

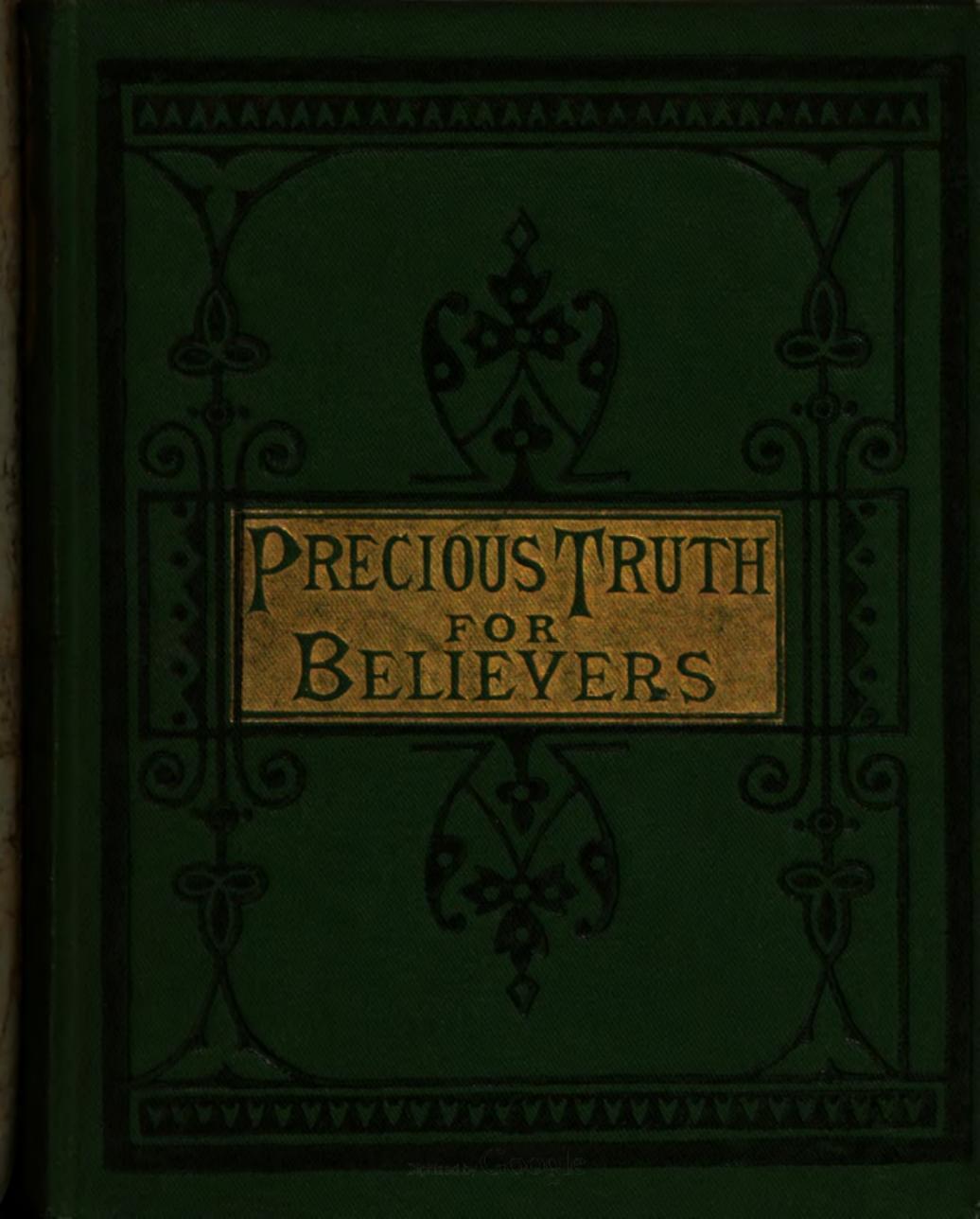
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The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is a dark, textured green color. It features a central rectangular label with a gold or light brown background. The text on the label is in a black, serif, all-caps font. The title is arranged in three lines: 'PRECIOUS TRUTH' on the top line, 'FOR' in a smaller font on the middle line, and 'BELIEVERS' on the bottom line. The cover is decorated with intricate, dark green embossed patterns. At the top and bottom, there are horizontal borders with a repeating triangular or zigzag motif. The central area is framed by a double-line border. Inside this frame, there are four large, ornate, symmetrical designs, one in each quadrant. These designs consist of stylized, interlocking floral or geometric shapes, resembling a four-pointed star or a fleur-de-lis with elaborate flourishes. The overall aesthetic is classic and elegant, typical of late 19th or early 20th-century bookbinding.

PRECIOUS TRUTH  
FOR  
BELIEVERS





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## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
THE OBJECT AND CHARACTER OF TRUE SERVICE,	1
“HIS OWN WHICH WERE IN THE WORLD,” -	17
“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED,” - -	33
“THE MEN WHICH THOU GAVEST ME,” - -	49
HE IS NOT HERE, - - - - -	65
THE PATH OF THE TRUE SERVANT, - - -	81



THE  
OBJECT AND CHARACTER  
OF  
TRUE SERVICE.

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"WHERESOEVER this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark xiv. 9).  
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HAVE any of you, beloved in the Lord, been led to ask the reason of this word of the Lord; and to enquire into the connection between this woman's act, and the preaching of the gospel throughout the world? I think we see this very clearly, when we remember God's ultimate aim in causing the testimony of His grace to be rendered to us. We know the *immediate* result, for the conscience that has been awakened to the sense of its need; the cross of Christ is presented to it, where the righteousness of God has rested in the judgment due to sin, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. i). Much indeed

remains still to be told of *present* access to and standing in the divine favour; of the joy of *hope* that looks out from this stand-point, and fastens itself on the glory of God, ere we turn to our path of trial in the world; of joy, in the very trials too, because of the rich experience learned of God in them; Himself—the climax of our joy. (V. 11.) There is in the gospel, what we have been saved from; but there is also what we have been saved into, even till our hearts find their home in the Father's house, "accepted in the beloved." A divine mystery of love, too, has still to be disclosed to us there. There are counsels of God for the glory and joy of Christ—eternal counsels hid from all other ages, but now made known to us, in which we, too, have our part and interest, as given with all that are Christ's to Him, to be His Church, His Body, His Bride.

What rich revelations are these, beloved, of the love of God! And yet, there is that which goes beyond them all, in the object of God in communicating them to us. He would make Christ known to us according to His own delight in Him. How rich the grace that has not only saved us from Hell, but that would now introduce us into communion with the very joys of God! For the Lord Jesus, who has become precious to us, is the eternal joy of God. Never until salvation was fully known, could our hearts have been free for occupations such as these. But now, that salvation is ours in Christ,

(and far more than ever thought could have conceived,) God would have us enter into His estimate of Christ. He would lead us into divine intelligence of His intrinsic worth and excellency, that losing self and all beside, in contemplation of Christ, we may wonder, worship, and adore Him. God will have it so in heaven. Then, perfectly, the gospel will have accomplished the object for which it was sent forth.

We see it so in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Are the redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation, seen in the innermost circle round the throne? (Ch. v.) The central object is "a Lamb, as it had been slain." Every eye is fixed, every heart occupied with Him; crowns are cast at His feet, harps tuned in His praise. Jesus is still their one-absorbing thought, their endless theme throughout eternity.

What were they once? What were we? "Dead in trespasses and sins"; "alienated from the life of God;" "without Christ," or hope! But now, "made nigh by the blood" of that slain One. Brought into the deepest secrets of the heart of God, even into His own estimate of His Son. Thus the object of God is attained—others with Him have known, loved, and prized His well-beloved, so as to count Him the joy of all joys, the very heaven of their heaven. Sinners of earth have been brought into unison with the mind of heaven and of God. Who more fit to lead the richest praise of heaven, and to raise the note, "Thou art worthy," to be taken up

by angels and the universe in eternal song? The rich and glorious monotony of heaven will be, *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!*

This, then, beloved fellow-servants of the Lord, being the aim and desire of God in the gospel, have we sympathy with God, as we preach it? Is our object to make known the Lord Jesus in all the varied charms and excellencies of His person? Is it to present Him that He may be owned as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely?" Is this the *object* of our service? Are His glory, beauty, and attractions ever before our own eyes?

This seems to be the connection of thought in the Lord's mind at this time. There is a supper in the house of a poor leper, and we find Jesus there. He is the Son whom the Father loved from eternity. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here He is amongst us, sitting at meat in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany. Ah! "He is despised and rejected of men;" men see *no beauty* that they should desire Him. The chief priests and scribes were just now seeking how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. Such was *man's* estimate of Christ. What a wound to the heart of God! God said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But we—yes, we all once among the number—"hid, as it were, our faces

from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Our eyes were indeed holden by sin and unbelief that we should not know Him.

While men thus conspired against Him, there was one at least in that house who entered in some measure into God's mind about His Christ. While others were occupied with the joy of sitting and eating with Him, happy in their nearness to Him (and well they might be), there was one who rose higher than all the rest; Mary—for it was no other, as John xii. tells us—was occupied with Jesus *for His own sake*. Her *previous training* had led to this. She had been found sitting at the feet of Jesus, hearing His word, while others were busied with serving Him (Luke x. 38). Mary had chosen "that good part which shall not be taken away from her"—she was occupied with HIMSELF. Already, on earth, she had come to the springs of the joy of heaven. Jesus was even now to her, her *all*. The feet of Jesus had been Mary's school, and there she had been learning to enter into what He was in Himself. Her one lesson was *Jesus*, in His own intrinsic value. Her eyes began to open to His matchless beauty and attractions, till at last she become dead to all other. In the scene before her Jesus is her *only* interest, her one absorbing thought. She forgets the guests, the supper table, all in adoration of *Him*. She seems to say, as she gazes upon Him, "I am sick of love." No *words* can express the sense of His worth, till at last, in

divinely given intelligence, she breaks the alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and pours it on His head. And thus in the silent language of a heart too full for utterance, she ascribes to Him, as alone worthy, all that is counted costly and precious on earth. Precious intelligence in the thoughts of God, which had its full value for the heart of Christ, however the rest misinterpreted the act!

It is in human nature to love to be *known* and understood. This desire is found in Him, the very perfection of manhood. Earlier in His ministry on earth, when the cities, wherein most of His mighty works were done, repented not, He was constrained to say, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). Misunderstood and unknown by men, He rests with comfort in the thought, "My Father knows Me," and lays His head upon the bosom of His Father's love.

Here was one who, taught of God, seemed to understand something of His perfections, as the Father delighted in them. She began to *enter into His thoughts of His beloved Son*. In secret with Jesus, walking in communion with Him, she had learnt them and gained capacity to enter into them, until no human words will suffice to express what she had found of intrinsic worth in Him.

The ointment poured on His head is just the necessary relief her heart seeks, bursting with the sense of what *He is*. Thus she adores and worships Him. And, O beloved! had not God His joy, in

this her appreciation of the Lord Jesus? Indeed, indeed He had. It is His will "that men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." He looks for this very result of the gospel in our hearts. He says, "Unto you that believe *He is the preciousness*:" and thus it was with Mary.

Oh, how much apparent zeal, activity, and earnestness, there may be, which does not spring from the heart's appreciation of Christ at all! This was what was lacking in Martha. She was busied apparently for Jesus, making ready for Him, serving Him. But what does Jesus say? All service has its value in His eye, according to the measure in which the heart is engaged with Himself, as its first object. Now, "Martha was cumbered about much serving." She was putting her *service* in the place of Jesus. He loves her too well to consent to her heart being thus engrossed. *He* wanted her to enjoy Himself. Mary entered thus into His mind; she felt He cared most of all for her heart, and gave it Him. If Martha seeks to distract Mary too, *she* chooses rather to sit still at His feet and listen, as He delights to reveal Himself to her; and Jesus stamps Mary's choice with His approval. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Beloved, in this day of general activity, is it not well to judge ourselves in the presence of God, as

to how far our hearts are *with Him* in it? Are we not often (by our very service) drawn away from the place where we ought to be—at the feet of Christ? Is not this the secret of *want of power*, and constant failure?

The Lord Jesus has not been the first object of the thing undertaken, or the word spoken; and then, too, it has lost all value in His eyes. Let us ask, then, Are we taken up and occupied with *Himself*? Is there not often but a very partial surrender of the heart to Him, though at the same time there may be much going to and fro in service? What He prizes is a heart thoroughly devoted to Him. He cannot be content with a part of the heart—He wants *the whole*. And, oh, if He cared to shed His blood to win and make them His—all worthless as they are—shall *we* refuse to give them to Him? She surrendered *herself* to be His alone. If He fills the heart of God, is He not worthy and able to fill ours? Christ is the central object of the thoughts of God. When He is of ours, all is in its right place and order. It was so with Paul. He had Christ for the absorbing object of his heart—“To me to live is Christ;” and all else was as dross and dung (Phil. i. 21, and iii. 8).

But am I saying a word *against* service in all this, beloved? No; but only seeking so to order it, that it may be acceptable to the Lord. A heart that, with God, makes Christ its paramount object, has the spring and power of service indeed; nor

will it be found lacking in sympathy with the thoughts of God, as the Master's words ring in our ears—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). Is it possible that any of us are so far removed from fellowship with God, as not to have the service of seeking to win souls for Christ ever dear to us? Let us work, beloved, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. But the most blessed service has its snares. Let us beware lest we should be engaged in telling others of Him, while all the time our hearts are cold to His love. Christ is not *first*: and instead of self-judgment that it is so, and confession, so that communion might be restored, the heart (feeling the distance) runs restlessly into increased measure of service; but this only tends to maintain the distance by cloaking the soul's real condition. Martha found a snare in her very eagerness to get ready the house for the Lord. Mary, occupied with Himself alone, to the exclusion of all other interests, when the time had come, knew how to render the most exquisitely grateful service ever rendered to Him on earth.

And what made it so grateful to the Lord? It sprang from a heart engaged with Himself: and the very least thing thus done, with Him as its object, is pleasing in His sight; if it be but a cup of cold water given to a disciple in His name. Beloved, a solemn day is coming, when all that we have *seemed to do for Christ* will be tested: and the test

will be, what place did He occupy in the affections and thoughts of the servant?

Here was where Martha failed, and Mary gained His smile and approval. Her heart filled with Christ, her service was the expression of it, and thus partook of the character of worship. This ever marks true service. Thus she knew how to do the *right* thing, in the *right* place, and way, and won those precious words from Jesus, "She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

Nor will He have her disturbed. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me." True, there was not one there who could estimate this service but He to whom it was done. Judas may account it waste; so may the other disciples; but Mary was in communion with the Lord's mind. He was pleased: it was enough.

Beloved, how humbling ought this false judgment of the disciples to be to us. They would not have counted it waste if it had been done to the poor; they did so account that which sprang from entire devotedness to Christ. This was human nature! And thus it is still. Whom does the world applaud? Those who will spend their time in benevolent and philanthropic schemes; while it counts him a fool who gives up anything for Christ. What is "*waste*" in the world's estimate, because done to Christ, is precious to God. Mary's action was but the *kind*

of response He looks for from every one brought to know Him.

But to have a heart thus free to be taken up with Christ, there must first be deep, settled rest as to every question of sin. The cross of Christ provides for this, for I see not only my *sins* there, put away for ever, but *myself*. There is the end of all that *I am*—judged, condemned, crucified, and buried: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. viii. i). Until the work of Christ is thus fully apprehended, self is still before the thoughts to be improved, amended, or got rid of; and it is not to be wondered at, that the heart fails to rise to God’s thoughts about Christ.

Others again have got beyond this. They have seen the end of themselves in the cross, and rejoice in the knowledge that life, righteousness, and acceptance are theirs in the risen Christ. Oh, how blessed it was, beloved, when we first made discovery that He was thus ours; and we were able to sing, as often still—

“Now I have found a friend,  
Jesus is mine.”

This must have been something of Lazarus’ happy experience, as he sat at the table with Jesus. So it was with the bride in the “Song of Songs,” when she says, “My beloved is *mine*, and I am *His* ;” and thus comforts herself, as well as she may, “until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” Observe, the *first* thought is, “He is mine.” This is her own

most blessed interest in Christ; still it is herself that is first. Do not many of us, beloved, get thus far and no further? We rest contented and happy in what we have in Christ; and there is no progress in the knowledge of what *Christ is in Himself*, as God would have it.

But we may mark this progress very blessedly in the case before us. Later on in the Song (chap. vi. 3), we find that she can put *His interests first*. Now, she says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The *first* thought is His possession of her, though there is yet room for thoughts of what she possesses. But in chap. vii. 10, we find she has forgotten herself, in the far higher thought of His interest in her. She has lost herself in His love; and if she adds aught to "I am my beloved's," it is only to speak again of what she knows of His thoughts, "His desire is towards me." How blessed, beloved, to be able to lose ourselves in the amazing discovery of what we are to Him.

But Mary reaches higher than all this in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And shall *we* be satisfied with anything short of what our sister has attained before us? It is blessed to know that He is ours; more blessed still to know the wondrous place He has given us in His heart; but this ought only to lead into a deeper apprehension of Him who so loves us.

This I find also in the experience of the Bride in Canticles. For in chap. v. 9, when challenged,

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" she answers, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand," and then goes on to tell, not of the blessings she has received from Him; nor even of His interest in her, but of all His own varied attractions, until at last she says, "Yea, *He is altogether lovely!*"

Thus, beloved, let each of us follow on to know the Lord, in the peerless excellency and glory of His person; till we can say, not because she said it, nor because of the report of others, but as the result of our *own experience*, "He is the chiefest." It is for this we have been drawn to Him; and *knowing* Him, and entering into the perfection of all that He is, we may thus have communion with the Father; who so rests, delights, and finds all His joy in the Son of His love.

There is another notable instance of one who thus had sympathy with the interests of God; and who is therefore distinguished by the Lord's marked approval. In that day of the passing out of the old dispensation, previous to the ushering in of the new, Jerusalem and the temple were *still* the centre of God's thoughts. She of whom I speak knew it; and hence, when the house of God needed repair, the poor widow of her want cast her two mites into the treasury; and this was "all that she had, all her living" (Mark xii. 44).

How beautiful was this entering into God's thoughts! What a surrender of every interest of

her own for God's, when, unmindful of her poverty, she gave her little all, in the furtherance of God's object.

This again in its place and measure was precious to the Lord. He draws the attention of the disciples to her, for in *His eyes* she had "cast in *more than they all.*" What, then, is God's object *now*—shall we not ask? We know it, for He has "made known to us the mystery of His will." Is it not the glory of Christ in His body the Church, formed for Him out of the materials of sinners found dead in sins, to be "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?"

If this, then, is the present counsel of God for the glory and joy of the Lord Jesus, does it occupy its proper place in our hearts and service? Are we willing to throw ourselves, our substance, our all, into the line of its accomplishment? To one who has intelligence of it, this will be the aim of his service as surely as it is true. The world will be pleased with what proposes good to man, and will estimate all else as worthless. God will accept that which has the glory of Christ for its object: only then is it of any value with Him. Is not the smile of God's approval enough? One that walks in the consciousness of it, can afford to despise alike the frown and flattery of this world. Beloved, let us beware of the world's smile. Its frown were safer by far. We have now "to please but *One.*" Let the "She hath done what she could" of Christ, be enough for us.

“To me to live is Christ.” Let Christ be then the controlling object of our life, in the power of the Spirit of God. There is no rest while the heart is divided between Christ and self, or the world, or our friends, or our brethren. The joys of God are entered into by the one that will make Christ, and Christ alone, his object.

Let us then, beloved, be found, like Mary, at the Master's feet. Let us listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus, as it is still heard in His Word; and as we are thus occupied, the Spirit of God will delight to unfold more and more His preciousness to us. It is His office and joy to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, until our hearts are won to be His alone.

Alas! do any say, “I have not been entering thus into the preciousness of Christ—my heart is cold to His love, and insensible to His grace.” Do not dwell on this; your heart will never be warmed by its own coldness. If it is cold, I shall never grow warmer by dwelling on the *fact* of the frost and snow around. Nay, I shall only get colder still, until I draw near to the source of heat. O beloved! is not the source of all light and heat for us *the love of Christ*? Draw near to His own heart. It is the place He gives, and delights that you should take. Lay your head upon His bosom. Your response to His love may be feeble, but His is not measured by ours. He does not change; the *measure* of His love to *each* is the Father's to Him. Did John call

16 THE OBJECT AND CHARACTER OF TRUE SERVICE.

himself the disciple whom Jesus loved? Yes; but it was only that by faith he *took the place* Jesus had given to the rest as well as to him—the very place He wants *you* to take, as though His love belonged to nobody else besides. Such love must melt the very coldest heart that *believes* it. Then Christ will naturally be first in every thought. He will be the absorbing object of the mind. Thus it was with Mary; and this was why her service was so grateful to Jesus. It sprang from a heart that was engaged with Him in the knowledge she had gained of His own intrinsic excellency. It was of the *order of result* that God looks for, in causing the gospel to be proclaimed; and hence, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Soon, beloved, we shall see Him with unveiled face. Then shall we know as we are known. There will be no power then, that could any more divide our affections with Him. Service will have no snares then, for God’s object will be the *only* object of every heart *there*.

Let us seek that it may be so with each of us *here*. The Lord grant it!

## "HIS OWN WHICH WERE IN THE WORLD."

JOHN XIII.

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It is helpful to the true understanding of the blessed instruction of the Lord Jesus before us, to note the place it holds in this Gospel. We can all see that it is very marked. Chap. x. gives us the result of the testimony of the words and works of Jesus in the nation. Responsible long since to receive Him as the Christ, they only waited for the full revelation of the glory of His person, as one with the Father (v. 30), to take up stones to stone Him. How infinite the grace that had brought the Son of God within their reach! This was their estimate of it! "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Chaps. xi. and xii. bring out for us His glories as Son of God (v. 4), King of Israel (chap. xii. 13), and the Son of Man (v. 23, 24). Blessed answer of God to the stone-throwing of the rabble on earth! But the nation's rejec-

tion of Him is the nation's judgment. He had been presented to them in the grace of Isaiah liii., and they had seen no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him; and now, God has judicially closed those blind eyes, that they could not see, according to Isa. vi. Judgment having been thus pronounced upon the rejectors of His testimony, Jesus turns His back upon a cold, heartless world, to shut Himself in with the little company of His own, whom He has been given out of it.

From chap. xiii. on to the end of chap. xvii., we find Him alone with His disciples, free to make known to them the full depth of the place they had in His love, now that He was about to leave them and go back to the Father; and how that love would be in exercise for them. This is what makes these chapters so peculiarly precious to us, beloved; for we have all our part in what is unfolded in them, as surely as we are His.

Mark the opening words of the Holy Ghost, for they are the key to all that follows. They give us the new position of things on which depends the action of Jesus in this chapter, for its full significance. "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should *depart out of this world unto his Father*"—such is the place *He* now takes anticipatively—"Having loved *his own which were in the world*, he loved them unto the end." He is gone to the Father; we are left in the world without Him! How dreadful to have to return to the scene out of which

He has been rejected; to pursue our path through it alone!—to be forgotten? Oh no! But to be to Him what our hearts could never have conceived. Listen! He calls us "*His own!*" Far more than if He had said—"His own friends," or even "His own brethren!" "*His own*" speaks volumes to us.

The human heart has a peculiar joy in having something it can call its own. It is not so much the value of what is possessed, as the simple consciousness that it is mine. Now it is just thus that Jesus speaks of us. He tells me that I am His, and that *He* delights in its being so. He would not occupy us with ourselves, nor with our poor, feeble estimate of Him. He would have us lose ourselves at last, and lose ourselves in *His thoughts* about us.

Are you prepared for this, beloved—prepared for divine love, speaking and acting from its spring which is wholly in itself, without a question of what you are, being raised from first to last? Oh, this is rest! He knew you, and *yet* He *loved* you. He died, not merely in pity and compassion that would save you from hell, but in love that had set itself on you as its object; and now he calls you "*His own,*" as well He may. We are His by more than all that by which one ever belonged to another: and it is ours simply to own it. Do you stand overwhelmed in presence of such love? It is well; you will never look again to find the reason of it in yourself; but be content that the only reason for it should be found deep in that love itself.

But listen—"He loved them unto the end." Do you ask, to the end of what? To the end of our path in the world, till we shall need the assurance of it no more. But what an assurance for our heart! He knows my path through to the end. He knows the failure that marks every step of it, the oftentimes coldness, and faithlessness, and treachery of my heart, and *yet* He loves me to the end! Was ever love tried like His? And oh, how it stands the heaviest strain put upon it! What a strain that was to be put upon it that very night, known before to Him too (v. 38); and yet *Peter* was by, to hear the blessed words, and know his part in a love that could never change. Now, it is because we have so deep a place in His love, that He delights to have us near to Himself, in the enjoyment of it. True, it is *our* joy to be there; but that is nothing to His joy in having us there. He died that we might know and take our place there, and now He lives to secure and maintain us in unhindered enjoyment of it. He will not easily give up what He has acquired for Himself at so infinite a cost. "His own," is still the spring of the service He enters upon in this chapter—the object of it, to secure our hearts for Himself while He is away. The love of Christ delights to be in exercise about its objects; but *He* has an interest in it as well as we.

V. 2 stands in terrible contrast with all that we have been considering. But the heartless treachery of one that has been the companion of Jesus, but

who never believed on Him (chap. vi. 64), will not deter the grace of Jesus from the service that alone could meet the need of those whom He is about to leave in the world.

V. 3. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." The time has not come yet for His taking possession of the "all things" that have been given into His hands; but He rises to secure that which is more precious to Him than all beside—uninterrupted and unrivalled possession of our hearts, against all that would dispute it with Him.

V. 4. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The action of the Lord here is eminently symbolic, beloved brethren. To gather merely from it the lesson of humility is, I do not hesitate to say, to miss the point of the instruction. We see that it must have a deeper character by reading from v. 7 to v. 10. It is essential to having part with Christ. It is, in fact, the Lord's present service in the Father's presence for His people in this world.

Water is the well-known symbol of the Word of God applied by the Spirit. Here we find a double application of it, the force of which is much obscured in our translation, but which you will understand

better if we read, observing a distinction of the Spirit of God, "He that is *bathed* needeth not save to *wash* his feet, but is clean every whit." What, then, is the first application of the water of the Word that needs never to be repeated? It is that spoken of in John iii. 5, "Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is the word God brought home by the Spirit to the conscience in that moment when first we rested on a word from God for our salvation. Thus were we "born of God," "begotten of the incorruptible seed of the word," and made "partakers of the divine nature." All previous remedial measures have but revealed more fully the extent of man's ruin. But now, what man could never do—that is, cleanse himself—God has done by His word received into the soul. We are clean in His sight—aye, clean every whit. Sins, and the nature of sin within us, have received their doom in the death of Him in whom we have believed, and we have received His life beyond the reach of judgment and of death. Meanwhile we are found in a sin-polluted world. *One* only ever passed through it without contamination.

Temptation abounds on every side, and finds too ready an answer in the nature within us. Just as the feet contract uncleanness in a dirty path, so are our consciences liable to contract defilement at every moment as we pass through the world. Sin never again can come *upon* us for judgment and wrath; but it can and must necessarily, if allowed, cloud

enjoyment of the love of Jesus, break up communion, and put us in a place of distance from Him. This is what *He* cannot bear. We must remember that there is nothing that the eye can rest on, or the imagination be occupied with in the things of nature, that has not this tendency. For all that is in the world is not of the Father, and all that is of flesh—of the nature and life of the first Adam—is that, that God has had to exterminate in judgment in the cross of Christ.

How great and real, then, is our need, beloved, and how sweetly the love of Jesus engages Him in the very service for us, suited to it! For this is what is symbolized in the washing of the feet. It is the second application of the Word given us in v. 10. We find it again in Eph. v. 26, "*Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.*" As surely, then, as we have part with Jesus, He must apply the water of the Word to detach us from all that would hinder communion with Himself. Note well, that it is not something He leaves *us* to do, or it would never be done. It is, "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*"

I think we do not well to confine the service of the Lord as symbolized here to the restoration of communion *when it has been broken*. Assuredly

there is this; but there is more besides—even all that is needed to maintain us in even, uninterrupted enjoyment of His presence. For the Word of God, as applied to us by the Lord, judges all that is incompatible with this, and thus marks off for us a clean path, separated from the defilement round us, where the Lord Himself can be with us. This is His object in the ministry of the Word, beloved. And do we not bless Him for it? What more is wanted for the fulness of joy?

But then, are we prepared to submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus that He may wash our feet? Ah, this is a question for our consciences! The Word, being the revelation of Christ to us, must *unsparingly* judge all that is unlike Himself. Christ is the only measure of its judgment. Oh, beloved, is there a single thing you would *like* it to spare? Search out and see if you are yielding yourselves honestly to the Word's searching action upon heart and conscience. Think of the terrible cost at which you reserve aught that it would judge—even of forfeiting fellowship with Him! And what have you *gained* with the loss of this? Where can the heart find aught to satisfy it away from Him? True, *He* will never rest, for the love He bears you, till He has led you back to His side; but oh, how grievous and terrible a thing is the defilement of sin! None but the Son of God could undo its effect, and it needs that *He* should stoop to wash your feet. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." But

the action of the Word of God is not simply negative in judging and leading us to judge the evil. Nay it is this, just because it is the full, positive revelation of Christ Himself to us. Thus, by all, He teaches us—slowly, it may be, because of our sluggish hearts, but surely—He is leading us with wondrous patience and grace into a deeper knowledge of Himself. And there is an irresistible power in the knowledge of Christ to attach to Himself, and so to detach us from all that is not Christ. Is it that He would *tear* you away from all your little interests, and leave you but an empty void? No, no; far from it. He knows that *nothing can fill* your heart but Himself; therefore, He brings you to judge with Him all that would create or maintain a cloud between you and Him: and He does it in His own sweet way. He does it by the revelation of what *He is in Himself* to us, until our hearts become taken up with Him as their object. Then easily, and without room for regret, we drop what only enfeebled for us, the power of heaven's richest joy. For, if the effect of every truth, when duly received, is separation from the things of nature and the world, it is only separating to still closer fellowship with the Lord Jesus: and this is at once precious to Him, and *necessary* to us, now that we have tasted of its joy.

Alas! I fear that too often, like Peter, we resist the wholesome water of the Word; and more culpably than he. He might have pleaded igno-

rance of the intention of Christ; but not so we. We know now that He would only form us by it, for deeper intimacy with Himself, for we are His own; but we love too well something of nature that He must detach us from. And, yet, it is Jesus stoops to wash you! My brother, my sister, can you say to *Him*, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? But we virtually say this if we are afraid of the truth, and seek to turn away its edge from us and our ways. Thus it is that the clouds come—we refuse the Word of the Son of God, and the conscience becomes defiled by what it would have purged us from.

Peter refused it, for he had yet to learn his need of the Lord's loving service. Confidence in the flesh was the root of it in him, as in many another of us since. How soon and terribly he made experience of it—but, may we not also say, of the Lord's restoring grace? He who had said, "I will lay down my life for thy sake," that very night, with cursings and oaths, denied that he ever knew Him. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." What a look that was for Peter! No wonder it broke his heart, for it told him that Jesus loved him still:—he might change to Jesus, but Jesus never to him. I have little doubt that look was enough to assure Peter that he was forgiven; but this was not enough for the Lord. There were yet sad effects of his fall remaining. The communion of Peter with the Lord had been broken. A heavy cloud still hung over him. What a witness

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of this was—"I go a fishing." (Chap. xxi. 3.) He had once counted all this loss for Christ, but that was when his heart was filled with Christ. Ah, he had denied Him now, and the poor heart of Peter sought in vain to fill up the void that was there by resuming his old occupations; but I am sure it was listless, wretched work. Which of us have not known something of such terrible experience?

And all this shows us that forgiveness is one thing, communion with Christ, as the object that fills our hearts, quite another. Beloved, have you learned to apprehend the solemn difference? Many of us have got all we could from Christ, and gone away to walk at an even distance from Him in the world and its interests; others of us have tasted of the joy of walking with Him, and if the cloud has intervened—never, never can *rest* be found until it is broken up. And *Jesus* never can rest until it is broken up. Mark His ways of love with Peter. "What I do thou knowest not now," Jesus had said (chap. xiii. 7); "but thou shalt know hereafter." And the time had come when Peter should know, in the reality of its blessing, the action of the washing of the Word, and welcome the love of Jesus that stooped to do it. For, get on and prosper as Peter might at his fishing, the Lord Jesus could not bear the distance that had come between them. But restoration is no light work. The conscience must be proved, and the root of failure laid bare. "Lovest thou me *more than do these*," will do its own work.

It will bring to mind the boast, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and then, that his was the deepest fall of all. Sad, painful experience, but needed, that he should know himself. Painful work, too, to have it opened up again in presence of the Lord and of all, but to result in the full judgment of the evil that had been at work, that not a cloud might remain upon his joy. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" again and again repeated, draws out his heart to confide in Jesus as he could not in another on earth—John only knew that he had sworn that he never knew him—"Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." The Lord Jesus answers by confiding to him His most precious interests on earth, "Feed my sheep."

What perfect grace, beloved, are these ways of our Lord, as each of us have proved them for ourselves! The heart has been heavy because of distance from Christ. Some little word from the Lord has been borne to the mind. It just meets the need. You say how strange that the word so suited at the moment should have come to mind! Ah, beloved, it was the Lord Jesus that stooped thus to wash your feet, and you discerned not that it was He! But how terrible the character of failure, and backsliding, and sin, when judged in the light of such grace! The Lord grant deep subjection of heart to His Word, that we may be kept from so sorely trying His love! But the cloud is dispelled

—Peter's heart has been restored to its rest in fellowship with Christ; and the Lord can give him in the power of this, the path he had sought to take in the energy of the flesh, and in which he had so utterly broken down. It was His own pathway of death, which is all that He can give any of us here. Compare verses 36, 37, with chap. xxi. 18, 19.

Yes, beloved, the path of the Lord Jesus in this world can only be taken in the power of communion with Him. Therefore it is, as it seems to me, that the Lord's precious provision for the maintenance of this while He is away, precedes all the other instruction of His farewell words to us. John's place on the bosom of Jesus (v. 23) is the place He would maintain us in the enjoyment of (with a somewhat deeper experience of the love of it), by the service of the first part of the chapter. But you may say, "Surely that place alone belonged to John, as *par excellence* the disciple whom Jesus loved." You wrong Christ's love by such thoughts as these, beloved. Partiality is a defect of human love. There is none in divine love. It has the one measure of love for each of us, and for all. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." There is no room for degrees here, for the love for each is infinite and cannot be exceeded. Truly it passeth knowledge. Besides, if He loves one more than another, it is to say that He has found something *in that one* to love. Whereas there was nothing in any of us to draw forth His love. Human love is

called forth by something worthy of love in its object; but this is the bright distinguishing characteristic of divine love, that its objects are alike unworthy. The source of Jesus' love is in itself—deep, deep, in the secrets of His own heart. It would be terrible indeed if, after all, you would insist on the place of distance. Will you not accredit His love by taking the near place He gives you? It is all He has left you to do! Love is gratified by having its object near to itself. It delights in the confidence it has begotten, that will quietly take the place of nearness—nor fear that it should be counted intrusion. This is the response His love looks for from us. John knew it, and leaned upon His bosom, and writes himself down “the disciple whom Jesus loved!” It is but the style and signature of faith, that makes nothing of self, but everything of the love of Christ, excluding all human merit and worthiness. Peter is in comparative distance, just because so much of *self* still adhered to him.

Communion is, moreover, the spring of all intelligence of the mind of the Lord, now revealed to us in His Word. Peter has to enquire of it through John. John “leaned” upon His bosom before; he has only to “lie” the closer now (v. 25). Perhaps some may object that none can be so near to Jesus now that He has gone to the Father, as they could who were with Him on earth. Not so, beloved; the Holy Ghost has been given us since then according to the promise of Jesus (ch. xiv. 16,

20), that we may be brought into a far higher order of intimacy with Him than *could* have been theirs: and it is just the object of the service of the Lord Jesus in this chapter that we have been considering to maintain us in this—that not a cloud of *moral distance* might come in between us.

I can only note further, that the Lord Jesus commits to us a very sweet participation in this His service for us (v. 14, 15). “If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” Again He gives His new commandment in v. 34:—“*As* I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” If *His* love is the only *measure* of the love we are to bear to one another, He also sets us an example of the *manner* in which it will be in exercise. And this is solemnly important in these last days, beloved. Which of us has not witnessed with joy a drawing together of the hearts of the children of God in our common faith and blessing, such as has not been, so generally, perhaps, since Satan first sowed seeds of division in the Assembly of God on earth? Old barriers of creed and ancestral religion have not been able to stand against the desire that the people of God should be together. The danger is lest Satan should prevail to mar this precious fruit of God's working among us, by intermingling the common social principle of nature, with the love to which Christ commands His people. True love has

Christ for its first object, and takes in all that are His, to love, as He loved us; and it will be above all essential to it, to seek to secure *the joy of Christ in His people*. Thus, if you *truly* love me, my brother, and discover in my ways or associations aught that would tend to keep me at a distance from Christ, being contrary to truth and holiness, you will never rest until you have stooped to wash me, by the ministry of some word of Christ, from the moral stain. You will have learned in sweet experience of the ways of Christ, the grace so needed for this expression of your love; and you will not be deterred by the pride that may spurn your interference, till you have led me into my place of privilege and joy. That which would consent to our each doing our own will, irrespective of Christ's, under the plea of love, has lost every characteristic of *Christian* love.

The Lord give us, beloved, to rise more into His thoughts and desires about us. Oh, to enter into the depths of that term His love has fixed upon us, "*His own!*" What a rebuke to every thought that is not according to his mind! What a corrective of every tendency of things, within and around, to draw us from Him! Nowhere can rest or joy for us be found now, save in the unclouded enjoyment of nearness to and intimacy with Christ.

“LET NOT YOUR HEART  
BE TROUBLED.”

JOHN XIV.

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IT is of importance that we should note the cause of the sorrow to which the Lord Jesus addresses Himself in these precious words for the comfort of the troubled ones ; for, as I am persuaded, they will lose their deepest significance and blessing for any who have not known as *their own*, the sorrow that is the occasion of them. For it is no ordinary sorrow that is here, such as abounds for every child of God in his path through this evil world. It is not any and every sorrow that here finds itself in presence of the Lord for sympathy, whose heart has still upon the throne of God its kindred throb for every throb of ours, and comfort too, to the full ; but the very special sorrow of any who *know Jesus well enough to miss Him*, in a scene out of which He has been cast by the unanimous consent of man. Brighter and more blessed things, it is true, have resulted to us from the cross of Christ, in the wondrous grace of God, that could make this culminating point of man's hatred, the moment and place of the brightest display of that grace. But this does not lessen the guilt of the world in putting Him there, nor the sense of His rejection by it in our hearts, as we pass through it. And so it is that Paul can say, “By

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Beloved, let us put it to our hearts, do we *miss Him*? We have known His work for salvation, but have we gone on to know *Himself* for love? Has His work, with all its known results in our blessing, served in any feeble measure to attach us to Him who has accomplished it, and we do not miss Him in this world? Impossible that it should be so! For us, as for Mary, if *He* is gone, then all is gone that was of any value for our hearts here; and henceforth, in all this world's scene, there is a blank that nothing can fill. It is stained with the blood of our murdered Lord; His cross blights it in our eyes; our hearts can never dissociate the world from His *cross* that judged it, and we only live to shew forth His death in it, while, as strangers and pilgrims, we pass on to our home above. Beloved, do our hearts know enough of the Lord Jesus to be desolate in a place where He is not? Ah, then, we know the disciples' sorrow, and to us as well as to them belongs the comfort of the words of Jesus.

And see how He counts upon the disciples' love, and consequent sorrow; for He has no sooner broken it to them in gentle words, that only "yet a little while" (ch. xiii.33) He can be with them, than He adds, "Let not your heart be troubled." Precious fruit of His own love, that, wherever it is known, detaches hearts from the world without Him, by attaching them to Himself. Yes, He whom they had known, and loved, and followed on earth in such precious intimacy, was about to return to the Father, and they would now no longer know Him after the flesh; yet He was only going to take the same place as the unseen God, where He would be still known by faith, "ye believe in God, believe also in me," and in all the *deeper revelations* of the glory of His Person that would result from that place: so that He will even prove that it is *expedient* for them that He goes away. And as we shall see, these deeper revelations of Himself will form the very staple of the comfort ministered to us in His words.

Where else could comfort be found for hearts that have known Him ever so feebly? All joy is treasured up for us in the knowledge of Christ. There can be no *different* joy, but only *deeper measures* of the same joy; and this is just what He brings us into by going away.

But will He enter alone into His joy, and *leave* us in our wilderness desolation? No; He only goes to prepare a place for us there too, and to wait for the moment when He can come and fetch us into it. Beloved, He speaks to us of *home*; and if you say it is of His home, I answer, not more His than yours with Him now: for He has never left us until He has accomplished a work in the world, on the ground of which He has introduced us into the very same relationship that He Himself stands in to God. “Go to my brethren,” says He, from the mouth of His open and empty grave, “and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God” (ch. xx. 17). Henceforth His Father is our Father, His God our God, His home our home. And if there are in it “many mansions,” His love has already set apart the place for each individual object of it: for such I take to be the force of the words, “I go to prepare a place for you.” None but *the one* for whom each place has been prepared by Jesus can *fill* it for *His* heart. How precious to be still and ever the objects of such love! Now, in His absence, we need the *assurance* of it, and He gives it to us.

But observe well, *where* it is He gives us our home,—“In my Father’s house.” Oh, beloved, have our hearts entered into the blessedness of this? The Jewish hopes of the disciples were filled with the displayed glory of the kingdom, as was natural from prophecy; but the time for that display, depending as it did upon the presence of the Messiah, was not come yet, as was evident from Jesus’ words, “Yet a *little* while I am with you.” And when all seemed lost to their disappointed expectations in His going away, He unfolds to their faith, what prophecy never thought of, *the*

*Father's house*, and gives them and us our home there, in a love that is beyond all the glory; for the glory can be *displayed*, the love, never. What rich comfort for our hearts, troubled in this world at the absence of Jesus!

But there is more, and more there must be, to meet the *necessities* of those to whom, by these very revelations, the Lord Jesus is becoming more precious every day. Is this separation to last for ever? No; *He* could not bear it any more than we. And, coupled with the home presented to our faith to enjoy, He gives us just what He knows hearts that truly love him could not do without—the promise (*v. 3*), "I will come again, and receive you *unto myself*:" precious hope for us, beloved, till hope shall be lost in the consummation of it, and we shall see Him face to face. Nor is it only that we shall all be with Him—for, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," and thus in death we go to Him—but His word is, "*I will come again and receive you unto myself*," and the promise is as sure today for our hearts as when first He gave it to us.\* Beloved brethren, is the coming of our Lord more than a doctrine among us? Is it a deep spring of joy even in hope? Is it a living power in our souls? But the promise goes on, "that where I am there ye may be also;" and this tells us that the necessity of our hearts is His own; that, not for our joy only but for His, we must be where He is. And, beloved, that is the heaven of the Christian's hope. Man's imagination has a heaven of its own, well suited to it, no doubt, but not the least suited to the desires of Christ for us. Scripture has but little about heaven; for all desire, all joy, all hope, is summed up for any who know *Christ* ever so feebly, in that "where *I am*" of His. *His presence* is the very heaven of heaven to us.

Yet we are only approaching the kernel of joy for us,

\* His coming for us, I need hardly say, is not the same as our going to Him.

and comfort, while we wait, in the absence of the Lord Jesus, for the fulfilment of such bright hopes. And this is contained in what follows—ushered in by the words (v. 4), “and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” He was going to the Father, of whom on earth He had been personally the full revelation before their eyes: “No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who *is* in the bosom of the *Father*, He hath declared Him” (ch. i. 18). So then they knew where He was going, and the way, in the very revelation that *He* was of the Father (v. 6), “*I am the way.*” He is “the truth” also, consequent as truth is on the revelation of God: for the truth about anything is its relation to God, which can only be known as God is known. Thus it was that when the Lord Jesus came into the world, all was tested and revealed in its true character. Then it was known that all that is of this world was one vast gigantic lie! Jesus alone, the Truth, who thus testing and judging it, was rejected by it. “Men loved darkness rather than light.” But He is also “the life:” for, if any found in Jesus the full disclosure of their lost condition by nature, they found also in Him the full revelation of God in grace and truth, and “this is eternal life *to know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent” (ch. xvii. 3).

Moreover, if God is known *in the Son*, He is known in the character of this relationship—or, in other words, as Father: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (v. 7). And this is truly blessed. He died “to bring us to God;” but having come by Jesus, the only way, we find that it is to the Father He has brought us. Thus, we not only know our future place in His Father’s house, but we know His Father, and we know Him as *our* Father. And this is needed to complete the consciousness that our home is there. Well may Philip say (v. 8), “Lord, show us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us.” What joy could go beyond the knowledge of the Father? But then Philip ought to have known the Father as

manifested in the Son: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME, Philip? *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;*" and "from henceforth," says Jesus, "ye know Him and have seen Him" (v. 9).

This, beloved, is our portion of blessing in our Lord's absence. The disciples enjoyed the presence of the Lord Jesus amongst them. In another day the Son of Man will come in His glory, and the blessing of the earth in the kingdom will depend upon the manifestation of His glory. But oh, beloved, far beyond all in the richness of blessing, is the way in which He is revealed to our faith *now*, as hid in God. Lost to the outward eye, it is only that He has taken His place according to the intimate nearness of His relationship with the Father; and in this wondrous intimacy we are given to know Him (v. 11): "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." What is the displayed glory of the kingdom compared with the home circle of divine relationship and love, into which such words introduce us? And this is our blessing. Power to grasp the full blessedness of such a revelation is another thing, and we are not left without this also, as we shall see. But such is the revelation, which is the strength of our comfort in the absence of Christ. He is not lost to us, blessed be God, but revealed to us, all the more fully, from the place He has taken in His oneness with the Father, so that we know Him in the Father, and the Father in Him, and "our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."\* Surely this is privilege beyond all that was ever heard of before in the wondrous dealings of God in grace with His people,—beyond all that will be enjoyed by Jew or Gentile, blessed in the Millennium in the personal presence and manifested glory of the Messiah; nay, beloved, privilege that *depends* upon the very place that the *absent* One has taken with God, having first fully declared Him in

\* 1 John i. 8.

the world. Oh, for hearts duly to estimate it, and to take our place accordingly, in the sweet and precious fellowship with the Father and the Son to which we are now consciously and intelligently brought as our privilege and joy. Well may the Holy Spirit say, instructing us in these very things (1 John i. 4), "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full."

Having said this much, beloved brethren, as to the *character* of our blessing in the absence of the Lord Jesus, I pass over intervening verses, however important in their connection, to note next, the *power* by which alone we can enjoy such a revelation of God. This is promised us in verse 16, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth. . . . At that day (namely, when He is come) ye shall know that I am in the Father." Thus has the Holy Spirit been given to dwell within each of us, that by His power we may grasp the present revelation of the Son in the Father—the power by which, though still in the circumstances of the wilderness, we may ever walk above them, in full, unclouded fellowship with the Father and the Son. But more than this is known, now that the Spirit has come: for verse 20 goes on to unfold to us (oh, amazing blessedness!) that we are *associated with the Lord Jesus* in all the nearness and intimacy of His place in the Father. "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and *ye in me*, and I in you." Beloved, can anything be added to such blessedness? The whole of our position here lies before us. While Jesus is withdrawn from the eye of the world that cast Him out, soon to come back again for the display of His power and glory in the kingdom, the Holy Spirit has come down, sent from the very place the absent One has taken *in the Father*, to be the power by which our souls are brought into the divine intimacy and fellowship of such a place, and of our association with the Son in all the wondrous blessedness of it.

But it will be easily seen, that, if our blessing is only to be fully enjoyed by the power of the Spirit of God, it is above all things essential to such enjoyment that nothing should be allowed to grieve Him in our walk. Hence it is that verse 15 occupies the place it does in this instruction: "If ye love me keep my commandments." Nothing grieves the Spirit more than when self-will is allowed to work. Obedience is the very opposite to this. Here, then, comes the third point in the Lord's instruction, as He tells us of *the path and order* in which alone the joy of these wondrous links with Heaven and with God can be entered into and maintained. How blessedly the power of an un-grieved Spirit was illustrated for us in the cloudless joy of the desolate path of Jesus on the earth! And the secret of it is unfolded to us in His words, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me" (ch. iv. 32, 34). Thus it is only as every thought of our hearts is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, that our portion of divine intimacy can be enjoyed by the power of the Spirit. And this is a joy absolutely apart from, and independent of, all earthly circumstances; it springs from the links that connect our hearts with the Father's presence, and the place that the Lord Jesus has taken there in the interval of His rejection by the earth. Oh, that nothing may be tolerated for a moment that would enfeeble the power of such associations in our souls!

But the happy spring of this obedience is found in the words of the Lord Jesus, "If ye love me." It is as though He said, Dry up your tears at the thought of my leaving you—albeit, these tears were precious in His sight—and prove your love, if it is true and real, by the more practical path of my obedience. And when the heart is taken up with Christ as its object, how easy and natural obedience to His commandments becomes! "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (v. 21). But if Christ is not our simple and all-controlling object,

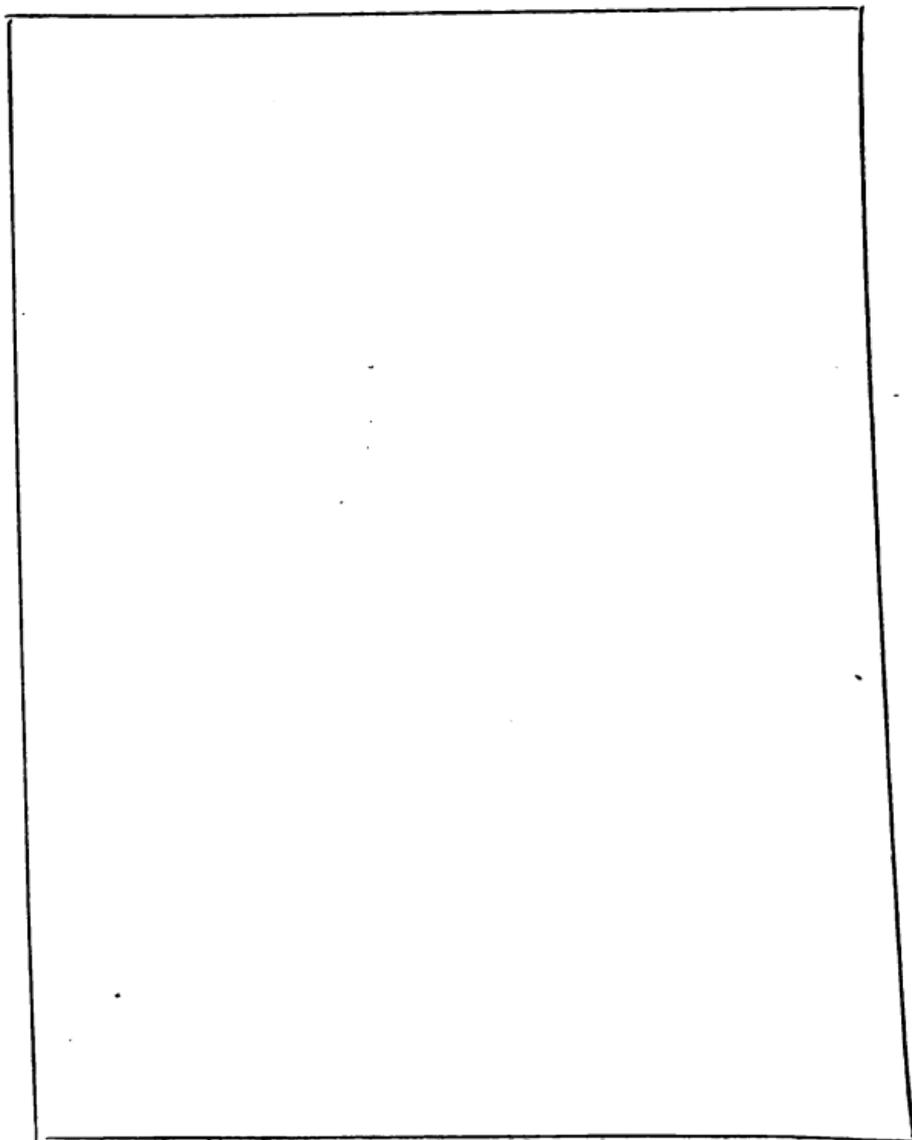
there is nothing that is more distasteful than this obedience. Ah, such is the treachery of these hearts of ours that we would be serving with unwearied zeal, according to *our own thoughts* of what He would like, throwing every energy, every power, into such service, rather than yield Him the unreserved obedience that is for this very reason the *test* of true love. Not that I would depreciate service in its own place, beloved brethren; but true service to Christ is rendered in the path of *obedience*, or else it will want, as Martha's did, that which would make it most sweet and acceptable to Him. As the loving eye of the Lord Jesus rests upon each one of His in the earth, it is not they who seem the busiest and most active and zealous for Him who most meet His approval, for this suits too well oftentimes the restlessness and pride of nature; but the quiet, unobtrusive walk of one, little noticed, it may be by men, but governed in every detail of it by the commandments of Christ: “he it is that loveth me.” And love for Him, thus manifesting itself, becomes, as it were, a fresh bond between us and the Father, for Jesus is the object of the Father's love; and thus we are found to have an object of love in common with the Father. We know what bonds are formed between hearts by some common object of love: “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him.” It is not that there is any difference in the love wherewith all of us are loved: for, as to the Father's love, we are each accepted “*in the Beloved*,” and the world shall know in another day that “thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me” (ch. xvii. 23); and if we would know the only measure of the love of Jesus for *any* of us, He gives it us in ch. xv. 9, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” But the *obedient one* only can *enjoy* this love, which yet knows no change. The disobedient child misses all the caressings of love; albeit he is not loved the less. But more, “I will *manifest* myself unto him.” Does the Lord call us by His obedience to a path that few have courage

for—there, it may be, to walk alone? Not alone, beloved, for HE is with us in it; and will any heart that knows the Lord dare to say that it will be lonely then? To yield up my own will at His command may bring upon me the frown of all; but if I know the smile and approval of Jesus, is it not enough? Are we listening for the voice of the Lord to take us, according to His promise to us in verse 3, to be where He is, and is His presence to us the deepest joy of heaven? What shall we say of these manifestations of Himself to any who will but obey Him? It is heaven's deepest joy in character brought down to my heart below!

But would you ask with Judas (not Iscariot) what this private manifestation of Himself to one, and not to another, means,—so foreign as such a thought was to Jewish expectations, that waited upon the public manifestation of the Messiah to all; and how it is to be enjoyed while He is hidden to the eye of sense? Then you must learn the meaning of the Lord's answer (*v* 23), "If a man love me, he will keep *my words*." This is more, beloved, than keeping the commandments of Jesus. Obedience to His expressed commands leads me into a place of ever-deepening intimacy with Himself. To this place of deeper intimacy belong His "words." I do not *command* my intimate friend; my mind is expressed in my words, and he knows my mind, and acts accordingly, by the very intimacy and fellowship he enjoys. A little word has ten thousand times greater weight with him than my command has upon one at a distance. The servant gets his commands and obeys them, but "he knoweth not what his lord doeth;" my friend walks with me in intelligence of my deepest thoughts. Oh, beloved, are we walking in this intimacy with Him who has not called us "servants," but "friends;" and, hanging upon the precious words of His lips, are we getting into deeper intelligence of His mind? How often, when at a distance, we find our excuse for doing our own will, in that we have no express *command* from the Lord Jesus! Oh, that every

little word of His may have its irresistible sway over us! This, again, is the expression of truest love, and what an answer it receives! Is it joy to us to think of being received to the Lord Jesus just now in the mansions of the Father's house? But the promise in verse 23 brings the Father and the Son down to make their mansions (for the word is the same) in the path with any who only thus love the Lord.

Beloved, I can say no more. What more could be given to encourage and sustain the heart in faithfulness to our absent Lord? Has God resources beyond what are here revealed for our joy? Oh to be filled with the Spirit, that we may comprehend the full blessedness of our portion, and have capacity to enjoy it! Well, well may He say (*v* 18), “I will not leave you comfortless,” when He only goes away, to reveal Himself from His place in the Father's presence, in oneness with the Father, in the full brightness and joy for our hearts of *all that He is*, even while we tread the path of this dark world. “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;” and so faith enjoys His presence still, and knows Him in the Father as it never could have known Him while He was in the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us: and all that is wanting to the full consummation of our joy is to see Him face to face, and be like Him, and with Him for ever.



# “THE MEN WHICH THOU GAVEST ME.”

JOHN XVII.

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BEFORE calling your attention, beloved brethren, to a few things in this unparalleled Scripture, I desire to cast a glance over what has preceded it, as to the general character of the instruction from chap. xiii.

The scenes of the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters are laid still in the house where the Lord supped with His disciples, in the beginning of chap. xiii. At the end of chap. xiv. He says—“Arise let us go hence;” and the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters were spoken while the Lord was in the public way to Gethsemane; for we find that they had not yet crossed the brook Cedron, at the beginning of chap. xviii. Now, these circumstances leave their impress upon the instruction; for in chaps. xiii and xiv. we are occupied with the home scenes of the Father’s House, and the intimacies of Divine fellowship into which we are brought by the power of the Holy Ghost, now that Jesus is gone away; while we are also given most blessedly His service from the place where He is, by the ministry of the Word, to maintain us in this heavenly communion—judging all that would tend to hinder it, for His joy and ours.

Then, and not till then, does He lead us out into the public scenes of our place in the world for fruit-bearing, discipleship, service, and testimony, as in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters. Our hearts must first be at

perfect rest in the grace that has set us in the presence of God, and in heavenly fellowship with the Father and Son, before we are called into, or have any power for these solemn responsibilities of our path in the earth. This is ever God's order, and we shall find it most fully sustained in the chapter before us—the last of this wonderful series.

Much has come out in these chapters of love that passeth knowledge—enough, we may well say, to assure us of an ever-present interest in it—but there is much in the heart of the Lord Jesus that has not found expression as yet. No human words can convey to that little circle round Him what they are to Him. One heart only can fully enter into it. It is the Father's. To Him He lifts His eyes (ver. 1), and pours into His ear what had long pressed for utterance, but found no possibility of it *for us*. But we, beloved, are admitted to draw near and have intelligence of what passes in the intimacy of communion between the Son and the Father, and to find ourselves the subjects of it all! It is not God addressing His children, as often in Scripture, nor the revelation before our eyes of God in Christ, as we have had it generally in the Gospels; but it is the Son speaking to the Father—free at last to express all that is in His heart, but in our hearing, so that we may know, as far as we *can* know, what is deepest there? Do our hearts rise to the sense of such amazing privilege?

"The hour is come." What hour is that, that must be singled out of eternity as *the hour* of the existence of the Son of God, that ever and anon has seemed to cast its dark shadow across His path on earth? Twice in this gospel we have heard that no man could lay hands on Him, "for His hour was not yet come." He, too,

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has spoken of it —“Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say—Father, save me from this hour, but,” as though He *would* not say it, “for this cause came I unto this hour.” But, strangely intermingling with the sorrow we find anticipations of brighter things connected with it—“The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” Ah, beloved, for both sorrow, and joy, and glory, that was indeed “the hour,” the like of which there never has been, nor can be again.

“The hour has come,”—the hour of the cross of Christ ;—and now in this chapter He takes His place as having passed through it, “I have glorified thee on the earth ; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” A man has walked upon earth before God, the object of God’s perfect delight, the only One that ever perfectly answered to His mind, as to what man ought to be ; over whom the heavens have opened for the first time, and the voice of God has declared, “Thou art my beloved Son : in thee I am well pleased.” But more than this, He has been before man, the perfect expression of God, in all His infinite grace—God manifest in the flesh—as God had longed to make Himself known. Still much more was needed, if the glory of God was to be made good in a world of sinners. Sin was there. And the holiness and righteousness of God must be declared as to sin, in the only way they could be, and that was by its judgment.

All, all has been accomplished in that hour. He who knew God’s infinite love, resting on Him even as man, must now bear the infinite judgment of God against the sin of man. But He gave Himself up to it, full well knowing what was before Him. “The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it ?” And now,

"It is finished," drained to its last drop of bitterness. All that God is against sin, has been fully manifested, as no *creature's* measure of suffering, though it be filled to the full for eternity, *could* have made it known. The righteousness of God has had its utmost claim against sin, and the sinner, fully met in the death of Him who knew no sin, but who was made sin for us. In His death the history of the first man's life that could only sin against God, has been closed under God's judgment executed to the full. All that God is for the sinner has found its full expression. And the Son of Man has found His brightest glory in the moment of His deepest humiliation and anguish; as He said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." But what will God do for the One that has thus accomplished it? "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" (John xiii. 31, 32).

There is a Man before us that has established a claim upon God for glory—"glorify thy Son." The first chapter of Ephesians gives us God's answer to that claim; He comes in to raise Him from the dead, and set Him at the highest point of heavenly glory. The glory of God, once grieved away from Israel, and the earth, by man's sin, now makes room for itself to come in and wrap itself around the One that has glorified God in bearing the judgment, and making an end of the first man; and we behold "the second man" "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," set "at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph. 1. 19-21).

Two blessed results flow from all this according to the

Lord's words before us :—First, that to know God now fully revealed is already our portion and privilege ; beyond which, there can be none in eternity, save the enlarged capacity to enjoy Him, and the absence of every hindering influence. So it is in the Epistle to the Romans, which has already reached the climax of its blessedness and joy in chapter v. 11, where we are set to “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and similarly when in Revelation xxi. 1-8—the furthest glance Scripture gives us into eternity—we find the sum of all possible blessing is in “God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” How blessed, beloved, to be drinking already of these springs of joy, inexhaustible—because in God Himself ; nay, to have them formed within us by the Holy Ghost, as a well of living water springing up into everlasting life, that leaves no room for thirst.

But, and as essential to this first result that I have alluded to, and which we find in verse 3, there is, secondly, that which forms the main subject of the rest of the chapter. For, power being given Him over all flesh, He proceeds, for the glory of the Father, to associate us whose existence, according to the first Adam, has been closed in His death, with Himself, the last Adam, in the whole place He has entered into in resurrection, as man with God. He can do this now in Divine righteousness. From verse 6 on, it is opened out to us in all its wonderful detail of blessing, not so fully doctrinally as in the Epistle to the Ephesians ; but in connection with the heart of the Lord Jesus, and the circumstances in which these new and wonderful associations for us have to be made good.

We see that it is already in His heart to have us thus

with Himself, in Psalm xxii. For no sooner is the darkness over, and His voice is heard as from the transpiercing horns of Divine judgment against sin, than we find Him occupied with those whom He can now associate with Himself in the light in resurrection; that is, those for whom He has borne the judgment. And in the midst of the assembly of such, owned as His brethren, He declares the name in which is found all our blessing, and leads us in the songs of praise. Alone, unutterably alone in the awful cry of overwhelming darkness, He has now those with Him, whom He can lead in song of resurrection light and joy. We find all actually realized in John xx.; when, from the mouth of the open and emptied grave, He can say to His "brethren"—"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Still, the Lord anticipating all, as ever in this chapter, and yet at the same time, looking back, I have no doubt, over His path on earth, can say (verse 6), "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." He could say of all His life, "He that hath seen ME hath seen the Father." O how blessed, beloved, to know the Father thus! Every ray of the glory, and the grace of our God, shines out from the face of Him who has loved us and wrought the work, upon the ground of which He has put us into His own relationship with Him; where we can gaze upon Him, and know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our own God and Father.

But now there is a secret of Divine love that must be disclosed in connection with the name He gives us all through this Scripture. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Who could have thought of such a

gift passing between the Father and the Son? It is this Gospel that brings before us so markedly the gifts and giving of Divine love. We have scarce opened it, when we come upon the gift which is the alone adequate expression of the love of God to this perishing world—“God so *loved* the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—the immensity of the love to be only known and measured by the gift! But here it is not the love of God to a world of sinners: it is the Father’s love that has sought expression for itself to His Son, and found it, in the gift to Him, of *those who have received Him from God’s love while they were yet sinners.*

“Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:” it was the very thing the heart of Christ would have had; and we are before Him precious, not so much here for any value in the thing possessed—though we be to Him as the pearl of great price, for which He sold all that He had—but as the sweet expression of His Father’s love. Thus received of the Father, what can He do but give us eternal life, (ver. 2); that in it we may have part in all the blessing, and joy, and glory, of His own place with God, as risen from the dead?

Hence flows the peculiar blessedness of this chapter, not simply in what we are given by it, but in that we get it *with Him*. Who that knows Jesus will not own that it is better than all we have, that we have it with Him? Is He Son with the Father? Then He will have *us* sons, “not ashamed to call us brethren”; and by the revelation of the Father’s name, He gives us our home where He has His—“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.” But we are not at home yet. Nay, the home this gives our hearts in the

Father's presence, only makes us more keenly feel that we are not there; but, in a world that had no place for Him we love, save the grave of His rejection, and which has thus become a wilderness for us. How are we to be maintained in the sense of our place in the Father's home and heart?

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me" (ver. 8). Beloved brethren, the Lord Himself has been in our circumstances. He knows the trial of them full well. He has been, as a Son away from home, in this heartless world, before us. He knows the need and desolateness of it. His joy was full, not because of the circumstances, but in spite of them. What was the power of it? He was sustained by *the words* of His Father, in the unclouded consciousness of His love. He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. And now having given us His own place in that love, He gives us, when He needs them no longer, the words that belong to it. Who does not know how the child away from home, looks for and prizes the home letters, and is sustained by them, realising afresh his unchanged place in the home affections? Just thus it is that the Lord Jesus meets our need. Oh, wondrous grace, and further unfolding the completeness of our association with Him! He leaves us the words that made all bright for Him, where all was darkest without them. Thus, and thus only, by feeding on the Father's words, are the children sustained in the children's joy while away from their home. "These things I spake in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (ver. 13). His place in the Father's love is ours; the words that were the means of His abiding enjoyment of it down

here are ours; and thus He provides that His joy may be ours to the full, while we are yet here. Yet there is more!

Would we know our path in the world? The Lord Jesus will mark it out for us. It is His own. Surely it must be so. If His place is ours above, His path must be ours below. *He* could not give us another; that would be to dissociate us from Himself: could *we* consent to it, beloved? Let us see how He does it. “I have given them thy word” (ver. 14). The “word” here is not to be confounded with the “words” of ver. 8. The order of the truth is very blessed, for the “words” (or “sayings” rather), as we have seen, have to do with our place before the Father, and are given us to maintain us in the enjoyment of it, till we are actually there. Not till this our place is perfectly settled, and provision made for our full enjoyment of it, is there a word about our walk here. The heavenly light of that place can now be shed upon the path for us. All is bright up above. Not a cloud between us and our home there, where Jesus has His. With what different feelings we can turn to the scene that was *once* our home! And what rest, to find that our path in it simply flows from our association with Him—confirming instead of causing a question as to it. Have we in times gone by sought to walk so as to attain to be where Jesus is? We never could arrive there, or ever conceive the path that He gives us here. The Christian comes down to walk upon earth, because he has got Christ’s place in heaven. Hence it follows that Christ’s path is his.

“I have given them thy word.” It is the expression of the mind of God, which had formed the path of the

Lord here, and all that He was in it so completely, that He Himself *was* that word. He gives us *Himself*, in fact, as the perfect expression of God's mind, to form our path on earth; insomuch that the world, able to identify us with Him, "hath hated them because they are not of the world, *even as I am* not of the world." Oh, beloved, how such words ought to put us to shame, when we think of how little we have shared the portion of Christ, and trace it to the world's having seen so little of Christ in us! We have forgotten *what we are*. For the Lord speaks not of what we ought to be, but of what He has made us, and therefore of what we unchangeably are. We have walked, alas, too often as men in the flesh, and of the world; seeking to conform ourselves to the course and fashion of it, instead of maintaining in our path, our place of heavenly association with Christ, and therefore of complete separation from it.

This was just what the Lord Jesus dreaded for us; therefore He prays "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." Deep as His desire was to have us out of it with Himself, the time had not come for it, and He would be, as ever, subject to the Father's will—"but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." To fill the place of the Lord Jesus in testimony for God, was now to be our business here. This is marred and ruined in the measure in which place is given to the flesh or world. We are encompassed with the danger. What is to be the delivering power? "Sanctify them through thy truth; *thy word is truth*" (ver. 17). We have seen the word of God as that which perfectly formed Jesus in His path. Hence He is the truth, for it was fully displayed in Him. That is, His presence tested and

judged everything, because it revealed God ; and shed the light of God upon man, the world, and all that was in it. Now He adds, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He sets Himself apart from all that is of the earth, by going to heaven, to give its form and fashion to His people's path here, and to them in it. He is objectively presented by the truth to our hearts where He is ; and "we all beholding the glory of the Lord *are changed* into the same image."

This is the transforming power of the truth, beloved. It is the revelation of *Christ* to us ; of the One who has first set us free to be occupied with Him, by making an end, in the cross, of all that we are by nature, that would otherwise have hindered this. Do we fully apprehend this immensely important principle for our walk ? To be like Christ is the desire of every renewed heart. The law no longer satisfies, for it was only the measure of what God required of man in the flesh. Nothing short of conformity to Christ will satisfy God, for a man in Christ. "He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son." And the Christian could not accept less. But how is it to be produced in our walk ? This is what presses upon many, "I know I am to be like Christ in glory ; oh, that I could be like him in my ways here !" Here again Christianity stands out in marked contrast to the law. The law demanded that man should be as he ought to be, but had no power to deliver him from what he was. But the gospel has announced my deliverance, by setting me in Christ before God, outside all that man is in the flesh, which has received its judgment in the cross. And now if it bids me walk on earth like what I am in Christ, this is

not to turn the eye in upon self again; but, disowning it as judged and gone from God, it fixes my eye on Christ, unfolds before me more and more what He is who is my life, and thus forms me like Him. It is not effort, which would be to assert that I have power to make it, and only lead to wretchedness in the discovery that I had none; but simply occupation with Christ as the object of my heart. Here there is only rest, and peace, and joy; and herein lies the *power* of Christianity, of the truth to assimilate me now in character and ways to Him.

We have only to yield ourselves honestly to the truth, beloved! Fixing Christ in the glory before our eyes, it necessarily judges all that is not Christ, searching and testing us thoroughly. But then He only can fill and satisfy every desire. The truth, by revealing Him, does this, and hence weans us from the things which it judges. Does the world shine bright, decked out by Satan in its best? There is a Man in the glory that shines brighter. His puts out the glory of all else. Is there a cherished interest of the heart that is not Christ? Oh, beloved, what could have a moment's power longer, now that He tells us of Himself again, and seeks to lead us unto a deeper insight of what we are to Him? What could prevail against the power of such love, that only seeks to separate us from what must necessarily hinder our full enjoyment of it? It is, of course, by the power of the Spirit, that Christ is thus revealed to us in the truth. Hence the important place that the Spirit has in this aspect of our sanctification, in which it may most truly be said to be progressive; for, alas, we do not fully bear the image of Christ yet, nor ever shall, till we "see Him as He is." One sight of Him *as He is*, and we are transformed

into His likeness, to bear it for ever. Till then, it is needful to bear in mind, that this practical sanctification is carried on for us, by the Spirit's revelation to us of what we are already in Christ, and of what He is, in whom we are complete.

But association with Christ does not close with the path below, blessed be His name! The rest of the chapter will disclose new and wonderful aspects of it. And now I must recall your minds, beloved, to the first part of it, in which we had the work of Christ before us in its resulting glory for God and for Him; and this laid as the firm basis of all the resulting blessing for us. There were two parts of the glory claimed by Christ, as the Man that had glorified God on earth. The first verse gave us all the fresh glory, that, so to speak, He had earned of the Father. And will He have us sharers of the glory with Him? Yes, indeed, He will! "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (v. 22). The day for the manifestation of it has not come yet. The present is still the time for suffering with Him—"if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." But He has already received the promise of the Father, and united us to Himself in that glory, by the Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Hence it is that if Eph. i. 20-22, gives us the glory of Christ as Man at the right hand of God, and looks on to the day when all things shall be actually put under His feet; we find saints in blessed association with Him in it all, as "the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Then will be prepared the scene for the display of the counsels of God for His

own glory in man. The first man, Adam, with headship given him in the old creation, has fallen and dragged down all in his ruin; but the heavens shall give out the last Adam, who, having made good the glory of God in the fallen scene, is the One in whom all things in heaven and earth shall be securely headed up—"in whom also we have been made heirs." Then will be found associated with Him in the headship and inheritance of all, the saints given Him in the time of His rejection, to be His body, His bride, the heavenly Eve of the last Adam. Then "He shall come to be *glorified in His saints*, and to be *admired in all them* that believe in that day," when we shall be no longer in the path where we have so deeply failed, and, alas, dishonoured Him, but when, in spite of all, we shall be in the displayed glory of Christ.

And oh, beloved, in what have we more deeply failed than in that which is again and again expressed here, as the dear desire of the heart of the Lord for those whom He has been given out of the world—"That they may be one." At every fresh aspect of blessing presented to us, this is given to us to be the practical result. Was it wondrously unfolded to us that we have been set as children before the Father; and provision made for our joy, while we were left for a little in a foreign world, in the consciousness of it? Yet, more precious still, the heart of the Lord Jesus will be occupied about us. "I pray for them." Why should He thus bear the burden of our need in intercession continually? The reason was twofold. "They are thine." We were objects of the Father's interest, and this was ever first in the heart of the Lord Jesus. But had He not His own interest in us? To be sure He

had. And here we must hide our faces in shame, while we adore the grace that, looking at us not as we walk, but as grace has made us, could say, "I am glorified in them." Nor do these interests of the heart of the Father and Son clash in the least. All is in unison there—"All mine are thine, and thine are mine." One in interest, affection, object, all: now He prays, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that *they* may be *one as we*." Oh, beloved, in the measure in which the name of the Father with whom we stand in so blessed relationship, acts upon the heart of each child, it will knit heart to heart together down here, in interest, affection, object, all, in a oneness which finds its only fashion in the oneness of the Father and Son.

But again, have we been given the word that found its perfect expression in Jesus—the truth of all that He is where He is now—that, acting upon our hearts and consciences, it might separate us from all that is not Christ, and which therefore would hinder fellowship with the Father and with the Son? It is, that each walking in this divine fellowship that admits of no thought that is not in accordance with it, may consequently be one with one another on earth—"as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one (not now 'as we,' but further) in us"—a oneness gaining its character from this fellowship. How could two of us be in such divine company, having every thought in common with God, and yet be found in different paths on earth? No, beloved, it could not be. That the saints are divided and scattered on earth is the witness how little we individually have known of fellowship with God. None can absolve

himself from the shame that becomes us, and the place of humiliation before God—our only true one—in such a state of things. For a little moment after the Church was formed, the saints were found walking in this oneness, but oh, how soon it was broken up by self coming in, as recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles!

Yet there is even now, what Satan can never touch, though the Lord could not here speak of it. It was still a mystery hid in God, but near to be revealed. We have already glanced at it in connection with the given glory of Christ. I speak of the fact that all saints, in the present time, have been formed into the body of Christ by the Holy Ghost, spoken of in Eph. iv. 3, as the "Unity of the Spirit." It is blessed for us to bear in mind here, where we have had to speak of, and to humble ourselves about the failure of saints in manifesting *in their walk before the world* that they are one; that they *are one body* indissolubly before God. Hence it is that the Holy Ghost never lets us down from our responsibility as to this, but summons us to use all diligence in maintaining HIS UNITY. If we cannot get the saints together again upon earth as a whole, we can at least, if there are any that will be true to Christ, and to what is so precious to Him, walk apart from all that disowns the unity of the Spirit, endeavouring to keep it in the only spirit compatible with it, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." The danger is that, in looking at what has failed, we should lose faith in that which can never fail, and therefore all sense of responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." But, blessed be God, we can turn sadly, yet with relief,

from the scene of the saints' failure and consequent break-down of testimony in the world, to where there can be no more—to what we have presented to us in verses 22, 23. Here all will be perfect, because removed from the responsibility of saints to the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, shining out the brighter by our very failure.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." If Satan seemed to have succeeded in thwarting the desire of Christ for us, it was only for a little while. All will be made good by Him, when He brings us out from heaven, perfectly one in glory. But the solemn thought is, that it will be too late for the world to *believe* then, that the Father sent Christ. (This might have been, if we had walked in manifested oneness now, verse, 21.) Then it will "*know* that thou hast sent me;" for none can dispute it. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it;" but not to participate in it, as those who believe in Him do now. And yet, beloved brethren, in spite of all, the world shall also know in that blessed day of manifested glory "that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Yes, the Lord Jesus will have the world know our wondrous association with Him, that enters even into that which is deepest—*His place in the Father's love.* We do not wait till then to know it. We know it now, "to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).

Still there is that which goes beyond all this to me, beloved. There is in our association with Christ that which can, and will, be *disloyed*. But there is that

which never can, belonging to the deeper intimacies of the love of Christ. There is what surpasses the glory—nay, all that He gives—it is to be with Himself. Do you desire it? Jesus goes on to demand it! His love cannot be satisfied with less. "Father, I will"—it is the word of One whose will none can dispute—"that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Oh, think of the love that actually cares to have us with Himself! He cannot bear that it should be always as now, that we should be here in the desert world, and He in the Father's house. He has given us His home to be ours above. He has called us to His path below. He will have us share His glory by and by, even as now we have His place in the Father's love. But, as yet, He is not satisfied. Yes, we must be, *with Him where He is*. Oh, beloved, do our hearts respond to this love? Have we felt that He is not here, and that nothing can satisfy us, but to be with Him? Or have we been allowing our hearts to get entangled with the things of this life—its pleasures, or its cares—making, or else seeking, our home in a world where He is not? Let us in presence of such love look well to it, lest we are accepting something short of what is His desire. "With me where I am;" the blessing and joy of one to whom the Lord Jesus is precious, is summed up in this for eternity. *It is heaven* to be where He is. *Yet* there is more—"that they may behold *my glory*, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

We have seen that there were two parts of the glory claimed, in ver. 1, 5, of our chapter. The glory of ver. 1, He has given us: but in ver. 5 He speaks of another character of glory—"Now, O Father, glorify thou me

with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” He claims to enter as man into the glory that He has had eternally as the Son with the Father—His own essential Divine glory. Now it is this glory that He speaks of in ver. 24, and therefore calls it “my glory;” only that He chooses to take it in connection with His Father’s everlasting love—as the expression of that. Here surely association with Him must close. But stay—He will have us where He is, to gaze upon it! It is the only thing in the chapter that He does not give us to partake with Him, because He cannot. He cannot impart to another Divine glory. But, oh beloved! what a fresh surprise of love, to be added to all we have already had, and that goes beyond all. He demands that we shall be with Him, that we may behold with undazzled eye what we can never have part in!

But there is that which even makes it more precious still, in the way in which the Lord Jesus treats the glory, as the expression of the Father’s delight in Him from eternity. If you have one you love, you want that every one should know his value, that they may appreciate him. In a cold, heartless world, we can find but a few to care about Him, whom having not seen we love. Men see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. Even our own hearts are so little able to enter into the excellency of His glory. We can tell that “He is the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely!” But words fail: we are conscious at least that He surpasses all our thoughts of Him. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” Yes; But He knows our longing desire. He will bring us in, to be satisfied at last, as we gaze upon the glory which is His

Father's expression of infinite delight in Him. Could anything be more exquisitely grateful to hearts that really love Him? Jesus knows it; His love has it all in store for us, the objects of it!

Oh, beloved! what can be added to this wonderful companionship with Christ, in all that is His? Only a few more words to confirm all, and apply it practically, if we have hearts to take the impress of them. Associating us with Himself in the knowledge of the Father by the declaration of His name, in a world that has not known Him, He does it as the Son in the bosom of the Father. Therefore, His revelation of that name is according to the love in which He dwells, which He alone can know, and of which He is the object; that we now, dwelling in it, may be formed by it in all our thoughts and ways towards one another. "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them" (ver. 26). It is, in fact, the manifestation of Christ Himself—that is, of the life and nature of God, in us. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John iv. 12). Nothing short of *Christ in us*, before the world, could be the practical living out of the wondrous place we have been given in and with Christ before God; till at last the grace that has given and maintained us in this place, in spite of all our failures, shall issue in the glory that is the consequence of it. Oh! beloved brethren, have we apprehended anything of this precious revelation of the heart of Christ? The Lord grant that it may lay hold of our hearts in the transforming power that belongs to it; that He may, indeed, be glorified in us.

**“HE IS NOT HERE.”**



## “HE IS NOT HERE.”

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THERE are three things that seem to me chiefly to give character to the Christian's path on earth, and to form him in it:—The Lord Jesus is not here; the Holy Ghost is here; and, lastly, the Lord Jesus is coming again.

Now before ever the presence or absence of anyone can be anything to me, I must first have learned to know them; and if I have learned to know one, that has drawn out my heart to himself, and become everything to me, his presence or absence is of the greatest possible moment to me, and gives its whole complexion to my life. Now I ask my own heart, and yours, beloved, How far has the Lord Jesus so become known to us, that His absence tells upon us, and affects the whole scene of our path through the world? Have we learned to know Him well enough to miss Him? It is a solemn question, involving so much for the heart of Christ in us; and I feel must deeply humble each one of us before Him. At times, perhaps, some of us may have known what it is to feel His absence as that of the One we love; but, oh, how quickly He is forgotten again, and the blank scarcely felt at all. Is this,

beloved, as it should be? Why is it thus with any who know Him? But I fear the truth is, that few of us have the person of the Lord Jesus Himself sufficiently before our hearts. I am not now raising the question as to whether we know His work—or rather the benefits resulting to us from it. You know your sins are forgiven. You know that your peace is made. But do you know the *One* that has accomplished all for you? Has His love—displayed in what He has done for you—led you to such a knowledge of Himself, as has made Him everything to you? "Unto you therefore which believe he is the preciousness" (1 Pet. ii. 7).

It may well humble us, in reading the Gospels, to find how hearts there were attracted to Christ for what they found in Him, when they could have known so little of Him or of His work, compared with what we might know.

Look at the two disciples in John i. John the Baptist's eye marked Jesus as he walked—he is filled with the sight, and speaks as though involuntarily, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The Spirit of God bears home to the hearts of two of his disciples these precious words. It bursts in upon them what Christ was, and at once detaches them from all else, even from their religious teacher (often the hardest link to break), by attaching them to Him. "And they followed Jesus!"

But the Son of Man had not where to lay His head in the world that was all His own. It had

rejected him ; will it make any difference to them ? “ They abode with him that day,” casting in their lot with the One who had now become their all. Precious unison with the heart of God that found all its delight in that lowly One ! Well does the Holy Ghost take care to record the very hour of the day on which, in the midst of the heartless rejection of the world, two hearts found that in Jesus which attracted them away from every other object.

Look again at Mary at the sepulchre in John xx. “ The disciples went away again to their own home,” but Mary had no home for her heart where Jesus was not. “ She stood without at the sepulchre weeping.” She wept because she could not find the dead body of her Lord. Your intelligence might readily rebuke her tears ; but there is something more precious to Christ than intelligence, and that is a heart that loves Him. The tears told Him of one that loved Him on earth, and missed Him, now that He was dead, or that she knew not where to find Him. All her affections were about the spot where they had laid Him. Bright, heavenly visions are seen ; angels are at the tomb ; but what are they to one who has known *Christ* ? They can but say, “ Woman, why weepest thou ? ” Beloved, what place has our risen Lord—revealed to us now from the glory where He is, with its light shed back on all that He has done—in our hearts ? He is gone from the earth, where we are still. Do we miss Him ? Not that I would undervalue intelligence. Only

intelligence of Christ risen could have dried Mary's tears. But do our hearts and consciences keep pace with our intelligence?

Yet there is a necessary condition of being able to love Christ, and, therefore, miss Him here; and that connected with intelligence of what He has done for us. It is that we should be free to be occupied with Him. Now, this would be impossible if there was still a question as to our interests for eternity to be settled with God. But even when Christ is known as the One that has borne our sins and put them away, is there still a deeper need, in order that the heart should be set fully free for Christ; namely, that we should know how God has dealt with the nature of sin within us. Christ not only "loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" but God "hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin," so that He has there executed judgment on *all that I am*, as well as upon all that I have done. He has judged *me*, condemned and crucified *me*. Thus in the cross of Christ a full end has been made before God for the believer of "sin in the flesh." He can say, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20). Until he sees this there will be inevitably the attempt to improve and make something of the flesh; but this is impossible; and the result is wretchedness in proportion to the sincerity of the effort. "Oh, wretched man that I am," may then lead on, through the Lord's mercy to the cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But until I see that the first man is gone from before God in the judgment of the cross, and that I am now in the second Man—Christ risen out from that judgment—the flesh still in me, but I no longer in the flesh—self is still the object, and not Christ.

So blessed and perfect is the way that God delivers us from all that would otherwise come in between us and Christ, that the affections may be free to go out after Him. All *my need* being more than met by Christ, I may now be occupied in learning of the One that has met it. He has loved and given Himself for us, and now counts upon our hearts for Himself.

Hear Him in John xiv., “Yet a *little* while I am with you . . . . . Let not your hearts be troubled.” Oh, beloved, has His absence ever caused us a tear? It is in the measure we have known the sorrow of His absence that we can enter into the provisions He has made for our comfort while He is away—opening the Father’s house to us, with the promise of His coming, and of the Holy Ghost being given to throw us into that wondrous circle of divine intimacy, that we may know Him as we never could have known Him on earth.

And this is just the significance He gives His Supper in 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. Listen to the voice that, speaking to Paul from the glory, tells us what we are to Him even there, “This do in remembrance of me.” He cannot bear to be forgotten by those He loves on earth to the end. Worthless

hearts! we may say truly. Yes; but Jesus cares for them; He has died to make them His, and counts on our remembrance of Him—giving us only that that may be the sweet expression of it. If the Supper of the Lord means anything, then, as we partake of it, it means this—that we love Him, and miss Him in the world that has cast Him out. He invests it with just this character Himself: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come."

It is the weeds of the Church's mourning in a scene that has been desolated for her by the death of Christ, and in which she finds no rest for her heart, only lingering round the spot where His cross and grave expresses the heart of this world towards Him. We know Him by faith in the glory, and have rest in communion with Him there: but this only makes the earth's rejection of Him more keenly felt, and the cross, that by which the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world, as we turn to our path through it. "Away with him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!" rings in our ears. It is the judgment of the world; and the links that connected us with it are broken. The cross, the death of Christ, henceforth characterises the one that loves Him. We call in our hearts from the blighted scene, and get away in spirit as far as possible from it; only seeking more complete identification with Him in His rejection, as the best and brightest portion He could give us in such a world.

It is not the attainment of an advanced Christian, but what Christ looks for from every heart that knows Him.

Well—He is gone; and the opened heavens show Him to us, to whom the earth refused a place, raised as Man to the highest point of heavenly glory. And this is the consequence of having glorified God on earth as to every question of sin, so that He is able to give us a place with Himself there. But for a little while, we tread the scene of *His rejection*; yet not to be left comfortless in the desolation of it.

This brings us to the second thing that forms the Christian's path. *God the Holy Ghost is here.* And if we have challenged our hearts as to the effect of the *absence of Christ* upon them, it becomes us now solemnly to ask, What sense have we of the presence of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter? I am not now speaking of the *work* of the Holy Ghost in quickening souls, but of the presence of a Divine Person here, of whom Jesus said, "The world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and *shall be in you*" (John xiv. 17). This is consequent upon the glory of the Son of Man at the right hand of God; for before His ascension it could only be said—"The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 35); and the Holy Ghost's presence in the world ever since has been the Witness of that glory.

What an important bearing this truth must have

upon our path, beloved. The Lord has even said, "It is *expedient* for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John xvi. 7). But, oh, how sad it is to find that for the most part Christians scarcely know whether there be any Holy Ghost, as for any practical recognition of His being here. Thousands of sincere people pray for Him to come, as though the Lord had forgotten His promise these eighteen hundred years; or else, that He be not taken from them, as if He had been unfaithful to it, now that He has sent Him—for He said, "He shall abide with you for ever."

How far, beloved, has the presence of God the Holy Ghost, dwelling in us, become a reality to our souls? How immense the consequences that flow from such a truth! Let us think of some of them. The Spirit of adoption sent into our hearts—by Him we cry Abba, Father. Come from the glory yet to be revealed to us—joint-heirs of it with Christ—He brings the power of it as a present reality into our hearts, making the desert more real as we pass on to it. He links Himself up with our present suffering. Do we groan within ourselves, in sympathy with a suffering creation? It is the voice of the Spirit making intercession for us according to God. By Him we know Christ, where He is, and are united to Him—making the scene of the glory the home of our hearts, if His cross has desolated the earth for us. What "eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man" God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit. The seal for God, He is the earnest in our hearts of all that is yet before us in actual possession. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. He is the power of the life we have from God, rising up to its source and level in Him in communion, forming thus within us the "well of water, springing up to everlasting life," of which, as we drink, we never thirst again: the power, too, of the overflow of the joy that goes up to the Father in the worship He seeks; while out of the fulness of it, "flow rivers of living water" to the desert scene around us.

Oh, beloved, is it true that the Holy Ghost has come down, and dwells within us? He brought us the sweet tidings of the One that is gone, that have won our hearts for Him. He now takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, that He may satisfy us with Him. He has not come to supplant Christ in our hearts, to present another object to them, but to absorb them with *the One* we have.

Could you tarry "ten days" in the scene from which he calls you away to such an One? Had we even the decision of Rebekah for Isaac, not a moment longer could we consent to a tie holding its power to connect us with a place where He is not. We will go to the One whom, having not seen, we love; albeit the desert lies between. But the Holy Ghost will keep us sweet company by the way, be it short or long—never

ceasing, if we only let Him, to occupy us with Christ.

Thus it is that the Lord has shut us up to the Holy Ghost for comfort. How far is it practically so with us, that all comfort in Jesus' absence flows from His presence with us? How sad when we think how often we grieve Him, and thus hinder the enjoyment of this rich provision of the Lord's love. Too often the positive testimony of Christ to our souls, is hindered by our allowance of the flesh; and the Holy Ghost has to turn to negative this, and thus days and weeks are lost, never to be recalled. Oh, beloved! let us keep watch that our eye may be fixed on Christ, that our ear be only open to His voice, that the inward movements of the heart be formed by His word, lest we lightly grieve the blessed Spirit that dwells within us, and so hinder the whole power of our present blessing.

Then, again, if we pass from individual blessing, flowing from the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in us, there is "The house of God;" "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians ii. 22). Committed to man to build (1 Corinthians iii.), he has terribly failed in it, and admitted all kinds of corruption; but God, in long-suffering, lingers in it still by His Spirit on earth, although a man must purge himself from all that is unsuited to His presence to enjoy it. But, looking deeper with God, in the midst

of the outward profession, there is that which is still more precious and which is out of man's reach to mar: there is the body of Christ constituted by the Holy Ghost. “For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians xii. 13). Such is the bond that unites all saints upon earth with their Head in heaven and one with another, in spite of all that by which Satan has for a little time apparently divided them. But is it only given us to know this for privilege and joy? Surely, beloved, such a truth has its practical responsibilities, and to these we are summoned in Ephesians iv. 1—3. How far have we owned them, and thrown all we have, and are by His grace, into “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”?

Few may be found with heart and courage for such a path, apart from all that disowns it, in the varied unities of man; but the Lord Himself will be there, with the two or three that are gathered together in His name. What more could we need for joy, to the full, till we see Him face to face? Nor has He left us without the ministry needed by us till then. Tongues and miracles, manifestations of the Spirit's presence to them that believe not, may be gone; but all that is most precious and requisite for the saints remains, for the Holy Ghost is still here, “dividing to every man severally as he will.”

Again I ask, do we own Him in all this, or are we

still consenting to what man has substituted in room of the Holy Ghost?

But I pass on from a subject of so wide a bearing and range on our walk as Christians, to speak of that which is given us to fix our hearts in hope and expectation—the coming of our Lord Jesus. It is linked with all that we have seen as to the effect upon us of His absence, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. In the measure in which we miss Him we shall long for Him to come again: and the Holy Ghost revealing Him to us from where He is, only makes Him more necessary to us, and therefore more missed in the place of His rejection. Besides, He dwells in us to bring us into the consciousness of present relationship with Him as His body, His bride, and to form our affections according to it. Has Christ loved her, and given Himself for her? Is she the all-absorbing interest of His heart, even though He must be away? Has He put off the kingdom, and possession of all things in heaven and earth, that He may possess her heart—now calling her into His own path of rejection, but by and by to share His throne, and crown, and kingdom? Does the Holy Ghost dwell in our hearts to be the power of our consciousness that we are all this, and more than words can tell to Him? And is His absence nothing to us? Is His long tarrying nothing to us? Oh, beloved, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." If He waits, He prays that our hearts may be directed into *His patience*.

But He closes the book of God with the promise—the last words that were meant to ring in our ears, have such sweetness to us, and sustain us while we wait for Him—“Surely I come quickly.” It was not for us to say “quickly,” though we desired it; but He knew the longing and said, “quickly.” Oh, has He had the deep, loving response from us that He puts upon our lips—“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

Do we miss Him on the earth? He counts on it. Listen—“I will come again and receive you unto *myself*, that *where I am* there ye may be also.” He misses us in the heavens! But it shall not be always so—“Father, I will,” and it is the word of One whose will none dare gainsay—“that those also whom thou hast given me be *with me* where I am.” Ah! it was not in mercy only that He saved us, it was in love, that must have us now *for Himself*, and *with Him* for ever! He *cares* to have us with Himself! Who could have conceived such a thing—after all our faithlessness and treachery of heart, and constant backsliding and denial of Him! Oh, if we only *believed* His love, and the place He has given us in it, there must be a response in us: and this is the spring and power of the hope of His coming.

See, too, how blessedly it takes us out of the earth and its objects, interests, and hopes—keeps us, as waiting, loose to all that, out of which the One for whom we wait comes to take us.

The object of our hope has an immensely formative power over us, even if it be in earthly things. How important, then, that He should be ever brightly before our eyes, as the only hope we have. Then shall we not only hold the doctrine of His coming, but be "*like* unto men that wait for their Lord."

Nor will it be to fold our hands in sloth and indolence; but, as really waiting for Him, we shall be alive to all His interests here, finding it our solace in His absence, that we have something to be doing for Him—something in which we can express our love. And it will not be *anything* we take into our heads to do, but we shall be seeking out *the thing* that suits His heart, to spend, and to be spent in it.

How precious to the Lord to find one thus employed on earth. He looks from the glory for such as love Him, and comes and manifests Himself to them. Do we not hear Him say, "This do in remembrance of me;" and again, "Ye show forth the Lord's death till He come." Is it not as though He said, "Do they miss me?" "Do they long for me to come again?" Oh, beloved, what answer do our hearts give to the challenges of His love?



THE  
PATH OF THE TRUE SERVANT.

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John xii. 23—26.

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“THE hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he *that hateth his life in this world*, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”

These words of the Lord Jesus give us the character of the path to which He calls His servants in these last days. They also give us the power needed for it. We find all in, “If any man serve ME, let him follow ME.” This marks out the path, and supplies the power by which alone any of us can take it. The path is His own path. The power to make it ours, lies in the hold that twice repeated “ME” has gained in our hearts. It will be seen, too, that the path is the given test of—not the service merely—but the servant. Surely they are words that may well arrest us in this day of general activity! When the day of solemn scrutiny of all comes, it will not be a question

of the quantity, but the *kind* of that which has passed for service. What, then, will be the standard by which it will be tried? "If any man serve ME." It is that only of which *Christ* has been the spring, and the object, that will abide. Shall we wait till then to bring our hearts to the touch-stone of Christ? Does *He* not apply it now—"If any man serve me, *let him follow me.*" How solemn! It tests not only my work but me. I must know where His path is, and take it as mine, before I can truly serve Him. How many of us have begun at the wrong end, anxious about how to work for Christ, rather than how, first, to walk with him! In result, we have been cumbered about much serving, with Martha, rather than choosing to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear His word, and there learn *how* to serve Him as Mary did, and win His approval too.

It is only as Christ Himself is before the heart that everything else falls into its proper place. But this supposes the knowledge of what *He is*. I say not of what He has done for us, though this is needed and blessed too, but of what He is as the object of our hearts. We hear of one in the gospels who knew not, as yet, the full extent of His grace as we may know it, but whose heart—attracted by the display of it in all His ways with poor sinners like herself—had opened to Him as the One who now possessed it. "She loved much," and this before she had heard Jesus say, "Thy sins are forgiven: thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." If we have begun at all the fulness of the grace revealed to us in "the glad tidings of the glory of Christ," where every need of heart and conscience before God is met, shall we stop short here? Oh, what hearts we have, that could find it in them to rest in the blessing, and go out so feebly to Him in whom it is ours! Does not her love put us to shame? Nor was He revealed to her as He is to us. His glory was yet veiled in the grace of His humiliation. But now He is fully revealed from the glory in which He is, by the Holy Ghost, come to engage our

hearts with Him, according to all the Father's delight in Him, expressed in that glory. What answer is there in us to all the displayed grace and glory of God in Him. Would we see Jesus? The hour has come; the Son of man has been glorified; the corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died; He abides no longer alone. But, as the fruit of His death, we have been quickened together with Him, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him. He has been able to unite us to Himself in the glory where we know Him. Is it too much that He should count upon all the deeper place in hearts made so wondrously His? Have we yielded, then, to Him? Then only have we got the power to enable us to take the path He gives us, or even fully to apprehend what its character is.

For what is the path as these words of the Lord open it out to us—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die;" again, "he that loveth *his life* shall lose it; he that *hateth his life in this world*," and, "if any man serve me *let him follow me*?" Oh! beloved brethren, are we prepared for a path like this? Have we apprehended what the Lord calls us to, if we would really serve him? There is the path of "life in this world." The Lord Himself has been found in it, and has set us the pattern of it—walking as man before God, perfect in obedience and dependence, but absolutely alone. There was no one to estimate such a path. The darkness comprehended it not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world knew him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Perfect goodness was for the first time found in a man—the object of God's delight. Divine love and light—all that God is, were shining out in fulness in Him before man—God manifest in the flesh. But no answer from the heart of man, only senselessly indifferent or else active in hatred. "They hated me without a cause." The world would not have Him.

The rejection of Christ thus early stamps the gospel of John : and this it is that gives its character to the path He was now entering, and calling us to follow Him in. He goes to lay down His life in the scene in which He has been rejected, to take it up in the sphere where all things are of God. He surrenders all that was so fully his right as man upon earth, to accomplish, indeed, by His death, the everlasting glory of God; yet He does not develop the effects of it here, but gives to us the same path of death—"If any man serve me, let him follow me."

Let us look at the Gospel of Mark, if we would learn further as to the path and its application to us. Here the Lord Jesus is presented to us as Servant—in the patient, unwearying service of divine love, from one scene of human need to another, till in chap. viii. He pauses to let the result come out as to man (v. 27). "Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say Elias, and others *one* of the prophets." There is the current idle hearsay of the world; but no one cares to enquire seriously who He is! Such is the heart of man! He turns away from the general indifference to the little company of His disciples—"But whom say *ye* that I am? And Peter answered, Thou art the Christ." Blessed, divinely given knowledge, though not so fully brought out here as in Matthew! But it was too late to make Him known now as such in the nation that had rejected Him. He turns from all that belonged to Him as the living Messiah on earth. It was no longer now the bright prospect of the kingdom. He was about to be "cut off and have nothing." (Dan. ix. 26, *marg.*) "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly." It is the turning point of the Gospel of Mark. How immense the change involved or the disciples! What a blighting of their long

cherished hopes connected with the kingdom, that seemed so near to be realized! But how quickly nature rises up to resent a change that involved in it nature's death! "Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him," attempting to deter the Lord Jesus from such a path. It was Satan's work. "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men," was the only answer of the Lord. Solemn words for Peter, and for us too, lest we be blinded by "the things that be of men," that we see not the path of the Lord and its practical consequences for us! "And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me let him *deny himself*, and *take up his cross*, and *follow me*. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall *lose his life* for my sake and the Gospel's, shall save it."

Such was to be henceforth the path in the scene of the Lord's rejection, where He got the cross instead of the crown of the kingdom. Oh, beloved, let us put it to ourselves whether we are a bit more prepared for such a path than they were! True, we were never given the earth as they were; but have we not *taken* it, and allowed the things of the earth to entangle and tie down our hearts, if not the grosser things of the flesh? For it is not this last that is in question here. Alas! how *we* have walked in the flesh! But the Lord Jesus had none *such* to walk in or to die to. He speaks in view of the things of "life in this world," "the things in the earth," that had once their place for man in Eden—was still and definitely the sphere of blessing, if there had been any under the law—and will be found fully in place as such, and according to God, when the kingdom is established in power. Out of all this the Lord was passing now by His death, and summoning us into His path, as we shall see more fully further on. The cross would indeed lead to the glory of the kingdom in another day, and for a moment the bright vista of it opens before

the disciples' eyes on the Mount of Transfiguration, not without witness, too, of a brighter heavenly glory in which man was yet to find a place. Still, it was but a passing gleam, and the Lord turns to the reality of His death, now fast approaching, as necessary to the accomplishment of both one and the other. It is constantly before Him through the rest of chap. ix. The disciples shrink from further insight into it (v. 32.) But in chapter x. the Lord formally commits to them the path. It was the only possible one for any who had been drawn to Him as the central attractive object of their heart in the world that had rejected Him. Just so far as He has become this to us, beloved brethren, shall we delight to follow Him; and all the more readily, as we can follow Him in heart up into the heavenly glory, and know our place with Him there, as they could not yet.

The elements of the path are all out in v. 21, in the words with which the Lord convicts the conscience of the young man who thought he had observed the law perfectly. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Such was the path that was now so thoroughly to test man's heart. "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." The things of the earth bound him, and prevailed with him to turn away from the path of Christ. It was not anything that was morally bad. It is said "the Lord loved him," discerning, in a naturally fine character, traces of God's handiwork that yet remained amid the ruin of sin. It was not sin to have "great possessions" But these are now manifested to be the things that hold the heart back from the path of Christ in His rejection. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! The disciples were astonished at His words." Riches had been a mark of God's favour; it was the *Cross* of Christ that

altered everything. "They were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?" This brings out the absolute impossibility of *nature* entering such a path. The power of God was needed for it. This is connected with the resurrection of Christ, and He does not, therefore, say more about it here; save that "with God all things are possible."

Then, in the next place, it is not man in the flesh merely, with nature's gain accounted of more worth than Christ, but those who think that they have given up all to follow Him, that are to be tested. For the Lord will have reality; as surely as we profess attachment to Him, the time will come when we shall be put to the proof. "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's"—that was the kind of path, and he who stood the test of giving up the most cherished things of this life for Christ, should have his reward—"an hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life." But—solemn warning for us as well as for them—many that are first in the energy of nature shall be last; and the last, seemingly slower, distrustful of themselves, as having no confidence in the flesh, would be in the end first. And so it was to prove with Peter and the rest. How little they knew themselves! "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed they were *afraid*." They knew what such a destination foreboded. And the Lord would have them in no uncertainty about it. In patient, perfect obedience, He was going down to shame, reproach, and death (v. 32—34).

But the hearts of even true disciples are bent on other things. "James and John come unto Him saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we

shall desire." Oh, what unabashed self-seeking, in presence of His absolute surrender of self to do His Father's will! How terrible the cropping up of flesh in such a scene! And what was their desire? To be nearest to Christ in His kingdom (v. 37). This was what suited man—not the Cross, but the ease and peace and prosperity of the kingdom. Yet the Cross was the necessary path to it. "Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." It was this He could give: His own portion of rejection and suffering, involving death in this world. "But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give, but to them for whom it is prepared." It was not the time for the rest of the kingdom, or for making good the counsels of God as to a place in it. How many of us can esteem this last, as we look on to a place there, by the grace of God? But oh! how do we esteem the present path that belongs to it? What answers to the heavenly glory and Christ known there, is the Cross and rejection on earth, in the willing surrender of all here for His sake! Time enough for the kingdom, when Christ gets it, for one who loves Him. It is the time now for passing out of everything that once held our hearts in this world, by the power of what we have got in Christ at the right hand of God.

All this testing of man at his best, and of the disciples who loved Him, by the only path that there was henceforth for one that would be fully His in such a world, and their proved failure, brings us to the question of the power needed for it. We have seen what power there is in a heart having Christ Himself simply as its object. But, if I am to go down with Christ into death, as to all that forms the life of man in this world, there must be something

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more. I must be in full, conscious possession of another life. It is only in the power of a life outside it all, that I can accept death to it. Hence the importance of the principle upon which the Lord makes all turn in this chapter—"with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." A warm, loving heart like Peter's will not suffice. Nature's energy, that will carry a man through anything in the world, cannot enable him to take one step out of it. Hence the corn of wheat must die. The disciples must learn as well as the Jews (John xiii. 33), "Whither I go ye cannot come," even though the Lord can say to Peter (v. 36), "Thou shalt follow me afterwards." But if, apprehending the path in theory, Peter will try it now—"I will lay down my life for thy sake"—it is only to expose himself in the attempt, and prove the need of a power outside himself, and that works in human weakness, not in confidence, if the path is ever to be his. It is the fruit of Christ's death, and finds its first full, triumphant, display in His resurrection. It is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the might of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies." It has been further proved, in the wondrous grace of God that has put us, once dead in trespasses and sins, in full association with Him there: for He has quickened us together with Christ, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We have eternal life in the Son of God; and, not only that, but we have the Holy Ghost as the actual uniting bond between us and Christ, gone up into the heavenly glory; and then we have the whole power displayed in raising Him as man into it, and setting us in Him, now to us-ward, to sustain us in the path on earth that belongs to such a place with Him in heaven.

Here I pause, that we may put it to ourselves how far

we have apprehended the practical bearing of these blessed truths in our souls. Have we seen the death of Christ as not only for our sins, but as our own judgment under the hand of God, that has made an end of sins and self? This is essential to full settled peace before God, as we have it brought out in the Epistle to the Romans. It is God's salvation beautifully shadowed forth in the passage of Israel through the Red Sea (Exod. xiv). Through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been thus brought to God, a happy and delivered people. But there is more. The Epistle to the Colossians looks back, indeed, at our death with Christ, but carries us on a step further—to association with a risen Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ." In Romans we had a life at the other side of death, against which no charge of sin could come, the life of Christ risen. Here this is carried on to its necessary consequence, we are risen with Him; in Ephesians we find the full result, in being seated in Him in the heavenlies. But what is at once the practical consequence of being risen with Christ (Col. iii. 1)? "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, *not on things on the earth*, for ye are dead." In Romans I reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but in Colossians I am treated, and to treat myself, as dead to "things on the earth." My power to do this lies in that I am not only able to follow Christ up in heart and mind as my object to the right hand of God, but I know him as my life, and am myself risen with Him. Heaven is to me the new scene of my life, relationships, interests, occupations, joys, and hopes—all centring in Christ, who is there. I am dead to the scene that gave me once my home, my object, my all. I have been translated in heart into a better and brighter one. It is not now a passing gleam of heavenly glory to light up the eye of the disciples (too heavy with sleep to enjoy it), ere the Lord led them down into the pathway of death. But Christ,

*my life*, has gone up into the glory, and has shed down the full light of it upon me. I know *Him* there, and He has given me my place there. What can hold the heart any longer in the earth to prevent my walking through it thoroughly with Christ, till He comes to take me actually there? It is Jordan now in type, and not merely the Red Sea. I go down practically into death with Him, in the power of the life He has given me in Himself, when by His own death first He had made it but the path to the heavenly glory. "And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." (Josh. iii. 3—4). It is the way we must pass now: "If any man serve me, let him follow me." If I have my members still here, I must put them to death (Col. iii. 5), like Israel at Gilgal—able to use the knife of circumcision at the other side of Jordan, as they were not in the wilderness. If I have relationships still on earth, as undoubtedly I have, see the new heavenly light shed upon all in the exhortations that follow! But I pass on from this—not my subject now—though so important in its own place, to see one fully apprehending and walking in the path, as in the Epistle to the Philippians.

We have seen, that the first essential thing in taking such a path, is the rising up of *Christ* before the heart as its fixed object. This impels us into it, and nothing but the bright, fresh, sense of what He is, kept up in the heart, will maintain us in it. Then, besides this, there is the life we have in Him, needed to our fully accepting death to all outside that life. We see both combined, and in their full practical working in that blessed servant of the Lord, the Apostle Paul, as the Holy Ghost presents him to us in

Phil. iii. It is not now the doctrinal unfolding of the path as we have had it elsewhere, but one who has apprehended, it and the power needed for it, and who is walking in it. Oh, beloved, what need there is that we give heed to it, lest in the day of abundance of truth, we be only hearers of the word and not doers of it, deceiving our ourselves; triflers with that which is the only present means of our sanctification—a sanctification of which Christ in the glory is the source, character, measure, and power! How inconceivable the loss of assenting to any part of the truth without the soul's subjection to it! It was far otherwise with the servant now before us. Christ, despised and rejected of men, has fully won the apostle's heart. Christ in the glory, the result of that rejection, was the one bright, blessed object ever before him. The attraction of the One whom he had seen in the glory of God, irresistibly impelled him on, and drew him out of everything here, and up into that same glory to be with Him.

This is the power that makes practicable the path found so impracticable without it in Mark x. Paul, too, could say, "touching the righteousness of the law blameless." He was rich, if any were, in those things that are accounted of most worth in the flesh, but instead of going away grieved from the path of earthly loss opening before him—"What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ." Nor was it only in the flush of bright first love, that he thus accounted of nature's gain. Have any of us known something of this? We have felt as if we would give up everything for Him in the first joy of the forgiveness of our sins. Ah! has love been declining instead of abounding more and more—link after link reforming with things you thought you had broken with for ever? How sad to look back upon days when the truth was fresher, and Christ more brightly before the eye, than now! I believe this declension is inevitable, when the soul stops short at the blessing received, and reaches not to

having Christ personally as its object. Nothing can sustain us for Christ, against the strong current of everything around us, but His possession of our hearts for Himself. There is power in the simple knowledge of what He is, to put Him thus in possession. And there is growth in this divine knowledge ever bringing with it increased power. So Paul can say, "Yea, doubtless, and I *count* all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Nor was this all; for the testing time comes when profession will be proved—if it be real—"for whom I *have suffered* the loss of all things." And now, as he looks back on all he has lost for Christ, he puts away the previous thought of loss, "and do count them but dung."

What can resist the power of the shining down into the heart of the excellency and glory of Christ? What else is Christianity but the Christ known thus in glory for the complete severance of His people from the scene that has rejected Him? Oh! has He so arrested *our* gaze that we refuse and resent as of Satan all that would distract us from occupation with Him? Then, there would be no effort of giving up what still bound hearts, but rather the dropping off, as the withered leaf of autumn, of all that is not Christ. What remains as the longing of the apostle—"that I may know Him?" Who, we might well ask, has known Him as he knew Him—proved by so complete a break with all that has power over the heart of man on earth? Still he is not satisfied. The more he knew Christ, the more he *longed* to know Him; and so it must ever be. But there is more that he desires—"and the power of his resurrection." It is the power of the place where He has made us one with Himself above. It is just the combination of object and power that we have seen to be essential to taking the path of Christ—an object that puts the heart completely outside the scene, and a life to be able to go down into death to it. Both are found in Christ where He is.

Immediately we see the apostle in the path that Peter and the rest so shrank from in Mark x. Amazed and afraid, they followed. Paul only desires more complete identification with Christ in it, to know "the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." It was with a *view to this* that he desired to know Christ better; to get to the sources of power for more thoroughly going down, as to the things of nature, into Christ's path. No fear of, nor shrinking from the consequences fully apprehended by him, but a fixed, earnest purpose of heart to press more fully into the whole path. Does it not lie within the power of earthly love so to unite hearts as to make them desire to share each other's circumstances, be they what they may? And shall the love of Christ have less power with us who know Him? Say not so, beloved brethren, but let us yield ourselves up to Him; that while He gives us His own path here, we may esteem it the best and brightest He could give, and follow it out without reserve or hesitation.

Nor is the end of such a path uncertain. "Where I am, there shall my servant be." *With Him*, in whom I have already found all glory and blessedness? Yes. Paul cannot be satisfied with less. What could there be beyond it? And here, again, in contrast with the disciples in Mark x.—Did they seek the highest places in the earthly glory? Ah! there was that to Paul above all the glory—"That I may win *Christ*." That is his prize, his full reward. It is the object in pursuit of which he girds his loins, and casts away the best earthly thing—"if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." It mattered little what befell in the path, if this was to be the end of it—the goal ever in view. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this *one thing I do*." Oh, beloved, do we know anything of the power of this—of a heart set absolutely upon one thing? And this one thing, not of the world, but lying completely outside it:

to lay hold in and with Christ, in full resurrection perfectness, of that for which He has laid hold of me. Is it so with us? Have we allowed other objects to divide our hearts with Christ? Is not this the secret of such little apprehension amongst us, of the path the Lord has set before His servant? Or, when this is apprehended in some measure, of such lack of decision in taking it—of steady, even walking with Christ when we are in it? Shall we allow what has divided us a moment longer? Shall we dishonour the Lord Jesus, grieve the Spirit, by thus practically declaring that there is not enough in Christ to fill and hold the heart? Yet, sooner or later, all that has thus had power over us beside Him must be gone. In eternity it will be only Christ. Shall I, in the power of what He is to me now, let the last link be snapped with ought that held me back from being wholly for Him? Or shall I hold to nature's ties, and to the things of the earth, till He comes, or death, to *wrest* them from my grasp—till I can hold them no longer?

How the Apostle weeps over those "who mind earthly things," in direct contrast with all that we have seen of the true power of Christianity—of the life of Christ in the Christian—its joys, objects, and hopes. "For our conversation (*πολιτευμα*) is in heaven." There is where the Christian's moral life is spent; "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." It is according to the same working, here carried on to its full result in glory, that He is able to subdue our hearts even now to Himself. It is found in the knowledge of what He is, revealed to us from the bright and blessed scene where He is, by the Holy Ghost. Let us, then, in full presence of such light and glory, write death upon all that has held the heart a moment here, and press on without encum-

brance to be with Him. It is easy for us, with the flesh still in us, to slip out of the path. Communion with Him is the only thing that will keep us in it. If Christ only be before the heart, nothing can resist His power. In dependent weakness, and fear of ourselves, let us cling to Him. If the heart is true, He will cherish its feeblest desire after Him, and strengthen and satisfy it. It is precious to Him to find one here and there who desires to serve, and therefore to follow Him. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." In 2 Corinthians we find too that God will order circumstances so as to be auxiliary to the servant honestly taking such a path (chap. iv. 8. 9). "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are *always delivered unto death* for Jesus' sake." It is a solemn path, utterly foreign to every principle of the flesh. The Lord give us grace to learn it of Him, where only it can be learned, and where only the spring and power for it can be found. For it is only as we walk in His path that we can be His servants. "If any man serve me, let him follow me."



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