

# TRUTH FOR THE TIME.

(PART XIV.)

BEING NOTES OF ADDRESSES AND  
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## THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING.

(JOHN VII. 37-39; COL. II. 1-3.)

I HAVE read the verses in Colossians in order to call your attention to the words, "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." To have the full assurance of understanding is, I take it, to know what God's thoughts are which centre in Christ. The apostle desires that we may be encouraged to take in what God's thought for His people is in Christ; I want to look at it in connection with John's gospel.

There is a certain road which we have to travel in order that each one may reach God's thought for us, and it is important that we should know the way. God begins from the top; He begins with His purpose in Christ, but it often takes some time before we really reach the full assurance of understanding. The apostle was seeking to lead the Colossians into it. They were not up to the thought of God's glory, and of how it centres and is to come out

in Christ and the saints. We read in 2 Corinthians i. : "For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." That is the point before me. Christ the Yea and Amen, and unto the glory of God *by us*. "By us" I understand the saints from Pentecost onward to the Lord's coming. If it is God's glory *by us*, it shews the wonderful position of privilege in which we are set. It is not that we are anything in ourselves, but the privilege is the place of association with Christ which is ours by grace. We get an illustration of this special place in what took place on the mount of transfiguration. The Lord led three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, up the mount. They were thus withdrawn from earth, and moreover it gave them, so to speak, a vantage ground. It is when we are withdrawn from earthly influences that we get a vantage ground, and the Lord encourages us to take it, that we may reach the full assurance of understanding, and know the thoughts of God. In the scene on the holy mount the disciples saw the Lord transfigured, and Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spake with Him. Moses and Elijah had been eminent servants of the Lord; on the other hand we see three poor fishermen of Galilee. If we were to compare them as ser-

vants, we should have to give the foremost place to Moses and Elijah, and as regards the commissions with which they were entrusted, they were most eminent. Scripture tells us of the way in which the Lord vindicated the position He had given to Moses. "If there be a *prophet* among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision . . . . My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." Moses held a wonderful place. Paul caught up to the third heaven was perhaps most like him. Elijah, too, was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire without dying. The Lord stood by him in a wonderful manner. What I want you to see is that Peter, James and John were nothing in the presence of Moses and Elijah, but they had a place of association with Christ not granted to Moses and Elias, they entered into the cloud with Jesus, and were thus for a moment in the circle of the Father's delights in His beloved Son, while Moses and Elias were connected with manifested glory.

It is not a question of what we are, but of God's grace. If God has been pleased to place the saints of this period in association with Christ, it is His grace does so. Abraham as

a man was greater than any one of us, Moses was greater; kings and prophets desired to see the things now made known to us and did not see them; they are for us to enter into and enjoy to-day, just as Peter, James and John entered into the cloud with the Lord. Moses and Elias disappear, and three poor fishermen are in association with Christ, and hear the Father's voice expressing His delight in His Son. That is morally the holiest, where one is brought into the apprehension of the Father's delight in His beloved Son, and the Father would have us hear Him; He can tell us that the love wherewith He is loved is in us. It is in the sanctuary of His presence that we are assured of this.

I turn now to John's gospel. It has been said that in reading John we have to go step by step. We could not arrive at chapter vii. if we did not begin with chapter iii. The cross lays the foundation for everything. In chapter iii, we get the two great foundations on which all is built up. One is the new birth: this is the great moral foundation in a man's soul, it is God's beginning there; the other is the cross, whereby is laid the basis of righteousness; in virtue of the redemption wrought there God is going to bring out a world of glory for Himself. That is seen in chapter i. 29, but here in chapter iii. *we* are brought in who

believe, as part of that scheme which it is in God's mind to accomplish. If we do not get the cross alluded to in the succeeding chapters, it is enough that the foundation has been laid in chapter iii., in order for the accomplishment of God's purpose. Man was lost and the Son of man had to be lifted up. The cross was the close of the history of the one man, that another Man might be before God, and that Man His Son. *His Son*—that takes us outside of things here. Our portion is with Him. I have already brought before you the privilege foreshadowed in Peter, James and John; they entered into the holiest in a sense: it is what every one of us is entitled to because the blood of Jesus gives boldness to enter by the new and living way. It is for the youngest believer in this room, though you may not know much about it, but the portion of the church is to know the Father's house, the place of relationship, where all the Father's love rests, and where we learn His delight in His Son. All the glory, every promise is established in Him, for glory to God *by us*.

In the end of chapter iii. you see that the Son here upon earth is in the truth of His person outside of dispensation. The question of baptism comes before us, and that is connected with dispensation, bringing the baptised into some privileged place upon earth. As being down

here, there is a place upon earth which we occupy and christian baptism brings us into it. In this time-scene God's people must occupy a certain place, and baptism is connected with it: we are told in chapter iv. that the Lord did not Himself baptise: He was in the consciousness of what comes out at the end of chapter iii., "The Father loveth the Son." You must carry on that thought, now that it is brought out, right through John. It is an immense thought if you ponder it. We must read the beginning of chapter iv. in connection with it. "Jesus . . . sat *thus* on the well." It has been translated "*sat just as he was* at the fountain." Who was He? We might have said that He was a wearied man sitting on the well, but He was just what He was, the loved Son of the Father. He could not be anything less; that is how we are privileged to know Him. He sat at the well just as He was, the loved Son of the Father.

It is not that we are looking now at God's love in giving His Son, but we are looking at the Son down here. What an Object of delight He was to the Father's heart! "The Father loveth the Son." Oh! ponder it. When we come to chapter iv.—Who could be the fountain of living affections in any soul but the loved Son of the Father? Who could be the Giver, nay more, the very source and spring of living water

in the soul that should rise up to God in responsive love, save that One. Did not God want it? Did not the law command it, that a man should love God with all his heart? Did not God want man's heart? Did He not say, "My Son, give me thine heart?" How would He secure it? Not by law. Here is another thing, something quite different; there is One now on earth whom the Father loved, the Son of His love; One who could become the spring of new and divine affections in the soul of a poor outcast woman. We might have thought that the Lord would have propounded the cross to that poor woman, and the well of water to Nicodemus; but it is to a poor outcast that He speaks of living water, and Himself the Giver. But how entirely outside of earth and man we are. It may be necessary to take up dispensational questions—God's dealings with man—but here we are engaged with the Son, the Object of the Father's love.

I pass on to chapter v. to notice specially one point. The blessed Lord is not only the fountain and spring of living affections by giving us of His Spirit, but He can teach us of that sphere of life to which those affections belong. He was here, life in the midst of a scene of weakness and death, and by His word He could connect the one that heard with His own sphere of life. I refer to a well-known verse, "He that heareth

my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." "He that heareth" is characteristic. Such an one is like the servant who had his ear bored to the door-post; his ear now belongs to Christ. Whoever has my ear, I am really subject to. In the sent One of the Father we have the revelation of the sphere of life. All here was subject to death, and the law could not give life or strength, but here is One who can quicken and bring out of the region of death, and the one whose ear is bored, so to speak, lives in the sphere which Christ's word makes known. This leads us to the divine side of this quickening power; the Son had become man that His voice in its own unmistakable tone might reach the ears of the dead. It is a great thing to have our ear bored, and to hear the word of the sent One of the Father; then I think we are on the road to the full assurance of understanding, and we rise to the thoughts and mind of God.

When we come to chapter vi. we learn the way in which Christ forms a people for Himself. In chapter v. He is here for the Father, doing His work. Here He is food for us, and we are nourished and fed upon Himself. There is no other company who are formed in such a wonderful manner. No other company but the

church will have the privilege of the Lord's supper. Not that John vi. is the Lord's supper, but both John vi. and the Lord's supper refer to the believer's part in the death of Christ. As we gather together every Lord's day morning in the fellowship of His death, and nourish ourselves in the affections which are expressed in that death, we have a privilege which no other company of saints before or after could possibly have. The great point of John vi. is that before the Lord returns to Israel, He forms a people for Himself by giving Himself to be the food of their souls. There are three things connected with the "one who feeds" (it is again characteristic) : Christ becomes the life of that one consciously, and in some little way we know eternal life. (2) We have a new home for our souls; we abide in Him and He in us; and (3) we have a new Object to live to, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Chapter vii. takes up a most important point, that of the world, and the world is our great hindrance. Christ's brethren wish Him to shew Himself to the world, and the great effort of the present time is to attach the name of Christ to the world. The world has become Christianised, and the attachment of the name of Christ to the present course of things is accepted, but it is the world still that would not have Christ. The

Lord said to His brethren, "Go ye up unto this feast." "Your time is alway ready." "My time is not yet fully come." The moment will come when Christ will take His place as Head, and fill the world with blessing, but that involves the reconciliation of the things on earth as well as in heaven. Thank God, all will then be filled with His blessing, and we shall reign with Christ, and rejoice in the blessing in which the world will repose, though it will be beneath our feet even then. Then will be the great feast of tabernacles, and the world will know the rest of God. It is not known now, for the world does not recognise Christ as Head, the source of blessing and rest. He could not take His place as Head over this world as it is, but He is Head to us. In a sense, we reach Him as Head in this chapter, communicating the streams of blessing and life which come from the place where He is glorified. We are thus brought into touch with another scene, but the river of refreshment and blessing is connected with the affections of the inner man, and flows out in this poor weary world. Another immense privilege for us.

What Christ's brethren would do, and what many Christians would do, is to connect Christ with the world. But in this chapter He speaks of going away to Him that sent Him. There was nothing in common between Christ and the

world, but those that went outside the resources of the world to Christ (for He was outside of things here), and drank, would by the Spirit be connected with the bright and blessed scene where He was going. Here we get an intimation of union. There could not be union until the Holy Ghost came. We could not be united to Him here. He must go outside of this scene, and take His place in glory as the exalted Head for that, and then the Spirit could come down and intimately connect believers by drinking of Him with the fulness of the Head. This is more than handing bread to the multitude from the hand of Christ, it is drinking that the rivers might flow. It must be through death and resurrection that Christ took this place, it was on the eighth day that Jesus stood and cried. The rock must, so to speak, be smitten before the waters could flow in resurrection life and power. There could be no union between Christ and the flesh, or Christ and the world. The rivers flow from the blessed Man who has gone through death (and that is the judgment and end of flesh) into the glory of God; they flow from another world of which He is the centre.

Chapter iv. no doubt is based on the cross and resurrection. We see the actual fulfilment of it in chapter xx. when the Lord as a risen Man breathed the Spirit of His own life into His

disciples. Chapter iv. connects us with another Man and chapter vii. with another place. We get in chapter iv. the communication of living affections, and these are capable of rising up to the sphere where there is nothing but love. Hence we have worship spoken of. I understand worship to be the response produced by the Spirit in our souls to the communications of love made known to us in Christ. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and as we know that love we respond to it in worship. In chapter iv. the heart is led to a Person and engaged with Him, and hence we have worship; but in chapter vii. we are connected with the sphere where that Person is glorified. A river carries with it the thought of fertility and blessing. Wherever a river flows there is refreshment, and life springs up. The river of the water of life flows from the heavenly city; the fulness of that day has not come, but it is anticipated by the Spirit dwelling in believers, so that their affections should not be in things here, but in the things above where Christ is. The Spirit has come to reveal the Lord's glory in that scene of divine delight and rest where He is.

The question might be asked of me, What is the Lord's glory? Perhaps I can best bring it before you in the way of contrast. If the light

of God shone upon *us* down here, how should *we* look in the presence of His glory? We have instances of this as in Isaiah. He came under the light of glory and he said, "I am undone." If we were dwelling upon our own state or attainment, how we should be discovered to ourselves in the light of glory. In Christ all is perfect, but if we look at our own path—our thoughts and feelings—no matter in what regard we may be with one another—all would wither up into nothing in the light of glory. Now look at Christ and bring the light of glory to bear upon every step of His pathway here, and there is nothing but perfection. True, it was in a sense a hidden pathway—a veiled pathway which only the Father knew, though the glory of His Person shone from behind the veil. But the moment He went into heaven, there was a Man there on whom the full blaze of God's glory shone, and what could that glory declare? It could only crown Him and put honour upon Him. What was hidden and veiled down here shines in all its brilliancy and splendour there. The Father knew Him when in lowliness here and His voice declared its pleasure in Him, but now everything is seen in its perfection and beauty in the full blaze of the glory which has crowned Him. All now shines out in that scene, and the Spirit has come to acquaint us

with the perfections of Him whom we now see crowned with glory and honour. It is the same One who walked in humiliation here telling out God's love, not known of men, or they would never have said, "Shew thyself to the world"; but what is He with God up there? Is He not the Head of a system of glory which He fills? All His perfection and beauty shone out here under the eye of the Father, but now He is the Head of a world of glory, and the grace and fullness of the Head will yet fill the universe, as the light of the sun shines for all. But the great point of the chapter is that the Spirit brings the light of Christ's perfections to the believer now. As we drink, we are independent of this world, because we are in the light of another world; and we understand something of the "full assurance of understanding;" what is now mystery will fill that other world. All will be to the glory of God by us.

It is wonderful to see Him in chapter iv. sitting by the well-side and opening springs to a poor woman. Wonderful that He should be here, as in chapter v., giving communications from another scene; and that we should get our ear bored, so that we hold to Him and hear His voice. "My sheep hear my voice"—the unmistakable voice of the Son of God. Wonderful to know that He has given Himself in death for

us. All that death claimed, death has had; it is now the proof of love, and we can feed upon His death, as that which has entirely done away with man, and becomes the practical power in our souls for the displacing of that man, that we might live in another Man. And not only so, but it is wonderful that the Spirit of God should come down to report Christ's glory in another world, to connect our souls with it, that we might refresh our hearts, as we behold Him there. Is it not wonderful that our hearts may become the channel of that river?

If we recall Peter, James and John upon the holy mount, and the vision granted to them, and then think of what they were—poor fishermen to whom the Lord had often to say, "O ye of little faith." If we think of how He bore with them and disciplined them by His word, and He does the same with us, one does not know which to admire the most, the love that purposes such privilege for us, or the love that disciplines us, which never tires, but breaks our wills, in order that we may be subject to Him and free from all that is contrary to God.

The Spirit of God abides with us, as in another way He abode with Israel according to the word in Haggai. "My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not," and they got beautiful words as to the glory to come. And the Spirit

in these days can still report Christ's glory to us, so that our souls should be greatly affected by the revelation to us of the sphere of that glory, where His glory and beauty are in full acknowledgment. In anticipation of it the Lord on that eighth day, the resurrection day, stood outside of man's world and honour, and cried, "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me and drink." That is addressed to you, dear fellow believer, and to me. But He is the Head of that world of glory, and He anticipated the moment when the Spirit of God would come and make known to us our union with Him and connect us with that scene of divine delight where the Son has entered—a glorified Man—the Object of the Father's love and delight. From that scene of love the Spirit has come to acquaint us with that world of bliss of which the loved Son of the Father is the Centre. Blessed it is to be drawn from things here to those "bright and blessed scenes." We could not touch them if we did not begin with the Son of man lifted up. But He was lifted up according to the counsel of God's love that all that we have looked at might be true for us. We are nothing; so were Peter, James and John: and yet they entered into the cloud with Christ, but all is Yea and Amen in Christ for glory to God *by us*.

T. H. R.

# “EXERCISED” OR “HARDENED”?

(JOHN I. 14; LUKE X. 13-15.)

I FEEL it all the more difficult, after our long pause this morning, to say a word to you, beloved brethren; but I know you will pray for me, and that is my confidence while I endeavour to say just the word that is on my heart; and I would specially address myself to my younger brethren.

What I should like to do is to follow on a little with the two things mentioned before this morning. One is God's side; what His purposes are, what He has in store for us, His coming down to make it known, His sending the communication of it in a person, and that Person His own beloved Son, and all in order that we might learn everything we can possibly learn of God in that Person, in a Person whose heart is full of love to us—unchanging, perfect love. It is by this blessed revelation that we come to be perfectly at home with Him; and as we learn Him we learn the Father also. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

The other side is our side: what we might call the dispensational side; and I should like to look, as the Lord enables me, at both sides.

It is very important for our souls to be on God's line, and to look at things as He does. There are, no doubt, different lines in scripture, and in the ministry of His servants to-day also; but what we really want to learn is God's line for the present moment. As I understand it, no special "line" of teaching should altogether engross us, but we all need to get into God's line. That line has been brought to light by His Son, and is made good in us by His Spirit.

Now there is a point where we first touch this line, where *we* start. This is why I read the verses in Luke's gospel which speak of *repentance*. It is not enough to sit by and hear wonderful unfoldings of God's purposes, blessed as it is to do so. Room for it must be made in our hearts before we do more than mentally give credence to it. There must be a preparation in the soul to receive these things. You might go round to all the taps in the town to fill your vessel. You might draw water from every one of them and yet your vessel remain empty. Why? No blame whatever to the taps. There is a closed lid on your vessel! So it is with ourselves. There must be a readiness in the heart to receive the truth; and that readiness is only brought about by self-judgment. Repentance makes room in us for the blessed entrance of God's word with all its unfoldings

of heavenly love and grace divine. This is the way God begins with us. We are brought to repentance. You may think it is only *sinner*s who are called upon to repent; but it is a mistake. Saints are called upon to repent also, that is if things are not right with them. Five out of the seven churches in Asia (Rev. ii., iii.) are called upon to repent; and if things are not right with us, if we are not perfectly happy, *we* are called upon to repent also. We need exercise of soul.

Two things strike me in reading Hebrews: one is *exercise* of heart (chap. xii. 11); the other is the opposite—*hardness* of heart. (Chap. iii. 8-13.) And we may depend upon it that if the ministry which the Spirit of God brings before us does not exercise and humble us it will certainly harden us, and I feel sure as to this, we all need to take heed.

I should like to draw your attention, for a moment, to the two gospels, Luke and John. One (to speak with all reverence) presents what we may call the *down* line, the other the *up* line. In John we get God's side, God come down. All His moral glories are brought down to us; brought so close to us, that we may calmly contemplate them, and enjoy them, too, for they are all presented to us in the Person of Jesus Himself, God's own blessed Son. He

could sit beside a poor, guilty woman at the well of Sychar, and make her feel quite at home in His holy presence. He could say to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God . . . thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Notice this. He does not begin with repentance. John's side is not the calling of sinners to repentance: the word "repentance" is not even mentioned in the whole of his gospel. We should not begin in that way with a poor sinner, nor would it be right if we did. We should begin with man as we find him and press upon him the necessity of repentance. But in this gospel God seems to be presenting things from His own standpoint, and not so much the different stages by which, in our soul-history, the truth is apprehended. So Jesus says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.)

Now notice this. It is *He* Himself who proposes this wondrous blessing. He does not wait for the woman to ask for it. He takes the initiative, and this is just what John's gospel brings out. It is as though God was saying all through—I am come down to *propose* the blessing to you. I will not even wait for you to ask for it. This is how He acts in this chapter and He

does so all through the gospel. Take a few more instances.

When Nathanael came to Jesus (chap. i.), He let him know that before Philip called him, He had His eye upon him.

The impotent man in chapter v. does not ask the Lord to be healed. The Lord Himself proposes to raise him up. “Wilt thou be made whole?” The Messiah of Israel is there. No need to wait for the waters to be troubled, nor for any other providential mercy if He is there.

Again, in chapter vi. the disciples do not, as in the other three gospels, mention to Him the need of the multitude: “He himself knew what he would do,” and He sets to work to exercise them about it. In Israel’s journey through the wilderness they would have had to wait till next morning for the manna; but since He is there they need not wait a moment. He will feed them. Let them, then, be seated in the self-same spot, and He will feed them that very hour.

Then in chapter vii., on the feast day, who is it that proposes the living water to them? It is Himself who does it, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

Once more; in chapter viii. the same thing is brought before us. A guilty woman is brought to Him. She does not come as a poor, penitent

sinner to seek Him. And here Israel's solemn condition is again brought to light. Iniquity is in the land, and there is no one who can remove it. *He* will do it, and not by judgment either; He will clear the land of iniquity, but He will do it in a moral way, in the way of grace. Hence His blessed words, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." What a lovely illustration of that statement in the first chapter of this gospel. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. As though He had said to her, "I can detain you in My presence and hush your fears at the same time." He would remove iniquity out of the land by taking the power of it out of men's hearts.

Then in chapter ix. the Lord again proposes the blessing; the blind man does not seek eyesight for himself, priceless as the boon was.

In chapter x. He presents Himself as the very Shepherd that Moses wanted. (Num. xxvii. 17.) Moses, perhaps, did not know till he got to the mountain-top where Christ was transfigured, that the Shepherd he longed for for Israel God had found ages before. At the right moment, all uncalled for, He had sent Him.

In chapter xi. death has come in. It is certain that Lazarus could not propose anything for himself; he could not ask to be raised, neither did his sisters ask it for him. The Lord comes

in when, as far as man is concerned, everything is hopeless, and He raises the dead.

In chapter xii. you see the dead alive again, the lost found, and they are feasting together. Later on His own death is alluded to, but it is entirely looked at as a matter affecting the glory of God in the Son of His love. That death is the result of no appeal from man: indeed, most of His best friends would have kept Him from it if they could.

In chapter xiii. the disciples do not ask for their feet to be washed. How *could* they have asked Him to do it? They did not even comprehend the import of the gracious act. Yet He girds Himself and stoops to do it, according to His own knowledge of the moral necessity for it.

In the next chapter, they do not ask Him to come and take them to the Father's house. (Chap. xiv.) But in His own sovereign goodness, He says, “ I will come again, and receive you unto myself.”

In chapter xv. we have the same golden line continued, and He says, “ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” So we might go on to the end.

He had come in not only to make the blessing known, but to present that blessing from His own divine standpoint, to propose it to man in

His own sovereign right. If He had not proposed it, who would have wanted it? But since He had Himself come to bring it, no one need wait for it. For example, in chapter ii., under ordinary circumstances, when the wine had run out, they would have had to wait till the next vintage. But not so now. Why should they? They can have the "best" wine without the vintage. They have Christ, and need not wait for anything else. Every blessing is assured in Him.

Now let us come to our side. This the gospel of Luke specially brings out. I desire to lay it on our consciences once more, that unless in coming to such a privileged spot as this, we are in God's line morally in our souls, we cannot get the blessing He wants us to have. We must be morally suited to it before we can receive it. This is our side, and deeply important to see it. John does not give us this side so much. Luke does. John speaks of glory come *from* God to be contemplated by us. (Chap. i. 14.) Luke of glory going to God. (Chap. ii. 14.) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good pleasure in men." Glory is there seen going back to God: "Glory *to* God from man."

What is presented in Luke will, if received, bring us into line with what is presented in John. Take an illustration. Zacharias is dumb

till the promised child is born. He did not, at first, simply believe God's testimony by Gabriel, so God had to work in him. And God does work: not in Zacharias only, but in us also; and, in reality, for the same purpose. He is working in us now. He would bring our hearts into the line of blessing which He has in His heart for us. He would lavish upon us all the blessing He has for us, as presented in John. In Luke He shews us the way He adopts to bring us into it. They ask Zacharias what the name of the child is to be. “His name is John,” is his reply. Ah! now he is in the line. He would not believe the communication before, but now that the child is born he gladly drops into line with the divine announcement, and bursts forth in praise to Him who had sent it. We do not *make* the line: God has made it. All we have to do is to get into the line that He *has* made.

What is God's line, do you ask? You have had it before you this morning, and possibly thousands of times before. It is the line of death and judgment. The end of all that God could not delight in has been brought about at the cross—the end of all that we are, as in the flesh. We have to get there practically, and to deal unsparingly with everything in ourselves that God has dealt with there. Whether as sinners or as saints we must be brought into

moral accord with what God effected for us at the cross. That is God's line; and if we are not really there we come very far short indeed. We are exposing ourselves in a very grave way to hardness of heart. It is a very solemn consideration. I feel it strongly in my own spirit, and felt it when we came together yesterday. To hear these wonderful unfoldings of the mind of God again and again, is blessed indeed, if we are morally in God's line, and in heart prepared for it. Otherwise nothing, I feel persuaded, is more hardening. May the Lord give us to take it to heart.

*There must be self-judgment.* We get in Hebrews God's dealings in discipline, and what is this for but that He may bring us into His own line? Who has not felt it? If you have not felt it, dear brethren, I have. God's discipline, I repeat, is to bring us into line with His own thoughts, that we may be exercised thereby. Why do you discipline your child, let me ask you? You say, I have a certain line of conduct for myself, and I want to bring my child into the same line; what is not worthy of me is not worthy of him. Exactly. Well then, in like manner, God has a line for us, and He has to chasten us and discipline us that He may bring us into it.

He warns us in the beginning of the epistle,

saying, “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” May we indeed hear His voice. He has a voice to us in these meetings. Have we not heard it this morning? He would say to each one of us, “Do not harden your heart. Be exercised before Me. Judge yourself. Do not go away from this place as you came. Get down low before Me.”

Hearing all that we have heard, is there no response in our souls? This day—this day when we are gathered together thus—“To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

May the Lord give us to see that there are these two lines. The line of His purpose into which He would delight to bring us, and the line on which our souls must experimentally travel to reach it in its full blessedness. John’s gospel is full of the one and Luke’s gospel is full of the other, while heavenly grace shines brightly in both. While John’s gospel is full of the testimony of His love, there is nothing till you come nearly to the close of the gospel about the forgiveness of sins, whereas Luke’s gospel abounds with it. In the Gospel of Luke you find people constantly calling themselves “sinners,” or it is said of them, whereas only one man is called a sinner in the whole of John; and that is Jesus Himself! Those wretched Pharisees, in their hard-

ness of heart, call the blessed Lord a sinner: and He is the only One so called throughout that gospel. (See chap. x.) "Whether he be sinner or no, I know not," said the blind man, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Then they cast him out; but the man excommunicated is the only man at that moment who is a true worshipper. What a rebuke to that proud religious people! The very one they had shut out from their place of worship is the only one found at the true centre of worship. Down in the dust before Jesus he worships Him as the blessed Son of God, his Friend, his Saviour, his Lord.

May the Lord give us to see these two lines more distinctly. He loves to unfold to us the line of His purpose, but we can only enter upon it by the door of self-judgment. We may *talk* about these great things, but in reality we can only reach the line of His purpose by the practical acceptance of the cross. But surely we can well afford to deal unsparingly with what has already been dealt with there, in His own blessed person. Blessed be His name, He has righteously removed all that was contrary to Himself, and has expressed His love in doing it.

GEO. C.

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## READING.

(1 COR. x., xi.)

D. L. H. May we have a little, following on what we had this morning—the supper, and the state which fits for it? Read 1 Corinthians x. 14–23; xi. 23–33.

D. L. H. What I had in my mind was—we get the nature of the fellowship spoken of before we get the supper itself.

E. D. Is that what you meant by “the state” for the supper?

D. L. H. Yes, that is what I meant.

E. H. C. What is that state?

D. L. H. I thought it was the fellowship of the death of Christ. The death of Christ gives the character of the fellowship.

E. D. What is the difference between *fellowship* with the death of Christ, and *identification* with His death?

T. H. R. I thought identification was an individual matter. John vi. is, that you take home the death of Christ—that is an end to all that is of the flesh. But then when you come to

the fellowship of His death, that supposes a *company* apart from all that is of the flesh and who own that all distinctions have come to an end in the death of Christ, so that we may have fellowship together.

G. There is a certain kind of confession in it, I suppose ?

T. H. R. I think God has given us a rallying point in the Lord's supper. The altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle was a kind of rallying point for Israel. "There will I meet with the children of Israel;" it thus became a rallying point, having an appointed place of meeting and formed them into a congregation or assembly. In chapter x. the apostle refers to the altar of burnt offering. . . . "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" Fellowship is an association of saints together here. The supper is the rallying point; it is that which brings us together, whether rich or poor, or different nationalities. We are there together on the ground of the death of Christ.

F. H. B. If we all realised what it is to be identified with the death of Christ, there would be more fellowship—nothing to hinder.

QUES. What is that in chapter i., "The fellowship of his Son?"

F. H. B. I suppose that is more the *bond* of fellowship ?

T. H. R. Yes, it is the circle of fellowship and characterises it.

F. C. Would you exclude the thought of our being in the place where He is rejected?

T. H. R. No; I think that comes out in the supper. It was the night in which He was betrayed He took bread. What is to keep a man from going his own way and getting into all sorts of associations but the sense of being in the fellowship of the death of Christ?

D. L. H. I think it is that which puts us apart from the world, and the whole system of things with which Satan has to do. The fellowship is a real thing—we are thrown together, but in relation to the death of Christ, and you cannot conceive that apart from the moral effect on souls.

E. D. Would not chapter x. 16 help to explain, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

D. L. H. I think the two expressions were given to bring out the reality of the death—"the blood" and "the body" being separated gives the actual fact of His death, the cup giving first the sacrificial side. The two things express that our fellowship is the fellowship of the death of Christ.

E. H. C. In Israel there were various types of His death: would you confine this to any particular one?

T. H. R. I should say the peace offering.

D. L. H. I think the death of Christ is introduced here to separate the Corinthians from all that was unsuitable to the death of Christ.

T. H. R. I think it is important to see that our fellowship does not exist merely when we are at the supper—if our fellowship only existed then, a person might say, it is only when we are together in the fellowship that I must be separate; but we cannot take up any worldly association at any time because we are in the fellowship of Christ's death. We are separated from everything to which Christ died.

M. G. If we are going on with the death of Christ individually we shall be right collectively.

T. H. R. Yes, we shall. I think the previous part of the chapter leads on to this. "These things happened unto them for ensamples." "Flee from idolatry" . . . . any acknowledgment of the God of this world, and then the apostle comes to the point of fellowship.

E. D. Is it not important to see it is not a question of our being *together* in chapter x., but it is in chapter xi.?

W. J. Is it not conduct *outside* in chapter x. and *inside* in chapter xi.?

T. H. R. Yes.

P. Is it not a question of fellowship, and if one is in the truth of christian fellowship are we not cut off from any other fellowship?

A. H. I think the point is not to compromise our fellowship.

W. H. B. I should like to know why the cup is put first and connected with blessing?

T. H. R. I thought it was because in the sacrifices the first thought is the blood being shed, it is the sacrificial side that is in view first.

W. H. B. Would "*we bless*" be "for which we give thanks?"

T. H. R. I do not think the terms are equivalent. "*We bless*" gives me the idea that we are in blessing. It is not escape from judgment. The death of Christ has opened out the way that all the blessing that could come from God should flow. There will be a universe of bliss as the fruit of that death, everything filled with blessing, but we taste it now.

QUES. Would "*the cup of blessing*" be in contrast to the cup of *woe* which He drank?

T. H. R. It may be.

D. L. H. I think the first thing is, we have to see what the fellowship is, and be careful not to compromise it in any way; and then that we have got a very blessed portion on the other

hand. That comes out in chapter xi., and which we can only enter on as we are in separation from the world.

E. D. In the first part of the chapter you see the danger to which the saints are liable.

T. H. R. Israel had a fellowship: they had to be careful not to compromise their fellowship, as in the case of Achan. God gave them a rallying-point at the altar which formed them into His congregation or assembly. They were the house of God. We have to be careful not to compromise *our* fellowship, nor the character of God's house. We cannot baptise ourselves. Baptism is a privilege accorded to us, wherein we are identified with His death, but in taking the supper it is our own act; we ourselves have fellowship with it.

W. We see in Achan what a terrible thing it was to compromise the fellowship.

T. H. R. I think it is in the house of God that christian fellowship is; I do not mean in the meeting, the meeting does not come till chapter xi.

W. J. Is he not speaking of "the law of the house?" I refer to "This is the law of the house . . . . the whole limit thereof . . . . shall be most holy." (Eze. xliii. 12.) I think the Lord established "the law of the house" in Psalm xxii. 3.

A. H. Was not that to correct the low moral state of Israel ?

T. H. R. I believe it is an immense thing to wake up to what our privilege is. God has called out a people to be connected with His name in this world, to be His house, where God's character is to be seen. Where is God's character to be seen except in His house ? Suppose the Lord had said to Israel when He had brought them out of Egypt, "Now you must, each one, get to Canaan the best way you can." All would have been individual, and where would have been the system of things in which Jehovah's character and ways were to be displayed ? He formed them into a congregation that they might carry His testimony through the wilderness. If one had set off one way, and another another way, there would have been no congregation. That is what many Christians are doing, they are only thinking of getting to heaven individually. God gave Israel a rallying-point—His tabernacle and the altar, where He spoke to them. It is true that Israel never had the thought of being connected with a system of things in which God's glory was to be displayed. They degraded the glory of God into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay, and when they move on with the tabernacle, they immediately murmur. Afterwards they spoke of going back

to Egypt. Then God said, "You will all fall in the wilderness;" but He did not give up His purpose. "As truly as I live," He said, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

G. W. Fellowship is not merely in His death, by which we are apart from all here, but there is that in which we have holy fellowship. Our fellowship has a positive side as well as a negative.

QUES. Is there any difference between the house and the temple?

T. H. R. The temple was in the house. It really is the shrine where the ark of the covenant was. The first thing with a young convert is that he belongs to God and to God's household, but the thought of God is to bring him to the Holiest.

QUES. Is not the loaf on the table meant to convey the idea of one body as well as representing Christ's body?

T. H. R. It says so; the two ideas run together.

W. B. Does the cup express the love and the bread the giving Himself to gain us?

T. H. R. When we come together the Lord is presented to us in the most wonderful act of love that could be known, and it is in that way that we realise His presence. Suppose any one of us had lost the dearest friend; after a time

that person would fade from your memory. Yet the Lord has been here and died, and His love is not a past thing, but as present to the church to-day as it was to the disciples more than 1800 years ago. Can any one explain that? The present realisation of the Lord's presence and His love is connected with the fact that He is living and that we have the Spirit. The Lord can be known of us in the breaking of bread, and His love can be as fresh to the church to-day as it was 1800 years ago. The Lord, because He lives, presents Himself to us in the bread and wine in the love that was expressed to us in death, and what took place 1800 years ago becomes a present thing. The effect of that is that you are so with the Lord that you are free to be led on by Him.

A. L. The absent One becomes present.

T. H. R. His death is a past thing, but the love expressed is present, for He who died lives. It is not an effort of memory. The bread and wine are given and the supper becomes a rallying-point for those who love Him.

REMARKED. "This do for my remembrance," for "my calling to mind." J. N. D. says in a foot-note, Remembrance has an active signification—for the calling *me* to mind.

D. L. H. We call Him to mind in that which

vividly calls Him to mind. He takes His place amongst us, but then there are conditions.

F. C. Memorials of His love are before us—in having that before us we call Him to mind, but you could not exclude the thought of His death.

T. O. What is presented to us in the supper? Is it not a dead Christ?

T. H. R. He died, but the One who did go into death is a living One.

T. O. But is it not a dead Christ that you are remembering?

T. H. R. But you could not touch death apart from life.

F. H. B. Do you accept that it is a dead Christ who is before us?

T. H. R. Well, we cannot reach Jesus at all apart from His death. His death is the way into life, but we are in life with Him when we partake of that which speaks of His death.

D. L. H. His death lands us on the ground where we know His love.

T. O. In the supper it is not a Christ in incarnation here, nor yet in glory, that we have before us. It is One who became dead. We are in danger, beloved friends, of letting go His death.

T. H. R. No one can touch Him at all apart from His death. The death of Christ is brought

before us in the supper, not a dead Christ. Christ is a living One. When Israel crossed Jordan they kept the Passover, and that was very different to their eating it in Egypt or the wilderness. Jordan was passed, they were circumcised and they ate it in perfect peace with the sense of where it had brought them. Where has Christ's death brought us? We are of Christ's company and God's house, but we are in company with Him who lives in the perfect peace of another scene altogether. Then the point is not to be inconsistent with the love that brought us there. Death has placed us in association with Christ in life and we go back and remember the love that has placed us there.

D. L. H. The announcement of His death is incidental to the supper. We do announce His death, but we do not come together to do it. His death is the starting-point. We do not start with what is prior to that. We begin with death accomplished.

QUES. Should not the meeting begin with the supper?

T. H. R. We must not lay down lines as to our meetings. I should make great allowance for the state of the saints, but it is a great thing when the true character of the supper is apprehended, it is most wonderful. The oldest saint and the youngest are there together on the same

ground. The youngest saint is there because loved by Christ, and can say, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." The oldest saint is nothing in the presence of Christ's love, he owes all to it as much as the youngest, both are on the same identical ground. Hence the supper puts us together as united in the love of Christ—"knit together in love."

H. H. H. "Spiritual drink and food" referred to Israel in the wilderness?

T. H. R. Yes. The point in the supper is not so much what *we* do, but what *He* did. *He* took bread and gave thanks and break it and gave to them. The first supper can never be repeated. It stands by itself. He was there personally present. Then it was instituted for us and you get "This do for a remembrance of me."

The basis of our coming together is the same for old and for young, it is the part we have in the death of Christ, and all that it means for us. There is no ground upon which every bit of blessing comes to us save the death of Christ. His death puts us really over Jordan, where we feed on the old corn of the land.

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## UNDERSTANDING IN GOD'S WAYS.

(ROM. VIII. 1-27.)

I HAVE nothing that can be called new to present to you. I only thought that it might be profitable to touch a little upon the ways of God. Nothing helps one more, or is more confirmatory, than in spirit and mind to review the ways of God. The ways of God extend over a long period of time, but we have to remember this, that there is no such thing as time with God. If we could look at things exclusively in a moral point of view, as God looks at them, there would be no time with us, but we are not constructed in that way, but all will admit that with God there is an ever-existing present. You get the statement that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. It is important to bear that in mind when you pass in review the ways of God.

Speaking of things that are figurative, I think the starting-point of the ways of God was, in a sense, the brazen serpent. A good many things had transpired previously in connection with Israel, all undoubtedly having a figurative bearing or signification; but all these set forth in type things connected with our conscience, and

the grace of God meeting our responsibility. A good deal that occurred in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was figurative of light coming in to man's conscience to reveal where he is, so that by grace he might be delivered from the power of the enemy. But in all that the state of man was not met, and the starting-point for God was the taking up of man's state, and that is what you get at the brazen serpent. Many things preceding are very necessary to us, but I am looking at things in view of God for a moment. It has been said that in John iii. you do not get the beginning of the gospel, but you do get there the true point of departure for God.

This chapter (Rom. viii.) looks at things in a different way from the previous ones, and in connection with it I want to call attention to what the position of man was in the sight of God consequent on the fall. I do not know if that is always apprehended as it ought to be. All would allow that the effect of the fall was that man became morally dead in regard of God. I understand that to mean that he was devoid of feeling or sensibility toward God. But the judgment of death lay on man from God. "If one died for all, then were all dead." There certainly were two questions: the question of man's state, and the sentence of death which lay on him. And "God drove out the man." I think

we want to attach great importance to that fact. Not only was man morally insensible in regard of God, but the sentence of death lay upon man. What that meant was this: it was absolutely impossible for God to form any link or enter into any relationship with that man. That is a point of great importance: "If one died for all, then were *all dead*." That refers not so much, I think, to man being morally dead, as to the fact that the judgment of death lay upon man. That judgment lay between God and man, and made it an impossibility that God could enter into relation with man as he stood.

That truth comes out abundantly in Old Testament times. Abel was accounted righteous, but then his offering had come in: a type of the offering of Christ. Acceptance was in that way prefigured by Abel's offering. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts." His acceptance was by another man.

I take up another case, Abraham; he was not only called out of country, but out of kindred and father's house; he was severed in figure not only from the world but from the flesh. He became in that way typical of what has come in in Christ. He left country, kindred and father's house at the call of God, and this separation is verified in Christ.

Then, with regard to Israel, the ground on

which God dealt with them was that they were the seed of Abraham, God's chosen. God called out Abraham, and he was accounted righteous; and God took up Israel simply because they were the seed of Abraham. It was not the establishment of a relationship with man as man stood, but God formed a link with one apart from the world and the flesh in His eye. You may depend upon it God never lost sight of the fact that the judgment of death lay upon man. This was perhaps even more serious than man's moral state. God never forgot it. If you examine into the dealings of God with this and that man, you will find some indication that God never forgot the position in which man was as driven out from His presence and under sentence of death.

You will understand now how the brazen serpent is the beginning for God. It is that which is alluded to here. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Ver. 3.) Three things have come to pass: 1st, The introduction of the Head who is the beginning of the creation of God; 2nd, The Head has borne the liabilities under which man lay by God's judgment; 3rd, The Spirit is here as the power to form man according to the Head.

These are three most important elements in

the ways of God which come out in this chapter.

I will speak about the consequences directly ; but in referring to the Head, I speak of the Head in the widest possible sense, the Beginning of the Creation of God ; the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Firstborn from the dead. I think we want to apprehend Christ more in that light. I am impressed with the thought that we have an inadequate idea of the greatness of Christ : " ascended up far above all heavens, that he may fill all things."

" The beginning of the creation of God " is a most remarkable expression. We might have said Adam was the beginning of God's creation, but scripture says Christ is the beginning of the creation of God. I have often said (and others too) that God began very small. In an outward sense Christ did not begin so great as Adam. " He was made of a woman, made under the law." Christ came into human life in the lowliest possible way, but nevertheless He was the beginning of the creation of God, and He is the Head and crown of that creation.

Then He came to take up the liabilities under which man lay in regard of God, and in so doing He has brought to an end before God the lawless man. " God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." There was the termination of

that state for God, a very great point for us to apprehend. God could form no link with that man. That man was useless or worse in the ways of God, he was no profit to God nor to himself. The death of Christ was the termination of that man for the glory of God, and we have the introduction of another Man, the beginning of the creation of God.

Now consequent upon redemption the Spirit is here in order that He may form man according to the Head, so that he may derive his character from Christ. This principle goes out to the widest limits, for in every circle man will in result take his character from the Head. That is the purpose and work of God.

I want now to touch on what comes out in this scripture in connection with the Spirit on two or three very important points. We get the thought of life and peace and righteousness, and all in connection with the Head. What I understand by life is that one who is in life is, in soul, outside the claim and domain of death. That described the position of Christ here on earth : "In him was life." Death had no claim upon Him.

But there was also peace. There could be no question between Himself and God. And there was righteousness ; He was the preacher of righteousness. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. All these things characterised

Christ, as man here, as Head : life and peace and righteousness. Well, by the Spirit of God the same things characterise us. We are cleared of liability before God, and it is a great thing to be in life ; to be sensible that death has no claim upon me. That is true. I do not mean but what one may die, but death has no right over me. The rights of death are destroyed and I am in life by the Spirit of God. There is in the Christian a man over whom death has no right. Death may touch my body, but if I regard myself as I am before God, I am in life by the Spirit of God, and have come to ground where death has no right over me. We get peace, too, by the Spirit, that is, the sense that there is no unsettled question with God. And so, too, in regard of righteousness. "The Spirit is life because [or in view] of righteousness."

All these things were found in Christ, and it is no small thing that the Spirit of God has come down to form us according to Christ as Head. It is a great thing for any one to say, I live by the Spirit ; I do not account of myself as in natural life, I live by the Spirit. The apostle says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." When I look at myself in that light death has no claim upon me.

Do you understand what it is to live in the

Spirit? Christianity is not a garment which I put on to cover the flesh; Christianity is that I live by the Spirit, the flesh being crucified.

Christians, properly speaking, are a wonderful generation in this world of lawlessness, they are more wonderful than they allow themselves to be; but we have so poor an idea of what it is to live in the Spirit. The great part of Christians have taken up Christianity as though it were a question of orthodoxy in doctrine; but in the true power of it, it is, we live in Christ by the Spirit. Peace and righteousness are necessary consequences.

Now I take up two other points coming out here: sonship and liberty in connection with Christ, for Christ being the Head, you cannot have a standard less than the Head. Life, peace and righteousness were true in Christ, and it was equally true that there was sonship and liberty; and indeed the one hangs on the other. All these things work out to the utmost bounds. I do not look upon them as having exclusive application to us—they have now their application to us; we are here for the will of God for the moment—but they work out to every family. Christ gives character to each and all, not in the same degree, I admit, but in principle the Head gives character to all who come under Him. The Spirit is to be poured out on all flesh.

What for? In order that everything may be subdued to Christ. The Spirit of God will give character to all that creation, every family will take character from Christ. It is of great moment to get some idea of the greatness of the Head and of the system to which He gives character.

I do not suppose any one of us has apprehended the greatness of that expression, "the beginning of the creation of God." Then it belongs to Him to give character to the creation of God. All that creation will be brought into the rest of God. He will have complacency in all. The secret of that complacency is, that all comes under the Head and more or less takes its character from Him.

Well, I suppose most of us are conversant with these things. We can speak something of life, peace, and righteousness, and we know something of sonship and liberty. They are good things to be in the reality of down here; but what are we here for? I think, for the will of God until all is expressed. We are going on as saints, gaining intelligence in the ways of God; they are opened up in the succeeding chapters; and this intelligence in the things of God is to qualify us for the time to come, when we are to be companions of Christ reigning in glory. We are qualifying

for the day of glory. God's ways are educating us that we may be fit for our part in the day of Christ's glory.

The holy city comes down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It becomes a vessel of light for the universe of bliss, and all we are learning now of divine ways is fitting us for our part in that day of glory. What then can be of more vital importance than to see the greatness of Christ as Head, and to know and understand something of God's ways in Him. They are very wonderful. The bringing in of Christ was that everything might be entirely according to God's heart. Not only do you get God revealed, but everything in Christ for God's pleasure. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Then you get life, peace and righteousness, and also sonship and liberty. You get the working of them out by the will of God to the utmost bounds, for the reason that Christ is the beginning of the creation of God. And the beginning involves the climax, just as the foundation of a house involves the roof. I think it is very important to take these things in.

We have our part in Christ, and He has His own place in us. The Lord says, "At

that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." If we are anything at all for God, whatever character we have is derived from Christ, as He says, "I in you;" and the object of our being here is that Christ might be seen in us. He must be here in the saints. Then do not let us underrate the present moment or neglect it; do not let us fail to understand the value and importance of the time when we can gain intelligence in the ways of God. With all our getting, the principal thing is to get understanding. I do not think I would lay myself out, at my time of life, to gain much in this world, but I would covet understanding. "With all thy getting, get understanding," and understanding must have its application to the divine way. Christ is the divine way, and we want understanding in Christ. You may depend upon it if you get understanding you will be a great man—not in the eyes of the world or of man, but you will be great in the eyes of God.

F. E. R.



## THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

(GAL. I. 4, 5 ; IL. 19, 20 ; JOHN XVI. 13-15 ; XX. 11-18.)

WHAT I had before me in these scriptures is the fact that the great work—or a great part of the work—of the Spirit is to detach us in mind and heart from this world, and to connect our hearts with another scene, to bring us to God's world. In using the word "world" I mean, on the one hand, a system of things that belongs to man and is of man; and, on the other hand, that system of things which is of God, and of which Christ is the Beginning and Centre and Head. It would be an immense thing for every one of us to know practically what it is to be detached from this world, and to be brought in mind and spirit to God's world at the present time, and that is a great part of the Spirit's work. I believe the way in which the Spirit does this is by bringing us into the light and under the influence of the Son of God. That is the ministry of the Spirit. In the case of Paul in Galatians ii. we have an illustration of it. He is himself an example of one who had been delivered from this present evil world; a man who was down here in this world, living his life in flesh, as we

are, but practically delivered from it because he was living down here in the light and under the influence of the Son of God. And in Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, we get an illustration of one who was not only detached from this world, but one who had come to God's world. She did not know much, but I believe she had touched God's world and by the same reason. In John xx. she came into the light and under the influence of the Son of God. That brought her to God's world. When I come to Him I am brought into touch with the One who is the centre of God's world. That is the only way I can come to it. The object of the Spirit of God is to bring us in our affections to that blessed Person who is the Centre and Head of all that system of things which God has purposed for His pleasure and glory.

I will say just a word in explanation as to what I mean by being in the light of the Son of God. The apostle says, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." He was living his life down here in the light of what was set forth in the Son of God. It was the light that filled his soul, the light of the Son of God. I think two things are set forth in the Son of God. I do not say only two, but these I see specially. They are connected with two expressions. He says of Himself in John xvi.,

“ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.” In His coming from the Father you get one thing set forth, and in His going back to the Father you get another thing. What does it mean to you when you think of Him, the blessed Son of God, coming forth from the Father, the One who was one with the Father, who dwelt in His bosom? Think of that One coming forth from the Father and coming into this world! What I understand by that expression is the testimony to man of what God is in love; the revelation, the expression of His love. The apostle says, “ We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” He is the One in whom God is speaking, the very voice of God, as it were. No other person could express it; no other was ever with God, or could come forth from Him in the way He did. The Father’s love shone out, and has been expressed in that blessed One who according to His will came forth from the Father, the Father’s voice to us setting forth God’s love. All that is conveyed in the Son of God. We have the light of that in our souls. I am in a scene of darkness and death, but in my soul I have the light of that One come forth in love from the Father. His testimony made effective in me by the ministry of the Holy

Ghost would go a long way towards delivering me from this present evil world.

Then another thing: the One who came forth from the Father, who expressed Him in all His works and words, in all He said and did, who was the living revelation of God, the bread of heaven brought down for us to feed upon; now He has gone back to the Father. "Again," He says, "I leave the world, and go to the Father." He has gone back on the ground of accomplished redemption, and has taken His place as Man in the presence of God. Man in the place of sonship, a new place and relationship for man. That which existed in the mind and purpose of God is now established in a Man, His own blessed Son. He has gone back to the Father, and we have expressed in Him not only the Father's love, but also His mind livingly expressed in that Person. The very fact that He as man has gone back to heaven declares God's mind that man should be there. It is the mind of God in regard of man. It is the proof to us that God would have man in glory. He is bringing many sons to glory. I know now God's mind is that we should be in glory because He has put Jesus there. And, moreover, He has put Him there as *Son*, and that proves not only that God's mind is to have men in glory, but to have them there

as sons. It is the mind of God revealed livingly in the Person of His Son. That is what I understand to be set forth in the Son of God, and I think that is what the apostle means when he says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

That was the influence that governed him. He was not governed by the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears or what goes on in the world, the things that so easily influence and govern man. He was governed by what was so infinitely greater—the Son of God. All that God is, is brought out for us and set before us in the Son of God. Paul was in the light and under the control of it, and set free therefore from every influence here.

What is going on in this world? Man doing his own will, gratifying his own lusts, exalting himself. Do you think a man walking in the light of the Son of God will care for this? will he go about gratifying himself? Was the apostle doing his own will? Not at all! The Son of God, he could say, "loved me, and gave himself for me." Instead of finding pleasure in doing his own will, his pleasure was to be for God's will and Christ's, as he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was delivered from the world in that sense, he

was free. Then was he seeking to gratify his own lusts? seeking to minister to his own desires? No; he had found satisfaction in the knowledge of the Son of God.

How can I know the blessed Son of God, how can I know all the great and divine realities set forth in Him, and yet have any desire for the things that gratify the lusts of man? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There is only one thing can shut the world out, and that is the love of the Father and the Son. If we are brought under the influence of divine Persons, the Father's love, the love of the Son, the world will have no power over us. Satan may present it in its fairest forms, but we are delivered from it. The apostle was not living here to exalt himself; he had thrown all that overboard; he desired that Christ should be magnified in his body, Christ was before him, the One who loved him and whom he loved, and his great desire was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. So you see what a real thing it is to be delivered from this present world, as brought and kept under the influence of the Son of God. I say *kept*, because nothing is easier than to slip away from it. There are ten thousand things appealing to us continually, and we need not only to begin in faith but to

go on in faith; the faith of the Son of God was a present and continual thing to the apostle. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Now I turn to the other side for a moment. How does the Spirit of God connect us with God's world? John xvi. answers the question. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me." That is not His testimony to the world. No doubt the Spirit of God maintains a testimony in the world to the glory of Christ, but here in John xvi. it is His testimony to us. He comes to us; He glorifies Christ to us; He sets before our eyes and hearts the glory of that blessed Person; what God has established in Him as we have been hearing—the greatness of that Person. The Spirit maintains that and keeps it before our minds and hearts. "All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you." That is what the Spirit would always do. He would occupy and engage our hearts with Christ, and all that God has given to Him. All that in which He has made Him most blessed. The Spirit would reveal these things to us and thus would bring us to God's world and all that belongs to that world—God's things.

You get a good example of that in Mary Magdalene. She had lost the Lord here. In her love she had followed Him to the cross. In the fact that the One in whom all her hopes centred had died, all her hopes in connection with this world died with Him. The Lord had so revealed Himself to her; He had become the object of attraction to her and so when He died, she died in spirit with Him and her hopes died too. I think she is a good example of it. And then she follows Him to the grave, expecting to find Him there, but on the third day what happened? The Lord brings Himself before her in a new way. He was risen; He says, "Touch me not." She was to know Him in another way. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." See how He presents Himself as the One who is going back to the Father. It is His glory as Son of God going back to the Father. He is going to another world. He is leaving this and going to another. He not only presents Himself as the Centre of that world and the One who is the object of her heart, but shews her that He can connect her with Himself: My Father is your Father; my God is your God.

I think in that way the Lord appeared and shone upon her, revealed Himself in His glory to her, presented Himself as the blessed Son of

God, the One going back to the Father, the Object for her heart. On account of her affection to the Person she in spirit followed Him there, and from that moment I do not think she went back to this world for anything. She had no taste left for this world. She simply went back to the disciples to tell them of what had enlightened her, to tell them of the One she had come in touch with. She knew the Son of God, and in mind and affection had come to God's world. She had done with man's world; she had found her home in that scene where Christ is.

That is the way the Spirit of God brings about His purpose, to detach us from this world in mind and affection and that we may, even now, come to God's world, and while down here really find our place and enjoyment, our rest and satisfaction, in that eternal scene of love and blessing where the Son is with the Father and where we share with Him in all that blessing and joy which He has entered into and which is ours to enjoy with Him here and through all eternity. It would be a great thing for us to walk down here in view of God's world, and to realise that we have already come into touch with that great system of things which is of God, and which is about to be displayed in glory.

F. H. B.

## THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS LORD.

(JOHN XIII. 1-14, 17 ; 26.)

THE blessed Lord, with everything opened up to His holy soul, having the knowledge of all that should transpire, does not forget that He is leaving upon earth a company who have become very precious to Him, and He gives to that company the greatest of all privileges—He leaves them to exercise amongst themselves that which He had exercised in the fulness of His love and the fulness of His heart. He introduces, in view of His departure, an entirely new order of things. The company is to be known by the practice of what He had introduced. It was to be bound together in a peculiar way by the principles and the following out of what is introduced in this way.

His gracious condescending service is to wash our feet ; it precedes our being able to do the like for others. He that is washed being clean every whit, must seek from the love and service of Christ on that person's own account the removal of the things which, occupying the heart,

hinder walk and testimony, and when this has been accorded by Christ we know what He has done to us; the service of divine love has been effectual; we understand that He has washed our feet; it is needed preparation for our own service.

He takes Himself the lowest place toward His disciples; they were not to shrink from taking a similarly low place. If they were to serve amongst one another there was no character of service which was to be deemed too low or too insignificant for them to happily and cheerfully enter upon, having in view the removal of every detaining influence in order that when the body of Christ was formed upon earth it might express Him. The "part" with Him was in one sense the entering into His own thoughts toward His own upon earth; to disregard this was to claim a place of superiority for oneself, and was also to forget others. Jesus had not acted in such a way, and it was important for them to understand that "The servant is not greater than his master; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." There was to be no selection in respect of persons in the exercise of love. There was to be no choice in the manner as to which one saint might help another; it begins at home in one's own manner of life and speech. The Lord Jesus

had taken the lowest place Himself, and that place was the most effective for the blessing and help of the saints.

The thought of feet-washing may be suggestive of failure and restoration, but if limited to that the suggestion will destroy largely the real light there is in this wonderful part of the word. The ministration of the servant might clear away the failure and the defilement, but, I give you my conviction, the ministration of the servant might also clear away not one particular thing, but the whole order of things which has hitherto held a particular saint back, things which have never even come to the surface. If the feet are washed they are washed not from one thing only, but from everything that is defiling the saint. When there is an effective service amongst the saints, from that moment any saint who has been cleansed, whose conscience has been enlightened, is not the same as before; the future walk is never the same as before. There is a great change in the person, and the walk is no more hindered by that which formerly held it, and dominated it, and deprived it of the light and enjoyment of the love of the Lord.

If the chapter is confined to one particular correction of a particular fault, or to individual ministration toward one another in respect of a

particular and disclosed failure it would be almost to nullify the point and meaning of the Lord's words. I think there is that in the ministry of the servants of the Lord, if it is effective, which sets saints free from what has held them; it removes what hinders, giving them clear light; and now that Christ is gone up on high, giving them, by His Spirit, truth that will bring them into the light of His order.

The great point for our hearts to dwell upon, I submit, is the fact that the servant is not greater than his master. There was no character of service for His own which the Lord was not willing to undertake, of whatever character or description it might be. The Lord has left it as a wonderful legacy to the saints; and, if we understood it, there would be a wonderful result seen in the saints; the power of love is so great, it is always greater than all the power of evil, and doth not behave itself unseemly. The Lord gave to them the inestimable privilege of acting as He had acted towards them. He having done that could contemplate His own departure; He having laid the foundation of everything which will bring out perfect glory to God, and, having founded it in love, His own nature. His own hand can then dip the sop and give it to Judas, and thus unloose the power which was to give to

man his hour; but it is powerless against the power of love; and He sought to imprint the power of love in the hearts of the saints. There it could be preserved, and if preserved no other power could prevail. All the power of darkness let loose could not check or hinder His love. It only drew it forth. He makes it the very occasion to shew His love. He permits Satan to bring out his enmity to the full, as it is written in Genesis iii. The enmity is allowed to come out to its fullest extent, but the love, the great love, wherewith He loved us was above it. He is going on to the cross, but He has made known to the saints His own desire that they should do what He has done, and live amongst each other in a service of love.

Then He sees His own glory established. The love which He began to unfold in such a wondrous way and in such power so filled Himself that He looks on now in His own perfection to all that is coming upon Him.

As He had before met that same power in the wilderness and subdued it, He now *commands*, "That thou doest, do quickly."

He makes everything subject to the good of His own. It is in view of this that He will not permit delay, the hour having come. If we ponder upon His excellences we begin to know Him. I do not doubt that the Spirit of God

helps us wonderfully in unfolding His excellences to our souls, in measure as we are prepared to take up what is gratifying to His heart down here. The power of His resurrection becomes real to us, and those things which have been a dead letter perhaps to us become priceless. The power of His resurrection confirms to the soul the very things the soul has been wanting to see, confirms them to it so that the soul enters into them.

We may shrink from having to rise up from ease to bear our own feet being washed by the Lord and then to do what God gives us to do for the benefit of others; we may shrink from things that nature would shrink from, but, as made conformable to His death, if we enter into them we shall be helped to realise that we have the power of His life and love to support us in the principles and practice of what alone will produce a perfect unity—"His example." And may we desire to be a channel of blessing in real foot-washing to one another! We first understanding in our personal, individual path the meaning of His words, "Know ye what I have done to you."

J. A.

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# AN OPEN DOOR FOR CHRIST.

(JOHN XIV.)

I DESIRE to touch on two or three points in this chapter ; and I just observe that evidently the chapter divides itself into two parts : the one goes down to verse 14, and the other begins with verse 15. The first part is what I might speak of as objective, and the latter part as subjective, that is, what has comé to pass in connection with the coming of the Comforter. That is a simple thought.

The first part is connected with faith. Faith always refers to an object. We are not called on to believe anything about ourselves ; *we* are never the *objects* of faith. The thought of faith necessarily involves what is objective. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." In the latter part of the chapter we have what is dependent on the presence of the Comforter. These are the two points I am going to touch upon. In the first part, Christ as the object of faith, and in the latter part a very important principle, and that is, that there should be an open door here for Christ. That is what Christ would bring to pass in a world to which He was

obnoxious. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." The point before the mind of the Lord was that, in spite of His leaving the world, there should be an open door for Him here in the affections of His people. A very important point, and one that might well exercise every one of us.

Eventually the Lord makes this very distinctly individual. He speaks in a more general way in connection with the coming of the Comforter at first, but afterwards He passes on to what is essentially individual. It is a little striking that you find the same thing coming out in the address to the church at Laodicea. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me"—there is the idea of an open door. The Lord invites us to open to Him. It is in such a state of things as is presented in Laodicea that there may be an open door for Christ. There is no good in making much of anything collective at the present time, for we are in the day of the church's ruin, and in such a moment everything must depend upon individual fidelity, so that each one of us has to look to himself or herself.

I say a word or two in regard to faith. I connect these chapters with the prayer of the

apostle Paul in Ephesians iii. You will find they run pretty much on the line of what he prays there. He desires for the saints that they might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that the Christ might dwell in their heart by faith. In this chapter in John Christ contemplates having a place in the affections of His disciples—that is what I mean by an open door, a place in the affections of His people; but, depend upon it, you will not get that side of the truth unless you get the first. If we are not right in regard to faith, we shall not get the other side. The Spirit could not fulfil it to us, because the Spirit will never work in any of us beyond our faith.

The Lord says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Evidently the Lord in this changes the ground, enlarges the view. Faith in God was no new thing; it had marked many a saint in times gone by: Abraham, for instance, believed in God. But faith in Christ was new in a sense. Evidently the thought of the Lord was not limited to the disciples—they had believed on Him; but He is laying down a new platform, and thus the ground is changed. It is now not only faith in God, but also faith in Christ, and that is to us a point of the last moment. I suppose we are all in the reality

of that; we believe in God, but we also believe in Christ. This does not invalidate any faith that had gone before, but a new object of faith has come in in Christ's Person. The Lord is anticipating here the day of Pentecost when He, as the ascended Man, made Lord and Christ, would be presented to men as an object of faith.

The Lord does not say, You believe in the Father, believe also in Me. I do not think it is exactly a question of the Father and the Son. He goes on afterwards to speak of the Father's house, but in the first expression it is more the idea of God and Christ than of the Father and the Son. Things have become very much more defined to us because the exaltation of Christ, following upon the accomplishment of redemption, brings at once into view another system of things. The apostle's words in the beginning of Acts, "God hath made this same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ," are pregnant with meaning. "Lord and Christ" is a wonderful thing to be apprehended by us in a Man in heaven. Faith in Christ, in that point of view, is to us a matter of the last moment. It is not only that He is Lord, but He is Christ. There is power in Christ not only to set aside the existing order of things, but to introduce an order of things that is according to the love of God which Christ has revealed. Not only "in him dwells all the ful-

ness of the Godhead bodily," but "He is the head of all principality and power." The Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." In Christ there is power to break up and set aside the existing order of things, so as to make room for an order that takes its character from Himself.

You get hints in the Old Testament of the break-up of the order that exists. It was the lesson God was teaching Job. God let loose the forces of evil, and shewed him in a way the break-up of the existing order of things, and that is what will yet come to pass in a wider sense. God will allow the lawlessness of man and the power of Satan, to come to a head; He will allow the upheaval and break-up of the existing framework of the world; the foundations of the world will be discovered. He will in this way bring to pass that man will find himself cut off from everything on which he has been accustomed to lean, and then God will re-instate man according to Himself. Of course, in the case of Job it was one single man, but he represents many who will be found in like circumstances. The upheaval of all here will teach them that nothing avails but confidence in God, who will in due time re-instate man according to His mind, and that will be brought to

pass in Christ. Christ can say, "I bear up the pillars of the earth." He is capable of this. He held back the power of evil when on earth; He is capable of controlling all the forces of evil hereafter. He can still the winds and the waves. This is in the power of His hand for He is not only Christ but *Lord*. If He uses His mighty power to hold in check the forces of evil, it is that He may introduce a world which in every part of it will be answerable to the revelation of God. It is a world which Christ will bring in; an order of things suitable to the holy love of God.

The moment I think of Christ, I think of God revealed. The only-begotten Son has declared God. A system of things brought to pass by Christ must be, in the very nature of things, suitable to the revelation of God. Everything must be in accord with what is revealed in Christ, responsive to the holy love of God of which Christ is the revelation.

I have said this much in regard to faith in Christ. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Now a word or two as to the Father's house. (Vers. 2, 3.) The Father's house must be a large place for the reason that in it there are many mansions. The Lord would not speak thus if the house were not wide. I should suppose many mansions must imply many

families. I do not understand an abode—a mansion, apart from a family. The place of Christ is that of Son over God's house. He is a great Priest over the house of God, and I take it He is that in order that He might usher every family into its appointed abode. Every family is named of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many abodes and many families, and Christ is the Great Chamberlain, so to speak—a great Priest over God's house (not a servant, like Moses) to set every family in its appointed place. How is that determined? You remember James and John desired to sit one on the right hand of the Lord, and the other on His left, in the kingdom, but He said, It is for those to whom it is appointed of My Father. I think the place of each family is determined by the character which it takes from Christ. Every family will surely take character in some sense from Christ. The Old Testament saints, for example, took character from Christ. That may seem strange, seeing that Christ had not come. But the Spirit working in them was the Spirit of Christ. We have been accustomed to think of it in that way. Scripture speaks of what "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." If you think of it, there could not be any other Spirit than that which

we have received. You cannot doubt that it was the Spirit of Christ active in Abraham, Moses, Daniel and many others. These saints, in spite of every difficulty and opposition, held tenaciously to the promises of God. That marked them, and they walked in the fear of God. No doubt in the Father's house that is the character by which they will be distinguished.

I might speak of other companies. There is the company that will suffer in the time of trial yet to come. I do not attempt to describe what character they will take from Christ, but Christ passed through, in anticipation, all that to which they will be subjected, and they, too, by the Spirit will take character from Christ.

But now to come to the church. The place of the church is peculiar. It is "the fulness of him who filleth all in all." It is not distinguished by any particular detail of character; but it is His body. The point in the church is that nothing might be lacking. I might use another word in place of "fulness." It is the "completeness" of Him that fills all in all. Therefore there cannot be any quality lacking which characterised Christ as Man. That is the place of the church as characterised by the Spirit of Christ. If I understand the working of the Spirit at the present time, it is in the complete displacement of the old man, the flesh,

that the Christ might be dwelling in the heart by faith. It is not one particular trait or character of Christ that is in question, but, as the apostle says, "That we might be filled unto all the fulness of God." He says elsewhere, "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And again, "That we may grow up unto him in all things." Not in one thing or another thing, but in *all* things, that we might be marked not simply by fidelity or attachment or any particular feature, but grow up unto Him in *all* things, which is the Head, even Christ. It is to that end the Spirit of Christ is working in us now.

Though there will be saints in the time to come who will be subjected, like Job, to the upheaval of all things, yet Job must have some instruction in regard to us. I think it is that we may be free from every prop down here, so as to find our resource in God Himself. I believe every heart will be privy to what I am saying, that we are ever ready to rest in something down here. We have to learn to be loosed from dependence on every prop on which man can rest, so that we may find our portion in God and in Christ. The Spirit is working to that end, so that one can say, I do not thirst; I have sufficiency; I have all and abound; all that heart could desire, in God and in Christ.

I only say that much in regard to the Father's

house, I have tried to open out the place of Christ in regard to the Father's house—there are many abodes, and each abode appointed for the family to whom it is ordained, and each family ushered into its place by Christ.

In the Revelation we see the whole heavenly company merged in one. There must be a point of unity, and you find that. But in the latter part we see the bride distinct from every other company. No company loses its own peculiar place and character, but there is a point of contact between all the families. Christ went to prepare a place for us, and I do not think any family will get its place until the church has its place in the Father's house, for the church is His fulness. No company will be made perfect without the church. The Lord says, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

It would be a great point if we were kept here in faith in God and also in Christ. If you look about the world and see the way things are going on, you cannot find much satisfaction there. The secret of all rest and stability and comfort in a world like this is faith in God, and faith in the One who is capable, on the part of God, to fill all things, who has ascended up far above all heavens to that end, and the church is His fulness.

Now I come to the latter part of the chapter, just to say a word in regard to there being a door here for Christ. (See ver. 15, and onwards.) All will admit that Christ is going to have a place here. We are only left here for a moment in the absence of the Bridegroom, but He will return and have His place. We forget that too often. It is not only that: He has a place in heaven. His place as Bridegroom is more connected with earth than with heaven. John speaks of it here in John iii.: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." We have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom: that shews He is coming. We are left here to fast in His absence; but the point is, the Bridegroom comes again. If there is any truth in our profession, we have left the world to meet Him.

While He is absent we are fasting, and in His absence there is a door open to Him here. That is what the Lord is opening out here. All depends upon the Spirit of truth and on the saints. I do not think you could understand an open door now without the saints. It could not be without the Spirit, because no one can hold for Christ but the Spirit; but it is *in the saints*. That is what the Lord contemplated.

He speaks first of what is normal. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." There is the open

door for Christ, because not simply are we in Christ, but He is in us. You shall, the Lord says, be conscious of the position of things in that day. "I am in the Father," that is in His affections. We are in Christ's affections, and He is in ours. Then there is a door for Christ. He can come in; He can present Himself. He is present in the affections of His people down here. The truth is maintained, because there is a company of people here who live because He lives; not because the world goes on, but because Christ lives. There is thus the witness in the world for Christ. What testimony could be greater than that we live because He lives? That is what maintains Christianity on earth. Were it not for that, Christianity would be a dead letter. Christianity may be here in name after the church is gone, but it will be a dead letter. It is not so now, because there are those who live because He lives. He is present in our affections.

That is the mighty power here of the Spirit of God. I do not care much for anything else if Christ has an open door here on earth, and that is entirely dependent on the Spirit of truth and the place that Christ has in the affections of His people. In that way everything depends on the heart. Propriety and orthodoxy are all very well in their place. I am not going to run a

crusade against them, but I do not see any great power in them. The power is Christ in the affections of the saints. The gates of hell will not prevail against that. They may prevail against orthodoxy and propriety, but not against the place which Christ has in the affections of the assembly.

Now we come to verse 21, and that is more individual. We get in the first few verses what is properly consequent on the coming of the Comforter, but what is normal has been gravely obscured; yet, after all, there is the individual, and that is what we have to see to. We see this in the Lord's appeal to Laodicea, "I stand at the door and knock, if any one hear my voice and open the door," &c. If you have the commandments of Christ and keep them, you will find you have to do violence to the desires of the flesh. That you may be sure of: they are bound to run counter to all the dispositions of flesh; but the Lord says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that *loveth* me." It is vain to talk of loving Christ if you do not keep His commandments. Then the Lord says, If you do that, there will be an open door for Me. Christ will manifest Himself. By-and-by He will put Himself in evidence; then there will be a great open door; but the point is now, there is an open door for

Him here. A great thing that! We ought all to covet that it might be. Even though we may be very conscious how everything collective is obscured by the great mass of profession, still it remains true individually that if any man open the door Christ will come in.

Do you think Christ manifests Himself for nothing? Depend upon it it is a great day in a person's history when Christ does manifest Himself. One will be a witness for Christ here then. He will never revert to his old ways. He will be careful henceforth about nothing but that there may be an open door for Christ in His absence. He will be characterised by loving Christ and keeping His commandments more abundantly.

But the Lord goes further in verse 23. If the commandments of Christ are bound to run counter to every inclination of the flesh, so the word of Christ is bound to run counter to the course of this world; because the word of Christ will undoubtedly bring to light the elements of another world, and in the nature of things that must run counter to the elements of this world. I ask any thoughtful person: Do you expect to find the word of Christ in a newspaper? You will find much about this world and the present course of things, but the word of Christ brings to light all that is of God.

Now look at the gain you get, "We will come to him, and make our abode with him." Christ is not content simply to find an open door for Himself, but He will have an open door too for the Father. That is a great thought. When He comes into the world hereafter He will not only bring in Himself but also the Father. The Father will get His proper place then, everything will be in accord, and there will undoubtedly be witness to the Father and the Son. It is true that if we love Christ and prove it in keeping His word we do not merely get the gain of Christ, He is in evidence, but He brings in the Father and makes Him known. "We will make our abode with him." That is a very great thing.

We are in a place of reproach, and I do not think we are found in a place of reproach for nothing. We have great gain if Christ is in evidence. You will be prepared to abandon everything that gives importance and position to you in this world. He is much greater than any worldly position or self-importance. What is the greatness of this world in comparison to Christ? Christ is equal to filling all things. He will fill all things with moral glory according to God. I can learn thus to be nothing, and to give up all that would give importance to me; I have learned my nothingness in the presence of

divine love. The great thing is that Christ should have an open door, and I cannot see how that can be at the present time save through the affections of His people.

I do not want to put out these things merely as a matter of interest ; but my desire is that we may enter into them by the Spirit, and if we do enter into them, and they are made good in us, they will give a very remarkable character to us down here. We shall be morally distinguished. We shall not be what we were before. The man to whom Christ has manifested Himself, to whom He is in evidence, will bear the stamp of it.

And the man with whom the Father and the Son make their abode will evidently bear a very peculiar stamp down here. It may not be appreciated by man or by the world, but it will undoubtedly be beneficial to man on earth.

I just touch on these things. It is for us to enter into them by the power of the Spirit—the Comforter. He only can work all in us.

It is most wonderful that after 2000 years we can go back to this chapter and find everything as fresh and real as at the beginning.

F. E. R.



# MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

(ROM. VIII. 37 ; REV. II. 7.)

WE must all of us have been struck by what has just been said, beloved brethren, that we are in the affections of Christ, and then that not only are we in His affections, but that He is in our affections. I said to myself, Ah! that is it. *That* is the way the blessed God by His Spirit effects His triumphs in us. It is when we come to see by His Spirit that we are in His affections. If you and I look back upon our histories, surely we say, what are we that we should be in the affections of the Son of God? It is when we dwell upon a thought like that, a fact like that, that we find He is in our affections, and then it is that God, by His Spirit, effects His triumphs in us, and I believe *that* is what He is after. It is not only that there are His counsels of love about us, but what I thought of as our brother was speaking was this, there *are* His counsels of love *about* us, and there *are* His triumphs that He effects *in* us; but how does He usually effect His triumphs in us? It is by His ways

*with* us. There *are* His counsels of love about us, but there are also His ways *with* us, and THAT is what I want to call attention to for a few moments, for He wants us to be more than conquerors—to triumph, to be overcomers down here.

Will you turn with me to 2 Samuel xxii. ? I connect with it Psalm cvii. In both of these scriptures you get very much the same thing. There are the two extremes in both passages *and* the ways of God with His people. Take verses 17-20: "He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy. . . . He brought me forth also into a *large place*." *There* are the two extremes. Then verse 31: "As for God, his way is perfect." Verse 33: "He maketh my way perfect." How we have often dwelt upon that! How we have been brought out of all the distance into a *large place*! We know it and we enjoy it in the power of the Spirit of God. But my point is this, that when we *do* know it, and when we *do* enjoy it, *are* in the power of it, then it is we apprehend that *this* is what God wants to bring us to, so that we may be more than conquerors through Him that loved us—that we may be overcomers here as we feed on Christ and are nourished by Christ, the tree of life in the midst of the para-

dise of God. But it is not done in a moment. We may know it in theory perhaps. But when Christ is our life in the power of the Spirit of God, God has *still* to take His way with us; and I believe it to be so—one speaks from experience, thank God. He takes His own way to make His counsels of love known in the soul. Wonderful counsels of love! how it touches the heart to think of them! Would to God we were more before Him, bowed before Him, meditating upon these things, giving ourselves wholly to them. Bear with me, beloved saints of God. That is where we want to get, alone with the blessed God, and to dwell upon His counsels of love for His people. Can there be anything more perfect? He wants to bring us into the enjoyment of it, and He has to take His way with us for this reason. His way is perfect, and He deals with us in order to make our way perfect.

Then turn to Psalm cvii. 2: "Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Verse 5: "hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." Verse 7: "He led them forth by the RIGHT WAY, that they might go to a city of habitation." *There* are the two extremes again; can there be anything more desperate than to be in the hands of the enemy? But we are delivered from the hand of the enemy. Some of

us have known what it is to drift a long way. We remember the time when we sat in judgment upon the living God, and called in question His love and His wisdom. What a triumph when He has led us to a city of habitation—when we know it, when we enjoy the counsels of His love and learn His way with us and see the triumphs of His love. Look at some more of His ways with His people in this psalm, verse 18: "The gates of death." Verse 27: "And are at their wits' end." Some of us, at least, have travelled this road, but it is a road on which He wants to effect His triumphs in us. Then verses 29, 30: "He maketh the storm a calm;" "So he bringeth them unto their desired haven." *Here*, not only *there*, but here. But my point is, God reaches His desired haven with *us*. And when is that? When God makes Christ to be all and in all to you and me. Beloved saints, once more bear with me. Everything here is crumbling to dust—it perishes in the using, but, thank God, God's blessed Son remains. He is unchanged, His love is the same, and how He expressed it in going into death for you and me, and now at the right hand of God He is ministering to all our spiritual necessities down here, and He lets us know that we are still in His affections, and He says, "I want your affections, I cannot do without your affections, give me the place in your

heart that my love wants." And now He is on high caring for us, and soon, as we have been hearing, He will come again for us. There is nothing stable here, all passing away, crumbling to dust, but He remains. Meantime, do not let us be wearied and faint in our minds, for it is by His ways with us that He effects His triumphs in us. The river of His grace has reached us and He wishes to bear us on the *crest* of the wave to the dwelling-place of God—in *spirit* now, actually, soon. We owe all to Him. We are dear to Him and He is dear to us. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." He wants your joy and mine to be full. If that is to be the case we have to walk in the Holy Ghost and if we do, our joy *will* be full and more than that, our cup will run over. We shall be overwhelmed with the sense of the greatness of His love. How gracious of the Holy Ghost to come here to bear witness to Him! He has come from heaven to earth—a divine Person in the Godhead, amongst us and in us to bear witness to us of the Father and the Son. I believe that the question of supreme importance for this moment for you and me is the testimony that the Spirit of God has come from heaven to earth to bear witness to us of the Father, of the counsels of His love, of the

greatness of Christ, the greatness of His glory, the greatness of His grace, the greatness of His love. He will never desert His people. He will bring them through to their desired haven. He says, "I want you to know you are in my affections. I love you still and want to lavish upon you *all* my love, not only here, but I will come forth and serve you in the glory." The Spirit is here to bear witness to this wonderful Saviour, to all the greatness of His love, that we may be affected by it, that our lives may be more fragrant with Christ, drinking in the testimony of the Spirit, being here for the will of God, our joy full, our cup running over. May it be so for His name's sake.

T. O.

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# READING.

(JOHN XV. 13-16.)

G. G. There was an allusion this morning to a connection between John xiv. and Ephesians iii. Could that thought be carried on to the succeeding chapters ?

F. E. R. I think you get what is spoken of in these chapters expressed in the same prayer. "Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth . . . . and to know the love of Christ . . . . that ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God." I think we come in this to John xvi.

F. H. B. What does this chapter answer to ?

F. E. R. "Rooted and grounded in love." Fruit is the evidence of vitality. Christ has come that we might have life. He says, "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Fruit is the evidence that life has come in. Rooted and grounded in love comes out in that we love one another. That is Christianity—not

simply faith, but evidence that life has come in. Hence the Lord takes the ground of being the vine and the disciples were the branches. The life abides and gets its expression in fruit-bearing.

F. H. B. Then we must be in the enjoyment first of all.

F. E. R. You must be alive.

QUES. Is the fruit in this chapter *love*?

F. E. R. That is what the Lord insisted on.

G. C. Is that why you have living in the Spirit and the "fruit of the Spirit" together? (Gal. v. 22, 25)?

F. E. R. Probably.

QUES. Is fruit here for the Father's glory?

F. E. R. I think so; they were manifested as the disciples of Christ by bearing fruit. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

G. G. Then the fruit would be seen of men.

F. E. R. "That they may behold your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." I think it is all testimony to Christ. He is to have an entrance here in His absence and fruit is the evidence.

W. Does not this contemplate the disciples being together?

F. E. R. Yes, I think so.

A. H. Is the fruit here individual or collective?

F. E. R. If it is purely individual, how can you have love? "That ye love one another." I do not understand love save in relation to one another.

H. T. "Let your light shine before men." Is there any difference between "*light*" and "good works." Would the "light" be Christ shining out and the "works" more works of faith?

F. E. R. I think "your good works" are the proof that you are in the work of God and you do not do evil works.

W. Are not the "upright works" the works of the kingdom?

E. D. It is evident "the *works*" are not to shine, it is "the *light*."

QUES. In Colossians we have "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord . . . . being fruitful in every good work." Might there be "good works" without fruit-bearing?

T. H. R. The good works speak to the Father of Him who is the source of them. I think it is an immense thing to think of the delight of the Father to see Christ reproduced down here, where He has been cast out. It shews the manner in which you get the Father's care here. What a care He has for all that belongs to Christ!

F. H. B. That really is the result of Christ dwelling in the heart.

E. D. What is the connection between abiding *in Him* and Christ abiding *in us*?

F. E. R. I think we are conscious of the place we have in His affections and the place He has in ours.

A. H. What is fruit?

F. E. R. It is difficult to define it. I take it to be the evidence of life—not exactly service.

W. B. And might assume a thousand forms?

F. E. R. I do not look upon Christ as bearing fruit; I think the fruit is borne on the branches. The vine is the source of fruit-bearing.

G. C. "Love, joy, peace" could not be as the fruit of the Spirit in Him.

F. E. R. I think He was the source of vitality in others; that there should be something here for the Father's pleasure when He was gone. It was the branches that bore fruit, but only by reason of their being in the Vine.

J. P. "I do always those things that please him."

F. E. R. That is all true. I would not like to speak of fruit-bearing in connection with Christ, but I think God is entitled to look for fruit where there is culture.

H. T. Would you apply Psalm i. to Christ?

F. E. R. No; but I should Psalm ii. I think Christ identified Himself with the class of the godly, but I should not like to put Him in

the class. He was pre-eminent. There was culture with Israel, but no fruit; the culture was in a sense thrown away. Where there is culture, God is entitled to look for fruit. With the disciples there was culture, the object being that they might bring forth more fruit. There must be discipline; discipline and culture are, I think, very intimately connected. Culture takes the form of discipline; education is discipline.

E. D. Is abiding in Christ living of His life?

F. E. R. I think so. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The Christian is affected by the love of Christ—the love of Christ becomes the motive-spring of everything and carries him above all that is natural; I do not say that he ignores what is natural. Fruit reproduces itself.

A. H. Would you connect fruit with the apostles' testimony?

F. E. R. I think the thought is that fruit reproduces itself. "That your fruit should remain." If you sow the *leaves* of a tree they will not bring fruit, you must sow the seed, that is really the fruit. I have looked to see where preaching can be found in this chapter. It may be involved in, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

T. H. R. All here to-day have come from the apostles' ministry and are their fruit. Fruit-bearing has gone on and there has been reproduction.

F. E. R. The Lord is looking at things, not so much in regard of persons as of fruit—that is, morally, that it was to abide and not to pass away.

F. H. B. I think we get it in the apostle. "Death worketh in us, but life in you."

F. E. R. Yes.

T. H. R. It is a very important point that in the thought of culture responsibility comes in to abide in Him. It raises the question whether we answer to the culture.

F. E. R. If you get a person self-reliant, self-sufficient, fruit-bearing is very much marred; that is the opposite of abiding in Christ. In abiding in Christ you give up all sense of your own sufficiency and every kind of self-assertion.

F. H. B. So there must be: "Death worketh in us."

T. H. R. The question is not a matter of apostolic succession, but of life and abiding in Christ.

W. Does not verse 7 take it out of figure into plain teaching?

C. What is meant by "and I in you"?

T. H. R. J. N. D. used to say that "abide in

me, and I in you" is the divine order in John xv. and brings in responsibility.

F. H. B. Is not that because the realisation of His being in us is the result of our abiding in Him?

F. E. R. I think verses 1-6 are in connection with the disciples here. The point of transition where we take it up is, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you." Christ was the true Vine, and the disciples came in, really, as the true Israel; and the church has come in as the companions of Christ. I think this comes in incidentally to our being here; it will return to Israel by-and-by. I think we come into many things not exactly proper to the church as a heavenly company, but in connection with our being here. When Israel come into it everything around will be favourable; now we have to bear fruit in the presence of ungenial surroundings. "So shall ye be my disciples" means to be manifest as such in life and character.

F. H. B. I suppose the first idea in connection with a disciple is of one who receives the teaching of another? The following is the result?

F. E. R. Yes; the disciple is not greater than his Master. It is so important to see that Christ is the beginning of everything. "The beginning of the creation of God."

F. H. B. Because everything that did not begin with Christ will ultimately pass away.

F. E. R. Quite so. It is not that Christ has come in to remedy a bad state of things, but to bring in what God had in reserve; all was to come to pass by Christ; but in divine wisdom there were certain previous provisional dealings of God, but Christ is really the beginning. You can understand new creation in regard of man, because man is to be according to God, and that cannot be apart from new creation.

W. B. What is that word, "Behold, I make all things new"?

F. E. R. That is the new heaven and new earth. Not exactly the "creation of God." Christ was the outset of creation because everything was created by Him and for Him, but He takes things up on the ground of resurrection that we may have part. He is entitled to everything; but if Christ took up His Headship on that ground, we could not have part. He takes all up on the ground of redemption that we may be brought in.

F. H. B. Then "the creation of God" includes more than "new creation"?

F. E. R. I think "the creation of God" is "the creation of God." Man is a new creation. Christ is the First and the Last. Whatever God set forth in previous dealings had always Christ in view.

D. L. H. It is important that nothing God had before Him has broken down.

F. E. R. Very important.

D. L. H. Christ is the beginning of the creation of God.

A. L. There is the "natural" and the "spiritual."

F. E. R. What God had before Him was the "spiritual."

F. K. Say a word about "new creation." Do you say that is not "the creation of God"?

F. E. R. Certainly not. You get "new creation" in connection with man, but I think we often use the expression in a different sense to that.

F. H. B. It has been used in connection with an order of things into which we come.

F. E. R. Surely God is going to be glorified in connection with creation? We have taken up the term new creation and given it a conventional use. Certain terms become conventional and when you look into them they do not always carry with them what is generally supposed. New creation has been applied wider than scripture warrants.

D. L. H. Adam was a figure of the One to come.

F. E. R. Quite so; but Christ was "the One to come." You get nothing morally precedent

to Christ. God saw fit to carry on a kind of testing previously, but God was ever looking forward to the introduction of the Man according to His mind, and everything taking character from that Man.

F. K. God's creation is a very wide thing, includes the whole universe of which Christ will be Head.

F. E. R. Quite so. He is not only the beginning of it, but the crown of it.

W. And He could say, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

F. E. R. Christ gives the impulse; and the impulse no doubt will be felt in every family, though not in the same degree.

E. H. C. The new heavens and new earth in Isaiah ?

F. E. R. God goes on there to the full extent of His purpose. Then He returns to shew the present thing, "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing," &c.

G. C. You do not think it is in a moral sense ?

F. E. R. I think God goes on to the full extent of His purpose. All the ways of God are in view. The new heavens and new earth, that is the great consummation before God, and God has made known the consummation. Every enemy subdued, every question resolved, then

the kingdom given up that God may be all in all.

F. C. When scripture speaks of the "new heavens," what is referred to?

F. E. R. The material heavens.

T. H. R. The created heavens, that which is connected with this earth, and has been tainted by evil. It is a great thing that in the millennium, what Satan has brought into ruin will be set up in Christ, so that Satan will not be able to say that he has triumphed. Where Satan has brought in evil there God triumphs. What has been spoiled by Satan, God will set up in Christ in beauty.

W. J. "As a vesture shalt thou fold them up."

T. H. R. Every moral question has been worked out here, and then the present scene is done with.

F. E. R. God allows the power of evil to appear for a moment (at the end of the millennium) only in view of the final solution. I have thought for years that the new heaven and new earth and the lake of fire are presented to shew us the ultimate determination of good and evil. When the disentanglement is complete good and evil find their own place. "*Lake*" gives the idea of a *limit*—that there will be no scope for the activity of will, there will be a limitation to it in its own scene.

T. H. R. There is no universal dominion, no such power as that of the beast after Christ's reign.

W. J. "That my joy might remain in you." What does that mean?

F. E. R. I think the Lord has His own joy in His disciples; His point was that His joy might continue in them. We often put the contrast between "my" and "you," but I question if it is just.

D. L. H. The force of "abide in me," &c.—is it that in our souls we have the sense that Christ is everything, and apart from Christ there is nothing for God?

F. E. R. I think it brings in a sense of responsibility. Our responsibility is to continue in Christ.

A. H. Is it that we do not apostatise?

F. E. R. I think so.

QUES. Go back to Adam?

F. E. R. You will go away perhaps to something worse than Adam.

F. K. Is abiding in Christ going on in the faith of the thing?

F. E. R. Yes; and that means a great deal. When you get Christianity adapted to the world it is falsified; but if you continue in the Christ that has been rejected, it is a great thing.

P. That is very far-reaching.

F. E. R. I think the point of moment is to apprehend what Christ is in the divine ways; not only that He is *Lord*, but the *Christ*.

F. H. B. It comes to the same thing as "holding the Head."

F. E. R. It is "holding the Head"—exactly what we have to do down here.

W. It is remarkable how this comes in after the end of chapter xiii., "Now is the Son of man glorified."

F. E. R. You get in the beginning of chapter xiv., "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

QUES. Would the believing in Him be the same as abiding in Him?

F. E. R. Not exactly, because there the Lord is laying down the position in a way.

W. B. Could you speak of a Christian going on badly as abiding in Christ?

F. E. R. I think a man is judged by his practice; if his practice is contrary to Christ, I could hardly say he is abiding in Christ.

A. H. That is not the point here, is it?

F. E. R. I do not think it is.

A. C. Would not that test unchristianise a good many?

F. E. R. I think they have unchristianised themselves.

T. H. R. The point the Lord brings out is a fruit-bearing branch and a not fruit-bearing

branch. It is not a question whether a fruit-bearing branch may fail to bring forth fruit for a time.

W. B. What is the force of that—a man “cast forth as a branch and withered”?

F. E. R. He becomes rejected, never restored.

F. H. B. Judas is the example. It applied to the moment when there were those who were associated with Christ after the flesh.

F. E. R. The apostle says, “Lest . . . when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” We have to abide in Christ; we are under responsibility down here in this world; any one of us might turn away. I think it is very foolish to take the ground of its being impossible to turn away from Christ.

W. B. Might you not have confidence that Christ will keep you?

F. E. R. That is another thing.

G. C. Is not every bit of departure in Christianity on the line of apostasy?

F. E. R. It is. We have come to the day when “the Lord knoweth them that are his.”

A. C. What is the meaning of that “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die”?

F. E. R. I should think it is the statement of a general principle.

F. H. B. It brings us back to that—we have to abide in Christ.

F. E. R. You have salvation in abiding in Christ. It is impossible to get out of that kind of responsibility while you are down here. It is not a question of salvation *for ever*, I am not concerned about that, I am concerned about the present—it is salvation *in the presence of what is down here*.

G. C. "Salvation is far from the wicked; for they seek not thy statutes."

F. E. R. Quite so. I do not think a man ever *talks about* his confidence; if he does, I do not think he has got it. I think salvation is exactly what the bulk of Christians are in need of. Forgiveness of sins is righteousness. God is a Saviour, because He saves you from all that to which you are naturally in bondage. Abiding in Christ is the secret of salvation.

G. C. Is the gospel spoken of in Corinthians xv. the gospel of their salvation? (Eph. i.)

F. E. R. I suppose so.

W. B. "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou . . . shalt be saved."

F. E. R. I think salvation is inherent in Christianity. "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus."

T. H. R. I think it is of great value always to keep the end before one—that I am going to be with Christ. People are often like wanderers down

here without an end in view ; the great thing that makes one continue is the thought that we are going to be with Christ. I do not mean a person feeling that all is secure, so that it is certain they will be with Christ. God has an end for me and I go on to that end in my soul. "Hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

F. E. R. I think salvation in Romans depends on the transfer from Adam to Christ ; the gospel presents a Man in whom is salvation, we are "saved in his life." Salvation is inherent in Christ. I think salvation *by* Christ refers to the ultimate result. "We look for the Saviour," &c., but God is our Saviour. Salvation is based on righteousness. You must have a basis, and then you come into salvation. For salvation you want the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." You will not get much sense of salvation without those two things. You want dissociation from the old things on the one hand and the work of the Spirit on the other. It really involves the transfer from Adam to Christ, and then you get salvation in Christ. Pure association refers to the Christian company, that which a converted heathen was *brought* to through baptism. The renewing of the Holy Ghost fits us for the new associations.

## THE WORD OF GOD AND CHRIST'S PRIESTLY GRACE.

(HEB. IV. 9-16.)

I DESIRE to say a word, beloved friends, on the way in which the Lord engages our affections. There are two points in this chapter in regard to this. One is that He makes communications to us, and the other the priestly grace that He affords us. Both draw us to Himself and are God's provision for the way. The character given to believers here is, that they are entering into rest, God's rest. It is characteristic of the believer. It does not say that he has entered in, though in one sense we have come to God's rest now; Christ said, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest," and we find rest as we take His yoke; but the point in Hebrews is that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God," and we are set to enter into it. We are on the way, but our character is "those who are entering in."

Again, the believer is regarded here as having the character of one who listens to Christ; the

great point of the chapter is hearkening to the word. I was speaking yesterday of one who had his ear bored. It is of immense importance that Christ should have our ear, and that it should be open to receive His communications. Thus He engages our hearts by His word, as He engaged Mary's heart. Christ had her ear; she sat at His feet and heard His word. That character is brought before us here: it characterises those who are entering into rest. As we were saying this afternoon, they have an end in view. There is an end; not merely that there is an end to each one's path, but the great point for our souls is to reach God's end, He has an end in view. This epistle brings that before us, it shews us in chapter i. Christ gone up to the Majesty on high, seated in the very centre of the glory which is to fill the world to come. It is that which God has in view, though it is not yet introduced. We are on the way to it, though the light of it shines upon us now. It is an immense thing for *us* to have it in view, and to be in the light of it.

Two points come before us in the preceding chapter: first, that believers are God's house; "Whose house are *we*" specially refers to the believing Hebrews, but it is true for Christians; and, secondly, that they are companions of Christ; but both are connected with the end God has in view. "Whose house are we, if we hold

fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." As I understand it, there is a reference in those words to the song they sang on the banks of the Red Sea. The rejoicing was expressed in the words, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;" then confidence was expressed that Jehovah would bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. The destruction of the enemy's power was the pledge of everything. The moment the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, the power was there on God's part to bring in the world to come. All was established in Christ, and everything ready for that world. We constantly see in scripture that the end is at once brought in and connected with what took place at the first coming of Christ. In the Old Testament, as soon as the sacrifice was offered Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle, and then came out and blessed the people and the glory appeared. As a matter of fact, the wilderness comes in between the song and the end. It has been often said that the wilderness was no part of God's purpose, but part of His ways, and it is on the way that we are tested in the wilderness as to whether we have God's end in view. The song celebrated God's salvation, and what salvation brought them to. God delivers His people from the hand of the enemy, and then gathers

them round Himself and forms them into a household: He "setteth the solitary in families:" God delights to do so. So they sing, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." Do not think of a material habitation or house; but is it not wonderful to think of God setting the solitary in a family? One may have been like Nathanael, a solitary man, before knowing the One in whom there is salvation; but when salvation is known, then it is the pleasure of God to set the solitary in a family, that we may have the fatness and blessing of His household. Israel had the care of God; He gave them manna; He gave them water from the rock; He succoured the people He had sheltered by blood in every way; the cloud of His presence was over them and went with them; they were set in families as the house of God. They were not only a delivered people, but brought to God's dwelling-place, the cloud of His protecting love.

But there was an end before them, and in the confidence and rejoicing of hope they sing, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." We are told as to the journey that eleven days would have compassed it from the Mount of God to the borders of the land. It was no question of time with

God, but it was a question of affection. That is what I understand by such a verse as "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." It is near to us as a matter of affection; it is not distant to love; the salvation to be brought to us at the coming of the Lord is near to affection. Affection has the end in view, and thus the confidence and rejoicing of the hope are maintained. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." It was God's end before them, and it is a great thing for us to have it in view. In Colossians we read of "the hope laid up for you in heaven." There is nothing uncertain in a hope *laid up* for us. Hope is sometimes used in an uncertain sense, but Christ in glory was the hope of the Colossians, for already He was their life. The Colossians were Gentiles, and as such had no God-given hope on the earth. Israel had a God-given hope with regard to Canaan. Providentially a Gentile might come into possessions on earth, but whatever I may have in this world, be it little or much, I could not say that I have it as an inheritance from the hands of God *directly*; but the hope laid up in heaven is that which God has given, as of old He gave Canaan to Israel. Now these Hebrews did not

hold the confidence and rejoicing of *the hope* steadfast to the end.

Then there is the second point in chapter iii.—“Companions of the Christ.” The children of Israel might have been looked upon as companions of Moses. He was their apostle and leader, their shepherd too, the shepherd of Jehovah’s flock, who brought them up out of the sea (Isa. lxiii. 11); and when they sang, it was with Moses they sang the song of confidence and rejoicing, as companions of Moses. But here it is “We are made companions of the Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” You know what took place with Israel. They turned back from Moses in heart and said, “As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him;” and they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Afterwards they talked of making a captain and returning to Egypt; they apostatised from Moses, not that Moses was anything in himself, save that he was the apostle and leader God had given them. But Christ is the Son over God’s house, and it is as Son that He is Leader of salvation—eternal salvation.

It is wonderful that God’s salvation should bring us into these two positions. That we should be of the household of God tells us of

God's pleasure in having us before Him. In one sense there is no need in His house, and yet as being in the wilderness and of His household every need is met: there was the manna, the springing well, and the grapes of Eshcol. As we sing:—

“In the desert God will teach thee  
What the God that thou hast found,  
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,  
All His grace shall there abound.”

Then as companions of the Christ, the Son over God's house, we are privileged to occupy a very blessed position. We see Him in this epistle as gone to the right hand of God, having sat down there. He has gone the whole way and knows every step of the path; but that path is finished, and He is in the highest heaven, and we are here and get the character of His companions as holding to the path that He has gone. No other company will, I think, have the same privilege, though doubtless the remnant of Israel will have somewhat of the character, though on lower ground. These are the two points which are connected with “the end.” Christ has bridged the whole distance for us from the depths of ruin and the distance of Egypt to the heights of glory. It is not a question of our competency for the journey, but

of holding to Him as His companions. He is made higher than the heavens, and from that point His hand reaches down to us here. There could be no greater comfort for the youngest believer than to think that he can have the grace and support of Christ—the hand of Christ; it is stretched down to us to draw us to the place He has reached. When men get into high places, they forget their former acquaintances. They use a person to get up by, and then forget him. But from the highest point to which Christ has gone, He reaches down His hand, and the youngest believer can be sure of the grace of Christ being ministered to him, and of the hand of Christ. He draws us by that hand to Himself.

When we speak of the house of God, it is where He dwells and where He makes known to us His mind; but when we speak of being the companions of Christ and the rest above, it carries our thoughts to the place where He dwells, the place which He fills. We get a place there because He is there. Oh! what grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to come down here and die, and in that death tell out the love of God; and now from the place which He fills in glory, He who was once in the place of sorrow and death sympathises with us, and guides us by His hand to the heaven where

He is. In order to have this sympathy we must be in the way, with confidence and rejoicing of hope in our hearts, and then we shall get the hand of Christ to lift us to where He is—in spirit now, and actually when He comes. It is the sense of this interest of Christ in us that draws our affections to Him.

Have you ever thought of the down-stooping of Christ? It is marvellous. He did not go among the ranks of angels to find companions, but He came to men. He took up the seed of Abraham. The gospel goes into the highways and hedges of this world to bring in those who should be companions of Christ. Marvellous down-stooping, which led Him to the cross, there to find at Calvary one who should be with Him that day in paradise. How complete His work! Such grace makes nothing of us—It was Christ that lifted the spirit of the poor malefactor to heaven, and the youngest believer may have the confidence and rejoicing of hope which His grace begets.

It is a good thing to have a sense of our own nothingness, it will keep us in godly fear. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." No one can continue, no one is safe, unless upheld by the hand of Christ. "Take heed, brethren," says the apostle, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." We need have no

question as to the grace and power of Christ, but we need to walk in reverent, holy fear. We shall then be in the consciousness that all our salvation is in Another. He knows the difficulties of the pathway for He has trodden it: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." He looked to God as to everything, seeing things as a dependent man, though the Son, in the light and fear of God. It is a great thing for us to look at things in His fear, and as we are conscious of our own weakness, to have confidence in the grace of Christ, and the succour of His hand stretched out to lift us to Himself where He is.

It is this sense of Christ's grace and the succour of His hand by which our affections are drawn to Him. It is not the measure of relief we get or the alleviation of difficulties, but the grace that draws us close to Himself which begets affection for Him. There is no better illustration of it than in the case of the two sisters of Bethany. Death had come, and sorrow indeed crossed their path. Christ felt it for He said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The sisters had lost a brother, and Christ's grace owned him as a friend. What is to make up for such a

loss? In such a case, is there to be murmuring, though mourn we may? Is there to be chiding in our hearts about it? Look how blessedly the grace of Christ comes in. He made them know that He knew it all and felt it more deeply than they did. When the Lord wept by Mary's side her feeling must have been, I never knew before how much He loved me, and the interest He has in us both. The hearts of those sisters were opened to Him, for He shared their sorrow, and nothing touches the heart and opens it to love and sympathy like sorrow. What He was in the days of His flesh He is to-day in glory as our Great Priest, and His grace reaches us from the very heights of that glory to attach us to Himself where He is, in the brightness of that unclouded scene.

The other way in which He wins our affections is by the communication to us of His own mind. I take it that the "word of God" in this chapter (Heb. iv.) is greatly connected with Christ. God has spoken in the Son; He is the Word of God. We must not confuse the letter of scripture with the living and operative word of God. We see the word "living" in Christ and it becomes living and operative in us, because it is living in Him. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." The apostle in 2 Corinthians iii. brings out the differ-

ence between "letter" and "spirit." The Jew was familiar with "letter" graven on tables of stone, but now what is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart by the Spirit of God is Christ. Thus the word of God becomes living and operative. There is vitality when Christ speaks in our hearts. There is nothing living in merely being directed by a command; that is letter. We must have the letter of scripture, but Christ's words are life; and being living and operative they are formative of Christ in us. When Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, I can understand how living every word He spoke was in her heart. It was not mere direction, but a living communication of what He was to her heart. As His words are heard, we say, "Never man spake like this man." When Christ speaks there is a tone in His voice: "My sheep hear my voice;" they know it. A child would know when he heard his father's voice; there is a meaning in it to the child: he says, It is my father's voice. When Christ's voice reaches us, His words are living, and His voice draws out the affections of our hearts to Himself.

We are so accustomed to try and translate the Bible into the language of men, but you cannot. You must learn the language of Christ. If you want to really know the Bible, the record of

scripture, you must know the voice of Christ; you must know the way in which God speaks to us in Christ. If I want to read a French book I must know the French language, for there is a peculiarity of expression to every language; and if I want to read the Bible to profit I must learn Christ, and if I know the language of Christ I shall understand the word of God in scripture. If I read a text in the light of Christ, how living it is! how operative to form us after Christ! That is the great point of the word of God; but there is another thing, it disciplines us; it is penetrating and goes down into the secret of one's soul, and of necessity it must judge everything that is not Christ. The office of the word is not to point out evil, but to bring in Christ, but this must judge everything that is evil. In ministering the word, it is not the business of the servant to be occupied with evil, or to attack the bad things in the world, but to speak of Christ. The light of Christ will detect and judge the evil. We need to have the word of God so living and operative in us that Christ may come out in us. Christ is the test of everything. Simeon said of Him, "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." The thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned by the word of God because

Christ is the spirit of it, and He is the test of the thoughts of the heart. You find constantly in the gospel of Luke that it is some word that some one utters which detects in the light of Christ the thought and intention of the heart. One says in chapter xii., "Master, speak unto my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," but the thought and intention of his heart is laid bare in the light of Christ. His heart was not with Christ, but in the things which he wished to possess, and Christ said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Another speaks of the blessedness of natural relationship with Christ after the flesh. The heart of the woman is detected. The only real link with Christ was by His word. It is not now a commandment, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," under which you quail, but the word of God presented in Christ forms the soul. "Which thing is true in him and in you." Then everything is detected and judged which is not of Christ. The effect of this comes out in a very blessed way, our lives are brought into accord with Christ, and as to the flesh and things here our minds are brought into accord with the judgment of the cross of Christ; we recognise the setting aside of all that we are in the cross, and as our minds are brought into accord with it we can say, "I am crucified with Christ, never-

theless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The word of God is, I doubt not, characteristically Christ, and as we receive its communications they become formative and operative in us, so that we can say, "Christ liveth in me."

T. H. R.



# RÉCOVERY.

No. 1.

I DESIRE to say a very few words on a subject I know nothing about. It is simply the subject of restoration. I turn to Jeremiah xxxi. 18-20.

I have just read these few verses out of a well-known chapter, to point out the way it appears to me, that by-and-by that long-lost people of Israel will be recovered for the Lord. I just submit it to the judgment of my brethren in the hope that they may be stirred up in the presence of the Lord, that there may be instruction and light given to us, and one might learn how, if by any means, to save some of those wandering ones whom we still love and mourn over.

The first thing that strikes one in these verses is, there is the ear swift to hear. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Very likely no other ear had ever heard any bemoaning at all save the ear of love. It is of significance the word "surely," recurring as it does. God will have reality. We have been made to feel it very specially, I think, at this time; but is it

not wonderful that He works it? "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." That is the rebellious northern kingdom, to be precise; a hundred years at this time in captivity and scattered; but God had them in His heart still, and having still a place in the heart of the blessed God, He can look forward through the prophet to a time when Ephraim will express this. They will be brought back through discipline: "*Thou* hast chastised me"—not now the Assyrian. "*Thou* hast chastised me." The chastising had been nothing heeded at first, then it came more heavily, and was continued to their captivity, their desolation; but everything was compatible with the fulfilment of the promise by-and-by, for they will be brought into mercy.

Have we not this blessed principle here that the relationship God established so long ago—though He has had to give it up outwardly—He will eventually resume? "Is Ephraim my dear son?" They had been pronounced "not my people," "Lo-Ammi;" but He says, "I do earnestly remember him still." How blessed to see even in the prophetic vision, in an outward way, the foreshadowing of what came out in Christ. He loved them still. "I do earnestly remember him still." "Surely I will have mercy upon him." Ephraim has all the place in the affections of the Lord that he ever had. That

is what I understand by "my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." You may say, All this is summed up in one line in Romans xi.; but there is refreshment in the thought that man's ruin and desolation, the coming down to the desert of all he held dear, is but the occasion for Another to step in and say, "Is he my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still . . . . I will surely have mercy upon him."

This passage refers to Israel. I might turn to many another passage on the same subject; but now I ask you to look at one scripture in connection with the assembly (2 Cor. vii. 5-11) to shew the principle of restoration.

It is well known what led to this wonderful intervention of the Lord's grace; for it is grace that restores. You know the apostle had to write to this company, gifted and blessed as they were, a letter that cost him anguish and many tears to write. Not one of us but knows it was the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that moved in His servant's heart towards an assembly who were indifferent to their true state. Christ began the work in the servant, but it did not end there. He was, like Jeremiah, brought into communion with the spirit of his Master with regard to those to whom he

wrote. And it is another servant who is used of God to go and reap the fruit of divine grace working in the company at Corinth. Recovery is so beautiful in this case. There had been chastisement upon them doubtless, the Lord's hand had been upon them in some measure; but the moment there is recovery in conscience and heart, what a high and holy tone things took with them. Verse 11 is one for us to ponder. There is no other like it in the epistles. It is the way in which grace has its complete work in the hearts of the restored company. Is not this the way in which the grace of Christ recovers to Himself? Is not this the order as it is given in this verse? "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." One well known amongst us, now with the Lord, used to say that when recovered the assembly is in a higher state morally than it was before. Everything is discerned then in the light, nothing of the flesh spared, and there is sorrow according to God.

I might just say, as to the individual, that the recovery of the individual is very distinctly God's work in the conscience. It is never done,

as far as I know, by argument or controversy. I have just two passages before me. (2 Tim. ii. 24-26.)

I have no doubt many besides the speaker were deeply impressed at the present meetings by the way the greatness of God and the greatness of Christ, the power of God and His majesty, were brought before us. Is it not to set us in our proper place of nothingness and to set Him before our souls in His proper place of dispensing blessing and grace according to His will? It is all of His grace any recovery; our part is waiting on God, and we give God His place in waiting upon Him.

But another thing comes out. The bearing and demeanour of the servant is of such importance. It is what he *is* more than what he *says* that God uses to recover. It is not merely restoration after a trip-up, or one sinful action, that is before my mind, but a course of evil. Is there any recovery for such? Yes; God can give it, but it is a question primarily between God and Satan. It puts us in our place of nothingness, but we are sure where light comes from. It is the will of God brought to bear upon one whom Satan has lulled to sleep with the fascination of this cruel world.

One other verse I refer to—very simple, yet very perfect. You all well know the passage.

When Peter had denied with oaths and curses that he knew Jesus at all, how is he recovered? There are steps in the recovery, I am sure. But how is he recovered? Luke gives it to us: "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Oh! think, where might our hearts have been at such a moment? It shews us what the love of the Lord is. He was in the hands of those who upon false witness had condemned Him to death. He was in the hands of those who buffeted Him, smote Him, spat upon Him; but it was not His sufferings, or the outrage heaped upon Him, which occupied Him; it was the one solitary sheep who had got into the clutch of the enemy, who had been beguiled by Satan to deny the Lord which engaged HIS heart. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter."

If my little word be used of God to stir up even a few saints to wait upon the Lord, that He may exercise that same grace which led to that look upon some wanderers from Himself, what a joy it would be! What a triumph in that day!

W. W.

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# RECOVERY.

No. 2.

I JUST desire to add one word on the subject of recovery. (Matt. ii. 15.) What struck me (and I was very much interested in what our brother was bringing before us), was that it is a wonderful thing to see that God has the power of recovery with Himself. That is what I want to indicate. And that Christ *is* that power of recovery; and all recovery, whatever it may be—and it is a great principle with God beyond all manner of doubt—is really the revival of Christ. There is no recovery in man, as man. All recovery, whether in the individual or in whatever circle it may be, is the revival of Christ in that individual or that circle.

You see the principle in Israel. In a sense Israel began with Christ. This is seen in Moses. Israel has lost all savour of Christ, but all recovery and blessing for them in the future is the revival in them of Christ. You get the expression of this in Isaiah liii. Christ will be revived in them. It is wonderful that God has thus the power and principle of recovery with Himself. It is all involved in Matthew ii. 15: "Out of

Egypt have I called my son." Christ is identified with Israel. God had brought Christ in, and He is the power and principle of recovery.

So in regard of the church. There is defection in the church. The principle of recovery is the revival of Christ in the saints. That is the force of what the Lord says in Laodicea. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." What is the recovery there? It is Christ. So in regard to the individual. We might take Peter as an example of this. Peter called to mind the word of Christ. It was the revival of Christ in him; he remembered the word the Lord had said to him.

If there is recovery for any one of us—we have all had to be recovered in a kind of way—it is the power of Christ in us. The power of recovery is in Christ, and the way in which it works is by the revival of Christ, whether it be in the church, or Israel, or the individual. We all ought to be set for recovery; but I think the point is, that the principle of recovery should be seen in us. God would desire the revival of Christ in us, wrought by the Spirit of God, so that we ourselves might be the expression of the power of the Spirit of God in the way of recovery.

It would be a good thing, and I heartily go with the desire for recovery to any extent in the

saints down here, but it must be brought about by the revival of Christ.

Revival is a very great thing. I do not limit it to the conversion of people. It is in the saints. No doubt if Christ were revived in the saints there would be much more work and power in the gospel. The revival must work in us. You may be confident there is no revival in man; the revival is the revival of Christ in man.

God has brought Christ forward as the blessed One in whom He accomplishes all the purpose of His will, but also as the great principle of recovery for every one, whether Israel, or the church, or the individual.

I only just desired to add that word.

F. E. R.

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# READING.

(JOHN XVI. 1-15.)

REMARKED. I suppose the being "offended" is a very real thing to-day as well as in that day?

F. E. R. I think people get offended and are stumbled over Christ because they get their minds full of what is of man. They get exaggerated ideas of the importance of man so Christ is not good enough for them.

W. They want to use Christ as a help to themselves?

F. E. R. I think so.

P. What are "these things" the Lord refers to in verse 4?

T. H. R. You get the same words "these things" in chapter xv. 21. There was the same kind of stumbling in John Baptist. (Matt. xi. 3.) He could not understand Christ being rejected, though he had had the testimony. "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending . . . the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." Yet afterwards John said, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" The disciples would have to meet this rejection, and might be stumbled by it; but Christ had foretold them.

A. H. Is this the treatment the witness for Christ in this world would get from the hands of the world ?

F. E. R. . . . . The world of which the Lord speaks is the religious world ; at that moment it was the Jew. I do not think the religious world cares for vitality ; I think that has been proved over and over again. If vitality comes in it shakes a person free of the religious world.

T. H. R. And God helps us by the opposition to be free of the world. The Lord says, " They shall *put you* out of the synagogues," not, you will have to *go out*. If we are Christ-like they will not have us, which is a greater test than having to leave them. Often when we do something we think something of ourselves ; but when we are cast out that is a different case.

F. E. R. Christ has come, not to produce some effect in the present world, that is not the thought in Christianity. If we were to run on that line we should not incur so much opposition. Christ is accepted in a way to put honour on man. That is the idea to-day, but Christ never could attach Himself to this world to put it right.

A. H. I suppose that was the line the Lord's brethren were on in chapter vii. : " If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world " ?

F. E. R. Christ could not come to put *this*

world right. Everything in this world is tested by Christ, for if He comes in He must of necessity be the Head and Beginning of another world; in the nature of things He is the Beginning, He could not be the end of an existing system.

T. H. R. Christ is going away in this chapter, and the result is that everything is put in its true place. The Comforter comes as witness of the truth. It was necessary that Christ should go away in order that the Comforter should come. He bears witness as to Christ in His right place as Head over all things, and as to the world in its right place, as judged.

G. G. "They have not known the Father, nor me"?

F. E. R. There had been the presentation of the Father's works and words; I doubt if the test would have been complete apart from that. In Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell. There was the full presentation of God in Christ; and the works He did and the words He spoke were the Father's works and the Father's words, carried out and spoken in the power of the Spirit. There would not have been the same completeness of testimony had not the presentation been so complete.

A. L. That brought out the state of man—absolutely incapable of receiving anything.

F. E. R. Yes, and you can understand that there would not have been the exposure of man without that presentation.

E. R. "Believe me for the very works' sake."

M. In what way would the world know that the prince of this world is judged?

F. E. R. I do not understand that the *world* would know it, it is more that *we* should know it; the presence of the Spirit here is the evidence of it, and those who have the Spirit have the evidence.

A. L. Then I suppose it is only those who have the Spirit that get the benefit?

F. H. B. Then if we do not enter into what is true as to the world, we cannot enter into what follows—the things of Christ?

F. E. R. People have an idea sometimes that Christ came to set this world right, even the disciples had; we must get clear of that idea; He never did.

F. C. To set this world right would be to recognise man.

F. E. R. The world around is a system that has grown up around man departed from God. The Spirit has come to make known another world. "All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I that he shall take of mine and shew it unto you." The Spirit has come, that we, "being rooted and grounded in love, may

be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height."

A. H. And that really is the "hidden wisdom" Paul speaks about to the Corinthians.

A. L. What is the connection of righteousness because I go to my Father?

F. E. R. The world is convicted on that plea. Christ, was rejected here but He has gone to the Father and righteousness is established there.

G. G. Would it be that He is the only righteous One and He has gone to the Father?

W. W. I thought that the idea is, that He was rejected in this order of things, but accepted in another order of things.

F. C. Is He not the Righteous One, and if righteousness is to be found anywhere it must be there?

F. E. R. Yes, righteousness is secured there.

W. H. B. What is the difference between the statement, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin" (chap. xv. 22), and this in chapter xvi., the Spirit coming to convict the world of sin? Is the one abstract and the other the conviction in the minds of those who have the Spirit?

F. E. R. I suppose so. I think most of us understand the position of the world in regard of God, that its position relatively to Him is sin; but I think what we are less acquainted with is

the other side, the things of Christ, that is, another world.

W. H. B. Is it not as the other side comes into your soul that the affections go out more and more?

F. E. R. I think when people are awakened to recognise the presence of the Spirit, they recognise, on the other hand, the absence of Christ, and they will make some move as to the world. I think the move made of late years has been in leaving the worldly religious systems.

F. H. B. Then that prepares the way for the opening out of another world to us by the Spirit?

F. E. R. Until people recognise the presence of the Spirit and the position of Christ in regard to the world they cannot make much progress. The moment people get a sense of the Spirit's presence, it is sure to bring home to them that Christ is rejected, and thus their position relatively to the world is altered; it was so with every one of us. The two things go together.

D. L. H. It is a remarkable thing that in the Christian world there is no sense of Christ being rejected.

F. E. R. Things are all taken up simply as facts and not in their significance; the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ are merely

facts to them and all is interwoven with the world.

W. H. B. How are saints awakened now ?

F. E. R. The Spirit of God from time to time will stir. Defection is allowed to go on, but the Spirit will make His presence felt, and it has been felt over and over again. In every movement of God it has been the Spirit making His presence felt.

W. H. B. Does He not awaken from outside ?  
“Awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall shine on thee.”

F. E. R. Yes ; but no one will awake but by the movement of the Spirit, though there is the responsibility. The Spirit is here in the saints, and thus the movement comes in connection with them, and this, in spite of all the defection in Christendom. It is really the revival of the Spirit of Christ in the saints.

G. G. The movement of the Spirit, the recovery spoken of last night, would be really a revival of Christ.

A. L. Does not that apply now—“If any man hear my voice” ?

F. E. R. Yes ; but none will hear His voice apart from the movement of the Spirit.

W. J. M. When there is defection, God must begin to work ?

F. E. R. I think so.

T. H. R. It is a great thing to apprehend that there are two scenes: one scene dominated by sin, and another scene where righteousness is established. Take Romans—I think people think a great deal more of the forgiveness of sins than of quitting a scene dominated by sin, and being alive to God in righteousness.

F. K. You take that in connection with “of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go unto my Father”?

T. H. R. It is not conviction *of* sin and righteousness. It is conviction *concerning*.

A. H. Then the demonstration is “of sin” in this world, and “righteousness” with the Father?

H. D’A. C. J. B. S. said that righteousness is not here. It went to the Father.

T. H. R. I think it is a wonderful thing, that there is a scene where sin is not. Righteousness is not here; even in the millennium righteousness will look down from heaven. The scene here is dominated by sin.

G. G. Then you do not think it is a question of a righteous umpire, like Psalm xvii.?

F. K. Is it that righteousness is seen there in His person?

F. E. R. I think it is that all that is of the Father is *with* the Father, and all will come out *from* the Father.

T. H. R. The Spirit brings the demonstration

concerning righteousness and sin, that sin is here and righteousness is not here.

F. E. R. There are two things—the world has proved its lawlessness, and would not have righteousness. In refusing Christ the world has refused righteousness and therefore in regard to the world righteousness is an absolute impossibility, and the practical effect of that is we must look for all to come out from the Father, all that is going to be displayed must be evolved from Him, and we can look for nothing from the world. God is allowing the world to run its course, but in due time we shall see a universe set forth in a day.

T. H. R. Christ being there, everything is ripe to come out, though all awaits the working out of God's ways.

F. E. R. Yes; God allows the present world to run its course and works His own will.

A. L. Is it not true that though the Lord speaks of the world, and the demonstration, &c., it is that we may understand it?

F. E. R. Yes; the Holy Ghost demonstrates sin, righteousness and judgment, that we may understand the true position of things in regard of this world, and thus be prepared for the things of Christ being shewn to us. That is the position of things whether any one understands it or not.

T. H. R. I think it is an immense thing to get things put in place.

GEO. C. "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence." God's sentence is a righteous one.

T. H. R. I think the devil got his sentence when he touched Christ at the cross; he brought all the world to crucify Him. He had a title to touch *us*, but he had no title to touch Christ: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He touched Christ, and touching Him involved his judgment.

F. E. R. All between God and the world came to an issue in Christ. His coming was a test to the world, but He was also the Beginning for God. God being presented in Christ has fully tested the world, and the world has proved itself lawless in rejecting Christ, and so, for the moment, righteousness is in another scene *with* the Father, and all must come *from* the Father.

A. H. Everything here is closed now, and He opens up another world.

F. E. R. Yes, and I think that is what the saints have to be occupied with.

F. H. B. I think we want to "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

F. E. R. Yes; we need the apprehension of all the extent of these things, of all that which

is purposed by the Father and centred in the Son.

A. C. In a sort of way, the world was judged when Christ came into it.

F. E. R. I think so—"All things that the Father hath"—it is most wonderful to think of; everything that the Father has is established in the Son—in the righteous One who is with the Father. It will all come out; I think God will greatly surprise the universe one day. He will set forth a new world in a day. The power of God will set it all forth thus, and for this reason, that all is there, it is all prepared, ready to be revealed. You have "the church of the firstborn ones," and "the spirits of just men made perfect;" everything is there.

W. H. B. Then the Spirit of God is here to give enlightenment and power?

F. E. R. The Lord says, "He shall shew you things to come." I think God would have our hearts to apprehend all that is before Him, "breadth, and length, and depth, and height." God would have us to be in the divine secret. There are two things necessary for us—the one, entering the Holiest; the other, going over the land, where you learn the expanse of all that which Christ is going to fill. I think the Holiest is where you learn the secret of God, His resource—that is, Christ. Then, in going

over the land, you get to know the expanse which He is going to fill; that answers to "things to come."

QUES. Will you explain why you must go into the holiest?

F. E. R. I think every one has to learn the resource of holy love. I see holy love in God, but I want to learn the resource of holy love, how God is able to make His holy love effectual to fill the universe of bliss. You will never learn Christ in that light but in the holiest.

D. L. H. Is not that "Christ dwelling in the heart by faith"?

F. E. R. I think so. Christ is the secret of God—"the hidden wisdom."

QUES. Is the land the Father's house?

F. E. R. It may be, but I think the land is typical of the inheritance. No one is suitable to act as a priest till he has entered the holiest; he is only a believer till he enters the holiest.

W. J. Do you connect this with Ephesians i.?

F. E. R. I think so. The fact is, that the practical effect of the holiest would be that people would sit lightly to things here. In coming in contact with people, I do not find that they have divine things much in view. See how occupied people are with their health—very careful of their life here; it would be different if they had Christ before them as the

One able to fill everything with the holy love of God.

W. J. "Until I went into the sanctuary."

F. E. R. Yes; when there we find that the best things in the world are really slippery places.

QUES. How does a believer become a priest?

F. E. R. By learning that he is kindred to Christ in the love of God. Then he is a priest; he proves his genealogy. Christ has the calling, and we are priests in virtue of being kindred to Christ.

A. L. Saints by calling; priests by association.

F. E. R. By being kindred to Christ, that is by the Spirit. The priests must also be consecrated.

QUES. Is that shewn in "Aaron's rod that budded"? (Num. xvii.)

F. E. R. Aaron's rod budding was the proof of Aaron's priesthood; it shewed that all priesthood must be in the power of resurrection. If a man is not on that ground he is not qualified to be a priest as to his own sense of things. It is life out of death.

F. C. What you say would account for there being so little priestly service. If souls do not know this there cannot be priestly service.

F. E. R. I think not. How many people bring

the holiest into the meeting? You can hardly find the holiest in the meeting except you *bring* it there. People cannot jump into things when they come together.

T. H. R. You hear a great deal of thanksgiving to the Lord for what He has done, but very little sense of association with Christ.

F. H. B. Then I expect the general thought is the other way about—not to *bring* the holiest into the meeting, but to *find* it there.

F. E. R. You are not going to find it if you do not bring it; you are not going to reach it in a moment. I think people must have a sense of the holiest, and familiarity with it, if they are going to get it in the meeting. I should think the ideal meeting would be when every saint brings the holiest there. If we eat the bread and drink the wine, it is not to *put* us in accord with the death of Christ, we should *be* in accord with that death already. Then you realise the presence of Christ. You realise the holy love of God. It is only in the holy love of God that you can realise the presence of Christ, for that is the atmosphere in which Christ abides.

QUES. The priests carried the ark?

F. E. R. So we have to carry God's testimony, but that is not the holiest. . . . I think we are all fitted in private for the place we take in the

assembly. You may depend on it every man carries into the meeting the best he has got. I think the holiest is the apprehension of a scene which is characterised by the holy love of God, and when you get there you find what God's resource is.

T. H. R. When Christ was here everything was veiled. Now there is no veil: all God's glory shines forth in Him, and we are privileged to be in the light of all God's glory as set forth in Christ.

F. E. R. Exactly.



# READING.

(JOHN XVI. 12, &c.)

## INTELLIGENCE IN THE INNER MAN.

F. E. R. It is important to remember that all these chapters (xiv. to xvi.) are connected with the disciples being left here as witnesses to Christ; we lose the point if we do not keep that in view. Chapter xiv. shews that Christ would provide means by which He would have a place here; chapter xv. that there should be evidence of vitality in those in whom Christ was; chapter xvi. that the witness would be intelligent, otherwise the witness would not be adequate.

QUES. I suppose they give us what fits the company to be here in His absence?

F. E. R. Yes, it prepares for witness. Chapter xiii. brings home to us the complete break-up of everything as connected with Christ upon earth.

QUES. What is the witness to?

F. E. R. To Christ and all that He will be when He comes again.

QUES. What difference is there between this witness and what we get in 1 John v.?

F. E. R. I think it is much the same; there is a witness in the saints to what is coming in by Christ, but the witness from heaven is already here. We anticipate eternal life, and in that way we witness that Christ is coming in the power of the last Adam; there is the witness thus to what He will be: "He will shew you coming things"—the day of display and glory is anticipated in a way by the witness; we are to be characterised by what *will be* rather than by what *was*.

A. H. What comes out morally in us now is what will be displayed in the New Jerusalem.

QUES. Is that where the thought of intelligence comes out?

F. E. R. I think so; the witness must be intelligent in all that is coming. It comes out in the previous chapter that there could not be fruit-bearing apart from vitality, and this is by the Spirit of God. He alone could strengthen us for these things to be made known to us. In principle every babe has the unction, the ability to enter into these things, yet one just converted would not enter into them; the Lord says: "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." We have to be strengthened for it. We have to grow up into things, just as in natural life.

The Spirit is truth subjectively, that is, in the

saints ; all truth lies in the Spirit, but that is not the same thing as our having it in our own intelligence. You have to look to it that the man who assumes to unfold anything to you is a spiritual man ; you cannot learn from man, but only from the spiritual man.

In natural things a babe cannot take in the things of a man. In 1 Corinthians there was not in the saints the spiritual state. The preparation is in being strengthened in the inner man, then you get Christ dwelling in your heart by faith. The Spirit of God will practically displace the old man. The only figure that sufficiently illustrates it is the place a husband has in the heart of his wife if he is absent : he dwells with all his interests in the heart of his wife. All truth is presented to us objectively in Christ, but made good in us by the Spirit ; all intelligence lies in the Spirit, but we have to get it in the enlargement of the inner man. We used to say we have everything in Christ and understand it by the Spirit, but that overlooks the formation of the inner man, the man that understands ; the old man does not understand : that is what the apostle prays for in Ephesians iii., "to be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man." In chapter xiv. everything depends on the spirit of truth ; you want the Christian whose affections are formed and

regulated by truth; this is not done in a moment, it implies an entire revolution. Christianity brings in new objects which call for a complete readjustment of the affections: "loins girt about with truth" is not a moment's work.

QUES. Is that what is expressed in Ephesians iii.?

F. E. R. I think so. In the affections formed and governed according to truth you get the inner man. Christ dwelling in the heart is His having His right place in our affections, it puts aside all else.

QUES. Is what you have been speaking of *growth*?

F. E. R. Growth in intelligence can only be commensurate with growth in affections.

QUES. You do not mean that you have to wait a long time before you can have enjoyment?

F. E. R. Oh no; but at first you enjoy everything on your own side and it takes time before we come to looking at and enjoying things from God's side, that is, what Christ is to God, not only what He is to us.

QUES. What is the point of "the Christ"?

F. E. R. The Head and Centre of the divine system, and He dwells in your heart by faith; Christ, and every interest of Christ, governs the heart, and all contrary is displaced.

QUES. What is the difference between "things to come" and "all things that the Father hath"?

F. E. R. I do not see any difference. What the Father has is "every family"—all that He purposes for the glory of Christ and for His own satisfaction, the accomplishment and display of His counsels. When He comes out in the revelation of Himself, He wants what is adequate for that display. Meanwhile we have the intelligence of all these things. Take a family as a whole, what characterises the family is not what is found in the babes, but what is found in the parents; a family will take its character from what is in the parents.

QUES. Is there any difference between the anointing from the holy One and the unction?

F. E. R. It is the same word.

QUES. Is it the Father's world which is seen in the millennium?

F. E. R. The counsels of God come out in the world to come: "All the Father's counsels claiming equal honour to the Son." They come out in connection with the complete revelation of God. Scripture does not separate the heavens from the earth, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In the millennium there will be complete connection between the heavens and the earth: the heavenly city comes down from God that all the earth may get the light and

good of it; the earth is thus under the influence of heaven. We shall have a fine time then! You will be able then to go and teach every one on earth their calling.

QUES. Do you mean that the church will be telling people on earth their calling?

F. E. R. I think it will all shine out in the heavenly city: her light is like unto a stone most precious. The earth must be cognisant of it in some way; the testimony must be spoken, I suppose; how else can it come out? It is not like a star shining in the firmament. The heavenly city is not a material but a moral thought. God must make known in the universe the exceeding riches of His grace; it must be made manifest in some way or the lesson would not be conveyed. The bride is presented under a material figure, but we must get the material thought out of our minds. The saved nations will walk in the light of the city. That must mean some great lesson to the kings of the earth.

QUES. Do you think those on the earth will be conscious of having heavenly visitors?

F. E. R. Very likely. The city is composed of actual men. The Lord says in John xvii., "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made

perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

QUES. What is the witness there?

F. E. R. It is unity, but the unity must be *seen*; how it will be I do not attempt to explain, but we must take up these things morally, not materially: there will be *moral* connection between heaven and earth.

A. H. His servants shall serve Him.

QUES. Will it be as in Jacob's vision?

F. E. R. I think so. If any one can give any better thought let us have it. The place which the church has at the present time is most remarkable; it stands between God's ways in the past and what is to come out in the future—every thread of the past gathered up in the church while it is being instructed in all that is to be displayed in the future.

QUES. Will it be with the nations as in Romans ix.?

F. E. R. Hardly; the nations now have come into the olive-tree. It is not that they are walking in some light presented to them, such as the heavenly city: that is what will come out in time to come, but now they are viewed as grafted into the olive-tree—are given the place of privilege.

QUES. Will not the fact itself of the church

being in heavenly blessing be a witness to them?

F. E. R. Well, yes; but how will it be known? I think there must be witness of it: "that the world may know;" it must come out in display in some way—what should be witnessed now.

A. H. Mr. Stoney used to say we should come back to earth.

F. E. R. We shall not be cabined and confined, there will be unbounded liberty. The instruction we are getting now in every way of God is in order that we may be intelligent in all. Every thread has been gathered up in the church. We shall be able to tell a Jew all about the flock, the Shepherd, the house of God, eternal life, the holy priesthood, the peculiar people—all the things that properly belong to a people on earth. We know it all better than they. You may depend upon it that a very great deal will be dependent on the heavenly city in that day.

M. G. What a wonderful place the church has!

F. E. R. The church is an adequate witness when there is nothing displayed. Perhaps we have limited this chapter to the peculiar things belonging to the church, but it is more than that, it takes in the whole scene of glory.

What we are and the place we have in relation to God and Christ and to each other will all come

out in display: "What ye have spoken in the ear shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

A. H. Then there is a very striking connection between the prayer in Ephesians iii. and these chapters?

F. E. R. There it is in connection with the work of the Spirit in the inner man, and here it is with the coming of the Comforter: the Spirit will not only open up these things, but will prepare you for them. The Lord said: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

A. H. Then it is no wonder that the opposition is so intense now against the truth.

F. E. R. No wonder at all, for all this world system must go to make room for what is in Christ. It is only what was foreshadowed to Job: God would allow a moment to come when all was broken up, all the social foundations. This is what God will do in regard to Israel. A fearful upheaval will be brought about by Satan, everything upon which man with any conscience rests will be broken up; but God is in His holy temple, and He can reinstate His people. Job's folly was that he did not wait for God to see what He would do. Israel will find out that God can reinstate them in greater blessing than before. Job is in this way a deeply interesting book.

A. H. We are going through a kind of college course ?

F. E. R. I think so. I have no greater wish down here than to be instructed in every way of God.

REMARKED. Very few are seeking this.

F. E. R. More's the pity! I want to see a revival among brethren, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith ; people are looking for some wonderful work *outside*, but we want revival *inside*.

QUES. How is it to be brought about ?

F. E. R. Only by the Spirit of God ; but if we were exercised about it God would be faithful and shew His hand. Who can question the subtle influence of the world which is invading us at this time ? There is a vast number who consent to the truth but are gradually bringing in the world with them.

A. H. Are not all the barriers which keep out the world being broken down ?

F. E. R. Few people are really bent on wisdom as their supreme interest. Many among us consent to it, but you must seek for it as for hid treasure, or you will not get it. It is remarkable that in that chapter you find that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to *depart from evil* is understanding. As we grow in the knowledge of

God we learn what to avoid and how to please Him.

REMARKED. If we are not growing we are exposed to the inroads of what is around ?

F. E. R. I think so. Only get people into the holiest and they are safe! If you could encourage people to draw near, I think they would in a kind of way be secured. It is a wonderful thing to get any apprehension now of that with which God is going to fill the universe of bliss. Each one of us has to take care as to himself; I have no wish or ability to affect other people, I can only seek to go on myself. I saw in J. N. D. that he affected others by going on himself—that is the true way. It was what he was rather than what he said.

W. J. Paul's word to Timothy was, "Take heed to thyself."

F. E. R. It distresses one to see things so miserably low down; people take up Christianity as if to patronise it, they have no apprehension of God's way, but almost think it is an honour done to Christianity that they have taken it up. It is a great mercy for them that it has taken them up!

A. H. You witness against the world, but also of that other world.

F. E. R. It all means that Christ should be

a *living reality in my heart now*, not only in heaven. "When wisdom entereth into thy heart"—you have not got to go to heaven for it. "Exalt her, and she shall promote thee:" that is what we want, to be promoted by Christ, or not at all.

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## READING.\*

(LUKE x. 1-37.)

F. E. R. I suggested this chapter, because it presents in a striking way the place which Christ fills in connection with divine ways. The first part shews Christ sending out the seventy on their mission. The end of this is the falling down from heaven of Satan ; and then we go on to the thought of everything being delivered of the Father to Christ, and eternal life is brought into view. Like every other part of scripture, it commends itself—it is so entirely divine, but impossible to be understood except by the Spirit of God. The mission of the seventy is confined to this gospel. It is connected with Christ being received up. (See chap. ix. 51.) What follows on this is Satan cast down from heaven. The mission of the seventy is wider than that of the twelve which we get previously. The point is that it is the beginning of the downfall of Satan. The beginning of the end of undoing the works of the devil. The end is when Satan is cast down from heaven. The Lord speaks of the gathering in of the harvest. All is final, things are

\* Calne.

brought to an issue. The ground in Luke is wider than in Matthew. Christ is set as a light to the Gentiles. At the beginning of Acts we have more the mission of the twelve, carrying out the testimony that Christ had given. Luke is more connected with the testimony of the apostle Paul. Everything is brought to an issue. The present testimony of the gospel will bring everything to an issue. The ultimate effect of the preaching of the gospel is the overthrow of Satan. Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty by God to the pulling down of strongholds." The light coming in has given an enormous impetus to human intelligence, but the real effect is in bringing to light the forces of evil. Lawlessness is brought to light in Christendom and so too Antichrist. While the preaching of the gospel gathers in the harvest, it brings fully to light the powers of evil. God has ordained that Christ should be the great test. "The Son of God was manifested to undo the works of the devil." Everything has to be disentangled. The harvest has to be gathered in and everything must become ripe for judgment. It really is more and more the question, "What think ye of Christ"? The spirit of lawlessness is seen in that light has been presented and deliberately refused. On the other hand, Christ has an eye on every thirsty one.

In the first 14 chapters of Acts we find opposition to the preachers of the gospel; in chapter xv. it is adulteration—law brought into the gospel.

It says in verse 21, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." (Vers. 21-24.) Then the lawyer raises the question of eternal life, and the Lord gives a solution of it in the thought of the neighbour. It is another order of things. The chapter brings into view an order of things in which the Father is revealed, and in which Christ gives the impulse. Christ fills all, and everybody is affected by the impulse which He gives. Mercy pervades all—the principle is "go, and do thou likewise." The priest and Levite could do nothing in this way. Jude says, "Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," and the impulse of mercy affects everybody. Christ has ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things. Light is supposed to be ether—and it gets its impulse from the sun. You get in this chapter the break-up of one system and the introduction of another. There is a new system set up by God, and of this Christ is the Centre. The names of disciples being written in heaven is connected with purpose. The companions of Christ were to have a place in heaven. We have this thought in Hebrews xii., names enrolled in heaven.

Divine love has not its end till God's people are in heaven. God would have them with Himself. We get the same thought in Exodus xv. in regard to Israel, "Thou wilt bring them in." When God comes out in the revelation of Himself in His Son, He gets His satisfaction—His love has its answer in those surrounding Him. The joy set before Christ was to give effect to the divine will. The Lord was supremely the evangelist here, and every evangelist is the reflection of Christ. The disciples when sent out were wonderfully equipped. Power is not expressed in quite the same shape now, but the power is there. Men are delivered from the power of evil as truly as then. In the thought of their names being written in heaven the Lord corrected the disciples' thought of power. Love is greater than power. Man is likely to be elated by the exercise of power down here. If I saw people manifestly set free by my agency from the power of Satan, I am not quite sure how I could stand it.

QUES. Why does the Lord introduce what we have in verse 22?

F. E. R. Because He is bringing into view the new system. There is the dissolution of the old system in the fall of Satan. The system of the world which has been under Satan's domination is reduced to its moral elements. A new system is

built up, everything being put into the hands of Christ. Then the glory of His person comes out. There is in Him the revelation of God: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There is a system which will subsist in the revelation of God, in which Christ will shine forth as the Sun of righteousness. What gives its brilliancy to the Sun of righteousness is that the glory of God shines in His face.

QUES. Is growth in Christians growth in the knowledge of divine persons?

F. E. R. Yes. And for that you must be brought into contact with them. You will not know me except in coming into contact with me. The Spirit brings us into contact with divine persons, so that we really know these divine persons before we get to heaven. That is in truth the holiest. I think the holiest is really the heart of God. When you get to heaven nothing will be strange.

"There no stranger-god shall meet thee," &c. The gospel of John gives us a clue to this. It is the gospel of the sent One, and the real way of entering into the knowledge of God is by the sent One.

When Christ arises as the Sun of righteousness He gives an impetus to everything. Every one will shew mercy. Houses of parliament and legislation will not then be required. Christ

perfectly meets both death and dearth. He brings in the mercy of heaven. Man will be freed from death and will be abundantly satisfied. If you could get man satisfied and freed from death, you would have eternal life here. The One who brings in the mercy of God sets aside death. This is what John v. brings out. He reveals Himself there as One who has complete authority over the domain of death. Everything hangs on Christ. Our blessing at the present time is in the way of knowledge; but there is no limit to what you may know because there is no limit to the Spirit of God. In the close of the chapter you get the moral effect of the apprehension of mercy in Christ. Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, and the consequences of this are seen in the next chapter.

No one can fathom the depths in the Son—the glories of His person. We know nothing, of course, of Christ, except through revelation. No one can know the Son save the Father. The Lord says, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see." He was speaking of this wonderful revelation. It was only Christ who could estimate the opportunity they had. It is a blessed thing that we have got the revelation of the Father in the Son, and Christ as the centre of all—the Sun of righteousness, who is going to give impulse to everything.

Everything on the divine side was perfect in Christ when He came, but we could have no part in it till after His resurrection. Christ has made the Father known. Eternal life in our case depends on the communication of the Spirit—the living water. The verse in John xvii., “Thou hast given him power over all flesh,” is true of Christ now that He is glorified. We come into eternal life by receiving the Spirit. Here the Lord brings out the powerlessness of the law with regard to eternal life. It is dependent on God’s mercy. We become conscious of eternal life in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, outside the region of death and dearth. There is growth in this knowledge. There is no limit in it. You increase by the true knowledge of God. All depends on the capability that is in the Spirit and in His work. If people were prepared for the surrender of their hearts to be set on that, they would get much greater capability. We are but small in the inward man.

The consequence of what we have seen is that we pray for the coming kingdom. (Chap. xi. 2.) The moment you come under the influence of Christ you prove the effect of it. That is really “looking for the mercy.” It is a wonderful transformation. The effect on a person who comes under this influence is the looking for the Father’s kingdom. The question is

how to get people under the influence of Christ, especially the young. If the older ones were more under the influence of Christ they might draw them. You may have everything as proper and orthodox as possible, and yet all be as chilly as death. The "young men" in 1 John ii. are in danger from the world. That is the great snare of the present day. We ought to make it manifest that the world is hostile to Christ. You dare hardly mention the name of Christ in the world.

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## THE ASSEMBLY COME TOGETHER.\*

(1 COR. XII.)

THERE are one or two expressions in the previous chapter of this epistle to which I will refer. "For first of all, when *ye come together* in the church. . . ." (Ver. 18.) Then verse 20: "When *ye come together* therefore into one place. . . ." So again in chapter xiv.: "If the whole assembly be *come together*." I want to bring before you two or three thoughts in connection with the coming together of the assembly. I may say they are elementary, but it is not always a very easy thing to present the elements, because so few of us understand the science. All the world comes together for worship; that is, at all events, the idea in Christendom. It is only the ungodly who do not come together. Churches and chapels are filled, and people have the idea of coming together for divine service. Now if we come together in assembly, we do not come together in accord with all that is around us. With very many there is probably the thought that they come together as others do, but in a more scriptural way. We come together at

\* Address at Calne.

the same time, on the same day, and it looks as if we were in accord with all around, but we are *not* in spirit in accord with anything around us. The saints at the beginning certainly did not come together in accord with heathenism. Judaism was immediately around, but they did not come together in accord with Judaism. The coming together of Christians was in most distinct separation from all around. Now we have got Christianity (if I might coin a word), but we do not come together in accord with Christianity. Just as Judaism was then the established order, so Christianity has become the same thing. There can be no real Christianity outside of the Spirit of God, and the world cannot receive the Spirit; so if Christianity has become bound up with the world, there is something very wrong, and the mind of God is not met. In coming together in assembly, we cannot make it apparent to others that we are in separation from what is going on around; but in our own sense of things we come together in separation from all. People may come to us, but we cannot go to them; there can be no reciprocity, for it is not according to the Spirit of God. We are maintained by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's death, and we come together in the fellowship of that death. Christ is not in

honour in the world, and until He comes again He will not touch the world. He has died to it, and we have died with Him, and are in separation from that to which we have died. The apostle challenges the Colossians (chap. ii. 20): "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" We are risen with Christ "through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

Now to come to chapter xii., see verse 12. We come together in assembly in the unity of the Spirit. The Spirit has no regard to the distinctions of the world; the Jew is no better than the Gentile, the free man is no better than the slave. What distinction can hold in Christ's presence? The Spirit pays no regard to the distinctions of men, and in coming together in assembly the distinctions which exist in the world disappear. If we do not come together rightly in our feelings and thoughts with regard to one another, it is impossible to gain the presence of the Lord. The Spirit maintains what is according to Christ, not what is according to man, and so in coming together it will not do for us to maintain distinctions which the Spirit of God has disregarded. "We have all been made to drink into one Spirit." I am putting

before you matters which are extremely important with regard to the things of the assembly down here. We have to regard the unity of the Spirit, and to look to it that we are right in our relations one to another.

Now I pass on to another point. It says in verse 27, "You are Christ's body." I refer you in connection with this to a verse in John xiv. Read verse 20; that verse helps us to understand the statement which we get here—"Ye are the body of Christ." The body is where the heart of Christ is. He says, "I am in my Father," that is, in the Father's heart. "Ye in me," that is, in the heart of Christ. "I in you," that is, the affections of Christ are here. Christ's affections are in His saints down here. It is difficult to realise this on account of the confusion around, but we have to regard the true character of things, as presented by the Spirit of God.

The first thing is, we do not come together in accord with things around. Secondly, we come together in the unity of the Spirit. Thirdly, we are conscious of being Christ's body. Christ is present there in affection. The Lord says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." It is very important that we should come together aright. We may so readily fall into what is prevailing in Christendom, only with a more correct form.

Now I want to call your attention to chapter xiii. 1-13. We will suppose that the points that I have referred to are accepted, and that we are come together. In the assembly come together, love is the principle which regulates everything and puts everything in its place. There is no real corrective to what is unsuitable but love. It is love in regard to one another. Christ puts love in activity, and the working of love is to put all in order in the assembly come together. We have to follow after love. These things are all excessively important if the assembly is to have its character according to God down here. We have to take account of its being Christ's assembly, and that our conduct has reference to Christ, and love corrects all that is unseemly or uncomely. The points I have touched on are: first, separation; secondly, the unity of the Spirit; and thirdly, the body of Christ—His affections being there—and then love as being the regulating principle.

Now I pass on to what transpires in the assembly. Each one certainly brings there the best he has got. We come there as believers or as priests. All are believers, but the priests are practically a more limited class. We all bring the best we have. How is the service to be ordered? I think by the priests. In a church the service is conducted by the

priest—the principle is in a way right; but all depends on the ordination of the priest. We want to find priests properly qualified, not priests ordained by a bishop, and we should look for it in ourselves, not in clericalism. Each one has to look to it as to what he has to bring to the assembly. Not something to give out, but as to the knowledge he brings. Every Christian is necessarily a believer, and every believer is entitled to be a priest, but I am not sure that every one is so. The qualification for a priest is the consciousness of being kindred to Christ. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. Your genealogy is attested in the consciousness that you are one with Christ. Then we want perfect assurance and liberty with God. There is nothing in God which is hidden from us. In the holiest you enter into the depths of God's nature—His holy love. There is nothing beyond the holiest. The depth and resources of that nature are laid open to you, and you can draw nigh. God invited the confidence of Abraham; when too, Christ, was on earth He invited the confidence of the disciples. Now God invites our confidence, and we have boldness to approach Him in all liberty of access. We draw near, not with reserve, but with the sense that we are encouraged to drink into the depths of all that God has revealed Himself to be.

When we come together in assembly, though the ordering of the worship is properly by the priests, yet each one must be simple, and all must be from the heart. There is not much good in any one setting up a kind of ideal. We have to take things as they are. When we come together there are really the two classes of which I have spoken. Very few among the Corinthians had entered into the qualification for priests, and yet when we come together in assembly the conduct of divine service ought clearly to be on the part of the priests. It is not simply a believers' meeting. We should not be content without having the qualification of priests—in the consciousness that we are one with Christ. I do not belong to any body of Christians on earth; I am of Christ's body, and one with the Sanctifier. I have confidence thus to avail myself of the privilege which God has laid open to me in making Himself known in the depths of His love. So few of us are prepared to surrender the world, and if we will retain the world we cannot enter into the qualification of the priests.

I have no doubt that many would say, Does not Christ regulate the worship? Yes; but He does it through His members—through the priests—through those who are in the sense of being kindred with Christ. You do not gain the qualification for priest when you come to-

gether, for each brings the best he has got. God invites us to enter into the holiest, and if we have answered to it, we know how to accept our part as priests in the assembly. We know how to draw nigh to the holiest things. I want that we should not take these things up in a formal way. The assembly is a very great thing rightly understood. We come together in separation from the world in the unity of the Spirit; we are the body of Christ, and everything is regulated by love. You must not suppose that the obligation in coming together rests only with the priests. Every believer brings the best he has got. If all were in the consciousness of being priests there would be a very great effect. In any case, we have to take care that all that takes place is done from the heart. Every one there is properly in sympathy with Christ and dwelling in the holy love of God.

F. E. R.



# READING.\*

(1 PET. II.)

## BELIEVERS OR PRIESTS ?

QUES. Is it not important to recognise that these epistles were written to those who had been Jews ?

F. E. R. I think so. There are many allusions to what had been, to things foreshadowed in Israel and taken up in the church. Here it is the spiritual house, the holy priesthood.

QUES. Is the first chapter the thought of the kingdom ?

F. E. R. I think Peter's object in writing was to fill up certain gaps, to shew that nothing had lapsed. The priesthood and the nation had apparently lapsed ; but the epistle comes in to shew how God had maintained the reality of these things. You get the spiritual house, the holy priesthood fulfilled in Christ's assembly. "I will build my assembly; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The truth of the house was maintained. These things were only foreshadowed in Israel ; the reality of them is found in the church. Aaron and his sons were typical ; you get the antitype in Christ and the

church ; and the same is true of the holy nation, the peculiar people

QUES. I should like to know the character of the service.

F. E. R. It does not, I think, go beyond the capability of the offering priest. It corresponds with Hebrews xiii. where they had not got the tabernacle or temple service, but were to go forth outside the camp, in the place of reproach ; but they had the service of God, spiritual sacrifices.

QUES. Is this on certain occasions only ?

F. E. R. No. It is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. I never could understand the offering of sacrifices in connection with the holiest. The holiest was not the place of sacrifice, though on certain occasions the blood was brought in there. This passage in Peter gives us an insight into the true character of Christ's assembly. You get steps in a way. "He that has called you." "Not redeemed with corruptible things." "Purified your souls." "Born again by the word." "Grow thereby unto salvation." You get all that, but you have not yet come to priesthood. I think the idea of priesthood has been made too small in the great anxiety to insist on the common priesthood of believers. It is God's thought for all, but it is too much to say that all are priests. We are "believers" before we get the thought of a "spiritual

house." The coming to the living Stone is a distinct step. Those who come are outside of what is of man; they are the building of Christ.

QUES. Is Christ's assembly composed of priests?

F. E. R. I think so. It is Christ's assembly, of His kind, as Aaron and his sons. The priestly company has its accomplishment in those who have come to Christ as the living Stone.

QUES. Are they those in verse 3?

F. E. R. They are on the way to it. In Hebrews xiii. we have, "By him let us offer," &c. They are offered by Jesus Christ. In Ephesians we have, "Through him we both have access." You touch God at the present time in the appreciation of Christ. The man who does not appreciate Christ does not approach God except in a formal way.

QUES. Is there liberty for "believers" to take part in the assembly?

F. E. R. Yes; but the point is whether the part they take is as believers merely, or as priests. It may be difficult to determine.

QUES. "To you that believe is the preciousness."

F. E. R. I take it, it is to us He is precious. Everything depends on the light in which Christ is apprehended. You want to apprehend Him as the centre of the company; you come to Him in that light, and in that light we are asso-

ciated with Him. A man who is seeking to prosper in the world has not come to Him as the living Stone, for virtually he does not admit disallowance. It is as having put on the new man that the apostle can speak of saints as elect, holy, beloved. You cannot get at priesthood apart from Christ being the centre of the company. "Ye in me, and I in you." You might have a very good believers' meeting, plenty of rousing hymns and so on, and people mistake this for a happy meeting. I daresay it pleases the flesh pretty much.

QUES. What is tasting that the Lord is gracious?

F. E. R. We appreciate Him. The point is, is the Lord alone good enough for you? People will say they like to have the Lord, but they want a good deal besides. Is He enough for you without anything besides?

QUES. In Matthew xvi. is the assembly a house for dwelling in?

F. E. R. Christ refers to gathering to Himself: it was building His assembly. David built up his own house, or God built David a house: that meant a family. The connection between assembly and house is intelligible.

It is a wonderful thing that the church is identified with Christ in acceptance and in rejection. When He shines out as Sun of right-

eousness He will be precious in the universe—everybody likes the sun—but meanwhile He is precious to us: we are partners in His rejection. In Hebrews, if you go inside the veil, you go outside the camp. The test in our coming together is what we think of one another. It is very important that we come together aright with one another, or we shall not meet the Lord. The Lord meeting us is dependent on the way in which we come together. If we come together out at elbows with one another we are not entitled to think of meeting the Lord. It is a great satisfaction to come together here, where we are necessarily so much separated by our callings, &c. The disciples came to meet one another in the upper room, and the Lord came to them.

QUES. Is it not a great test to come together to meet one another?

F. E. R. I think what seriously affects us in it is undercurrents of feeling. There would be more blessing to others if we were more in the fatness of God's house. People would confess "that God is among you of a truth." If we came together in love there would not be these undercurrents: there ought to be a power in the Spirit to carry us above even the peculiarities of one another. The Lord will not make His presence felt when we are going on badly.

The *ultimate* object is that there may be room for Christ : the *immediate* point is that we meet one another. We have to take into account the strength of the tie that exists among saints. It will necessarily draw us together ; it is a powerful bond that holds us together. Partners in a business come together and are well pleased to meet one another. Everything depends on our appreciation of the bond that holds us together. At Corinth I think they came together in a very loose way.

It is instinctive in the unity of the Spirit to come together. J. N. D. was asked why Christians come together, and the answer was, "Because they cannot help it." To come together in assembly would be perfectly natural if we understood the unity of the Spirit. I do not think the disciples had much difficulty when they came together in the upper chamber ; they came because Christ was such a powerful bond to them. They came with one accord to one place.

M. This has not been a prominent thought among us, but I see its importance.

F. E. R. We come together to meet and touch one another in the unity of the Spirit. You have nothing of the Lord's presence mentioned in 1 Corinthians xi. There is fellowship—the bread and the cup—we express we are one body. Every heart answers to Christ, and it is that

that brings us together. Christ is the bond. I think we are tested by our relation to one another. I am sure we do not respond to Christ if we do not to one another. Where there is estrangement and strong feeling, I doubt if a person should come into the assembly; let such go and be reconciled and then come. Every person is responsible to free himself from such feelings.

QUES. Are we to come together as believers or as priests?

F. E. R. If as believers only, you are very individual; but if as priests, you are living stones come to the living Stone. The first point in coming together is, that you are outside of the world, you also are disallowed, but by the Spirit you are in association with the One who is accepted. The whole universe of bliss hangs on Christ: He is "chosen of God and precious." If you are baptised to Christ you are in a sense disallowed.

QUES. You quite admit that we come together to meet one another *and* the Lord?

F. E. R. Certainly; but our meeting the Lord is dependent on our meeting one another. The presence of the Lord is not a matter of course. We come in affection to one another and expect the realisation of the Lord's presence. My expectation is to meet the Lord. People take it that if you only come together in proper

form, the Lord will be there. I do not believe that. The presence of the Lord is dependent on what we are in relation to one another. It is very possible to come together continually and not have the Lord's presence.

QUES. Would the few who come in a right state be deprived of the Lord's presence?

F. E. R. I would not say so, for the few might save the meeting, and His presence be made good to the two or three, for they morally represent the assembly.

QUES. May we not be edified by the love expressed in a meeting where there is no ministry or gift?

F. E. R. I think in a little meeting there may be fervent affection one to another; while in a big meeting there is often so much under the surface.

QUES. You would not put any hindrance in the way of the assembly to any one who is only a believer?

F. E. R. Certainly not; that is a point that I have desired to make clear. You must take the meeting as you find it; we have to accept it in that way. The priests ought, however, to have the conduct of the service among us. The part that people take in assembly must be according to where they are.

QUES. Is it not a very serious matter to give out hymns beyond the state the company is in?

F. E. R. I think people ought not to give out hymns that are beyond their own state ; the great point is that it should be done from the heart.

QUES. I thought the Lord ordered all this if we are dependent on Him ?

F. E. R. I think it is rather that the Lord joins Himself to us. Everybody is affected by the Lord ; but the thought that I should have with regard to His singing praises in the midst is that He attaches Himself to our praises. Christ is present in and to our hearts ; it is more that thought.

QUES. In connection with the assembly ?

F. E. R. Yes. You have not got to conjure up an imagination.

QUES. But you have scripture for it ?

F. E. R. But it is because He is in us. He is pleased to identify Himself with two or three.

QUES. "I will come to you" ?

F. E. R. That is explained afterwards. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

QUES. In John xx. they were together, and the Lord came into their midst ?

F. E. R. Yes ; but they had not the Spirit. He only came for a little while ; everything was completely changed in the communication of the Spirit. He makes us conscious that He is in us.

QUES. I thought "I will come to you" was a question of visiting ?

F. E. R. Well, it may be that; but the Lord goes on to explain it. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you." He is shewing what would characterise that day.

QUES. You keep up the thought of "I will come to you" as visiting?

F. E. R. Yes; but because we are conscious He is in us: His presence realised. It is because we are in His life. The affections of Christ are in His body. They rest in His body here.

QUES. "We will come unto him"?

F. E. R. That is individual; it is a different thought. It is wonderful that there is a company here on earth identified with Christ. And Christ is precious to the company. "To you that believe he is precious," not to the priests only. There is no believer on the face of the earth to whom Christ is not precious. The real power of Christianity is in the appreciation of Christ; a person will never give that up. Christ is entirely peculiar: a real man; but entirely unlike every other man. He did not do things or speak like any one else. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the assembly because there is appreciation of Christ there.

## CHRIST THE CENTRE OF A SYSTEM.\*

(JOHN XII. 27-37; ROM. VI.)

I THINK it is a great point to apprehend the purpose with which Christ is presented to us. The preaching of the gospel is the presentation of Christ, not merely of the benefits to be obtained by Christ. The gospel is the glad tidings of the Christ, not simply of something *about* Him. The truth is that Christ is the centre of a system which *God has now before Him*, and is presented as the light of that system, and, as such, there is virtue in *Him*. When He was here there went virtue out from Him, and now forgiveness is preached in His name. The setting forth of the virtue that is in Christ is not the end in the presentation of Christ. The point of attraction is Christ Himself. That is why I read John xii. 31, 32. In verse 31 we see one system judged, and in verse 32 another system introduced in the presentation of the Son of man lifted up. When the Lord cast out seven devils from Mary Magdalene virtue went out of Him, but it was to attract her to Himself.

In chapter ix. of this gospel we find that after

\* Address at Devizes.

the Lord had given sight to the blind man, He presented *Himself* to him and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He gave the man sight that he might be attracted to *Himself*. I believe that God's object is to attract every one to Christ, and forgiveness of sins is presented, not to occupy us with the virtue that is in Him but to attract us to Himself. I dare say all will accept this. When the light came into the world it was largely rejected, but there were those who came to it, and in coming to the light they proved that they were attracted by Christ.

The Lord said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." That is Jew and Gentile irrespective of nationality.

Now God is not only drawing men to Christ but attaching them to Him. In 2 Corinthians i. 21 we read, "Now he that firmly attaches us with you to Christ . . . is God." He does so by *the Spirit*. He has communicated the Spirit as living water to this end.

Now Christ has been lifted up from the earth, that He might be the point of attraction for all. He attracts to Himself as One who has died *from* the earth. It has been said that He could hardly have died *on* the earth, it would have been unsuitable that the righteous One who had glorified God on the earth should die on it.

He is lifted up out of it vicariously, and, as lifted up from the earth, draws all to Himself. We have each and all, if believers, in one way or another been drawn to Christ Himself, and He is the Head and Centre of God's system—He is the Sun of that system. That system is founded on redemption, and the Head of that system is necessarily Christ Himself.

In the coming day that system will be brought out into display; but it is already established for God in Christ. He has prepared it in every part, and will set it forth in due time, and it is in connection with that system that we have been attracted to Christ.

I will ask you now to turn to Romans vi. 9-11. I want to give you an interpretation of that passage. Suppose, for a moment, I put "the world-system" in the place of "*sin*" here, and read, "In that he died, he died to the world-system," that would largely convey the idea, for sin is the ruling principle of that system. In the sight of God, every bit of this world-system is sin.

I do not deny that man is under responsibility and in a sense entrusted with government here; but the glory of the world is entirely another thing.

The natural man finds pleasure in the glory of the world, but if you take the whole thing

morally from top to bottom, "*sin*" is the one word that describes it. And why? Because Satan is the god and prince of it, and God has no place in it. If I do, at times, take interest in anything that belongs to the world, I am ashamed of it, for the whole system of this world is enmity against God. The Lord when here would not receive a bit of its glory, though Satan offered the whole of it to Him. Satan got only from Him a rebuke.

People think, and say too, that there is no harm in many things here, but the true way to look at things is in inquiring if this thing or that is of the system of which Satan is the god and prince.

Now the position of the Christian is, that he corresponds to Christ. *He* is the point of attraction, and "In that he died, he died unto '*sin*' [the world-system] once; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Christ has died to sin and to the whole world-system, and we are associated with Him in that death. We reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, that system to which Christ has died. Every Christian properly is to reckon himself as crucified with Christ. On the other hand he is attached to Christ, and that by the Spirit of God, so that he can recognise himself as alive unto God in the system of which Christ is the

head and centre. We are privileged to take that place in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“In Christ Jesus” is an expression of wide bearing. It implies our being in Him as the head and centre of a system, and consequently in correspondence to Him in that system.

Now in the system of which Christ is the head three things will prevail—*Righteousness, holiness and eternal life*. And these three you find here in Romans vi. They are principles which Christ has brought in, and are in marked contrast to the principles that prevail in the system of the world. These may be described as *lawlessness, impurity and death*.

Man is naturally lawless, insubject to rule; he may be outwardly moral and orderly, but he is in mind insubject to God. There is another thing that marks him, namely, *impurity*, and that comes because of the absence of righteousness. And, further, there is death, to which men are universally subject. You do not imagine that, apart from Christ, God is going to relieve man of the consequences of his sin—death? I think it is really a mercy that God allows man to suffer the consequence of his sin in sickness and death. What would the world be morally if it were not so?

Now in the system which God has brought in by Christ, the principle that rules is *love*, and

love is really righteousness in practice. You love your neighbour as yourself. Love being the bond between all, righteousness prevails in every circle. *Righteousness is fidelity in every divinely appointed relationship.* Where fidelity is thus maintained, there is righteousness.

As each planet fulfils its own appointed course in the solar system, so, when the will of God gets its proper place, in every circle *righteousness* will prevail.

Now where there is righteousness, impurity becomes intolerable. In this world-system we are surrounded by it—it is seen in the newspapers, in the placards on the walls, and there has been an immense increase in that way in my time, and the worst is that much is said *not* to be impurity. Now in the universe, which is according to God, impurity will not be tolerated. The principle which will be present in the day when Christ takes up His true position as the centre of the universe of bliss will be holiness. I am quite sure that the judgment of death in a world of sin, is of the wisdom of God, but in the system which is of God, eternal life will rule as the blessed consequence of righteousness and holiness. Now we reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and so are in that system of which He is the Head, the first principle of which is righteousness, and we have to

look to it now, that we do not fail in fidelity in our obligations, and love is that by which those obligations are discharged.

We have to see to it that nothing is allowed that hinders our love being in activity towards God and towards Christ, so that He has His proper place in regard to the saints. And then that in all the relationships in life every obligation is fulfilled. I love my wife, my children, though this is secondary to the relationships which subsist in Christ. Love to God leads to holiness, and in fact you will never reach holiness but in getting under the influence of God's holy love. In true love there is no room for impurity.

Our blessing at the present time takes the form of knowledge. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ thy sent one." And if you want to get into this knowledge the way to it is in being led by the Spirit into the love of God. I believe we can be in spirit entirely outside of this world-system in the knowledge of the Father, and of His sent One Jesus Christ.

May God give us to appraise this world-system according to its real value, and to be apart from it in mind. On the one hand reckoning ourselves dead to it, and on the other alive to God in Christ Jesus. . . . F. E. R.