

LECTURES
ON THE EPISTLES OF PETER.

THE WILDERNESS AND A LIVING
HOPE.

(1 PET. I. 1-13, 23-25.)

I SUPPOSE that all here are familiar with the thought that Christians are looked at in the word of God in two ways. If we take the proper and distinctive portion that belongs to saints as forming the assembly of God at the present moment, they are contemplated as in Christ and united to Christ by the Spirit, and belonging to the heavenly places, as it says: "Made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ." On the other hand, we are looked at as actually in the body down here; still, looked at as the body of Christ nourished and ministered to by the Spirit of God, and yet not actually up there in the heavenly places. It is not only that we

can in spirit know ourselves as belonging to that scene where Christ is, as those who are in Christ and united to Him ; but being actually down here we can regard ourselves as passing along through a scene of contrariety, where God teaches us for our good, and instructs us in the truth of all that to which we are going, and also disciplines and chastens us so that we should not come short of what His purpose is for us. Now it is the latter thought that Peter takes up. He looks at Christians as individuals who are *going* to heaven. What God has converted us for is to bring us into His own purpose, that we should be with Christ in that glory into which He has entered.

I will refer for one moment to another scripture, which will, I trust, make it plain to the youngest here. In the beginning of Hebrews xi. the Spirit of God gives us three great instances of faith, and they are very important for us. I refer to Abel, Enoch and Noah. Now they are all three very simple examples, and they give you the first great leading traits of the faith which entered into the thoughts of God. Of course, the very fact that Abel came to God by a sacrifice supposes that man had fallen and was away from God ; not merely that he had sinned, but that he was away from God. If you remember, the first and

great point that God raised with Adam after he had fallen and sinned, was not what he had done, but the question that was asked was, "Where art thou?" and the fact came out that he was *away from God*. He had gone away from God and had hidden among the trees of the garden. When God said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree?" then Adam made an excuse, and said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." But he could not make any excuse as to his *state*, that he was really afraid of God and away from Him. It was his own conscience that drove him away among the trees of the garden. Now what came out in Abel was that there was a way back to God—a righteous way—and therefore in the sacrifice of Abel, the result of his faith, we get brought out the first great thing with regard to man's approach to God, and that is justification—that a man could be justified. But what for? You may say, to secure himself; no, for God. You are justified so that your conscience should be set free before God, that you should be justified for God; that, as it were, matters between you and God should be clear; there is a way back for the sinner to God, as there was in Abel's case by sacrifice, and he was justified by God on the ground of his faith. But then it has often been said that

though he was justified in respect of what had taken place in this world, yet he was not justified in view of this world but of another. As sinners and departed from God we are responsible in our life down here. If we are brought to the sense that we are sinners, it is sinners in their responsibility to God down here, and therefore justification has to do with our responsibility in this world. Man is not only a sinner but away from God in his responsible life down here, and therefore justification meets the state and condition in which he is; but then if God justifies and brings back to Himself, it is not to set us up in the old state and condition; therefore the moment Abel was justified, that is, that he obtained witness that he was righteous, what took place was that he died, he went out of the world; it was not for this world he was justified. His justification availed him nothing as to this world, for he was slain by Cain; but if he did go out of the world slain by Cain, yet he was not of the world. He had already refused it in taking a contrary path to that of his brother who represented the principles of this world, and he was justified in regard of another.

When you come to Enoch that world comes into view. He could not have walked with God if he had not known the truth of justification.

It may not be mentioned with regard to Enoch, but it had come out in Abel. "He being dead yet speaketh." The point with regard to Enoch is, that man is for God; His purpose is in man. The great object of Satan was to get between man and God. God's purpose could not be frustrated by Satan, He found a way to bring man back to Himself, so that there should be nothing between Him and man; He would make him know, too, that man is for God, according to the words of Proverbs viii., "My delights were with the sons of men." They were not with angels; God did not take up angels. The object of His choice and what God set His love upon was man. You get the same idea in the Epistle of Titus: "For after that the kindness and *love* of God our Saviour *toward man* appeared." It was love to man. It is not that God is not love, and that angels do not know it, but when it comes to this great point, the purpose of God's love, God has been pleased to set His love upon man. In Enoch we see that God's delight was to have man, and man goes to be with God. Enoch walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death. He pleased God, and it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them

that diligently seek him," and you can only come to God by sacrifice—by Christ. Faith has to do with God, it believes that *He is*, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. God delights to reward the faith that seeks Him and counts upon Him. You see in the Lord Jesus Christ that He delighted in the faith that came to Him and drew upon Him. He delighted in the faith that trusted His heart. Take the poor woman that came behind Him. She did not know how Christ would receive her, she was going to steal away with the blessing, for she did not know how she stood with the heart of Christ; but she touched Him in faith, and then Christ lets her know the value in His eyes of her faith: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." He did not say, *I* have saved you, quite true; but He lets her know that her faith saved her, that is, her faith drew upon Christ, and He was delighted that it should draw upon Him, and therefore He says, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee," as much as to say to her, You are perfectly welcome to all the virtue that is in Me. It was the echo of what was in the heart of God. Enoch sought God out, and it pleased God; the blessing that was in the living God Enoch sought, and Enoch got it. He went to be with God. Man is for

God. Do you believe that, beloved friends? It comes out in another way in the Song of Solomon. The first experience is: "My beloved is mine." She has found "in her beloved, so to speak, that which will meet the necessities of her heart, but her thought afterwards is, "I am my beloved's." Is that so? Does it really meet, if I might say it with reverence, the necessity of the heart of God? It is so. That God should have come out to seek man, because there was a necessity in His love; do you believe it, beloved friends? Tell me, dear young Christians here, do you believe the love of God? The love of God to man? I know if you look at yourselves, oftentimes you may say, Well, but I seem this and I seem that, I wonder how God could love me. You may have the sense God can be gracious; but the *love* of God—does God really love man? Yes, it is so, and He came out to seek man, and to win the heart of man, and I may say He delights that the heart of man should seek Him, and should own to Him that He is a Blessor and Rewarder of those that seek Him out. That is the second example of faith and connects itself with purpose, God's thought for man. God has found a righteous ground on which He and man can be together, and faith takes it. Then He makes known to man the thought

of His heart in blessing; that *He is*, and faith desires to be with Him, for the thought in the heart of God is, that man should be with Him, and that as the object of His love.

Now a third thing comes out in Noah—I am not looking at it in a dispensational way: Enoch doubtless sets forth the translation of the church, and Noah the deliverance of Israel—but I am taking it up in a practical way, because I would like the youngest believer to have a sense of what God is to you. If you have been brought to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and to confide in His heart, and know His love, it pleases Him, and He would have you abide in His love. He does not say, you keep on loving me, but He says, “Abide in *my* love.” In Romans viii. it does not say, Who shall separate Christ’s love from us?—we know nothing can—but it says, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Who is going to take us out of the love of Christ? The love of God has been made known to you, and now you come to the third thing. Noah had the sense that the whole scene around was under judgment, and *you* have to go through it; it is still under judgment, but there is a blessed thing, that you can go through it with a sense of the love of God in your soul; it comes out in Romans v., you are brought into peace with God and have the hope of glory;

glory is the purpose of God for us, then the apostle adds: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience," &c., "because *the love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts." This world is a place of trial and difficulty, opposition, and so on; it is a judged scene, but you can go through it with a sense of the love of God in your soul. It has rejected Christ, and it is going on to judgment. The love of God has been expressed in the cross of Christ, and we have to go through it, covered and sheltered in the salvation effected in the death of Christ. Noah knew the salvation of the ark, and we know the salvation of the cross, Christ's death as deliverance from this present judged world. No power can touch us, nor can anything separate us, from the love of Christ. We have to go through this scene as sheltered in the death of Christ; in other words, we are delivered from it by the salvation of Christ, dead to it by His death, and belonging entirely to another in virtue of His resurrection. We pass through this present world to the point of God's purpose, the glory beyond.

I turned aside from Peter to shew you these three things, because I think they illustrate what I desire to bring before you. Peter takes up the fact of our going through this scene to

the glory. It is not that he teaches the peculiar blessings and privileges of the church, but he seeks to lead those who were a people upon earth, believing Jews, to heaven; to separate them from earthly hopes and associations, which they were connected with, and to shew them what their true place was with regard to the scene down here, that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, and on the way to an inheritance that was given to them of God in heaven. Their position down here lay between the sufferings of the Christ and the glory which should follow.

I will take up a few points as briefly as I can, to shew you the way in which the apostle writes to them; he speaks to them as strangers scattered abroad; scattered from the earthly inheritance. The earthly inheritance was Canaan, and I suppose everybody here would understand how a pious Jew's thoughts and heart and eyes turned to Jerusalem, to that centre of earthly hopes, to the country that God had given to their fathers. We all know very well what it is in things here. Supposing a young man goes out to Australia, how wistfully after a time his eyes turn back to the old country and home. Well, much more did a pious Jew's thoughts. For instance, take what Psalm cxxxvii. says: "If I forget

thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Because Jerusalem was to a Jew what England could not be to anybody who belonged to it. It could only be what they call the old country to them; but Jerusalem was God's city, and Canaan was Jehovah's land. It had a speciality about it, and therefore a godly Jew turned back to it in his mind and thoughts; here they were scattered abroad, right away from it all. How had that come about? Under the government of God there was the entirely setting aside Judaism and all connected with it. Israel had despised His grace and goodness, and they came under the hands of the Gentiles. They had killed Christ who would have gathered them, and they were scattered abroad. It was not that these were not Christians, but as Christians they had to suffer even as Christ had suffered. It was not because of their own unfaithfulness, perhaps, but because of the unfaithfulness of the nation. Just as with Caleb and Joshua of old, it was not for their unfaithfulness that they had to wander forty years in the wilderness; but because the nation had to wander, and Caleb and Joshua had to wander with them. They had to come under difficulties and trials, because of the perverseness of the nation; but then what Caleb and Joshua proved really in those forty

years was the faithfulness of God. The power of God had carried them along, so that Caleb could say, "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." (Josh. xiv. 11.) God had kept him and held him; and that we should be here together to-night—what has kept us, and brought us here? Some may have been Christians only twelve months or less; some, five, ten, twenty, thirty or forty years—what has held us, and kept us, but the faithfulness of God? Well, we have to pass through this scene, and these people had to, but though they were scattered abroad, towards what does the apostle lead them? He speaks of them as having been sanctified by the Spirit of God. They had been separated from this present world, and from their own country, not merely by being dispersed, but by the sanctification of the Spirit, and according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Now that was an important thing for these people to understand, that though they were scattered from their earthly inheritance, yet they were elect through a real sanctification of God's Spirit; not merely had they been separated through circumstances, cast out from their own land, and living in all the isles of the Gentiles, but there had been an effectual

separation, a sanctification by the power of the Spirit of God, which brought them unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; just as of old the children of Israel had been separated from Egypt, brought through the Red Sea and separated—sanctified in that way—by the blood of the covenant which was sprinkled upon them, putting them under obedience to law and the leadership of Moses. Now these were put under the obedience of Christ, not of law, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, which really gave them the value of what God would establish under the new covenant. All God's blessing under the new covenant was secured to them by the blood of Jesus, and they were put under obedience to Him to lead them into the purpose of God, that is, heaven. Then he goes on, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." When Israel of old saw all their enemies dead on the sea-shore, God having delivered them out of Egypt, they sang: "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed," and so on—that was their song, and they expressed their hope to be brought in to the mountain of God's inheritance—but what does Paul

tell us in Hebrews? He shews us that they did not hold the confidence and rejoicing of the hope steadfast unto the end, but they fell in the wilderness. The hope was that God would bring them in; they sang of it as those full of fervour and full of hope; but they did not keep the confidence and rejoicing of the hope steadfast to the end, as being in that day companions of Moses, placed under obedience to law. Now these strangers were sanctified to the obedience of Christ, and begotten by His resurrection to a living hope reserved in heaven.

I would like to bring two points before you with regard to that, which have struck me very much. Let me take you for a moment to that day when the Lord Jesus Christ died. We think of it oftentimes as being at such a distance from us—nineteen hundred years ago; and it seems a long way off from people's souls. It is quite true it is brought before us every Lord's day morning—but how far do we enter into it? How far do we enter into the great fact that Jesus died here; that the Lord Jesus Christ has gone out of this world? Never was such a day in the history of this world as when that blessed Man, the Creator of heaven and earth, rejected here, was hung up between earth and heaven. What a moment in the history of eternity! The death of man—

well, he is accustomed to it, man comes and goes, he dies; but that Jesus should die! I am not speaking now of how that death met all our guilt and sin: it did; but I am simply trying to impress you with the great fact that took place in this world on that day of days when Christ was hung up between heaven and earth, and died upon the cross. What must that have been in the sight of God? What was it in the sight of angels? What is it in the history of eternity? Death like a pall settled down on this world. Everything, all the hope of Israel, was gone, so to speak. He who made the earth and heavens, and who can and *will* bring it into blessing by and by—think of it, He died. Man put Him to death, the very Maker and Sustainer of all things—the One in whom every promise and hope was. He died in this world. Now go on three days, and another power visits this world—that blessed Man could not be holden of death. Another day came in—the day of resurrection! Jesus rose. And God gave plenty of witness to His resurrection: a mighty angel descended and rolled away the stone and sat upon it; keepers shrank as dead men; another power came in—they were conscious of it—a power that shook the earth. Think what verities these are, beloved friends, ponder them. The death of

Christ has taken place in this world; the resurrection of Christ has taken place in this world! The power of death broken! How easily we can speak of death and resurrection. How lightly we can talk about it as mere doctrine. People can accept it as a creed! What do you think it must have been to those who stood and looked at Jesus dying? No wonder that Peter says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." Everything went, so to speak, in the death of Christ, all was sealed in death. "We trusted," said the two disciples, "that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done;" but hopes sprung up when He was risen—not hopes in this world—the death of Christ ends all hopes in this world. If your hopes are in anywise connected with the system of this world, all your hopes must be blighted, because all must close in death here. Christ has died; ah! but Christ has risen. And now look what the apostle can say of these Christians: "Begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Oh, what a wonderful thought is now brought out! All the purpose of God is in a risen Man. I do not say that Peter enters into that—unfolds it—but he seeks to lead them on to the ground of resurrection as the ground of all

their blessing. They had to tread the wilderness—but how? Why, in the faith that Christ has risen, Christ has got the victory over death, the inheritance is insured, the power of the enemy is broken; all is secure. If you take Israel in the wilderness, when Balaam seeks to curse them—there are three things which come out with regard to them. In the first place they are *called*—God had separated them to be His people; it is what you get here, sanctified by the Spirit. Then He *justified* them, and the third thing was, He *glorified* them. (Rom. viii. 30.) What Balaam was forced to look down upon was Israel abiding in their tents, all spread out under the order of God. I own it was only a passing picture; there was murmuring in their tents and evil there, and yet if you could abstract yourself, and get on the mountain, so to speak, with Balaam, what a picture you would have seen of the camp of Israel, with the tabernacle in the midst, and the people in the beauty and ordering of God. That was a figure, in a sense, of the glory of God yet to be displayed in the millennium. Instead of all the confusion in the world, the rushing to and fro, every man seeking his own; instead of the corruption, evil, unrest, death and dying—what a day it will be when Christ comes in glory. We shall look down upon a scene

which is all ordered of God. The church will be the tabernacle of God in that day—the new Jerusalem, the centre of the glory; but then Israel will be abiding in their tents according to the order of God. What a day it will be when this world is all spread out under His eye according to divine order, all governed by Christ, and instead of man's will, with hardly time to live, so to speak, because of business, evil, sin, death and dying everywhere, all will be under the beautiful ordering of God. Who brought in all the confusion? The power of the enemy. It is beautiful to see in the Gospel of Luke how the Lord anticipated the casting out of Satan when He saw him as lightning fall from heaven. Satan is the source of all the mischief in this world. And he will be cast out of heaven, that Christ and the church may occupy the place. Now that is the hope of the youngest here. You belong to that scene of divine ordering. You have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ to this living hope! How often you see that people stop at the death of the Lord! How little they see what resurrection has opened out to them! Christ has come out of the darkness of the tomb and has opened a door in resurrection which enables us to look forward to the glories that shall follow. I have brought you to that

point, because it is where Peter sought to lead the scattered people, and to fix in their hearts affection to Christ as the One that had gone into heaven; their inheritance lay there, and he says, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I read the verses at the end of the chapter, and I will be very brief in referring to them, because they give us the way in which we are enabled to enter into the thoughts of God's glory. I would like to ask every one here—the youngest among you—does your heart rejoice in the thought of this one great thing, that you belong to the scene of the glory of God? Do you rejoice that Christ has emerged from all the darkness and death of this world, and is gone into heaven? If you have anything of the system of this world in your heart—it will all go down to death. There is no revival for that system. Christ has emerged from all the darkness and death that came as a pall over this world when He died. Sin having been put away (He would not have risen if it had not), He rose, and that opens the door into another scene—the glories that shall follow. The end of the chapter shews the way into it practically for our souls. If you remember, in Isaiah xl. we

read of the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Mark, it is the wilderness, a solitary place, where, so to speak, no springs of God are—where no life is—all desert and wild, that is what this world is. What Israel found it to be was a land of drought and the shadow of death; there John cries: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord”—the Lord is going to come in. How? The voice said, “Cry.” What shall I cry? “All flesh is grass.” That is how God prepares the way. He must bring down man into the silence of death. He must stop every mouth. Death closes upon all and puts all on one level. The Jew might plead, I am the seed of Abraham! All flesh is grass; Israel might say, we are the favoured people! All flesh is grass. Supposing I come to the Gentiles. Do you mean to say we are alike? A man says, I am the son of a peer—or a man of money and position in the world. All flesh is grass. All flesh is brought into the silence of death. That prepares the way of the Lord. The glory of the Lord can be revealed when He has blown upon the whole glory of man. It does not signify what it is, death covers all. The sooner we accept the truth of the wilderness the better, that it is the place of the shadow of death, and yet “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice

and blossom as a rose;" that is because we have a living hope on the way to the glory. What a wonderful thing for our hearts! Do you believe it? I say to the youngest here, your hope is in the glory. I do not say that you ought to have it there, I say it *is* there. If you only see that Christ risen is a light for your soul between the sufferings and the glory. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." It is the word of the Lord, that all flesh is grass, but the *mouth* of the Lord has spoken, that all flesh shall see the *glory*. This world is going to be filled with the glory of God. Instead of death and evil, resurrection has come in. We are begotten to a *living* hope by the resurrection of Christ. We are begotten by the word of God that endures for ever. The Lord counts upon it that we should not lose sight of Him and the place to which He has gone, and the glory He has secured by resurrection. I wish I could press upon the youngest here to walk in the light of that divine glory which is opened to us by the word of the Lord, and that word can *never, never* pass away. It abides. When it speaks of the abiding word, "the word" does not mean exactly a promise, but it means the *thing* that God has promised. There are certain matters and things of which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and these

matters and things will certainly be brought to pass. The sufferings of Christ the prophets spoke of—they have come to pass. The glories of Christ have not yet come to pass—but they are reported to us now by the Spirit sent down from heaven, and hence the wilderness can rejoice *for us*. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it—all flesh is grass; men come and men go; generations come and go; but the word of the Lord abides for ever. You remember how it was with Israel. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations from everlasting to everlasting thou art God a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday.” But there is the eternal God and the word of the eternal God. And it is not merely that there is that which is promised, but we are born of the living and abiding word of God. What you are born of is that which forms your character. If you are born of Jerusalem above, it forms your character. That you are born of the word of God—begotten again by the resurrection of Christ—forms your thoughts according to that which Christ risen has entered into. Now let me ask you, in closing, does all that the word of God speaks of—the sufferings and glory of Christ—have its place and effect with you?

May the Lord grant it! May Christ be before your souls as the One that having entered

into death and ruin, and broken the whole power of death, has emerged out of the darkness of death, and is about to bring in the glories that God has gotten through Him. We are born of the word of God that we should enter into them to His praise.



NEW ASSOCIATIONS.

(1 PET. II.)

WHAT I desire, beloved friends, to bring before you to-night, as the Lord enables me, is the entirely new set of associations into which the Christian is brought. It may be more difficult for us to enter into them in the present day, because everybody is a Christian nominally. Christianity so-called is all around us, though we must see (if we think) that it has sunk back into a kind of Judaism while it bears the name of Christianity, and that I think greatly confuses people. At the time Peter wrote, there could be no difficulty about the fact that Christianity was not Judaism, and Judaism was not Christianity. There could be no question that the One whom Christians believed in and followed had been put to death by Judaism. Judaism was that which was totally and thoroughly opposed to Christianity. That which bears the name of Christianity has now fallen back into Judaism. Then on the other hand there was heathenism, and that also was totally opposed to Christianity. Now we have neither the one nor the other as they existed in

Peter's day, but we have a Christianity which is corrupted, and fallen into heathen and Judaistic practices, and that makes the difficulty of our day. (See 1 Tim. iv. and 2 Tim. iii.)

Now I hope to shew you from this scripture (at all events in principle, and the Spirit of God alone can enable us to see it) how the Spirit acts with regard to ourselves in the present day. What the apostle really was doing was seeking to lead those who believed away from Jewish hopes and promises, and from things connected with Judaism that had been ordained of God—the services, the priesthood and the sanctuary. Moreover, the Jews as a nation had been taken by God out from the world, and set up as His people, and though Lo-ammi—not my people—had been written upon them, still there was the danger for these Jews still to continue with Jewish hopes and feelings, and not really to enter into what had come to pass in our Lord Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, that is, the end of all hopes for the moment connected with the earth, and the bringing in of heavenly hopes and associations. And that question of association I am persuaded is of all-importance, because all around us there is the outward form of Christianity, and therefore worldly associations are not so easily detected.

I am afraid that with many of us there may

be a great deal of looseness with regard to association. We may have got clear in a certain way of sectarianism; we say, perhaps, that sectarianism is wrong and not according to the mind of God; we may have cleared ourselves through the conflicts that we have had from certain other associations, that is, we may *outwardly* have cleared ourselves; many people, for instance, would not be upon what is called open ground, they have cleared themselves from it nominally; but when we come to the state of our souls in regard to all that is around us, how far are we clear as to our associations down here?

Now the chapter that I read brings out an entirely new system of associations for the Jewish Christians. The subject begins in chapter i.: the apostle addresses them, as we have seen, as begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I did not touch last week on that part of the chapter beginning with verse 17: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of

Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." What I want that every one should see is, that the apostle is not exactly speaking of the blood of Christ as that which blots out all our sins; it does. He does not speak of it as that which redeems us from the world, but he says it redeemed you from Judaism—from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. You see, the precious blood of Christ here is looked at as the redemption-price paid to take them really out of Judaism, and their vain manner of life which consisted in outward things, ordinances, and so on—that is why he calls it an empty manner of life, because it was all in the letter, not in the Spirit. The apostle Paul says, "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." (Heb. ix. 10–12.) The apostle Peter looks at these Jews as redeemed from their old manner of life, which was only a formal religion. You remember what the Lord said to the Pharisees, they made clean the outside of the cup and platter, put a good outside face upon man according to the flesh, but inside they were whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones.

Now it was not merely that these Christians were redeemed from their old manner of life,

but they were brought into an entirely new set of associations; so the apostle goes on to say (verse 22), "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned *love of the brethren*, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." He looks at them as being born again, not of Abraham, but of incorruptible seed. It was necessary in speaking to Jews to take note of their former birth. You do not find being born again spoken of to the Gentiles, because it was not, so to speak, necessary to speak of their former birth. The Jew was born in certain privileges; it was that made the difficulty in the mind of Nicodemus. Was he not born a Jew? How could it be said to him, You must be born again? Therefore the Lord says, "Marvel not that I said to *thee*"—you a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews—"you must be born again." So Peter says here, "being born again." Their birth from Abraham counted for nothing. The death of Christ was the redemption out of Judaism. I know it was for putting away of sins, all that was needed; but more than that, the death of Christ was the righteous way out of Judaism and all connected with this world. But then it brought them into association with "the brethren," that is, with all those that were born of God. In the end of John iv. the question might arise when he

speaks of loving the brethren (because John was no doubt writing chiefly to Jews), who is my brother? who am I to love? because in Christianity it is not merely loving your neighbour (the Lord shews us in Luke x. who is my neighbour), but it is a question of loving *the brethren*, and the question might arise, who is my brother? The Jews would have spoken of their brethren as Jews, children of Abraham; but they were redeemed from that, and who is my brother? John goes on in chapter v.: "*Whosoever* believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him"—no matter who he was, be he Jew or be he Gentile, if *any one* believed that Jesus was the Christ, that man was born of God. Mind you, it is not *how* a person is born of God, but if any one, no matter who, Jew or Gentile, believes that Jesus is the Christ, he *is* born of God; and if we are born of God we love every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ.

One word more with regard to that. I think it must be plain that if anybody believes that Jesus is the One that God sealed and anointed—the one Man approved of God—the Christ—for though at John's baptism hundreds were baptised yet God did not anoint and seal any who were baptised but that one Man—every other man is

turned away from. God could not put His seal upon any man but that one Man, His own dear Son; and if I really believe that Jesus is the Christ, the blessed Man that God approves, the Man that He anointed and sealed, what must be the effect of it? That I have done with the man that was born according to the flesh. I do not mean to say you may not try to cling to it, but in your mind there is a breach with it. You have found the Man that God anointed, and you leave every other association in the spirit of your mind at all events. Other truths may be brought in to free you, but it is the first breach with the man after the flesh. God put His seal upon that blessed Man, and it is the work of God in anybody's soul if they leave the man after the flesh for that Man.

Our association is with such, we love the brethren, we have found a new company. If you look at the middle chapters of Luke's gospel, you will find that the Lord was really leading His disciples into this new association. He was forming them into a company, outside the earth, with heavenly hopes, and that is what Peter takes up. He speaks of a company with heavenly hopes, they are begotten again to a living hope, their inheritance is above, they are looking for the glory of the Lord to come in and fill the earth, and their living associations

are with those who are born of God—they love the brethren. Now let me ask every one here—Are these our associations? Perhaps I had better say—when I speak of “the brethren,” that I do not mean those who are called “brethren” now; I mean those who are born of God, those that believe that Jesus is the Christ. There is a new company now upon this earth that God has formed, and these are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s work is in their souls, and by the blessed Spirit of God He has sealed them in connection with the one Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive from the dead, who passed through death that He might redeem us out of this present evil world; and as to the Jew, redeemed them out of their vain conversation received by the tradition from their fathers. Now our living associations are with the brethren—that is, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—we are to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Where can we let out our hearts in this world? We can to those who are Christians. If you go through the world you have to keep your heart with all diligence—you cannot let your eyes look *this* way or *that* way; If I do, I get entangled with this or that object in the world. I have to look straight on and keep my heart with all diligence. I dare not let my heart

out, so to speak; but when you come to the brethren you need not be afraid of loving them too much. You dare not let your heart out here even to relations if they do not believe in Christ, lest they carry you into the world. There are all kinds of ways around us, but Christ is our only way. There are associations for doing good, to further benevolence and a thousand things which embrace all kinds of people, and one has to pass through this scene guarding oneself. If Christ died, He broke every link with this world, and if He is risen again, every link is formed in resurrection. Therefore we have to guard ourselves as we pass through this scene. If our living links are with those who belong to Christ and confess His name, we may not be afraid of loving them too much—we can let our hearts out to the saints, and that is the value to us of the house of God. It is the home of divine affections, and of *His* compassions.

In chapter ii. the apostle carries on the thought of the house of God, and brings us, not merely to the fact of loving the brethren, but to their being built up in Christ as a *spiritual* house. It is that which now forms the character of the house of God. A Jew would have said—the temple is the house of God; and to-day what people regard oftentimes as the house of

God are all the various churches and chapels ; but the house of God, as here, is composed of living stones built up upon the Living Stone, and in it we find our place of association. Our attractions are centred in the house of God, and that is a most important point for us.

If one looks at the Psalms, one feels ashamed as to oneself to see how in that day there could be such things written as in Psalm xxvii. : “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” Look at the desires of the psalmist : he understood that the house of God was the place where God manifested Himself, where the blessing of Jehovah’s name was known. The Spirit of God revealed things in connection with Jehovah Himself who dwelt there. Is there less now ? Are not the living stones builded together the place where the Spirit of God dwells — the One who has come down to bear witness to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ ? It is a spiritual house where the blessedness that results from the revelation of God in our Lord Jesus Christ is known. Now, beloved friends, is that where we want to be, offering up spiritual sacrifices ? “ They that dwell in thy house will be still praising

thee." Where is our place of association continually? Where are our interests? What we find here as to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, is that they come to the Living Stone to be built up. In the Lord Jesus Christ God has laid a foundation, and is building a new structure. Once He laid the foundation, the corner stone, of this world, and the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, and it yet will be filled with the glory of the Lord. Then there was the manifestation of God in the tabernacle of old, which was a figure of the universe; but now God has laid a foundation stone, a chief corner stone, on which He is building up living stones and forming a structure so that they shall be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Let me ask every one, Where really are our hearts? Are they associated with God's work in Christ? When God brought Israel out of Egypt, the great centre of everything to them was the tabernacle. Why? Because God dwelt in it. He said, I brought you up out of Egypt that I might dwell among you. God wanted them round Himself, and they had in the tabernacle the manifestation of all that He could make known of Christ in type and shadow, it was a

figure of good things to come, the setting forth of heavenly things. They did not understand it, but there it was for them. All that has passed, and now God has laid a foundation stone, as He says, "elect, precious," and he that believes on Him shall not be ashamed—there will be no passing away of that building. The temple of old was set aside, and God forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh; but the foundation that God has laid abides. That is why the Lord says to Peter in Matthew: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I think it is a most wonderful thing, that although outward things may fail, the real living work of God in souls abides, and what is built up upon Christ never can fail. So that there is even to-day in the power of the Spirit of God an impregnable fortress against every power of Satan.

The power of Satan to-day is used to nullify the truth of God by leading the saints into false associations. The great evil of to-day is the doctrine of Balaam; it is brought out in the epistles to the seven churches, it taught unhallowed associations with the world; it is that which is corrupt and idolatrous. There may not be the actual denial of the true God, but the form idolatry now takes is the denial of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of old

it was the denial of the true glory of Jehovah; to-day it is the denial of the true glory of Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God. Take, for instance, the Roman Catholic system; as to orthodoxy it holds that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but what it puts forward is, that He is the Son of Mary. The glorified Man in whose face God's glory shines for us is not confessed, and the truth is falsified, it is the idolatry of to-day. Then, on the other hand, there is that which is untrue as to association, and the two must go together. If I do not really see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God—if He gets in any way lowered in one's own mind, then we shall certainly be careless as to our associations. The church is built really on the *confession* of Christ's glory as the Son of God (Matt. xvi. 16-18), and that forms an impregnable fortress against the attacks of Satan. There always will be while the church is here that which the Spirit of God has effected in souls. Outwardly you may see the church broken up, yet there is the work of the Spirit of God, living stones do come to Christ, and they get built up, they may not understand much about the doctrine of the house of God, and so on, but after all there is this work of God going on, building up saints in Christ, forming and fashioning them for the spiritual house. By-and-by all

the work of God will come out in glory. We then find that every stone will be put in its place in the temple of God, and there will be the full manifestation of the glory of the Son of God, and the light of God's glory that shines in Him will come out in the church in that day; but the great point is, that now we have a new association—we belong to the holy priesthood of the house of God, we are built up upon Christ, the Living Stone, that is, He is the One that God has chosen, elect and precious. He is the Son of the living God, and the knowledge of the glory of His person is the peculiar treasure of the church. How blessed that is! Would to God our souls were more in the light of it! It is not merely that we know Jesus as a Saviour—that He died for our sins—but we are in the light of His glory.

If any one had asked a godly Jew about the temple, he would have said, That temple is connected with the glory of Jehovah. When the Son was here He took the place of the temple. (John ii. 19, 21.) His whole business was to set forth the Father—to maintain the glory of God. Everything He did was pleasing to God. Nothing that He did or said that was not for God's pleasure. Therefore He is the One that God has chosen for a foundation, in whom Christians should be built up a spiritual house, where

spiritual sacrifices should be offered up, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

But you have to remember another thing, that the Living Stone chosen of God is *disallowed* of men. It is not that people do not take the name of Christ, but the stone that God has chosen is the stone that of old times the builders refused—Christ and His glory as Son of God is disallowed of *man*; and let me beg you, beloved young Christians here, do not be deceived, because the name of Christ is professed, because you may hear it spoken of oftentimes very *feelingly* in a human way; the flesh does not love Christ, *your* flesh does not love Christ; man's flesh does not love Christ. Distrust your own heart, and think of this "disallowed of *men*, but chosen of *God* an precious."

I pass on to another point, which is more connected with the kingdom. I have brought you to the association of Christians as brethren, and shewn you how that is connected with the house of God. It is a spiritual structure built on the stone disallowed of men but chosen of God. Now we come to what is properly connected with the kingdom. The apostle goes on to say (it is a quotation from Ex. xix.): "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the virtues [excellencies] of him who

has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." It is what God proposed to Israel. If they would keep His laws, then they should be to Him a kingdom of priests—what is here called a royal priesthood. Peter is not now speaking of a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, but of a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession—that is the force of a "peculiar people." They were to be those who should shew forth the excellencies of Him who had called them. That is the character of saints, as in the kingdom—some may say, perhaps, What do you mean by being in the kingdom? I mean that we are under subjection to Christ as Lord. While we live down here we are passing through this wilderness world for so Peter looks at us—he speaks of us as "strangers and pilgrims." In one sense we are at home in the house of God. The only place where we are at home is among the saints in the love of the brethren because home for us while in the wilderness is in the affections of the saints. Otherwise we are passing through this world as pilgrims and strangers, and as in the wilderness we are subject to the Lord—to the will of God, and have to shew forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Perhaps a figure from the Old Testament may help one to see it. When the tabernacle was set up and its services were going on, you see there in figure the house of God, the place where priesthood was exercised and the sacrifices were offered. But when Israel journeyed, then the tabernacle was taken down, and the different vessels were covered over with certain cloths, and they were carried by Israel through the wilderness. For us it is carrying the testimony of *Christ* through this wilderness world as we move on towards heaven. When holy vessels were carried by the Levites in Israel, cloths of blue and purple and scarlet were put on. This was to shew figuratively the excellencies of Christ. Certain characteristics were connected with the various vessels of the sanctuary, and Israel were connected with those characteristics as a holy nation and kingdom of priests, setting forth the excellencies of Christ that were figured in the cloths of blue, purple and scarlet, and fine linen, as they moved through the wilderness. That was God's ordinance, though all failed in the hands of the people. Now it is not in vessels and cloths but in ourselves that the excellencies of Christ should be seen. The idea is before us in Ephesians iii. Of old the great central point of the testimony of God was the ark, a golden box with the testimony of God

in it, its resting-place was in the sanctuary; but the testimony now of Christ—where is it? Christ is the great testimony of God. Where is the resting-place now of the testimony of God? Not in a golden box, but in the hearts of His people: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” Ephesians ii. speaks of the house of God; chapter iii. the mystery that is in the house—the testimony; the mystery of Christ is deposited in the house of God. But Christ dwells in *the affections* of His people—not in a golden box as of old. When we are looked at as strangers and pilgrims going through the wilderness, it is not that there are certain beautiful cloths put upon the holy vessels, but the character of Christ is seen in the deportment and demeanour of Christians. Priesthood supposes that you are connected with the things of God. It may be a royal priesthood as distinct from a holy priesthood, but still the idea is that you are connected with the things of God, and the royal priesthood shews forth the virtues of Him that has called us, in demeanour walk and ways, as being light in the Lord, passing along as those connected with the tabernacle of God. These are our associations. We must not forget that our associations are with the sanctuary of God and His things, through the redemption of our Lord Jesus. Do

you believe that the blood of Christ has redeemed you from your old associations and associated you with the things of God? As the blood was put upon the ear and thumb and great toe of the leper, or on the priest, it was not only separation from all that was unsuited to God, but it was association with all that into which the blood of redemption brings the people who are redeemed. It is a great thing to be in the sense of the blood of Christ as the redemption power that brings us into association with everything that is of God. In our daily walk as pilgrims and strangers, we should be what we sang in the verse just now, "as hireling fills his day," &c.—a redeemed holy priesthood indeed, but carrying the testimony of the Lord. We ourselves are those who treasure Christ in our hearts, and then it comes out in our walk and ways. You get the idea of it in Luke's gospel (chap. xi.), where it says, "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light."

Then, as being in the kingdom, we get our relationships in regard to everything; "having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of

visitation." No doubt these believing Jews were among heathen Gentiles—he speaks to them in that way, and they were to shew by their good works that which would be for God's glory in the day of visitation—the day when things are looked into. It may be the judgment-seat of Christ, or it might be in this present time. There will be a day, and there is a day, when God looks into things. He may intervene at any time. I do not doubt He intervened in a way at the destruction of Jerusalem, to set aside Judaism, and to shew that He loved the church, and to establish the church as the testimony for Him, not in the way man has established it, but as the light for Him down here.

There may come a day of looking into things by God at any time. You get in the church of Philadelphia: "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." There is a day when God decides between what is of Him and what is not. You may walk through this world disallowed of men—people do not care for subjection to Christ, you have to walk in separation to Christ—but the day will come, you may depend upon it, when those who have been true to Christ will be vindicated. There is a day of looking into things,

and there may be a day of vindication even here, and if not here, at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Then you get our relationship to the powers that be—they were to be subject to the Gentile powers as ordained of God; they were to submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king. The apostle is really taking up the question of subjection "for the Lord's sake."

Next we have those who are most set in the place of subjection, servants (slaves). He speaks to them as being "servants of God." I suppose they were Jews, and it must have been truly galling to them to be slaves to Gentile masters. It does not say that they were to claim freedom, for it was not a question whether slavery was right, but they were to follow in Christ's footsteps, it formed an opportunity for them to shew the praises of Him that had called them. Supposing you and I had more the thought that we were really set to carry the testimony of God through this wilderness. Just think for a moment of the march of Israel. I know they murmured and turned back, but I want you to see it in the mind of God. According to divine order they were to go through the wilderness, but protected by God, carrying those vessels, with all the holy cloths. What a

spectacle they ought to have been. Keep that in your mind's eye, and say, We are that people now, only not carrying material vessels with material cloths, but what those vessels signified—all that was of God; setting forth the excellencies of Christ as we go along to that scene where they all belong. Those were patterns of things in the heavens. We are strangers and pilgrims, and have the testimony of heavenly things in Christ Himself, but it is in our ways, deportment, and demeanour that it is seen—gentleness, graciousness and long-suffering, righteousness, truth and purity, and so on. All these are to come out in us down here. A poor slave had the opportunity of shewing his fidelity to Christ, and if he was illtreated, Christ had been illtreated: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” Perhaps one has to bear wrong in this world, but you do not take it up yourself. By-and-by there is a day of looking into things, and the offender will have to settle with the Lord. It is a great thing to commit oneself to Him that judges righteously, not to vindicate oneself in any way; Jesus did not when He was here. He did not please Himself, and the reproaches of them that reproached Jehovah fell upon Him. It is a great thing to be reproached for Christ's sake in any wise.

In the next chapter we come to wives—they are in the place of subjection, and there you get the same great idea, deportment and demeanour, and a life formed by the word. The man may more be set to carry the vessels, so to speak, and the woman is set in subjection to the man, but in her own sphere, in her deportment and ways and manner she can set forth Christ. All that belongs to the kingdom of God. Is Christ precious to us? Have we seen His beauty, the glory of the Son of God? Has that become the light of our souls? Have you ever seen in spirit the glory of the Son of God? Well, if you have, everything else looks dim.

I conclude by reading one verse: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” Think of it, what we are called to is *blessing*, and in the sense of it, it is a small thing that we should suffer anything that appears contrary. Oh, may the brighter thought that we are set for Christ down here fill our hearts and enable us to go on through this scene giving glory to Him!



THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

(1 PET. III. 8-22; IV. 1-11.)

IN the former part of this epistle we have seen that Christians are viewed as strangers here, but begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. They are passing through this world as those who stand between the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow; it is not yet revealed, and consequently we are here for a time, and more or less we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. The scene through which the Christian is passing is under judgment, but he is sheltered from it as being covered by the death of Christ. It is where Christ suffered and died, and hence it remains a place of suffering and death; but Christ's death becomes a shelter for the Christian, as the ark was to Noah, and his hope is in heaven. Peter does not develop the purpose of God, nor speak of our being made to sit down in heavenly places in Christ, but he seeks to lead saints on to heaven, that they might have it as the hope before them. Heaven with Peter lies at the end, he does not bring out the truth of our being united to Christ as the glorified Man, by the Spirit of God;

but he seeks to lead a people from earthly and Jewish associations to heavenly hopes. Then in chapter ii. and the beginning of chapter iii. I sought to shew that we are brought, during this interval between the sufferings and the glory, into a wholly new set of associations here below. Of course that was a special point for the Jews, because their associations as the people of God had been, in a way, formed by God; but, as we read in John x., Christ having left the Jewish fold by death, He leads His sheep out of it. So here Peter takes up the service, and, as a shepherd, leads the sheep out of the old Jewish associations into a wholly new set of associations—there is unfeigned love of the brethren, and in chapter ii. a new structure, of which they were part, as built up upon Christ, the Living Stone, and so on.

In the verses I read to-night we come to another point which I feel is of the greatest importance, and which I trust the Lord may enable me to bring before you, and that is the present government of God in this scene whilst we are still between the sufferings and the glory of Christ. I do not doubt there are two ways by means of which God forms us; I might say that there is a third, but there are two great means by which God disciplines us and forms us. One of them is in chapter i.,

that is by the word of God: "being born again of the word;" and one idea connected with that is, that it certainly gives you character. If a man was born a Jew, all his thoughts were naturally Jewish; if we are born of Jerusalem above (Gal. iv.), naturally our thoughts are connected with heaven. If we are born again by the word of God revealing the world to come and the glory of Christ, naturally we take our character from it through the word of God. But there is another important thing by which we are disciplined and formed, the holy government of God in the scene down here. The Book of Job brings that out in a very remarkable way, shewing us the discipline of God with one man, and how that man was formed under the hand of God, in order that he might not merely rest in the mercies of God, but that he might know the God of all his mercies; for that is the great object of the discipline of God, that we should be brought to know Himself. I daresay many have been struck with the way in which Peter dwells in his second epistle on the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. As we pass along through the wilderness where we are tried and disciplined, the effect of it is, that we know God better and our hearts get drawn to Him; therefore the present holy government of God with us is of great value to

our souls. I do not doubt that the great thought of God with regard to us is to bring us into His purpose. God has before Him the great thought of our being with Him. We have seen that He has not only opened a way by sacrifice in order to approach Him, but we also saw with regard to Enoch that man was to be with God, for His purpose is in man, he is the being in which He is going to be glorified through eternal ages. His purpose towards us is to bring us into all the blessing that He has established in His own blessed Son : His Son became a man in order that it might be established in Him. Even in our daily life down here, we can take the mercies that we give thanks to God for every day, food and raiment, and so on, and receive them from the hand of God in connection with His purpose toward us. His providential care feeds the sparrows ; but what does He say to us ? Ye are of more value than many sparrows. We are of value to God—and why ? because His purpose is about us. He is going to be glorified in us.

What a thought it is ! Take a man, for instance, like the dying thief—steeped in every crime and defilement—and think that God should make out of such a man a vessel for His praise through eternal ages. Is it not wonderful ? Now God never forgets that pur-

pose—and His word has come to us to form us, and the discipline of His hand also comes to us day by day. It may be in the household duties, or in the daily business, that God's gracious discipline comes in to form us. We are conscious not merely of providential care, but that *God* can feed and protect and care for us and guard us in view of His purpose for us. Do you remember what the Lord said to His disciples after the parable of the rich man who said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater"? He said, "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." The word "life" there is the word used for the soul, it refers to the seat of a man's actual life down here, the soul; the living part of man as distinct from the body that dies. The Lord says, it is *more* than meat. The soul is not to be kept alive by mere food, the soul is worth more than that; the soul is the place where God works, in order that He may form something that shall be for His eternal praise. And the body is more than raiment, God clothes the lilies, and will He not clothe us? But the body is more than raiment. Why? Because it is going to be changed and fashioned like to Christ's body of glory, we shall be conformed to the image of His Son; therefore the body is of great

value to God. If God thinks of us in that way, we can take our food and raiment with the thought of God's purpose with regard to us. Is not that a blessed thought?

In speaking of God's government of this world, God was pleased to set up His direct government in Israel, and so direct was it that He overthrew every enemy for them; He interfered for them in this way and that way. That is not so now. He governs in the world providentially now, not by direct intervention as when His throne was established in Zion. His throne now is in the heavens, and thus the government down here is providential in respect of the world, but the principles of God's government are still in favour, as always, of the righteous. That is a point we have to remember, and consequently they will get food and raiment; but then what God would have with regard to us is this, that we should not be merely trusting in His care, but that we should be in nearness to Him, in the consciousness of having been brought to Him. I think oftentimes that many of us are in a sense two kinds of people; in business and our daily concerns we think of ourselves as being one kind of man, and when in the assembly another kind of man, instead of regarding ourselves as always Christians. Do we walk through this world

with the consciousness of the care of God, and know that His holy government is in favour of the righteous ?

There is a third thing here : " His ears are open unto their prayers." The word of God and prayer go together in christian experience. The communications of God have come to us in Christ, and by the Spirit they have been recorded for us in scripture ; but there is another thing, that we are privileged to draw near to God, not merely as to our needs, we can ; but prayer is a wonderful privilege for us, we can get near to God in the sense that we have access to Him, that He has brought us to Himself ; when we have no special need we can speak to Him. Every want we can lay upon His throne, for His government is in favour of the righteous ; but what I want to press is the unspeakable privilege of speaking to Him. If we knew that better, what a sense we should have of nearness to God ; we can talk to one another, and we often speak about the latest intelligence and those kind of things ; but what I would like you to see is, the unspeakable privilege of our being able to speak to God, and if we were accustomed to that you may depend upon it, our words with men of the world and with one another would be very different. The very fact that we were

accustomed to speak to God would have a great effect upon us, just as continually listening to His word, whether we read it for ourselves, or in our family, or when we are assembled together, would affect us. If we are accustomed to listen to His word, and also to speak to Him, it would beget a spirit of dependence in us, and the sense that we have been brought into nearness to Him.

Now we come to another point with regard to those to whom Peter wrote, they were a feeble few in the midst of a great professing system; and we are much in the same state in these last days, true Christians have to take the place of a remnant. A remnant are those who refuse to go with the mass of mere professors; they see and confess the failure of God's people, in the light of the original standing; to make anything of ourselves, would be to deny the ruin. For fifty years I have not had a question in my mind as to the pathway I am in; but supposing that everything was true and real with us, it would not become us *to say* we were anything. What should mark us is keeping Christ's word and not denying His name. To the church of Philadelphia the Lord said: "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, *which say* they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make

them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Mark those words "*which say,*" and supposing that we were to say that we were anything, in principle and spirit we should be like them. It is not what we say, but what we are; when we see what should characterise Christians in the sight of God, then the great thing is to seek grace that we may be it.

Now I return to the point that in that day they were a feeble few, and they had to set their faces against the stream—it was Judaism in that day, it could boast of its temple and services in the face of a feeble few who were trusting in a crucified Man, whom the world, the Jews, had cast out. The apostle refers them to Isaiah, where the prophet anticipates the moment of Jewish apostasy; there was an attempt to form a confederacy apart from the house of David, in order to withstand their enemies; then the feeble few who were true to Christ (for it is the Spirit of Christ in the remnant) were not to fear the fear of the others who were afraid of the Assyrian, nor join the confederacy, but "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear." Beloved friends, are we sanctifying the Lord in our hearts? It goes on, "And he shall be for a sanctuary." Do we know, as it were, that

though the direct government of God has not come in, and the glory is not manifested, yet after all, the Lord is a sanctuary? Blessed thought for our hearts! Nothing in this world is stable; everything is failing and giving way. Not the Lord. The Lord is our sanctuary, and though outwardly there is no direct intervention, and the day of glory has not come, wickedness is not yet put down, yet the Lord is our sanctuary. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him," though He does not yet bring all into subjection; meanwhile, it may be, although the government of God is in favour of those who are righteous, that we may have to suffer for righteousness, because evil is in the world and power has not intervened to put it out. If God did intervene, He would have to close everything up, the day of His long-suffering would be over at once. Abraham in his day had to wait, for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. God did not intervene at once to give Abraham the place that He had promised him, because He was still bearing with the iniquity of the Amorites. It may be, because God does not yet intervene to put down evil, that trouble may come, and we may be called on to suffer for righteousness; but the Lord says: "Happy are they which are persecuted

for righteousness' sake." Satan may have power here, but we belong to the kingdom which is established in righteousness, and we may have to suffer for that.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to look beyond all the power of Satan in this world, and to see that, after all, God is upon the throne. God uses everything we pass through, trial and difficulty, for our chastening; even if it be the opposition of the enemy, God can turn it to our profit though there may not be immediate relief, but there is God's end. When God chastens anybody, He can do it in various ways; Job's greatest chastening was from the unkind and unjust words of his three friends; in other words, it was from man. Satan had thrust sore at him, but he got his greatest trial from man. When Elihu speaks to him as an interpreter, he says, when God speaks to a man it is that *He withdraws him from his purpose*, and it is with this in view that he is laid aside on his bed. God uses to this same end the opposition of the enemy and all the difficulties we may encounter; His discipline checks our will, it hides pride from us. We form plans: a young man, for instance, may have before him the thought of getting on in this world; then perhaps illness comes along and it checks him. He withdraws man from his purpose; he may

have had this and that in his mind; but God says, I have another thought in my mind for you. He may check us in all *our* purpose, in order that He may make known *His* purpose to us: all that is blessed for us, and all connected with His government in our life down here.

But the apostle touches another point—suffering for sins. You may suffer for righteousness, but you ought not to suffer for sins; and why? Because Christ has once suffered for sins. In Israel there was the government of God in respect of sins, and so there is in a certain way now. That I do not doubt. The Epistle of James contemplates the case of one who is sick, and it says, “Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil . . . and the Lord shall raise him up, and *if he hath done sins*, they shall be forgiven.” So in the church at Corinth, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you.” There is that holy government of God, but a Christian ought not to come under it and suffer for sins, for Christ has *once* suffered for sins. In Israel the government of God will culminate at the close in the great tribulation, not only for breaking the law, but for crucifying Christ, and resisting the Spirit. The righteous in that day will have to suffer, but *we* know what they will

not know, and that is, Christ having taken up that question and suffered for sins. Israel will not know it till after the tribulation, but the righteous remnant will get the sympathy of Christ in the tribulation, because He has gone through their sorrow under the government of God; but we know that He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, so that the one who knows Christ as having suffered, ought not to suffer for sins. He ought only to know the government of God as discipline, helping and in favour of him. Christ having suffered for us in in the flesh, says the apostle, "arm yourselves . . . with the same mind." God has to bring us to that point. He could not let His Son go into all that suffering for sins and let us be indifferent to them. He cannot let us go on with sin in any wise. He must have us in accord with Christ's mind. Christ suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It will be finally and fully by-and-by, but even now we are brought to God in our consciences. It is a wonderful thing that I can let God have a place in my conscience. Because Christ has suffered for sins I am not afraid of God coming into my conscience. Adam had a conscience and was afraid to let God in, but we can let God into our conscience; as it says, "the answer of a good conscience

toward God," our souls are brought to God with a good conscience. We are not *actually* with God yet, but as to all conscience work and place with God, Christ having suffered for sins, we are brought to God with a good conscience. That is a most blessed thought for our hearts.

Then he takes up that of which baptism is the antitype. It is remarkable that Peter does not refer to the Red Sea; Paul, when writing to the Gentiles, connects baptism with the Red Sea; but Israel had actually gone through the Red Sea, and therefore Peter does not refer to that again. He takes them up on far wider ground before ever they were a nation, when God in the flood condemned *all flesh*. That did not so much come out at the Red Sea, what happened then affected only the Egyptian: the enemy was overthrown, and the redeemed went out free; but what came out at the flood was, the end of *all flesh* came before God. Noah and his family were saved, they came through the judgment sheltered in the ark. So the little company in Peter's day were saved from the judgment of the ungodly nation by baptism; in it they had been identified with the shelter of Christ's death, and, as to their conscience, were brought to God; it was not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, as in the flood; so to speak that washed away all the filth of the flesh; the old world was

full of corruption and violence, and it was all washed away by the waters of the flood; but now Christians were brought to God in their consciences. The flesh is truly condemned in the cross of Christ; but the point before us is not exactly the sweeping away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience *towards God*. When Christ died there was the end of all flesh before God, and we have a good conscience before God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; we are put on a new platform by baptism to Christ's death, not occupied with the putting away of evil, it is put away in the cross, but with Christ gone into heaven. The apostle carries on that thought in the next chapter: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

What we all want, as we go through this world, is to have *our minds* brought into accord with the cross of Christ. We need to see how God in His holy government about sin dealt with Christ upon the cross; the whole question of sin and evil was gone into before God, that He might bring us out of it all, and connect us by faith with Christ risen. Christ having suffered for sins, God's government should have nothing at all to say to us about sins; but then we

have to arm ourselves with the same mind. That is, we should not suffer for sins; Christ did that, but we ought to have that mind which Christ had when He suffered in the flesh. Then follows an abstract statement: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." If our minds are in accord with what took place in the cross of Christ, He suffered for us in the flesh, we cease from sin, the restless will ceases. People treat sin as though it were a question of debt; if the debt is paid, the sins are not against me any longer, I am free; but how am I free? By the cross. But do you believe that sin brought *suffering* to Christ? Do you believe that Christ suffered? Sin and suffering go together. Christ *suffered* in the flesh. "Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Can I allow the flesh then? Can I allow its will? If so, certainly I have not ceased from sin, a point of rest from the will of the flesh is not reached. You constantly see souls that in a way are always in a struggle with sin; but that is not rest, though I would rather see a soul in struggle with sin than going on carelessly. We have not actually suffered in the flesh, but we have to take Christ's mind home to ourselves, and then we suffer in the flesh, and its will is not allowed. The flesh in us can be light and careless about sin, but Christ suffered and did no sin. The flesh in us is lawless, but

He loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; He bore the judgment of sin, but in doing so He suffered, and we have to arm ourselves with that same mind in order that we may go through this world as those who have been brought to God with a good conscience, and have ceased from sin. Paul shews us that it is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body in order that we may live. Peter brings us to Marah ; we take home the death of Christ to our souls ; it is bitter to the flesh, but we know the love of Christ in suffering for our sins, and that makes it sweet.

It is by the death of Christ that we have done with the world of flesh. In that day the Jews were the religious part of the world-system, and the Gentiles were the openly ungodly part, and Christians were no longer of it. It had perished once in the flood ; but *we* see it judged in the cross of Christ, and we are brought to God outside of it. Nothing can be more important for us than the sense of God's holy judgment with regard to the flesh, hence the apostle goes on to say : " For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." I do not doubt he is referring to the Old Testament saints who had

died. The promises and the testimony of the prophets were gospel to them, and though as to the flesh they died, for the sentence of death is on all flesh, yet there was that which enabled them to live spiritually to God in a new system of things. It was not brought in, still their hearts could live in it through the Spirit of Christ's testimony in that day. We see what they did not see—judgment of sin in the cross of Christ, and we can arm ourselves with the same mind. Finally, the apostle says, "The end of all things is at hand." It is wonderful how Peter carries us on, as in the second epistle also, to the final issue of the government of God. He refers to the millennium in what they saw on the mount of transfiguration; but he carries us on to the final issue of God's way—a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. So he says, "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." How I would desire for every one of us that our hearts may be in the sense of the favour of God, as those brought near to Him, and who can speak to Him as He speaks to us in His word.

May we be in the sense of the grace that keeps us day by day through our pilgrim pathway for His own blessed purpose. The Lord grant it.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND DIVINE POWER.

(2 PET. I.)

THERE are two leading thoughts in this chapter. Evidently the last verses that we read point on to the Lord's coming and the day of glory. The apostle speaks in the first part of the chapter of things which pertain to life and godliness, and these things enter very much into christian experience. We are going onwards towards the glory, but then while we are going on towards glory there is a life of godliness down here. We get the same idea in Titus; Paul speaks of himself as an apostle, "according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;" but he adds, "in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." There we get that which lies at the end—eternal life, which God promised before the world began; but also the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is according to godliness. That word is often translated piety. I rather like the word "godliness." I

do not say it exactly represents the word in the original language, but it brings in the thought of God, and that is just, for piety must bring God into all it has to do with. If you remember, in the psalm the idea given of a wicked man is, "God is not in all his thoughts." That is why I rather like the word godliness, because it brings in the idea of a life which has to do with God, even in the ordinary details of our conduct down here, and that is very important for us.

Now I desire to look at these two things in detail, because our life down here is in a kind of way an education. The education is, I doubt not, in the knowledge of God. How far, beloved friends, we have gone in the school of God I do not know, but I put it before you that our christian life down here is looked at in view of the glory; our education down here is in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; that is what this second Epistle of Peter greatly dwells upon. We get the secret of godliness brought out in the Epistle to Timothy: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." What I understand by that is the hidden motive power, the secret spring of godliness. If you had asked a godly Jew, What is the secret of piety? he would have spoken at once of a man who meditated in

the law of God and walked according to it. Like we read of Zacharias and Elisabeth, who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless. It is a *secret* spring, a mystery, because the world does not see or know the motives upon which a Christian acts. The world has no idea that there is a hidden spring of life which governs the Christian, he walks by faith—the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. There is a Person in heaven that he knows, and the faith of that Person who loved him and gave Himself for him is what governs him down here.

People nowadays do what never was done in Israel, and that is, they put up the tables of the law in places of worship. That was not done in Israel; they were put in the ark; never set up in the camp. People put them up publicly as if they were a rule of life which they had competency to keep. Beloved friends, the *secret* of godliness with any soul is Christ, Christ who has been here, but who is now in glory. Those are the two great elements. *God* has been manifest in the flesh, and the other side of it is, that *man* is in the glory of God. This world is not according to godliness. The great secret of piety is, that *God* came into the world. It is not now that He sent a law into the world, but

He came into it. *God* has been manifested in flesh, and everything that could give to man the knowledge of God was manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ down here; then there was another thing, and that is, that in this world there was no place for the Lord; He was turned out of it, and now Man is in the glory of God. These two things would have a great effect upon every one of us if we kept in the faith and light of them.

The Christian has to walk down here as Christ walked, for Christ has brought him the knowledge of God; then, on the other hand, our eyes are directed to a Man in glory, that is the One to whom we are to be conformed—there is the secret of piety. If we look a little closer at it, you will see that this life of godliness, which really brings God, as made known to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, into all our thoughts, becomes the way of our education, and prepares us for entering into God's purpose by giving to us, midst all the circumstances down here, increasing experience in the knowledge of God; we grow in it. Speaking a little lower down in the chapter the apostle says, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge," &c. Then he says, "If these things be in you, *and abound*, they make you that ye shall neither be *barren nor un-*

fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" because you get exercise in those things. Nobody, in the things of this world even, acquires knowledge by merely reading a book; it may give him all the details, but what he wants to do is to put it into practice, and then he gets to know in a very different way. We have to bring what we know of Christ into practice in our daily life, and thus we become exponents of the truth which is according to godliness, and grow in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now one word as to heaven. If you were to ask Christians in general what they were going to enjoy in heaven, you would find that their thoughts of its blessedness are very indefinite. With many it does not go much further than the negative thought that sin and death and the sorrows of earth will be experienced no more. Many hymns go upon that line. The hymn we sung is a happy exception.

"There no stranger-God shall meet thee,
Stranger thou in courts above;
He who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greets thee with a well-known love."

A well-known love! What shall we find when we enter heaven? The presence of God

as known in His dear Son. Jesus fills that holy place—He who made God known to us—and we shall be like Him. Are we growing in the knowledge of God? so that when we enter there, it may be a well-known love with which we are greeted. Israel proved what God was to them during the forty years they spent in the wilderness—their raiment waxed not old, nor did their foot swell. It is true they proved what they were, but in Canaan that is left behind, and the love that brought them through remained.

Is it not a great thing to grow in the knowledge of God by learning what He is to us in all the circumstances through which we move. There was not one single thing that Israel met with in the wilderness but that it brought to them a fresh experience. Perhaps you say, of what they were. Granted; but was it not a fresh experience of what God was? Then there is another way in which God has been made known to us, and that is in what He proposes to us; He has given us exceeding great and precious promises, and in these we learn what He is. If I think of His sending His Son, and I see the Son here, I see that everything centred in Him; all the promises were in the Son, and now in glory all the purpose and counsels of God are established in His Son, and that leaves us out altogether. It is not a

question now of His ways *with us*; it is God acting from His own heart. We read here: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." I do not think exactly that these were promises made in time, as we read of them to Abraham and the like; but they were promises that were the expression of what was in God's mind before time was. It does not say they were made to anybody. We read of the promise of life in Christ Jesus before the world was (2 Tim. i.); it is not said there that the promise was made to anybody, but there it was, and it was brought out in time. These promises were in God's mind in eternity, before ever the world was, but expressed in time. When we think of all that, we are left behind. It is what is in the Blessed God's heart to do. As one thinks of these promises, one comes to know God. What a God He must be that ever such things should be in His mind! Oh, if our hearts thought of what there was in the mind and thoughts of God! If we only knew the Lord Jesus Christ better, as He came down here from the Father, and is gone back to the Father, how we should be brought in communion with what is divine. Human nature knows the things of man, the divine nature knows the things of God.

There were very few who entered into what

came out in Christ when He was here. You see how oftentimes people took the blessing who little knew the Blessor; but there are beautiful occasions where we see the Blessor became known: take, for example, Mary of Bethany; look how the heart of a sister was met by her brother being brought back to her; but how she learned the Person who gave him back; where do we find an instance like it of a woman who could pour the alabaster box upon Christ because of what she found *in Him*? Would to God we knew more of Himself by learning what is in *His own* blessed heart as revealed in Christ Jesus, as well by the wonderful way in which He can meet *us*. Many here are young, and some of us have trodden the way many a long year. We are all in different stages of experience; but what can we each say for the blessed God? How He has met us all the way along; how He has borne with us, how He has been above all our weakness and unbelief? and when we reckoned and calculated from ourselves what He would be to us, we found He was not what we thought, but that He was above it all in a ministry of grace and of blessing, so that we had nothing to do but, like David, to sit down and praise Him. We learn Him in the expression of all His thoughts to us in Jesus,

and we learn Him in what He can be to us in the wilderness, where we have needs and difficulties. Every one of us here, perhaps, has a different pathway, different needs, different temperaments, different temptations, and our condition of life is different, not one of us want exactly the same grace. How good God is to us! How He meets and supports us as we go along day by day, giving just the grace that suits us; the circumstances are not altered, but we get grace poured into our souls, and we are refreshed and strengthened. We get the water abundantly from the Rock. Like Peter says here, "Grace and peace be *multiplied* unto you," that we should have a deeper sense of grace and a deeper sense of peace in our pathway down here through a world where there is nothing but trouble and sorrow; and how? Because circumstances are altered? No; by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. In knowing God we have a divine ground given us from which to act. You could not find any direct text, perhaps, that would meet your case in a given circumstance; but the knowledge of God would meet it. I give you an instance; I take the man of God from Judah. You know he went to Jeroboam to cry against his altar. He was told that he was to go by one way and come back by

another, and he was not to eat bread nor drink water in Bethel. The old prophet of Bethel, who went after him, said: I am a prophet as you are, and I had a message by an angel that I was to bring you back. Here is a dilemma; here are two words. How is he to decide? I know what would have decided him—*the knowledge of God*. He would have said, You a prophet, and dwelling in Bethel, where there is an altar to the calves, your word cannot be from God, and I will not listen to a word you say. The knowledge of God is an immense thing. You will not find *a text* in the word for everything. What you want is day by day to be growing in the knowledge of God, so that you should understand really what is suitable to Him, and many a difficulty would vanish if we had more of the knowledge of God, and thus also grace and peace are multiplied to us.

Now he says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." That is rather a difficult phrase to translate into English. In reality divine power is given to us, and with it all things that pertain to life and godliness. It is divine power in contrast to natural power. Natural power does not avail

us. Divine power is given to us, and with this divine power is given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness; and how? Through the *knowledge of Him* that hath called us by glory and virtue. Two things come out. God hath called us by glory; that is, our calling is not according to what we find in this world at all. It is not exactly that He has called us *to* glory, though that is true; but He has opened to us the glory of Christ in another scene. The gospel opens to us another Man, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, and the knowledge of Him; but it opens to us, too, another scene which that blessed Man fills, and of which He is the centre. Now He has called us by that. Abraham was called to go out into a country which he should receive for an inheritance; it was another country that characterised his call when the God of glory appeared to him. Then, our call is by virtue; that is, the energy which pursues the object. Divine power has come in. We have an object before us, Christ in glory, and that we shall be conformed to His image, and be with Him there; but also He has given us divine power and thus a moral energy that pursues the object. A child is put to school with a view to his future life. His education is according to what is before him, but he must have a moral energy to pursue the object

his parents have in view for him—that is done by human power. What *we* get is divine power. Power comes in and gives us to pursue this object. I will take the illustration of a Nazarite. You see entire devotedness in him, a moral energy that had nothing before him but to be devoted to Jehovah; he abandoned all human energy; he took the place of weakness, letting his hair grow; he relinquished the gratification of self by things here, everything that came of the vine, figurative of earthly joy; he gave up all his rights as a man; now what for? We see the answer in Samson, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him; the Nazarite was to be the instrument of another power altogether. There was energy and devotedness that gave up everything here to be in the power of the Spirit of God.

I have carried you on to Ephesian truth, where you get the two things: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” it has a reference to the priests who were not to drink wine or strong drink, so that they might be vessels of the knowledge of God for Israel. All that shews us that there is needed with us a moral energy which pursues that which is set before us, and that is, another scene where Christ has entered. But in *this* scene we acquire the knowledge of God. The

more you know Him, the more love will be drawn out towards Him.

One more point, and then I quit that part of the subject. You find two great doxologies in the New Testament: one celebrates the purpose of God, and the other celebrates His ways. What we have been considering here are His ways, and His ways lead to His purpose. One is in the end of Ephesians iii.: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The church is the vessel of the glory of God in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, because in it everything answers to the glory of God; it is formed according to the perfect wisdom of God, and all the fulness of divine love and glory which has come out in Christ is to be reflected in the church, so that the church in that sense will be the great temple in which there will be glory to God for ever. The doxology of Ephesians iii. looks up to heaven, Godward, so to speak. What a doxology! What is it to be part of that church, that holy temple! In the new Jerusalem all is looking earthward; it is administration, it is what flows out to the earth below; but the

church in that sense also is really the temple of God's glory. The other doxology is in Romans xi.: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." It celebrates God's ways and judgments, all that is done in working out the wonderful scheme of redemption, settling the question of good and evil for ever, and bringing man out of death and darkness and danger and unbelief, working it all out according to His own mercy. It celebrates the *ways* of God, and I think in one sense it will be as wonderful to trace these as to enter into the glory of His purpose. How God has worked in this scene of man's sin and misery and woe and Satan's power, in all the patience of that grace which has borne with man in long-suffering, and yet in goodness and truth is a wonderful subject. We experience it in our little lives, as well as see it worked out in 6,000 years of this earth's history; and what praise it will be to God who has worked it all out, and thus again we may say:

“There no stranger-God shall meet thee;”

a “well-known love” has guided us through the whole scene here, kept us and ministered to us, and the effect of it has been, our education in the knowledge of Himself; we become, too, more quiet, more restful in our souls; what we once thought we could not do without, we are quite willing to give up; if He takes away from our sight earthly things, He opens heavenly ones to us.

Dear young people here, those of us who are older can tell you that you will find the blessed God all that He says He is, and you may cast everything upon Him; thank Him for everything, everything that thwarts your will, everything down here that makes you know yourself. He works that you may know Him and His grace revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I need not say much about these things that come out here, because it is not so much that they need exposition as that you should read and ponder them. What characterises Christianity is that there is another Man brought in, and that He fills another scene. Then faith is that which perceives it; it looks at the scene which that blessed Man fills. Then you get, “add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." One who lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, he does not see the glory beyond; he is groping in the midst of present things. How often people are groping in the dark, and forget that they are purged from their old sins. All our old history in this world was only a history of sins. It was the history of a sinner living in his sins; the cross of Christ has ended that history, that we should live in another way altogether, as it is said in the first epistle: "Being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." We are to make our calling and election sure, *we* are to do it. It is not that we can make it more sure, but we can establish it to ourselves, and then there is the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now the apostle speaks to them of what he saw on the holy mount, because, as taught of God, he had a presentiment that the coming kingdom and glory would fade from people's minds. People might say that they were enthusiasts, and it is being very plainly said nowadays that the early brethren who were

so full of the coming of the Lord, and looked out for it in their lifetime (I wish there were more of it now), were enthusiasts, for He has not come. Perhaps there was not quite the patience of Christ in their anticipations, but there was affection and a real looking for the Lord. Peter did not want the prospect of this coming glory to be lost in people's souls, as if it were something to be put off in the distance; we want to have the glory near to us morally, and it may be nearer actually than people think. It may be but a little moment and we shall be in the glory. I remember a beloved brother in early days saying, "They calculate how long it takes for light to travel from the sun to the earth, but," he said, "we shall take the journey to heaven in the twinkling of an eye." Look how simple it is with a dying saint, how near the unseen world is to such an one. Absent from the body—and there is no interval—present with the Lord. How near the Spirit can make that scene of glory to us where Jesus is! Look how near the Lord brought it to Peter, James and John on the holy mount; they entered into the cloud with the Lord; Peter says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." He wanted them to have in

remembrance after he was gone, that they were called by glory and virtue. He had made known to them the glory of the kingdom that was to come in, and they had the prophetic word of the Old Testament confirmed by the vision on the mount. There would be a time when the glory would be manifested, because in the vision on the mount there are two sides, there was the manifested glory, it says, Moses and Elias *appeared* with Christ in glory. Then, on the other hand, there was a cloud which was the secret place of the divine glory, and into which Peter, James and John entered with Jesus. So there was the manifested glory which confirmed the prophetic word; but there is another thing, the cloud; they did well to take heed to the prophetic word "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." If one is going through this dark world, the prophetic word sheds upon it the light, that this world is not always going on as it is. Things are going to be administered from the glory. Everything will be ordered and bear the stamp of the divine glory. All will come into beautiful order under Christ in that day, and the glory of the Lord and the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Are we near the glory in our hearts? has the

day dawned and the day star arisen in our hearts? Christ is the day star. The *day* star is merely the Greek name in the original for the morning star. Before the manifested glory breaks forth upon this world, our hearts are in the light of the heavenly Christ. A heavenly Christ is the Morning Star. God grant that our hearts may be full of it—that that glory—that scene where Christ is—may be nearer to us than ever it was before, and then, as it is nearer to us, and we walk in the light of it, and the day star lights up our hearts, beloved friends, we shall walk in godliness down here. The glory where Christ is near to us; the Spirit of God acquainting our hearts with Him who is the Centre of it; and then that energy of soul by which, through the power of the Spirit, we make our way towards it, not as a thing somewhere up in the clouds, but as something well known to us, because Jesus is known to us. The Lord grant that we may more deeply enter into it, for His name's sake.

