

## USING OPPORTUNITIES.

E. P. C. was an earnest soul-winner. I recollect going into his office one day, and found him in great distress. He said, "I have just missed an opportunity. A gentleman called upon me, with whom I am in the habit of doing business. I immediately turned to business matters, but I found him preoccupied with the sudden death of the chief partner in his firm. We spoke together of his unexpected end, and parted without my having spoken to him about his soul. What troubles me is that I should have forgotten my Master's business in pre-occupation with my own. Such an opportunity may never present itself again."

His words made a deep impression on me. Gifted beyond many as a preacher, blessed of God greatly in the Gospel, this beloved servant of Christ lamented an opportunity lost of speaking to *one* soul. Let us—writer and reader—ask ourselves, Are we skilful in using our opportunities?

By way of encouragement, let me relate two incidents. A farmer had worked hard, and plodded on from comparative poverty to affluence. He had just put up a new barn.

"What a noble barn," said one of a group of neighbours who stood admiring it; "how well filled, and so finely ventilated. I'm glad you got it roofed before that storm set in." "Yes,

it was lucky," replied the farmer; "but I am thinking about neighbour Jenkins, who had only just finished his new barn and got the hay inside when the lightning struck it, and it was burnt."

Leaning upon a pitchfork, listening to the conversation, was an old labourer, who had been working for the farmer. He was a Christian, a very unlearned man, but with real love for souls. On hearing the remarks of his master, he said, "Ye have a greater evil than that to fear, sir."

"Worse than to lose my barn by fire, David! What could be worse than that, now that all my year's hay and grain are in it?"

"Ye have this sorer evil to fear, sir, lest the Lord should say unto you, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou hast laid up in store?' sir." The neighbours stared at him as though he was reading the doom of his employer, then stalked away to their different homes.

The farmer frowned and said, "I don't care how much religion you have, David, but I want you to keep it to yourself, remember."

"I've done that too long already, sir. In future, sir, I'll strive not to put my light under a bushel."

He took off his old straw hat respectfully to the rich man, shouldered his pitchfork, and went into the field to work.

Away went the farmer into the house and began grumbling to his Christian wife at David's impertinence. "You have made something of him, and spoilt him. He took upon himself just now to advise *me* to look after *my* soul." The good wife was silent; she saw that an arrow from the quiver had pierced him, she decided to let it do its own work.

Not very long afterwards David and his master were side by side in every good word and work. He was truly converted to God. Barns, cattle, and grain were secondary matters to him now, the spiritual interests of his fellow-creatures were his great concern. His life was spent, like his Master's, in doing good. All this arose from an "opportunity" used by a very unlikely instrument.

A Christian lady was in want of a washer-woman. In the village was a cottage occupied by an aged mother, her daughter, and grandchild. They had only recently moved there. The daughter sought employment. "Do not engage her," said a lady who knew her; "nothing is safe within her reach."

"Poor thing; perhaps she has been driven to it, in order to keep her aged mother and child. I think I will try her."

"Well, just as you please; but I advise you to lock your store cupboard, and count every article you give her to wash."

M—— was sent for the next morning, and

engaged. Before commencing work she was called in to family reading. The husband specially commended her to God, and earnestly prayed for the salvation of her soul.

Week after week she came, nothing was lost. It is true a piece of meat often went home with her, but it was not *stolen*, as her mistress literally carried out the precept, "As ye have opportunity, do good to all." During this time her mistress had not summoned courage to speak to her about her soul.

One day the thought pressed upon her spirit, that if the redemption of the soul was so precious that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, was given as a ransom, she might well say a few words as to its value. Why not use the present opportunity? Turning to M—— she said, "M——, do you ever think about death? Are you prepared for eternity?"

The answer was a flood of tears and a heart-broken utterance, "Oh, I am so wretched. *I am such a sinner.*"

"How long have you felt wretched, M——?"

"Ever since the master prayed for me. The thought burdened me, *if he thinks it worth his while to pray for me, I may as well pray for myself.*"

What a happy task it was to speak to her of the virtues of the "precious blood of Christ," and of the love which led God to give "His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth

on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

M—— heard and believed. Her heavy load of sin went. As far as the east is from the west it was removed. With a light heart and a purged conscience she went home that night to her poor old mother.

It did not end there. The grace of God which had brought salvation to her visited her aged parent and the grandchild.

Not long after the grandmother's weary eyes closed on this scene of sorrow. She had gone where weakness, want, and woe can never come. In a few short months the cottage door was closed. The tenement was empty. Typhus fever had carried daughter and grandchild off, but not before the grace of God had brought salvation to all in that house. Three precious souls were in glory. Heaven was fuller, the ranks of the redeemed recruited, precious souls saved, and the human instrumentality simply a pleading prayer for mercy and a few words spoken in weakness. Neither husband nor wife went outside the door of their own house to accomplish this. It cost no arduous toil on a foreign mission field, no organized effort; it was just a few words out of a heart full of compassion for the lost. It was using an opportunity. Let us challenge our hearts. Is a soul worth a prayer? Is a soul worth a word?

## Christ's Constraining Love.

(ADDRESS ON JOHN xiii. 1.)

“Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

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I WISH to say a few words on the love of Christ. It is a great thing to have these things objectively before us, and not to be too much occupied with our state subjectively, for though state is very important in these days, that is the way to be right subjectively. His love is unchangeable. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

Let us turn to Ephesians iii. 19—

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

It seems a contradiction, to know that which cannot be known, but it is because it is infinite ; yet we know it. "That ye may be able to apprehend" (not "comprehend," for who could comprehend it?) "with all saints ;"—we should have the whole Church before us, "Christ loved the Church"—"what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"—of what? It does not say what, but we know what it is, though we can hardly express it—the whole domain of glory ; but next to that comes what we know, "The love of Christ." It is impossible for a saint to know this 19th verse until he has passed through the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It is far more than any service to Him ; God values that Christ should dwell in your heart. Often our hearts are full of cares and troubles, the fogs of nature. How are we to keep them out? By Christ dwelling in our hearts. "Strengthened with might by His Spirit" is preparatory to that. How am I to be strengthened? By patient study of the Word of God.

Let us turn to 2 Corinthians v. 14, for one word, "For the love of Christ **constraineth** us." What is the force of that? It is a grand word. "Constrained" means, moved by an irresistible force outside ourselves. There are lines we often sing that express it. There is silence in the courts of heaven—

“Till from a heart divinely prest  
 Bursts forth at length the loud exclaim,  
 ‘Praise the Lamb.’”

That's it, “A heart divinely prest.” There is no effort, no forcing, oh never, never, **never!** It is to be abhorred, it is Judaism, it is legalism! The love of Christ **constrains** us. E. P. C.



## Notes on the Temple—No. 8.\*

**W**HEN the Lord Jesus ascended up on high, He gave the gifts and the supply of the Spirit for preparing a spiritual house for God; so looking at the type in 1 Kings v.—

“Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work” (ver. 15).

Solomon had “threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens.” So among the workmen employed by the Lord Jesus there were those who “look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others,” who are prepared to “bear one another's burdens.” Then “fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains.” Do they not at once suggest to our minds the work of the evangelists?

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\* This article follows on from page 317 of Vol. XI.

## God Our Saviour.

Address on 1 Timothy i. 1-5, 2 Corinthians ii. 14.

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**I**T is not now a day for questionings, but a day for setting Christ before the heart, the great object outside ourselves—"God our Saviour"—a living, present God. That is what we need—**God**.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

It will not do for the soul to be living on past experiences ; we have to do with a present, living God,

"Forgetting the things that are behind."

When David saw the sword of Goliath, he said—

"Give it me, there is none like that."

What was it? It was the emblem of a past experience. We can never act rightly in the present, even in the things of this life, unless we think of the future. That is a beautiful word—

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

You say, "I had a bright day yesterday."

Yes, but it ought to be brighter to-day, shining "more and more," and the word "shining light" is very strong, it should be "clear, shining light." This passage in Corinthians is chiefly ministerial, applying to Paul, but may also apply to us. When the heart is full of Christ, there is a savour, though you may not say much. God leads us in triumph in Christ, but you must be led.

Our hope is to be conformed to the image of Him who is "the first-born among many brethren, the 'Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.'"

Turn to a verse in Acts x. 38—

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power ; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil : for God was with Him."

Though this is a description by the Spirit, a brief and marvellous description in one verse, of the life of Christ, we are not shut out from it. The Holy Ghost descended and remained on Him, it says twice in John i., and the Holy Ghost is on us.

In 1 Peter iii. 9, we get the character of our calling. I read the first words by way of contrast—

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing ; but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

We are called to blessing, to be a blessing to

every one around us, and also to the inheritance of blessing.

There are three things in this fifth verse—

“Love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned.”

Christians say often, “My heart is so wicked.” Yes, but it ought not to be; it ought to be a pure heart. We must distinguish between the heart, and the evil nature in us, which was never so bad as at the present moment. The heart in Scripture is looked at as the vessel of the affections. When Christ is before the heart only, that is a pure heart, and other things retire from the heart, the eye is single. An impure heart is a selfish heart, vexed because people do not show it enough attention. A pure heart is glad to be nothing, to be unnoticed and unknown.

Then, “A good conscience.” Not a purged conscience, that we have on the ground of redemption, nor a conscience full of scruples, nor a crotchety conscience, nor a legal conscience, but what Paul spoke of when he said—

“Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man” (Acts xxiv. 16).

Then, “Faith unfeigned.” The man who has these is not like those Peter had to write of, who are “blind, and cannot see afar off,” and have forgotten that they were purged from their

old sins, but he can look right up to the throne of God ; he sees God.

We are “renewed for knowledge, after the image of Him that created” us ; God, who made the new creation. Subjective truth is useful, but we want to have the knowledge of God and Christ objectively, then we shall be right subjectively.

E. P. C.



## Pilate and Christ.

(Read John xviii. 28 to John xix. 16.)

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**T**HIS Scripture furnishes us with the record of a conflict such as we do not find again in the whole Word of God. The soul of Pilate is the arena. The conflicting powers are, on the one side, the claims of truth and the voice of conscience; on the other, the fear of man and the love of the world.

Pilate is brought into immediate contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Led from Caiaphas into the judgment hall, He stands before the Roman governor. His accusers remain without, fearing defilement that would prevent their eating the Passover—a circumstance which gives perhaps the most perfect example of how completely a religious man may become a dupe of Satan and

withal pride himself upon ceremonial observance. This, however, only necessitated Pilate's going out of the judgment hall to inquire the nature of the accusation. In reply they only say, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee," whereupon Pilate urges they should take Him and judge Him according to their law. They again take shelter behind a statement that such would be unlawful only in result fulfilling the Lord's own utterance.

Pilate now returns to the hall of judgment, and is once more found in the sacred presence of the Lord of glory. What the feelings of Pilate were at this moment are not recorded, but of this we may be sure, none ever stood in the presence of Him who in His own Person "is over all, God blessed for ever," without being conscious that he stood in the presence of One who addressed Himself to the soul and conscience. This Pilate's subsequent history clearly proves. He now salutes the Lord with the question, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus in perfect wisdom answers, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" This only draws from Pilate the truth that His own nation and the chief priests had delivered Him up. He also asks, "What hast Thou done?"

Beloved reader, what an answer could be given to Pilate's inquiry, "What hast Thou done?" Even at that hour what an answer could have

been rendered. At an earlier day they declared, "He hath done all things well, He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak," but He had done infinitely more, for He brought into this world life and light in His own person, and His pathway from the manger to the cross was one beautiful course of testimony for God and of blessing to man.

But mark the Lord's gracious answer: "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." We have in these words, first, the fact that He has a kingdom; second, that it is *not* of this world; and third, that His servants have not to fight for earthly deliverance. How entirely the truth contained in these words of the Lord Jesus have been lost sight of in the circle of professing Christendom! Let my reader ask himself, first, if he has accepted the claims and authority of Christ; second, if he has apprehended that the source of this kingdom is heavenly; and thirdly, that the servants of Christ have to stand apart from worldly conflict for the *worldly* establishment of His claims.

Still, however, the Lord in all the calm and blessed dignity that was ever His, could but bear a good confession before Pontius Pilate. He was the King of Israel. Pilate again asks, "Art Thou a king then?" Jesus answered,

“Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

Never, perhaps, in the whole course of the Lord's ministry had He uttered words more simply defining the nature of His visit to this world, and wonderful that a man of Pilate's character and position should have been allowed to listen to such a testimony ! Every word must have made itself felt in the conscience of this miserable man, and as he felt the power of that testimony the claims of Christ must have asserted themselves over his soul.

Reader, I ask you quietly to ponder the marvellous depths of these precious words, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness of THE TRUTH.” Who else could claim such a mission ? Who else could say, “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice” ? None but He who *was* “the Truth” (John xiv. 6). He came into this world bringing into it “grace and truth,” and was in His own Person the true test of everything here. He declared the truth in relation to man's ruin and misery, but revealed in Himself the completeness of divine grace and truth that alone could meet man in that condition. He came bearing the testimony of what “He had seen and heard” in heavenly glory, but no man received his testimony.

As in that day so in this day, He still bears witness unto *the truth*; then in His own personal ministry, now through His servants, using His Word by the Holy Ghost. We have in the Word of God the truth in its completeness as to man's condition in time and the issues in eternity; we have also therein revealed the truth about God in His grace to man, and the awful results of slighting that grace.

Pilate raises the inquiry, "What is truth?" but, alas! like many a man since, he raised the question but waited not for the answer. Reader, is this your case? Care you to know "what is truth"? If so, you may know it in the very moral depths of your soul. Do you ask, "Where can I learn it?" I answer, in the presence of God. There, and there only, can you learn the truth, the truth about yourself, about the world, about Satan, but, blessed be God! much more than this, *the truth also about God Himself*. Light will discover to you the truth of your real condition, and Love will discover to you the fullness of that grace which awaits every returning sinner.

Pilate was afraid to face the answer; the conflict within was now raging in terrible reality; he feared getting too much under the sacred mysterious power of the testimony of Him who stood before him. But if he will not listen for an answer, he will go out and declare that "he finds in Him no fault at all."

E. P. C.

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The intense need of the soul is present association with Christ in heaven. I *must* get to His person; and then I am filled with joy. But I say when I see it, If I am to have that, it will cost me *everything*. And so it will; and that is the very reason why I must have the Holy Ghost first. It is "changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord." The Holy Ghost says, I can take you up into heaven. I could never get there by myself; He takes me in; and, if I grieve Him in any way, I at once lose heaven for the time.

(E. P. C.)

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God exhausted all His resources as to showing the manner and way of His love when He gave His only-begotten Son. The sin that man brought in, the death that man brought in, the ruin that man brought in, never made any

change in the heart of God; they only presented the opportunity for showing the love that was there—"perfect love." When that Son of God was put upon the cross for me, God poured out upon me such an expression of His love as can never be shown again.

I could lie down to-night and die saying one word, and that word, "Amen." Amen to all that I am—to all my ruin, my misery, my degradation—nothing too bad for me; but not stopping there: there is no comfort in that; but amen, too, to all that Christ is; amen to all the perfect love that God is to me in Him. If you think there is a single thought about you in the heart of God that you would sooner not have there, then you are not resting in "perfect love;" and you never can know the joy that God would have you know until you pillow your heart upon His love—His perfect love to you.

Can you let Him roll perfect love in upon your heart? If you can, it ejects fear as it comes in: "Perfect love casteth out fear." A resting-place for a poor soul in this world is only found in "perfect love." And God would have that love that is perfect *towards* you made perfect *in* you.

(E. P. C.)

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“He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” It is not he that *has* believed. You see thousands of believers that are as dry as chips because they are not believing. It must be a present thing. It is only as I am connected with the source that the waters can flow out from me. Then there is no dryness. The knowledge of God in His ways and in His word never make a person able to minister refreshment. It is only *Christ* in him that can do that.

(E. P. C.)

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We are walking in company with a triumphant Christ, as a triumphant people. And you cannot be in triumph yourself without leading other people into it. Walking in triumph is a blessedly infectious thing; and, on the other hand, getting down under the power of troubles is equally infectious. Nothing will so pull down, make miserable, and blight a soul as getting under the power of church troubles. When we get thus weighed down we cease to have power over them, and they do not cease to have power over us. But the Christ we are in company with is a victorious Christ. As the hymn says: "Thy life in us each victory gains." It is the life of a victorious Christ that we have. (E. P. C.)

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## IV.

When Christ begins with you, He will never leave off till He has you with Himself in heaven; it must be *everything* or *nothing*. He does it according to His own heart, and are you to dictate to Christ as to how *much* He shall bless you? Let Christ have His way with you. Why do we miss blessing? Is it possible to miss blessing? Yes, by not allowing the Lord Jesus to have His own perfect way with you. He wants to bless you, but there must be rest and quietness and subjection on your side. All the resources of Christ are then placed at your disposal.

E. P. C.

## THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF HIS DISCIPLES.

LUKE xxii. 19-34.

THAT which is so precious and interesting in this portion is the grouping together of so many various subjects. If you follow the order of events here, and the moral unfoldings, it is most beautiful. It begins with the greatest expression of divine life. In a certain way we begin life every week with the Lord's table. A week is the summary of one's life, and the first day of the week we begin with the death of Christ, and there is no beginning like that. After the passover is over—the celebration of that which was characteristic of Israel—He comes to that which is for us, and He does it in full view of the future. I am sure if we get right about the Lord's table we are right about all else. "This do in remembrance of me." Whatever brings our souls into close contact with Christ is a gain that will never pass away. Our great necessity is *nearness* to Christ, to have in our souls the sense of what a wondrous reality it is *to speak to Him*. To think that people walking through this world may know that just as really as the disciples could speak to the Lord down here, *we* may speak to Him. I do not know anything to compare to it—His ear ever open to me, His heart ever open to me, and the Spirit ever willing to conduct my soul into His presence; but it is a greater thing for Him to speak to me.

"This do in remembrance of me" has a peculiar claim on us. He was about to undergo death, and yet

there He is in all quietness and calmness saying, "This do in remembrance of me." How differently a person goes out on a Sunday morning to the other days of the week! Where are you going? I am going to meet the Saviour, according to His own desire, and everything else sinks into utter nothingness. There is no *routine* in it. Could there be routine in worship, adoration, bowing of the heart, and the satisfaction that takes a person out of the world? If there is a hymn sung it is worship; if there is silence it should be the silence of adoration. I go and sit down and wait till I have the sense that the Lord is there, and that is *everything*. It is not repetition. There is no such thing in God's ways with us as repetition. We never pass through two circumstances alike. We are walking to heaven as straight as we can go. In the pathway every circumstance is new, and fresher in divine blessing than before, and there is so much there to take in that we shall never get to the end of it. But I press the solemn, blessed joy of being able to speak to Christ. Often we pray, and do not get the sense of being near to Him; and then I think the thing is to persevere, and get out of the distractions until the Spirit of God takes us into the quiet place, and we sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to our taste. When a person is with Christ, and has really got Christ, there really is not room for other things.

Here (v. 23) when the disciples come out for a moment, they are disturbed at the thought that there is to be a betrayer. John xiii. tells us how the secret is known that there was to be a betrayer, and *there*. This is a most expressive verse—"Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake."

Immediately after there is a strife among them which should be the greatest; that is *self* pure and simple. It is that kind of working which we have to judge in this day. There was the Son of God, the Lord of glory, going to give Himself for them, for ever to displace from before God's eye that which was unsuitable to Him, and there *they* are making themselves objects of consideration. They were objects of suspicion in the previous verse, now objects of consideration. John the Baptist is a beautiful contrast to them. He calls himself nothing but a "voice," and if we are anything else but voices it is all over with us. It is a beautiful thing to be a voice, and we are only voices *for* Christ, as the voice *of* Christ is the joy of our hearts.

This is the most humiliating picture of man's heart. Immediately after the table where His love is displayed, then they strive which should be the greatest. When you get near to Christ you feel as if every shred of yourself was gone. Verse 25 shows what goes on in the world; but verse 26 shows that Christianity is the total and entire opposite of it. It is beautiful, the moral condition of soul that takes a person into the place of being nothing, and glad to be in obscurity. The more we are with Christ, the more we welcome obscurity, and He knows; that is enough. The soul that goes on with Christ can say, "Well, I am content to be nothing;" but this verse 26 is open to us because it is service, and the way He remedies their departure in that day is the way He remedies it for us in this day. We never remedy anyone but by setting Christ before them. "I am among you as He that serveth." Service is where we get tried; but when we are with Christ, nothing but the lowest place will

do for us. The moral order here is so beautiful; first the table, then service. Nothing can disturb Christ's love; but what it must have been to Him to see His disciples like this. But He removes the entire thing in a moment when He says, "I am among you as He that serveth."

First, we have the full expression of divine love in the supper, and the request of divine affection; the greatest love shown, and the greatest grace in asking them to do something for Him. There is nothing He cares for so much as the affections of His people. Then He comes down and sees that these loved ones are at issue among themselves as to who should be the greatest. He corrects that by the revelation of Himself, and by doing this He displaces self. We are never displaced but by Christ. Then He says, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." The moment the heart reaches what Christ was, immediately He says everything He can in their favour. He rebukes them solemnly first for their selfishness, and shows them that the very opposite marks Christianity—"Ye shall not be so," and then He unfolds the true principle of service. Because He loves them, He delights to say everything He can in their favour. He delights to say all He can for each of us; and when we stand before the judgment-seat, He will surprise us. Little things we had forgotten He will remember and bring up in our favour. What a set they were, these disciples, a company of men one would look down upon. That is the best company Christ had in this world. But it brings out what He is. Is this the kind of Christ you have to do with? He will say everything He can for me, He will not pick all the

holes He can find in me. It is the sense of the *love* of that Christ who looks over my pathway here. He knows what a bungler I am. But He cheers us and helps us and puts the best motive for all we do; and when we get home, will He not surprise us?

And now think what a moment it was for Him; think of the surroundings in which He was—sorrow and rejection, and those waiting outside to drag Him away to death; and yet He speaks about the *kingdom*. (v. 29.) The kingdom was *present* to Him, and He says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." Only a man in power and position can talk about appointing. There never was a brighter day for us than the present; but it must be faith. Faith makes what is on before present; it makes the kingdom present, and the light of that future is enough. You never found a man strong and vigorous in Christianity who was not living in the light of the future. Put yourselves in company with the disciples, and say, How are things with us? The very men who were appointed a kingdom forsook Christ and fled. First, we want personal acquaintance with Christ, and then, there must be the acceptance of identification with Christ in rejection. We talk about the Church and house of God; but if a person is not in spirit identified with a rejected Christ, the Church is all Greek to him. No soul has ever taken in the truth of the Church that is not in identification with Christ in rejection. The Church is a heavenly thing. Do you know you are one with Christ outside this world? that there is a breach between Christ and the world, and are you with Him?

Verse 30 is worth looking at. Eating at His table is the highest thing; sitting on thrones is more for judg-

ment. Intercourse with Christ in the day of glory coming. It would be a terrible thing not to be true to Christ *now*. Let us rise up, and go straight on. Satan will try to hinder, and we get Satanic power here. (v. 31.) There you find Satan, and what he brings against the soul, and then Christ's priestly service praying for us. To think that the Lord knows every tactic of Satan. He is above them all, and sees their working towards me. We have not an *inactive Christ* in heaven, but one who cares for us, and watches over us every moment of our lives. What a moment it is for the soul when it can say, "Lord, I know Thou art sufficient; Thou wilt help me through." To know I am an object of consideration in heaven. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him." There is nothing like Christianity. A Saviour in heaven, with boundless, measureless resources, who is going to do everything for me. "I have a rich Almighty Friend."

"When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." (v. 32.) It is beautiful to see how the Lord contemplates the blessing of His people. He does not say, "When you are restored, take care you do not fall again," but, "When thou art restored, *strengthen thy brethren.*" That is what Christ cares about. You must learn from failure; but when you are restored, strengthen the brethren. That is our business, and we cannot strengthen each other but by the ministry of Christ. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing [blessing there means the ministry of blessing]; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Peter iii. 9.) We are

going to inherit it, we *do* inherit it, and our only business is to minister it.

The one thing we need is to get near to Christ. Can I *spea*k to Him? Can I be as near to Him as John or Peter were, and have intercourse with Him? What a wonderful thing! And how *He* values it and loves it! If we are taking the ground of self-sufficiency (*v.* 33), God has to put us to the proof. The first thing is to be so at home and at rest in Christ's presence, that He has no question to put to me. It is no good thinking about service if there is a question between me and Christ. Peter had to learn himself. The higher thing is not to learn oneself by faults, because if I rightly accept the cross of Christ, I accept the very worst about myself. If we have learnt the cross, we have learnt the worst about ourselves.

E. P. C.

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## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

*John xiv. 1-6.*

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THERE is no portion we are more familiar with than this John xiv. Surely there is no part more frequently read, and turned to for comfort—and rightly so. “Let not your heart be troubled.” The Lord anticipates the disciples being found in circumstances of sorrow and trouble. Of course He refers mainly to His own going away; but when He comes down to verse 27, and has spoken of His going away, and of giving the Holy Ghost, He again says, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

It is one thing to be saved *by* Christ, and another thing to throw in your lot *with* Christ. Every true-hearted servant of Christ, or Christian, would say: “If my Saviour died for me, if He came from God’s eternal presence down to the cross, if *that* was the measure of His love to me, the only answer I can make is, to cast in my lot with Him.” Then he is prepared not to *expect anything* down here. We have no expectations here, where Christ was rejected; and a place is opened out to us up there, where there is no rejection. But there *is* rejection here, and no person can fully enjoy John xiv. who does not accept rejection with Christ. For why is not Christ here? The fact is (and nothing requires more pressing), that Christ has been rejected, cast out, refused here; and God came in, in the riches of His grace, and turned all that into the fullest blessing for us. Christ has been refused; they would not let Him remain here. He had a title to everything here, but He accepted this place of rejection. He was the Son of God, the blessed Saviour; and as long as the disciples had the shelter of His wing, they knew what it was to dwell under His shadow and have a place of refuge. Whatever opposition and trouble they met with, they had One to whom they could go and tell their sorrows: they “went and told Jesus.” No one can tell what it was

to those disciples to walk in the Saviour's presence here. Who can tell what it was to them to hear His voice, to have His ear ever open to them, and to know His care and His presence? Remember that *God* was there manifest in flesh. Think what it was for these poor simple men, who had walked in the company of the Son of God in this world, to hear Him say that He was going away, and that He was going to leave them in a world where He Himself met with nothing but rejection. He said He would not leave them comfortless; but they, for their part, looked at the terrible blank the absence of Christ would make to their souls. We must place ourselves in the very circumstances the disciples were in at that moment in order to understand it.

Nothing is plainer than "the foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He had not a place here, but He was going to speak to them about heaven, with which He was *perfectly* acquainted. He knew all that was there, though it was an entirely new revelation to the disciples. Where can you find in Scripture anything before about the Father's house? There had never been anything unfolded about it before, and now *we* speak about the Father's house as a place we have heard of all our lives! But think of the Lord going away, and leaving these dear ones He had drawn to Himself; ignorant perhaps, but *they loved their Master*. If you ask me what is the striking characteristic of these men, I would say, their affection for Christ; they really *loved* their Master. Because in an earlier day (John vi.), when the Lord had been speaking of His rejection, and some went back (men who had been outwardly near to Christ, and had seen what they had never seen before, but had no real link in their souls, with Him; merely a passing interest, and when the moment of testing came, they parted company with Christ), yet still *these* disciples were true to Him, and when He said, "Will ye also

go away?" there came that beautiful answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." They could answer in all the certainty of what they had learnt from Christ, and they could answer rightly. They were not intelligent perhaps, but where a person's heart is true to Christ, everything else will follow rightly.

Christ has gone to prepare a place for those that are His, remember. It is one thing to have a place prepared *outside* this world, and another thing *inside*. In the gospel God does not propose to prepare a place for us *in* this world; there is the unfolding of that which is heavenly, and not the giving us a place or anything down here in this world. That which marked the Master must mark the servant. Some people say: "I would like to understand the truth of the Church of God." You never will, unless you take part with Christ in rejection. You may read a book about it, and have it all in your head, but if you have not broken with the world you don't *know* what the Church is. You must be *in the company* of Christ, as well as be saved by Him, in order to know what the Church is. Christianity gives you the most wonderful circumstances outside, but it does not propose to give you anything in this world—it will not set things in order around you.

"Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." You have God before you as an Object of faith. The invisible God they had believed in; now the Lord was going away, and he was to become an invisible Object likewise, but He *claims* their faith. I do not know anything more beautiful than that in Scripture. He has a right to claim your faith, and you know very well whether He has it or not. Christ came from heaven and walked down here for thirty-three years, died for you, and because He died for you He has a claim over you. Do you know Him? Has He gained the confidence of your souls? The Saviour who stood upon this earth is now up in heaven, but

He is just the same Lord Jesus, and in the midst of your sorrow you can know how real a thing it is to be brought into personal acquaintance with Christ in heaven. I ask you, What is the greatest favour that God can give to man? "Well," you say, "He watches over us, and He gives blessings, such as health and strength." Yes, He does; it is God's own special mercy. But what is His *greatest* favour? *The revelation of Christ in heaven*—that is His greatest favour. For what do you bless God most? That ever He brought you to bow at His blessed feet. He claims your faith.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." There is no other way to God. The fact of Christ saying He is the way, declares that man has lost the way. What man wanted was a way back to God, to the Father; and Christ says, "I am that way." And He is "the truth" as to everything, the truth in relation to God, in relation to man, in relation to time, in relation to eternity; and if you do not know Christ, you do not know the truth about anything. Your judgment of things in this world is a false judgment if Christ is unknown to you. And is He not "the life" too? He claims these three things for Himself. It was claiming to be a great deal, was it not? Is it too much? Do you admit that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life? and have you proved it for yourself? The great thing is for your souls to be brought into association with it. There is no approach to a difficulty on God's side, but on your side there may be difficulties. There is no difficulty about your forming an acquaintance with Christ now. It is a great thing to be able to say you know a Saviour at God's right hand in heaven, and if you do not know Him, you can go to Him now, as you are, and where you are, and say, "Lord Jesus, I should like to know Thee as my Saviour." The man that sets out for God and Christ in that way may say, "Well, I do not know much about doctrines, but I

know I have a soul that must live for ever; and, Lord Jesus, I want to know Thee as my Saviour." The heart of Christ is delighted with every soul that turns aside to Him; and not only at the first moment, but a *deepening* acquaintance must delight Him and you too. All blessing depends on it. The first thing is to know Christ, to come to Him, to say, "I desire to bow before Thee, to receive Thee as my Saviour." Christ is either inside or outside your hearts; you have opened the door of your heart to Him, or it is shut against Him. Your blessing in this world depends on a *deepening acquaintance with Christ*. To think that the Son of God in heaven loves to increase the acquaintance of your soul with Him! There is no company Christ so delights in as the company of those for whom He died. And is your answer, "I delight to be with the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Having claimed their faith He speaks of His Father, a new thing to them. Who can tell what the Father's house is? It was *home* to Christ. Home is home everywhere. Christ had not a home here; He came from heaven, and He measured things here by it. He saw the poverty, the sorrow, the ruin, and death here, and He came down from heavenly glory to tell us what the Father was in Himself, to open up the way to Him, and to speak of the Father's house. Is not that a divine reality? Supposing it were possible to annihilate the opening verses of John xiv., would you feel a blank as to the future? Supposing you had never read them before, what a revelation it would be to you! What could be more wonderful than that the Saviour should tell us all about it? It is as if He said, "I do not propose to find you comfortable nests down here, and to guard you from every anxiety, but I open up a place for you in heaven." A *place*! That is the whole thing in this chapter. No place here, but a place in heaven, a place for man, a place in the Father's house. And when the soul has learnt that, it has got hold of divine possessions, of

surroundings which God has given for our comfort in this world. The place which Christ prepared for *them* is prepared for every believer in Christ to-day. Our place was prepared the moment Christ went in as a Man. If Christ is your Saviour, where He goes you go. Christ never goes anywhere that the believer has not a place with Him. As a Man on the ground of accomplished redemption He goes up into glory, and there prepares a place. We have a place in heaven, not amongst *men*, but a place, a *present* place, in heaven. The moment Christ is our Saviour, God is our Father, and in virtue of what Christ has done, we are brought into the family of God, and that which is proper to the family is the *home*. You never get into the thought of verse 2 unless by meditation and prayer before God. The Father's house, it is greater than the glory of the kingdom. If I had been there in that day, what would have comforted my heart? He tells what there *is* for us; He knows what there is; a place, many abodes, a rest, and the Spirit of God is given us as the only power to sustain us here. We should go to the wall completely but for the Spirit of God. Our only power is in the fulfilment of, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

A Christian is a person who can stand in this world and say, "I am ready at this moment to step into the Father's house." As surely and as really as Christ stood on this earth, and told them what He was going to do, so surely did He tell them He was coming back. Do you believe Christ is coming for you? I do not mean, Do you believe in the second coming? but, Is it *Christ coming for you*? If you believed it, it would settle ten thousand things for you. It is so blessed! It is the heart of Christ which will find out in this world every loved one, wherever they are; the heart and eye and hand and almighty power of Christ will gather them out of this world. *That*, next to the cross, will be the greatest expression of divine affec-

tion. Do you know that may take place now? There is not a word of Scripture to be fulfilled ere He come, and before another hour has passed Christ may be here. We do not know what the circumstances of the rest of our pathway may be, but we *do* know Christ is coming.

Have you weighed and measured everything connected with you in the light of God's eternity? Can you say, "Thank God I have a Father, and a place in the Father's house, and thank God I have a future so brilliant and so blessed that nothing can touch or disturb?" Is it not wonderful? That Christ is really *for us*; that, notwithstanding the poverty of our testimony for Him, His heart has not grown cold, and He never loved His people more than at this moment. He was never in greater activity for them. You can look up to heaven and say, "Christ never loved me more than at this moment, and He is only waiting to have me with Him for ever." One moment we shall be here, and the next moment up there, received unto Himself. Then there will be no separation from Christ for ever. Is it not beautiful? And that is our future! I trust that we may honour Christ by the expectation of Him. When Christ has displayed this most magnificent future, could anything be more sorrowful than that we should treat it as a fable? The moment Satan has got anything in between our souls and the coming of Christ, it has no power over us. If the coming of Christ is a *near* thing to you, it has power. Make it to-morrow, and its power is gone; you cease to wait and to watch. Christ has been refused here, but He is accepted there, and the weakest saint that ever looked to Him is dear to Him, and He will come and fetch that one.

May the Lord make His coming the *next* thing to us!

E. P. C.

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GOD is never a moment too late with His mercies; but He sometimes comes just at the last moment.