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LIFE AND WALK.

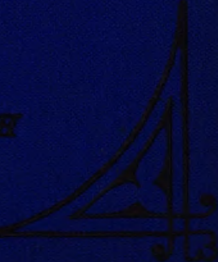


Seven Addresses



BY

J. DENHAM SMITH







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LIFE AND WALK.



THE RISEN ONE.

JOHN XX.

WE have here a first sight of the Lord as He appeared on the morning from the dead—that resurrection-morn. You may remember that Paul said, “If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins;” implying plainly, that if the blessed Lord be indeed risen, we who believe are not in our sins—that we have been raised out of sin: “the Lord laid on Him”—on Jesus—“the iniquity of us all.” He died once in the end of the ages to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and when the anxious heart can get a sight of this truth, oh, what rest and peace it gives! My sins *were* on Him when He hung upon the tree, but they were *not* on Him when He rose from the tomb; my sins *were* on Him when He passed through death, but He was freed from them when He appeared in resurrection; and now

“My soul *looks back* to see
The burden Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.”

Ah, beloved, have you for yourself, each one, looked upon that scene? Have *you* seen *your own* guilt and burden there? Can you, as you sit here, in the calm quiet of this happy scene—can you gaze on One who, having your sins laid on Him, bore them all completely away, having exhausted their utmost penalty, and who is now for ever before God on your behalf? Truly, if Christ be *not* risen, we are yet in our sins; but “He is risen,” and therefore we are not in our sins. When Christ appears the second time, it will not be to atone for sin, but “*without* sin.” He has already appeared *once* “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;” and now the sin is for ever gone—gone from the sin-bearer, and gone from God’s book, and, moreover, gone from God’s memory; for He says, He will not *remember* our sins. Say, what could you want more than this? Surely this must give every burdened, aching heart rest. Did you want *more* than this, God would have provided it; but *less* would not have met the circumstances of the case. And, oh, if you have never seen this truth before, may you see it now! Look on that sin-bearer, on whom the Lord laid iniquity. And now, seeing your burden gone from the cross, it is gone from your heart. Such was God’s amazing love to us, that, in dealing thus with our sins, “it *pleased* the Lord to bruise Him.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.”

Will you remark upon this first verse, that it was “very early” that the Lord rose—early, even while it

was yet dark, was Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, that even then she found it empty—already the blessed Lord was gone. He had said, After *three* days I will rise again; and so scarcely had the third dawned before He rose. One loves to think of it—how little of that *third* day did He pass in the grave. He had said He would rise on the *third* day; but how very early upon that third day did He rise! He did not wait for noon—no, nor yet for daybreak; for Mary was at the sepulchre before break of day—before then He had left the tomb, as if the Father were in haste to raise His Son—as if He would release Him the first moment that He had fulfilled His mission. Like Abraham who was glad to unbind the cords and raise his Isaac from the altar, so was the Father glad to proclaim redemption accomplished by so early releasing His own beloved Son from the fetters of the tomb.

And why was the Father so desirous to raise His Son? Because His resurrection was according to the glory of the Father, who, in wondrous love and grace, had thus dealt with sin in His death. Moreover, it was according to His eternal equity and righteousness that, having fulfilled completely the eternal covenant, the Lord should be liberated; it was in keeping with divine justice that, having paid the debt, the surety should be acquitted. The whole matter settled, the Father rejoiced to raise His Son, and neither death nor the grave could retain Him. Moreover, by resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God with power. He had stood amid the storm

upon that Galilean lake, and had controlled the fury of its billows: the sea became as adamant beneath His feet. Ah, yes, He could stand before the scene of corruption at the grave, and bid it restore its prey. Although throughout His public life gleams of glory shone from Him, yet it was not in *this* way that He was declared to be the Son of God with power. I know that at His baptism He was divinely owned by the Father—"This is my beloved Son;" I know that when upon the mount of transfiguration the same voice from the excellent glory pronounced the like divine utterance; but *this* was not the grand and public acknowledgment by which the Father testified to the perfectness and completeness of the work which He had resigned His Son to accomplish on our behalf; no, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by *the resurrection from the dead.*" Death had stopped the way between the sinner and glory, but the Lord had gone down into death—had passed right through death up into the glory, leaving an open path behind. But had He been a mere man—had He failed to accomplish the work He came to do—if He had not made atonement—had not put away sin; had He been a deceiver or an impostor, as His enemies said He was, death would have retained Him still, and God would not have raised Him. But, by raising Him from the dead, He declared Him to be His Son.

And what was the end of all this? Not merely salvation from hell, not merely justification, but

something far higher than this: "He died, the just for the unjust." And what for? He died "*to bring us to God.*" What a wondrous thought! God wanted us, wanted us to be for ever in His presence, to reflect throughout eternity His own glory; and so, *because* God wanted us, but death stood in the way, the Lord died "to bring us to God;" and death having taken place, God raised Him after three days; and now, if you can see Him going down into that death, and rising from it—if you know indeed that God has raised Him, you must see that the question of sin is eternally settled. "Where are my sins now?" asks the believer. Why, they are just where the Lord Himself left them—down, deep down in that death—cast, as it were, into the depths of the sea. Ah, how different is all this to pondering over sin in your own wretched hearts, where doubtless it still is! How peaceful is it to take a look right out at the cross, *there* to see sin made an end of in THE DEATH OF CHRIST!

But the narrative goes on to say: "Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." She went and told her grief to the disciples. There is something very lovely in this picture of Mary going out before break of day, looking for an object she so loved, and then, not finding Him, unburthening her sorrow to hearts which she knew would respond and

sympathize. She did not tell the Jews or the world of her disappointment—little knew or cared they about the Person so precious to Mary; no, she went to Peter and John. And when in distress and anxiety about your soul, to whom do you confide your grief? Surely not to a person of the world who is a stranger to the Lord Jesus, but to one whose heart has a chord which you know will vibrate to that name which has become so sweet in your ear, to one who has a personal acquaintance with Him whom you are so anxiously seeking. Is it not so?

“Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.” You see, although John was first at the tomb, he did not go in, he only *looked* in; but as soon as Peter arrived, he immediately went into the sepulchre. It just shows how a poor backslider may yet have a heart for the Lord, how one who has grievously departed from Him may yet have affections for Him. There may be some such in this place to-night, some poor backsliding one, who is saying,

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”

Is the silent cry of your desolate heart, "I want Jesus, Jesus, Jesus"? You have lost your former peace and joy; you have got out of communion, and are not happy; you cannot live without the Lord; you want to be again in His love, to be brought once more into fulness of fellowship. Well, beloved, look at Peter, and take courage. Peter, you know, only three days before, had been lying and swearing that he did not know His Master; yet here he is hastening to His empty tomb! yes, and it was no imposture on his part. He was no hypocrite, or he would not have rushed into that tomb. Ah, there were still affections in Peter's heart! he still longed, longed, longed after his Lord. So, beloved, with you—you who are longing for Jesus—you who are sighing, "Where is that joy and peace which once I possessed?" The language of your heart is, "Come, Lord, and occupy—yea, *fill* my affections." This was the spirit of Peter. Peter was a grievous backslider, but not an apostate. The difference between an apostate and a backslider is this: the latter has gone back to the world for a time, whilst the former has never been truly brought out of it. And how does the Lord deal with the poor backslider who has consciously gone away from Him? Ah, beloved, He *restoreth* him; He will never let him wander beyond the reach of His arm. "My sheep," He says, "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." No, they cannot perish; they *are* His hand—members of His body, being of His flesh and of His bones.

“And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.” I would suggest for your consideration on the napkin which was around His head : it was not lying with the other garments, but *wrapped together and laid aside* in a place by itself. It may speak to us of the fact that the Head is now in resurrection—His own resurrection is completely finished. Hence the napkin is *folded together* and laid aside, whilst the linen clothes of His body were still lying about. We are not told that *they* were *wrapped together*. It may suggest that the members of His body are not yet raised ; but by-and-by they will be raised, and, with their risen Head, made to share with Him His glory. Then the linen clothes may be *folded with* the napkin which was about the head. Did you ever think of it thus ? Paul shows us how this will be. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven, as said by Paul in Thessalonians. And having descended, the dead in Christ will be raised first ; then we who are alive will be changed ; then both the raised and the changed will be caught up *together* to meet the Lord in the air. Thus they who now sleep in Him will not be one moment in the glory before us. The graves of Martha and Mary, of the daughter of Jairus, and others, still retain their precious dust, and will retain, until our own graves deliver up theirs ; so that they, with Mary Magdalene, or John, or Peter, will not be glorified before other saints of later years. No ; they are in Paradise

before us, where indeed their spirits are now waiting for the glory, as Rutherford sings—

“’Twixt me and resurrection,
But Paradise doth stand.”

Death brings us into Paradise, but there not as a permanent home, only to wait for the enrobing morning when, as Paul says, we who are sufferers together, and heirs together with Him, shall be glorified *together*. Not one member glorified before another, not even the Head before the members. Neither one nor the other can be glorified until the whole Body is perfect—complete. Oh, it is for this we are waiting! and it is for this that He too is waiting—waiting for that break of day which shall know no evening, waiting for that glorious hour when all the members will be caught up *together* into the radiant air! This is our hope, for which we earnestly long, for which we desire that many suns may not set before it brings us face to face with *Him*. There is but one reason why we would have Him tarry, and that is, that those who yet are strangers to Him may be “brought in.” Oh, how blessed a thing it is to get a comprehensive view of this truth! How wondrous a thing, looking back with the eye of faith to the first Advent, and forward with glorious hope to the other, that your soul can say,

“I do believe, I *will* believe,
That Jesus died for me;”

and can rejoice in the hope of this glory. Paul shows

you, in Colossians iii. 4, that when the Lord comes *you* will come with Him.

You will remember that this truth was suggested by what Peter saw when he looked into the sepulchre—by those linen clothes separated from the napkin. By-and-by all that belong to Him will be manifested; we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Well, when Peter had gone in, then John went in. See how the one encouraged the other. And so it is, one brings another to the Lord, and the second brings a third, and so the work spreads. The two disciples looked into and entered that empty tomb, and believed. Believed what? That He was risen? Oh, no, indeed; for the next verse tells us that "*they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.*" They only believed that the Lord's body was not there—that indeed the sepulchre was empty! They were slow of heart to believe what the Lord had so often and so plainly told them. And we meet with ignorant ones still; but we ought to put up with their dulness, and to be patient and forbearing. Look at these disciples; the very thing (that Christ's tomb was *empty*) which should have given them greatest joy proved to them the source of deepest sorrow. Mark the difference between these Galilean disciples and those at Bethany. Not one of the circle at Bethany was at the tomb on that resurrection morning. *They* did not go to look for a dead Jesus; they were better instructed; they *knew* that He would rise. How different was it with Mary

Magdalene, and Peter, and John. They were sorrowing beside His empty sepulchre, grieving that He was not there! You see they knew nothing of resurrection. Instead of being all gloom, they should have been all gladness. Thus is it with many now who have been saved, yet do not know the greatness or completeness of their salvation.

“Then the disciples went away again to their own home.” The *disciples*, but not Mary. Oh, there was immense love in Mary’s heart! It was *love* that held her to that spot. She was sad, lonely, desolate, for *Him*. Surely such love was precious, as we shall see. But though there was love, she wanted intelligence. Yet who does not delight in that immense love? I incline to think I would rather have the love of a Mary Magdalene than all the intelligence of some others. Her heart was freighted with the precious love of Him who is the Chief among ten thousand. But better still to have the love of a Mary Magdalene united with the intelligence of a Mary of Bethany, or of a Lazarus, who himself had been raised from the dead.

But to pass on with the narrative. These disciples saw and believed—believed that the sepulchre was *empty*—that was all; for they knew not the Scripture. How much better if they had been in the Lord’s thought—if they had understood *His* purpose of love. They would then have clapped their hands with joy, and exclaimed, “The Lord is not here, for He is risen!” But instead of this, “Mary stood without at

the sepulchre *weeping*: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre." Oh, have you ever seen a mother repair to the spot where had lain one who had been her earthly joy, the light of her home circle? Imagine such a bereaved one saying to a friend, "Will you go with me into the room? Ever since I have never been able to go." There was a melancholy satisfaction in entering the room where the loved form had lain. So was it with Mary, who lingered to look into the tomb where *He* had lain. You remember how, after He had ascended to the right hand of the Father, the little band of disciples still stood gazing, gazing up at that very spot in the sky, as if they loathed to let the eye off it, where they had taken the last glimpse of Him. Well, after those two disciples had gone home, Mary lingered. It was like an "after meeting." She loved to stand and gaze upon a spot where an object so infinitely precious had been.

By and by Jesus Himself drew near (though Mary recognized Him not), and tenderly inquired, "Woman, why weepest thou?" I would like to tell you a happy thought in my soul about this. Do you know why Jesus was standing by His open sepulchre? Why did He repair to a spot where He had no occasion to stand? It was surely the yearning, the longing of that *one* heart which brought Him there. He came there to meet and comfort that loving but bereaved spirit. And are there any here saying, "Of all things in the world, what I want is Jesus"? Are

there any here longing "to see Jesus"? Is there but one such heart here to-night? Ah, dear soul, such longings as thine are sure to bring Him to the very spot where thou hast come to find Him! He cannot deny Himself. He Himself gave thee those longings. He who fills the mighty bed of Ganges or Mississippi will fill your affections with Himself; for He who planted the deep, longing desires in your soul has an ocean-fulness from which to fill them. Ere long that cry of yours, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," will bring that very Jesus to your soul, and you will see Him whom your soul desireth.

"Ah," thought Mary, "if I could but look upon His body once more!" Little did she imagine how soon her utmost hopes would be exceeded. Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Why should He thus ask, seeing that He knew perfectly the cause of her sorrow? Had not He Himself created it in her? But then *He likes to be told*; yes, beloved, and He wants to be told of *your* sorrow, though well He knows it; for the devil did not set you thirsting for Him—it is the very last thing the devil would set you longing for; and your own natural heart never yet produced a holy aspiration; it is the Lord Himself who has done it. He knows your dread of sin and death; He knows your dark foreboding of an endless eternity, how it casts its shadow over your soul; He knows the ten, twenty, or thirty years you have been longing for peace and joy. He knows you, a poor

backslider, it may be, saying, "These years, alas! I have been longing for Jesus to visit my soul as in former days; I thought I had Him, but now, I fear, all I have had has been truth without Christ." Well, my blessed Master can now manifest Himself to you; He can now draw near, and bind the bleeding tendrils of your heart's affections around His own adorable self; He has been making your heart bleed, that He might free you from its evil, and once again have you to Himself.

See what Mary answered: "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Oh, that little word "*Him!*" She thought all must know *Him* who was *everything* to her. She had been *dead to the angels* even, in her longing for *Him*; and she thought there was surely no need to translate that "*Him.*" Oh, how was He feasted now! What a cup of joy was this for His lip! It was for this He was crucified, laid down in the tomb; He rose, and went back to the glory above, that He might have such joy, that He might bring home the sinner to His Father's house rejoicing. He said to Mary—the tones of that love-breathing voice telling her own name—"Mary," which awoke in a moment the consciousness of *His* presence. In the twinkling of an eye she was down at His feet, about to embrace them. Oh, if He were here now, beloved, would we not also at once fall at His feet in joyous adoration?

But "touch me not," said the blessed Lord; "as to

myself, you need not hold me. I am not going to leave you immediately; I shall remain here for forty days to prove the fact of my resurrection—to assure you of the *finished* work for which I came forth.” “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Blessed word! *my* Father, *your* Father.

Mark, beloved, what *He* gets and what *we* get by redemption. He gets God as His God, and we get His Father as our Father. He gets God as His God; as the eternal word, He had been with God from before all ages; but His relationship as man with God was something quite different—it was the result of *incarnation*; and if He had not become man, and associated Himself with us, He never would have had God as His God. He Himself had always a glory—His own primal glory as God. He had it, yea, before a sun or star had ever broken on the bosom of immensity, or ever, at creation, the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy.

By His death moreover, along with resurrection, He finds glory; He gives that glory to us. *He* gets God as His God, and *we* find a Father in God. He gets, and we get. Oh, mark the wondrous steps in this pathway of divine, ineffable love! and mark what we get by each! We get God as *Father*. His Father is our *Father*. By *incarnation* we get God manifest in the flesh. In those wondrous three-and-thirty years before death we get our divine model, not, as so many falsely teach, salvation. If, by His

life, I am redeemed, then He need not have died. No, we do not get life by His life; for, on the ground simply of His life, He never could Himself, as man, for us, have gone back to the Father. Salvation is on the ground of *atonement only*; "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

No, by His *life* we get a perfect example as to how He pleased God; but by His *death* we get *atonement*. There, at the cross, I see what God is—what God demands; Christ dying on the tree, drinking to the lowest dregs my cup of hell; and now I see that I have no cup of hell to drink; it is all gone, gone, gone! and nothing left for me but overflowing grace and love. And now I can sing, as did Rutherford—

"I stand upon *His* merit,
I know no other stand;
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."

Moreover, by His resurrection, we get into a new life. We were dead with Him, buried with Him, and are raised with Him; by resurrection we are taken out of death, saved from wrath and hell. There is something else we get the moment we become risen with Christ: we get *strangership*, *pilgrimage*. Resurrection lifts from the tomb of corruption, but it leaves us still upon this earth; it does not of itself put us into heaven. We get pilgrimage here below. Ah, and that is also what the Lord got! When I look at Him standing by that tomb, I feel that He

was indeed a stranger—a pilgrim in this world. He did not go back to Jerusalem and claim an earthly home. Oh, no! He, at that open tomb, was surely a pilgrim; and if we know resurrection, this is what we too have got by it. We do not get into heaven by resurrection; it is *ascension* which puts us there. As He has gone back, having done *all* that our lost, guilty condition demanded—as He has gone in yonder, the righteous, accepted One, in all the energy of accomplished redemption—as He has taken the value of the blood in with Him, and laid it down ever to speak on our behalf, so now *we*, linked with Him who is *Son* with the Father, we on His own title as Son of man have liberty, boldness, to enter in. We go in *along with Him* into the holiest of all; that is, into heaven itself. In a word, we get into heaven on the ground of His own ascension in righteousness.

But what more do we get by all this wondrous transaction? Why, *glory*. When He comes again in His glory, then shall we come with Him, sharers with Him of that glory. But we must be gathered first. We cannot come *with Him* until we are gathered *to Him*; and gathered to Him where He now is. For this He is coming for us, as He said, I will come again and take you unto myself. Hence the early saints were taught to look for Him. Says Paul to his Thessalonian converts, “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven.” Mark those three little words—*to—from—for*; they turned TO God FROM

idols ; not like some of you, who are only half turned towards God—only the profile towards Him—an eye to Christ, and an eye to your idols at the same time. But these believers had completely turned their *backs* upon their idols ! they had turned to serve the living and true God ; and what else ? “To WAIT—to wait FOR His Son from heaven.” This, beloved of the Lord, is our position too ; we also WAIT FOR THE SON FROM HEAVEN ; and then, when He comes, He and we shall be GLORIFIED TOGETHER ; the whole body—Head with the members—will share the same glory. This will be the last link in this wondrous chain of colossal grandeur ; and He who holds that chain in His hand will surely work out each successive link ; and the time is rapidly hastening on when all the members will stand in that last link in the glory, and look back to that first link as it lies amid the secrets of the divine purposes, and raise for ever and for ever that one loud, long ascription of praise, “To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Oh, hasten that time, beloved ! speed the happy moment, that glorious morning for which we are waiting ; it is in your power to hasten it, as we shall see.

Then the Lord said to Mary, “I am not yet ascended to my Father ; I will first present myself to Him for you, and then you can by a new claim touch me :

meanwhile *go to my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." This was the first time that He had called those disciples "brethren." Resurrection gives us this. "Go tell my brethren." Yes, beloved: we were children; He had called us servants; but now, after resurrection, He calls us "*brethren*." He tells us that the very same love which hitherto the Father had given to Him who was His only Son, He now lavishes upon us who are His brethren—"THAT THE LOVE WHEREWITH THOU HAST LOVED ME MAY BE IN THEM." So truly one are we with Him, that we share the love which, as Son, He enjoys with His Father. Oh, how blessed! recognized as *His* brethren! Yes; and He is not ashamed to call us brethren, seeing we are made partakers of the divine nature, and are invested from Him with all those wondrous resources of holiness, and righteousness, and life, which were from all eternity in God Himself.

But now the Lord enjoins Mary to go and publish His resurrection. Mary was the first evangelist to tell of a risen Jesus. Some people think it doubtful whether women ought to preach, and would fain close their lips. Would you have closed the lips of Mary? It depends on what is meant by preaching. It will be impossible to close lips if the Lord opens them; and when He opens them, who am *I* to forbid? And so Mary goes right out from His presence—the true place of commission—carrying His own message,

"THE LORD IS RISEN!" Was there ever such a sermon as that which Mary preached? The Lord is risen! She went away saying, "He is *alive*! not dead, not a corpse in the tomb of Joseph." How wonderful! He *is* Lord—Lord of life! How she would spell it out, as it were, to her own soul as she flew along to tell it to others—"resurrection! life! He *has* died! I will doubt no more, sorrow no more. Let me tell it, THE LORD IS RISEN!" What a world of truth is that one word, RISEN. It included all the mighty thought of God from eternity—God in man on the other side of death; man in incorruption, and beyond the reach ever again of sin or dying; man redeemed—fit for the eternal presence, and joy, and glory of God. Said the Lord, "Tell them I am risen!" And shortly after He ratifies her message by His own presence. Thus I have found it in preaching the gospel. I have preached; He has ratified; He has appeared to faith. Oh, beloved, think of it! "*He is risen; He is risen.*" May God give you, each one, to know this truth, especially you who are anxious about salvation, and see how it for ever settles the question of sin, over which you have so long been brooding, saying, "Oh, my sins, my sins!" In resurrection-life, "self and sin no more are known." God Himself made an end of both in the cross, and brings you complete into His presence. Do not forget the distinction between atonement and forgiveness: the one is a finished work, never to be touched again; forgiveness may be often repeated.

All my sins were laid upon Thee,
All my guilt was on Thee laid ;
And the blood of Thine atonement
All my utmost debt hath paid.

The debt is cancelled, because *paid* ; sin is blotted out, because atoned for ; and now sins are gone—gone—gone. And did we not know it as we *do*, for an *absolute certainty*, because God says it, we could never preach thus to you ; and if God had not told us so here, we could not ask you to believe it. But here, in this book, is God's own declaration that "Christ hath appeared once in the end of the world, TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF." Stand still, beloved people, and see, this very hour, the salvation of God.

But now we reach another truth. We find that on that very day, at evening, when those disciples were assembled, then "came Jesus and stood in the midst." Ah ! there were but ten disciples there that night, for Thomas was not there ; and see how much he lost by being away. But those ten ! they were a sad ten indeed—a faithless band. But what does the Lord do ? what did He say ? Did He say, "Before I can have any communion with you, I must have an understanding, an explanation as to your late conduct" ? Does He tell them, "I am come to judge you" ? For Peter had denied Him, and the rest had all forsaken Him, and forsaken Him when He most needed them. Did He now absolve connection with them ? Oh, no, no, no !

His first word indeed might have been, "Shame be unto you," or, "I have done with you;" but no, no, it was, "*Peace* be unto you." And the first thing that He will say to you to-night will be, "Peace." Oh, what a picture we have here! The Lord stands in their midst, and, sadly as they had deserted Him, the only word with which He meets them is, "Peace." And so will it be by and by. When He gets us all in the air—when He raises us from all our bitter controversies and divisions—it will be, not shame, shame, but—"Peace, peace." What grace! what love!

And now the Lord "*breathed*" on them—so *near* were they—what proof of resurrection!—and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." How else could it be if *He* breathed on them? for He was *filled with the Spirit*. He added: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Some stumble at this passage; but the Lord still invests His people with the happy privilege of pronouncing as to sins. If there be a soul here believing in Jesus, with confidence I can say to such an one, "Thy sins *are* forgiven." Here in the Word, beloved people, you have complete absolution—not a human, not a priestly, not an angelic, but a *Divine* absolution; and I declare it to you to-night—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED." And I also declare to you, that "he that believeth *not* SHALL BE DAMNED." Yes, whatever else you may do

—teach in the Sunday-school, visit the poor, talk like an angel—if you do not *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and take the benefit of His atoning sacrifice, you will be damned—damned. Do not deceive yourselves; for all this is absolute—“He that *believeth not* shall be damned.”

The profession you make may be most plausible; the outward appearance may be fair; but if there be not in your heart faith in the Lord Jesus—if you be not one with *Him*—it will all be as nothing: it is hypocrisy, and will not stand the test, or bear the light of eternity, which will shortly meet you at His coming, gleaming across your whole life, and exposing it to the most open scrutiny. There can be no deception *then*; the mask will be stripped from the face *then*, and all the horrible deformity and corruption manifested *then*; and there and then—down in hell, amid the fearful moans and groans of the damned—*there* you will know the value of the blood which you have trampled under foot; your vain lament will be—“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.” When the gospel *is* preached, it binds a tremendous responsibility upon each one who hears it; to each one it will prove a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death, according as it is received or rejected.

And here I am reminded of a child who heard a sermon upon the words, “Now is the accepted time.” She went home much impressed, and under deep

conviction that she should no longer be undecided, she said to her mother, "Mamma, I have heard a solemn sermon to-day about 'Now is the accepted time.' Mamma, I think I ought not to keep away from Jesus any longer." But what did that parent reply? "My child, I have heard *that* ever since I can remember; there is plenty of time yet." At night, before getting into her couch, the little one wrote in a book—thoughts like these were passing in her mind—"I have been hearing such a solemn sermon to-night, I feel afraid of staying away from Jesus longer; but mamma says I need not be unhappy, that there is plenty of time yet. Might I wait twelve months, and then become a child of God?" The writing ends for a little, as if she had gone again to her couch; but, unable to sleep, she makes this second entry: "I could not keep from Jesus so long as a whole year; I think I can only wait a month; yes, I might wait one month." Again there is a break in the diary, as if the dear child had once more turned into her couch; but there is one more note: "I cannot wait a month; one more week." And so the child concludes. The family assembled as usual the next morning, but the child was missing; the servant was sent to ascertain the cause, and there, in that room, was the solemn record, but the dear child lay in her couch—*dead*.

Oh, ye mothers! have you, any of you, a child in hell? and is that child there, does conscience say, through your neglect, or through your unfaithfulness?

Oh, ye fathers! have you sons now amongst the lost in the regions of despair, does your conscience say, brought there through *your* evil example and *your* pernicious counsel? Oh, think of it! They have gone where a ray of hope can never cheer. Their torments can never be mitigated; they are eternal. What a sad reflection must now be yours, that, if you had trained these children to know the Lord, you could inscribe upon their tombstone, "Here lies one who has fallen asleep in Jesus!" Ah, friends! *procrastination*—how dreadful! Not that there is ever a time when the gospel is proclaimed that you are not tremendously responsible. But to put it off and off, how melancholy, and in the issue how fatal! Oh, sinner, sinner! why not to-night? Oh, if I could, I would take you in my arms, and then lay you in *His* arms, and ask Him *now*, on your believing, by the Holy Ghost, to seal you as His own. Do not say "to-morrow," but "now;" believe *now—now*.

But look once more at this blessed portraiture of Jesus, Jesus; for, oh, it is all *Him—Him—Him—* brought out here. "And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." This is the first time in the Bible that

we find Jesus addressed as "*God*." Peter, indeed, had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the *Son* of the living God;" but here Thomas calls Him "*God*." I have often wondered why Thomas called Him *God*. The other disciples, probably, had said to him—"Thomas, you little know what you lost. We have seen the Lord; He has been with us to-night." But Thomas declared that *except* he should see in His hands the print of the nails, and the print of the spear in His side, he would not believe. But on this night Thomas was with them; he would not be absent again; and by and by the Lord appears among them, and again says, "Peace be unto you." Then He turns to Thomas, and says, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas was amazed at this. "Only *God*," thought he, "could have known all that has been going on in my heart." Ah! he had a consciousness that that eye and that heart which had seen and known all that passed that Lord's-day evening must have been the eye and heart of the Lord, whom he now knew to be *God*. Hence he exclaims, "My Lord and my *God*." And when we, beloved, meet Him in yonder glory, and gaze upon Him eye to eye, and face to face—when we see Him with the glory streaming through those perforated feet and hands, and know that He knows all—will not our joyous exclamation resemble that of Thomas, "My Lord and my *God*"?

And now mark these next words—"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Precious declaration! We can thank God for that which gave occasion for it; for how descriptive of our condition now: "Blessed are *they that have not seen.*" We have never yet seen Him; but I would as soon disbelieve my own existence, or that of any star yonder, or of this earth, as I would disbelieve the being and character of the blessed Lord. He *was* rejected, disowned; He *is* enthroned in the glory yonder. Do you ask me how I know it? Simply because of His own word, that when He should be there, He would send down the Holy Ghost to dwell in His people here; and every joy in God, every longing for Christ, speaks of His presence in my soul, and is a precious testimony to the truth of Him who is now *above*. These aspirations—proofs of the Spirit here, and of the presence of Christ there—remind one of the bells upon the robe the high priest wore when he entered the holy place on the great day of atonement. If Aaron seemed to tarry long, the people, anxiously waiting his return, might begin to tremble, lest for some sin their representative should have perished; and they would, perhaps, inquire, "Why is Aaron so long in coming out?" And then, it may be, one more thoughtful or anxious Levite than the others would say, "I will go near and listen—put my ear down near to the holy place." And as he listened, he heard the sweet chiming of those bells upon that priestly robe, which waved to and

fro before the Lord, and returned to tell the joyful news. Oh, beloved! all those longings to inherit, those deep desires for perfect holiness—all those yearnings to see the King in His beauty—are a sweet assurance that the Holy Ghost is in you, and that He, the Lord, is now in the presence of God. And therefore may we *believe*. And it is more blessed for us who have not seen Him, yet have BELIEVED: if we own Him now in the hour of His rejection, we shall share His glory. If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.

And now, finally, mark what John says of all these things: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." Oh, sinner! are you listening to these words? "These are written, that ye might believe and that believing ye might"—what? "*Have doubts?*" No, indeed. "*Have hope?*" or some trembling apprehensions? Nothing of the sort. "And that believing *ye might have life.*" Ye might have life. How simple! is it not? And it is the gospel: there is nothing more in order to salvation. And if you are not satisfied, or want anything more, you will go away unsaved. And saved or lost you must be. And not to be *saved*, how sad! Oh, dear souls, you who would be saved, you think you will begin with repentance and conviction first! But it is *dead* souls that the Lord died for: you must be satisfied to be saved as you are, in your present *dead* state. You hear people talk as if

self-righteous people could not be saved. Why, every sinner is *self*-righteous, until he sees Christ; but when he believes in Christ dead and risen, he becomes the righteousness of God in Him. Every sinner is utterly dead, utterly corrupt, till the Lord speaks the life-giving word, "Come forth;" and then at the cross he sees sin is gone. "There is *life* for a *look* at the crucified One." But do not misunderstand me. I do not say that you will have no repentance. The longer you live, the deeper will be your sense of sin; but if you are looking for conviction before you come to the Lord, you may wait till it is too late. If the dying robber had waited for anything, he would never have been saved. How did he get peace? Just by believing the word of Jesus. And how do we know that we are saved? Only in the same way—by believing the testimony, and not by foraging in our own heart for assurance. No; you will never find it there. Look at that poor bankrupt; his friend has become surety for him. How does he get assurance? Does he seek for it by examining his own resources? No, indeed; he will never find it there: he looks at his SURETY, and in him he sees his complete justification. And, beloved, *there—there—look up on Him*, risen from the dead, He is your Surety; the One who has completely paid all. Oh, look—look—look at *Him*—forget all else but Him; and as you look, just now you may enter into rest! Oh, may God quicken the dead souls here to see and to know thus the *risen One*!

And now remember, beloved children of God, that God has formed us by His Spirit for this special relationship with His Son, and that we are in all the rights of His risen life. United to Him, we have His life. Having died for us, He has a right to us. As having put away sin, the sting of death is gone. The Jordan in which He stood has been dried up, and we are now on the heavenly side of *death*.

And united to Him we are supposed to have put off all that belonged to the old life which was brought to an end at the cross—the body of the sins of the flesh. What a life should be ours—the living out, in fact, of the life which is in the risen One. And how blessed and holy! for we are *where* He is, and *as* He is before God—accepted, righteous, sanctified, free. It was for this that God quickened us together with Him, *having* forgiven us all trespasses. Christ died that it might be so. Our place of highest height finds its root in His own deep, eternal love. We are raised with Him, not that He may ever again condemn, but that He may glorify us with Himself—the *risen* and ascended One.

Oh, sweet relief from sin and woe,
My risen Lord, in heaven, to know!
No more as bowed in death for me;
No more His soul's deep agony:
The ascended One has entered there,
And as He is, His members are.

Oh, glorious place! oh, sweet abode!
Where dwells for me the Christ of God.

I gaze on *Thee*, Thou blessed Lamb ;
God's righteousness, in *Thee*, I am !
To know *Thy* place, and there to be—
Thy joy—Thy love—'tis heaven to me.

What matchless height ! To gaze within
Thy loving heart—its thought of me ;
For there eternal I have been
Loved and redeemed beyond degree ;
But, oh, as only "through a glass,"
"Darkly," I see the glory pass !

But I am my Beloved's own,
Accepted through *His blood* alone ;
Secure, I'm sheltering at His side,
Which riven was when once He died.
'Tis *all of God* : *He* made me meet,
Which makes *His* presence feel so sweet.

And now I'm looking for that day
When death itself shall die away—
When I no more shall wander here,
But in His glory bright appear ;
Where *like* Him all His saints will be,
And *with* Him through eternity.

ETERNAL LIFE.

1 JOHN i.

BELOVED friends, this chapter contains a deeply important subject—the eternal life which was with the Father, and which was manifested in Christ, and which also is in us who believe.

There are but few Christians who duly consider what this life is. A peasant having natural life may seldom, if ever, give a thought as to what *it* is ; he may bind sheaves to his bosom, and gather in the grain to the garner, without ever thinking of what it is within him which enables him to do it. There are thousands of believers who, of course being such, *have* eternal life, but who have never really apprehended it. They know not as they ought, either its true nature or the responsibilities attached to it. Yet this is necessary in order to a true intelligence, also for fellowship. When believers in general speak of eternal life, the idea which is present in their minds is simply that of duration. They think of it as eternal in the sense merely of unending continuity. It means, they suppose, that it will never end. But this, though true, gives but a poor idea of that eternal

life which was with the Father, and which was manifested in Christ. That life had no beginning. It was from all eternity with the Father. Moreover, it was in Christ—in His human body—a body like our own, which contained the divine treasure. It was in Him as man; God manifested in the flesh. It is now in heaven where Christ is. He is Life. And He is our life. And it is not only in Him, but it is also in us; by which life it is we are able to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

Having the same life in us which was and is in God, we know in measure what God is. We saw it first in Christ; in Him, says John, "who was in the beginning;" and that which *was* in the beginning must have been *before* the beginning, even in the eternal ages of ages. Says John, "We have known Him"—heard Him, seen Him with our eyes, handled Him, as did Thomas, or John himself when he leaned on His bosom. They had seen Him during those marvellous thirty and three years when He was here as man. Especially had they looked on Him with their eyes, yea, with eyes of astonishment and, I will add, of love, during those three years of His public ministry. Ah, how did they fill their eyes with Him then!

They gazed on and on upon Him as words—how gracious and wonderful!—proceeded out of His mouth. They had specially handled Him after He had been dead, but had not seen corruption. He had been in death for our sins, and was with them again in surprising life. They had often seen Him as

having power over death as to others ; but now they knew something of the meaning of those words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." The laying of it down in death, and the taking of it up again, were in themselves so manifestive of God, so precious in His sight, so glorifying to God, that He on that account especially loved Him.

But in how many ways had they seen Him ! They had seen Him stopping the course of death on its way to the grave at Nain, when He raised from the dead him who was the only son of his mother. They had seen Him by the couch of Jairus' daughter. And what a sight for the *heart*, for the *affections* ! The mother had closed the eyes of her loved one. Like any other mother, her tears—a little pool of them—might be lying on the gentle lashes her hand had smoothed down in death. They had seen the God-man ascend that chamber. They had heard Him say, "*Talitha cumi* ! . . . Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." They had seen those eyes, so lately closed in death, now open on the face of Him who had given her life. Precious benefactor ! They had heard His words, "Give her to eat ;" for eating is a true sign of life. Oh, any soul freshly awakened, cries for food, thirsts for truth ; and blessed sign of life is it when any one can say—

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share ;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my portion there."

I have often thought that among the five hundred who saw Him after His resurrection might have been that father, and mother, and daughter; and how the father might have said of Him, "No wonder He could take up His own life again. Blessed benefactor! but for *Him* we should never have been as we now are: you, child, would not have been here!"

They had seen Him with Martha and Mary. "Lord, if thou hadst been here," they said, "our brother had not died." Then said He to them, "I am the resurrection and the life. Martha, if you die, I am the *resurrection*, or if you do not die, I am the *life*; so that it does not much matter." When He stood near the grave, and commanded to roll away the stone, they said, "No, do not disturb the stone." To disturb death is only to stir corruption. But Jesus is the resurrection. Jesus had said, "Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth;" and they went home, and perchance Jesus went with them—with Martha, the careful worker, and with Mary, who well knew what He delighted in, and therefore *sat as a learner, a disciple, at His feet*; and with Lazarus, who sat at the table with Him—a picture, beloved children of God, of what it will be when we who are with Him in the glory shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom. Oh, it was love, doubtless it was *love*, that so attracted, and so *often* attracted, the Lord to Bethany! Not that their love was the ground of fellowship, but it was that which, as a cup of refreshing, He

delighted to put to His lips. Yet love attracts, which was the case, as we have seen, with Mary of Galilee, who surely, because the loadstone of her love, had drawn the risen One to the place where she was.

The disciples saw Him as He walked on the waters of Galilee. They looked, yea, steadfastly gazed on Him; marvelled how, when they saw Him, that He spake as never man spake, and did as never man did. Said John of Him, This is the eternal life which was with His Father. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; He was the elect vessel, as man, in whom it was pleased to dwell. The very life of God was in *Him*. Hence He was God and man—the God-man. This is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. All that was of God in Him we know to have been, and still to be, in God, forming His life. How can we explain? If you were to ask me what my life is, I would say, It is made up of a little joy and a little sorrow; a little knowledge and a little ignorance; a little labour and a little rest; so that knowledge is in me, and ignorance is in me. But what is in *God*? Love is in God; truth is in God; grace is in God; righteousness is in God; life, light, and holiness are in God. These all go to make up the wondrous life which is in God, and which we have seen manifested in Christ. Hence, when He was talking with the poor sinful one at the well of Sychar, it was a manifestation of the grace and love of God. In doing

that, teaching and saving her, He was doing, He said, the will of His Father in heaven—doing which was His meat and His drink. When He raised the dead, it was the power of God; when He wept over Jerusalem, it was the compassion of God; when dying on the cross, it was a revelation of the holiness, righteousness, and love of God—His righteousness against sin, His love for the sinner. And when you see all this in God, as revealed in Christ, and *have* the love *in you*, the holiness *in you*, the very knowledge which was in God *in you*; when in fact you can see Jesus, and receive Him as God's gift, and can say, "Jesus is mine," you have this same eternal life. How wonderful is this! When you say eternal life is simply a life going on and on for ever, you have a very poor idea of it. It is eternal in the *past* as well as in the future. It had no beginning in God; it will have no end in you. Ah, beloved, when I have this life—am divinely quickened to see and know it—I have in me an *eternal* life; not merely an elongation, but that which had no beginning in God, though it had a beginning in me. I am not only born, but I am divinely born; it is a divine life I get. Take a simple illustration. The light which now shines on this book *was* billions of miles away, in the sun; it is now *here*, in this scene. The *love* which is now shed abroad in my heart was in God; it is *His* love, but it is now in me. So also with all else that we see and get in God. God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined

into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But have not angels eternal life? No; angels have *angelic* life; and Adam in Eden had a *human* life; but the believing sinner has *eternal* life. The very same life is in him which was in God. He is not merely a poor, wretched, miserable sinner, which by nature he is of course in himself, but a partaker of the divine nature. That which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*. He who is born of God has the love of God in him. God *is* love; nor love alone, as we often sing—

*Just as Thou art, thou Lamb divine,
Life, light, and holiness are Thine;
Thyself their endless source I see,
And they the life of God in me.*

Not only is Christ our holiness; but that which is born of God in us *is holy*, intrinsically holy, and has not to become so—has not to grow or develop *into* holiness. It is holy; it is perfect. Our standing before God, and His life in us, are alike holy. What a wonderful person a Christian is! Think much of yourselves in this respect, for you are partakers of the divine nature. It is said of Christ, “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And we are complete, filled out of Him. Imagine a man—any sinner, one who has been a drunkard or a blasphemer—all at once, on knowing God, standing out in the love, righteousness, and mind of God. What a wonderful change! In a moment of time,

on believing, we have "eternal life." We see it all objectively in Christ; subjectively it is in us. This is eternal life, that ye may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Shall I tell you how it comes into a poor sinner? In my wrong thoughts I used to think, If I love God, He will love me; but I found that God had never ceased to love me—loved me whilst yet I was a sinner. The Lord says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (Heb. ii. 8.) And again, in Jer. ii., "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth." Like a father who had a poor prodigal in a far land. He has been absent for years, and he never hears of him; thinks some evil thing has befallen him. "I remember him," he says; "oh, I remember him! I remember the kindness of his youth. I remember how I loved him; how, ere he wandered, he was a pleasant child. I used to put my hand down on his childhood's locks. I *remember* him; and sweet, indeed, is the remembrance. Oh that I could have him back again!" It is the 15th of Luke over again. The father yearned for his lost one. And when the messenger met him in that far-off country, and told him his father had never forgotten him; never ceased to love him; that the thing he desired of all others was to have him back; the poor lost one said. Oh, this is good! this is what I want! "I will arise, and go to my father." Ah, the very love that was *in* the father was shed abroad in his heart! Like Jacob and Joseph. If Joseph

had wanted still to carry on his little plot with his brethren, he made a great mistake in referring at all to his father. As his brethren bowed before him, he saw the fulfilment of his dreams : the sheaves bending to his sheaf, and the moon and the stars making obeisance to him. And so the thing worked on until, as it were inadvertently, he asked after the old man of whom they spake ; for they began to dilate about Jacob. Joseph could refrain no longer. He turned away, and wept. The love of Jacob was shed abroad in his heart. This is a sample of what I mean : how that God loves us with an eternal love in His Son ; and how what is wanting is for me to know it, for the Spirit to reveal it. But you are not to *wait* for the Spirit. "I, if I be lifted up, will *draw*." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But if you *do* see, you have an eye ; you have a life ; you are born again. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." And now "God commendeth His love to us." What love ? The love He had in the timeless ages for the sinner. He comes and takes the position of an advocate, and commends His own love, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When I see the love of God objectively in the mind and heart of God, and see it manifested in Christ, who died to bring me to God, not merely out of hell, but *to God* ; when I see it and know it, what happens ? Why, the love of God is shed abroad in my heart ; I *have* the very love that was in God. So,

also, I have the grace that was in God, as when that poor woman, the adulteress, stood in His presence, "Woman," He said, "where are thine accusers? Doth no man condemn thee? Truly there is a condemnation, but I have taken it, and now neither do I condemn thee." She became a partaker of the grace that was in Him. And so with everything else in God—righteousness, peace, rest, joy. We have it all. It is something to stand still and marvel at! And the thoughts that were in God in the ages of eternity we may have them all in His Word. How wonderful! We may get what was in His mind in the eternity past, and a view of what He has for us in the eternity to come, by the reading and understanding of what would take only a few hours, as it were, of this brief life to read. And, oh, the result is not a flimsy thing, to be had to-day and lost to-morrow, but the very thing that is in God—an infinite love, an infinite grace, an infinite righteousness; but we have it in us only according to our finite limited measure. What we want is to have our thoughts enlarged, that with enlarged thoughts we may have more of God.

And now this life, as it is in Christ, for the present is all up there. Christ is raised and seated at the right hand of God. And by faith, through the Word, we can see Him there. We know Him, and have seen Him. By faith now—but soon it will be sight—where He is—

"There no stranger God will meet us."

It will be *Him*, Jesus, Jesus, we shall see throughout all the ages of ages. It will be still and for ever, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" still and for ever, "I in Him, and He in me."

But now John wants those to whom he wrote—and many of them, like some of you, were little children, babes in Christ—to know all this; to know, in fact, all that he knew himself. Hence he says, These things write I unto you, that you may be raised to our own level, that you may have fellowship with us. The very latest born of the children of God need not know less than the very apostles.

Now fellowship requires more than one, and also that the persons to possess it must be mutually instructed. Here is a threefold fellowship; first with the apostles, next with the Father and the Son, then one with another. God may have taught you some truth which another cannot see. There can be, in such case, no fellowship. Fellowship is in knowing the same thing. A friend converses with me on medicine; *I* am in ignorance; the conversation is all on one side. If he instruct me, and raise me to his own intelligence, then we may have fellowship. To have Christian fellowship I must know that about which there is to be fellowship. I must know God, His eternal purpose of grace and love as revealed in Christ. And I must know the Son—what He is, and what the love of the Father is. It is of no use talking of a million of money to one who does not know what money is.

But, says John, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Oh, beloved, this fellowship is something far higher than mere prayer, something far more than merely asking for blessings. What would you think of a child who never said anything to his father but, "Father, I want"? who would come on Monday morning and cry, "Father, I want;" Tuesday, "Father, I want;" Wednesday, "Father, I want;" Thursday, "Father, I want;" Friday, "Father, I want;" Saturday, "Father, I want;" Sunday, "Father, I want;" until at last the father asks:

"My child, have you nothing else to say?—nothing else to tell me? You never come but to ask." Dear friends, what fellowship of heart is there between *that* child and his father? How different when he comes to his father, and, putting his hand in his father's hand, and knowing what is in his father's heart, talks to him of what is in his father's heart. Oh, how little do we know of such fellowship with the Father—of such intimate communion with our God! A friend once remarked: "I never come to God but I feel I have so much to confess. What I grieve over is, that I find my time is so much spent in mere confession—I have so little *communion with God*." Oh that I could impress this upon you, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus! We come to God too much as paupers. "Ever since you knew me," God might say, "you have been asking, and asking, and asking: when are the streams going to flow back upon the ocean?"

when are you going to tell me of that which delights me?" And what is it which does delight Him? Why, Christ, of course. I see Him—what He is, to God and to me, and I tell it all out to God. I see His wondrous love, His beauty, His matchless grace and perfectness, and I tell God of it. I see the glory which, as Son, He now possesses, and the glory which, by and by, as *man*, He will possess, and I tell God of it; and all this, beloved, is infinitely delightful to the Father's ear. Oh, let me urge you to seek to enjoy such fellowship with God! and then you will know something of what John adds: "And these things write we unto you, that"—that *what*?—"that ye may *doubt*." Beloved, is that it? "that ye may be stinted and straitened in your desires;" is that it? Oh, no! but, says the apostle, "*that your joy may be full*." Ah, when the prodigal sat inside that circle in the father's house, when he *saw* the father's joy, the father's heart, then, doubtless, he thought, "It is indeed true; it is all true, what I heard, that his heart yearned to have me. It *is* true, he was not satisfied until he could see *me* seated at his table; he has reserved all for *me*—the best robe, and the ring, and the fatted calf;" and as he sat and meditated, there was fellowship between his heart and the heart of his father. So fellowship, *communion*, is just getting right out of self, up into God's thought, or rather down, down into the deep recesses of love and grace, in God. It is divine life in us, knowing, through the Word, the life which is in God.

And now let us look at another thing—let us look at *the scene of all this*. Where is it? Why, “*in the light*.” “If we walk in the light,” says John, “as He is in the light, we have fellowship.” Unless I am in the light, I have not fellowship. Oh, beloved, where is Jesus? He was down here; He went deep down *with* our sins into death, and He arose from that death, *without* our sins, into the presence of God—that scene of perfectness and rest; and we who were dead, and for whom He died, are quickened, and are raised up together with Him, and are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Hence, as to our standing in Him, we are *in the light*. Yes; yonder, up there, is the scene of our life, of our worship, of our communion; not down here, where the knee bends—not here, where the voice gives its audible utterance—not here, where the four walls rise around us—not here at all, but *there*, in the risen life, where Christ is before God. Our liberty to be there is in virtue of the blood of Jesus. Such is risen life. You know how it was with our princess, when she was still in Denmark, where, during six months of plighted love, she yet lingered in the old country. But were her affections still in her old country? Oh, no! From the moment her heart was won they were here in England. All her letters were written, all her wardrobe was prepared, with a view to her position here. She was already in heart and thought over here, in *the reigning house*, with him with whom now her life

was one. So now our spirit is with Him in whom our love is all centred—Jesus. He is no longer here, blessed be God! in a world that scorned and rejected Him! and which, if He were here now, would still scorn and reject Him! No, He has risen and gone up, and is there within the veil, blessed be His name!—no more with marred visage—no more with sorrowing heart. He has gone in there, and there we too are. Man lives, not so much where he himself is, as where he loves. So is it with the believer—he lives not so much where he now is as where the object of his love is—where the Lord is; and He is in the light; and if we are there, in calm, conscious intelligence of this, we have fellowship with Him—we can speak with Him, and we can have fellowship with each other about Him, and our fellowship is in heaven—far above all heights. Oh, wondrous position! oh, blessed privilege! yea, *right!* which is now ours in Christ.

Believers, do we *know* this fellowship? “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” How blessed—“*into your hearts.*” The Spirit of the *Son* giving us to know the Son; also the Father, whom the Son reveals. This is a precious truth, that the same Spirit which is in the Son is in us. The Son has fellowship with the Father: we say, “Abba, Father.” Suppose for a moment that my spirit, with all its affections, memories, and thoughts, could enter into you—you, having my spirit, would at

once be in possession of what is now known only to me. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

And He does reveal the Son. Said the Lord to His disciples, "He shall not speak of Himself; He shall testify of me." Just as Eliezer testified of Isaac, his rank, his riches, his person, so the Spirit the Lord through the Word. And as Eliezer led the way through the desert, travelling over many a dark and dangerous place, so the Spirit leads us. And as she who was to share with Isaac his inheritance walked on in fellowship with Eliezer, who unfolded to her all his mind concerning her hope in Isaac, so also the Spirit unfolds to us, through the Word, the nature and joy of our own hope. How eagerly did the one tell and the other hear! But had she not *heard*, there would be no fellowship. So, if I will not *hear* the truth, I stop fellowship. Imagine my being in fellowship with the Son, and yet no ear or desire for what is in His heart! He says, "I will come again." But I say it has a meaning different from what it says. Can I be in fellowship, and turn away from the hope that is nearest and dearest His heart? or can I be in fellowship, and know not how He is waiting, in long patience, for the day when His glory shall be consummated? What! in fellowship, and not know the purposes of His own love and grace, or the purposes of the Father!

The Spirit of the Son reveals Him (the Son) to me

and *in* me. He reveals Him as a Person. He tells of the love and glory of a personal Christ. Christianity is no myth, no abstract theory. It does not consist in mere doctrines, or truths, however great. No; the very heart-strings of Christianity are closely entwined around *a person*. The beginning and end—nay, the very soul and centre of it, is the glorious person of the Lord. Such are our affections, that we could not rest in a system of truths merely, nor in a book, not even the Bible, unless it revealed *Him*. If I have not *Him* I have nothing. But I must have *Him*, and live in the sense of His love and grace as a person. Without such a sense I grow cold. I lose all my freshness of soul and power in service. I grow worldly; I lose all. But having Him, and knowing Him, I have all. Paul, standing on this, exclaimed, “I know *whom* I have believed.” It is said of Nelson, that he won all his victories with an imaginary ball of glory ever suspended before his eyes. Paul had no imaginary glory before his eyes. His was no illusion, no fancy of the brain. His eye was ever on the Lord Himself, whom he had seen in *the glory*. In his spiritual vision one glorious object was ever present. “I know *whom* I have believed.” He did not say—“I know *what* I have believed;” though truly if any one could testify with certainty to the truth of *what* he believed, it was the apostle. Nor did Paul say, “I know *when* I believed,” though he did know. No; but it was, “I know *whom* I have believed.”

I have as a rule very little opinion of those who cannot go back to some period of their lives when they experienced a change. What! be quickened from death unto life, and yet be unconscious of the transition! What! transfer your devotion and service from the devil to God, and yet not be aware of the change! Paul, seeing Jesus, said, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus," was the reply. Knowing that changed his whole life. He was that same loving, adorable Jesus whom Paul hated, but who ascended from that mount when a blessed confluence of eyes rested on Him. The resurrection One whom Paul thought was an impostor, but whom he came to see, was the grand key-stone of Christianity; for if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins.

But John goes on to add—"If we say we have fellowship with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we lie, and do not the truth." If I am ignorant of your property in India, I have not fellowship with you about it. If you say you have fellowship with Him, and are living in sin, or are dead in your sins, you tell a lie, says John. How can death have fellowship with life? How can a man who not only has enmity to God, but who absolutely *is* enmity to God—how can he have fellowship with the Father and with the Son? If you say you have fellowship with us who are believers, it is a lie. I meet a man, and say, "Do you know the Lord Jesus?" He replies, "Well, I trust I do." I further ask, "But do you know the value of His blood, and what the power of His risen

life is?" He answers, "Oh, I have never thought about that! I do not understand that!" Then, though he may *say* he is a Christian, we have no fellowship: he is not in the light! Even the possession of eternal life is one thing, but the intelligent apprehension of the nature, power, and scene of it, is quite another. Now, mark again what John says here—"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ"—mark this, beloved—"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." See the connection there is between our position of fellowship and the blood. Where is the blood now? Not, as once, upon that accursed tree—not in the veins of the God-man, but up in heaven—*i.e.* the value of it. Yes; for when the Lord of life and glory rose from the tomb, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He as it were carried the blood in along with Him, and sprinkled it before, and down upon, the golden altar, in the very presence of God. So, beloved, when you and I are enjoying calm fellowship up there "in the light," if the devil, or the world, or aught of sin, should cross our souls, and seek to mar that communion—what then? Why, then, says John, "*there* is the blood." It speaks *for* us. It is *always* there. Blessed truth!

There are three precious letters in that word Cleanseth; I mean the e-t-h—Cleanseth. The efficacy of the blood is always going on, both while you wake and when you sleep. The blood of Jesus is

always before God, in the presence of His holiness, and it cleanseth from all sin. It is always there to meet and remove any thought or act of sin which may be in us, but which never reaches God; for Christ is there with the value of the blood. Oh, precious provision for us poor sinners!

Like Aaron, on the day of atonement, in the holy place, he was in all perfectness of garb and mitre; but he could not be there without the blood. God might have said, "Aaron, there is sin in the camp," and he would answer, Yes, but here is the blood. "Aaron, the soul that sins must die." "Yes, but here is the blood." And the light of the glorious Shekinah shone out. There was a man between Israel's sins and God. There is the God-man between our sins and God. How was an Israelite assured Aaron was there? You remember what we said about the bells. A Levite might go and put his ear down to the mystic veil to listen, and would return, saying, "I know he is there." "How?" "I heard the bells." How do I know Jesus is in the light for me? Ah, the bells! What are they? Jesus said, "If I go there the Holy Ghost will come down here." Every sigh for the Lord to come, every moment of joy, every sorrow for sin, every sense of Him, is the ringing of the bells.

This whole subject bears upon two things—upon our state before God, and our life before men. I could not be *in the light*, where God is, unless meet for the scene. I must be possessed of a perfectness as un-

sullied as His own. This I have in Christ. He is possessed of complete holiness. Life, light, and holiness are in Him. They are reckoned to me as mine. Thus I am as He is, and where He is, in the light—where God's holiness cannot detect a thought in Him contrary to itself. It is God who has given me this place. His grace has reigned over every obstacle, through righteousness, in putting us there. We are there, "complete in Him"—Christ—"who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Oh, beloved, are we living in the place thus given us? It is ours, as God's children, whether or not we have ever consciously possessed it. No words can express its moral blessedness. What perfectness! what rest! what joy in the Lord! what communion! As He is before God in righteousness and holiness, and who rests in God, so are we.

Ah, this it is which gives us our life of holiness before men! We do not walk holily *that* we may be in the light, but *because we are in the light*. I may have conflict, sorrow, and be surrounded by evil on every hand here, yet the constant thought of being in the light, as He is in the light, will keep the soul in peace and rest. And the light will give a capacity to judge of things here. It will make the soul cautious of her path. Where the Lord is, there is she; and she will not touch that which is contrary to the light. Every thing will be brought up, as it were, to the level of our place before God, and judged

according to it. What death is this to the Antinomian idea of living as we list ! A world whose course is sin will have no charm with one who is living in the power of being raised and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Dear friends, what a height is this—a height not gained by us, but given to us ! We did not attain it. We have it on believing *in Christ*. Christ having died, having become man, and being before God for us, we are there in His right, in His holiness, in His acceptance, in His rest. How *could* man have ever reached to such a place ? and who but God *could* have found means of placing us there ?

Now another thing, How is all this mine ? It is all mine by seeing that I am on the heavenly side of the cross, that sin is atoned for and put away, and that up in heaven, where Christ is, I am not in darkness, but in light. I *was* in darkness. When He took the cup on the cross, darkness covered the scene. I stand gazing on, and say, *Is* atonement complete ? accepted ? I get over to the *other* side of the cross and find darkness overpast, and I see that atonement *is* complete. I am in the light, and there is only a step from the load of my sins to Christ ; only a step from the darkness of self to Christ. “There is life for a look.” May the Lord, my master, reveal it to you. “He appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Not *sins* merely, but sin ; and though many dear believers do not see it, it was not merely sins, but

sin, sin as God knew it, that Christ put away. Beloved, if sin, sins, all your sins, were not there on that tree, you are yet in your sins. But the Lord laid upon Him our sins, and He took them down with Him into death; and having fully and perfectly expiated them, He rose without them; and so when He comes the next time, it will be "*without sin.*" "But," says some dear saint, "how can that be? have I not sin? I am constantly sinning." Yes, that is it of which John further speaks, "If any man sin, if any believing man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"—one ever speaking for us. He who was with us, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," now appears in the presence of God for us. He is there accordingly, not to put away sins, but to stand between God and our sins; as we have said, our Advocate and Intercessor with God. So that if we sin—and the Word supposes we may sin—He is there with God to meet our case. And, oh, the thought has often proved a solace to my own soul, He does it *when* we sin; at those times when we, perhaps—alas that it ever should be so!—are not in any sense of the evil we may be in. For it is not said, If any man *feel* his sin, or *repent*, or *confess*; but if any man *sin*, we have (at the time of the sin) an Advocate with the Father. But, as in the case of Peter, He does, on having interceded for us, bring us into confession; yea, often into deep repentance and sorrow of soul before God for our sin. But at that very

time of sorrow, how solacing to our souls, how restoring to communion, to think the very sins, the memory of which grieves us, were at the very moment of their occurrence met in grace, yea, in *righteousness*, by God through Him whose merit is ever in His presence, and whose intercession for us never fails. Hence His name, in this respect, is truly precious; which is Advocate—or *Paraclete*—as the word is. We must ever distinguish between atonement and forgiveness. The atonement was made 1800 years ago, but the constant forgiveness we need is assured to us by God, in virtue of the ever-present blood. But to know the grace in which we thus stand is our power in confession, also in the prevention, of sin. For with the *believer*, the more he grows in grace, the more does he see the evil of sin—sin which will be in him to the very last. How many a saint, ripe for glory, on his dying-bed, has said—

“A *guilty*, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Thou art my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour and my all.”

Truly we have the evil nature—*sin* in the flesh. The old man, I know, *was* crucified on the cross; but is he not yet in *me*? My power over him is, to reckon him dead. He has had his doom. Christian, in Bunyan, saw two lions in the way, and he trembled; but he found they were *chained*, and then he went on rejoicing. When I see myself in myself, I tremble;

but when I see myself as having had my doom on the cross, I go on my way rejoicing. You understand.

But then comes the truth, that if we say we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves. What shall I do, I say? Every day I live I find *sin*; even though I could go through a single day without committing actual sin, yet there must ever be the consciousness of shortcomings. The right which the Saviour has to all the love and abounding gratitude of my heart is great, when I know how justly He claims the supreme affections of my soul—the loving obedience in service of every hour—the joyful and implicit resignation of my will to His will; when I know this, and see that I have *not* rendered it all, then comes the sense of sin, and of coming short of the divine glory. We have seen, moreover, that we have still “sin in the flesh.” Hence our conflict: “If any man *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father.” There He appears inside the veil, in all the energy of the blood. And then, as we have also seen, when *known* sin has been contracted, and a believer becomes melancholy and depressed under the deep sense of his sin, why, then, mark, there is further provision—that which comes of *confession*—“And if we confess our sins, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*”

But now, ere I close, let me speak a little on the *action* of this life. All that comes of self, and not of this life, is sin; it is wood, hay, stubble, which will be burned. If I give large benefactions, and it does not spring from this life, but is of self, it is sin. If I

preach, and my preaching does not spring from this life, it is sin. If I visit the poor, or sit by the bedside of a sick one, and if I so speak and act that when I am gone he says, "Oh, what a person! how kind!" and a thousand other things about myself, why, I have left *myself* there! Instead of leaving Christ, I have left *self* there; I have, in fact, supplanted the very Lord Himself. We ought to go to others, and it should be all Him, Him; we should leave behind us only Himself. He only should occupy the thought of the poor or the suffering one. Beneficence, education, natural gifts, talents—all our works will be as nothing unless they spring from this life. Oh! did you ever inquire how much of your work will abide the test of *that day*? Lord, what have *I* that will have conveyance beyond death, or beyond the Judgment-seat? Alas! I fear but very little. But just as I cannot lift my finger or move my eye without the exercise of natural life, so should it be with this life and all I do for God. I ought to perform no act, speak no word, but in accord with that divine, eternal life which is in me. This is a large subject. For how did the life that was in Christ act in Him? It was in this wise: it was His "meat and drink to do the will of His Father." "I delight," He would say, "to do Thy will, O God." All *He* did was according to that will. But, alas! how far short of the Perfect One are we!—self and sin mixing with all we do. It is whilst looking at *Him*, and seeing how little we are like Him, that shame and confusion cover us.

Remember, it is "*if* we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The same solemn "*if*," doubtless, regards also our fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Blessedly it is *fellowship*, and not *discipleship*, that hangs upon this condition; else our hope of being Christians would be vain. It is well it is not said, that if we walk in the light, then have we an advocate with the Father, or then are we sons, or then are we members of Christ. These are of grace, and are not dependent on our obedience, blessed for ever be His name!

It is our sense of *communion* we lose—our "*fellowship* one with another, and with the Son and the Father—if we walk not in the light. Oh, then, let us not be regardless of our obedience and walk before God! Did you ever, beloved, link together what John says in verse one of this chapter with verses thirteen and twenty-four of chapter ii.—"That which was from the beginning" was *Christ*? He had revealed the Eternal Life. The fathers to whom John wrote had "known Him," as John had, "*from the beginning*." They were to let that "*abide* in them which they had heard from the beginning. For if that which they had heard from the beginning *remained* in them, then they would *continue in the Son and in the Father*." Thus, beloved, if the Lord REMAIN in you, you will continue in the Son and in the Father.

How beautiful the way in which this whole subject has come to us. Shall I put it again? He who was

with us from the beginning was in the bosom of the Father, knew Him, and revealed Him. But John was in *His* bosom, and learned the Father in Him. The Son *revealing the Father* is *what he learned*. We, through the Spirit's teaching, receive the same. Beloved, is it not so? How immense our position! May the Lord write it more and more on our hearts.

But, it may be, though we are all professedly believers, that some are such only in name.

Dear friends, there must be no uncertainty here. Are you yet in your sins? Have *you* this life? Are *you* merely in the energy of nature?—or are you in the life of God? No fancy will do. No mere profession will do. You must have something solid to rest upon. I had once a friend, who was suddenly struck down—laid low in death. As death had come, he cried, in an agony of despair—

“I won't die—I can't die—I'm not fit to die—my God, I *cannot* die!”

Alas! how many have a name to live who are yet *in their sins*! Yet tell a man he has no religion, and you insult him. Alas! how many have religion without God! Oh, we would remind you of this! There is but a little while, and in the twinkling of an eye you may pass into *eternity*; as sings the poet—

“Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death;
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plunged into a world unknown.”

Ah, yes, my friends! Eternity, heaven, hell, God;

retribution, salvation. They are each but one word, yet, oh, what a meaning! It will take eternity to understand them. If these things be so, what manner of persons ought we to be? speaking to one another, and admonishing—both saving ourselves, as Paul says, and those who hear us.

And now glance once again at the grand rock, or ground on which we stand. Salvation is not merely to be delivered from hell; it is to be brought nigh to God—to be placed in the light—in the very innermost, highermost circle of His love. “We shall be seated” where no angel ever sat—where no angel ever will sit. “You shall sit down,” says Christ, “with *me* on my throne.” But, then, there was one thing between us and that throne elevation, and that one thing was *sin*. Jesus Himself removed it by taking it upon Himself; He DIED to put it away; and so, as some of you say, “He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” Sin called for death; death was the great barrier between the sinner and the glory. But Christ comes, and by suffering death takes the barrier out of the way; He has gone *through*—gone right in, and left the way open. The blood of Christ is the believing sinner’s right to stand in the very presence of God. As Israel saw their way through the Red Sea, so Christ has come, and made for you a path right through death into *life* and light and fellowship with God, inside the veil, where Christ is. How wonderful! Listen to His own blessed utterance—

“He that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life.” Say, have you not now *heard His words*, and do you not now *believe in the Father* who sent Him? And does He not say that *on* believing you *have* everlasting life? What remains for you who have believed but to take your place as *saved*, and in the light—

In the light where Jesus is,
Light of uncreated bliss,
We have fellowship with God,
Through the ever-present blood.

Blessed in that light to be,
Knowing that *we are as He*;
God in love hath set us there,
Perfect love which casts out fear.

Highest height, my soul, for thee
There the Father's face to see;
One with Jesus, who is there,
Favoured all His members are.

All I have, as in that light,
Holy is in God's own sight;
Lord, in righteousness divine,
All thy perfectness is mine.

That which I could never be,
Thou Thyself art made for me;
Life, and light, and holiness,
Wisdom, strength, and righteousness.

Sin and self I am below,
Sorrow, conflict, here I know;
But before th' unsullied throne,
Seen I am through Christ alone.

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All of sin, O Lord, is mine,
All of perfectness is Thine ;
What of death was due to me,
Thou hast borne to set me free.

Ah ! 'tis walking in the light,
Walking perfect in Thy sight,
That my walk is close with God,
Through the ever-present blood.

Walking in the light I live—
Highest life which God can give ;
That which keeps my soul in Him
Keeps from Satan and from sin.

Oh, I would for ever stay
'Mid the uncreated ray !
Live that holiness divine,
Which for ever there is mine.

But if walk I must below,
In that light I fain would go ;
Walk as perfect in His sight,
E'en as He is in the light.

COMMUNION.

GEN. xviii.

I WOULD like you, with the Word in your hands, to follow me in a few thoughts as to what thus occurred between the Lord and Abraham, and to see if we have anything like it in our own Christian life.

First, mark the place where the Lord appeared to him; it was Mamre, in Hebron, the meaning of which is fellowship—Communion. This is significant; for truly Abraham was in communion when the Lord came to him. It is when you, in the presence of the Lord, have your hearts, shall I say, open towards the Lord, that He delights to have to do with you. It is blessed when our minds are calmly responsive to what is in His mind. Beloved, are we thus in communion with God?

I believe there are many Christians who pass through their whole lifetime on earth enjoying but little of communion; many indeed are but ill-informed as to what it is which constitutes true communion.

I need not tell you that prayer, however precious in itself, is different from communion. Prayer is all

on our own part—it is simply asking for what we ourselves want. It is a blessed attitude, a divine privilege, daily to draw out of the fulness there is in God for our constant need, to ask, in fact, for what we need; but what would you think of a child who was always in want—always asking, as we have lately said—always pressing his need?

Ah, you would say, he never seems to *have*! never seems satisfied! How much better were he to say—

“Father, I do indeed want, but I speak not of *that*; I know what is in *your* mind; I know what is dear to *you*, and I am come that I may speak with *you*—have communion with *you*.” How pleasurable to such a father! They now enjoy that which is common to them both.

I repeat it, a man may be professedly praying to God all his days, and yet know but little of communion with God.

Again, intercession is different from communion. Intercession is asking or pleading in behalf of others, as Abraham for Sodom, the Lord Jesus on the cross for His murderers, or one believer for another believer; a parent for a child, a child for a parent; a husband for a wife, a wife for a husband. Precious privilege, to bear the burdens of others, or our own, concerning others, before the Lord! but it is not communion.

Confession is different from communion. Oh, it is a blessed privilege to come before God with our own failures and sins, to tell out the burden that is on the

soul and conscience, knowing and believing the promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" but you may have confession and not be in simple communion.

Worship even is not communion. Worship is all on our part.

Communion is that which is *common* to both parties. Sin is not common to you and to God. Confession is not common to you and to God. When a child comes to his parent simply craving and longing, it is not common to both. Communion with God is that which is common to the believing sinner and his Father in heaven. We *know* the purposes of His grace towards us, in and by His Son; these form themes in His presence for communion. Hence communion is a far higher thing than prayer, or confession, or intercession. Prayer, and confession, and intercession will cease with earth; they will have no conveyance with us into heaven. But our communion will be eternal; God's delight and our delight in Christ will be eternal; as God's grace towards us in Christ is more and more known, our communion with God will be more and more full. Hence communion is that which God pre-eminently delights in.

But in what attitude was Abraham when the Lord came to him? This is of deep interest. Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent. On leaving his country and kindred he went out in quest of a country and of a city out of sight—a heavenly one. As a mere traveller, he needed nothing to encumber him.

He had seen, as it were, heaven opened, and a city was revealed—a heavenly city; hence his calling was a heavenly calling. He was not called to any present dominion here, as was Adam in Paradise. He was not to reign as David or Solomon. His calling was not to earthly possessions, though his seed would possess the earth; his calling was that the God of glory had appeared to him—a God of heavenly glory—with promise of a *heavenly* city. He could have sung in spirit—

“No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in the wilderness,
A poor wayfaring man.”

What Abraham had was a tent. This was according to his character as a pilgrim. Another thing he had, which was an altar. That was according to his character as a worshipper. But God could receive no worship from him but on the ground of sacrifice: the altar was that which indicated sacrifice also. His portion was *God*; but not God in some abstract form, unattainable to faith, and unapprehensible to the mind, but a *God of glory*, whom having seen he loved, and obeyed, and enjoyed, who had told him what to do and what he would have. Now, God has not appeared to us as a God of *visible* glory. It is through His Word He has appeared to us. He has told us, in Ephesians, that He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Church and Christ are one; He the head, and they the members. “God hath chosen them *in Him* before

the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame *before Him* in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; *having made known unto us the mystery of His will*, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: *in whom* also we have obtained an inheritance."

You will mark the words, "*in Him*," and "*before Him*," and "*in whom*;" they all indicate the scene of our blessedness. It is not as was Adam's *Eden*; it is not as will be Israel's in the latter day—*Immanuel's land*; it is not as was Israel's after the wilderness—the *land of Canaan*. No; our place is *in Christ*; the character of our position is the same as His, the measure of it the same as His. Christ is now before God; God is His portion, He is ours also. He is God's *Beloved*; we are accepted, taken into His favour in the Beloved. He has died, ascended, gone up far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. "And we who were dead hath He quickened

together with Christ, and hath raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In all this God has put us in the same circle and on the same level with His Son. As He is not of the world, so we are not of the world; as He is in heavenly places, we are there likewise, seated in Him: as He lives possessed of the Father's love, so do we. We are heirs with Him of the like glory. He would, as partners of His joy, see us seated with Him on the same throne. Oh, this is the portion of every saint! God has given us a place in Christ, His own Beloved. His portion is also ours. It is our possession of Him that makes us pilgrims here. As our calling is a heavenly calling, so our hope is a heavenly hope. All things here are secondary; the world, in comparison of it, is a wilderness world. Our hope is a heavenly hope. As with Abraham, so with us; we have a tent, for we are pilgrims; we have an altar, for we are worshippers.

On the occasion before us Abraham was sitting in the tent door. He was there at leisure, as if unhampered and unhindered by circumstances, having a mind at perfect peace. It was in the very heat of the day; the sun was at its meridian, when it is natural to man to long to breathe more freely. This, we may imagine, was the attitude of his soul; and surely, sometimes at least, it is ours. Oh, how sweet to be sitting, longing, and panting after God! yea, for the freer breathings of the soul in communion with God! Sweet such soul-breathings, as we sing—

“Each moment call from earth away
My heart, which lowly waits Thy call ;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
‘I am thy life, thy God, thy all.’
To know Thy power, to hear Thy voice,
To feel Thy love, be all my choice.”

Abraham, we may suppose, was in the calm noon of communion with God. He was simply waiting, as it were, the special visit of the Divine Being ; and mark what he saw : “Three men stood by him.” They were there *before* he saw them. Oh, if we had but eyes to see—I mean when we are longing for God—the Lord would be seen as visibly with us ! Abraham just lifted his eyes, and there was *God* ! and at once he was in the very presence of God ! How precious ! how blessed ! And, oh, how sweet is it thus, when in communion, to know that the Lord *is* blessedly with us ! Thus, in our dying moment, when the soul is released from the body, which now cannot see God, we shall be simply present with the Lord. What an image is it of how faith, in one moment, may be changed to sight !

And now mark here the intelligence of Abraham. He addresses the three as *one* ; he says, “My Lord.” I do not say that he was fully intelligent of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—but with singular utterance he speaks to three persons as “*my Lord*.” The whole Godhead is in Christ.

It is our privilege to know that the *Son* is in Him, the Father in Him, and the Holy Ghost in

Him. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And the Father has been manifested in the Son; and we know, and have abiding in us, the Holy Ghost, who reveals to us God, and who shows us what is in the Father and in the Son. It is a delightful employment to trace what a full growth of manifestation there has been from the first of God. The whole Godhead has been gradually revealed, and we gaze upon the several glories with unveiled face. What a word is that!—"It pleased the Father that in Him should dwell *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*." It was pleasant, blessed, for the fulness of God to dwell in the human body of the man Christ Jesus. No man had ever seen God; the only begotten, He *hath* revealed Him. Up to *that* revelation there was no such knowledge of God. Till then angels approached with covered faces; never after. They gazed on Him at the incarnation. One of their company ministered to Him at Gethsemane; others were in the scene of His burial robes, as if they had carefully taken them from Him, and folded them, as we have seen, on the morning from the tomb. He could say—and, oh, blessed word!—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" His love, the eternal love; His grace, the eternal grace; His holiness, the eternal holiness.

These, as we have seen, were among the things which form the life of God, the eternal life that was with the Father, and which we now have—even the life of God—of Christ. It is this life which forms

ours. Says Paul, "That the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our bodies."

But how gradual has been, from the first, the growth of what we now see! In the beginning it was God—simply, sublimely, *God*—who made the heavens and the earth. But when man was formed, it was the *Lord* God—an advanced truth of His name. Afterwards to Abraham He is a *God of glory*, which was much additional. Then *the Almighty*. Then His shield and exceeding great reward. Afterwards the everlasting God (Gen. xxi. 33); that is, not the God of any one age only, but of all ages, for ever and ever. Then the name Jehovah. Israel had sinned, and may expect to be destroyed. No, says God; you have not till now known me by my name *Jehovah*, which means unchangeable. You change; *I* do not. It is my purpose to bring you into the land: my purpose, whatever your sin may be, cannot fall through. Blessed truth for us!

But who, in the days before Christ, ever knew *the Father* as we know Him? or the *Son*, as such? or the Holy Ghost, who is with us, and shall be in us, for ever. How blessed to trace it all out!

Now Abraham, when he saw the Lord, ran to meet Him. Oh, the readiness of his heart! being in communion. If the Lord were suddenly to appear to you, perchance running *away* you might be. If you were brought suddenly and at once into the presence of God, would it be your joy, your delight? But Abraham had seen the God of *glory*, and thus had

known what He was. He knew the love which had given him his portion ; and "there is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear." We are never afraid to meet with those we love. The moment his eyes were lifted, and he saw God, he ran to meet Him. Is that your attitude, beloved ? Are you delighting in the nearness of God—speaking to Him as a man speaketh with his friend ? And when He presents Himself as He may, at death—when the mystic soul is revealed, separated from the body, will it be yours to—

"Run up with joy the shining way,
To embrace your dearest Lord" ?

It was in the broad noon the Lord appeared in Mamre ; yet was it eventide with Lot in Sodom. The light was fast diminishing there. The day was far spent, and the night was at hand. Lot must pass through tribulation, and be saved so as by fire. And if the righteous scarcely or with difficulty be saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear ? *Where*, alas ! "When they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.) "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto

judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds): the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

It was no fast declining day, or terrible coming night with Abraham; it was high, broad noon. The Church will have had *its* night, made such by the previous absence of the Lord, when He comes to take vengeance on all who know not God, and obey not the gospel. It will be with the Lord, *taken away*, as 1 Thess. iv., before the judgments descend, and when He comes *in* judgment it will descend with Him. Among the many reasons why the Church will *not be in* the tribulation, this one sufficeth me—that when the Lord comes in judgment, and to execute His wrath, the Church will *come with Him*—will be spectators of that wrath.

And now, said Abraham, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant." Let me hold thee, says Abraham, now I have got thee. 'But for why? Was it merely

for himself? No. "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort **ye your hearts**; **after that ye shall pass on**: for therefore are ye come to your servant."

Do you understand this? "For *therefore* are ye come." What words! What intelligence of God! What a secret! For "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Truly the Lord had come for this very thing: not so much to give, though He would give, but to receive, yea, to be *feasted*; not to feast, though He does feast us, but now Himself to be feasted. How wonderful! and how precious to the soul that knows and loves it! Surely His delights are with the sons of men, and His rejoicings in the habitable parts of the earth. That it was the Lord who had come the whole statement shows.

If you have any difficulty as to this, you find Him saying, "Shall *I* hide from Abraham that thing which *I* do?" Then giving the promise of Isaac, and telling the doom of Sodom, showing how palpably it was the Lord. How marvellous the patriarch's intelligence! Said Abraham, "Let not the Lord haste away; I will prepare a feast." It was as if Abraham knew what was the desire of God—as if he had said, "I know His joy in me. I know that in which His soul delighteth. Blessed be His name! He has indeed fed *me* with both bread and wine, and filled *me* with that which He alone could give; so I needed not to take the spoils taken from the kings in the

vale of Siddin; and now in my turn I will feast the Lord." Bold, but true utterance; "for therefore is my Lord come."

Think of the Lord, beloved, who long afterwards found a cup of refreshing from the woman of Sychar, saying, "*Give me to drink*," now coming to Abraham to be refreshed by him; yea, coming to be *feasted* by him! Hence Abraham orders "three measures of meal and a calf from the herd." It is the fifteenth of Luke reversed. There the returned son is feasted by the father, who prepares for him the fatted calf; here it is the returned son preparing the feast for the Father. Who can doubt that the feast in both cases was Christ! Ah, this is what God likes, that we should bring Him Christ! He complained of Israel, that they had brought Him no small cattle, no lamb or kid of their burnt-offerings. What God wanted was "the sweet cane" and the "fat"—that which set forth the preciousness—yea, the very perfectness "of the Son of His love." I am speaking concerning believers, but it is true concerning the sinner. God says, "You have not brought me Christ; you have brought me your sins, your difficulties, your doubts, your cares, your burdens, your sorrows, your bereavements; for these surely I care; but you have not brought *my Son*. Were you to bring *Him*, the sins once on Him are gone! the condemnation which He took is overpast! With no sin or doom in Him you are free, accepted as He in my presence! This is what He died for. This is what I love."

Ah, beloved, is this your sense of what Christ is to God, and of what He is to you? Is this your soul's delight before God? Do you see Jesus as inexpressibly precious to God, as the one who, in dying for us, has given Him highest glory? Do you see that, through Him, God, who is a consuming fire as to sin, has had His way in saving us by consuming sin on the cross, and in showing in us the exceeding riches of His grace? Oh, how sweet is it in His presence to hear Him say, "*My* beloved Son," and for us to respond, "And *my* beloved Saviour." This is *communion*. The ineffable love which the heart of God has towards His Son; you see it, tell God of it, speak to Him about it, and of your own delight in Him, and indebtedness to Him. This, I repeat, is a far higher thing than all prayer or confession; it is *communion*—fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Christ Jesus.

But where did Abraham feast God? Was it in a palace or in a tent? No, indeed. It was under a tree. Suggestively here—a tree represented the cross. It was a tree, when cast by Moses into bitter waters at Marah, that made them sweet. It is the cross which has turned all our bitter into sweet, all our death into life, our hell into heaven. We owe all to the cross. We could not have been in the presence of God, saved from death and hell, nor ever have known divine grace or holiness, but for the cross. When God met Christ on the cross, who was there for the sinner, Christ must die. But because of that

cross where the Saviour did die, we can meet God and live. It is through the cross that God justifies the ungodly—makes us His righteousness—subjects of His highest joy—children of His family and home. It is when we see this that God is well pleased. God might have said of Abraham, “He remembers me. He knows me. He knows ~~my~~ heart, my mind, since I appeared to Him in Ur of the Chaldees. He knows my thoughts, how I know and love him.” Dear friends, does He say this of you? Does He never say of you, of me, yea, of some poor, lowly, solitary one, such as Abraham was, “He remembers me; He knows me; He is got into the thought that was in me before all worlds; yea, with that which was the joy of my soul from all, all eternity”? Yes, beloved, some of us are in this. We are in the secret of His love—in the love that was eternal in HIM; and we see ourselves in the purpose of that love, that it associates us with the Son, of whom we can say, “I am my beloved’s,” from whom none can separate. Oh, truly this is communion!

And in the estimate God forms of it, does it go for nothing? Verily, no. Though God infinitely delights in receiving, He ever infinitely delights to give. He will not be our debtor. In this He is like any other father. Were your child to come to you and say, I delight in what you love, I know your mind, your purposes, what would be the effect on you? Would you not say, Is not this love to be requited? is there anything I can do for him? Thus God says, Shall I

hide from Abraham what I am going to do in Sodom, or can I keep from him my purpose as to Isaac?

Beloved, what does He not delight to reveal to us? He has not called us servants, for servants know not what their master doeth. He has called us *friends*. The Word, which is His revealed mind, shows His love in the Eternal past, and what are His purposes for the future. The Spirit of God, who searches the deep things of God, dwells also in us, and reveals them to us. The record containing them is complete. There is no new or further truth to be added. Full light has He shed on the coming doom of the Sodom of this world, on Lot's deliverance, and on the Church, whose calling is heavenly, and who, ere the judgments fall on this present evil age, will be saved from the coming wrath, caught up, as it is said, into the air, to be for ever with the Lord. Oh, it is whilst in communion that the Spirit brings all to our remembrance, helps our memories, and makes powerful and blessed in our life what He teaches through the Word to the soul. Blessed Spirit! let us not hinder or grieve Him. In true communion there is no hindrance. In Mamre, *away* from Sodom, and not *in* Sodom, is the scene of His unfettered fellowship.

And now, beloved friends, what seeds of precious things are there in this theme. How suggestive of many personal practical inquiries. And, first, are *we* in communion? Try yourselves by your recollection of this very day. What was the character of your

secret moments this morning before God? I do not ask, *Had you* such moments? but, having them, were you in *communion*? or were you hurriedly, and it may be confusedly, asking, *asking*? saying, "Lord, give me this, or I want that; or, Lord, I confess this, or deplore that?" Has this been the character of your approaches to God? "Alas!" some may say, "I never seem to know any other. Years and years pass on, and I am always in doubt, or fear, or want. I know but little of what Abraham had—unhindered fellowship with God." Ah, yes many pass their lives, and (though saved) are simply paupers, ever hanging on upon God, as it were, as if in sore want! Do I make light of prayer? No, indeed. Prayer is blessed; confession is blessed. But why not communion blessed? Is there never to be a mind at such perfect peace with God, and such leisure from its own wants, that it can speak to God of what is dearer to Him than all other things—even of the Son of His own love—presenting to Him Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only; saying, "For therefore is my Lord come"?

For the soul to enjoy communion there are many things needed.

Knowledge is needed.

True, there may be much knowledge and little communion; and there may be much communion with little knowledge. Yet God, in indulging us with so much of His own knowledge (shall I say His own secret mind?) intended that our intercourse with Him should be commensurate therewith.

Accordingly, to be in communion with God, one ought to know fully what God is—that He is *love*; and what are His eternal purposes of love towards us. That love was a special love; it was such a love as had never before been known to be in God—a love which embraced man as a child, providing for him the best things God could give. The best robe had never been worn by angels; the fatted calf never provided for *them*. Man, as a special child of God, or the Church specially with the Lord, will be a theme of their wonder and joy throughout all ages. When I know what are the thoughts of God towards me, my communion will be according to them, according to their exceeding riches in grace.

If we would enter in some measure into the love of the Father to us who are saints, we must look at the love which, before all worlds, found its one object in Him who is the Son of that love; for, wondrous and vast as is the thought, *that* is the very love which now, by virtue of our oneness with Him, He lavishes upon us. Did you ever think of it, that whilst bestowing upon us such infinite blessings and privileges, God withholds not even this—the very same love which from everlasting had centred in Him? That such is the fact is shown by the words of the Lord Himself in John xvii., where He prays the Father “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be *in them*.”

There are two kinds of love in God which every believing sinner enjoys, or ought to enjoy; viz.,

first, that great love of God which He uniformly exercises towards His creatures; for example, He loves all those bright beings above. They are His own creation. He could not but love them. And then, too, He loved man, as made in His own image. Ah, yes, and He loves sinners, *as they are*, in all their sinfulness and alienation from Him. The truth is, that supposing one whom I am addressing is dead, unconverted, utterly careless, yet, O sinner, God loves thee at this moment—as thou art. Yes, God, we are distinctly told, “so loved *the world* ;” not the world as it was in Eden merely—not the world improved—oh, no, but the world all through—the world of *sinners*. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us.” It is this love of God to the *sinner* which He commends to us, since it prompted to the wondrous sacrifice of His own Son. How plainly do we see *this love of God to the sinner* brought out in Luke xv. Look at the joy with which the Good Shepherd carries upon His shoulder the poor, wandering one whom He has found. He rejoices over it more than over those who are safe in the fold. Then look at the parable of the *lost son* ; another picture which the Lord draws to unfold this love of God to sinners. That love did not begin when the prodigal had returned and was within the home. No; throughout the whole course of his wanderings his father’s thought had followed him; his father’s heart had yearned after him. Thus with God’s love: it has

not its beginning when the sinner turns to the Lord, but existed during his estrangement from Him. Yes, even from before all ages the sinner has been in the thought and love of God. And I may suggest in passing, those three parables represent the interest which the whole Godhead take in the salvation of the sinner: that of the prodigal unfolds the love of God; that of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep unfolds the love of Christ; and that of the lost piece of money sought for by the woman may show the Holy Ghost seeking, through the truth, or through the church, to save the lost. But the love of which I am led specially to speak, and concerning which our souls may enjoy the very highest and sweetest communion with God, is not the love of God for the sinner, not the love to the world spoken of in John iii., not the love of the shepherd to the lost sheep, not the love of the father to the erring prodigal, not the love of the woman to the missing piece of money, but the love which as Father He has for His own Son. I go back to before all ages, ere creature or world was made, and there I see the Son in fellowship with the Father, and the Father in fellowship with the Son, and that Son I see the one and sufficient object of all that Father's love. What love!—an ocean without a shore. Oh, the depths of it! Well, it is the Father's love which now is ours. Well may we say with John, who in highest communion exclaimed, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*" It is the very love

wherewith He loves *His Son*. Ah, dear saints, this subject allies us to the blessedness bound up with the very existence of the Father Himself! For that which made existence so blessed for Him was His Son. He shared with the Father a primal divine rank and love, which, since He was God, knew no beginning, and will know no end. As I said elsewhere, What goes to make up my life? A little joy and a little sorrow, a little labour and a little rest. But what was the life of God from all eternity? Infinite love *to* the Son; unbroken communion and fellowship *with* the Son; and now *I* am *in* that love, and can never be separated from it. “Who *shall separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?*” It was part of the life which was in God, the love He had to His Son. How wonderful is all this! and that we should have eyes to see it, and hearts to enjoy it, and souls filled with communion with it. It is a life this which goes beyond all other life. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

But another truth here, and truly blessed again is it for communion—having this love; the *Father's* love, it has shown itself in calling us sons. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*.” Not saints merely, separated, which we are; not servants only, which truly is much; not children merely, which we were by creation; but *sons*—raised to the same

rank with Him who is Son and Heir. Beloved friends, are there any besides redeemed sinners on so high an elevation ?

And more : because I am a son, I have the Spirit of His Son in my heart, saying, " Abba, Father ;" and because I have the Spirit of His Son, I know the Son, also the Father whom the Son reveals ; and I am a partaker of the divine nature ; what was and is in God is also in me ; love, truth, holiness, righteousness—these all have an infinite source in Him, and now they are the life of God in me. But how is it that all this love can flow forth to me ? The simple answer is, God foresaw us in Christ. Through Him, in His eternal purpose, He saw us invested with the holiness, light, life, and beauty which also were in Him. It was thus He saw us fit objects of His highest love ; having removed all obstacles which our fallen and corrupt condition as sinners had placed in the way. This He did by the death of the cross ; by which holiness, truth, righteousness have not only been vindicated, but gloriously displayed, in colours which otherwise they never could have worn. Through these, or as the result of such display, the sinner *is the righteousness of God in Christ*, and can stand eternally in God's presence, and have communion with all that he can find to be in God. Ah, beloved, when I know this grace in which as a believing sinner I stand, I see it is all in Him ; it is, all there, *there*—in a once crucified, but now risen Jesus—it is all, all, all in Him !

And this love, as I have said, supposes rank corresponding to the position. It is not *every* child of the family that is an heir; the rank of heir is the exclusive privilege of one.

But He would have us all heirs, and make us "sons" by emphasis—*heirs*—heirs of what? Heirs of the whole inheritance of Christ; viz., God Himself—"heirs of God." Oh, beloved, in God are realms of love—realms of grace—abysses of love—deep, unfathomable abysses of grace; and we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And we have a *hope* corresponding to this rank—"We are to be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Oh, what a *hope*!—to "see Him," and to be "like *Him*." Yes, and when we see Him, it will not be with a marred visage, but with countenance resplendent with glory. And we shall be "like *Him*"—formed after the pattern of His beauty—His holiness, His righteousness, His glory. Oh, what communion may not the heart now find in the knowledge and blessedness of this hope!—a hope full of glory. And what a life! I must see to it, that my daily life in everything corresponds to this blessed anticipation of being *with* Him and *like* Him for ever. Oh, bethink with yourselves, when He comes, we shall come with Him! when He reigns over this redeemed world, we shall reign with Him! and when He is seated on His throne—having put down all rule, having reconciled all things unto Himself—we shall be with Him, knowing His joy, and sharing His glory! Again I say, Need communion

with Him be a form, a name, when a hope like this is ours? Well may we say, What manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us! No angel was ever loved with love like this. No angel will sit down with Him on His throne. But the throne is not *Himself*. You will have *Himself*! Oh, I am tired of not realizing it! All I can do is to say, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly;" for why want Him to tarry a day, or an hour, save but for one thing—that such as some of you may be with Him when He comes? But at any moment He *may* come—come into the air yonder, made radiant by His presence, to reveal Himself, and to gather up His saints together to Him there; quietly, and unperceived to the world, He may arrive there, and His saints will disappear. "Where are they?" will be the exclamation by and by on every hand: it will be a little while's wonder to the world. Said the blessed Lord when He was about to leave those sorrowing disciples—"I am going away, but I will come again;" "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and take you unto myself*" (you disciples, saints of this whole age, who have believed on Him, owning Him during His rejection, both Lord and Christ), "*that where I am, there ye may be also.*" The Lord Himself, says Paul, referring to this promise, will descend from heaven to the air, to which scene He will take us up; those who sleep in Jesus will be raised from their graves, and we who are alive and remain will be caught up

together to the Lord in the air; and so we shall be for ever with the Lord. Hence that coming will not be for the world—will not be to the earth at all—but a coming merely to the air, to take home His saints. When He comes publicly to *this earth*, then they will all come with Him; “for when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall *ye also appear with Him in glory*.” But they must first go to Him ere they can come *with* Him. What a time! We shall be taken away, and shall all enter into the same glory *together*: not one of all the loved members of His body will be missing—not one absent; no, nor yet one in the glory before another; and the Head will enter the glory with all His members—one body—one Christ: not the Head even in glory before the members, nor yet the members before the Head. Seeing, then, that such blessedness is ours, what communion may we not enjoy! what fellowship with the Son! Well may John say, “These things write I unto you, that your joy may be full.” Well may he declare that “it doth not *yet* appear what we shall be.” No, the glory is so great, the happiness of that hour so transcendent, that we do not know what it will be, or what we shall be; we only know, and that for the present is enough, that we shall be *like Him—like Him—like Him*.

Some seem to doubt whether we shall know each other there. Surely it will be passing strange if we have less knowledge there than here. We cannot imagine it for a moment; but every eye there will be

set gazing upon *One*. If you have watched the billows, you have noticed that they all roll in one direction ; that though they clap their million hands together, and are many-voiced in their mighty roar, yet their faces are all looking in *one* direction. So will it be up there : so wonderful, so blessed will it be to gaze upon His face, to behold His glory, that we shall be, as it were, oblivious of all else ; and on, and on, and on we shall gaze, thinking only of Him, looking only at Him, ravished only with Him ; and so much so, that although I may have been standing side by side with friends long known and tenderly loved, yet may there be no recognition, no thought of each other, and still no want, no neglect, no loss ; for we shall be occupied only with HIM !

And, believe me, this blessed hope of ours is indeed much for communion. The Father's love ; sonship ; heirship ; likeness to the Son in the glory ; for ever with one another and the Lord. Oh, dear Christians, will you, after this, be conformed to *this* world ? will you ever again talk of how much of the world you *may* give up, or how much you *may* keep ? No ; rather let your testimony be that of a friend who declared, " People talk of giving up *the* world ; but *I* never had to give up the world. The truth is, very soon after my conversion, on going into society and speaking of the Lord, not liking *Him*, the world very soon *gave me up*." Ah ! if you still wish to be buried in the world, and its pleasures and sins—if the world *be* your portion—do not pretend or flatter yourselves

that this blessed hope and this communion with the glory are yours; but if you live in communion with Christ, and rest only in Him, He will take you out of the world, by making Himself so incomparably precious and lovely in your sight, that all else in comparison will be but a thing of nought.

Oh, beloved people, may the Lord give you to know more and more and more of *Himself*; may you seek or desire nothing but *Him—Him—Him—*to know and love *Him*—to be in communion with *Him*, till we see Him face to face in the glory.

Remember the true scene of communion is where God is, and where Christ is. And here I must know the value of the blood of Jesus; what it has done, having put away sin; and that because of it, in God's presence—

“All is rest, and rest for ever;
All is perfectness above.”

Moreover we must know our place. It is our privilege as believers to see our place as already in heaven, with sin gone, death conquered, and the grave emptied! Many Christians do not see this. They are like the two-and-a-half tribes who were content to remain on the Egypt side of Jordan, albeit the promises made to the fathers, and looked forward to for ages, gave them the land flowing with milk and honey. Instead of that land, they were content to remain in one which they said was “good for cattle.” Singular that an inducement apparently so

low should have led them to forego their divinely-appointed inheritance! Yet so it was. And so it is now with many a true saint, who, although saved, are not living in the scene to which Joshua-Jesus, our risen Head, has brought them. They are not consciously sitting down with Jesus *in* the heavenlies. They are out of this world, but they cannot say, "We are in the land." They can pray, but they are not intelligent worshippers, having realized communion in the true sanctuary. They are much exercised about themselves as to what they are *here* on earth, but they know little or nothing of what they are in heaven in Christ. Christ is seated in the very presence of God, in true rest for us—a rest never, as was *Eden* rest, and *Canaan* rest, to be lost or broken. He is there in the power of an actually accomplished salvation. It lies beyond the cross, and beyond the tomb, and beyond self, and sin, and the sorrows of the wilderness; as we sing—

The wilderness is past,
And Jordan's depths are o'er;
We've reached that bright and blessed place
Where we shall die no more.

He brings us in as free
From sting of death and hell;
Shows us 'tis life and peace to be
Where He Himself doth dwell.

With old corn of the land
He doth our spirits feed;
The Son—*His* rank, *His* life, *His* peace,
Are wondrous food indeed.

Oh, to be always free
In spirit from this earth,
To eat and drink, dear Lord, from Thee,
Thou food of priceless worth !
Angels ne'er eat of this,
They are not one with thee ;
They have a bright angelic bliss,
But *life of God* have we.
His life—the life of God ;
His peace—the peace of Son ;
His home—*His rest*—and His abode,
He says are all our own.
Oh vast, eternal love !
And grace beyond degree !
That, Lord, Thy Church—below, above—
Should thus be one with Thee.

But now, finally, there can be no realized communion without the Spirit. He is in every believer. He is there, the promise of the Father, to reveal through the word *the Father*. He is there, the Spirit of Christ, to reveal Christ. He is there, the Spirit of the Son, to reveal the Son. Because we are *sons* He hath sent the *Spirit of His Son*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Who that would know the Son must have the Spirit of the Son. Such knowledge is needful for the true enjoyment of God ; also *obedience*. If I walk in defilement, trifle with conscience, or neglect the *word*, the soul must suffer loss ; and a chief form of that loss will be want of *communion*. It is well we know to whom to go. Only *One*—He who died for us—can make and keep us clean. Beloved, are we in *communion* ? Do we now know what it is ?

and *where* its scene? and what its power in our words,
and affections, and life?

Communion with the Lord !
'Tis not on earth the scene,
'Tis on the throne th' Incarnate One
In perfectness is seen.

The place is in the light,
Yea, light ineffable !
Where Jesus, precious in His sight,
Doth with the Father dwell.

'Tis there unveiled we gaze,
On love before unknown ;
Where eye of angel ne'er was raised,
Or cherubim looked on.

There, glorious place within,
We commune with our God,
Who sees us as He sees His Son,
Accepted through His blood.

For there before the throne,
'Tis not what we may be,
But all according to that word,
" As He is, so are we."

There we adore the grace,
The vast, unfathomed love ;
Whilst Jesus tells us of our place,
As one with Him above.

Oh what a height is this,
For soul once dead as mine,
To find in God so great a bliss,
Eternal and divine !

Oh for the sweetest lays
That e'er Thine ear hath heard !
Oh for the long eternal days
To adore and praise the Lord !

LIVING MANNA.

“And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”—DEUT. viii. 3.

THERE were no cities, no places of abode, for Israel in the desert. They had no possessions. There were no fields, no corn or wine. All was one long-continued desert; and at times there was no water even that could be taken. Never were multitudes more helpless or dependent. A wanderer, looking on upon their condition, and seeing them, that their wants, without any human intervention, were supplied; that their raiment waxed not old upon them, neither did their foot swell through forty years, might well ask how was it, or what had they? Ah, what indeed! They had *God*—a God who had taken them up for Himself, for His own chosen heritage. He had opened seas and discomfited armies for them. He had made the bitter sweet; palm trees and wells, rivers of water, and bread had He provided; He gave them angels' food.

Nothing more revealed what Israel was than the desert. And nothing revealed *them*—their sin, their need, their weakness—but manifested also some fresh grace and power in God.

He suffered them to hunger, else had they not looked to *Him* for food; and else had He not fed them. He suffered them to fail and faint, else had He not shown His patience, and power, and grace. He *suffered* them to hunger, that He may meet that hunger, giving them the mighty's meat. He permitted it. Blessed permission! For hunger is sweet. Famine is dreadful; but, when food is at hand, how precious is hunger! And when He permitted them to hunger, it was that they may see and know more of Himself. He loved to be known and to be enjoyed. What ways of His did He teach unto Israel? His secret ways—the ways of His love, and patience, and grace. And now that it has been revealed, we have seen the end of the Lord in it—how merciful, and long-suffering, and gracious!

And "He humbled them." The effect of His grace was to humble them. As when Noah was in the ark, and saw all else in destruction, he was humbled at the thought of the grace that had spared *him*. So Israel, after Egypt, or after the Red Sea, or when they saw that, on murmuring, instead of destruction there was manna; or there was water, or there was always a present help; they were ashamed that ever they had distrusted such a God, or ever provoked such a friend. Thus do we say—

“The more Thy glories strike mine eye,
The humbler I shall lie.”

And is there nothing analogous to our condition in this, that He suffered them to hunger? Was not this the beginning of things in us? We felt as those who had no city, no home, no abiding-place of rest or peace; nay, we had no rest, no peace. He suffered us to hunger. What used to please, ceased to do so any longer. The things that used to charm us most, ceased to charm us any more. The so-called pleasures of sin and of the world could not satisfy us; we tried and tried to be satisfied, but we failed. Ah! it was He who suffered us to hunger. He did so; nay, He does so, in love. And why? Because He wants us to feed only on *Him*; only from *Him*; to eat of *His* manna; to live on *His* love; yea, on the Son of His love, the true bread, the living manna, that came down from heaven. Beloved, many of you understand how, besides the hunger He created, He presented *Himself*. And this He does still. Nothing else can satisfy us. Our affections want a *Person*. They cannot rest in a mere doctrine, not even in the Bible, unless it disclose *Him*, and we can say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Oh, then, dear friends, how blessed! And it was when in want that He taught us this, and is still teaching us, in unnumbered ways of *Himself*, as we often sing—

“In the desert God shall teach thee
What the God that thou hast found;
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound.”

But if He suffered them to hunger, it was, as we have said, that He Himself may feed them. He could not give that joy to another. Sweet the pain of hunger when He can come in and surprise us with His bread. Sweet the wound, for which the balm is His own grace and love. He feeds still His beloved with the finest of the wheat, and rains down manna from heaven: we eat angels' food. The angels find their highest delight in God; they live on Him; but to angels, where is there another such a feast for their joy as they find in the Son of His love. It is He who has revealed God; all whose fulness dwells in Him. It is He who has unveiled the loved secrets of His mind. He has given to principalities and powers an unveiled God. Hence they delight in Him; they find their eternal food in Him. It is surely in some such view of Him as this that we sing—

“With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' food to feast?”

And now, what was the manna with which He fed them when He humbled them and suffered them to hunger? and how does it bear on us? This is what is more especially before us. There is a striking reference to the glorious substance in this shadow of the past.

1. You will observe the *nature* of the manna. “Fed thee with manna which *thou knewest not*.” It was of deep meaning; like Him whose height and depth of love who can tell? When the children of

Israel saw it, they said one to another, "It is manna;" or, as it is in the margin, "*What is it?*" for they wist not what it was. How could they? its essence and its power of life being far beyond their wisdom. One is reminded of the word given by the angel to the parents of Samson, when they asked, "What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the Lord said, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *secret*?" (Judges xiii. 17, 18), or "*wonderful*"—the very word given in the grand description of His whole, great, name (Isaiah ix. 6), "*Unto us a child is born*;" there is the incarnation. "*Unto us a son is given*;" this He was declared to be with power by the resurrection from the dead—more than man; He was from everlasting Son with the Father. Says Paul, "Who revealed His Son in me," and with Him the Church, as a body with the head is associated; for Him we look, waiting for the *Son* from heaven. "*And His name shall be called Wonderful*" (*secret*). His wonders who can tell? God, yet man; human, yet divine; infant of days, yet Ancient of days; on earth, yet could say, "Who also is in heaven;" like Jacob's ladder, the top in the glory, the foot in the desert, with the resting, weary pilgrim. "*Counsellor*" (wisdom); not only guiding, teaching, and directing us, but having our cause, not to plead merely, but to carry on, with power and capacity, to a sure and successful issue. John speaks of Him as Advocate. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ

the righteous." It is remarkable of an advocate, that he never pleads guilty, but the very opposite. Thus He, in divine righteousness, can show, that since He died for us none can condemn. "*Mighty God, everlasting Father.*" The infidel, aiming a dart at His Godhead, says it is not "everlasting Father," but "Father of the everlasting age;" which we accept as true: it supplies just what we want to complete His whole name. For though He is *God*, He is also the Father of that blessed, glorious age yet to come, when, as "*Prince of peace*," He will reign in righteousness, and the whole earth will be filled with His glory, and as to the eternal age, His tabernacle will be with men, and God will be all in all.

Such is His *whole* name. Is it not wonderful? Well may we say, What is it? Very God and very man; man, that He might suffer and die for sinners; and God, that He might satisfy. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. If we see Him as we shall in the glory, all the Godhead will be enshrined in Him; so that when we see Him, we shall see the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." How wonderful! In Him, as God-Man, will be *all* the fulness of God—God in Him, the Son in Him, the Holy Ghost in Him. The manifestation of the eternal essence and power will be everywhere throughout the universe; but "in Him DWELLETH all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." How this helps us in our expectation of heaven or paradise! "There no stranger God shall meet thee."

He is wonderful ! and we shall know Him, and love Him, and be loved by Him for ever ; and find His love an exhaustless deep, an infinite height. Ah, beloved ! in Him, in *Himself*, there are heights never to be scaled, depths never to be fathomed, a diameter never to be spanned. Observe—

2. The occasion on which it was given. God took occasion of the sin and murmuring of Israel to give them this heavenly food. They did not ask for it. They had come out of Egypt, and they asked Moses if he had brought them out to kill them with hunger. Was it natural for God to do this ? Was it according to His promise ? What occasion was there for such a conclusion ? God might, indeed, as a judgment on such murmuring, have left them to perish. But no ; He takes occasion from such a condition to come in in grace, and meets their necessity with manna. Why was this ? Not surely that He might reward murmuring, but to show His power and grace, in not only forgiving, but also in feeding them. This is a great truth. We know not why God permitted evil—why He allowed sin in its first existence ; but we do know how He has turned it to His own purpose of glory. God, in His eternal grace and love, saw man in his sin, and found occasion, through man's sin, for manifesting His own wondrous glory. He takes occasion of the very depths to which the sinner was sunk to manifest the fulness in Himself. It was because of this Luther exclaimed, "Oh, blessed sin !" Not that sin was blessed ; but a very curse ; yet it gave God



an opportunity to bring out resources which were needful to a full manifestation of Himself. He *needed* the sinner, so to speak, for this perfect manifestation. There were two things in God—holiness and grace; the one, God's hatred to sin, was not only vindicated, but gloriously manifested, by His Son dying for sin on the cross; all God's claims of holiness have been met, and now grace is free to act. Marvellous grace! From what a depth does it lift us, and to what a height has it placed us, even far above all other heights! The height to which Christ is raised is the measure of our own. Mark—

3. The character of the manna. The manna was essentially pure. It was "white, like coriander seed." See the analogy here;—the blessed Lord was "holy, harmless, undefiled," without spot or taint in His person. It is a wrong doctrine that would touch the perfectness of Jesus. Many, alas! are submitting His person and doctrine, particularly His sufferings and death, to an analysis unwarranted by Scripture, and hurtful to the souls of God's people. Scripture on these is always simple, and let us not make it unsimple. We are told He was *holy, harmless, undefiled*. We are told that *He died* for our sins; that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree—that perfect spotless One!

Then the manna was very small, mere globules on the ground. "A small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost upon the ground." None but the eye of a true Israelite could discern who Christ was; by all

others He was undesired. There was no beauty that they should desire Him, "As a root out of a dry ground, He had no form nor comeliness." (Isaiah liii. 2.)

The manna, moreover, was as lowly in position as it could be without touching the earth; there was between it and the ground but the dew-drop, in which, as in a socket of silver, it rested. It partook of none of the impurities of the earth on which it fell. The Lord, though here in the midst of sinners, was Himself altogether separate from sinners. And He was lowly as He was pure. He was made in the fashion of a man. He humbled Himself. His position on earth was a lowly one. When men saw Him they said, Is He not the son of Joseph and Mary? All-obscured the glory, though sometimes gleaming out as when He raised the dead, He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Mark farther—

4. Its use. It was for life; and for such it was to be gathered. When it came down it was all around for food. But one of two things must be done with it. As the Israelite stepped from his tent-door, he must either *gather the manna* or *trample upon it*; there was no third course. When a man hears Christ, he must receive Him or reject Him. Ah, the sinner will think of it! God forbid he should have to think of it when it is too late. His position is just this—he must either take the gift of Christ for

salvation, or trample Him under foot in rejection. And as no Israelite could say, I never heard of manna, never was told that it came for me—so you cannot say, I never heard of salvation, I was born a heathen, never heard of Christ. Ah, no, no! thousands and myriads have gathered the manna who heard no more of it than you. Many of them had less opportunity than you. But they gathered it.

This was the one condition: *it must be gathered*; and this could be done, not by the exalting, but by the humbling of self. The manna was not on the summit of things to be reached down, not on the mountain heights, nor on the tops of the stately palms, but it was low as the ground. Thus Israel, when the manna fell, had to stoop to gather it. You must let down the loftiness of your conception, your self-sufficiency; you must come down from your own doing; for you did not merit the manna, purchase it, earn it, labour for it. No; you must stop for it or starve; you must take it as the gift of God, or die without it. Do you understand? Alas, how very few do understand the gift of God in Christ Jesus, how that He is free for the chief of sinners! A stranger seeing the people gathering the manna might have said, *What* is that? Oh, they might reply, it is *secret*, it is *wonderful*; we cannot tell you; it must be received to be known! But *whose* is it? It is ours, they answer. Yes, *mine*, says one; and *mine*, and *mine*, say others. What made it yours? *God* gave it. This, you see, is the "Jesus is MINE" doc-

trine. He is God's gift to the sinner. I take Him;
He is mine.

“He my redemption is,
Wisdom and righteousness,
Life, light, and holiness,
Jesus is mine.”

I as a sinner deserve to die—deserve death; God interposes, and puts Christ before me, who has taken my death. This is simple. But how am I to possess Him? I am to possess Him by possessing Him, to have Him by having Him; that is, I am simply to take Him, adding nothing of my own.

“Nothing either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”

But there is a further truth about the manna. On every sixth day it fell in double quantity, and on the seventh day there was none. The Israelite, therefore, gathered double quantity on the sixth day. In the seventh it was there with him without being gathered. We are in the Saturday-eve of the world—the eve of millennial rest. On that sabbatic day there will be one Lord Jesus, and His name one. It is now the evening before the glory. As the Lord said: “At even ye shall know [as we do now], but in the morning ye shall see the glory.” How blessed! We shall be satisfied then! (Ps. xvii. 15.) Meanwhile the gospel is coming down in double quantity.

But one point more. The man who had gathered

little lacked nothing, and the man who had gathered much had nothing over. An Israelite might have said—

“I am weak and ill; I cannot leave my tent; I can only spend a few minutes gathering the manna; I wish I had more time. What shall I do?” He but half fills his vessel. This is wonderful: he has as much as if nothing had happened. Another man says, “Well, I will have a good supply; I will take three vessels.” When they eat they have not more than they want; so that He who gathered little and he who gathered much were on the same footing. Do you understand that? I do. When the dying thief had only a moment to gather the manna, what he got was *Christ*; what Paul through long years got was simply *Christ*. It is not the amount of time we have, or the quality of our faith, or our experience. What the dying thief embraced was the *Son of God*, and instant blessedness; and what the very highest capacity of saint will ever receive throughout all eternity will be the same, God manifested through the Son. The manna was gathered according to the capacity for receiving it—fathers, young men, little children. If you can only look on Jesus—just get the eye of faith on Jesus—there is your soul’s salvation. Do you understand it? But where is He now? He is not here now, though, blessed be His name, He is here formed in us the hope of glory. Yet as to His person, He is in the presence of God for us. The two truths were set forth in the manna.

“Take a pot,” said the Lord to Moses (Ex. xvi. 33), “and put an omer full of manna therein, and *lay it up before the Lord.*” What is this but Christ, who is our life? and our life is hid with Christ in God.

Dear friends, have you this manna? Have you this life? Are you simply living on God, relying on Him for salvation, and feeding on His word?

When I was at the death-bed lately of a beloved Christian, I asked him what message he had for his friends, for he had often mingled in scenes like these. He replied, “Tell them that the truth which you so often preach is the only thing for a dying man; namely, that God is to be taken simply at His word. That is sufficient. God has said, that believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, we are saved.” Ah, dear friends, what have any of us but this—God, His word? Living or dying, there is nothing for us but this. Mere religiousness is not salvation, but knowing *God* is salvation. The question is, What has God said of me, and of Himself? Has He ever travelled—come into my soul? Do I know what from eternity has been His thought of me? Ah! He might say of my soul, as seen from His word, “I wanted you in heaven; I wanted you at my table—special want of my heart—that table without you would not be perfect. I wanted to have you there righteously, meet for the scene, with the best robe; I wanted you with sin put away, and in my highest, greatest love.” Oh, is it not wonderful! At resurrection we wake up into all His thought of

love. And you and I are to believe. The seed of the woman has been bruised; then we have not to take the bruising. Salvation was preached to Adam; the same glorious salvation I have preached to you to-day—a salvation to be taken, received on the testimony of the word of God.

We have no conception of the importance of a single utterance of God—no conception of what hangs upon it. You know what hangs on the single utterance of a man. When the lord of the soil says to his steward, “I do not want you more,” there is in that one word a severance; with the judge, death is in the word. How much hangs upon the simple word of man; but, oh, how much more on the word of God! And you are to be tried in the last day by every word of God. How the Lord Himself honoured *the word*. Satan, as you may remember, entered the lists with the Lord, who went into the wilderness to understand the power of the tempter. Moses went to the wilderness to meet God; the Lord Jesus went to meet Satan, to be tempted of the devil. Satan accordingly raises the question of His Godhead—seeks to cast a suspicion on His Sonship. But how does the Lord meet him? by merely saying He *was* the Son of God? No; though He might have done that. It was as if He had said, The last time my Father spake with me, He said, “Thou ART my Son.” He had just come up out of the waters of baptism, and, said Jesus, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;”

and God had just given Him this word, "Thou ART my Son: I have begotten thee." What a rock was this for Him who was son of a carpenter, and who was born of a woman! What a rock against Satan! One of David's mighty men was famous for hurling a stone. He knew how to handle it, and had power to use it against a foe. What a stone was this for the greater than David! How did He level at a blow the enemy at His feet! God has spoken to you, and He will try you by these words. He has given His Son to die for you; He came forth in grace and mercy to save. If you place your whole hope and confidence in Him, He declares of you that you are saved. What a word is this! "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." Oh, what a word for you, sinner, to listen to this day! How responsible are you! If you question it, and so question it that you reject it, it will be a millstone about your neck, dragging you down to deepest destruction. Instead, however, of your questioning if it is true, if you receive it, you have the word of God assuring you that you are saved, that you have everlasting life, that you shall no more come into judgment. Believe it, "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Here is the word I have got: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

But here again is another word, which, if a man understand and believe, he understands and *believes* the gospel, and is saved. "But now once in the end of the world hath He (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 26-28.)

Do you know Christ thus? If you do, oh, what living manna! what food for your souls! Do you know Him on the cross as dead because of our sins, and as raised from the dead because our sins were put away? Do you know Him as one who, when He comes again, will come *without* sin? Ah, this is the gospel! No sin on Him when He comes. He had sin on Him when He died. He had it *not* when He rose. He now knows or bears it no more. This is an immense truth to see. It is simply the gospel—a word of God truly—which, if any soul can see and believe, that soul is saved. Do you see this? What rest to the conscience! Christ in heaven *without* sin. And when He appears a second time, it will be *without* sin. What would make any of us afraid of Him? What gives us alarm at His coming? What but our sins? Just as it is the debt he owes which makes the debtor afraid to meet his creditor. But if the debt be gone, the fear is gone. How blessed to know this! But in our case *it is gone*,

both the debt and the fear. It is in fact the gospel, that when we see Him there will be no sin to bring us into judgment; no death to follow upon sin; no hell to follow upon death.

Never forget that sin, death, and judgment, all stand or fall together. If there be sin, there must be death; and if death, judgment. But they all pass away in the death of Christ. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him (which all believers are supposed to do, it being their natural attitude as such) shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The Lord on the cross strikes at the power of the first of these. By death He takes the doom of sin, so that to those who look for Him, who are believers, instead of what would otherwise follow death, viz. judgment, when He appears, it will be unto salvation—complete, full, eternal salvation. And we shall see Him, and be like Him, and be for ever with Him—*with Himself!* We shall be for ever with the Lord.

And then, beloved, it will be as the old corn of the land; we shall see Him and know Him, not merely as *man*, as Son of *man* who died for us, and whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, but as *Son*; the Son as He is and ever was with the Father. As He said—"The glory that I had with thee before the world was." He had a glory from all ages His own, which glory we are to

see. And all that as Son He can give us He will. His peace, the love with which He is loved, we have now—also title to be where He is—it is ours as in the heavenly places in Him. For in Him the wilderness is passed and Jordan over, and we are planted in the land.

Meanwhile, in the wilderness it is we have the manna, which we daily need—manna on which to live continually. The Israelites gathered it *in the morning*—the first thing ere the world and care had come in. Oh, if first filled with Christ, what strength and what provision for the day! But if no daily manna, you will have no power for service, no walk with God, no realized enjoyment of communion. It is every day we want the manna, every day we must feed on Christ; He is our daily supply. We cannot live upon past attainments, or past experiences, however precious. The manna of the last week, if laid up instead of gathering it each day, would not do. We need daily a feeding on Christ, on His truth, on Himself. This is our wilderness life. It was in the wilderness Israel had wilderness provision—their Elims, with their palms and springs. It was there they were led by the pillar of cloud and fire. It was there they eat the manna. But it was in Canaan, beyond the Red Sea, and beyond Jordan, they eat the old corn of the land. Thus it is now—

No more the sea of death
"Twixt us and Canaan rolls;
But all its gloomy waters lie
"Twixt Egypt and our souls.

That place of death once past,
None tread again its shore ;
With Christ, who trod its deepest depths,
We live to die no more.

We passed, with sprinkled blood,
From out of Egypt's gloom ;
And death, the source of all our life,
Became th' usurper's doom.

We now have Elim rest,
Where living waters rise—
Blest fruit of Him who died our death,
Who all our wants supplies.

And we have manna now,
Blest bread of God, divine—
God's cloud we have to guide by day,
His light by night to shine.

Our God is always near,
He keeps us in the way ;
He *suffers* us to want, that He
May feed us day by day.

This is our daily need,
As pilgrims here below ;
But there in heaven, through Christ our Head,
Th' Eternal SON we know.

As once on Canaan's side,
O'er Jordan's emptied strand,
The hosts of Israel loved to know
The old corn of the land ;

So we in heavenly rest
Safe planted in the land,
Feed on the love, and peace, and joy,
Which are at God's right hand.

But desert palms and springs,
However loved and blest,
Are not the long remaining things
Of our eternal rest.

THE TRUE FEAST.

“And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.”
LUKE vii. 44-48.

IT has been remarked, that in Luke's gospel the blessed Lord is presented to us specially in His social character. Over and over again we read of His sitting at meat; and one great charge brought against Him by the Pharisees and scribes was, that “this man receiveth sinners, and *eateth with them.*” Over and over again we have His social joys brought before us. Look at the 15th chapter. What a wondrous picture of social happiness! The wanderer who had wandered away from his home and his God returns, and is feasted at the father's board—the best robe, and the ring, and the shoes having been previously bestowed.

In olden time, when He guided Israel through the

wilderness, God acted in grace truly, but it was with reserve. When He led that elect people, He was enshrouded in the cloud ; when He fed their hosts, it was with the mystic bread ; but now there was no restraint, all veils are thrown away, and in Him who was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person, all that Father's ineffable grace and love shone forth. Where, in the past, would you find a manifestation of *God* like that unfolded to us here—the Lord of glory, sitting, happy, with sinners ? And this was the character which He bore. He loved to sit down with sinners, not that He loved their sin, but them, in whose cause He unfolded His love, bringing out the depth of His grace. And we had never known His grace but for the sin which gave occasion for its display ; the prodigal never had known the love and grace of his Father's heart, if he had never wandered and sunk into such depths of iniquity. And so too in regard to the scene before us here ; the wonderful grace of Jesus would not have been manifested but for His contact with this sinner.

She came to Him as she was, but He rejected her not ; nay, her very sinfulness and vileness but presented a platform on which He purposed to erect an eternal trophy to His own grace. Well, she comes ; and, oh, what a picture ! Simon—the proper, upright, moral Simon—invites the Lord to be his guest ; but Simon was not the attraction for the blessed One ; no, nor yet the other guests invited to meet Him ;

no, nor yet the feast—the loaded tables. Oh, no! it was that the blessed Lord knew that He would be feasted there on far different joys. Ah! it was this poor sinner that attracted Him to that house—that city sinner was His feast. Like another Mary, it was the loadstone of *her love* that had drawn Him to the spot where she would be, as it was His love that had drawn her. Like another Mary, she had got by some means an inkling of the wondrous value which was in Him, and an irresistible determination possessed her, that she would go to Him. Fancy her, down, perhaps, amid her accustomed haunts of sin, and then, as her irrepressible desire increased, she resolved to go: she finds her way by a path which no angel had ever trod to a place in the Lord's affections, which an angel might well have coveted to occupy.

Oh, beloved, beloved, I would I had such a sinner here to-night, that I might—blessed work!—unveil to such an one some of those depths of love which, even now that He is in heaven and at rest, He still has towards the sinner and outcast. And why may there not be? Some of you perhaps know.

And now mark here first what *the woman* did, and next what *Simon* did, and then what *the Lord Himself* did, and lastly *what the woman received*.

We are not told where this woman first met the Lord, or where she had first heard of Him, or had first seen the value that she now knew was in Him.

A veil is drawn over her past; but this is certain, the Lord Himself had met with her, He Himself had

sought and found her, and touching some tender chord in her soul, had awakened in her the first divine longing.

Wondrous thought, that God, who from all eternity had chosen the sinner, should now thus Himself delight in seeking the sinner! This woman had never sought Him had not He sought her. But, as we were saying, somewhere, or by some means, in the midst of her sin, for she was indeed a sinner, God had lodged His arrow; it had penetrated deep into her soul, and how to get relief was the question. By and by she finds that Jesus, whose love and compassion she had heard or felt, was to be the special guest of a Pharisee; a bold determination seizes her; she too will go there, and there seek His help and grace. Ah, beloved, I have fancied this weary and heavy-laden one treading her way through the streets until she comes to the sought-for dwelling; I have imagined her halting for an instant, amazed at her own boldness in coming, unbidden, where Jesus was. Yet she wavered not in her resolution; a burdened, aching heart impelled her on, as all such hearts do, to seek relief. Dear people, when a soul has got a true hold of God, or God rather has got a hold on the sinner, nothing is an obstacle. Well, this woman, right or no right, comes to the house. She finds her way within, and there she beholds Him whom she has been seeking; another moment, and she is where Jesus is, and at His feet.

Well can we imagine Simon's secret disdain of

her who could thus intrude; but **THE LORD**, although specially invited to share in Simon's feast, was being feasted far more sumptuously by the sight of that woman's love and faith than by the feast itself. See how His heart turns with divinest love and pity towards her; for He who saw and loved her was God manifested in the flesh. The springs in *Him* were springs of holiest, divinest compassion.

Ah, my friends, religiousness—mere religiousness—provides man with a covering, makes man outwardly fair and righteous, such as was this Pharisee; but the truth shows God to the soul, and reveals the soul to itself, shows its sinfulness and wretchedness. It is in the light of God we see this. And though in that light sin is found to be exceeding sinful, yet at the same time by revealing Jesus, whom this woman had sought and now saw, it brings pardon and peace, and all this made sure to the soul, as we shall see, not by love, great as hers was, but by faith. “Thy *faith* hath made thee whole.”

What a picture have we here! Let us look at it again. There is the feast; there are the spread tables; there are the invited guests; and there is the self-righteous Simon; and there, now, behind as it were, and yet in the midst of that festal scene, drawn by the irresistible presence of Jesus, of whose love and grace she was soon to have such rich assurance, this woman presents herself—a wretched, scorned outcast. But she heeded not the feast; she cared not for Simon; she heeded not either the

astonished glances which the guests directed towards her ; *she thought only of the Lord.*

Oh, mark it well ! deeply-anxious sinners, sinners deeply moved by God, sinners under the arrests of His love, do not stay at circumstances. As Mary at the sepulchre, in her longings for the Lord, was dead to the angels, so this woman was wholly dead to any, or all, such circumstances. She had come with one purpose ; one object alone fixed her eye : she wanted *the Lord.* She thought of her sins ; and so thinking, was found bathing His feet with her tears. Our Lord was in all probability reclining, after the eastern fashion, upon a couch placed at the table, so that, speaking after the manner of men, He would not perceive any one bending at His feet, and so may it have been that His eye did not notice her till the hot tears bedewing them told their own tale. And yet she had *not* been unnoticed all this while. He had marked each step of her way, and inwardly He had already embraced her in the arms of His love and grace. Little thought Simon what was occupying the mind of his guest. Jesus was occupied with that woman ; and, unlike Simon, who was occupied with the feast, that woman was occupied with Jesus, *Himself alone* ; she was blind to everything but “Jesus only.” She had seen something of His beauty, had felt something of His power, and now He in His grace was delighting in her, even in that city sinner whom He destined shortly to make so blessed a trophy of His forgiving love. It was His own work :

“He drew her, and she followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”

But what did she bring? She brought an alabaster box of ointment—most costly, most precious. But see! she broke it, and poured out the fragrant contents of it upon His feet. Dear friends, such an alabaster box is the most precious thing to be opened; the odour must fill, as did that from this box, the whole house. You understand; you cannot in love have to do with the Lord, but you break before Him and over Him an alabaster box; the personal dealings with Him of any soul that needs Him are to Him most precious; and you cannot come thus into personal contact with the blessed Lord but fragrance spreads itself all abroad; all in the house, all around you, must take knowledge of you that you have been with Him; you carry away with you the odour of contact with Him, of communion with Him.

But to return to this picture—the manner of it; as she stands there, the memory and consciousness of past guilt and sin kindle deep grief in her soul; but she finds relief in weeping. The touch of her tears attracted His notice, and He looked round, and there, as I have said, was a richer feast to the Master than any which Simon had spread. And as the tears fell a warm bath on His weary soiled feet, she found a towel wherewith to wipe them in the loose long tresses of her own hair. Simon ought, if only for courtesy, to have provided water for His feet; but whether this attention was simply overlooked or

not, he neglected to do so, and the Lord rebuked him for it. Said He, "Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head." "*This woman.*" Ah, He loved to speak of her; He loved to contemplate her; and as He spoke, down, down, down fell her tears in rapid succession. She sees the assoilment of those feet; she marks the long lines of dust contracted by weary travel unremoved; and so she takes the long tresses of her hair and binds them round His feet, turns her tears into a bath, and her hair into a towel; as we have been reminded, nothing to break the immediate fellowship, not a towel even—her tears, direct on *Himself*; her hair, direct on His feet. It was all *Jesus*, Jesus, and that which was of His creation in her for Himself. Ah, beloved friends, the feet were *His* feet! that was the true secret of it all; nothing was too costly for *them*, for HIM, either the ointment, or the kisses, or the tears. Truly the Lord was feasted at the sight of such love! such confidence! such contrition! and such joy!

But what thought Simon of all this? Strange, indeed, must the scene have been to him. He had no sympathy with the joy of the Lord, and still less with the singular intrusion of the woman. As to other guests, and there were such, common courtesy forbade reproach or comment. Simon himself was a silent spectator, wondering in himself at the Lord's endurance of such boldness on the part of one who was known as a sinner. So, not aloud, but to him-



self, he thus spake : " This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him ; for *she is a sinner*."

The Lord knew—the Lord marked ; and notice the wisdom with which He dealt with Simon's murmurings. It was not necessary Simon should tell Him what he thought, just as it had been unnecessary for that poor woman to reveal *her* thoughts. The Lord had alike read the one and the other ; for all things are open to Him. Is there any one here saying, " Oh that my tears could fall upon His feet ! Oh that my sins could be thought out as hers were in His very presence ! If Jesus of Nazareth were now to pass by, I would go to Him ; yea, I would press in where He was ; for, oh, I long to hear Him speak that word to me, even me, "*Thy sins are forgiven !*" Well, dear soul, the Lord knows the secrets of every heart ; He reads even at this moment that longing of thine. Nothing is hid from Him, and it is as a cup of refreshing to Him *thy* seeking—*thy* longings. It is joy, *joy*, to the seeking Saviour when any one sinner that repenteth seeks and longs for Him. Dost thou believe ?

But now, knowing that thought of Simon's, the Lord said to Him, " Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ?" And then the

Lord applied the illustration, to bring conviction as to this woman's greater love to Simon's conscience. But before we look at that, let me first say a word as to the "five hundred" and the "fifty pence." The one who owed the five hundred pence was the poor woman—a poor immoral character, while the fifty pence represented Simon himself, a moral, upright Pharisee. It was, moreover, if he thought at all, what Simon would think the proportionate difference between his debt and that of the woman. He considered himself moral, upright, religious, and probably was scandalized by any comparison with the outcast who had thus entered his house.

But, says the Lord, "Which will love *most*?" Oh, that "*most*"—surely it applied to the one who owed the most! As if the Lord had said, "Here is this woman, a sinner; and who, moreover, is conscious of her sinfulness. She has been treading the haunts of crime; she knows their depth, their darkness, their horrors; and therefore she can appreciate the grace which is in me. And because she has had so much forgiven, therefore she loves much." And, shall I say, he who has in like manner been snatched from the drop, plucked from the very clutches of the devil—the drunkard, the murderer—will raise a louder song by and by than he who has never known such depths of iniquity. The height to which he is raised will be proportionate to the depths into which he had sunk. Oh, what a heaven it will be when millions of "five hundred pence" sinners shall be brought

home! No voices will send up louder songs than theirs; no hearts will respond more heartily than they to the triumphant chorus, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Rescued from depths which no angel ever fathomed, they have travelled up, up to heights which no angel ever reached. Oh, ye moralists—ye hypocrites—ye self-righteous Pharisees, who say, "I am as good as my neighbour; I keep all the commandments; I observe mercy, morality, kindness in my ordinary dealings"—the vile sinners whom ye despise shall come from the north and south, and from the east and west, and shall sit down in the kingdom, whilst ye yourselves shall be cast out! On what principle, I ask, can you distinguish between him who owes fifty pence and has *nothing to pay*, and another person who owes five thousand pence and has *nothing to pay*? They both have *nothing to pay*; they are, as to want, on equal ground. The law can put its hand upon the one as well as the other. It is a matter of debt, and utter inability to pay it in both cases. And so is it as to sin. The child who has not lived long enough to sin consciously, but is born in sin, and the vile old man hanging over the very precipice of hell, are one and the other by nature under sin, and must have salvation if they are not to perish for ever. There are no *degrees* as to the matter of *sin* or *salvation*. I have

either a sinful nature, and so need salvation; or I have a sinless nature, and do not need salvation. But as to our world, man, ourselves, "*all* have sinned;" *all* therefore need a Saviour. But, oh, though there is no difference in this respect as to sin in itself, any of it or all of it being such, there is a wonderful difference as to the sense which people possess of the *removal* of sin. "Ah," said an old person, "you were wrong to-night when you said that no voice will sing a louder song than yours; for, surely, I who have served the devil all my life, but have now been rescued, surely, I must praise Him most." And as she was speaking, a young man came up and interrupted: "Nay, I shall sing a louder song than you, for I was within a hair's-breadth of being lost, rushing down headlong to destruction, when God's grace arrested and saved me." Ah, these are the five-hundred-pence sinners! and truly, if one voice can be louder than another, *their* songs will not be the feeblest. And if each one is to be louder than the rest, no wonder that, as the jubilant song rolls on and on, and swells louder and louder still, through the eternal ages of ages, no wonder that it will be like the sound of many waters, of oceans piled on oceans of rushing sounds, such as human orchestra has known never, and created ear has heard never. Yes, though there is no difference as to salvation—the same alike for great sinners and little sinners—yet there is a marvellous difference in the love of those who are saved. Love is shown strikingly in this narrative: the Lord contrasts the love which

this woman, this five-hundred-pence sinner, had shown Him, with the want of civility which Simon had manifested. As if He had said: "Ever since I came in here the love of this woman has been a cup of refreshing to my lips; she has brought me her confidence, her love to me as her Redeemer; and it has been a feast most truly." Ah, dear friends, do I weary you with repetition? He did not care about that which so engrossed Simon's mind; He did not care whether this part of the feast were good, or that part dainty. No; what He said was this: "This woman—this woman—this woman;" not "this feast," but "this woman;" over and over again it was "this woman." And who was it that had an ear to hear it but the silent weeping one herself? What wonder to her! what joy! what rest to her soul! What heeded she the way she had come, the fear she once had, the rebuke of Simon? There was communion now between her and the Lord. Dead to all else, her heart might have said—

"Precious Jesus, I have found Thee
All my utmost need required;
In Thyself, dear Lord, Thou'st found me
All Thy loving heart desired.
I would praise Thee,
From my heart by love inspired.
"Both Thine arms are clasped around me,
And my head is on Thy breast;
For my weary soul has found Thee
Such a *perfect, perfect* rest.
Dearest Saviour,
Now I know that I am blest."

And now, as to yourselves, if you would give the Lord the highest feast conceivable, you can do it by owning yourself a sinner just as she did, and Himself a Saviour as she did. The Lord had more joy over one such woman than over ninety and nine Simons who would bring Him to a feast, but withhold the love and trust of their hearts. He had more joy in that poor city sinner than in all the guests invited in mere compliment to Himself.

Believe me, there are many now who patronize Christianity in much the same way as Simon patronized the Lord. They invite Christians to their house as Simon invited our Lord; but it is not such who truly feast Him, but those who, once buried in iniquity, have found their peace and rest in Him, and who, with all others *owning* themselves to be such, can say—

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.”

And who also respond—

“I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.”

And now mark what the Lord has to say to the woman herself: “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Observe, He does not say, "thy love," or "thy tears," or "the ointment," but "thy *faith* hath saved thee."

Nor did He say, "thy love *and* thy faith;" no, it is THE BLOOD OF JESUS, and that alone. Nothing can be added to the merit, the value, the efficacy of that precious blood. But what sees Christ dying for us, shedding for us, for our sins, that precious blood? FAITH. Faith takes hold of that blood; and so faith glorifies the Lord Jesus. When with lowly heart, trusting alone in Jesus, I come to Him, then He is glorified. And mark here, faith always believes; it can do nothing but believe; it cannot doubt; and salvation is on believing. And this salvation, as I remarked in another place, is a *present* salvation. Said the Lord to that dying and redeemed thief, "*To-day* shalt thou be with me in paradise."

To-day!"—truly it *was* a day. At its beginning, in his prison cell, he was a child of wrath even as others; in the midst of that day, hanging on the tree, he was a public blasphemer; and at its close was carried, redeemed, changed, sanctified, and holy, into the very presence of Jesus in paradise. I noticed, too, what a *perfect* salvation it was: "*To-day* shalt thou be *with me*." "*With me*." Does not that imply the very highest conceivable bliss? There is nothing higher. He Himself will constitute our heaven. A crown is but a thing; harps, and robes, and mansions are but things; but He is a *person*. He says, "You shall sit at *my* table." The table

blessed because *it is His*. And again, "Shall sit down with *Me*." And here, "To-day shalt thou be with me," inclusive of all that He has and is. Dear friends, is this our thought, to be for ever with Him? not glory, not heaven even. When we next see Him with these bodily eyes, it will not be in heaven at all, *but in the air*. We shall meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with the Lord. And then a *personal* salvation was in that word "*thou*." "Thou shalt be with me," thou, and not another, thou *thyself*.

We have these same three features unfolded in the salvation of this woman. Said the Lord to her, "*Thy* faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Here we have a personal salvation: "*thy*" faith, and not the faith of another, but her own faith; next a *present* salvation: *hath* saved thee, or, as He said to another, "*hath* made thee *whole*;" next a *perfect* salvation, not partly saved and partly lost, not partly justified and partly condemned, not partly forgiven and partly not forgiven, but *SAVED*." "Thy faith hath *SAVED* thee."

Mark well the *effect*. She had owed much; she loved much—*loved at once*.

Love in her was a blessed fruit of what she saw in Jesus. Love drew her to where He was: she was not ashamed to confess Him before men. Love led her to minister to Him. The alabaster box was for Him—the more costly the better—she did it unto Him, knowing that He would receive it. This is the true principle of service: it must be done *to*

Him. All work that is not done *to Him* will be as hay, wood, and stubble in that day.

But what a change in life and walk does the knowledge of Christ work in a sinner. This woman was a new creature. No more her haunts of sin—no more her ways of guilt. Was she a once fallen sister? She was. What a life was hers on conversion! She knew Him—she loved Him. Sitting at His feet, she had chosen the good part, never to be taken from her. No; she had entered into the Lord's own thoughts of her—sat at His feet to know and enjoy them from Himself. This is the true place of service—sitting at Christ's feet. The change was a real change. Many in our day talk of justification and of sanctification with the lightness of men in the flesh; but he who is really justified will live justly, and he who is really sanctified will live holily.

May God give you, beloved, to understand all this; may He give you to see it to be your salvation, even to know it; may you especially know His grace and love *in receiving sinners*, the manifestation of which we have here in Christ Jesus. Language fails, words, thoughts, are inadequate when one attempts to grasp the wondrous love of God to sinners.

It is always the same. Take as an illustration the history of a city sinner, such as the one of whom we have been speaking.

A daughter had wandered away from her home, until even a mother's patient search could ascertain no more concerning her. But, though lost, she was

still fondly loved. But, like the prodigal, she was dead to that love; yet that mother's heart did not cease to love, and could not cease to pray and yearn over, the wandering one. One night the storm howled with unusual fury over her desolate home. The mother's thought went out in prayer after the daughter; for, though good as dead, the mother knew there was One who could rescue and restore. The storm still raging, she went again upon her knees, and again pleaded with God, who giveth all things to prayer. Scarcely had she risen from her knees when an object presented itself at the door—her own lost one, the very picture of wretchedness and want.

"May I be forgiven, mother?" sobbed the penitent.

A welcome was given, and then the mother said—

"We'll ask God to forgive you."

"Mother," said she, "God *has* forgiven me."

Passing along on the high road of her sin and shame, she went through a crowded street, where a voice was heard uplifting Jesus. It was some good evangelist making known the good news of God to the lost sons of men. Would that more who profess to be preachers and evangelists loved sinners just where they are, as Paul did, and as the Lord did, in the street, or in the house, or by the way, and not merely in the pulpit, or amid the well-ordered and pre-arranged gatherings. The word went home in the power of the Holy Ghost.

"God saved me," said she, "and that has brought me home."

What a word for that soul! "God saved me!" and what a word to that mother! Oh, ye mothers, He does indeed give all things to prayer! And ye believers, because ye are lovers of souls, or rather lovers of the glory of your Lord, what a word is this for you! And, oh, sinners, you perhaps are saying, though we knew it not, "He hath saved me!" Blessed *hath*! Blessed in heaven—blessed to sinners; for this man, the ascended ONE, still receiveth sinners:

"Oh, ye that feel your sin,
And coming long have been,
Now find your rest in Him:
Jesus is here!"

Ho, all ye that pass by, come to Him now! for him that cometh—her that cometh—ye poor daughters of sin—"He will in no wise cast out." Said the Lord to this woman—Not "thy love," but "thy *faith* hath saved thee; *go in peace*." This was what she got—this was what she wanted, to be ever in peace; she was to be always in peace. Such is the force of our Lord's word—*Be going on in peace*. Peace was a blessing to be *conserved*—a blessing which was to abide with her. Her salvation was complete—she got *the Lord*. Ah, this was beyond all else! She had sought *Him*, and now had found Him. He had said to her, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee*." Blessed word! And, "*Go in peace*." Ah, then, what peace

was hers, and what love ! Her sense of Christ's value was that which made her what she was—a loving, living disciple. *Her* walk ever after would be close with Him. Like Lazarus, who himself had been raised from the dead, instead of weeping at His grave on the morning from the tomb, she had still peace in *the risen One* ; and on His ascending into heaven, she might have said, well remembering Him—

'Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah's name !
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne,
For evermore the same.

The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep my sky ;
This blood-sealed friendship changes not ;
The cross is ever nigh.

My love is ofttimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows ;
But peace with Him remains the same :
No change Jehovah knows.

That which can shake the cross
May shake the peace it gave,
Which tells me Christ has never died,
Or never left the grave !

Till then my peace is sure ;
It will not, cannot yield ;
Jesus, I know, has died and lives—
On this firm rock I build.

I change, He changes not ;
My Christ can never die :
His love, not mine, the resting-place,
His truth, not mine, the tie.

The cross still stands unchanged,
 Though heaven is now His home;
 The mighty stone is rolled away,
 But yonder is His tomb!

And yonder is my peace,
 The grave of all my woes!
 I know the Son of God has come,
 I know He died and rose.

I know He liveth now
 At God's right hand above;
 I know the throne on which He sits,
 I know His truth and love!

Dear friends, is this peace yours? Have you ever for yourselves heard that word, "Go in peace"? And have you in your own soul heard this word, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"?

Five-hundred-pence sinners and fifty-pence sinners alike need forgiveness—they are alike sentenced to die; but Jesus died for us: this is the gospel—this gives peace. On the ground of His death the Lord can say, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.*" Accordingly, believing in His word, we are forgiven—we have salvation—we have peace—we *are saved*. This, oh this is the gospel! this is what we preach; this is *the word*—the word of the living God; this is what we believe. But—

Not by the natural mind
 Can we discern the word;
 For none by searching e'er can find
 Out God—the Saviour Lord.

To learn by might—our own,
To toil with natural breath,
Is empty as the whistling wind,
And worketh only death.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear
Of man hath heard God's love ;
That love once known, the Lord is there
With quickening from above.

Oh, 'tis the Spirit's work
To search out deepest things !
And babes and sucklings born of Him
Can take whate'er He brings.

My God, now give this power,
This quickening from above,
That new-born souls this very hour
May see and feel Thy love.

Then praises to His name,
Who bought us with His blood ;
Eternal praises we'll proclaim,
Thou wonder-working God !

CLEAN, AND TO BE CLEANSED.

LEVITICUS xiv. 2-9.

YOU will observe, beloved friends, the title which God gives to this statement concerning the putting away of leprosy ; it is "*the law* of the leper." Certainly God had a *law* for the leper—one determined and particular way by which He chose to cleanse the leper ; and, accordingly, the remedy for leprosy was confined strictly to this one divinely-appointed way. So that if an individual, loathing the vile disease with which he was afflicted, wanted to be cleansed, only God could cleanse him, and that only in His own way.

This for ever silences all question as to there being *two* ways by which the leper could be made clean ; and thus, moreover, in type, we get the point settled as to whether the sinner can be cleansed, can be saved, in any other way than that which God has made known. Truly, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it ;" not intimating, as some imagine, that the way is so difficult that few, on seeking it even, find it ; but simply that there is no other way, that

God has restricted salvation to the one path which He has revealed, even by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So that we cannot mend, or in anywise change, God's method of salvation. We must be content to be saved in God's way, or to do without salvation. "*Strait* is the gate, and narrow is the way ;" to faith an easy and plain path, but a solitary, an arbitrary way, in that there is none other whereby man can be saved. There is no name given among men, but the name of Jesus, whereby man can be saved.

I can well understand how that as a sinner, under the just condemnation of God's inflexible law, I must suffer the doom of that broken law, unless, indeed, that doom be taken by another ; I can understand how that *I am shut up to one of these two alternatives : either I must bear that doom, that condemnation, in my own person, or in the person of a substitute.* The gospel is, that God has provided a substitute. And if we would not eternally bear that condemnation ourselves, we are shut up to God's way of salvation ; namely, salvation by the death and resurrection of our Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ ; and as faith is just that which gives me to see it, so I am shut up to *faith*. There is no other way, no other law of life, as there was no other law than this by which the leper could be cleansed.

And then mark, further, it is "the law of the *leper* ;" not the law of the man who needed not cleansing, but of him who was a prey to that fearful

disease of leprosy, and who was, moreover, conscious that the disease would yield to no human skill—that it was utterly immovable except by divine power. The grand feature of this law of cleansing was this—it was “the law of *the leper* ;” and the grand feature of God’s salvation is, that it is for the *sinner*, indiscriminately—for any sinner and for every sinner who needs it ; for God has come forth from the eternal recesses of His seat of glory and majesty for this very purpose, to save the *sinner*. God is love. And God and love are one ; and His ways are like Himself. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes ; “God so loved the world, that He gave His *Son*,” and that Son the Lord of Glory ; and Christ, knowing and revealing what God was, so loved the sinner, that He gave Himself—gave Himself to die, the Just One for the unjust, to bring us to God. As I have said, this is the law of the leper ; salvation is not for the good, not for the virtuous, not for the moral and upright, but for the *sinner*, the very worst, and most hell-deserving, as well as those whom men may count less so. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance (of the acceptance of *all*), that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Thus it is only for the sinner to take his place as such, and there is salvation for him. God foresaw my condition ; from all eternity He had it in His mind to save the sinner. Before the timeless ages

the sinner was in His love ; and when the fulness of the time was come for the accomplishment of His purpose, then the eternal Word became flesh, that, as man upon this earth, He might manifest that love. This, truly, is the law of the sinner. It was the very place, and form, and guilt, and doom of the sinner, that the divine Substitute took upon Himself. In yon heaven, where angels stand pure and spotless in the presence of God, they need no salvation. He passed by the ninety and nine worlds of God's creation, which need no Saviour, and came to seek and to save the one world which had rebelled. He died, the just One for the unjust ones, to bring you and me to God.

And then mark further, not only is this the *law* of the leper, shutting him up to this one solitary remedy, according to divine purpose—not only is this the law of the *leper*—a remedy for one in disease who needed it, salvation for the lost—but it was the law of *the cleansing of one who consciously felt that he needed to be cleansed*—of one who by coming owned his condition as a leper; the man would express his desire to be cleansed, according to his sense of being a *leper*.

There he is—see the man! suffering under the loathsome disease; upon his pale lip the covering; his countenance wearing the expression of sadness, the depressing effect of the leprosy, fearing to meet with others, scorned, it may be, by some; loathed by all. See him withdrawn to the outskirts of the city,

amid the dews by night, and the scorching sun by day, and there, in loneliest solitude, his weary days passed by, and the oft-repeated utterance to any approaching stranger was the warning cry, "Unclean, unclean!" Ah, that is the picture of one who was *consciously* and *confessedly* a leper. But there are millions of sinners—from the sovereign upon the throne to the beggar in his garret—from the crowned heads of nations to the prisoner in his cell—who do not know that they are sinners. There are millions of our fellow-immortals who are perishing in sin, but do not know it. But salvation is for the sinner, and unless a man has a consciousness of his sinful condition—unless, in the spirit of the publican, he has been led to cry out, "God be merciful to me a *sinner*"—he will not care to lay hold of this great salvation.

Dear friends, how is it with you? You may have health, wealth—there may have been a good deal of religiousness in your outward life; but unless you have salvation, unless you have Christ, you will die in your sins. Oh, sinner, sinner, may God give you to see the importance of a personal consciousness that you have within you a soul which must be eternally either a vessel of glory or a victim of despair, where the unsaved will for ever be tossed upon the rolling billows of unquenchable fires, where the worm shall know no death, and torment shall have no end! Ah, sinner, sinner, if you die in your sins, it is there you will awake to the conscious

reality of what sin is! May my God now, even this very night, give you each one to understand your lost condition as a sinner, and may you thus be led to seek Him who alone can save.

But, again, another thing here. The leper was compelled to go outside the camp, he was cut off from the congregation of Israel, a stranger to its privileges, its joys, its worship. I well remember how it was in my own case. It was in early life, when sitting one day with beloved friends, some of whom are now with the Lord. They were speaking of what I knew not, and by and by began hymning and singing, and singing and hymning; it was all strange to me, I could not understand it, still less did I enjoy it; and I thought to myself, "I know nothing of the happiness which they possess." And this truly was like an arrow piercing my soul; it made me feel that I had no part nor lot in the matter; I was like the leper, by my very estrangement of mind as to divine truth, outside the camp.

But the leper was in a far worse condition, he was not only outside the camp, but outside of GOD, outside the presence of God. He was where God was *not*. And as a sinner, I felt not only that I was outside the joys and happiness of Christians, but also outside *God*; and that is a picture of every sinner who has been brought to know anything of God, and who, with the veil taken off his eyes, looks at himself in the glass of God's word, and in the light of a coming eternity says within himself,



"Shall I ever rise into the glory and know the delight and joy of God?"

But now, observe further, this is the law of the *cleansing of the leper*. How one longs to tell it out!

Let us look first at what *God* did, and then, secondly, at what the *man* did.

First, as to what God did. Well, really, when I come to think of it, God did everything; God directed the priest to take "two birds alive and clean." He instructed him that one of them should be killed over running water. He told him to take the blood, and to sprinkle that blood; and thus the priest stood in the place of God, he was as God. *He* was to get the two birds, *he* was to get the cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, and *he* was to take the live bird and dip it in the blood of the dead bird, and he was to sprinkle the leper, and to pronounce him clean. God did everything.

Oh, do you see it? If you do, you will apply it. Everything that was needful for our salvation God found in Himself.

Who was it that provided a Christ who died? It was *God*.

And who was it that provided a Christ who lives—made alive again? It was God.

God found everything. Thus, when I go back into the depths of a bye-past eternity, there I see God finding Christ—finding in Him all that His own love delighted in; and there too, even from the timeless ages, I see Him finding the sinner—finding you—

finding me; for as there is nothing new, no *new* thought in the mind of the Eternal, no new object for His love or His thought, so I have been in His thought, in His love, from all eternity; and He saw me there not as He sees me here, in all my wretchedness and corruption. No, He loved me as He saw me in His Son—accepted, perfect as He. Oh, wondrous love! wondrous grace! He purposed to save me from death, making me all that His heart required. And for this—wondrous utterance!—"He gave His only-begotten Son."

He gave Him up to death; gave Him that He might give His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair. Oh, ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto that sorrow—any grief like to His grief, wherewith God grieved Him in the day of His wrath against our sins! This was how He saved us—how He embraced us righteously in His love. What a picture! God could in nowise clear the guilty, and did not clear Him who stood for the guilty, even though He were His own beloved Son. But though He could never *clear* the guilty, He could and did *save* the guilty. I beseech you, let your eye drop with the clear vision of faith upon this type. See how God *can* save the guilty. The man had not to find the birds, he had not to find the blood, he had not to find the scarlet, or the cedar-wood, or the hyssop. God did all. So with us sinners. He unfolded everything. He gave His Son to die. There we get the dead bird, the

dead Christ. But I ask you, Where do we get the living bird, a living Christ? You know, after death had transpired, after God had exhausted His utmost wrath against sin, which in Christ's death was upon Him, He went down into the grave, into the tomb; but the early hours of the third day found Him risen, liberated. Oh, look at it, beloved people! It was as if God longed to put His own seal upon a finished, perfected redemption, and so, ere the first ray of the sun had streamed its golden light across the sacred spot, yes, even "a great while before day," He came down, so to speak, and raised His Son from the dead. Beloved, clap your hands for joy; for, behind in the darkness of death He left, like the grave-clothes with which He had been swathed, your sins which had bound Him to the tree, left them all at His bleeding cross, or down, down, down in that grave, entombed there in darkness and oblivion, whilst He rose triumphant over death and hell. Oh, beloved friends, do you see it? Do you see God—God Himself—finding a living Christ? And it was according to and in harmony with His own glory thus to release His Son, and to liberate the sinner whose sins in death He had put away. For His dying is your dying, His rising your rising. According to that word of the apostle, "If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins," plainly implying that if Christ be indeed risen, we are *not* in our sins; they are all gone, gone for ever. For, as I have often said, my sins were on Him when He

hung upon that tree, but they were not on Him when He rose from the dead. Oh, blessed emancipator that He was, when He rose on that morn, in all the power of His divine nature, in all the energy of accomplished redemption—when He hung on the tree, expiring, God's wrath fell upon Him, divine justice lodged its last arrow in His heart! When He rose, it was to the delight and satisfaction of God to receive Him from the dead. Resurrection—our faith in it—God's proclamation concerning it is our absolution. Oh, what a wondrous absolution! not priestly, not human, but divine.

Dear friends, mark another thing here. When the living bird was dipped in the blood of the dead bird, was he merely liberated at once on *being* dipped in the blood of the dead one? Oh no! Mark what a touch of divine truth we have here. The bird was not to be liberated *until the priest had pronounced the leper clean*—until he had been told that he *was* clean; *then* the living bird was liberated. And so the Lord of life and glory could not be raised out of death, could not be liberated, until all sin and transgression had been put away. Who does not think of that remarkable utterance of Paul where he says, "You hath He quickened, *having* forgiven you all trespasses"? Quickened together, I apprehend, *with Christ*. It is all, all, dear people, *with Him*—"with Him," "*having forgiven you all trespasses.*" Neither He, nor we with Him, quickened, until trespasses had been put away. We were dead with Him at

His cross, buried with Him in the tomb, but also we were raised with Him in resurrection-life and power. But this could not be until trespasses and sin had all been completely and for ever put away, which they were, not *after*, but *before* He was raised—when, in fact, *He died*—DIED UPON THE CROSS. Died for, or *because* of our sins; was raised again *because* we were (by the death) justified.

Well, the dead bird having been provided and slain, what next takes place? The scarlet and cedar-wood and hyssop are to be dipped, with the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed, over the running water, and “the priest shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean.” You observe, the scarlet, the hyssop, and the cedar, all alike are to be connected with the blood. Some have taken the scarlet to be worldly glory or position, in which I may have found my portion; the cedar-wood and hyssop, all that is of mere nature.

Thus, if I am truly dead with Christ, then it follows that I must be dead to the world, to self, to all that is of mere nature. Natural tastes, natural desires, natural emotions, finding their root, where my sins have theirs, in the natural man, corrupt self, they must all go where the sins have gone, even down into death. I must not only know that my sins and transgressions are put away at the cross, but that the world, and self, and all else according thereto, were put away likewise. You remember, in the case

of the sin-offering, not only was the red heifer to be slain, but consumed to very ashes. As that heifer was a *sin-offering*—had, so to speak, sin on it—it was consumed, sins and all, to ashes—the whole thing consumed. But if sins are reduced to ashes, what of the cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet? what of the world and self? They too must go with the sins *into the ashes*. What is this but the utterance of Paul, where he says, I am not only crucified with Christ *as to my sin*, but I am also crucified to *the world*, and the world is crucified to me? Thus also Dr. Watts, where he sings—

“ His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o’er His body on the tree.
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.”

But behold now the gospel. As I have said, all this while the man was doing nothing; he stood simply *passive*. It was the priest, it was God, who did everything. Not a movement on the part of the man; he was just to stand still. And what then? Why, he was sprinkled seven times with the blood, and then PRONOUNCED CLEAN! yea, was told that he WAS CLEAN! Oh, do you understand it? I wonder if you understand that, in such state, the priest *pronounced* him *clean*—told him from God that he *was* clean; yea, then and there, just as he was, that he *was* clean.

Notice here what decided the point as to whether

the leper *was* clean or no. *It was God's word.* The priest, on God's behalf, pronounced the leper clean, and he was clean. And it was *now* that the living bird was liberated; it was "let loose into the open field." It arose, as it were, from the scene where death for sin had transpired, into liberty, joy, life! It did this in all the energy and *power* of what had transpired; for it carried with it the sevenfold sprinkled blood. It went aloft, dripping as it were with the precious blood which had given it right to live.

It was let loose into the open field—a scene of enlargement, liberty, and joy. How might the eye of the leper follow him, and see his own enlargement, his own liberty and joy. *That* bird had been in the scene of death; it had been raised out of it; it had been in the earthen vessel, full of running water, where also was the blood; it was now raised up free and accepted, and had gone up on high, never more to be found in the place of suffering or of death.

All this is precious to the soul that sees it. But the dead bird, what of *it*? The dead bird is no more heard of. Though we owe all to Christ's death—and precious in the sight of the Lord is His death for His saints—yet it is not as *dead* that we now know Him. The votary of superstition has Him as one *always dead*. With such the crucifix is *never empty*; it is Christ *on the crucifix*, or Christ *lying dead*, or being *taken down* from the tree, that meets the eye. Often, in meeting with the poor mangled images of Him, has one's heart said, "Do they not know Christ

risen from the dead?" Rome never seems to know a *risen* Christ! How, *as a risen One*, Jesus is a stranger in the land!

But just ere the living bird was let loose, the man was told he was clean. Dear friends, how did he know he was clean? How did poor Colossian sinners know they were *complete*? for personally they were not complete. *God said so*. How did this man know he was clean? *God said so*. Looking at himself, he might have said, "*I am a poor leper*;" but, looking at the live bird let loose, he could have said, "*I am clean every whit*." What is this but as we sing—

Just as I was I came to Thee,
An heir of wrath and misery?

But that condition having been met by Christ's death for our sins, we could add, looking at the all-powerful offering of the blood of Christ before God—

Just as Thou art before the throne,
I stand in righteousness Thine own.

But now observe this seeming contradiction—I will say, lovely contradiction: the man pronounced *clean* has to *be* cleansed. "He shall shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean."

You will mark this, for this is deeply important. When the man was pronounced clean, *then* he was told to go and wash. Ah, beloved, that poor leper

was to do nothing, indeed could do nothing, *until he was pronounced clean* ! Of what use for him before, in all the defilement of a leper, to go and wash his clothes, or wash his flesh ? As long as the foul disease lay there in his nature, ravaging his life and strength, and spreading defilement over his whole person, of what use was it for him to go and wash ? It would have been all in vain. No, it was not until the man was clean, and pronounced clean, that he was told to go and cleanse himself. This reminds us of our Lord's utterance, "Now ye *are* clean ;" and that other word, "*Clean every whit*"—made so by the cross, which judicially put away our filth—and yet by and by, "Except I wash your feet, keep you from daily defilement, you have no part with me." The Colossians were "*complete* in Him ;" and such, too, is our condition in Christ Jesus ; yet we are told by the Holy Ghost to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) And again, to "put off the old man." So is it here. The man is first pronounced clean, is first told that he is *saved*, and then he is commanded to go and cleanse himself. Oh I would that this truth should penetrate the soul of all who may be asking, "How am I to be made saved ? how am I to be made clean ?" *Made* saved ? *made* clean ? It is God's work, and His alone, *to save*. There stands the sinner in all the vile and leprous state of defilement, both original and actual. But God draws near ; and having made by His own dear Son full and perfect

atonement, pronounces to faith, to *himself*, that the sin, the defilement, are gone, blotted out. Thus in one moment I see the priest performing the cleansing; after which the leper is told that he is clean.

First he is made clean, then he is pronounced clean, and then he is told to go and cleanse himself. Again, I say, a lovely seeming entanglement of precious truths! For thus is it with me a sinner. I come to God—come to Him in His word, in the gospel, there He speaks to me of sin gone by Christ, and pronounces me “clean every whit;” and then He bids me to go and put away, to mortify, *deadify* sin. Ah, dear friends, when God tells me that I am clean, I might well inquire, “How do I *know* that I am clean?” No change has come over my old nature, and yet I am told to consider myself clean. So is it. God tells me that I am clean through the blood, and complete in the completeness and perfect in the perfectness of Christ. Redemption, full and final, from the first to the last trace of evil? I have it all in Him; for “He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Says God, “Ye are *complete* in Him. It is all in Him, *Him*. Oh, truly, “they that *believe* do enter into rest!” It is true, if I look at myself, at the evil which I find to be within, and at the evil which I see to be without, I have to confess that I am not complete, not perfect, not intrinsically holy; but it is equally true that, looking at Jesus, at what He is to me and *for* me, and at what I am in Him—that I

am His own beloved, His own heart's love, all that from all eternity He required me to be, so that, invested with what I am in Him, I am all that His heart of love and joy can desire. It is seeing myself thus that I can take up that blessed word, "COMPLETE—COMPLETE IN HIM."

But now, being holy, I must live *holily*; when pronounced clean, the man was to rid himself of what was unclean. There is deep importance in this. God never presents words but to convey the truth.

First, then, the man is told to "*wash his clothes*." I have seen thus clothes washed all in a moment of time; that is, I have seen men's habits changed all at once. Along with the change of state there has followed an immediate change of life. I have seen the daughter who had wandered from home restored to that home. I have seen the prodigal, who had spent his all in rioting and drunkenness, return with the penitent confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." Clothes, you know, are what first meet the eye on looking at a person. They indicate the outward conduct and bearing of a man. As the first thing a leper had to do was to wash his clothes, so the first thing which a sinner has to do who has come to Christ, and been pronounced clean, is to change all that was wrong in his habitude, his course of living. When Christ takes possession of a heart, there is sure to be a difference in the life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" or, as the word is, *a*

new creation. He belongs to a new, yea, a *heavenly* creation, and of the *old* creation the old things are to pass away, "and all things are become new." And it is no superficial change that thus takes place, but one which those around are constrained to see and own. Said a dear child, "I should like to go to the meeting to which father goes; for what a change has taken place in him! A little while ago the slightest annoyance would throw him into a violent rage; but now a deep insult scarcely draws a reproachful look from him." That man had washed his clothes, and the change was marked and palpable. Talk of truth such as this leading to careless living,—why, they are the careless liver who keep the scarlet, and cedar-wood, and hyssop, instead of dipping *all*, putting *all* under the pure and separating action of the blood. But the believer, who is not only purged as to his conscience, but is in intelligence as to the practical power of the truth, does he say, "*May* I still indulge in the vile passions and sins in which formerly I delighted? May I still keep my worldliness, my evil temper, my pride?" No! Contrariwise he says, "I am raised with Christ, and in the presence of God, by virtue of oneness with Him, I am even as He is, through the precious blood of Jesus; then my standing shall henceforth be my standard; I will seek that my walk and life below be construant with the position of acceptance and perfectness which I occupy 'within the veil.' If Christ be the measure of my standing yonder, He must also

be the measure of my walk here. I am as He is *there*; therefore I must walk as He walked *here*."

But notice the next point; the man must *shave his hair*. The hair represents human grace and dignity—the comeliness, the glory of the natural man. All that is of the carnal man is sin, and we are not to glory in the flesh, or in what is simply of the old nature. I have died to it at the cross; therefore I must practically mortify it in my daily life. The man that was clean must shave his hair off his head, and must also shave his beard and his eyebrows. It must have had an extraordinary appearance. And when he returned to the camp, and mixed with his fellow-Israelites, he must have been the object of much astonishment, he must have been a marked man. Just imagine *no* hair, and *no* eyebrows; and as men looked upon him, they must have thought, "Well, that man, as to his person, has got nothing in common with us, nothing that he can delight and glory in." And so it is. Let a believer be true to Christ, reflect the Master's likeness, and breathe His spirit, and those of the world around will soon perceive that they have little or nothing in common with him. They will find that what is their glory he despises, and that which is most precious and costly to *him* is as nothing in *their* estimation. Only imagine people without eyebrows, how strange to the world! That is what the saint is who has separated himself from what is as necessary to the world as eyebrows to the countenance.

"All the vain things that charmed me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood."

And then, mark again, the man was to wash *himself*. There was to be something more than mere external change and reformation. Ah, what is the use of saying, "I do not swear, I am not addicted to drunkenness or gambling, I live uprightly and honourably," if there is no vital work in the soul?

What is the use of mere external morality if there is no change within? It is only like lopping off a few of the topmost branches, whilst the noisome root is spreading its poison beneath the soil. The life of God within the soul touches the whole man—the thought, the life, the walk, the spirit, the conversation. It is *I, I myself*, not merely my habits that must be holy—holy, for He is holy.

And now mark the blessed consequences of all this. First, as we have observed, he saw the living bird rising, with its wings dipped in the blood of the dead bird, and flying loose over the field, no longer bound, but free. What life from the dead!

The man had joy and rest, which we have in Christ—blessed joy, blessed rest.

And another, that he returned to the camp—was brought to the Lord's people. The moment I am united to Christ I am united to all His saints; one with the Head, I become one with all the members. And as there is but one Head, there is but one body, of which every saved soul is a member. And he is entitled, the moment he is brought back to God, to

be in fellowship with all God's people; and henceforth he can say, "Thy people shall be my people, and their God my God."

And remark again—for the theme is not yet exhausted—what occurs on the eighth day. "On the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat-offering." On the eighth day the man was to take the trespass-offering, the sin-offering, and burnt-offering, and meat-offering. If you look at the word, you will see that it is not the priest who takes these offerings, but *the man himself*; he takes them in *his own hand*, like the truth I *have* Christ, Jesus is mine.

And then the priest presents the man and the offerings together unto the Lord. He can now worship. During those seven days he had been restored to the camp, and thus, in a measure, to God; but it was not until the eighth day that he himself might take the offering, and be presented to the Lord. We are reminded here of how during the seven days of this present time we are truly in fellowship with the Lord's people; but it is a "tarrying abroad," we are not yet gathered into His visible presence; but when the true eighth day arrives we shall have fresh glory—a fuller manifestation. Then, as the man *and* the offerings were presented by the priest, we shall be presented by Christ to Himself, one glorious church, without spot (without *defilement*), without wrinkle (without age), in the power of an endless life.

And now I press a few words by way of practical application. I press upon your notice, that up to a certain point in the ceremonial the man that was to be cleansed did nothing; he was simply passive in the transaction.

He heard the words which pronounced him clean, and he believed them; and had, of course, corresponding rest and joy in believing. Home, and health, and restoration were all at once before him. Love, too, he felt for such a change—such another life. So it is in the matter of a sinner's salvation. He hears, he believes, he rests. It has always been so. It was so with Adam. God, as it were, said to him, "You have broken my word, and thus fallen under death. You deserve the doom of death, but I will give you One to be bruised instead of you—One whose dying I will reckon as your dying, and Him I will raise out of death, and then His life shall be your life." Well, what did Adam do with this precious word of God in that early age? He listened; he believed, and had rest. And then, too, Abraham, how he looked for a city, even an heavenly one, upon the bare promise of God. God, moreover, promised him a seed as countless as the stars; and how did he receive the information? He simply heard; he believed. I know it was the new nature in Abraham, which God had made for Himself in him, which ever gave God credit for His truth. And it is the new nature in us which sees, and knows, and believes God. The moment I believe, as with Abraham, so with me. I have a mind, a will to do so, showing that God is working

in me. It is seeing God, looking at Christ, that we may find we have it. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." If He be lifted up, as He is to-night, and I see Him, and want Him, *I am drawn*. And what you see on the cross is a finished work. You have nothing to do but just look at what is done. "What," you say, "have I *nothing* to do?" What would you do? What could you do? Can you get another Christ? Is not the Christ of God's providing sufficient? Will not that do! No; you have nothing to do, but just to be satisfied that God has done all—that He has perfectly accomplished the salvation which you need. And now God presents this to you, and says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Blessed divine asseveration—"Thou *shalt* be saved." I would that I could ring it deep down to the innermost depths of every heart here to-night. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be **SAVED**." May God give it an abiding-place in every heart. God says it, and you may believe it *now*. I marvel at the strange inconsistency of many in these days. They demur to a sinner finding salvation just as he is, on the spot. They object to what is called a sudden salvation. Yet can salvation to a sinner, when first he receives it, be anything but sudden? If they are sent for to a dying couch, they do not hesitate to say to the poor sin-burdened soul, within perhaps a few minutes of eternity, "Believe in Jesus, and you are saved;" but if they deal with persons in health who are exercised about sin, they must needs enforce a previous process

of repentance and fruit, before ever they would venture to say to such an one that he may have rest. Strange inconsistency! as if there were one gospel for the dying, and another for the living. No! Who can see God, as He is revealed; and wretched, *leprous* self, as needing His salvation; and sin, for which Christ died, and not repent? not have blessed fruit of grace? Beloved people, to-night, in the presence of God, and in the calm intelligence of a scene like this—*to-night*, I ask you to stand still, and just rest the eye of faith upon Jesus. Believe only—only believe! “They that believe do enter”—*do enter* “into rest.”

Then when we have found rest and peace in believing in Jesus; *then* the vital work of the Spirit in you is to rid the conscience of its daily evil, and to keep it clean before God—blessed, often painful work, like the cutting off of the eyebrows, and the nakedness of the head. There must be the water—the cleansing, as well as the blood. But there is a lost one here saying, “Alas for me! *I want life.*” Let me give you a present illustration. There are three men lying in our land at this hour under sentence of death. The gallows lies before them on the morrow. Well, what can they do to procure life? Can they do anything? *They* can do nothing. Can the law do anything? No; the law could only do one thing, and that was to condemn them; for, remember, that when the law is brought to bear upon guilt, it *can* only condemn. Can the judge do anything? No; for the judge is bound to pronounce

the sentence according to the guilt; and the sentence is death. Having declared them, as proved by law, guilty, the judge is powerless to pronounce a contrary verdict, or to recall that verdict. All England at this moment is interested in this. Thus the sinner under sin is helpless. He *must* die. Oh, I want you to see that "*doing* is a deadly thing!" But now suppose another case. Imagine that I obtain a reprieve to carry to those convicted men, what would those men do in that case? The law had done its utmost for them, and that was to condemn them. But when grace comes into the scene, it is all changed. People talk of "*free* grace;" but grace can be nothing else but free. Well, grace comes into the cell, and proclaims those prisoners free. Then what now can they do? What but walk out of that cell free, take their reprieve, which is their life, in their hand, and go? The question of previous life, or the darkness of their crime, none of these questions at all affect grace. The man with the leprosy, when pronounced clean, had only this to do—to walk away in the energy and joy of one pronounced upon divine authority *clean*. And this is just what you have to do now—hear the sweet combined voice of divine justice and love pronouncing you free, acquitted, and in the energy of that word to leave these rooms at perfect peace with God. Justice speaks satisfied from the cross. Love does the same. And now grace reigns.

May the Lord, by His Spirit, through His truth, bless you. May God bless you.

DAILY WALK.

EPH. iv. 22-32.

I AM now going to speak on the life and walk of a Christian. Though we have nothing to do *for* salvation, we have much to do in the working out the salvation which we now have.

You will remark, that in Paul's epistle to the Colossian saints the apostle writes thus: "Seeing that *ye have put off* the old man;" whilst here in these verses he exhorts them thus: "*That ye put off* the old man." In the one epistle he speaks of this putting off of the old man as a thing already done, whilst in the other as a thing to be done.

Now, though there is an apparent contradiction in the words he employs, yet in truth they agree. Most blessedly true is it that the old man on the cross *has been* put off; and it is equally true that now, in our lives, we must put it off.

How is this? Why thus: In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul is speaking of the old man in its judicial relation to the death of Christ—looking at it in the light of the doom which befel it on the cross: and viewed as having died *there*, he declares

that it has been put off. It was laid upon Christ; He bore it on the tree; and having by His own death atoned for its sin, He put it off. This is the gospel; and how blessed is it to the soul that knows and believes it! *His* death is reckoned by God as *my* death. In a blessedly true sense I, who deserved death, have had my desert in Him; the "old man," *self*, has been put off. Its sin, condemnation, and doom have all been met on the cross.

But though the old man is crucified judicially, yet *morally* it is not dead. Its *presence* is still in us. But its "former conversation," habit of life, is not now to be allowed, but to be "put off." Hence the exhortation of the Holy Ghost here in Ephesians, "That ye put off concerning the *former conversation* the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

It is as if the apostle had said, "See what God has done with the old man; see Him in righteousness manifesting His full judgment upon it at the cross, there, in holiness and righteousness, putting it away. Now, you Ephesians, deal with yourselves according to the same. Let your life be according to what was done at the cross; let your walk, daily and hourly, correspond with *that*." Do you understand? God saw our nature, the old man—*one's self*—corrupt; and without any attempt at altering, amending, or changing it, He brings it to a doom corresponding to

its condition. He brings it to an end at the cross. He has given His own beloved Son, that He may taste death in all its misery, as God's judgment upon our utterly corrupt selves. It was sin that led us into death. The wages of sin is death. It was to take our death that Christ died. His soul was made an offering for sin. On the cross, the cords which bound Him to our sin, were loosed by death; for having once died for sin, no more was required. Therefore, seeing I died with Him, let me henceforth be loosed from the chains of sin practically. The cords which bound the sacrifice in Aaronic times, bound to the victim the whole load of Israel's sin and transgressions. So was it with our divine victim. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all;" and when He put away sin, He put off the old man—our old self—with all its inbred corruption and its outward transgressions; and when Christ died, having put away sin, it was according to divine equity and justice that God should raise Him from the dead, and that we also who were dead, and for whom He died, should be saved. Hence God can now be just, and yet "the justifier of him *that believeth in Jesus.*"

And now, we who are quickened, and have been raised up together with Christ, and made to sit in heavenly places in Him, are to see that our life and walk here corresponds to our position of holiness, rest, and acceptance *there*; we are to see to it that we put off all those things which belong to the old

man. This, in few words, is the apostle's argument. And now, if I am to speak here of the walk of Christians, I would say there are many, alas! who do not hesitate to take the putting off of self, the old man, by Christ on the cross *for salvation*, who seem sadly to fail in taking the putting off of the same for *separation*. They seem careless of evil. There is need of a solemn practical word on this. May the Lord help and teach us!

Some never seem to have judged the evil that is in them, or the evil that is in the world, in the light of God. It is in that light, through the Spirit who is in us, by the Word, that we can judge both good and evil. For true holiness is not ignorance of evil, or innocence of it even—as was the case at the first with Adam, who whilst in innocence did not know evil—or *separation from it*. But to separate from evil, it must be known to be such. And, having judged it to be such, the soul born of God inwardly abhors it. It is blessed where it is judged without reserve, and the whole will goes against it. Self and all its ways are evil. That which received its doom upon the cross is now judged by conscience before God to *be* evil, and is morally and practically condemned.

But if there be no self-judgment of evil, the divine nature within us is denied, communion becomes a mere name, worship before God hindered, and weakness of soul in service will sooner or later be evident. Hence the failure of so many.

It is as dead and risen with Christ that we can best judge of evil. We have put off the old man ; that is, we have been dead together with Christ. We have put on the new man ; that is, we are risen together with Christ, freed judicially from sin, holy, righteous together with Him, and are as He is in heavenly places. It is in such sense that God sees us in Christ ; and we are to walk in the light of what He sees. That is a solemn word, "if." If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Christ Jesus. Hence we may be saved, justified, accepted before God, yet we may not walk in the light, may not have fellowship. Such is the condition of those who have no exercised souls as to evil, or who trifle with their consciences when exercised.

A saint's ways should be according to his standing before God. And our standing is one of perfectness, completeness, through the precious blood of Christ. Is Christ there ? He is there for us, and we are made nigh to God even as He is nigh—holy, righteous, accepted in the Beloved. What a life, then, should be ours !

And so, mark, the apostle argues : "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour : for we are members one of another." "Putting away *lying* ;" for lying belongs to the old man, and is no characteristic of that new nature which is created after God. And remember it is not unconverted sinners whom I am addressing, but I

am speaking to believers; to you the apostle writes, "Putting away lying, speak every man truth." In Colossians the same injunction is repeated—"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Ah, when tempted to give a false statement, or not *the whole statement*, think and say, "Oh, no! that is the offspring of the old man which was put off at the cross." It has no place before God, and it must have no place in me. Like Joshua, who put his foot on the necks of the kings of Canaan, you must put your foot upon this evil. But the apostle goes on to say, that not only is *direct* lying not to be allowed, but—"Speak every man truth with his neighbour." Not only is it not to be a lie which you speak, but what you say is to be exact *truth*. For example, if you know a certain report to be false, but if, in repeating it, you only say that you *heard* the statement, without adding that you know it to be untrue, then you are not speaking the truth. Alas! character becomes ruined when given up to any such unregenerate ways. But what a knife to the flesh, as to untruthfulness in Christians, are all these inspired admonitions!

The apostle adds—"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." I know there are Christians who think far too lightly of anger as well as truth. They are impatient of contradiction; peevish under denial, fretful, and sometimes scornful of others. They suffer the sun to go down upon their wrath. How little are such the epistles of

Christ! Oh, beloved, when your sevant never sees God's mind, or your husband refuses to read Christ in His word, believe me, they may and ought to read Him in the page of your daily life! They cannot *help* reading *you*; and so, too, your children—they daily read your walk. Says one—"There must be something in my mother that is quite different to what I have got; there must be something that I do not understand; it makes her so calm and forbearing. When brother comes home in a passion enough to move an angel, she is sad, but so calm. Oh, if it be Christ that makes her life so lovely, then I should like to be Christ's!" Oh, ye who are the opposite of this, do not *talk* of Christ if you do not *live* Christ! It will come out soon whether yours has been hollow profession, or whether truly you are Christ's. Let me say to you, save yourselves and the friend, the child, whom you have injured. But there may be anger and not sin. God, we are told, is angry. We may well feel and act in our measure according to God. But an evil disposition is not of God; it is not of the new nature, but belongs to the old man. Is railing or revenge Christ-like? Oh, for the answer to that, look in again at that room where the ten disciples of Jesus are gathered! Peter was one of the number—Peter, who had cursed and had sworn—Peter, who, in a moment of cowardice, had basely betrayed his Lord. The others, too, had cruelly left Him all alone in His hour of bitter agony. We have seen how graciously the blessed Lord deals with

them, as He gets alone with them on that resurrection-day. How sparing of reproach. Did He turn to Peter and the rest and say—

“I have no word for you until I have had an understanding with you”? Oh, no, indeed! not a word of the kind; but “Peace, peace.” You see, beloved, not yet had the sun risen when He stands beside His own empty tomb, and there appears to and comforts the weeping Mary; and on that same day He appears to Peter and the other disciples, and breathes “Peace, peace.” Now Paul exhorts us to walk as He walked. Says the apostle—“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Better, indeed, that it should never have been; but since you have it, let it not go down upon it; for wrath is of the evil one, and belongs to the old man, and must be put away. Oh, what sight more sad than that of the sun going along all day, shining on the evil tempers of a Christian, and finally going down upon the same! There is only one person on whom I feel at liberty to bestow my anger, hatred even, and that is *myself*, because of the evil I know to be in me—the plague of the sin that besets, and the evil that is present. But as to saints, yea, all saints, how can I speak an irascible word, or look with coldness or contempt upon them, when I know with what love they have been loved, at what price they have been bought, and that soon I shall stand eye to eye and foot to foot with them in yonder glorious scene. Ah, then the ocean of the glory will swallow up all the pebbles and pools of our differences! They

will be all forgotten there—every eye centred on *Him*, every thought occupied with *Him*. Beloved friends, this is no surface religion! Of what avail is it that you make profession of love, if all the while the sun is going on and on till it go *down* upon your wrath? You are professing, but not manifesting the mind that was in Christ.

Shall I go on with this daily walk of the Christian, which is here so blessedly connected with Christ? Well, says the apostle, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands (as Paul did), the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Is this impossible, that a Christian should be ensnared by the devil into such an evil? Nay, not with such a heart as he has, and such an enemy. But this reminds you of more than that you are not to rob your neighbour's *goods*. By misrepresentation, by exaggeration, or tale-bearing, you may steal the good character or the good name of one whom you call your brother or friend. Alas, many do!

But, now, what a word is this, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Let your eye drop on the fourth verse of the next chapter. There you will find an injunction which bears upon what we have here: "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." This is most important; and

you will notice that these words are addressed to you and to me as saints. The apostle is not writing to the unconverted. No; but to *saints*. He says, "Nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." Bad words, foolish words, wretched jesting words, like bad fruit, have rottenness in them; they are corrupt. And, oh, what a penalty to pay to be obliged to listen to them! A Christian, whose converse bears the stamp of levity, of frivolity—a Christian, whose daily intercourse breathes the love of flippancy—what sight more sad? A trifling Christian, what a melancholy contradiction! To find an aged Christian, who professes to have long known the solid joy of the love of God, indulging in the empty joke and the hollow laugh, is indeed one of the saddest sights. But do I denounce cheerfulness, or forbid that a Christian should be joyous? Oh, no, indeed; for surely of all persons the Christian alone possesses the key to true lasting joy. I do not believe in a melancholy, morose Christian; but give me cheerfulness without levity, and joyousness without frivolity. Religion, Christ, was never designed to deprive us of, but to sanctify and deepen every true delight. But I repeat it—to find a Christian, whose lips have been consecrated with the blood of Jesus, and thereby set apart for *Him* alone—to find such an one employing his speech in foolish and unworthy conversation, how lamentable! Beloved friends, remember the Lord has no lips to speak for Him here below but those of His people!

“Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” In the Aaronic arrangement, you remember, that not only was the hand tipped with blood, to teach the Israelite that he must touch nothing that was contrary to that blood, but his ear was also sprinkled with blood, to show that he might *listen* to nothing that was contrary to God; his feet, too, though still in the howling wilderness, were consecrated feet, and bore traces of the blood, enjoining him that he must ever walk according to the mind of God. So, too, in principle, it is true of the saints now; of them, it is true, that their ear, their foot, their hand, and, we may add, their lip, is marked with covenant blood; the blood was upon their whole person, to show that the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, should be consecrated to the Lord. “Ye are bought,” you *yourselves*, “with a price.” So when the idle word rises upon the lip, put your finger upon it, and repress it; and when tempted to lightness of spirit, because of Christ, put all jesting and foolish talking away. But this does not forbid divine joyousness. No, indeed. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts unto the Lord. What! Are we to be always singing, and singing hymns? We would if we could. And if any tire of singing the praises of Christ on earth, they are wanting in one of the elements needful for heaven. There it will be always praise; always singing; always praising the Lamb; always singing unto Him that

loved us. Oh, how sweet the hymn in which we have the beginning of this now—the rehearsal of heaven’s employ now; the joy of heaven now! But no one can really sing but the believer. If Israel had not seen the horse and rider of Egypt’s host sink as lead to the bottom of the sea, do you think they could have raised the victorious song of triumph which rose from their six hundred thousand tongues on the Canaan side of the Red Sea? No, indeed. And so, too, you and I cannot really sing until we see the Red Sea of death open, and ourselves passed right through on to the Canaan side—sin, death, and corruption swallowed up. All my sins were laid upon *Him*; but he entered the billowy deep, and there left all the load of transgression buried beneath its waves, and, passing through, He came out on the other side, in resurrection-life and power. And as I see *Him* freed from death, I see *myself*; I, too, am on the other side of the Red Sea of death and hell. It is by the cross I know it. But unless I *know* it—know that I am saved—I cannot sing. If I am not certain that all my doom and destruction are past and gone, I cannot sing. But if I have been planted on the Canaan side of the Red Sea and Jordan—I may, I ought to rejoice. Some of you are, perhaps, still sighing about Jordan’s stream rolling between you and Canaan. But, oh, beloved, death—death—death—is all behind, past, and gone! and now, all who are in Christ cannot go back to pass through its flood again. They cannot, because He cannot. Be-

hind us is that flood, and in a sense the wilderness; we are *across* Jordan. In the land, in spirit we are there; and practically, in fact, there is nothing between our inheritance and us save a little strip of the wilderness; and, journeying along down here, we are pilgrims, strangers, not citizens, not at home, but in the desert, in which God Himself is our portion, as we sing—

“God, thine everlasting portion,
Feeds thee with the mighty’s meat,
Price of Egypt’s hard extortion,
Egypt’s food no more to eat.”

And with such a portion, all of grace, what of sin, or self?

“Thou art weaned from Egypt’s pleasures,
God in secret thee shall keep,
There unfold His hidden treasures,
There His love’s exhaustless deep.”

“Ah!” say some of such *grace*, “but will not this lead of Antinomianism?” Antinomianism! If any of you are thinking thus, it shows very clearly that you know but little experimentally of what it is to have *God* as your portion, “to eat the mighty’s meat,” to have unfolded to the soul “God’s hidden treasures,” “love’s exhaustless deep.” Christ’s own delight is that He feeds on God. We have the very life of Christ in us, which binds all who possess it to *live practically the life of Christ before men*. Besides which, being members together of *His* body, of His flesh, and of His bones, we being one with Him,

must walk even as He walked. This is not Antinomianism. This is no half-and-half religion, as some would like. Antinomians say—"We will be religious, if we may keep *some* of our sins and pleasures; we should like to have so much of religion as would keep us out of hell, and there is no law to hinder us from enjoying the pleasures of the world for a season." Ah, all that is very, very different from *this* of which I have been speaking; *that* is not this, neither is *this that*; and in vain will will you know God, or Christ, or have peace or true rest so long as you seek for it in such a way.

But we have been wandering away to the fifth chapter; now let us come back to the 29th verse of the fourth chapter. You see, immediately upon this follows the inspired precept, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Why this? Because nothing grieves the Holy Ghost like that spirit of levity, of unregenerate feeling, of carnal passion, of which we have been speaking. And then, another thing which grieves Him is, that some of us do not even recognise His presence within us; for how many believers are there who do not know the truth, even in the letter of it, of this blessed, life-long indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Hence they are constantly asking *for* Him, as if He were not already *in* them. They do not see that when Christ, the Head, was taken up, He fulfilled His promise, and sent down the Comforter to take His place, not only *amongst* us, but *in*

us—to be our guide, our divine Paraclete—to abide in us, to *remain in us*, until, as Paul shows, we shall be all caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Just imagine, a father returned to his home, and his children, instead of enjoying his presence among them, constantly deploring his absence, and expressing a wish for his return! How strange would all this be to the father! And where would be the fellowship between parent and children? Just so is it in regard to the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church. Said the blessed Lord to His disciples just before He went away, “I will pray the Father, and He shall send you another Comforter, that He may ABIDE WITH YOU FOR EVER.” Do you notice that word, “for ever,” “that He may *abide with you for ever*”? Not that you may ask Him to come down, or to descend from heaven, as if He were not here; that were to deny the truth, which says, “He shall be *in* you, and *abide with* you for ever.” Thus, when I fail to apprehend the Holy Ghost in my soul, I must grieve Him; He is the true Guest of the saints, and their Leader. He is likewise the divine Witnesser to a risen Christ. Moreover, says the apostle, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Conscious of His witness to my soul, I know that I am Christ’s.

And He is grieved not so much on His own account, for the Holy Ghost cannot be dissociated from His work, which is to reveal God, to speak of Jesus; hence He is grieved that we should know so little of the

things of Jesus ; that we should have such a low idea of the dignity which attaches to a believer in Jesus ; that we should know so little of divine love, of God's heart, and of what we are in Him. Oh, when we get a right understanding of what God is, how it turns everything upside down ! And how different from all that the sinner is at, trying to work on with *himself*, in order that He *may* be saved. The believer in God sees, that whereas before he had been standing in self—in the old Adam—he now sees himself to be standing in the eternal love of God, risen and seated in Christ in the heavenlies ; that whereas he in fact is here, he now sees himself in spirit to be risen, and “in the light.” He knew that he had to die for sin ; but now he finds that in the person of his substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, he *has* died ; and that now, being born of God, he is a son or daughter of the Lord God Almighty. Oh, what a name ! How vast, how solemn to be this—“sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty !” Do you understand, beloved ? Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who delights to witness to the truth of this accomplished redemption wrought for us, and to our position in that redemption, in Christ Jesus.

But, adds the apostle—“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, *whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*” A seal, we know, is the sign of possession. For instance, I wrap up this book in an envelope, and upon that cover I put my seal. If any one finds the book, and enquires to whom it belongs, I imme-

diately reply, "It belongs to me; for it bears my seal." Do you understand? The presence of the Holy Ghost in your souls is a blessed and additional proof that you belong to God—that you are His, not your own. And you are *eternally* sealed; not sealed to-day, and to-morrow unsealed (so to speak); for no soul is fast and loose thus—in the hands of Christ this morning, and in the hands of Satan this evening; no, but sealed *until the day of redemption*—until the day when the sons of God will be manifested. And yet we hear people praying *to be* sealed, when all the while, if they have the Holy Ghost in them, dwelling and witnessing in them, they have the seal! For the Holy Ghost not only dwells Himself in us, but He is *the Seal* with which we are *sealed*. This is said of all who have believed. "In whom also, after ye believed (or, as in the margin, in whom, *on believing*), ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. i. 13.)

But do you ask how you may know that you are sealed? Why, the very fact that you have the Spirit; have divine assurance, have deeper longings after Jesus, blessed desires to know more of Him now, and to see Him shortly face to face—the very fact that you are looking for His appearing, and are crying, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly"—all this is a proof that you *are* sealed, that you *have* the Holy Ghost. Blessed, precious proof! Beloved, if you *will* look *within*, look now for real purpose, and see what it is that God hath wrought in you. And

be thankful, and happy, and *holy*, according to Him who is in you, who is the HOLY Spirit of promise.

And then, further, we are sealed to the day of redemption. Not for a decade or a million of years, but, like the life we have, which is eternal, we are sealed for an eternity. Very well; then there comes the question, *When* does this sealing take place? When we really believe. The moment I find out that I am a sinner, I may be simply quickened—made alive. This may be without much intelligence; but the moment that I look to Jesus as a Saviour, and rest in His precious blood, and know my place in the love and grace of God, that very instant *I am sealed*, I am assured of my acceptance through the Spirit, who is in me, and by possessing whom I am sealed.

And now, dear friends, see how very sweetly this chapter closes—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Be much with Christ, for like creates like; and all bitterness, and wrath, and anger *will* be put away. Whenever the harsh word would be uttered, as we have said, let Christ put His finger on your lip. Kind, sweet, faithful, gracious words carry a mighty influence. "Ah!" says one, "I do not know or understand anything about *religion*, but I do know that that man's religion is worth something! That man! I never see him but I wish that I were like

him; I never find other people or myself like that man." Let us seek to have thus the mind of Christ. Never failing to live in the highest place which *He* gives you; it is there with Him, where He is before God. And it is there, through the truth, you get His mind, know His ineffable life, and grace, and love, and perfectness. And the more you realize *that*, the kinder, the holier will you be.

"Tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, in Christ, hath forgiven you." "*Hath forgiven you.*" Mark that word, HATH. No uncertainty was there about the matter here; no question raised as to the acceptance and pardon of these Ephesian converts. And why should *you* raise the unbelieving question, "Are my sins forgiven?" This they are in Christ. "You hath God quickened, *having* forgiven you all trespasses." What grace! "*Hath* quickened," and "*hath* forgiven," "even as God, in Christ, HATH FORGIVEN YOU." Let that settle every doubting, burdened soul in this assembly this morning, and so free you for your heavenly walk. But the way to be kept is, as the Lord hath enjoined, to *abide in Him*. Sweet way, beloved, by the exercise of His grace within us, in spite of all trials, temptations, and sins, to have the heart kept fixed upon Him. Occupied with Him, the affections will be filled with heavenly things; and the walk, accordingly, will be heavenly; and prayer and service will be blessed; and our words and ways be blessed. We shall, in fact, be holy. But we must *consciously* abide in

Him ; then His life will be seen in ours. His fruit appears in us ; for the fruit of the branch is the fruit of the vine.

The vine, it bears its fruit
Through living branches fair ;
Abiding in their living root
Those branches fruitful are.

The *feeblest* life that is—
Divinely formed in me,
Can show the self-same holiness
That dwells, dear Lord, in Thee.

The branch that beareth fruit
With pruning oft doth bleed.
That from Thyself, the living root,
May come forth fruit indeed.

Of all the fruits that spring
In walk or life divine,
None are so scant as those I bring,
Yet, Jesus, they are Thine.

Oh, I would ask Thee, Lord,
To prune each sickly part !
Cut, but to heal with Thine own word,
Though painful is the smart.

Then shall my life abound
With what is all from Thee ;
No more so much of self be found,
But more of Christ in me.

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