden of death; and through death He destroyed him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—and has delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. He rises with all the fruits of His victory, and shares them all with His own before having ascended. He received the Holy Ghost to send down as the seal of all.

"That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs."

He lets them know it. Puts them into the

same position as He had. Was He a Son? He puts them into the same place, and into that with God which He occupied as the dependent man down here. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."

I do not know any words out of scripture so blessed to my own soul as these: "*Christ's place ours.*" Whether we look up there, or down here, His place is ours. The place which in His infinite grace He gives us. He wants our *hearts* now, and He cannot do without them. He has gone to prepare a place for us. He has given us access by one Spirit to the Father. He went up through the opened heavens, and He never closed the door behind Him. He left it open that faith might reach Him where He is now. It is as easy to touch Him where He is now, by faith, as when He was on earth. Yes, far more so; for then, only those who were in the place where He was could get to Him, and all can reach Him now, by faith, where He is. Does He not bid for those heart-affections of ours *now*? And who bids highest, He or the world? Let them go to the highest bidder then. Do not let us look at our hearts; but the point is, *He wants them* and cannot do without them. I appeal to my elder brethren (who know Him a thousand times better than I do) if I misrepresent Him when I say His heart cannot do without our

affections *now*? And He has power to get them, and to remove the barrier. Whatever it may be let it go, even if it be as tender as an eye, or as useful as a right hand. His love can remove it. It is not like a river, rising and filling, but the mighty power of the ocean of His love pours in, and, filling the river, carries the bar before it, and my little barque can float out on to its shoreless bosom.

This chapter (xxi.) is the removing of the barrier. He never asks us to surrender anything until He has so filled our hearts with Himself that we are glad to be rid of the dross. And it is not only a great counting at the start, as with Paul in Philippians iii. 7; but, having learned how to "count" at the start (ver. 7), he went on applying the rule (ver. 8) right on through his whole school-time here. We are all at school here, and we all feel the trying character of its discipline. (Heb. xii. 11, beginning.) But do we know what it is to be receiving and enjoying "*home comforts*" while at school? Not like a school-boy's hamper from home, which is soon finished; but the Spirit of truth come down to "glorify Me" (as He, the Son, had come down to glorify the Father). To minister to our souls of those boundless, inexhaustible supplies—of the "*all things*." "All things that the Father hath are mine"—of "the whole universe of bliss," as we have heard,

it so well described. When we have finished our schooling here—have got our "culture," as well as our education, as has been said—He will take us home. But He wants the joys of home, and the knowledge of Him, whose home it is, to be *present* to our hearts now. (Chap. xiv. 21–23.)

The Holy Ghost in Person was not given until Christ was glorified, but every spoil of that victory He shared with them. He had died for them, He had been into the conflict, and there were His hands and His side as the evidence of the accomplished work, and he speaks "peace" to them on the ground of it. He repeats it again: "Peace unto you," to send them forth with this message of peace to others. He sends us forth from Himself. He wants us there in spirit that we may go forth from Him and with Him. How *can* we represent a person we do not know? Therefore all the care to wash our feet, that we may have "part with him" where He is now. (Chap. xiii. 8.) God forbid that we should demur for a single moment to let Him have His way with us in washing our feet. He has risen in the power of life in the Spirit. He imparts it to them. He, "the last Adam, the quickening Spirit," breathes on them a breath of this new order of life in Holy Ghost power, as He says, "Receive ye Holy Ghost"—"the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 2; compare Gen. ii. 7.) This is the

life of new creation in Holy Ghost power. We do not get union and the Holy Ghost in *Person* until after ascension.

We have seen what "these things" were (chap. xxi. 1), after which "Jesus shewed himself again to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias," and we will now look at the "wise" or *manner* of His doing it. I would here note that we get the commission—which comes at the end of all the other gospels—in the last chapter but one of John (vers. 21–23), and a wonderful commission it was! Another proof of the supplementary character of the last chapter.

The scene of this last appearance is also peculiar to this Gospel and the disciples present. (Compare Matt. xxviii. 16–18.) It is the very lake from which He had called them at the beginning—"from henceforth to catch men" (Luke v. 1–11); and they had forsaken all to follow Him. Now at Peter's instigation (ever remarkable for natural activity) they return to it all again. (John xxi. 3.) And in disobedience to His definite appointment to meet Him on a mountain of Galilee. (Matt. xxvi. 32; xxviii. 16.) How easily our souls drop down to the low level! "I go a fishing, we also go with thee," means, 'We must look after ourselves now, as the One who has provided for us these three years and more is gone!' But what do they get by it? Nothing—for "Without me ye can do

nothing." No, not with all their fishers' skill; and they have to find it out. How slow we are to learn that lesson! How prone to think that we can do for ourselves in little things, and in those to which we are accustomed! And to try to effect an entrance in service where there is no opening, like blind men groping on a wall for the door.

What does He do? Rebuke them sharply? No. "Children, have ye any meat?" There *was* a rebuke wrapped up in the question—as if to say, "What have you managed to do after all?" but so beautifully concealed that none of them could discern it then. And He has to use His power as Creator, to command the wealth of the deep into their net, before they knew Him. And who is the first to know Him? "That disciple whom Jesus loved." And why is he permitted to call himself so? Has the Lord favourites? Did He love one above another? No. But John *drew most upon His love*. And the one who will have most must draw most upon it. (I do not go into the dispensational teaching of this portion. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.") Why did they not know Him? Why often do we not know him? Because we are not *in a state* to know Him. This was "the *third* time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead" (ver. 14), and yet they did not know Him!

When He comes into the air, will He be a stranger to your heart? Well, we shall know Him by-and-by, "Whom not having seen, ye love." What a meeting that will be! Isaac lifting up his eyes and beholding Rebecca, and Rebecca lifting up her eyes and beholding Isaac! What a glad day it will be to *Him*! "The day of His nuptials, the day of the gladness of His heart." When we get *God's* side of any truth, it lays hold of us with power, and then it is that we get *our* side of it in power in our souls.

Peter had been out of the boat before to reach the Lord. (Matt. xiv. 28-31.) Thank God, for the faith which can leave the thing which man has made for the water, to go to Jesus. "Lord, *if it be thou*"—that is all. Let the billows be ever so high, if it be Himself we can go. Here Peter swims to Him on the shore. (Ver. 7.) What! the one who denied Him? Yes; but he knew that heart, and he was about to know it better still. He knew enough of it now to go straight to Him, notwithstanding all his failure. And what do the disciples find when they reach the shore? "A fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." *Their* fishing would not have procured this ready-made provision. How it shews His interest in and care for us! And how it might have rebuked their want of faith. When He comes to sup with us, He does not ask

us to provide ; nor does He occupy us with our catch, though He is ever interested in it. (Ver. 10.) Peter had never had the like before, but He could leave it to go to Jesus. Directly they land, the Lord says, "Come and dine." Here we get the "wise" (ver. 1), the manner He shewed Himself to them ; and after this, the way He acts in seeking to gain our hearts. He wants them that He may get a note of praise out of them for Himself : "Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Do not we know it ? Does He not take care to discover it to us ? What do we come together for on Sunday morning ? Is it to get our hearts lifted up after being down all the week ? Or is it to meet Himself ?

A brother told me he was walking over the border hills one Lord's day morning, with a shepherd brother, to break bread, a distance of six miles. After walking some way he noticed a young woman behind them, who followed at about the same distance for some time. He slackened pace to allow her to come up, that he might have a word with her. As she approached them, he saw that she looked very worn and ill. "Where awa?" (that is, where are you going), he inquired, as she overtook them. "To ——," naming the place to which they were going themselves. "Where there?" he said. And she named the meeting room. "What to do

there?" he asked. "To remember the Lord," she replied. "You look very ill and weak to undertake such a journey on foot," he observed. "It's a' He asks, sir," was her simple response (that is, it is all He asks). Within two months she was "with the Lord." Consumption had done its work. Are *we*, beloved, up to that poor consumptive lassie's affection? "To love with *all* our heart," we sang. I am afraid we shall not until we get there. But is there any excuse? Either Christ or the world will have our hearts. Have you ever found Him as the object of yours? Well do I remember the dear devoted servant of God who came to where I lived, and persisted in proclaiming in every preaching and lecture for weeks, "There is a Man in the glory of God. There is a *Man* in the glory of God," until He became formed before the eye of my heart as its object. The very Man of Sychar's well, of Nain's gate (of whom it is written, "He had *compassion* on her," the poor widow bereaved of her only son). The Man of Bethany. (John xi.) The man of the gospels, who

" Once, too, hasted
 This weary desert through;
 Once fully tried and tasted
 Its bitterness and woe.
 And hence His heart is tender
 With truest sympathy—"

He knows every form of suffering that man can pass through. Do we want love, or tenderness, or sympathy? It is *only* to be found there in all its fulness and depth. The more we require it the more He delights to impart it. Do you know Him *for yourself*? not by hearsay; that will have no power. That will not help you. I remember what helped me most at the first conference I ever was at, was to see some others who knew that Heart, who knew that Man. I knew I should never be what they were, but I knew that by the grace of God I might, and ought to be on the same level they were—delivered men. I do not remember one word said at the meetings, but a remark dropped between the meetings, by a beloved brother who is here to-day, stuck in me. It was to the effect that another brother, who had not spoken, ought to have done so, as "he was upstairs." And by the grace of God, I determined to be "upstairs" too. Do not rest till you are. Do not stop till *you* are delivered. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." *Believe* the word and you are there. Believe you are over, and you are there. Years ago I was in an exhibition of arms, with an American. There was the complicated old blunderbus and the most modern rifle. He ran his finger down the line from the old to the new, "Look at all the ingenuity that had to be expended before

simplicity is reached," he said. And so in our soul's history. What an amount of "exercise," as we call it, or rather of the workings of unbelief, before the *simplicity* of faith is reached. "*Abhor*" ourselves! We cannot abhor ourselves while looking at ourselves. We may learn, "Behold I am *vile*." But it is only when we get right before God Himself, so as to say, "Now mine eye *seeth Thee*," that it is "*wherefore* I abhor myself," &c.

And then (to return to our chapter) when He had probed Peter to the bottom of his heart, He commits the tenderest objects of His solicitude to Peter's care. But the blessed Lord does not probe his conscience until He has made Peter perfectly at his ease with Him—has fed him, and served him. (Vers. 12, 13.) And He does not commit the lambs and sheep to Peter, He does not place confidence in Peter, until Peter has lost confidence in himself. And note, the Lord put the tenderest objects of His care first, that is, the lambs—unlike Jacob. (Gen. xxxiii. 2.) Perfect Master! Then comes *such a touch of grace*! Peter had lost the chance of dying with Him, spite of all his boastfulness. The Lord gives him the chance of dying for Him, and thus glorifying God. And then, when He had brought them up to it, He says, "Follow me." Not as Messiah now (as in chap. i. 43), but as the blessed Son of God who had manifested the

Father. He came into this scene *alone* from the eternity with God. (Chap. i. 14.) He passed through it *alone* (chap. xii. 24), declaring the Father. (Chap. i. 18.) "*Alone* He bore the cross, *alone* its grief sustained," forsaken even of God there. But now in resurrection He has a following (chap. xxi. 19-22) associated with Himself. Here we get our "company," nay *His*. And we find He has a yet unfulfilled desire, "If I *will* that he tarry till I *come*." "I will come again." (Chap. xiv. 3.) "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." (Chap. xvii. 24.) His *will* is to come. Do we say "Amen" to that? Some here, who belong to that following, are most likely of those whom that "will" desires to tarry here "till he come."

"Follow thou me." He attracts and fixes the eye and the heart. Where was He going? To the Father's house. A brother's little child said, "Mother, when they asked Him, 'Where dwellest Thou?' Jesus said, 'Come and see;' and I know *where* He dwells—Mr. — made it quite plain—He dwells in the Father's bosom."

"Dwells in His bosom, knoweth all
That in that bosom lies,
And came to earth to make it known,
That we might share His joys."

Could that Father do without the affections

of that Son's heart, when He was down here? That Son cannot do without our affections whilst down here. And so He lays Himself out to gain them. May He keep them wholly for Himself, "till He come!"

W. G. B.



THE HEAVENLY COLOUR.

COLOSSIANS II. 13-19 ; NUMBERS XV. 22-41.

I DESIRE, in the first instance, to say a word in regard to the books of the Old Testament. I do not think that we get in them the revelation of what is purely heavenly, and yet "they are written for our admonition;" they are written, one might say, with a heavenly people in view.

It is one thing to see the revelation of what is in nature and privilege purely heavenly, and another to see the walk of a heavenly people through the wilderness. For instance, in the prophecies of Balaam referred to yesterday, the people of God are contemplated in the wilderness. Balaam looked upon them from above, from God ; he saw them with the eye of the Spirit, but he looked upon them in the wilderness.

Just refer for an instant to the book of Leviticus. The subject treated there is that of approach to God ; and that which comes out in the early part of the book is of the greatest importance, namely, the offering of Christ, in its various aspects, which is laid as the foundation in the soul of the believer. That is the great idea in

the beginning: but you do not get the revelation of purely heavenly privilege; so far from it, the testimony of the Holy Ghost is that "The way into the holiest was not yet made manifest." Yet we have Aaron and his sons, and the whole question of approach to God; the death of Christ in its various aspects laid as foundation in the soul of the one that approaches. For acceptance, fellowship, and every blessing, I begin with the offering of Christ. That offering is the foundation of every blessing one experiences down here, whether it be acceptance or anything else. I quite admit we get the day of atonement; the great day of reconciliation comes out, but with the testimony—"that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest."

I come to another point in Numbers. Numbers is the walk of a heavenly people through the wilderness, and God's provision for it. Many things are found there which are not in Leviticus: for instance, the numbering of the people; the people are taken account of; the rod of priesthood, the water of separation, and so on; God's provision for a heavenly people where they need to be supported by priesthood, and are in danger of contracting defilement.

But for the exposition of heavenly blessing I must go to where the heavenly things are revealed; and before speaking of things connected with the walk of a heavenly people, I first have

to make out what is heavenly. That has led me to the chapter in Colossians.

The principles that come out in Numbers xv. are most important in this day. We get two things brought into juxtaposition—the worst and the best; and the worst has to be met by the best. Nothing short of the best will meet the worst. I often think the millennium will not present the same contrast as now; evil will be repressed and its power set aside; there will not be the same character of things as now. This is a very great day, the day of the Holy Ghost. Nothing can transcend the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is here, so we get the principle with regard to believers, that the good figs are very good and the bad very bad. If the flesh comes out in the believer it comes out in a way worse than anywhere. I do not think the flesh comes out in its naked, terrible character anywhere as it does in the saints. The good figs are indeed very good, the bad very bad. These two things are brought into contrast in this chapter in Numbers. The spirit of lawlessness on the one hand, the very worst thing in the world, which puts aside everything of God; and, on the other hand, what I may call the heavenly colour. In order to steer clear of the principle of lawlessness, what one needs to bring down into the details of life, and those nearest the earth, is the heavenly colour. The Israelites were to stone the man who gathered

sticks on the sabbath day. It was lawlessness. It is brought in as an example of presumptuous sin. If they sinned through ignorance the trespass might be met, whether as to the nation, or the individual ; but in regard to high-handed sin, there was no offering at all. It was impossible for God to go on with it. This man who gathered sticks was to be stoned ; he had made light of the sign of the covenant between God and His people in careless self-will. It is just the lawless will of man at work ; it does not come out here in anything very flagrant or immoral, but in putting aside the ordinance of God, the sign of the covenant. Then comes the direction that they were to wear a fringe in the borders of their garment, and in the fringe a ribband of blue. The heavenly colour was to come down with them, a heavenly people (of which, of course, we have here only the figure) going through the wilderness, to the details that come nearest the earth, the *borders* of their garments.

I will first say a word about what is heavenly, and then as to the application of the heavenly principle to the details of life down here ; for I do not think we can apprehend the latter unless we are clear in our minds as to what is heavenly. What is heavenly is, as to us, new creation—God's workmanship. It is not a patch up of what man is down here ; it is not simply a man going to heaven when he dies. The heavenly is the new

thing that is come in. That is what led me to Colossians ii. 13. It is a wonderful passage. It is the part of the Epistle in which the truth of Ephesians is brought into Colossians ; and we see it is all God's work, and God's work in us—what is wrought in the believer, looked at from that standpoint as wholly the work of God. We have been quickened, "quickened together with Christ," a truth peculiar to Paul. I would say a word about that, because I believe it to be a truth of the very highest moment for every one to understand. Every one accepts it, but there may be many who have not apprehended the force of being "quickened together with Christ." It looks upon Christ in the place of death ; Christ gone down into the place of death for the purposes of God. He is raised again from the dead, quickened in the power of the Spirit, quickened as man into a new condition ; the same divine Person, but quickened into a new condition ; and the wonderful thing that comes out is, *we are quickened together with Him*. I have a very poor idea of the force of it, but the thought is of the greatest moment. If quickened, we are quickened for God, so that in every way we may be agreeable to God ; that we may be according to God in every sense, even as Christ is according to God. That is the idea to me of being quickened together with Christ ; quickened for God by God's own work. It is not

a question of how I reach it experimentally ; that is not brought in ; it is wholly and entirely the work of God which has fitted me for Himself, made me as agreeable to Him as Christ is agreeable to Him.

Another thing comes out in the passage—that every impediment that stood between God and the believer, or that could stand between God and the conscience of the believer, is removed. He has taken it all away—trespasses, the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, principalities and powers, everything which might have a power over the spirit of the believer, has been spoiled by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ ; every obstacle completely removed. We are quickened together with Christ ; we are before God now according to Christ—“ quickened together with Christ.”

The next thing therefore that he brings out, is “ the body.” Why ? How could we be united to Christ, joined to Christ, if we were not quickened together with Christ ? It is the character of God’s work in regard to believers that He has quickened us together with Christ, that we might be associated in the pleasure of God with Christ. We are that purely and entirely by God’s own work, without a single word brought in as to how the soul reaches it in its history. It is all the work of God.

It is a blessed thing to think that we are here

a company of believers, but how far do we enter into the truth that we are before God for His pleasure, according to His pleasure in Christ? There, by virtue of God's work, and nothing short of that : God's own power in raising Christ, quickening us, but in the power of the Holy Ghost, that we may be before God according to His mind. We get expressions analogous to it elsewhere. "As he is, so are we in this world." That is the way God looks upon us. Of course, what He looks upon is the result of His blessed work. It has not come out yet into display, because we are here in the wilderness still ; but it is all involved in the thought of being quickened together with Christ. It must go on even to our bodies. Of course it is only faith that realises it ; it is all true and real before God ; the fruit of His blessed work, and it involves likeness to Christ in glory. I refer to that to shew we are heavenly. *We are heavenly.* It is a great thing to get hold of that : "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And we are heavenly by God's own work, taken out of death as Christ was raised, taken out of spiritual death to be before God in the life and liberty of Christ. To be before God agreeable to Him as Christ is agreeable to Him, "quickened together with Christ," quickened to be before

Him in such sort as to be members of the body of Christ.

I now turn back to Numbers xv. The thought is brought out of provision for ignorant failure. No doubt it has reference to the future history of Israel; and in regard to presumptuous sin, sin done with a high hand, the people who do not accept the offering of Christ, wilful sin being imputed to them, they will be cut off. Our lot is cast in a day where we see the spirit of lawlessness rampant in the world. People calmly put aside all that is of God. It is not simply that they do not like it, but a spirit of lawlessness is abroad which puts aside everything; one thing after another that used to be recognised, in this country at least, as of God. We are fast going on to the time of Antichrist. Thank God, we shall never be here to see that time! But we see the spirit at work on every hand which will set aside every ordinance of God. This man who gathered sticks did not do anything outwardly very gross, but it was the will of man making light of the sign of the covenant between God and His people. The point for us is, how is this to be guarded against? If you live in the midst of evil you are in danger of being infected by it. See, for instance, the Cretans (as we read in Titus). At Corinth people lived in a state of luxury and self-indulgence. The believers there were in danger of being carried away with the same

thing. If we see these principles at work we are in danger of being poisoned by them. What I would bring before you is the antidote, and I believe the first thing is to accept that *I am heavenly, and heavenly by God's own work*. Then what is the kind of thing that becomes me down here? I will tell you in a single word: *God's will*. What does not become me? *My will*. That is the thing most unbecoming in the saints of God.

I believe the very circumstances through which a Christian is called to pass, and the relationships in which he is set, are all parts of God's discipline to make him practically pleasing to Himself. I am not sent here to be prosperous in the world. It is all a question of the will of God. I am here for that, and I recognise it. I would not care to lift my finger to gain a worldly advantage, simply because I know I am here for God's will. I would not employ a patron to gain an advantage for me, because I am here for God's will; and in the circumstances most suitable for it. I am here to yield my body an instrument for God's service, that in my body His will may be expressed. I bring His will into everything. I would not push my business. I am there, and I fulfil it diligently; I bring God's will into it, and I am happy, and my spirit is quiet and at rest because I am conscious of being in the place of God's will. People fret against their circum-

stances sometimes, and wish to change them, and they do not better them. They do not find themselves in a better position for themselves or God's people. I do not think people ought to be in a hurry to change their circumstances, or to change their location. I am here, not to have any part in the lawlessness all around, but to bring the heavenly principle into every detail of life down here. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The question with me is not—Is there any harm in this or that? I am here in this world for the will of God; I take up even the relative duties of life in the same way. I bring the heavenly colour into all the details of life down here; but the one thing that enables me to do it is the consciousness by the Spirit of God that I *am* heavenly by the work of God. I realise that, in faith, and bring the colour of it into the things down here. I do the same things an unconverted man would do. He has his natural ties, so have I; he has his business; I have my business; but he acts on human principles of prudence; I bring the heavenly principle into the lowest details. I believe that is the antidote to what I may call the dreadful principle of lawlessness that is rampant in the world.

To begin with, we are heavenly by the work of God. "He has made us meet to be partakers of

the inheritance of the saints in light." He has made us suitable for Himself in association with Christ, by His work which raised Christ from the dead, and has quickened us together with Him.

F. E. R.



THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.*

JOHN XVII. 1-5.

I DARESAY, beloved friends, some may wonder at my taking up such a passage as this to speak from. In fact, I feel some hesitation myself. There are many parts of scripture which one would not have the same feeling about at all, but one has some difficulty about taking up such expressions as these—the prayer of the Lord. What I read is part of the Lord's prayer; some of us have been accustomed to think of something else as the Lord's prayer, but this is really the Lord's prayer. One feels some hesitation, as I said, in taking up part of the Lord's prayer as the subject of an address; but it is only with the thought of bringing out two or three points which come before us in these first verses.

What I first want to lay down as a principle, is this: The greatest blessing God has conferred upon us is the knowledge of divine Persons. It is the greatest blessing God could confer upon a creature; no other blessing can come up to it. I do not think any one can contest that for an

* Notes of a Lecture given at Quemerford a few weeks later.

instant. If I think of what our future is to be, we come into an inheritance; but whatever we come into in that way is below us. Naturally it is so. Suppose I was heir to a great estate now in my father's possession, and constantly heard it said all this was to be mine; I should say, I have a privilege much greater than that, I have the privilege of knowing my father. If things were not altogether out of course in the world, people would think so. They would consider the privilege of intimacy with one's father greater than any advantage one could come into by being the son of his father. When I look at divine things, I see there is no blessing God could confer upon a creature to be compared to the knowledge of Himself in the blessedness of His own nature and His own thoughts; for that is what is involved in the knowledge of God. Poor sinful creatures that we are, we are called to heavenly blessing, to the knowledge of God Himself as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in His blessed Son.

That is the first principle I want to lay down before I touch these verses; and then another thing, namely, that the blessings that belong to us as Christians, lie completely outside this world of sense. I do not doubt there are many things we enjoy down here, such as justification and peace, and the sense of acceptance. More than that, God has given to us the Holy Ghost to con-

duct us through the wilderness, the path-way down here. We have grace ministered to us in our circumstances day by day. How could we get on without it? And not only that, but mercy. Mercy and grace are not precisely the same thing; the Christian has both. As the children of Israel had manna for their daily necessities, so I have grace ministered to me for mine. We are the recipients of a thousand mercies from God to us down here, as the Lord said to His disciples in regard to temporal necessities, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Do you not think you have the care of God in your pathway here? Do you not remember what the apostle says: "Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour (Preserver) of all men, specially of those that believe"? I ask the poorest Christian here, to-night: Do you not think God cares a great deal more for you than for those who do not believe? He is the Preserver of all men, *specially* of those that believe. That is the care of God for His people. We are subjects of that. The Lord told the disciples not to be careful for the morrow, what they should eat or what they should drink. He says, Your Father knows. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

I only just bring this forward because it is of

all importance that we should apprehend and understand the care of which we are the subjects down here. I do not believe there is a single thing which exercises me, that is not a care for God. You remember the exhortation: "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." I should be very sorry to get into an unreal Christianity; and it would be that, if we failed to see the care of God for us down here. But my point to-night is, that the privileges that belong to the Christian, his proper portion, are outside this scene altogether. These blessings are ours by faith, made good to us by the Holy Ghost; it is not that we have not the power to reach them, but they are outside this world of sense. Suppose a Christian dies, what is the effect of death to him? He goes nearer to his blessings. Suppose it were possible for a saint to die in the millennium, he would go away from his blessings, they will be all upon the earth; but with a Christian it is totally different. If I die, I simply go to where my blessings are; I go to the scene to which my blessings belong. The blessings and privileges which God has given to me are completely outside this world of sense; and whatever may be said about it, the highest of these lies in the knowledge of God Himself. Who were the most privileged class in Israel? The priests. They had no lot nor inheritance among

the people. What was their portion? They had access to God in a figurative way (not really), and they were the only class who approached God. It was the highest privilege God conferred in those days. What are we called to? To have access to God, as we read in Ephesians: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." That is the peculiar privilege which belongs now to the people of God.

Now I pass on, beloved friends. I merely lay down these two principles: The greatest privilege you can possibly have, consists in the knowledge of God, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the Son; and the blessings peculiar to the Christian are outside this world of sense altogether.

I want to dwell upon the first of these verses, and then to shew you how the third verse connects itself with the first. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." I desire to shew what it is to know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, His Sent One. I will speak a word or two at the end as to the capacity, but now I want to speak about what the blessing is in itself. The Lord prays these words (He speaks here as a divine Person): "The hour is come. Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." He, the Son, prays to be glorified, in order that He may

glorify the Father. I wish that God might enable me to make plain, in some degree, the force and meaning of that verse. It is a very great verse. He was no longer to be here in humiliation: He prays to be taken out of humiliation; to be glorified, that He may glorify the Father. One word about the Father. It is a great thing to know the Father, to understand what God intends to convey to us by the name of the Father. There is nothing connected with the name of Father in scripture but pure grace. Scripture keeps every other thought apart from the name of the Father. There are things connected with the name of the Son that are not in connection with the Father's name. For instance, judgment is not connected with the Father's name, but is with the Son's, because He, as Son of man, has been humbled. I remember we were once pretty much taught, that the Son was for us, and God, as Judge, against us; but scripture brings before us a very different idea in connection with the name of the Father. I beg you to bear in mind, that there is no thought in scripture connected with the name of the Father but pure grace. All the counsels of grace flow from the heart of the Father. "As the living Father sent me," &c. If you were to go through the whole of the Gospel of John, and find every place where "the Father" occurs, you would, I think, find in every

one that it is connected with grace. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." I hardly know a more precious verse. Do you remember the occasion of it? The Jews were reproaching Jesus for breaking the sabbath. That was His reply. The Father had been working ever since sin came in. He began then to work in grace. We do not see the Father in creation. The Father is the name of God revealed in grace. There never would have been a bit of grace for man, or a hope of salvation, if the Father had not begun to work when sin came in.

When the Son was here, what was the Father doing? He was drawing to the Son. "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." The Father was drawing to the Son, that souls might be blessed by the Son, that He might bless them, because they were given to Him of the Father. There was, what I might call, the most wonderful administration of grace when the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth: the Father drawing to the Son, and the Son delighting to bless those who came, because the Father had drawn them. He delighted in them; He appreciated them, because they were given of the Father. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Why? Because they were drawn to Him by the Father.

Two or three other expressions I refer to.

"My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." The Jews wanted a sign, and said their fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. Jesus answers, "Moses gave you not the bread from heaven. My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Then too, I recall another passage in John iv.: "The hour is come when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." This is the necessity of what God is; but as to the activity that was going on Jesus says, "The Father seeketh such." I bring these quotations forward to prove my point, and it is a very important one, that scripture takes care to keep the Father's name connected with grace. All the counsels of blessing belong to the Father. It is a great thing to see the glory of each divine Person. Each divine Person has His own peculiar glory. Counsels belong to the Father. The Son says, "All things that the Father hath are mine," and again, "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth." I want you to see the thought connected with the Father's name, and that He is the source of all the counsels of grace.

Now the Lord says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." What do you think that means? It is not the same thing as the Son of man being glorified, "crowned with glory and honour," as in Hebrews ii. Here it is the Son of God: "Father, glorify thy Son." He prays that He may be taken out of the condition of humiliation into which he had entered, and to be glorified, that He might glorify the Father. How would He glorify the Father? I will tell you: By giving effect to all the Father's counsels of grace. That is the idea which is connected with the Son. He says, "I come to do thy will, O God!" He has become the Sent One in order that He may accomplish God's will. He is what we may call the Agent, the One who effects all. If He is to give effect to these counsels He must be glorified. He could not give effect to them in humiliation. He came down here in humiliation that He might put away sin; but He is no longer here in the place of humiliation. He was down here, and, in a sense, His glory was veiled. It is no longer so now: He is glorified, that He might glorify the Father. These are thoughts connected in scripture with the names of these blessed, divine Persons. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." He is the source of all these counsels; and we have the Son now glorified to give effect to them.

I pass on now to verse 3, to speak for a moment about the Father and the Son. I wish I knew more about it! I wish I were more in the power of the Holy Ghost to bring it with more unction before you. The great thing is to find an attraction in these names. I think people need to be attracted, to be drawn from the influence and power of things here, and I wish I could present the attraction in the names of the Father and the Son! It is a wonderful thing, that when sin has come in to spoil everything here, we should find there were counsels of blessing in the heart of the Father, the thought as it were of reconstructing everything—of new creation and all connected with it; and then the Son comes down here in humiliation, taking part in flesh and blood, going down to death that He might put away sin, and then be glorified in order to give effect to all these wondrous divine counsels of the Father; and these counsels are bound up with our blessing, and the blessing of the world too. It is indeed blessed to know this in the midst of this world of ruin and sin. It was wonderful for the Lord to be able to say to a poor woman: "The Father seeketh such to worship him." Sinful, degraded as you are, you are not below the notice of the Father. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven;" but He had also to say to the Jews, "Ye have seen me, and believe not;" and then, there had

to be also the silent work, the drawing of souls to Jesus by the Father.

You may depend upon it, beloved friends, heaven will be a wonderful scene; I quite admit we enter into heavenly joys now by anticipation, but heaven will be a wonderful scene, where the Father will be fully known, and the Son too. These blessings belong not to the earth but to heaven, where the Father and the Son are known without a veil.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This is what we are called to! The highest and greatest privilege to which we are called, is to know these divine Persons. To know is a very great word. It does not mean to know there *are* such divine Persons, but as we say in natural language, I *know* such a person; that means, I am intimately acquainted with him, I delight in his company. That is the idea of "know" here. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee." The Father was to be known as the only true God; and who is the Father? Such a One as I have been trying to bring before you—the Source of all the counsels of blessing. I often think, when we are in the presence of the Father, whatever we are before the Father originated in His heart; and it is not only the knowledge of the Father, but of "Jesus Christ, thy Sent One." I do not think the disciples,

when the Lord Jesus was on earth, could completely know Him; and for this reason, His glory was veiled. It could not help being veiled, because of the condition in which He took part as man down here. But His glory is not veiled any longer; He is glorified; He is taken out of that condition into which He entered down here; He is risen and glorified. And now it is, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, thy Sent One."

I ask every one here to-night, how far do we enter into this? How far do we appreciate that this is the privilege and blessing God has conferred upon us? There are many things we rejoice in. People rejoice in the knowledge of salvation, and rightly; and they rejoice in hope of the glory. But what I desire to bring before you is, your present privilege (for it is *present* and not future only), that we should know the Father, the Source of all the counsels of grace, and the Son, who is become the Sent One to give effect to all the Father's will.

Two or three other points I desire just to speak of—our side of it, as I might call it, as to our capacity, and so on. I do not think one could ever understand it without apprehending first the position in which we are placed, and the power and capacity God has given by which we can enter into this privilege; for I need hardly say, no creature, as a creature, could enter into it

for a single instant. The point is, we are to know the Father and the Son in their own circle, if you can understand the expression. It is not as the angels know God; they do not know the Father and the Son. The Lord said, "In heaven, their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven;" but they do not know the Father in the sense of this verse. You must be in that circle, as the Apostle John says in his epistle: "These things write we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." I do not, of course, mean to say but that the Father has His glory, and the Son His glory; but we are put into that circle. How are we put into that circle? Do you remember a verse in John i., "As many as received him, to them gave he power (title) to become the children of God," &c. What is the effect of divine birth? To make us children of God. Jesus has given us title to that place (we could not have it without title), the One who died because of what we are; the Son of man lifted up, who has borne the judgment of our state, that He might bring us into His own relationship as man with the Father. You get it all brought out in John xx., "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God." You see that the first thing which He does, as risen from the dead is to

place the disciples in the same relationship as Himself with His Father, and His God. He puts them into this circle and family privilege. Scripture tells us of other families in what one might call the economy of blessing ; but I speak of this one family privileged to enjoy communion with the Father and the Son. The first thing is relationship. The youngest babe in Christ that has the Spirit, cries " Abba, Father." I admit it ; but I do not think every babe appreciates, and enters into this knowledge of the Father and the Son, as we get it in this verse of John xvii. It belongs to them, the youngest and oldest alike ; but to enter into it involves faith, and the knowledge of deliverance. All this belongs to every Christian. Faith in Christ belongs to the babe ; deliverance by the death of Christ belongs to the babe as much as to the father, but I question if the babe enters into it as the father does. A very good thing if it were so, but I do not think it is so.

Realisation is a very good word, because you realise what belongs to you ; so that with the blessings of the Christian, everything belongs to every Christian alike, but very many Christians may not have realised what belongs to them in the gift of God ; but it is none the less the gift of God to all alike. It is a very great thing to enter into the enjoyment of this circle of blessing. I ask every one here to-night, Do you know what

it is to enjoy fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? Manifestly that is outside this world. You have to go in the power of the Holy Spirit by faith outside this world altogether. It is the greatest blessing that God could confer upon us, but it is completely outside this world of sense.

I have spoken about the relationship Christ has given us as children; and there is another thing—the divine nature. I must be according to God as to nature—one in nature with Christ. If I am not according to the Father and the Son in nature I could not know them. If I had only human nature, even if it were perfectly pure, I could not know the Father and the Son in this way. We have the nature; it is not only that Christ has given to us the relationship, but the nature. The Son quickeneth whom He will. He quickens after His own order. He gives us a nature suited to the relationship in which He sets us.

Then there is a third thing needed, and that is *power*. We have that too. The Holy Ghost is power. After the Lord, in John xx., had conferred upon the disciples relationship, He gave them power. "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." All these things belong to every Christian: every Christian is brought into this privileged circle by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ

has gone to the cross, in order that he might close up my history here; He bore the judgment of my state, so that He might bring me into relationship with His Father and His God. That is what He has done for every believer; every believer is entitled to know it, is set in that relationship; the nature is given by the quickening power of the Son, and the Holy Ghost is given that we may not only have the nature but the power. It is the Spirit of God's Son that is sent forth into the hearts of Christians. As Paul says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"

Well, now, dear brethren, I feel my great inability to bring the Father and the Son before you according to what I may call their own proper attractiveness, and indeed it is only the Holy Ghost who can do it; but it is a most wonderful thing to me to think that the Father should have been pleased to reveal Himself in the Person of His Son, in the midst of this sin-stricken world. Knowing what the world is, knowing what I am, it is blessed indeed to know what counsels of grace have been in the heart of the Father from all eternity, and that the Son should have become the Sent One, in order to accomplish all this. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." And here are we brought into all this privilege

now—everything given to us to qualify us for it. We could not have the knowledge without the relationship; and not only the relationship, but the nature and the power also given that we may have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

I should be inclined to insist strongly upon the importance of faith and deliverance. I do not mean simply the acceptance of the work of Christ for us; that is the beginning; you would not be a believer at all without that, of course; but what characterises the Christian is present faith in Christ. He is to me the Object of faith, and governs my soul because He is; and by His death I am delivered from this present evil world. The link is broken. You will have to go through this world. I quite admit it; but I am sure it is a great thing to realise that you are free from it; it has no claims upon you. I do not care about my status in this world; it is not of moment to me. I pass through in the grace of God, but I am free of it, because the grace of God has set me in a heavenly place and relationship before Him.

I pray God in His grace to come in (if I have not made things clear, and very likely I have not) to present to you the attractiveness of the Father and the Son, that you may know all the blessings in scripture connected with the Father's name. Christ not only declared the Father, but

He manifested the Father's name. (John xvii. 6.) The wonderful truth that came out was that God could stand in relationship to a man as Father. Jesus manifested His name. I can now say Father; I know Him in the consciousness of His love to me, and I know Him too as the Object of my love. Scripture takes the greatest possible pains, as I have said, to keep clear the Father's name from everything but thoughts of grace. Then, too, if you think of the blessed Son: who became Man that He might bear the judgment of our state, who as Son of Man was lifted up, and, having glorified God, is Himself glorified, in order that He may give effect to the Father's counsels of grace.

It is only a little while, and all these wonderful things will come to light. We are privileged to enter into them now by faith, but the time will come when these eternal counsels will be fully displayed, and then in heavenly courts we shall rejoice eternally in the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, His Sent One. That is the circle to which you and I by grace belong. Our blessing is bound up with the knowledge of these blessed, divine Persons, and the nature and the power is given to us by which we may enjoy this knowledge, which the Lord speaks of in this verse.

Beloved friends, have you ever been really exercised about it? People ought not to remain

just upon the threshold of Christianity. Forgiveness of sins, and even the gift of the Holy Ghost, is the threshold, as it were. The point is, to *go in*, to enter into the house—the circle into which you are brought by grace, to enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son. We could not know these divine Persons if God had not been pleased to reveal Himself to us.

May God really give us exercise of heart about it, that we may not go on grovelling here, but that we may have grace to go within, and know these blessed, divine Persons where they are at home, if I may so speak. It is a great thing to know a person at home. You never know people till you know them at home. Christ was not at home down here, He was in a foreign scene. Now He *is* at home, and we have the power to know Him *there*. We have the relationship, the nature, and the power. Then what do we want more? We want *faith*, and we want *deliverance*. It is not that they are not ours, but we are slow sometimes to take them up.

May God exercise our hearts! I assure you I am exercised about it, and about the miserable, low state of the people of God. How they grovel down here!

May God stir us up, beloved friends, that we may enter now into what is to be our blessed and eternal portion.

F. E. R.