

“WHAT IS MAN?”

Heb. ii. 5-18.

A WONDERFUL inquiry this is, which is quoted from Psalm viii.: “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” It is an inquiry founded upon his nothingness in himself, but bringing out, in God’s answer to it, all His own counsels in Christ. “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” Such is his littleness; yet, when it comes to be answered not according to what man is but in the counsels of God, we find him to be the one in whom all the wisdom of God is displayed. Nor is it the display of power merely—creation shows that—but all those qualities in God where His nature comes out, which are more than attributes. Power can say a word, and the thing is done: very wonderful, of course; but there is a great deal more than this. Man is the one in whom angels have to learn what God is in His ways and

counsels, for the simple reason that the Word of God was in those counsels to become a man—that He who created angels did not take up angels, but took up man.

Thus necessarily all the ways and qualities of God (I use these words as distinct from mere attributes, such as of power, and the like), His holiness, love, and righteousness, all these come out in man; because they were associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this that gives man such a wonderful position. And then it is not like the angels—glorious creatures, but preserved by the power of God unfallen, while that shows His ways in this respect, His power to do so, and the like. But men are taken up when they are sinners to display the glory of God in them; and this is another matter. Things that are in the highest (a revelation of the character of God) do not come out in angels. No doubt angels in a certain way want mercy; no creature can even stand without being sustained. This is quite true, as I am sure we all know; but they do not want redemption, and as regards grace, mercy, love, all these come out in man. As Paul says, "We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." In carrying all this out, we have the special testimony of the responsibility of man as an unfallen creature, one who was made in the image of God, which is never said of angels; but in that, when he did fall, we find grace and power coming in and connecting him with the Creator Himself, so that He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

This is what is brought out so wonderfully by the

question—"What is man?" It was a testimony to man's lowliness, taking him in himself, crushed; but the moment we have the thoughts of God (ver. 7-9), this puts us in a wonderful place. Angels excel us in glory and strength; but they are not said to be in the image of God, and there never was any being set up to be the centre of an immense system that was to turn round himself, till man was (Adam of course I mean); but this is fallen now, and every one is seeking to be a centre for himself. The whole system therefore is under the bondage of corruption now. But in the Lord Jesus man will be the centre of everything that God created. He has put under the Lord all the works of His hands; yet when He said "All things," it is manifest that He is excepted who put all things under Him: God alone is the one exception. The statement of the exception proves that all else is put under Him. But man in the person of Christ is Lord of all.

Thus the Lordship of Christ over everything is not only dominion, but this in a Redeemer, in One who keeps it safe, One who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, to death, but who descended that He might ascend up far above all heavens and fill all things. But He fills all things in the power of the redemption He brought out. God will gather together in one all things which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him, even in Christ. They were created by Him and for Him, but while presently He becomes Head, He does not take them until He can take them as man. And then too what is brought in is that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with

Christ; as He says again in John xvii., "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one." These are to come in, though of course He is the firstborn amongst many brethren. He brings us in every respect into the relationship in which He stands Himself as man. Son Himself, He makes us sons, and He takes His place in resurrection that it may be made ours: for He tells us, "I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Then there is another thing that is so wonderful—it is all by redemption. How could He take sinners and put them in such a place with Himself? Not as sinners; and so He comes down where the sinners are, and puts Himself (sinless of course) in their place: and in this I learn where I am. "If one died for all, then were all dead." God "made him to be sin for us." He came down to the place of death and judgment, passing through all the toil and difficulty of this world as we do, but perfect in it all, that He might take our hearts up where He is, giving a title by redemption and a condition by grace in which we could be associated with Him as the firstborn among many brethren. It is not merely the fact that I am saved, which is true; but He has associated Himself with us down here, in order that He might take up our hearts there by the love He has brought down into them—up into the very place where He is gone, making all the Father's love known to us; for the word is "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." It is not only that I have a place in glory in consequence; but Christ is come for the purpose of associating us with Himself in heart and spirit and mind, so that He should not be *ashamed*

to call us brethren. He might well be ashamed, if He took us as we are.

We see the various characters of the way God brought Him through, and He could say Himself, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He was in Himself a sweet savour to God, beyond the putting away of our sins. In this chapter are given the various grounds upon which He had to go through this place of sorrow in order that we might have this blessing with Him. "It became him in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The truth upon which it is all founded is this—the great original truth—that He was rejoicing in the habitable parts of God's earth; that is, Christ Himself was wisdom in Proverbs viii., and "his delights were with the sons of men." Thus Christ is the wisdom of God, and He was God's delight from all eternity. "I [Christ] was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." There I get the link formed with the eternal objects of the Father's delight. Where did His delight go out? Into the habitable parts of the earth before even they were made. "I was by him as one brought up with him;" but if we look where His heart went out, it was into the habitable parts of the earth and with the sons of men.

Also in due time He became a man: that is the source and foundation of it all to us. He took up the seed of Abraham, who are the heirs of faith. Then comes the purpose and plan, His gathering together in

one all things which are in heaven and earth put under His hand as man. The ground given in Heb. i. is that He is Son; in Colossians i. it is that He created them; and in Psalm viii., Ephesians i., as well as Colossians i., it is that all things are put under Him according to God's counsels and plan. As Son, as Creator, and according to God's counsels, He takes all. "To the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak;" but "thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." "But now we see not yet all things put under him."

Such is the purpose and intention of God. There comes in the additional notice that "we see not yet all things put under him." There is only half of the Psalm fulfilled. He is crowned with glory and honour; but we see not yet the things put under His feet, for He is waiting for His joint-heirs. The time now is the gathering by the gospel the joint-heirs, that He may take His power and reign. As Paul says, "I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." There was another set of promises belonging to this earth, and this we get in Psalm ii., where God sets His king in Zion, and says, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." This will be "the world to come;" but it is not the higher position of Him who is to have the world to come; and therefore in that connection we read of Christ's rejection, "why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and

against his anointed"—the very passage Peter quotes in Acts iv. But, being rejected, He takes another place—upon the Father's throne, where He now is: He is not on His own throne yet, but as He says, "to him that overcometh will I give to sit with me upon my throne, even as I also overcame and am sat down with my Father upon his throne." He sits as man at the right hand of God, not having taken His own throne; and He does not take this until the joint-heirs are ready: Psalm viii. comes in (verses 6-9). Nathanael owned Him as Son of God and king of Israel; but to him our Lord replied: "Thou shalt see greater things than these. Henceforth [so it should be] ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." It is a small thing, My title in Israel; but you shall see Psalm viii. fulfilled. He was rejected as the king of Zion, but He was cast out of the world that God's righteousness might be accomplished; and He was answered according to the value and virtue of what He had done in God's setting Him at His own right hand; and so it is said, "Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This has not yet come; and therefore we must suffer with Him, because His enemies are not made His footstool. The world is round us, and Satan is not bound, and everything has been spoiled that God set up good; and so it will be until Satan is bound. So that plainly Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, not having taken His own throne, but with title over everything, not only as Creator but in redemption, having first descended into the lower parts of the earth: I say, with title over all things, but having taken none, with His enemies still in power

and to rise up more dreadful than ever; and then all will be put down.

Now here it is that people are so deceiving themselves—Christians too. They are going to improve man and improve the world. Why, *He* was in the world and could not improve it; but Christians are going to try! This is the folly of even real Christians: when Christ has been rejected by the world, they will make it all right! But it is only the time for gathering those who are to be Christ's companions. Of course light does improve the world in one sense: men are ashamed to do in the light what they would do in the dark. But this is all. They are themselves the same, no better.

Now we find this Blessed One, of whom Adam was a figure, going to be centre of all things, though not yet. We find Him made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. Then we find the next point—the way in which He was bringing others into full association of heart with Himself. All the glory was His; but He does not go and take His place at the right hand of God as man until He has accomplished redemption, tasted death, gone down to the lowest place and condition to which man can go. I speak now of sufferings rather than atonement, though this is in the chapter. But He tastes death. He goes down to that in which the curse was expressed on the first man, and a great deal more, as we shall see. But it is here the great and blessed testimony to the way in which He took man up to glory. He came into the world

and left it to go to the Father, but not by the aid of twelve legions of angels; but He as man goes through where we are on His way as man to glory. I speak of the road He took. He tasted death. The great general fact is that He who created everything, and who is now sitting at the right hand of God, did not take that place until He had gone down to the lowest place, down to death; and this without speaking of atonement. Two things are there: the fact of the death and the life spent where hatred and death reigned. He came to destroy Satan's power; He came to glorify God; He came to be able to sympathise with every trial and difficulty and sorrow of my heart while trying to walk rightly. There are therefore objects, the glory of God, the propitiation for sin, the overcoming the power of Satan, and the entering into all our sorrows. This is what He does as Priest. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We see Him, "Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." "It became him (*i. e.*, God) in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." He was perfect Himself. He came from God, and went to God, and still was the Son of man who is in heaven; but He had come to obey, to serve us, and bring us there also; and if this were the case, He must take the consequences. The moment our blessed Lord had undertaken our cause, it became God to deal with Him according to the place He had taken. The majesty and righteousness of God must be maintained, and none could have vindicated them but Christ: there never could have been security for God's glory other-

wise. It *became* Him to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering—"perfect," that is, in the full result of glory, to bring Him into the state of a glorified man if He would bring sons to glory. In Himself He was the perfect One; He always is in the bosom of the Father; and all that He did was the Father's delight; so that, if I may reverentially use the expression, the Father could not be silent, but opens the heavens and says, "This is my beloved Son." But in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is a question of the majesty of God, and we do not find "Father."

Hence, if Christ takes up these sinners, He must take the consequences of taking them up. God's glory must be maintained. If He was to clear us from our sins, He must deal with God about them and be made sin—He must die. It was His own blessed grace to do it, but through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. It is not spoken of here as clearing us, but as called for by God's glory; and the more we look at the cross, the more we shall see God could not be glorified any other way. If He had cut off all men as sinners, there would have been no love in it; but the moment Christ gives Himself up for the glory of God, there is perfect dealing with sin in righteousness and perfect dealing with the sinner in love; infinite love in the sacrifice for sin, and infinite righteousness. Of course all this is in God's nature; only it is here displayed, so that there is nothing like the cross. Nobody in what he is himself could be there in the glory with Christ. Therein is expressed all that God is, every character

of His, and Christ giving Himself up in perfect love to His Father, in love to us, and in obedience to God. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but He is made perfect through sufferings; He goes through the effect and consequence of having taken up our case, so that He could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him." He has that place, is a glorified man now, and will be displayed in glory when He comes again. God would straightway glorify Him. Only faith sees this. The world will be judged when He comes again; but faith sees it now and sees it at once, not when displayed in judgment. As He glorified God perfectly on the cross, so He is gone as man into the glory of God. It became God to deal with Him thus. And what a thought it gives of the depth of the place Christ was in, that in the depth of the place among sinners He was making good the glory of God! It was amongst sinners, yet He was the sinless One.

The first ground laid here is that, "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 10-13). Now we find the association of His people with Himself—Him that sanctifieth and them that are sanctified. It is not simply the fact of incarnation,

but this in resurrection. They are "all of one" after death; for He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. He declares His name after He has accomplished redemption. He had said, "Behold my mother and my brethren" in a vague way; but now He calls them His brethren and not before. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." This name is expressly declared after redemption was accomplished. These then are His brethren, made "all of one" with Him. Here we have it in a poor earthen vessel; but it is so. Those who are His own are all one set before God, they are Christ's brethren, and they are entirely and for ever associated with Himself, they the redeemed, and He the Redeemer; we the recipients, and He the exerciser of the grace, it is quite true; but this is what is done.

We are "all of one." The more it is looked at, the more striking it will be seen to be. All through the life of Christ He does not once say, "My God." He lived in the perfect relationship He was in, and says, "My Father;" but on the cross, when He was drinking the cup of wrath, He says, "My God." This was His perfectness; it was not the expression of relationship; but it was the expression of infinite suffering, and of infinite claim. But when this was accomplished, so that we could be brought in, He uses both names; and on those names of God our whole blessing rests. If we look at God as He is, we can delight in that name; for we are made partakers of His holiness. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ; of course we are so suited to God; while we have also the blessed relationship of sons, and say,

each of us, He is my Father too. And so we read in Ephesians i. 3, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" has blessed us. Of course Christ is a man, and so God is His God; and because He is His Son, God is His Father. Grace has brought us perfectly to God, and this is the blessedness which is wrought for us. Then the whole place is perfectly settled.

I do not say we may not have trembling faith in our hearts; but the place is settled—"my God and your God." We have not a bit of the full results of it all yet, but the grace which gives us the full consciousness of it. In three ways we have it. If I take John, I say, Christ is in me and I in Him; if I take Paul, I say I am a member of Christ's body; but if I take the question of coming to God, which the Epistle to the Hebrews treats of, I can go into the holiest. I do not call this priesthood; but it is the place where we go through redemption. And it is important to understand this, because it is often used as if priesthood was to bring us there, and therefore persons go to the priest. Surely He will hear them in His mercy, though they go wrong. But it is not right: we are there, accepted in the Beloved. By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

But is this all? It is not all the truth. Did not Christ live on earth? Was He not perfect on earth? Are you living on earth? Are you perfect on earth? That is another story. It is not all the truth to say, "I am in Christ before God;" it is the foundation of all, but it is not all the truth of what is

passing in your hearts. Have you not difficulties? Do you not find you give way sometimes through want of faith? This is not suited to heaven; the more you consciously belong to heaven, the more unsuited you feel it to be. And God deals with this. It is a tremendous mistake to think that, because I have a place in heaven with Christ, God is not concerned in my path down here. In this respect I am present in the body and absent from the Lord; and God deals with us in this condition. He brings practical death on all that is in us (on the flesh I mean), and not only where there is failure (this is met rather in 1 John ii.). And in all the weakness here, I have the blessed sympathy of Christ with my heart in all I am passing through, where I need help, and He obtains help for me. I am before a throne of grace, and there is righteousness truly—grace reigns through righteousness. But what is the confidence I have? “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.” I am talking to God, and getting answers from God. This is not perfection. Certainly if there were not perfection, I could not go on; but now, mark, it continues, “seeing we have a great high priest” (Heb. iv. 14-17); and so I go boldly and find grace. I have standing there a witness of righteousness and propitiation. He is there; and this because He is both these. Then, in 1 John ii., “if any man sin, we have,” &c. He is my righteousness, and all this is settled; if not, I should have the sin imputed to me. But I stand in Him as my righteousness before God; and He is there according to the value of His propitiation; and if I fail, He there has

taken up my cause. Grace comes to deal with my heart and spirit and restore me, my righteousness never being touched. It is because my righteousness can never be touched at all, that I go on. This is not my highest place, but to be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—in one word, to be in Christ; but it is the highest character of His grace now to help us when we are in weakness and infirmity. If God has commended His love towards us, it is when we were sinners, but I learn it all in joy in God. He loved me when there was nothing in me to love; and the grand testimony of absolutely divine love is that God loved sinners. So the grace of Christ to me is not my highest place; but it is the highest place of Christ. It makes me little and Christ great. To be put into Christ makes me great; to find Christ going the same path as myself that He may understand every feeling I have makes His grace great. And this is most precious.

The next point is—"I will put my trust in him." He passed through the whole scene, it was part of His perfection, dependent on His Father; when going to appoint the twelve, He prayed all night, and so on. Then we see Christ treading this path of opposition and insult; and we know that we have not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. But in my infirmity, as Paul says, I can glory that Christ's power may rest on me. You know what the Lord does there—He sends a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him; but He says "my grace is sufficient for thee." He answers, deals with him, understands him; and this is all he wants. It

was the humble weak place of the believer, but the constant and touching exercise of Christ's grace towards him. Another reason why He took this low place (not part of priesthood exactly, though the priest took it) was to annul the power of Satan—in order to be able to die and destroy Satan, that is, his power. First, it became God to lead Christ through this path in regard to His own glory; then Christ was there putting His trust in Him while going through it. Then He destroys Satan's power. And next we come to the more proper and immediate exercise of priesthood, and He says "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels," &c., verses 16-18.

First, the children were partakers of flesh and blood in trial and difficulty (it does not say *sin*, though they might sin). He calls them His brethren, and sings in the midst of the church. Think what it is!—not, you may sing now, for I have accomplished redemption, though this is true; but *I* will sing! Christ leads our praises; He has associated us with Himself now that He takes up all our thoughts and feelings. It is praise for redemption, but it is every thought and feeling I can express to God. For He is a man; He knows what it is, as none of us ever will know, to bear God's wrath. It is over; it is gone for Him on the cross; and it is gone for us by His having taken it: when risen He declares the Father's name to His brethren, and leads their praises. It is from below the praises go up, founded on redemption and atonement; but the expression of every thought and feeling that can be in my heart, as an exercised man down here, goes up in praise. Christ has gone through all this, enters into it all, and sings in the midst of the church—

a figurative expression, but true. That is, He is the person who leads every feeling and thought of exercised persons, because He has gone through it all.

And when it comes to the accomplishment of the way, it is the same thing, "in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." He understands it. It is not a question of perfectness or acceptance before God, but the heart of the Lord entering into every trial and difficulty I have. As He might ask, "Do you think I was not tempted and have not gone through sorrow?" He could, say "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say?" There was the constant passing through this world with all that is in it. And there He is understanding every thought of the exercises through which we pass as belonging to God. He belonged to God, and as such was made perfect through sufferings; and if we belong to God according to His acceptance, we must pass through sufferings. It is in this respect He can help us. He succours them that are tempted. There is the link of our weakness and dependence and exercises and trials we go through here. They have an echo in Christ's heart and are a link between our hearts and His.

It is not a question of righteousness, but belongs to the righteous. That is the difference. It is not the question of sin, but it is having our whole heart, as a man's down here, brought into the tune and tone of Christ's feelings, who went through it here that He might call our hearts into the channel of His own. He is a merciful and faithful High

Priest. It was a strictly priestly act: the high priest did it. It was not the going between the people and God at all. He was victim as well as High Priest, But Christ did not exercise His priesthood on earth, for if He were on earth He could not be a priest; but the people must have a ground on which they could stand in such a place. Christ made propitiation before beginning His ordinary exercises of priest. He stood as representative of the people. Christ was both. There is this blessed truth in it. There is the perfectness of the work, but the full confession of the sin. Christ was owning all my sins upon the cross. He was the victim and scapegoat that bears them; but as the high priest confesses them. And so He charges Himself with them all, the basis of all the rest. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him"—not only scapegoat, but this thought too (and that even of Christ as man), that He it is that confesses all my sins. He is scapegoat as well as high priest.

Then I learn that He *suffered*, being tempted. That is *not* atonement; it was part of his trial, and it enabled Him to succour them that are tempted. It is not atonement but succouring. And, I repeat, though God does not make an offender for a word if the heart is right, it is not that we go to Christ, but Christ goes to God for us, and we go to God by Him. The Spirit of God groans in us. The word "Advocate" is the same as Comforter. The Holy Ghost carries on in divine sympathies, as dwelling in us, and takes up all our sorrows; while Christ takes them up for me in the presence of God, and the effect of this

is that the blessing comes down on my soul by the Holy Ghost. In this connection it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost," unto the end. He is talking of all this, of our going through the wilderness. It is not union that we find spoken of here in the wilderness, but exercises and trials. Christ enters into all these, and there is grace to help in time of need. His death has perfected us for God; His life carries on with God until we reach Him. He ever lives for this; and in this we have a blessed consciousness of our weakness, and quite right too; so that with the weakness we look to One and lean on One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Do you believe that this is Christ's heart now? I do not believe it has its place until we have righteousness, for it is a mistake to think that we go by the priest to get righteousness. Christ is there, and, believing in Him, we are made the righteousness of God in Him. But this leaves us free, in perfect acceptance with God in Christ, to learn all that He is by the way. God is thinking of us too in His own heart; and we have a man sitting at His right hand touched with the feeling of our infirmities, One who takes every sorrow, weakness, and difficulty, as the occasion of ministering grace, bringing us into the presence of His faithful love. It is not mere righteousness; it is a Christ I can trust. And I admit, and press it too, that it is not our highest place; but it is blessed, precious, perfect grace that we learn. My weakness makes me insist on what the grace and tenderness of Christ are. By Him I am perfect before God; but while I am absent from Him, I never lose the

exercise of His heart for me before God to secure for me grace and strength. This carries our souls on with Him. I would have you feel that it is a low place; but it is true. It is your weakness and your infirmity, and it may be a thorn in the flesh; but it is to put you in the place where the grace of Christ can meet you, and His strength be made perfect in your weakness. It is a great thing to learn the constant exercise of grace, as it is our highest duty to show the life of Christ; but it is the daily exercise of Christ's grace that obtains for us grace to help in time of need. The time of need is the time of grace. The Lord give us to know it in power!

Price, per 100, 5s. 4d. ; or 4s. direct from Manchester.

Published at 93, Bloomsbury, Oxford Road, Manchester.

R. L. ALLAN, 15, Paternoster Row, London.

POST-OFFICE ORDERS PAYABLE TO W. B. HORNER, OXFORD ROAD
POST-OFFICE.

(MANCHESTER SERIES.—No. 129.)