

*The Gospel, the Kingdom,
and the
Dwelling Place of God.*

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THE GOSPEL, THE KINGDOM, AND THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD.

IN speaking of the gospel I suppose it must be taken in its widest aspect to refer to all that God has to say to man in the present dispensation. In this sense it would include all that has been put on record as doctrine in the New Testament scriptures. I say "as doctrine" because there are placed upon record a great many details regarding the afflictions which the gospel underwent at the hands of men, the exercises of those who proclaimed it in the world, and the failure and corruption of the profession of Christianity, all of which it is of importance that we should know, but which hardly forms part of the testimony of God, but rather the behaviour of men with respect to that testimony. But while this is so, some of us have been accustomed to view the gospel in a more limited sense, that is, as that which is addressed to responsible man, and which he is to believe in order to be saved, or at the most as that which meets the whole question

of his responsibility ; and I think there is in this a measure of truth, for there is the *teaching* as well as the *preaching* of Jesus Christ. Who would venture to say that Peter and the rest of the twelve did not preach the gospel? Undoubtedly they did, both faithfully and fully, as far as was necessary for those to whom they were permitted to speak. But to none of them was it given to declare the mystery. This was committed to Paul, who was sent to the Gentiles.

The twelve knew it (Eph. iii. 5), but it was not given to them as the subject of their ministry. They occupied themselves largely with presenting Christ as the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers. In Acts ii. Peter tells the Jews that God had made the One whom they crucified both Lord and Christ. In Acts x. he speaks of Him as Lord of all, the Judge of living and dead, and the One through whose name the believer receives forgiveness of sins. In Acts xiii. Paul preaching in the synagogue presents Him in addition to this as the Son of God. (See also Acts ix. 20.) He was sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes, that they might turn to God, and everywhere he preached that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. And he reminds the Corinthians that the gospel he had preached to them was that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that

he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." In all this there is not a word about the house of God, the body of Christ, the city, or the temple. These and other truths being reserved for the instruction of those who had believed the gospel.

That Christ is the subject of the gospel one would not expect a true believer to deny; he who did so would have to be avoided by every faithful heart. But whether such a person can be found or not, it is clear enough from scripture that the apostles preached Christ. All through the past ages He was in promise, and the prophetic word directed the drooping soul to Him, as the One in whom alone there was help for man; and at His birth the heavenly host announced to the shepherds what was to be glad tidings to all the people: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This was the glad tidings. Every blessing for man was bound up in the person of that wondrous Babe. Simeon says of Him, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Anna "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Paul says the gospel is "concerning his [God's] Son." (Rom. i. 3.) He determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) He says the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among them

by him and Silvanus and Timotheus. (2 Cor. i. 19.) They preached Christ Jesus as Lord. (2 Cor. iv. 5.) The same apostle speaking to the Galatians says God revealed "his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." (Gal. i. 16.) But I need not multiply passages of scripture. It is the universal testimony of all scripture.

The reason of this may not be apparent to every reader of this paper, but I will endeavour, by the help of God, to put it before him as I see it. The gospel is the glad tidings of God, and is the announcement of the light in which God has come out to man in Christ. Christ Himself is the glad tidings, because it is by Him that the blessed God reconciles or puts everything into right relations with Himself. But everything thus reconciled to God is not only brought into right relations with God *by* Christ, but *in* Christ, that is that men when reconciled live to God in the life of Christ. Therefore, when we are viewed abstractly as in the life of Christ, we are said to know no man after the flesh, to be new creation; old things are said to be passed away, and all things to have become new, and all the new things to be of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. v. 16-18.) Everything in Christ is of God, that is, morally of His nature, derives from Him and therefore God has supreme delight in

every reconciled creature, because that creature is morally of Himself. Now everything in Adam is contrary to God, morally obnoxious to Him; and as all in Adam are of Adam, and, like him, wilful and evil and obnoxious to God, so everything in Christ is of Christ, and of God, for Christ Himself is of God, and therefore to the supreme delight of the heart of God, for God can only take pleasure in that which is of Himself. It is because of this that Christ is the glad tidings, because He is the One by whom God puts everything into right relations with Himself, and brings all things into moral accord with His nature. It is not that Christ has become Saviour to man, as my neighbour may save me from a violent death, and leave me morally unaltered. The salvation is not only *by* Christ but *in* Christ; we are saved by His life (Rom. v. 10; Eph. ii. 5), and our salvation is that we "live together with him." (1 Thess. v. 9, 10.) Everything in heaven and in earth will be taken up under His headship, and in some way or other, not only man, but everything else will take tone and character from Him. Therefore Christ is the subject of the gospel, for though the gospel be the gospel of God, Christ is the One by whom God carries out the purposes of His heart, and it is by Christ He has approached man as Saviour.

The next thing I desire to bring before the

reader is, that every blessing is in Christ. There is no blessing for man deposited anywhere else. In the past dispensation the blessings were announced to Israel by the prophets, and were to be entered into in the day of Christ, and to His day faith looked forward. They were to be justified in Him, and to come into salvation and eternal life under the sceptre of their Messiah; and the Gentile nations were to share in these blessings, but in connection with Israel. Their salvation in that day would carry with it temporal deliverance; their justification would be proven by the circumstances in which they would be set up in their own land; all the consequences of sin would be removed from them. They would possess eternal life not only by the knowledge of God, but by the destruction of death, for in that day death would be swallowed up in victory. Now these blessings are ours, but we have every one of them in the Spirit. We enjoy forgiveness by the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. Eternal life lies for us in the knowledge of the Father and Jesus Christ His sent One, though death be upon us as in flesh and blood. Our salvation is not temporal deliverance, but the emancipation of our souls from bondage to sin, Satan and the world, and from the fear of death as the judgment of God, and eventually from the bodily condition and circumstances in which we are. Our out-

ward circumstances remain at present unchanged, but even a slave in bondage to an ungodly master may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. (Titus ii. 9, 10.)

The next thing I wish to speak of is the principle upon which these blessings are ours. The old covenant promised blessing upon the principle of works; man was to fulfil his obligations. But upon that principle man inherited no blessing, but rather a curse. But upon the principle of faith we come into every blessing. This being so, in order to have faith there must be a report, for faith comes by report. (Rom. x. 17.) But then if it be report it cannot be of something that may be verified, or proven to the natural man. The report is the gospel, or word of God, which is proclaimed in all the world for the obedience of faith. It is a report of *things not seen*. They will be in evidence by-and-by in the age to come, but the gospel as preached by the apostles was the announcement of what God had established in Christ *in heaven*. Peter tells the Jews that God had raised from the dead that same Jesus whom they had crucified, and had made Him Lord and Christ. That they had crucified Jesus was no part of the report; that was well known to them. But they had no knowledge of His resurrection and exaltation; this was reported to them. And the report was

established by the mouth of two witnesses—the Holy Spirit and the twelve apostles. (John xv. 26, 27; Acts ii. 32, 33, and v. 32.) The witnesses form no part of the report, but are referred to as witnesses. The witnesses are down here, and are witnesses to men upon earth, but they witness to what is in heaven. The Spirit had been promised by the prophets, and was now given by Christ from the Father, and was the supreme and powerful witness of the exaltation of Christ; and Peter tells the Jews that if they believed the gospel they would receive the Spirit (Acts ii. 38); and they would then have the witness in themselves, that is, they would need no outside evidence. The signs and wonders which accompanied the presence of the Spirit at the beginning, and were evidences of His presence, those who received the Spirit needed no longer, and neither do we who have by the presence of the Spirit in us the witness in ourselves. In no subsequent preachings is the Spirit referred to, nor does He in Acts ii. form part of the report, but the report is of Christ, and goes out *in the power of the Spirit*, and the Spirit and the apostles are witnesses given of God to establish the report. In the age to come all that we have believed will be verified, because then seen.

Let me take up some of the blessings in detail. I will first speak of righteousness and

salvation. They are very closely connected, but yet not the same thing. The gospel is said to be the power of God unto salvation, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed. (Rom. i. 16.) And in Titus iii. we read, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." These scriptures seem to me to connect very closely justification and salvation. And they are very closely connected, for we need to be saved from the judgment that lies upon us, and which Satan uses to oppress us and to keep us away from God. When we are justified we no longer fear death. We see that Christ, by going into it, has broken its power, and by means of death has declared the grace and love of God to us, so that we are brought to God, and not only find our justification in Christ risen, but are delivered from the fear of death and the power of the oppressor. As Romans iii. answers to the blood-sprinkled lintel in Egypt, so the resurrection of "Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv.), answers to the Red Sea; and there the children of Israel were saved out of the hand of the oppressor, and brought to the abode of God's

holiness in the wilderness. Still, however closely they may be connected, and though we cannot be justified without being in a measure in salvation, yet the two things are distinct, and rather put in contrast in Romans x., though even there the righteousness which is on the principle of faith speaks of salvation. Strictly speaking righteousness is more connected with the title *Christ*, and salvation with the *Lord*, though no hard and fast rule can be laid down, for we must keep in mind that salvation is in Christ Jesus. But in Romans x. we are instructed that, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. I do not think it would do to say that with the heart we believe to salvation, and with the mouth confess to righteousness, though it is true that we believe to the salvation of our souls. (Heb. x.) Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes, that is, the believer has found Christ to be his righteousness, and has done with the law as a means of arriving at it. But in the gospel Christ is also preached as Lord, and He is preached for the obedience of faith, and faith in the gospel involves submission to Christ. I doubt if any one ever was justified who did not call on the name of the Lord, and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be *saved*. Thus righteousness and salvation, though in themselves

different ideas, go together in their reception. At least this is the way I see things.

This brings me to speak of the kingdom of God. Paul spoke of preaching the kingdom of God. In preaching the gospel the kingdom of God is preached. Christ is preached in the gospel as Lord, and all the authority and power of God are vested in the Lord. Hence to be brought into subjection to the Lord (and as I have sought to shew this is involved in justification), the soul is brought under the moral sway of God, and this is what I understand by God's kingdom; it is where He holds sway. In the age to come His sway will be universal; it is not so in this age. Men have to be born again to see it, and born of water and of the Spirit to enter it. It is preached as glad tidings to men. Men are to repent and turn to God. Grace is preached that men may be able to repent and turn to Him. But as it is only in Christ that God has approached men, and as all the grace and authority and power of God are established in Him, it is to Christ we turn, and in calling upon the name of the Lord we come into subjection to God and to His Christ, and thus find our place in the kingdom, where salvation is ours. We are under good government, and safe from the oppressor and all the hosts of evil. Our souls are safe under His sceptre, and we find the Lord to be a "hiding place from the wind, and

a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Moreover, we are brought under the influence of the grace of the throne, for it is a throne of grace, and are taught to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. (Titus ii.) The effect of thus coming under the control of God revealed in grace is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and in these things we are to serve Christ. (Rom. xiv. 17.) The reason that we are said in these things to serve Christ is just because of what I have said, that the authority and power of God are vested in Christ, and to be subject in the kingdom of God is to be subject to Christ. The power and influence of the kingdom of God are felt upon earth, and it is while we are upon earth that we enter into it ; but the kingdom, while it is the kingdom of God, is also the kingdom of heaven, because the kingdom is established there in Christ. The throne is there, and the One who exercises all power in heaven and upon earth is there. I do not doubt the Holy Spirit is the One by whom we are inwardly affected, and brought into accord with the mind of God, for righteousness, peace and joy are said to be in the Holy Ghost ; but the power and authority of the kingdom are not vested in the Holy Spirit, but in the Lord. He says, " *All* power is given

unto me in heaven and in earth." There is not a particle of power in heaven or in earth that is not in the hand of Christ. The kingdom is not established in earth, but in heaven; but as I have said, its influence and sphere extend to all that call upon the name of the Lord. Its limits enclose all who submit to Christ, but the throne and the King are in the heavens.

A word as to the temple and the house. We have both in scripture. They are also closely connected but not the same thing. They are closely connected in this, that both give the idea of a dwelling place of God. (1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 22.) The temple is the shrine or holiest, the house is a more general idea and would take in in its widest aspect the whole baptised profession. In the house that was built by Solomon there was the shrine, or holiest, which contained the ark of the covenant and the cherubims. The great thought connected with the temple in the New Testament in addition to *dwelling* is *holiness*: "The temple of God is holy." (1 Cor. iii. 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21.) In the Old Testament it was spoken of as the oracle, or the place of speaking, the place where inquiry was to be made. But this was because the ark was there. God told Moses that He would meet with him there, and would speak with him from above the mercy-seat, from between the cherubims, everything He would give him in

commandment to the children of Israel. (Exo. xxv. 22.) At the entrance of the tent of meeting where the brazen altar was He said He would meet the people, but at the ark of testimony inside the second veil He would meet Moses. Christ is the Antitype of Moses, and is the Apostle of our confession. He could say to His disciples that He had made known to them all He had heard from His Father; and this did not cease with His presence upon earth. But the communications given from between the cherubims to our Apostle are not, it seems to me, on the same lines as those in connection with the brazen altar. The former refer more to our heavenly associations and relationships and divine counsels in connection with our heavenly position as a heavenly people. If we inquire in His holy temple it is of these things we shall hear. Had the Corinthians been able to rise up to the truth of the temple, they would have been able to listen to the wisdom that the apostles spoke among those that are perfect (1 Cor. ii.); but they had no ability to hear anything except what referred to the ordering of God's house upon earth, and this I think is what is declared outside at the door of the tent of meeting. This has more to do with the *house*, and with our conduct upon earth in connection with it. Piety is enjoined in connection with the house, and we get instructions how to

behave ourselves in it; but I doubt if you could talk about a man behaving himself in the *temple*, though men might be judged for their conduct, not *in*, but with respect to the temple—the defiler of the temple will be destroyed.

The house and temple are different ideas, and each conveys its own distinct thought to the mind, though *dwelling* is connected with both. The desire of God is to dwell with men. It has often been remarked that it is only on the ground of redemption He does this. He did not dwell with Adam. There was no thought of dwelling with men in innocence. One reason I suppose why it is only on the ground of redemption He can dwell with men is, that it is only in redemption He draws near to man and makes Himself known. He dwells with man according to the light in which He declares Himself. It was so with Israel. He who brought them out of the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage placed Himself in a tent in their midst. But now in His Son He has fully declared Himself, and He has builded us together that we may be His habitation in the Spirit, and in the power of His Spirit we get all the benefit of that perfect revelation. He will fill all things in a coming day with His presence, and it is His desire to do so; but this is impossible at the present moment, for things are defiled by sin. But Christ has so wrought, that He has made it

possible for God to dwell with men: He has prepared Him a habitation, which He occupies before the day comes when He will fill everything. This is by the Spirit, and is independent of our practical state. But there is another sense in which God is said to dwell in us, and that is in the blessedness of His own nature, and this is altogether dependent upon our practical state. We are told in 1 John iv. 12 that if we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. But the presence of the Spirit with us is on the ground of redemption, and does not depend upon our practical condition of soul in the least.

Salvation is not connected in scripture with either the temple or the house. Salvation is, as I have sought to show, more connected with the kingdom. Saul was made king to save Jehovah's people out of the hand of the Philistines; and all through scripture the great thought connected with the kingdom is *salvation*, but with the house *dwelling*. Therefore, though the house was there in Acts ii., there is not the slightest reference to it, not even as a witness, nor has it any place in the account of the apostles' preachings, nor is the attention of any one directed to it. Nor is it in the Epistle to the Romans. It forms no part of gospel testimony, as far as the proclamation is concerned. It is not an object of faith, neither is

the Holy Spirit who dwells in it. We receive the Spirit through faith (Gal. iii.), but it is through faith in Christ, and not through faith in the Spirit. The subject of the gospel is Christ risen and exalted to the right hand of God. To Him the apostles and the Holy Spirit were witnesses, and there is no notice taken of any others in Acts ii., where we get the fulfilment of the words of Jesus in John xv. 26 and 27. But some one may tell me the house was there. I do not deny it; but as the Holy Spirit does not bring it in, He did not intend to give it any place, and neither would it be well for me to do so. It might be said, but the saints were there. Yes, but they have no place given to them, not even as witnesses. Indeed, so much are they not in the mind of the Spirit that it could not be proven that the whole one hundred and twenty were present on the day of Pentecost. My judgment from the context is that they were, but Peter and the eleven have the prominent place.

The attention of men is not directed to anything down here, except as a witness of the glory of Christ, in whom they were to believe. It might be thought that, after the outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning, all who received the gift would receive it from the supply that was down here. I do not think this can be maintained from scripture. I am not dogmatic about it, but the thought does not seem to me

to have the support of scripture, but I am I trust willing to learn. We have the Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost, and we have Him again poured out on the Gentiles. (Acts x.) It might be said that this is not a second outpouring of the Spirit, but unless I read the text wrongly it says that: "On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Ver. 45.) And in chapter viii. He is said, as an exceptional case, not to have fallen upon any of those converted through Philip's preaching. That the Spirit was promised, and that He was poured out on the day of Pentecost is not in question. I believe He was, and that He has been with and in the saints from that day to this. But I do not see that He is disconnected from Christ in heaven. *He* is the source of supply, and though the Spirit is on earth, that does not mean that He is no longer in heaven. It is like the oil that was poured upon the head of Aaron, that went down the beard to the skirts of his garments (Psa. cxxxiii.); it resides in every member of the mystical body. He dwells in every believer, and for a saint to be found praying for the gift would shew great ignorance of scripture, but no man upon earth, however full of the Spirit he may be, has that gift to impart to any other man. As every cistern in a city is filled from the reservoir upon the distant hill top, so every saint upon earth is filled from the

living Head in heaven; and though we are joined into one by this unspeakable and heavenly gift, each is directly connected with the source above, for "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.)

But it may be asked, Is it not in the christian circle alone that I enjoy salvation? Surely it is; but every true believer is in the christian circle, for the limit of the christian circle is the indwelling Spirit. There is a sense in which His presence and power pervades the whole sphere of christian profession, but that has long ceased to answer to the mind of Christ. Outside the christian circle there is no blessing of any sort enjoyed. But if by the question is meant the society of Christians, or of the spiritual, I should answer, Certainly not. A slave chained as watch-dog at the gate of his master, and who may have few, if any, opportunities of meeting with fellow-believers, may be much in the enjoyment of the salvation that is his in Christ, and able also to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. But the question may be put, What about salvation from the world? Does not the companionship of spiritual men at least preserve me from the world? My answer is this, Did companionship with the blessed Lord Himself preserve Judas from the influence of the world? Did the company of Paul preserve Demas, or "all that be in Asia"?

The society of Christians is most blessed, and where they go on with God they are a great support to one another ; and I would also say that where the society of godly and spiritual men is not cultivated as far as possible, it betokens a very bad state of soul, and no one in a bad state of soul would be likely to be in the enjoyment of salvation ; but if you do not in the first place find salvation in Christ as an individual, you will never enjoy it in the christian circle. And if while you are in this circle you do not be careful to keep your heart well under the influence of the love of God, you will soon find the company of the spiritual little to your liking, and you will depart from their midst. A man's state of soul is generally detected by the company he keeps, but no company can communicate holy desires, though such desires may be nourished by and in the company.

The christian circle, even when it is according to the mind of God, is not my justification, nor shall I *find* salvation in it. It must not be substituted for the blessed Lord Jesus, in whom alone salvation is ; but the salvation which is in Christ Jesus brings one into the christian circle, where, if it is what it ought to be, the love of God is the life of every soul, and the atmosphere of heaven is breathed. The noxious vapours of the abyss of evil have no admittance there. It is where the rock gives forth its water, and

where the heavenly bread falls white amid the morning dew. It is the circle over which the Son of God presides, and it is where the affections of Christ are found in activity. It is the house of God built by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a house built of living stones, and where a holy priesthood offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It is a radiant sphere of heavenly light, whose glorious sun never sets, and over which the black night never casts its mantle. It is where the word of God is ministered and where servants are appointed to see that the household gets meat in due season, and who know how to so act that they may save both themselves and those who hear them. It is where you get led by the fountains of living waters, where you lie down in green pastures, and where you have the comfort of the sceptre and staff of Christ. It is where continual praise is offered to God and where glory is given to Him eternally; and it is the pillar and base of the truth.

It is this *in the thought of God*. But what has its actual condition been? Except for a brief moment at Pentecost it has been anything but according to God. Almost from the beginning the influences found there had to be overcome. What help could one have got for the soul at Corinth, or at Galatia? There a man of God was required who needed not to be dependent

upon his brethren for support, but who would find all his strength in the grace that resided in the person of Christ. And to-day where will you find that which is according to God? I need not be carried away by the evil, but I need to know that all my resources are in Christ Jesus, and in Him personally.

The believer is saved in a practical way from the dominion of sin, and from the influences of the world, by the work wrought in his soul by the power of God, which causes the revelation of God in Christ to become the controlling loadstar of his heart, so that divine affections being quickened within him, he abhors the evil which would swallow him up in its unholy depths, and loves, and with all his might cleaves to the good which he knows to be of God. I am persuaded of this, my whole spiritual history, backed up by the testimony of scripture, bearing witness, that the man who turns for salvation to the society of men, however spiritual, will sooner or later come to grief. In what better company upon earth could one have been than in that of the saints at Pentecost? And yet Ananias and Sapphira, surrounded by those men and women filled with the Holy Ghost, fell completely under the influence of the spirit of the world and lied unto God. Let no man deceive himself, the Father's love and the Father's name must be known if the soul is to enjoy salvation from the world:

“keep them in thy name.” (John xvii.) “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John v. 5.)

Salvation from the world is set before us as found in faith in the Son of God (1 John v. 5), “dead with Christ, and the mind set upon things above” (Col. ii. 20; iii. 1, 2), and the love of the Father. (1 John ii. 15.) If the love of the Father is in you, you will not love the world; and if you do not love it, you will not run after it.

A word as to “living water.” The Lord is the giver of it: “I will give” (Rev. xxi. 6), “he would have given.” (John iv. 10.) This is life in the Spirit, or the Spirit of life, not the Spirit personally, but rather the effect produced by the presence of the Spirit—the love of God shed abroad in the heart, which is a fountain of life in the believer. It might be thought that because the saints possess this gift, and because it flows from them in rivers (John vii. 37), that they have it to impart to others, and that the thirsty soul need not have to do with Christ personally, but only with the saints. But Jesus says, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.” You must come to Him, and to no other. The wise virgins had no oil to spare for the foolish (Matt. xxv.), nor has the believer any of the virtue of the Spirit to give away. It is the last Adam who is a life-giving Spirit, not the

saints. Every faithful servant of God will direct you to Christ at the right hand of God for all you need. And if you drink from Him, you will become a channel of blessing to others. Instead of the deadly influence that flows from the will of the flesh, that which will flow from you will be pure and fresh and sweet and healing; but it will be this because of the savour of Christ which you will carry with you, and because you will be so able to set Him forth in all His grace and power to meet the need of man that weary souls will be directed to Him, that they also may drink and live. It is not to living water down here that men are directed, though it is down here in the saints, for the saints possess it; but the saints possess it only as they possess every other blessing *for themselves*, and they have none to give away, it is to living water in the living Fountain on high that men are directed. *Nothing down here is the subject of gospel testimony.* Believers have the blessings declared in the gospel and are thus witnesses to the grace and glory and power of Christ, and by the preachers they may be referred to as witnesses, as those that possessed the Spirit were at Pentecost and afterwards, or as the cured cripple was in Acts iii., but the gospel in itself is the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. i. 1-3.)

But it may be asked, "Is it not through the

saints I reach the Lord?" Certainly not. The gospel directs you to Him where He is. That the "new man" is Christ in the saints I suppose every true Christian believes. But this only means that a work has been wrought in the saints according to what Christ is morally. To come to the saints is not to come to Christ personally, but to come to men who are formed by the Spirit's work in them according to what Christ is in His moral nature. You do not come to the father by coming to the child, even though the child may bear every moral feature of his father; neither do you come to Christ by coming to the saints, however spiritual they may be, though in them His moral beauties may be delineated. Was it Christ in the saints Paul had to do with on his way to Damascus? or was it to the Lord in one another that the saints were committed in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts xiv.)? or was it in the saints Paul saw Him when praying in the temple (chap. xxii.)? or was it in the saints Stephen found Him in the hour of his martyrdom (Acts vii.)? or Paul in chapter xxiii.? But I need not quote passages of scripture, both writer and reader of this paper know, I trust, the blessedness of having to do with the blessed Lord when there may not be a saint within miles of him. The truth is it is through the Lord you reach the saints. You will never know much about the saints if you do not turn

to the Lord. Paul knew the Lord, and had to do with Him a very long time before the saints would have much to do with him. (Acts ix. 26.) If my reader does not cultivate acquaintance with Christ in private, or if he is not very careful to keep much in His blessed company, the saints will not be of much importance to him. The company of saints, however blessed it may be, can never make up for private intercourse with Christ.

That there may be a difference between reaching Christ as an individual, and when gathered together with His own I do not question. With His own I am one of the heavenly band, His brethren, whose praises He leads to God; but even there I may fail to get into contact with Him, though every other in the meeting may be taken up with Him. My only point in speaking of this is to encourage the reader to draw near to Him at all times.

I wish to direct the reader's heart to Christ, and to Him personally. I am sure if I can keep Him well before my own soul, and if the love of God is the constant light of my heart, I shall not be careless about His beloved people; but were I to turn to them as the source or fountain of supply for my spiritual necessities, I would be turning from the fountain of living water to that in which I would find disappointment and sorrow. We ought to serve one another in the power of

that self-sacrificing love of Christ, and though there may be many a sore trial in the pathway of that service, there will be found in it unfailing divine support. But as I have said the true way to serve the saints is to direct their hearts to Christ where He is, that they may look off to Him. In no other epistle is the gospel, salvation and fellowship more alluded to than in that to the Philippians, but from beginning to end it is the Lord that is kept before their souls; their rejoicing is to be continually in Him, and they are to stand fast in Him, and as to saints and servants it is disappointment, weeping, lamentation and sorrow of heart.

The days in which we live are evil and difficult. The garb of Christianity has been donned by the world, but underneath is all rottenness and rebellion against Christ. We need to be on our guard that we be not deceived by it. The touchstone is Christ, and this makes everything simple. A babe in Christ need not be deceived, neither will he be if he views everything with relation to Him. It is a day that above every day tests the state of our souls. We cannot go on in the right path if we have not Christ before us, and we can have no true judgment about anything if He is not supreme in the affections of our hearts. The flesh will have *anything* but Christ, and if we are in the least under the influence of the fleshly mind, we are certain to go altogether contrary to

God, and in a way ruinous to ourselves. But He loves us. This is our refuge. How blessed it is to look up to Him in the sense of His great unspeakable and eternal love, and to feel that that love is so true and faithful that He never will allow you to get into a way that would be grieving to His heart! But that love must be ever kept fresh and warm in our souls, and this involves constant waiting upon Him in continual exercise. What a privilege ours is! To feel and know that we each of us may ever be in the sense of all that is expressed in those words of our great apostle: "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Let Him be *everything* to you, my reader; and if He is, you may be perfectly sure that you will not be indifferent to His interests, or careless about His dear people. The truth is, it is only as He is *everything* to you that you have any real heart for those that are His, or are in any way able to enjoy their company.

May He be pleased to direct the hearts of His poor people more distinctly to Himself.

J. BOYD.



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