

THE RICHES AND GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE.

BEING GOSPEL ADDRESSES
BY W. JOHNSON.



LONDON :
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

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THE RICHES AND GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE.

(LUKE VII. 40-50.)

I WANTED to read two other passages farther on in the gospel, but I may be detained by what is proposed in the chapter before us, so I will refrain from reading the other two passages which were before me, as this one is the most important.

Now I suppose we may safely say that a verse found in the Epistle to Titus would be a very fitting title to this precious gospel from which I have read this passage—I refer to that scripture which says, “The grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared.” Now I take that to be a most fitting title to this precious gospel in which we have so prominently the grace of God set forth.

There is just one remark I would like to make in passing: we have all heard of the grace of God; it is impossible to be brought up in a country like this without knowing something—in the letter of it—about the grace of God; but there is such a thing as tasting

the grace of God ; knowing it in your soul, not only hearing it and holding it as a dogma, but tasting it ; and when you have tasted it you do not forget it. I hope that any who have never tasted that the Lord is gracious may begin to taste that grace this evening. May God grant it.

My thought is to bring before you three points. The first is in this passage and is this : God's attitude of grace toward all men in forgiveness. That is where you begin to taste that the Lord is gracious—in forgiveness ; indeed this narrative which I have read shews to us plainly and clearly our first introduction to Christ as the Saviour. That is your first introduction to Him ; you know Him as your own precious Saviour.

Now my thought was to read a passage later on which sets forth the riches of God's grace as seen in the story of the good Samaritan. Then, thirdly, the glory of God's grace as set forth in the story of the prodigal.

These are the three presentations of the grace of God and form great landmarks in the gospel—God's attitude of grace toward all men in forgiveness ; that is where you begin to taste that God is gracious. Secondly, the riches of His grace are set forth in the good Samaritan—you remember the story. Then the glory of His grace is seen in the reception

of the prodigal ; that is the glory of His grace. The two latter expressions are seen in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Now if I were asked what I considered in my experience of preaching the gospel to be the scripture used more than any to the blessing of souls, I should immediately refer to the passage before us, because we have so livingly before us a sinner coming to the Saviour, and the reception of that sinner so simply and so vividly, that it has been used in the bringing to God of thousands.

One remark I would like to make, that when we are reading the gospels and reading about Jesus, the precious Saviour, the Son of God, we must remember that He is the same to-day as He was then, as you see Him there in the narratives. As He is in this passage, so is He now ; the words that fell from His gracious lips have the same divine meaning and power now as then. That is what makes it so intensely interesting. He is a long way from this world, He is at the right hand of God, having accomplished the will of God and finished that blessed work whereby the grace of God can reach us ; He is alive at the right hand of God ; but His words are living, and the Spirit of God is here to make the reality of His words living and efficacious in our souls.

Another thing, and please pay close attention to it, is that men are just the same morally now as they were when Jesus was here; so that when you are reading the gospels—such a passage as this—where you get this woman and Simon, they are represented by millions to-day. It is not a bit of history you are reading, something historical, but similar people are alive now. That is what I want you to see, it makes the scripture so intensely interesting.

This woman is alive now; there are many here in our meeting. Do you recognise that? They have taken this way and have had this gracious reception; they have heard His voice—not only read it—but heard it in their souls livingly. I would like you to have the sense of that. It is like what a boy once said to his mother. His mother asked him, "What are you reading, Johnnie?" "Oh," he said, "I am not reading, I am looking at Jesus raising Lazarus." *Looking* at it. Do you see the difference between reading a bit of history and reading the scripture? "I was looking at Jesus raising Lazarus." That is the way to read scripture. It was living and real to him.

People are to-day morally the same. I would like to press that upon you. One of the reasons why I love the scriptures so much, is that I am told the naked truth about my-

self. God never flatters me, He tells me what I am, and He shews me in these personages what I am. I thank God for it. That is why the scriptures are not liked. God never flatters man; He puts him in his right place. What for? That you may find that the good that is in God is greater than the evil in you. You must come down to find Christ. You must come down to Him. Take that in. Jesus, who was here in Simon's house, is the same to-night as He was then. His words have the same meaning now as they had then. The Spirit of God is here to bring home in mighty power the words that fell from His gracious lips; they have their own true meaning at this moment.

Let us look at the incident. I did not read the whole of it. It is your first introduction to Christ, the way you are introduced to Christ in the reality of what He is. The incident you well know. I will recall the fact that over the incident is written this verse, "But wisdom is justified of all her children." That is the text which stands—if I may be allowed to put it like that—over the incident, and immediately we are introduced to this man who invites the Lord to his house.

Now there is a man here named Simon, and he invites the Lord into his house. Whatever induced that man to invite Jesus to his house?

There are thousands of Simons, and, thank God, there are thousands of Wisdom's children still. May you be one of them. Simon invited Jesus into his house. Other guests were welcome, but not Jesus. Other guests had water given them, not Jesus. He was sadly neglected in Simon's house; He felt it, but He kept silence; He felt it and noted it.

Whatever induced that man to invite Jesus to his house? It is a principle we are in the presence of at this time; he sought to patronise Christ. He never came here to be patronised; He came here to be trusted and loved, the blessed Son of God. Simon thought to add something to his own dignity; he thought that He was a prophet, and so He was, more than a prophet of course—and he invited Him to his house, but there was not a single pulsation in that man's heart towards Christ. Is there one in yours, one single pulsation in your heart towards Christ? Has He endeared Himself to you? O sad and desolate is the heart that knows Him not. He is there in Simon's house, but He is waiting for His child. He is waiting for you. Where is His child? A sad and weary heart; a sin-convicted soul. He is waiting for His child, and she is wending her way towards Him. May you wend your way towards Him as you sit there; wend your

way to Jesus in your sinfulness and weariness in all that bitter past ; may you come to Him. She wends her way and she entered Simon's house, drawn there by her deep need. That is where you learn the reality of Jesus, by your deep need. Have you need ?

I love to tell God in that psalm I quoted in my prayer that He numbers and names the stars ; the infinitude of God is seen in that ; He spangled the heavens and upholds it by the might of His power ; but He heals the broken-hearted. Jesus has stooped down to my poor broken heart and has healed it, and He is greater in doing that than in creating the universe. May you be conscious of His interest in you ; may the preacher be forgotten and His Master, the Lord Jesus, be in presence, so shall there be blessing to your heart.

She wended her way and stooped down. Not a word escaped her lips. She feels safe there. She stands behind Him and she takes down her hair and anoints His feet and wipes them with the hairs of her head. The woman's glory has come down to wipe His feet. "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." His feet were beautified by the grace of God. He is God's Son and He brought the grace of God down here to poor wretched man. She stands behind

Him and she weeps. What a place at which to weep! Yes, that is the place to weep. Have you not read in the scripture, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made . . . saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit." He who is poor and contrite in heart. I will look on such, says the Lord. You cannot do anything for God. It is no good people trying to patronise Christ. He does not want that; He wants you—your love. You cannot do anything for Him, He wants to do all for you. She stood there behind Him. She washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Simon looked on with a dark frown on his brow. He had no appreciation of Christ. Look at Simon—I am rich; I am religious; I am respectable; I am clever; I am this, that, and the other. That is Simon. But she says, I am nothing—but she found Christ there. I found Him there, and you will find Him there. I am nothing. That is where you find Christ. Do you say, "I am religious," or "I am respectable"? All that keeps you at a distance, but the moment you come down to "I am nothing"—on this

man will I look, says the Lord, I will look on him that is of a contrite heart.

Simon sits there with a dark frown on his brow, wrapped up in all the pride of what he was; he had no appreciation of the mercy that was there. He says, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him." The Lord read his thoughts, even as He read the dark history of that woman; every dark blot was under His eye. He read the darkening thoughts of that man. If the woman had said anything—nothing is related as to what she said, she is silent there—but if she had said anything she would have said, "You speak for me, Lord. I cannot meet this man." She knew her dark history, her blotted past, she could not meet a man like that. The Lord said, I will speak for you. If you are Wisdom's child He will justify you. If you take your true place before Him He will justify you. "Wisdom is justified of all her children." He justifies His child. How simple it all is. Let me tell you, the way of salvation is put simply, it is for simple people.

The Lord said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." He said, "Master, say on."

Then briefly, pointedly, and powerfully He puts before us the situation. How magnificent the words! So simple that a child can

understand the force of them, but how profound and far-reaching !

“ A certain creditor had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” Behold in these words the mind of God—the situation which has for its moral foundation the precious blood of Christ. If grace is to reach down to us it has its righteous foundation in the precious blood of Christ. He who uttered these words was going to the cross to make it good and efficacious by His death. He was wending His way to Calvary's bitter cross to lay down the righteous foundation of that which is underlying these words. “ When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” That is, He graciously forgave them both.

It gives me the greatest possible joy to say that. In these words you may learn the attitude of God in grace toward all men—*all* men. That is it. He has no judgment in His mind ; this is the day of grace, it is not the day of judgment, but if you refuse the grace you force the hand of God to judgment. This is the day of grace because there lives before the face of God One of whom it says in scripture, “ He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole

world." It is open to all—God's attitude of grace is toward all men, and the only thing that will keep you out will be this, that you do not acknowledge your liability. There must be the acknowledgment of liability before there can be the relief. You must acknowledge it, this is all that God asks you to do. Without palliation or excuse, go right down to it.

I am liable to God and I cannot pay. No tears, nor prayers, none of these things can make atonement; the only thing that can make atonement is the precious blood of Christ. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

That is God's attitude towards them both, whether the five hundred pence debtor or the fifty. They were both alike, they could not meet their liability. What is to be done now? Own the liability—*own* it. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

I do not know which is the greatest point in the passage, but there are two grand points: God's attitude of grace towards all men and the way in which Christ endears Himself to those who know the grace that is in Him; and let me tell you, that is the way to love Christ, much forgiveness, much love.

He justifies His child, He draws a striking contrast between His child and Simon. He dismisses Simon. As long as he keeps in that environment the situation will be on a plane as far as he is concerned. It is open to both—open to all—but you must recognise your liability. It is wisdom to own your liability and also to own that you cannot meet it yourself, and then you will learn how blessedly He has met it through His precious blood, which is the witness of the righteousness of God. He dismisses Simon and turns to His child.

Now sad and weary heart, you know you are not right with God, you are afraid of Him. You cannot meet Him on the ground of your responsibility, you are away from Him, you want to come under the blessedness of His grace, I am sure. Just look, He turns to His child, and His words have the same deep and blessed meaning to-night to all such. He turns even to you and looks on you with divine love.

May you know it as you sit there in the sense of your sinfulness and the weariness of your soul. You can trust in Christ, can come to Him by faith, His words are for you as they were for her, for she represents the whole company of Wisdom's children. "Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace."

The Spirit of God is here to make good those words; the mighty power of the Spirit is here to make good those blessed words which fell from His lips, of which you have the record; they have their own true, deep, personal meaning for you now—mark it well. “Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

I was preaching some years ago in Essex in a little hamlet—well I remember it. It was in a little cottage; I stood in the passage and on either side was a room full of listeners. On my right hand there was a middle-aged woman, and during the preaching she wept; she was greatly affected by the preaching. I said to her afterwards, “What is it; why do you sorrow so?”

“Oh,” she said, “I do not know whether I have been sorry enough.” She was making her sorrow her saviour—her repentance. I said to her, “He had the sorrow, the Lord Jesus; the Saviour had the sorrow when He was the sin-bearer.” I had to leave the town and had no opportunity to say more to her.

On the next Thursday I was lodged in a farmhouse at another village, and after breakfast the Lord said to me, “You go to that village.” I cannot explain it, I would like to know it better, but He said, “You go to that village,” and to that village I went. The first

house I came to—though I did not know it—was the house where that woman lived.

A young woman opened the door in answer to my knock, and when she saw me she burst into tears and said, "Have you heard about mother?" I said, "No, what has happened?" She said, "Mother was sitting at breakfast when she fell off her chair and was paralysed down one side." Thank God, her tongue was not paralysed. When she fell on the floor she cried, "Lord, send the preacher to me with words." The daughter added, "We have sent for the doctor and we were going to send for you, but you have come."

The Lord had sent me. She said, "She is lying on the bed and must hear your voice, so go up and see her." As I went up those stairs—I did not go very quickly—I said, "Lord, give me words for this dear soul." As I stepped into the bedroom a pair of anxious eyes looked at me and she said, "Have you words for me?"

I stood there and said, "The Lord Jesus, the precious Saviour, who died and rose again, if you will but trust Him, His words to you are, 'Woman, thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.'" I said no more and stood quite still. She turned away from me—how gladly I saw it—she turned her head away and I heard her

say adoringly and gratefully, "I thank Thee, Lord, beautiful words, Lord, and I do thank Thee."

Let them be beautiful words to you, and let your heart thank Him, poor, weary soul, as you are sitting there in the sense of your need, and look up into His face and say, Lord, here I am, Thou knowest all about me. He will speak to you by the Spirit these words—again I repeat, for so much depends upon it. His words are as efficacious for you to-night as for that woman—"Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." May God grant it.

Are you cavilling at what I am saying? Dare any of you say that this cannot be known until some future day? How dare you say so? God says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2.) Do you think that God would tantalise us in presenting impossibilities to us?

Never mind theology; never mind what men say, there is a description by God Himself. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven . . . unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." That is God's description of a happy man.

Unattainable, you say? How dare you say so? Not to be known. How dare you say so in the presence of the word of God? This momentous thing—and how momentous it is—our individual relationship with God. Meet that woman outside Simon's house—many a time have I put the question to her in my mind, Are your sins forgiven? Oh, yes, she would say. Have you got peace, what is the ground of it? *He* said so. That is it. *He* said so. Never mind what Simon said or anybody else. *He* said it. What did *He* say? "Woman, thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Now that is the first introduction to Christ, and that is the way in which Christ endears Himself to us. That is what I call the first step in the apprehension of the grace of God. It is forgiveness.

I will proceed now and read further on in Luke x. 33-37. Here we have a deeper thing, a further apprehension—the riches of His grace. We have had before us the grace of God in forgiveness, here we have this poor wretched man lying there. It is not a question of sins, but of condition. We are introduced to the story by the man who was not Wisdom's child asking the Lord, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and the Lord said, "What is written in the law? how readest

thou?" He said, This is the way I read it, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself."

Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." You go and do it, and you shall live. The blessing does not lie in the reading but in the doing it. Now if he had been upright and one of Wisdom's children he would have said, "I cannot do it, I cannot love my neighbour as myself." A man said to me at St. Ives, when I was preaching there, "Your coming here has turned me upside down and inside out. I thought I had to love God, but now I find that I cannot." A very good thing that, you are on the way to learning that God loves you.

Here we have in this picture—I cannot go into details—a wretched man lying there on the roadside, naked and half dead. Mark the salient points. He was wounded by the deadly wound of self-love. You do not love God or your neighbour. We love ourselves too well, and the deadly wound of self-love is there.

The good Samaritan came down from where love was to where love was not and He brought it down. He brought love here—self-sacrificing love. The good Samaritan was Jesus, who brought love down to the spot where love

was not. All our misery lies in self-love. Have you not been bitten by that deadly wound of self-love?

How does it work? "They do not think as much of me as they should." Would you not like to get clear of it? I was down in Wiltshire during the late war, and met an old man there. He was deploring the war as we all had to do, and I said to him, "If everybody commenced to love God with all their heart and their neighbours as themselves, the war would end at once." We want to see the *moral reason of things*. How could there be a war if man loved God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself?

I pity the politicians—I pray for them every day—but I pity them. They think by altering people's circumstances they will make people happier—never one bit. What is needed is the alteration in you. That is it. I often think of it and pity them—I do not say it disrespectfully, but I think of authorities when I am on the beach and see the children putting up their castles, and by-and-by the rude waves come up and wash them away.

The government must be carried on, but people are not happier, they are growing more unhappy. What is the meaning of it? They want to be changed inside, not their cir-

cumstances outside. You want the mighty love of God to be in your heart, that will make a difference, and then you love God and love your neighbour. So will it be by-and-by. I thank God from the bottom of my heart. I do not know where I should have been during the late war if I had not known that there is a time coming when from pole to pole every one will love God and his neighbour as himself; one great amen from pole to pole; God's will be done.

When your heart is in the love of God your will is silenced, it is God's will. From pole to pole amen shall be uttered, and there shall be great peace. One amen—one will. I will tell you why. Because the one love will produce the one will.

I must proceed very rapidly. One thing I should like to say, and if I speak of it naturally you will understand. My beloved mother, when I was a poor little weakling in the cradle, morning, noon and night she was there; week after week, month after month, she was by my side. What made her do it? She couldn't help herself. She loved me into loving her back again. She has gone to be with Christ long since, but if she stood outside the door to-night and called my name I should know her voice from any other. She put love into my heart, she loved me into loving her back

again. God loves us into loving Him back again. My friend down at St. Ives, I have since learned, has been brought into the blessing of knowing that God loves him.

Now He poured in the oil and the wine. The deadly wound of self-love was there, but He poured in the oil and the wine. He poured in the love of God. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." I cannot help loving God any more than I can help breathing. How so? He has shed abroad that love in my heart by the Holy Ghost. That is the riches of His grace.

My last point is the prodigal. There we get the full glory of His grace. Mark it well; we reach the climax of grace in Luke. There was departure; there was distance; oh, what distance! He took all that he had from his father and went off into a far country. Departure and distance. There he had destitution—he was hungry. There he had degradation—he fed on the husks that the swine did eat. He was sent into the fields to take care of swine—degradation. Departure, distance—what a distance, a great way off. What destitution—hungry. What degradation—sent into the fields to feed swine.

He had gone from a place where all was

give and no take, and he got into a place where all was take and no give—a sad place. That is the world, take everything from you and give you nothing, and he had gone away from where all was give and no take. He thought of his father's house, all the plenty of it, never a tramp turned away with nothing; he thought of that and the goodness of his father brought him to repentance. So he repented and he resolved: "I will arise and go to my father." He would return to the goodness of his father.

I want you all to take this in. Here is a dark background, but there shines resplendent over against the dark background of the poor prodigal the glory of God's grace—the glory of it. If the boy was hungry for his father and his father's house—let it touch your heart—the father's house was hungry for the boy. That is God, dear friends. Now, the boy was hungry, but the father was looking out for him. God is like that. Jesus came to deliver us. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran." The hunger of the father's heart—God is like that, may it touch your heart—he was on the outlook for that poor degraded boy. He says, "I will let him know the kind of father he has turned his back on." He ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. That is God. God is like that.

He fell on his neck and covered him with kisses. That is the reception. There was the repentance, the resolve, the return, and the reception. That is God.

There arose from his contrite heart—doubly contrite now because of the father's welcome—there arose from his heart and his lips, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He stops. He had meant to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But he cannot say it now. His father's kisses checked it. What does he say? Do just what you like with me. I begin to see you are going to bless me, not according to my need, but according to what you are yourself. What a grand thought that is. Look: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." He was robed; he was ringed; he was regaled, and then he rejoiced.

Oh, how pregnant are those words; how full of meaning—there are twenty discourses in each. He robed him; he ringed him; he regaled him; and he rejoiced over him, made suitable for himself. That is it. "I will have you near me so that I can look upon you with pleasure." That is the story of the glory of His grace. "And they began to be merry." "*They began to be merry.*" Did it ever end? No, never; it never ended.

Do you say, "I want to get away from my mother's house so that I can see life"? What folly! That is a way that leads to nothing but death.

My dear mother looked through her tears at me and said, "I will never let you go." And her prayers were answered when I was eighteen. I came to Christ, and I never knew happiness till I came to Christ. "They began to be merry"—they *began*.

Look at me; do you think I am unhappy. do you think that what I am speaking about makes me unhappy? If I could only put the one hundredth part of the music of it in your heart that is in my heart through grace, I would do it.

When I was in Indianapolis a conductor on a car said to me, "Do you belong to the happy band?" I said, "No; I belong, thank God, to the pleasures for evermore people." Would you not like to be a Christian, I ask you? Would you not like to have the music in your heart? Let me tell you, my dear young people, I yearn over you, that in all my earthly joys—and I have had a good many—I have always had the sense that some day I should lose it. That is the point, it will come to an end. But in this spiritual joy that has come to my heart I know I shall never lose it.

What a magnificent thing it is to be a

Christian. It is open to you all. The very first step in it is that you go as the woman did to taste it in forgiveness, and then to have Christ endear Himself to your heart, and then you will learn the riches of His grace and the glory of His grace in deepening joy. God grant it. Amen.

GOD IS, AND GOD WILL PREVAIL.

(PROV. XXX. 1-6.)

THIS remarkable book closes with the two chapters which give the force and meaning of chapter i. 8. That is to say, chapter i. 8 covers the last two chapters of this wonderful book. It reads thus: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." The instruction of the father is in chapter xxx., and the law of the mother in chapter xxxi.

You will remember that I am here to preach the gospel, not to give an exposition of scripture, but I merely say that and pass on to the passage before us: "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh." The Hebrew meaning of the word Agur is Gatherer, and of Jakeh is Instructor. He is in the presence of Ithiel and Ucal, in which lies all that I have to say. These two Hebrew names mean this: "God is," and "God will prevail." That is the meaning of these two Hebrew names, "Ithiel," God is, and "Ucal," God will prevail. That

is the key to the position—the key to all I have to say. God is. He *is* and He will prevail.

Scripture says, “The fool hath said in his heart, No God.” It does not mean that such an one does not believe in the existence of a supreme Being, but the force of it is, “No God for me.” What it means is the exclusion of God, and there are millions of people who believe in the existence of a supreme Being, the Almighty God, and yet they constantly say and have said by their ways all their lifetime, “No God for me.”

Now, beloved friends, I pause before such a thing as that. It is the greatest possible folly to exclude God. The exclusion of God will end in eternal ruin. You cannot afford to exclude God. If I speak of religion, and there is to-day plenty of religion, my definition of it is this, that it is the respectful recognition of God at a distance on occasions. People make a respectful recognition of God at a distance on occasions, but there is nothing in that. It is not Christianity.

Christianity is this, that God has come into my life to beautify it, and to make me supremely happy down here in this world in the blessed knowledge of Himself. That is the nature of the proposal in the gospel. The blessed God desires that we should know

Him, and know Him in such a way that our happiness shall not depend upon our circumstances here. The nature of the proposal is to make us supremely happy in the knowledge of God here and now. That was the nature of the proposal in the early days of the gospel. There was not one word said by any of the preachers in the early days of the gospel that if they believed the gospel they would go to heaven, not a word about it.

You may study it and look closely into the inspired record of the early proclamation of the gospel, and you will find that none of the preachers ever said that if they believed the gospel they would go to heaven. What was the nature of the proposal in the proclamation of the gospel? The nature of the proposal was this, that people should have the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost there shall be the knowledge of God, and His blessed love shall be shed abroad in our hearts.

What a magnificent thought that is. Do you think that God would tantalise us with magnificent impossibilities? No. There is no such thing. God proposes to every one to make you supremely happy in the knowledge of Himself down here in this world. After the early Christians were thus blessed

with the gospel and had received the Holy Ghost they were taught that they were going to heaven, and they were taught it because love wanted them there. That is how it comes out. I impress this point on you, that you cannot afford to exclude God from your life.

There was a time—I speak as a Christian—when I tried to exclude Him, but now I am never happier than when I think of God. I have known Him for fifty-three years; He has come into my life and beautified my life and made me supremely happy, and that happiness does not depend upon whether I have a fine coat or a shabby one; a long purse or a short purse; whether I live in a palace or a cottage; my happiness does not lie in these things, but in the knowledge of God.

Now then, the fool hath said in his heart, “No God for me.” The Lord tells us in Luke xii.—I draw a contrast now—of a man who had a piece of land. Who gave it him? God gave it to him. He had the strength and the ability to cultivate that piece of land. God gave the ability. He had the sunshine and the rain. God gave it him. He was very diligent and he expanded it—men love to expand, because it gives them a place in the eyes of their fellow creatures, poor things

that we are ; he prospered and said, " What shall I do ? " " I have much goods laid up for many years." " This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods." That is expansion. Now there was not one thought of God or of his neighbour. That man's life was self-centred and God was excluded, and not only God, but his neighbour.

What an awful life to live, to be self-centred, to shut out God, and if you shut out God you shut out your neighbour. That was the condition of that man. The neighbours said, " Well done," the newspapers would say, " Well done," but God says, " Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." In one fell moment he went from time into eternity, and while I am speaking that kind of thing is still going on, and that should make us very serious.

Have you excluded God from your life ? If you exclude God from your life here, He will exclude you from His life there. Awful exclusion to be without God for ever and ever. The very fact that such is the danger that some of my hearers are in fills me with anxiety, and I long after your souls, for this man used the goodness of God to exclude God.

I will draw you another picture from this

precious Gospel of Luke with which you are more or less familiar. The evangelist puts it so graphically that you can see it livingly before you. There is a man in Luke's gospel standing in a boat in the water. He is a fisherman and pursuing his avocation, and the circumstances are that they have been out all night and have taken nothing. If you do not take anything, you have to wash your nets in the morning anyhow. He is there washing his nets.

Yonder on the beach a great crowd is gathering and in the foreground of that crowd is Jesus, the blessed Son of God, and they are crowding down to hear the gracious words that proceed out of His mouth. Who is this Jesus?

He it was who spake and it was done; commanded and it stood fast. He it was who spangled the heavens and upheld them with the word of His power. It was Jesus, and He is here—let it touch your hearts—the blessed God has come down to man to win the confidence of His poor degraded creatures. Do you know that this degradation as God sees it lies in distrust of Him, all the rest is detail. Jesus is there, the blessed Son of God, and they press down to hear the words which fall from His lips, and He draws near to this man. The first meeting of these two is found

in John's gospel, they are known to each other, but this was going to be a wonderful day in the history of Peter.

Jesus says, "Let me preach from your boat." The people are crowding down on the beach—you see them there—and Peter is there listening. I think I can see him there listening to Jesus, the blessed Saviour. Have you listened to Jesus? He will make you forget everything and everybody but Himself. Have you listened to Him like that? Peter is listening and he forgets his nets. So may it be with you; you have heard about Him, you may have been taught to lisp His name from early childhood, but I do ask you with great anxiety, does He stand out before your consciousness in the reality of what He is? Have you heard His voice? Has He spoken to you? Is there a living link between your soul and this Jesus, the blessed Son of God? God grant that to-night there may be a link with Him, that you may listen to Him and that you may hear His voice and be conscious of a living link between your soul and Himself.

When the preaching was over and the audience dismissed, the Lord turned to Peter and said, "Launch out into the deep, and I will give you a draught."

Peter said to the Lord, "We have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless

at thy word." "At thy word." That proves the value of the listening; as Peter was listening his heart said, "I can trust you." So shall it be. That is the point, the blessed God was there in Peter's boat and He won his confidence. Has He won yours? "Nevertheless at thy word," Peter said, and he let down the net, and then He who created the fish commanded them and filled Peter's net with fish. Creatorial power and goodness were shining there. The nets are full of fish, the threads are breaking and the boats are filled with that living freight; but the draught of fish drew Peter's soul into the presence of God. "Ithiel," God is.

Let me tell you, dear friends, that is conversion. If God be for me at any given moment it must raise the question as to what I am to Him. Let me tell you that conversion is intensely individual. We are not converted in a company; but one by one we come to Christ. We must come to Him; we must have the sense in our souls that He has received us, that we have heard His blessed voice. Here is the point, you know very well—I speak as a man—what it is to have the feeling of success in your veins when you have done a good stroke of business, when you have had a good catch of fish or whatever it may be. What is Peter thinking

of? The commercial value of that catch? No. He never had a catch like that before. But what is happening in that man's soul is this, he is drawn into the divine presence.

You might have said to Peter, "You had better wait till you see the Lord alone, James and John are seeing you and listening." It does not matter about James and John when God is there, we are delivered from all such feelings when God is there. God and you, and you and God, and no intrusion of a third person. That is conversion—in the blessed solitude with God to learn what you are and to learn what God is.

He turns his back on his companions and on his fish, and he falls down at Jesus' feet. Well I know it through grace, I know the action of it. "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." "You have filled my nets with fish that I might learn that I am full of sin, that I am a man full of sin. But if you go what shall I do?" He tells Him to go but clings to Him. What is it? Why just this—"Ithiel," God is. "Ucal," God will prevail. In the day of grace He will prevail, but if He prevails not with you in the day of grace He will prevail with you in the day of judgment. Surely it is most blessed to meet Him now in the day of His grace.

The Lord looks upon Peter and says, If

you are full of sin I am full of grace, and My grace is greater than your sin. That is it, "Ithiel" and "Ucal."

You see, on the one hand, the rich fool excluding God. Creatorial power and goodness only served to make him selfish and he left God out, but he died that same night. Here in our other passage creatorial power and goodness only drew this man into the light of the presence of God to learn that he was full of sin and to learn that God is full of grace, and His grace is greater than sin. How blessed it is; does it touch your heart? I never tire of the story, the more I speak from it the more I enjoy and love it. That is what is so lovely in God's word, the more you read it the more you love it and the more blessed it is, you never tire of it.

Surely we who are the subjects of God's grace are growing as Christians in the sense of the grace that has met us. Do I forget the first touch, my first meeting with Christ? How can I forget it? It is growingly beautiful to me. I do not lose the sense of it, but there is a growing apprehension of the grace that met me.

I have said all this that you may see the force of these words, the divine meaning of these words "Ithiel" and "Ucal." "Ithiel," God is, and "Ucal," God will prevail. No

matter what evil you may find in yourself, you will find that the good that is in God is greater than the evil in yourself, and if I have to learn—and I must learn—the evil in myself, it is to find God—blessed finding. If I have to go down through the mire, and it is very painful, I have to go down and find what I am, and I find God underneath it, and the goodness in God is greater than the evil in me. He never condones evil, but He has taken advantage of the evil to shew what the good is in Himself.

I am saying this that your heart may be led to trust Him, that the presentation of Him may win your confidence and you may be found among those of whom it may be said, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." He was a shield for me and He will be a shield for you.

Now this scripture is very fascinating and I will proceed to shew you the force of verse 4. I call special attention to it. Did you catch the thought—I trust that God may impress it upon you—that if God raises a question in your soul—He always does when His presence is there—if God be for you at any moment it must raise the question of what you are to God. It must necessarily do so. God raises such a question in your soul to

introduce His own blessed answer. You cannot answer it, but God can answer it, and God's answer to every possible question is Christ.

What a magnificent thought. How my heart is thrilled with such a thing as that. He raises a question with me as to what I am, and He raises the question to introduce the answer, and His answer is Christ. Many of you here are Christians. Is there one answer to all your tears, all your desires, all your prayers? He has got one answer and that is Christ. If you are passing through bereavement and sorrow and the heart feels it—God intends you to feel it—it is to find Christ. Blessed compensation. If I have been through deep sorrow and have found Christ, what blessed compensation. I have found that He is more than enough to fill every breach. Do you think I could by searching with my brain find out Christ? Every bit of appreciation of Christ has been through a sense of need. It is an experimental thing, not a doctrinal thing. There is no such thing as a mere doctrinal knowledge of Christ. No. I beg your attention to it; every bit of apprehension you may have of Christ, you have been led into the knowledge of and the blessedness of experimentally.

But to return, I called attention to verse 4

of our chapter. To analyse it as one would like to do in detail would take longer than the time at my disposal. It is most vast. There are five questions raised in verse 4, and these five questions are answered by Christ.

I could not speak on it if I had not the light of the New Testament scripture. The first question is, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?" It appals you. "Who hath ascended?" That is not a geographical question, behind it is a moral question. Who has measured the distance between a holy God and an unholy sinner? Who has measured it?

Let me tell you, dear friends, that one of the sweetest thoughts—and there are many sweet thoughts in the gospel—but one of the sweetest is this, that God felt the distance at which His poor creatures were. He felt it. God cannot bear distance. He loves nearness. He cannot bear silence, and silence is the result of distance. If you are in distance you are silent towards Him; but God sent His own Son to remove the distance and to break the silence; the blessed God. You remember that when the prodigal "was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran." If the boy was hungry, and he was, the father's heart was hungry for the boy. That is God. He felt

the distance. There were painful results to the poor prodigal; there was departure, distance, destitution, and degradation, but the father felt it.

Is God like that? He is. He felt the distance in which His poor creature was, so He sent His own Son to remove the distance. How? How could He remove the distance? By going into the distant place. Where was the distance removed? In the cross. Have you heard that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" wrung from His blessed lips and from His heart? Who could measure what it was for Jesus to be out in the distance? In dark Gethsemane angels were sent to strengthen Him, but when He was there no angelic being could cross that dark abyss; He was left alone. Come and learn His love, and learn to hate the sin that put Him there, by that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The distance was removed by the blessed Son of God being in the distance. It is a moral idea. He removed the distance; and He who measured the distance measures the nearness.

" So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I could not be,
For in the Person of His Son,
I am as near as He."

He felt the distance. One could spend a whole evening on that one thought. I am presenting Christ to you according to that which He has wrought.

The second question is, "Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?" Who is greater than Satan? Satan is a powerful being, the prince of the power of the air. Satan is behind all those things that we are subject to. He can blow with his winds and raise the mighty fury of the will of man; but the One who opposed Satan, the Son of God, is greater than Satan; He has been down into Satan's dark domain and He has broken his power. He is greater than Satan. Who is? Jesus, the Son of God. He has won the victory. He has gone down into Satan's headquarters and broken them up.

What a wonderful Saviour He is. How we should trust Him. I sometimes feel that I cannot stand against Satan's winds. I am a poor creature, however can I stand against Satan? But I can get behind the One who has gathered the wind in His fists and I feel perfectly safe there. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death . . . and deliver them who through fear of death were

all their lifetime subject to bondage." What a mighty victory He won over Satan.

Question number three. "Who has put a girdle on the sea?" In other words, "Who has annulled death?" He is greater than death. Who? Jesus. How He looms before my delighted heart in the grandeur of what He is. He has annulled death and He has brought to light life and incorruptibility through the gospel. When you came into the world—every one of you—death said of you as children of Adam, "I will pull you down; I will feed on you." Dare you deny it? You cannot. Of every child of Adam death could say, "I will pull you down and I will feed on you." It cannot be denied.

One of the greatest statesmen of the last century was dying; a christian doctor stood by his side and held his hand, and he said, "O doctor, I am overwhelmed." Death was overwhelming him. Death was over him. Gone were all his honours and all his glories. Oh, how pitiful it is. That is what brought me to Christ, the thought that I must die. My heart was beating high with ambition, I wanted to get on in this world, and I was urged to do so by some who knew me. But I was the subject of a mother's prayers—she looked through her tears at me when I

left home and said, "I will never leave off going to God for you."

When I went away—poor silly fellow that I was—I thought to see life, to have a fine time, to have sea liberty. It was absolute slavery—my mother kept praying for me. I have sat in a concert hall and heard sweet music and I have felt the touch of my mother's hand and heard her pleading voice. She was spoiling all my pleasure by her prayers.

The thought was on my spirit that I must die, and I wanted something to love outside the reach of death. Like the child who said to its mother, "Give me something to love that cannot die." Pet after pet had died, and the child wanted something to love that would not die, but the mother could not do it. The Lord looked in pity on me—His compassions are very great. I well remember it, I was a sailor lad and sitting up in one of the largest churches in Glasgow, right away from home, and I sat up there in the gallery. There were probably three thousand in the place, and the preacher got up and said, "I take for my text the first chapter of Colossians and the nineteenth verse. 'In him all the fulness was pleased to dwell.'"

What kind of a sermon was it? I do not know, but I know what happened to me. This glorious Person, my precious Saviour,

drew me out, He looked into the depths of my sad and weary heart and said, "I am for you, and you are for Me." I said, "A poor sinful creature like me?" "I am for you, and you are for Me," and we two came together, never to be severed, never.

Many a time I have thought of it; it is fifty-three years ago, but it comes sweetly to me over again. "I am for you, and you are for Me." Never to be severed. My heart was wakened to a new affection and I have found what my heart desired, some One to love outside the region of death, and I have got it. I have known hours of sorrow and bereavement and have had to look through my tears into His face and say, "I shall never lose Thee." He is outside the region of death.

What a magnificent thing it is to be a Christian. He has annulled death. What is the good of my preaching to you if I do not say it to myself? I can say to death, "You will never pull me down and you will never feed on me now. I know the One who has said, 'Whoso eateth my flesh . . . hath eternal life.' He has the keys of death. Thou art my servant, O death." That is it. That is Christianity. How could I say it but for Jesus, who died and went down into death to annul it.

Question number four is this, "Who hath established all the ends of the earth?" Take

the last few years, where have people been? Governments breaking up, everything giving way. Many a time have I said during the last five years, "I have received a kingdom which cannot be moved." Everything for Christians is established on the resurrection platform in Christ. Established there. We preach a risen Christ to you.

"That glorious resurrection morn
Bids doubts for ever cease,
For far and wide the news is borne,
Of perfect peace."

I was preaching at Newport (Mon.) some years ago, and I said to the people in giving out that hymn, "We Christians keep Easter all the year round; not only once a year, but all the year round." He cherishes the fact that he knows a risen Christ. Everything is established there.

I should like to refer to it. I was travelling a few years afterwards in Somersetshire. I had been to a meeting and had to get out at the junction. It was a very dark night, but I heard a voice saying, "Mr. Johnson." I groped my way along the platform and said, "Who are you?" There I saw the engine driver who had driven the train I had come in by, and he said, "You don't know me, but, thank God, I know you, and I thought I would tell you about it. Do you remember

telling us in Newport that you kept Easter all the year round?" I said, "Yes, I think I do." "Well," he said, "I have been keeping Easter all the year round ever since." That is it. A risen Christ is presented to you. All is established in a risen Christ and on an unshakable foundation.

Now the last and best of all, question five. "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?"

Can you tell me what His name is? Who can tell what His Son's name is? We Christians can. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." That is His name and that is His Son's name. We can tell. All we Christians here can join with the preacher and say, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Is He your Saviour? Your own personal Saviour? God grant it may be so.

I have endeavoured to shew you what is here in God is, that as you sit there listening your heart has been saying, "He is worthy of my trust, worthy of my confidence." You are never saved by creed, but by personal faith in Christ. I trust that all of you here, if you have never been conscious of a personal faith and contact with Christ, may know what it is now to have a personal sense of

your need. He is worthy to be trusted. I have known Him for fifty-three years. I have summered with Him and wintered with Him ; I have not been all that I should like to have been, and I cannot take pleasure in what I have been, but I take the greatest possible pleasure in what He has been. May He be all this to you for His name's sake. Amen.



THE PURPOSE OF GOD TO MAKE MY LIFE BEAUTIFUL.

(MARK V. 15.)

“ And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind : and they were afraid.”

DOES it strike you, beloved friends, that the ending of this verse is very singular? “ And they were afraid.” The people were afraid when they saw this. Why were they afraid? What was there to cause them to fear? We are not told that they were afraid in the former part of the chapter where we have the past condition of this man presented so graphically. There he was under this awful domination; living there in the place of death, crying night and day; poor, restless creature under this frightful domination.

They had sought to reform him, to restrain him; they had bound him with fetters—reformation fetters—but the devil was too strong for reformation fetters, he had broken the bands asunder and they could do nothing for him.

They had known him under those distressing circumstances, but now they saw the man under a new domination, and in a new condition entirely. He was sitting—no longer restless, but sitting—he was at rest. No longer naked, he was clothed, and his brain was no longer railing as it had been all those years, but he was in his right mind. That is what they saw; they saw the man sitting in absolute rest, he was clothed and in his right mind. They saw it and they were afraid.

They were not afraid of the man under the past conditions, but now they see him thus they are afraid. I call your attention to this and then dismiss it. What were they afraid of? The fact is, men are more familiar with the power of Satan than they are with the power of God, far more familiar; they are more at home with the power of Satan in destruction than they are with the power of God in blessing. You will find that is so.

There is one passage in Psalm xiv. I wish to call attention to—there are other passages, too, which I could quote—but it says, "There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous." They were in fear. And so here, here is a man who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of

God's love. That is what this verse sets forth—it is a beautiful miniature picture of the kingdom of God. He is delivered from Satan's kingdom and has got into God's kingdom, and when you are there you have absolute rest in the kingdom of God.

Jesus was his Lord; he had come under a new domination; he was delivered from the power of Satan and had come into God's kingdom where Jesus was now his Lord, and he was under the subduing influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a Christian. Are you one of those? Have you known the subduing power of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know what it is to be delivered from the power of Satan, from the kingdom of Satan, and brought into the kingdom of the Son of God's love? That is what this passage sets forth most blessedly.

In the previous chapter we find the parable of the sower sowing the seed; the seed was sown and the seed is the word of God—the revelation of God. If that is sown in man's heart he begins to know God. Now in this chapter we have the deliverance of the Son of God. There must be deliverance in order to enjoy the sowing—that is to say, the narratives given here set forth the true condition of man as he is, of man in the flesh. Now as such they need deliverance, and the

Deliverer is the blessed Son of God. He is the Deliverer, He is the Son of God.

There is a verse of our chapter which I must call attention to—the first verse—it is a geographical verse; the Lord went through the sea and passed over. I quite admit that is a *geographical statement*, but underlying that is the key of the whole of the chapter. This is what I refer to. The Lord has been through the sea of death and has reached the other side. There is no other Christ to preach to you than a risen Christ. I repeat it, a risen Christ.

In the early days of the Acts, if you have looked at it, when they preached the gospel—Peter or Paul, for instance, or whoever it was—the culminating point was a risen Christ. He has been through the sea and has reached the other side, or there would be no Saviour for us. He has reached the other side and is victorious over death. He is a mighty Victor, the Son of God.

In Romans He is declared to be the Son of God by resurrection from among the dead. Who He is is declared by resurrection. He was declared when He was here in the spirit of holiness, and in the exposition of the gospel in the Romans He is declared to be the Son of God by resurrection from among the dead. He has reached the other side. What a glorious

Person He is. He has reached the other side ; He has won the victory ; been through the sea ; made atonement. As I was trying to shew you last week, He has broken Satan's power and everything that is against us He has met.

You remember the story of Jonah : well, a lady said to me some years ago, as I was travelling with her and speaking about Jonah, " Mr. Johnson, surely you do not believe in the story of Jonah, I thought that was exploded years ago." My reply was, " Madam, I believe in God." If you believe in God you must believe Jonah.

Dear friends, if you do not believe the story of Jonah you have lost Jesus, and there is no Saviour for you, for the blessed Saviour said, " As Jonah was." Was He mistaken ? Can you imagine it ? Can you entertain such a thought ? Do you remember what fell from His lips, " As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Do you not see that if you do not believe the story of Jonah you have lost Jesus and there is no Saviour. I could not believe in a Saviour who was mistaken, who was fallible. You remember the story : Jonah was on the deck of the ship fleeing from the presence of God. He

was not a type of the Lord Jesus in that ; he was God's sent one, and in despondency embarked on that voyage with the heathen mariners. A storm came up, the sea was white with foam, and the poor heathen mariners cried to their gods to deliver them.

Jonah was asleep in the side of the ship. They thought of their Jewish passenger and roused him from his sleep, saying, " Call upon your God ; do you not know we are in peril ? " And Jonah came on deck, and said, " I know what this is for, it is on my account ; the only way out of the difficulty is to throw me overboard ; the storm will never cease until you do. "

Now sailors are very tender with their passengers—I was a sailor once myself, and I know—passengers always get the first chance. So they called upon their gods, but the ship was sinking ; they threw overboard all the cargo and the tackling, and then at last they called up Jonah and threw him over. He sank beneath the waves and there was a great calm.

Time was when Jesus, the Son of God, stood on the deck of our sinking ship ; His eye surveyed it, and His heart was filled with divine compassion—that blessed Jesus, the Son of God. He surveyed it—it was white with foam—the wrath of God was deserved,

righteously deserved—and He knew it, and He went beneath those waves and those billows. “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” He was overwhelmed in that bitter hour. Are you so familiar with the fact that it has no place in your heart? Do you know the facts? How are you affected by the fact that Jesus died, that Jesus went underneath the wrath of God? He exhausted it; but He has reached the other side. There is no other Christ to preach than a risen Christ and a glorified Christ.

It is a momentous question. Where is Christ now? This blessed Man, the Son of God, Maker of heaven and earth, yet very Man, where is He now? Do you ever sit and think of that? Where is He? He is at the right hand of God. He has been through the sea; He has reached the resurrection shore and now He is exalted at the right hand of God. There He is. Do you see Him there? Do you see Jesus?

Beloved friends, these eyes have never seen Him; these fingers have never touched Him; these ears have never heard His voice; but He stands out before my soul in the living reality of what He is more than any living person on this earth. Thank God. He is the Son of God; He has been through the sea; He has reached the other side; He is declared

to be the Son of God by resurrection from among the dead, and He moves through this chapter in mighty power.

I love to think of Him moving through the chapter; for, remember, these gospels were written years after the death and resurrection and exaltation of Christ; the Spirit of God wrote the narratives of the gospels years after, and in view of where Christ is; in view of what He has done and where He is; so that when we read the gospels we have it livingly before us, and what He is in this chapter He is to-night. He is as available to you now as He was here. Remember the words of our Lord to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

So you go through the chapter, and it is a most fascinating chapter; I could preach from it all the year round; if I thought of myself as a preacher I might diversify, but that is not my point. Something fresh and something original is what people are after, but we need the old, old story over and over again.

Now there are three narratives in this chapter. There is the man under the dominion of sin—under Satan; there is the woman weakened and defiled by sin; and

there is the little child of twelve years of age in the deadly grip of death. Man under the domination of sin; the woman weakened and defiled by disease, which sets forth what sin is; and the little child in the deadly grip of death. Can any of you dare to say that it is not here now? Satan's power, the defilement of sin, and the power of death; they are here. You will do well to take heed to it—to the conditions. If the ruin is dire—and it is—the remedy is greater.

You have the most graphic descriptions of diseases put through your letter-boxes in order to present a remedy, and so that you may apply at once for the remedy. The description is all right, but the remedy is oftentimes very doubtful.

The ruin is great here, but the remedy is greater. How then are you going to appreciate the remedy unless you are made to feel the ruin? I cannot make you feel it, but the Spirit of God can. Here is this man under this frightful domination—held by Satan—he is the mouthpiece of Satan, and dwelling in the place of death and restless. Are not people restless to-day? Oh, yes, they are restless in heart and growing more restless as the years go by, living in excitement away from God. Religious, perhaps, but I gave you my definition of religion the other night,

the respectful recognition of God at a distance on certain occasions to appease the conscience. There is nothing in that. The respectful recognition of God at a distance on occasions is religion, but there is nothing in that.

Christianity, as I understand it, is this, though I may be repeating myself—God proposes to come into my life to make my life beautiful. That is it. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." The glory of a man lies in the knowledge of God. I was never truly happy until I knew God. I never knew what real happiness was until I knew God, and God has become my exceeding joy.

There were moments in my history when I was glad to forget Him, to forget that I was responsible to Him, and I wanted my own way; I wanted to pursue my own way and I was glad to shut God out; but now through grace I am never happier than when I am thinking about God—never. God has become my exceeding joy. I am speaking also for other Christians of what is proper to a Christian, not simply of myself, but as a Christian, and I never knew happiness until I knew

God, and He has become my exceeding joy.—for fifty-three years He has been my exceeding joy.

Let me tell you, dear friends, I have known the value of these things in hours of peril. My life has been very varied; I have been near to death. I have been covered up for dead, and I have been on the Atlantic when we expected to go to the bottom at any moment; the waves were dashing over us, and I remember rolling myself up in my blanket, dead tired and hungry, for we had had no food for thirty-six hours, and saying to myself, "I shall see the Lord directly," and closing my eyes and sleeping as quietly as ever I slept in my mother's house at home. I remember saying, "I shall see Jesus now." Not one bit of trepidation in my heart. I have been taught the value of these things and can speak of them to you.

When I was preaching at Basingstoke one day people were saying, "Who is this man who is preaching?" I said, "I have not come to preach about myself, I have come to preach Christ, but my name is William Johnson; I was once a sailor and have been tossed up like Jonah to come and preach to you." The Lord said, Not yet, you are not to come yet.

So here this demoniac besought the Lord that he might be with Him, but the Lord

said, No, you go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. I send you on a mission now ; by-and-by you shall come and dwell with Me, but I send you on a mission now.

What about the people here ? May I point out to you the two extremes—on the one hand there was a man raving like a maniac in opposition to Christ, the Son of God, and on the other hand you see the people preferring their pigs to Christ. That is the devil. They prayed Him to depart out of their coast. What an awful thing. On the one hand the raving maniac and on the other the deadly power of Satan. They say, Go out of our coast, you are disturbing our commercial values, we have lost two thousand pigs through you ; go away.

What have you preferred to Christ ? It is an awful thing to slight Him.

I remember a poor woman at Canterbury who seemed to be anxious about her soul, and I said I would go and see her. On the Monday morning I called at her cottage ; she knew I was knocking at her door, and she just opened it a little bit and said, “ Mr. Johnson I have thought it all over. I know what you will tell me, to come to Christ ; but if I do, I shall have my husband against me and my children against me, and I could

not bear it," and she shut the door. How awfully solemn.

Here they preferred the man to be a wretched maniac, and they preferred their pigs to Christ. They had lost their swine—the Lord had sent the devils into them and the whole herd ran down the hill and were drowned—they had lost their prosperity.

If you want a Deliverer from Satan there is the Son of God. You are no match for Satan. What a folly it is—I have heard men singing, "Britons never shall be slaves," and they are slaves to the devil all the time they are singing about their liberty.

Now I come to what I hope will be of blessing to many here. There is a woman brought before us as the Lord is passing along—Jairus had begged the Lord to come because his child was sick—and as He went His way to Jairus's house He met this woman. She had been twelve years in this sad condition. The child was twelve years old and the woman had been twelve years in this dreadful condition. She had spent all that she had, but instead of getting better she grew worse. All these weary years of disappointment, trying to be good, trying to be better, but only growing worse and worse. The more you try to be better, the more you find out the badness. So at last she comes

to the end of her resources. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity" is a very good saying.

She hears of Jesus; there is a great crowd passing through the street, and pressing through the crowd the woman comes to Him. What brings you to Him is your need. Jesus only commits Himself to your need, He never commits Himself to your brains. He did not come here to be discussed. No. It says at the end of John ii., "He did not commit himself unto them, because he knew . . . what was in man." He will not commit Himself to anything but need.

If you have any knowledge of Christ it is through the necessity of your soul. You cannot understand Him by knowing Him mentally, it is through the conscience and the heart. It is no use trying to argue people into Christianity; there must be the living power of it in the heart and the conscience. This is an engaging story and I hope some will get help from this point. She says, If I may touch but the hem of His garment. She pushes her way through, her need makes her earnest. She had been ill twelve years—think of it. I think I can see her timidly going behind Him. Her need was great and she put out her hand and touched the hem of His garment and she was made whole. That is faith—the

hand of need. "Lord, I need Thee." She never said, "I need Thee." She puts her hand out and touches Him, and He knows that touch. He says, "Who touched me?" The disciples are astounded at such a thing. A vast crowd and the Lord said, "Who touched me?"

Supposing I am crossing by the Bank of England—the human tide is strong there—and I turn round and say, "Who touched me?" What would people say? "All are touching you; a great crowd touching you, and you ask who touched you!" But the Lord says, There is a touch I know.

Have *you* given that touch? May you do so to-night in the need of your soul. He is here as much to-night as He was in this chapter. As you sit there in the sense of your need, in the sense of the glory of this blessed Person and how He is adapted to your need, you may put out your hand and say, "Lord, I trust Thee."

I see a vast crowd around Christ by way of creed, and creed never saved a man yet. Never. I see millions round Christ by way of creed, but that never saved a man yet; it is personal faith; and amongst the vast millions around Christ in Christendom by way of creed there are tens of thousands who have come to Him and have put out

their hand and touched Him. I often think of it, of the vast crowd around Christ by way of profession and creed, and among them are those who have really trusted Him. No matter what their creed, whether Lutherans, Greek Church, Romanists, or Protestants, there are in these vast bodies those who have come to Christ, they have given the touch that the Lord knows. I hope you are one of them. It is real, personal faith. "Who touched me?" The woman went away; she knew she was healed, but the Lord would have her back.

What does this garment mean that the Lord wears? It has no seam, woven from the top to the bottom. What does it mean? The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. All that God is, He is in Christ. When you touch Him, all that He is is for you; you may have to learn it bit by bit, but all that He is is for you. Thank God. It is all for you, that garment which had no seam. She touched the hem of His garment.

She came back; the Lord had His after-meeting with her. She came back and she fell down before Him and told Him all. He loved to be told it. He knew all about her, He knew every bit of the disappointment, but it is intensely interesting to Christ; the

tale of soul history is interesting to Him. I am glad to say that on behalf of my Master.

She told Him all the truth. The truth about God will make you truthful about yourself. He knew it, but He loved to be told. I think I can hear her saying, "Twelve years, Lord, I tried this, that, and the other." How He listened with the deepest compassion. What a blessed Jesus He is, the blessed Son of God. She told Him all the truth. Then He said to her, "Daughter." If she touched Him by faith He touched her by the Spirit. If she said, "Lord, I need Thee," He said, "I need you." There is a Christian.

Let us look for one moment at Ephesians i., the epistle which gives us the highest character of christian blessing and where the glorious future is unfolded in wonderful language. It is God's mosaic.

In the first twelve verses of that chapter you get the blessings of Christians, and then you get the simplest idea of a Christian as setting forth what is here in Mark v. The question may be raised—I have heard it raised—and I have said to myself, "How may I know that I am one little bit of stone in this beautiful mosaic?"

I have seen in Mark's gospel the mosaic work, millions of stones put in marvellous

designs* most charmingly. The first twelve verses of this chapter are God's mosaic work. Am I one little stone in it? How may I know?

The simplest idea of a Christian occurs in this epistle and I call attention to my chapter. It says here (ver. 12), "who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted." "Trusted in Christ." Are you a truster in Christ? Then you belong to this vast kingdom. I have thanked God that in the epistle in which there is the highest christian blessing, the simplest idea of a Christian on the faith side is presented.

How admirable scripture is! It does not require a theologian to understand this. Have you trusted Christ? "After that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." The "word of truth" answers to the garment that had no seam. The truth about God is in Christ, so that is your salvation. What God is is your salvation. They trusted Christ in whom the word of truth was, and the word of truth was their salvation. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

That presents the idea. She touched Him in faith, and in her touch she said, "Lord, I need Thee." He said, "Daughter" to her.

What does that mean? "I will never forget you. You are an object of interest to Me; there is a link between you and Myself that can never be severed." You are welcome to the blessing, and it gives Him the greatest possible pleasure to bless you.

I was going along the city some years ago on a cold wintry morning, and there was a man standing in the gutter holding out bootlaces. He said, "Buy a bootlace, sir, I haven't had a bite this morning."

I might have said, but I did not, "My dear man, do you not see across the street there is wealth, why do you not go and ask for a shovelful of sovereigns. Wealth is there in millions." When Christ comes it will all be done away with. What men are trying to do by political efforts will be done away with when Christ comes. Every Christian feels the need of man. If I had said to the man, "Wealth is there, go in and ask for some," do you know what he would have said? "Yes, the wealth is there, but there is no welcome."

The wealth is here in Christ and the welcome is there in like manner. Just trust Him as you sit there. He has done everything and His heart is full of compassion. Is there one sad and weary heart here? You have tried to be good; tried to be better; tried to love

God and your neighbour as yourself ; you have been here and there ; to everybody but Christ. Come to Him ; trust in Christ. " In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth."

I was preaching at M—— some years ago I think on this very subject—and all at once there came something to me, and I said to the people, " I am going to get off the desk and sit on a chair, I feel I am in the way." I did so, and sat down ; there was great silence for ten minutes, and during that ten minutes five souls came to Christ as they sat there. You may come to Him now. May you feel by the Spirit that He is near to you. May you put out your hand in all your deep need—faith is the hand of need—and say, " Lord, I need Thee." He will answer back ; He will tell you that you are needed by Him, and it gives Him the greatest possible pleasure to bless you.

Now here, the child was dead, but the Lord says she sleeps. Do you know it ? This little rosebud, the delight of her father's heart, was lying there in the silence of death. Do you know it ? There is scarcely a household that has not been interrupted by the rude hand of death. Death is the rude interrupter of everything that is here. I will put a question to you, and then close. I remember going

to see an old gentleman down in Devonshire ; I went in and sat down, and he said, " Did you observe that beautiful wood as you came up the road ? I gave three thousand for that, I did not want any neighbours here." I said, " Yes, I noticed it." He said, " Did you observe the beautiful sea view I have here ? " I said, " Yes, I stood and admired it." Then I said, " I am a servant of Christ and am going to visit others, so cannot stay with you long, but I want you to put a question to yourself after I am gone."

He was eager to hear the question, and I said, " When I am gone and you sit here in your chair I want you to ask yourself this question, What do I possess outside the reach of death ? " A fine question that. "*What do I possess outside the reach of death ?*" Put the question to yourself, all of you. I sit in my room and ask myself that question.

What a doleful man, you say. No, it gives me the greatest possible joy. I look round on those who love me and my departure would give them sadness ; theirs would to me. I cannot look on any one here outside the reach of death, but my heart gives a leap, for I have got Christ, and He is outside the reach of death.

I have looked up through my tears into His blessed face in the hour of my bereavement

and have said, "Lord, I shall never lose Thee." No, never lose Him. Splendid. Have you ever told Him that? Are these things what you say on certain occasions? Let them be living realities in your soul. There is your testimony, not only in saying certain things, but the testimony lies in vitality, and vitality lies in nearness to Christ and in knowing Him. What a happy thing to ask the question, "What do I possess outside the reach of death?"

My story is over, poorly I may have presented it, but I plead with you, as I may never see you again—do you not see how you need Him? If you have a grave in front of you—one step more and you are in it, you do not know how soon; you may be full of health and vigour, but one step and you are in the grave—have you got any one the other side? Christianity gives you some One the other side of death, the blessed Jesus, the Son of God. May your heart trust in Him, and may you just be led to do it for His name's sake. Amen.