

NOTES ON
“The Breaking of Bread”

AND ON
TRUTH CONNECTED THEREWITH.

“I sat down under His shadow with
great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my
taste. He brought me to the banqueting-
house, and His banner over me was love.”

Canticles ii.

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TO THE READER.

THE need of a brief, and yet comprehensive, unfolding of the subject of the Lord's Supper, as well as of the precious things connected with it, such as might be helpful to those who are enquiring after truth, and at the same time not be wholly unprofitable to those further advanced, has led to these Notes being put together.

One feels conscious of only being, as it were, on the very outskirts of the subject ; but, like a broad and far-reaching landscape, beautiful not only in its completeness, but in all its details, it spreads itself out before us, inviting us to go forward and explore it.

The surpassing interest of the subject, and its sway over the soul, can only be accounted for by the fact that there is

nothing else which so sets before us the excellency and attractiveness of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cold indeed must be the heart which is not moved and stirred by the presentation of Him in that which so simply sets forth His love for His own here. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

May the Lord be pleased to use what is here written to awaken a deeper interest in the subject which is now before us; and may He Himself be more fully exalted in the hearts of His own.

MALVERN,

January, 1900.

I.

THE CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP.

MAY we look, first of all, at what appears to have originally characterised the company of those who were privileged to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ during His absence from this world?

It will be seen, as we proceed, that what this company was at the first, so it is, *in principle*, at this moment. Failure and confusion have made no difference in the Lord's thoughts as to His own company here, and therefore those who seek to be true to Him can count fully, and without reserve, upon His faithfulness.

Now the reader hardly needs to be reminded that Christ has not yet entered upon His rights here. Whatever may be the thoughts and purposes of God concerning Him, it is only too evident that, for the

present, He has no place here except in the hearts of His own. It is this fact which gives such a depth of meaning to a passage which, perhaps, has not received the attention it deserves.

"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."—1 *Cor. xi. 26.*

We may have occasion to look a little more at this later on, but we may just say now that it throws great light upon the Christian's position, as far as this world is concerned. Why is it that we shew forth His *death*? Why not His *life*, or His *resurrection*, or His *glory*? The simple answer of the believer is that He to whom our hearts are now so closely attached has been refused and cast out here, and that just as death meant for the blessed Lord the closing-up of all His links with this world (for the world, as such, never saw Him again after His death) so, for those who are

identified with Him, the associations which once we cherished and cultivated here have no longer any hold upon us. His death has severed the ties which once bound us here.

This great fact, when accepted, leads to much thought and exercise, but the true heart is not afraid of it; for in His death, we see not only that which closed up for us everything here, but also that which opens the door to all that lies beyond. That which is really life is reached through death. It may seem difficult to apprehend this at first, but it no longer presents any difficulty when we remember that every blessing for the Christian is connected with Christ *where He now is* in the resurrection-scene, and not with Him *where He was* before His death. It is this fact which gives stability and joy to the soul. May every reader be led more and more into the knowledge of it.

Now looking at Christianity *externally*, one is painfully conscious of the confusion which

has come in to disfigure and spoil what should have been a bright witness of the love of God during the Lord's absence from this world. We go back to Scripture, and read of what was set up at the beginning—its simplicity, the prominence it gave to Christ, its refusal of the pretensions of man, and then we look around with amazement at what this thing has become in our own time, with its worldliness, its formality, its exaltation of man, the very little place it gives to Christ, and the monstrous teachings and practices which have found their way into it. We ask wonderingly whether there is any path at all for the believer who seeks to be true only to Christ. Scripture alone can supply the answer—and it is an immense mercy that Scripture does give an answer so distinct that no one need misunderstand it. In 2 Timothy, the very last of Paul's Epistles, written, perhaps, shortly before his death, and with a prophetic insight into what was

coming to pass, we have the following verses, which we quote in full:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His, and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth ; and some to honour and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Chapter ii. 19-22.

The path is clearly enough marked out here for those who are willing to follow it, and where does it lead? The reader will see at once that it brings us, in *principle*, to where they were at the beginning. We are

to follow with those who "call *on the Lord* out of a pure heart. Two or three brief references will make this plain :

"The LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved."—*Acts ii. 47.*

"And believers were the more added to the LORD, multitudes both of men and women."—*Acts v. 14.*

"And much people was added to the LORD."—*Acts xi. 24.*

"With all that in every place call upon the name of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, both theirs and ours."—*1 Cor. i. 2.*

The Scripture from 2 Timothy does, in effect, sum up, in the briefest form, what we are taught as to the ground of the gathering together of Christians, viz., owning THE LORD as supreme, and *His* name as excluding all other names. It is very exclusive, and yet broad enough to take in every single member of Christ's company upon earth. In this common bond, we can come together, separated from associations

unsuited to that Name, and finding our guidance, surely, for whatever is to go on inside the circle of fellowship, in that which was written for the instruction of the saints by the Holy Ghost Himself through the Apostles.

We find at the very beginning, viz., *Acts ii.*

"They continued steadfastly in the doctrine and fellowship of the Apostles, and in breaking of bread, and prayers."

This passage is quoted merely to show that there was a new and distinct circle of fellowship set up here, viz., that of the Apostles, and it was into this circle that those who believed and received the Holy Ghost were introduced. It was spoken of as the "assembly" or "church," to which souls could be added, as they stepped out of either Judaism or heathenism into the clear shining of Gospel light.

Well now, it is a wonderful thing that, in spite of all the confusion, all the "vessels

of wood and of earth," "vessels to dishonour," which have become mingled with the "vessels of gold and of silver," this circle of fellowship, as the Lord Himself sees it, remains untouched and unmarred. It is evidently impossible to restore things, externally, to their original condition—no one would be foolish enough to attempt it—but it is open to us, as we have already seen from 2 Timothy ii., to return to first principles, and, in all humility, to fulfil those conditions under which we can confidently expect to be conscious of the Lord's presence amongst us when gathered together.

We remember that blessed occasion, on the evening of the Lord's resurrection, when He came into the midst of His own company here, and showed to them the marks which attested His sufferings and death, and when He set all their hearts at rest in the enjoyment of Himself as the Living One, and "opened their understanding, that they

might understand the Scriptures." How could they fail to understand when He, the central figure and end of all Scripture, was there before them in a life altogether beyond the reach of death? Now this was surely meant to be a picture of what the Lord intended to make good to His own, as gathered apart from everything here to Himself, during His absence, and we can, even in this day, come into all the light and blessedness of it.

II.

ENTRANCE INTO THE CIRCLE OF FELLOWSHIP.

It would be well to consider what should be looked for in those seeking to take their place in this circle of fellowship we have been speaking of. Every Christian, by the very fact of his being a Christian (as we shall see further on) belongs to it, but the number of those prepared to enter upon it, in this day of difficulty, is not large. Even in Paul's day—before the church was fifty years old—it became evident that there were comparatively few who were able and willing to contend against the current of the worldly or judaising Christianity of the time. Those of Asia who "turned away" from the Apostle (see 2 Tim. i. 15) were, no doubt, Christians, but the attractiveness and sweetness of being attached to a heavenly Christ had lost its hold upon them, and they could contentedly go on with their worldly things

and associations, while Christ's servant lay neglected and alone in his prison cell.

However, whether there be few or many who identify themselves with a rejected, though glorified Christ, the circle of fellowship remains the same—as we have already seen—and we will endeavour now to get from Scripture the general principles upon which entrance into it (externally) is based.

It is a very important point for those who have to bear the responsibility of commending a person to a company of believers, for reception into the circle of fellowship, what degree of intelligence in the Christian faith or position should be looked for. A great deal of heart-searching and exercise have been caused by this; and one can easily see how much grace, as well as spiritual insight, is required in those who have to take such a matter up. For, on the one hand, a person who can readily answer questions may be approved, when, in reality, there may be but little heart for Christ, and little of the

true brokenness which is suited to a person seeking to be identified with Him in His rejection. On the other hand, a person who has been truly converted, and who may have a deep and melting sense of Christ's love, may be rejected, or, at any rate, kept back, because he may be unable to put things in a form which would come up to the expectations of those who are making the enquiries on behalf of the assembly. Many mistakes have, doubtless, been made in both these directions, but it must be as grieving to the Lord for any one who is truly drawn to Himself to be hindered, or kept unduly waiting, as it is for the more pretentious to be put forward while their hearts are perhaps very little softened, or diverted from the world.

We would suggest that the key to the whole position really lies in what we have in Romans v. 5.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

From the fact of this verse being at the *close* of the beautiful unfolding of the position of a justified man here (contained in the verses previous) we must not be too ready to come to the conclusion that the Spirit cannot be given, or the love of God shed abroad in the heart, until after the things previously set forth in the chapter are all *fully known and enjoyed*. Such is not the teaching of Scripture at all.

The gift of the Spirit follows upon the hearty reception of the "glad tidings of our salvation" (Ephesians i. 13, and see also Acts x. 43 and 44). As one who has been awakened, or "born again," I look out, as it were, from my position of felt need and distance, to see if deliverance is within reach. A messenger from God of some kind—an evangelist, or perhaps a tract or book, or a simple text of Scripture—comes and makes known the "glad tidings of salvation," the precious efficacy of the work of Christ on the cross in having fully vindicated God's

righteousness, and in having "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." I receive, on the evangelist's testimony, the blessed facts connected with the presentation of God's grace in Christ, and God answers that by giving me the Holy Spirit, as a seal, or distinctive mark. It is He who brings to my heart the knowledge of God's love. The vessel may be exceedingly limited in its capacity—it may take in very little—but still, God's love is there, and from that moment forwards, the Spirit will be as the "anointing" to teach me "all things." What you say, all at once? No, certainly not. It *may*—though not necessarily—take years for a soul to learn anything like the blessed order of the truth, and to have its parts, in their divine position, in the soul. Those, even, who have been longest in the way, are ready enough to own how short a distance they have really travelled in the apprehension of God's things.

Now what bearing has all this upon our

subject? Just this—that what we are to look for in those seeking to be identified with a rejected Christ, in the "breaking of bread," is not so much an intimate acquaintance with the form or order of the truth; but what we want to see is the evidence that the Spirit of God is really there—that there has been a simple and hearty appropriation of the work of Christ leading to attachment of heart to Himself ("unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious") and that the subduing power of the love of God is showing itself out—in some measure, at least—in the daily life and ways. These things will be very apparent to a spiritual mind wherever they exist, and we may, with perfect confidence, count upon God to lead such a one on in the true knowledge of Himself, not in the coldness and shade of an outside place, but inside, in the warmth and light and fellowship of the Christian circle. To such a one, the true inner meaning and blessedness of the "breaking of bread" will

soon become known and enjoyed, and those other deep, and yet simple, things of God which are connected or associated with the Lord's Supper will gradually take shape, and occupy their proper position in the heart and mind.

There are three principal or leading aspects in which the Lord's Supper is presented to us :

- 1st, in the Gospels of Matthew,
Mark and Luke.
- 2nd, in 1 Cor. x., and
- 3rd, in 1 Cor. xi.

To each of these we shall devote a brief chapter.

III.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AS THE LINK OF AFFECTION.

Luke xxii. 14-20.

EACH of the four gospels takes up, from its own point of view, the occasion on which the Lord's Supper was instituted, though only the first three of them refer distinctly to the Supper itself. Taking a survey of all the narratives, there is one fact which stands out very clearly, and that is, that the institution of the Lord's Supper was sacred to the Lord Himself and those who were His by the drawings and ties of divine love. No profane hand was allowed to touch the cup, or to break the bread. It is an immense relief to see that Judas, the traitor, the only one of that little company in whose heart there was no response of love, had gone out during the eating of the Passover

meal, before the "Lord's Supper," as such, was instituted.

"He then, having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night."

John xiii. 30.

The Lord Himself had bidden the traitor to go out "quickly" (see verse 27).

What is the point of all this? It seems clear enough that, while the Passover was a national commemoration, and could be partaken of by any Jew who was ceremonially clean, the "Lord's Supper" was to be the privilege of those *only* who were in the circle of His love. We shall see, as we proceed, that, in the very nature of things, it could not be otherwise, and that the partaking of the "Lord's Supper" by the unconverted is a grievous perversion of what was in the Lord's mind when He first instituted it.

Now the account in Luke, which we have quoted at the head of this chapter, will be

found, on comparison, to be the one most closely in line with what we find in the Apostle's references to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians—after Christianity had been fully established. It seems well, therefore, that we should give this account a rather fuller consideration, without overlooking what we find in the other gospels. The Gospel of Luke itself, as we know, more particularly sets forth the fulness and largeness of grace, and the Lord is presented to us as the chosen and suited vessel of it. It is here where we should expect to find the fullest and most affecting account of what was to be the link of love between the Lord and His own during the period of His rejection. This is exactly what we do find. Here and here only is the *personal* element introduced.

"This is My body, which is given for *you*.
This do for a remembrance of *Me*."

"This cup is the new covenant in My
blood which is shed for *you*."

It expresses the bond of affection—which the approaching death of Christ would only confirm and establish—between the Shepherd and the sheep. Whatever other features may present themselves to us later on, evidently the simplest and most elementary thought in partaking of the Supper is the response of affection towards Him who, by death, wholly and absolutely set Himself apart from everything in order to bring into effect the purposes of God's love.

It has been said, and the thought is very beautiful, that here in Luke we have the Lord Himself showing His disciples in what way He could still be with them after His departure; that is, that in the Supper they would call HIM to mind. It was not to be a mere memorial, as of some historical event, but that, in partaking of the bread and wine, they would "call to mind" (this is the real force of the Scripture term translated "remember") *Himself*, in a personal way. The deep reality of His death would

necessarily occupy the heart at such a moment, but there would, at the same time, be the full recognition of Himself as the living One, "alive for evermore," the "first-born among many brethren." We shall see a little more of the bearing of this later on—but what a wonderful moment it is for the believer when he reaches this point, that, as belonging to Christ's company, we can sit before Him as thus "called to mind," and enjoy unhinderedly the contemplation of His love.

Before passing on, it would be interesting to consider afresh, for a moment, the striking way in which the Passover and the "Lord's Supper" touched one another on this affecting occasion.

The Passover feast was that which recalled the night, "much to be remembered," when in Egypt the blood of the slain lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of the house, and when the sheltered family within the house sat in peace and safety to

feast on the lamb, while death and judgment were falling on the guilty nation around them. It was to the Israelites the divine pledge of redemption, not only bringing them out from the bondage of Egypt, but bringing them in to the goodly land of God's purpose. For well-nigh 1,500 years (though with many interruptions) this memorial was kept up in the yearly feast of the "Passover," or "unleavened bread," and we who are in the light of Christianity know that it was the continuous setting-forth before God of the true Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death was to be the basis and pledge of a redemption and deliverance deeper and wider far than ever Israelite knew or dreamed of.

Now it is exceedingly beautiful to see this type or figure receiving its fulfilment in the person of Him who, on the Passover day itself (*i.e.*, the very day on which He was sitting with His disciples around Him, for the Jewish day began, as we know, in the

evening) was to be set forth as God's Lamb, "our Passover, sacrificed for us." This is the explanation of the urgency of Christ's love :

"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Luke xxii. 15.

He would not omit to associate Himself, as a true Israelite, with the little godly company, or remnant, of that moment, in the eating of the Passover, and in order to accomplish this, knowing full well what was before Him, He would take care that the meal should be *earlier* than was usual amongst the Jews. It is evident to any careful reader that the "eating of the Passover," among the Jews generally, did not take place in Jerusalem until the following afternoon, *i.e.*, Friday afternoon, as we should call it, while the meal partaken of by the Lord and His disciples was on the Thursday evening. The result was that at the very

time when the Passover was being generally eaten, the true Passover Lamb was being offered. The leaders of the people had endeavoured to prevent the betrayal and death of the Lord Jesus occurring on the feast day, lest there should be "an uproar among the people," but they were helpless in the matter. A power beyond themselves was ordering events in such a way that the ancient type should be fulfilled with the most literal exactness.

The Passover, then, having been eaten, the Lord formally sets it aside, for the time, with the declaration that He would no more eat thereof until the Kingdom of God should come—an evident reference to the establishment of the Kingdom in display and power. It is the Lord's own pledge that, although everything *seemed* to be closed up by His rejection and death, nothing could or would really prevent the carrying out of the purpose of God; or, in other words, that the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham and

David was a certainty as to which there could not be the possibility of failure. Abraham had rejoiced that he should see Christ's "day" (John viii. 56), and David exulted in Him as Son of God, Son of Man, and Lord, (Psalms ii. viii. and cx.) and their bright anticipations will be fully realised.

In the meantime, a new order was to come in, and provision was to be made for those who were to be identified with the Lord during the period of His rejection. It was for these that the "Lord's Supper" was instituted. The little group around the Lord on the night of His betrayal represented, and were to form the nucleus of, the company of those who were, by the eating of the bread, and drinking of the cup, to show forth His death, *i.e.*, His rejection here, until His coming again.

The meaning of the bread, and of the cup, will come before us more fully as we proceed, but, meanwhile, may the sense of the love which found so touching an expression on

that memorable night be greatly deepened within us ! How it melts and captivates our hearts as we think of the Lord, in the full knowledge, surely, of all that there was to come out in those disciples—the denial of Peter, and the forsaking and flight of all of them in the presence of danger—expressing the yearnings of His love towards them—

“The faithful and forbearing love,
That never turned aside,”

that love which would have them thus close around Himself in the hour of His deep pressure and exercise.

We must not forget that it was on that very evening, either inside the upper room, or on the way to the garden of Gethsemane, when all the gracious communications of John xiii.—xvii. fell from the lips of the blessed Lord. It would seem that as the pressure from without grew heavier and more severe, so His heart found its relief in bringing out of His hidden

treasury those rich unfoldings of divine love which, though intended primarily to reassure and cheer the little company then gathered around Him, have been so precious to the saints who, since that moment, have been brought into the circle.

IV.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AS THE EXPRESSION OF
FELLOWSHIP.I *Corinthians* x. 15-17.

THE chapter from which these verses are taken seems to be much less familiar to most Christians than the chapter which follows it. There may be two reasons for this, 1st, its true meaning is but little understood, owing to the present state of Christendom, and 2nd, it is, in some respects, much more searching than what we get in chapter xi., and if accepted, would involve a breaking loose from unsuitable associations and ties such as not very many Christians are prepared for. It is one thing just to sit down and "partake of the Lord's Supper," as a formal, and proper, and enjoyable exercise once a week, and quite another to accept the fact that our doing this really touches our daily life and

path in all its details, and affects all our associations and surroundings. It is a blessed moment for us when we are prepared to admit this.

We shall see, as we glance at the chapter now before us, how all this comes out, and may the Lord make it very simple and plain to the youngest reader, how much the enjoyment and understanding of what is presented in chapter xi. depends upon the honest and hearty acceptance of what we have in chapter x. There is always in Scripture a definite principle of *order* in the unfolding of truth, and perhaps nowhere is it more apparent than in the case now before us.

It is evident, on reading the verses quoted above, that the main thought contained in them is "communion," or, as the same word is more correctly translated elsewhere, "fellowship." In "the cup of blessing which we bless," or give thanks for, we express the fellowship of His blood, and in

the bread which we break there is that which is expressive of the fellowship of His body.

A little explanation of the terms in which this is set forth will help us to grasp the meaning. The simplest idea of "fellowship" is that of "partnership." In fact, in most cases, "partnership" would not be at all an incorrect translation of the word. This idea is actually conveyed elsewhere in our translation of the New Testament, as we see in the following instances, where the word used is substantially the same—varying only in the form :

"Which were *partners* with Simon."
Luke v. 10.

"He is my *partner* and fellow-helper."
2 Cor. viii. 23.

"If thou count me therefore a *partner*."
Philemon 17.

A "partnership," as we all know, is the combination or association of those who are

"partners." The idea is too familiar to us in daily life to need explanation, beyond saying that while it involves a common participation in whatever benefits are to be derived, there is also the very important point of sharing in the responsibilities which attach themselves to the position.

If we apply the principle just stated to the passage before us, the meaning becomes immediately clear. The "cup of blessing" of which we drink, and the bread of which we partake, set forth in a two-fold way (which we shall explain a little further on), the fellowship or partnership of believers ; and that which characterises or marks this bond, and is indeed the seal of it, is the death of Christ. On the one hand, we have the immense *gain* of it, as that which glorified God and set us free from the dominion of sin and death. On the other hand, as being identified and bound up together, as it were, with Him who was rejected and put to death here, we have to be separated from the course

of things around us in which we used to find our pleasure.

It is not that we cannot do our work here—"providing things honest in the sight of all men"—but that the link that has been set up between us and Christ now puts us as much outside the things of the world, in their social or religious aspect, as was the case with the Lord Himself when He was refused and put to death.

Now, the object of the 10th chapter is to make this great truth a reality amongst the company of believers. It is not merely the presentation of a doctrine to be accepted, but something to be practically worked out in the path of the saint. In the earlier part of the chapter the apostle carries our thoughts back to the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness. There was that amongst God's ancient people which answered, in some respects, to what we understand by "fellowship." They had all come out of Egypt under the value of the

Passover lamb, they had all been "under the cloud," and had all "passed through the sea" (see verse 2). The Passover lamb set forth their own deliverance from death and judgment, the cloud was the visible sign of God's presence, indicating that He had brought them to Himself (see Exodus xix. 4), and the Red Sea was God's way of their deliverance from Egypt, and the destruction of the enemy's power.

Moreover, the Israelites had had the manna from heaven and the water from the smitten rock (see verses 3 and 4). At every point they had had the benefit of God's intervention on their behalf, just as we have had. That was one side of the fellowship or partnership, but now what do we see as to the other side? How about their accepting the responsibility to walk here for God, in testimony for Him, and in separation from evil? It is a sad exhibition of what is in the human heart. The brief and

pointed summing-up of it is contained in verse 5 :

"But with many of them God was not well-pleased ; but they were overthrown in the wilderness."

The details of their failure (verses 6-10) present one of the most humiliating pictures within the compass of Scripture, and the Spirit of God uses it, through the Apostle Paul, as the basis of an affectionate and earnest appeal to the Christians at Corinth to be faithful to their fellowship, and to do nothing, or link themselves with nothing, which would in any wise bring their "fellowship" into reproach.

This serves to bring out a point which is of interest and importance, viz., that while the actual partaking of the Lord's Supper, or the breaking of bread, is only of weekly occurrence (evidently, in scriptural usage, the first day of the week) the "fellowship" of Christ's death is maintained perpetually.

A Christian is always in it—it is that which marks him off from the course of things around—and he cannot get out of it, though he may shirk his responsibility and grieve the heart of Christ.

It is in connection with this that the expression "The Lord's Table" is used (verse 21). It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It sets forth, figuratively, that with which the Christian is in fellowship—his place of fellowship, so to speak, in contrast with "the table of demons," which was expressive of that with which the heathen were identified. So that it is correct to say—and it is well worthy of consideration—that a Christian is always at the Lord's Table, though, of course, he is not always breaking bread. If this fact were accepted and remembered, what a mighty influence it would have over our associations and our ways generally, and how careful we should be to be faithful to our fellowship!

With what different feelings we should

meet together for the breaking of bread on the Lord's day if the fellowship of Christ's death were practically and faithfully maintained day by day in our pathway through the world. Oftentimes we are painfully conscious, when we come together, that there is but little in our hearts that is in real unison with the Lord. Perhaps there has been much in our associations—or, it may be, in our service—during the week, with which we should not like to link His name, and we can hardly expect, when we come together in assembly, that there can be that freedom of heart which will enable us to enjoy His company.

Nothing really helps us so much in maintaining this faithfulness to our fellowship as an intelligent grasp of the true significance of the Lord's Supper. This is evidently what the Apostle means when he says to these Corinthians :

"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."—(Verse 15).

He invites them, as it were, to enter intelligently with Himself into what is divinely meant by "the communion of His blood," and "the communion of His body."

In this two-fold view of Christ's death we have, 1st, His blood shed—that which was for God in expiation, and at the same time the expression of God's love, for it was "the blood of the new covenant," in which the great purposes of God's love are set forth (see 2 Cor. iii.); and 2nd, His body given—*i.e.*, the whole condition of *man*, as in Adam, judged and set aside when the blessed Lord Himself, in perfect grace, took upon Himself our responsibilities on the cross. We who believe in Him can, with grateful hearts, see in His death the closing-up of our history here before God as men in the flesh. Many other scriptures illustrate this, as for example :

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the BODY of Christ."—*Romans vii.* 4.

that is, the condition to which the law applied (man "in the flesh") had been ended for God by Christ's death.

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the BODY of Jesus Christ once."—*Hebrews x. 10.*

Here, as in the previous passage, His death was the removal before God, in judgment, of the whole condition for which the Levitical sacrifices had been provided.

An intelligent entrance into these wonderful realities awakens in the soul the response of affection to Him who "gave Himself" in order that the purposes of God's love should be carried into effect. Then we are prepared to accept a path of separateness and devotedness to Himself. This path is, no doubt, in some respects hard and distasteful to ourselves naturally, but it becomes easy and delightful as we learn to appreciate the immense gain which comes to us through the death of Christ, and the greatness

of His love who "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

As a result of taking up for ourselves, heartily and with distinct purpose, this path of testimony, we begin to enjoy the sweetness and attractiveness of the Lord's Supper itself, as we partake of it week by week. This will come before us a little more fully in our next chapter.

V.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN ITS RELATION TO
THE ASSEMBLY.

1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

IN our last chapter, we were occupied with what we might call the *outside* effect of the Lord's Supper, *i.e.*, the conduct which should characterise those who are in the fellowship of Christ's death, here in the scene of His rejection. In the verses quoted above, we are entering upon different ground altogether. It is now the *inside* circle, and what is enjoyed there; not the scene where Christ is unwelcome and His love unrecognised, but the circle where His love is known, where He can find hearts faithful and true to Himself, and where He can minister the joy of His own presence to those who are fitted and ready for it.

It is worthy of note that here, as on many other occasions, the Apostle is led to bring out the fulness of the truth in connection with failure on the part of the saints to maintain what had been already taught by word of mouth. It is evident that the Lord's Supper, in the earliest days, had been taken during, or after, some particular meal; but the sanctity and meaning of it had (at least at Corinth) become so completely lost sight of that Paul could not recognise what was carried on there as being the Lord's Supper at all:

"When ye come together therefore into one place, it is not to eat the *Lord's* Supper; for in eating, everyone taketh before other *his own* supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken."—Verses 20 and 21.

It is under these circumstances that Paul is led to place the Lord's Supper, once for all, in its true position, and this he does with great point and force, as we shall see.

The reader will not fail to notice that the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter stands at the commencement of the Apostle's teaching on the subject of the assembly (see verse 17). He is now occupied with the conduct of the saints, not as individuals, but as forming the company here on earth gathered out for Christ. We have already looked at this company in its earlier history (see Chapter I.) Here at Corinth, we notice that such confusion existed amongst the saints, as gathered together, that the Apostle has to repeat, in writing, those elementary principles of the assembly which would surely have been treasured up and preserved in living power in their hearts, if they had only remained true to the fellowship of Christ's death. It is humbling to think that it should have become necessary to present afresh such simple and obvious instructions as those we get in these chapters.

One or two essential points in connection with the "Assembly" may be mentioned here as preparatory to our meditations on the Lord's Supper. The youngest believer will recognise their importance.

The "assembly," as such, could not be, and, in fact, was not formed until after Christ had been raised from the dead, glorified, and the Holy Ghost sent down. The materials to form the nucleus of the assembly were prepared by the blessed Lord Himself while He was here upon earth. He gathered around Himself those in whom, after He had taken His place in glory, the Holy Ghost was to dwell.

The steps which led up to the formation of the assembly are beautifully set before us in John xx. Christ's death had met the whole question of sin, and God was now free to come out and make Himself known fully according to the purposes of His love.

Hence, the first message to His disciples after the Lord's resurrection is :

"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father ; and to my God and your God."—*John xi. 17.*

This is a remarkable fulfilment of the word in Psalm xxii., speaking prophetically of the Lord in resurrection :

"I will declare Thy name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."—Verse 22.

It opens up the great and wonderful fact that it is in *resurrection* that we are Christ's brethren, of the same order and stock as Himself :

"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 praise unto Thee."—*Hebrews ii. 11 & 12.*

The Lord proceeded to make this good to the original company of His disciples on the evening of His resurrection. John xx. 19-22. After fully assuring their hearts by showing to them His hands and His side, He brings them into association with Himself, on a wholly new footing, by breathing on them, and saying to them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." It is evident that this is not the same thing as the descent of the Holy Ghost personally on the day of Pentecost, but its meaning has often been made simple by connecting it with Romans viii. 2.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The point for us to lay hold of is this—that when we are indwelt by the Holy Ghost as the result of our faith in Christ (see page 19) we are, by the same Spirit, brought into association with Christ in resurrection-life, *i.e.*, a

life where sin, and death, and judgment, must evidently be for ever excluded.

There is much—very much—more to be learned in connection with all this, but we limit our consideration of it to its bearing upon the subject now before us. The Scripture we have quoted, and the further fact that we are formed into “one body” by the Spirit, make it plain that when we come together, as forming part of the assembly here, we, for the time, leave the ground of our own individual needs, and failures, and circumstances, and enter upon a scene where Christ alone is everything and in all. We shall look at this a little more fully presently.

We can come back now to the passage referred to at the beginning of this chapter, and we would repeat what was said before, viz., that when Paul sets himself to unfold these valuable teachings as to the assembly, he is careful to commence with the Lord's Supper. This not only gives to

the Lord's Supper the prominence which it deserves, but seems to indicate, as has been so forcibly pointed out by others, that the Lord's Supper is the introduction or stepping-stone into the enjoyments of the assembly. So evident is this that in one passage (Acts xx. 7) the brethren are described as coming together “to break bread.” It was their first object, and whatever there was to be, in ministry or worship, would follow upon this. We venture to quote a few words just here which will make this plain :

“The Lord's Supper, properly apprehended and carried out, has the effect of putting saints in touch with Christ and with one another. In assembling together, each coming from his engagements and home, saints are not for the moment free in spirit to enter into what is proper to the assembly, but they sit down for awhile, and partake of the Lord's Supper, and so get in touch with Christ and with one another; they are thus brought into the spirit and

tone of the assembly, and are as different as possible in mind and spirit to what they were at first.”—(F. E. R.)

Now the form in which Paul had “received from the Lord” the teaching as to the Lord’s Supper, or as it is familiarly and lovingly called in Scripture, “the breaking of bread,” is very much on a line with what we have in the Gospel of Luke; and as we have already considered Luke’s account pretty fully, we will not occupy the reader again with it in detail—but will just add a few practical remarks.

Our attitude and position at the breaking of bread are lucidly summed-up in the following brief quotations, which the reader will do well to meditate upon:

“In the Lord’s Supper, man is nothing, but Christ and His love everything.”—

(J. N. D.)

“It is Christ taking His place with us, and taking us into the light of the Father’s

love . . . That is why the breaking of bread should be the first thing in the meeting. It is then Christ is realised on our side, and He conducts us, as we are attached to Him, into the Father’s love.”—(F. E. R.)

“We have nothing to do in this retreat, but to sit down and enjoy what the Lord is . . . If we are brought into the presence of His death, we must go down to our own nothingness, and then, sitting under His shadow, we should find Him opening out to us all that He is.”—(T. H. R.)

If all this is true—and who can question it?—it follows that there is really no place at the breaking of bread for occupation with our own state, or circumstances, or sins, or our own past history. We are there on the distinct footing of being part of Christ’s company, associated with Him in resurrection, all question of sin having been settled and done with, and it is as those who are on such a footing that we can enjoy the presence of Him who is the Living One,

“alive for evermore.” At the same time we are made sensible of the love which led Him even to death itself in order that we might thus be suited to be of His company. “The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.”

Now the occasion of the Lord’s first meeting with His disciples after His resurrection, in John xx., is most helpful to us in this way. He had promised to come to them, and there He was. Can we suppose that those disciples did not appreciate, or would ever forget, the agonies of the garden of Gethsemane, or the deeper agony of the cross itself? Or, on the other hand had they forgotten their own utter failure and breakdown in the presence of the sorrow and rejection of Jesus? Not at all—but that was not the moment to be occupied with it. It was a moment of deep joy and gladness, and no doubt that blessed One Himself *for the first time* found His own heart fully gratified in the sense that now, at

length, there was a company to which He could come, and where He would be appreciated to the full, though, as a matter of fact, it was His own perfect grace which had drawn them together.

That scene in John xx. is a true and vivid picture of what the “breaking of bread” should be to-day. It would be impossible not to be subdued in heart as we think of the details of what the Lord entered into, or of the extent of our own individual failure. It is not, however, to be occupied with all that that we come together, but rather to be engaged with Him who is there to lead us, as in risen life with Himself, into fresh and fuller unfoldings of the Father’s love.

There are one or two other points in the passage before us which claim just a brief notice :

(a) “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come.”—Verse 26.

This showing, or announcing, of the Lord's death, is more especially connected with the fact of His rejection here. We have already looked at it in a previous chapter. It is not exactly the question of His death meeting our state before God, but that the Lord's Supper is, in itself, a perpetual witness before the world that Christ has been refused, and that we have taken upon ourselves to have fellowship with Him in it. It is a solemn thing, this "bearing His reproach," and a path not to be entered upon lightly. How beautifully do the words "till He come" fit in here! There will be no reproach then, but sharing with Him all the joy of the Kingdom.

(b) "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Verses 27-29.

These verses point out the inevitable result of not being in the practical power of that which we have already been looking at. It came out in the Corinthians most strikingly. Instead of taking up for themselves, practically, the fellowship of Christ's *death*, where flesh and all its outcomes were, once for all, judged in God's sight (see Romans viii. 2), they were just allowing the flesh to act, giving room for the very thing for which Christ died. Professing to call *Him* to mind, they were giving full rein to the indulgence of their own fleshly desires. No wonder that, with such things allowed to go on unjudged, many were weak and sickly amongst them, and that some had even been cut off in death.

Perhaps we may not be in circumstances where it is possible for that particular form

of the flesh's activity to be manifested, but who would deny the necessity of our "judging," or discerning ourselves, and maintaining, all through our path here, that refusal of everything which would tend to bring in weakness and disaster?

VI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE FATHER'S LOVE.

It would not, perhaps, be out of place to conclude these Notes with a brief reference to what has been upon many minds in regard to the order and exercises of a meeting of those gathered as forming part of the assembly of God here upon earth.

The general principles which guide these exercises are most clearly and simply stated in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. In the former of these chapters, everything like ministerial domination is shut out by the great fact of our being "one body"—all the members of which are of equal necessity to the well-being of the whole, though there may be great differences of intelligence or gift. Thus the head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you." The hands and the

eyes are absolutely dependent one upon the other, and so throughout the whole body. In chapter xiv. the great point is the edification of the assembly, where head and feet, hands and eyes, are in activity, under the control of Him who is the Pre-eminent One, guiding, by the Spirit, according to His own pleasure. There are very clearly defined principles on which all this is practically carried out.

Now in spite of the confusion and division which at the present time reign supreme in Christendom, these divine principles of 1 Corinthians xii.—xiv. are accepted and acted upon by many who are seeking, without making any undue pretensions, to walk in a path of faithfulness to the Lord, and “to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

The reader will have gathered, from what has been before us in the earlier chapters of

these Notes, two points, which it would be useful to recall just here :

1st.—That in coming together as forming part of the assembly of God upon earth, it is taken for granted that we have some knowledge, at least, of what it is to be at home with God, that there is no longer any question of sin between Him and us, and that His love has cast out fear. It follows from this that the Spirit, if unhindered, would, on the occasion of the gathering of the assembly, naturally occupy us with praise and worship, and not with prayer or confession of our own weakness, and the like.

2nd.—That the Lord's Supper is introductory to the worship which is properly characteristic of the assembly, and would therefore naturally occupy the earlier part of a meeting.

While avoiding any interference with the liberty of the Spirit, or laying down any

rigid rules, we gather from what has been already stated that, up to and including the breaking of bread, the company of saints would naturally be occupied more with the Lord Himself, and the attractive and wonderful ways of His love, and the hymns and praises would be on that line. We begin from His death, as an accomplished fact, and are in living touch with Himself in resurrection as part of His own company.

On the other hand, one can see plainly enough, that as we are led on to realise that we are in company with Christ, our hearts would be directed into a channel which would be characterised more by praise and worship of the Father.

It must be carefully noted, however, that while we may expect to be led into rather a different order of exercise after the breaking of bread, yet the meeting should not be looked upon as dividing itself into two parts. We cannot make any distinct or definite break between the earlier and later

exercises of a meeting, and any attempt to do so would be disastrous. *We* cannot decide the exact moment, on any given occasion, when the current of the praise or worship should be changed. All will be regulated perfectly when there is real accord between the hearts of those who are gathered and the Lord Himself. The youngest and least instructed in the gathering will have a rich feast if his heart is only in touch with Him, who, "in the midst," is ready to conduct us, without distraction, into fresh and comforting thoughts of the Father's love.

It may be asked what definite Scripture there is to prove these things. A sufficient answer would be that no positive Scripture is required. It is only what would be naturally expected from the Lord taking His place as the Risen One in the midst of His own company. As a matter of fact, however, Scripture does give us indications which are distinct and unmistakable. In the chapter

we were just referring to, 1 Cor. xii., we have this remarkable expression :

“But covêt earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”—Verse 31.

That is, there is something more excellent even than the exercise of the “gifts,” and what is that? It is *love*. Chapter xiii. gives us the characteristics and ways of it in the assembly—but *love* is really God’s nature, and the manner in which it has been made known to us now is by the Son revealing God as Father. It is evident that divine love must be entered into and enjoyed before it can be manifested in its actings, and it can only be thus known, in anything like its fulness, in the assembly. Hence Paul quotes in Hebrews ii. that beautiful verse we have already referred to in Psalm xxii.

“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 assembly will I sing praise unto Thee.”
Verses 11 and 12.

Now, if our hearts are collectively led into the enjoyment of this—the Father’s name, expressive of God’s perfect love—in the assembly, what would be more natural than that praise and worship should flow *in that channel*, and *on that line*, after the breaking of bread? But again it must be said that no exact rule can be laid down. The Lord is there as Head, and if those who are gathered are only in true accord with Himself, they would find that, without any effort, they would be led on into that which would be suitable to the position He now takes as linking Himself up with His own company here. Thus the hymns, the praise, the worship, or the ministry (if there be any) would not be such as to bring us, or our needs, or our state (past or present),

or even our benefits, into prominence, but would connect the hearts of the saints with the circle of the Father's love, and what is enjoyed there.

"All things that the Father hath are mine."—*John xvi. 15.*

There is no limit here—all is boundless and eternal.

These things are apprehended without difficulty—though perhaps not all at once—by the one who is really willing to go forward, with purpose of heart, for the Lord here. It is for this reason that Scripture is so earnest in its appeals to the saints not to hinder the Spirit. He is our only Guide here, and can only pursue His blessed work of leading us on—and forming us according to the truth which has been made known to us—when we are willing to part company with whatever has proved itself to be a hindrance. If we clear out the "earth" from the channel, and make it broad and

deep, the living water will flow along with unhindered and steady course.

We might close these meditations fittingly by making an affectionate appeal to the reader to accept more heartily than ever the obligations attending upon the fellowship of Christ's death here, and to be more sensitive as to everything that would compromise that fellowship. It is grateful to the heart of Christ when those who are His are found firmly (though gently) refusing to be identified with anything which is not suited to His name.



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