

Christian Prosperity

AND

HOW WE ARE BROUGHT
INTO IT.



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CHRISTIAN PROSPERITY AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

(ROM. V. 1-12, 18-21.)

THERE are two important thoughts in this well-known scripture. The first thought is that of progress, and the second that of spiritual health. Both are of great importance to a Christian, for, if he is going on with God, he will be making progress, and in order to go on with God he must be maintained in spiritual health. This chapter presents to us, in verses 1 to 11, our Lord Jesus Christ as Lord, and from verses 11 to 21 He is brought before us as the ONE MAN.

One thought that I connect with Christ as *Lord* is *control*. He has this position in the universe of God. He is Lord of all, but all do not own Him as Lord. Those who own Him as Lord He controls for blessing. It was a good thing for the Egyptians when Joseph was made Lord of Egypt, but it was far better for his brethren. All the fat of Egypt was their portion through coming under his control. So, if we are kept under

the control of the Lord, we are led along a path of progress, blessing and joy.

The principal thought that I connect with Christ as the one Man is relation, for we must first be recovered from lawlessness, and then we come under His influence, where alone we are preserved in spiritual health. We all need to be more really in touch with Christ—that real living Person in the presence of God. Then, through being under His control and His influence, we are kept in the fear of the Lord, walking with God, making spiritual progress and preserved in spiritual health.

Every believer is, according to Acts xiii. 39, “justified from all things.” That is true of each one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, “By him all that believe are justified from all things.” At the close of Romans iv. we read of believing on God, “Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Now, it would be well for each soul in this room to ask himself, “Do *I* believe on God as the One who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead?” Do we believe that God has come in, in power, and raised up the One that went down into death, and not simply made Him Lord, but *our* Lord? Many of God’s people, and in fact all of us,

have very little apprehension of a real living personal Saviour on high as our Lord.

This passage presents God as the One who has come in and raised up His beloved Son from the dead, and He is the One who is the Christian's Lord. It is a great privilege to be able to look up and not only say "*the* Lord," but "*our* Lord."

Now, consequent upon the recognition of Christ as our Lord, it appears to me, that in the first eleven verses of Romans v. we get what we may call the pathway of those who are kept under His control, and it is one of spiritual progress and prosperity. We can divide it into four sections. The first two verses go together, and in these the word *faith* is prominent. In the next two verses, I think, *experience* is the principal word, and in the next four it is *love*, and from verses 8 to 11—*joy*.

We will now return to the first two verses. "Therefore being justified by faith." Without doubt "therefore" refers to the close of the previous chapter. Faith always leads us to look outside of ourselves. We see Christ raised from amongst the dead, and by looking at Him we know God's mind regarding those who believe. There is no outward change in us at the present time. Hence it is a matter of faith. But faith, as I have

said, looks outside ourselves—looks at the Person of Christ, and through looking at Him we know how God regards us *even now*. On the principle of faith we are justified; not only clear from every charge, but approved of God, placed in His favour, and declared suitable to be with Him in His world. Then, being “justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have peace *Godward*—perfect peace. Not a ruffle can be produced on that side. There may be disturbances produced in us or around us, but towards God there is perfect peace. It is impossible to raise a disturbance Godward, for He has cleared the scene. The man, his sins, and the enemy's power have all been triumphed over.

But let us notice the words, “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” These blessings are only known and enjoyed when a person has come under the control of the Lord. No blessing is entered into and nothing is enjoyed in divine things unless we are under His control. If a man is lawless he cannot possibly enjoy divine things. Hence to come into the reality of divine things we must come under the control of the One who is Lord.

Next we read: “By whom also we have

access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Much has been said about the meaning of the word "grace." I would suggest that there is no other word that can take its place. What it conveys to my mind is this—we are brought to stand in all that God is for man. The greatest hindrance to souls is that they are seeking to stand in something *in* themselves or something *of* themselves. A person under the control of the Lord knows something of what God is for man, and the standing of the Christian is in all that God is for man as revealed in the Person of Christ, "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." We stand in grace; we stand here (where man fell, where the enemy's power is still manifested), in all that God is as a Saviour-God made known in the Person of Christ.

If I may for a moment allude to the difficulties of souls, how often they raise the question—"Do I believe?" That is because they are trying to stand in their believing instead of in what God is for man. God has been revealed in Christ, and the whole work of redemption has been accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has taken up the great question of sin, the power of the enemy has been annulled, and everything

has been accomplished by Him. God is thus made known as a Saviour-God, and we stand in what He, as revealed in Christ, is for man ; not exactly in what He is for believers, but for all men.

We can now look forward. The glory of God that shines to-day on the brow of Christ is going to fill the whole of this scene. We are privileged now to rejoice in the hope of it. We know what will take place. We see what must be the wonderful result of Christ having passed through death and resurrection, and gone to the right hand of God.

We now pass in our scripture to what is connected with experience—"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." We rejoice in hope of the glory, and should also "glory in tribulation." Not exactly in the trial and difficulty, but in the profit yielded through them. They yield certain results if we are under the control of the Lord. These results are beneficial and good for us. Hence the apostle could say, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

Our being brought to believe on the Saviour-God does not alter or change our *circumstances*. We have to pass through the same scene that we passed through before

we knew God, but, being brought to know Him has a great effect upon us and makes a great difference in us. We now go against the stream, and therefore we experience tribulation. A man under the control of the Lord will experience tribulation. Things are allowed that test him and which, under the good hand of God, help him spiritually. Our being brought to know God does not change our circumstances, but it produces an immense change in *us*. The circumstances are not exactly ordered of the Lord, but He is the One to control us in them. God as our Father orders them, but to receive spiritual gain through them we must be under the control of Christ as Lord. If they yield us real profit, it will be through being preserved under His control. Are we not all in danger of overlooking the goodness of God in this connection? God is not seeking to help us to obtain worldly ease and comfort, much less to get on in the world. He seeks to help us spiritually and also providentially, in different positions and surroundings which are the best that divine love could devise for us in view of our making spiritual progress. If we are under the control of the Lord, our circumstances produce exercise, and the result is that which is stated in verses 4, 5.

The apostle says, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience." That is, if we are controlled by the Lord, things are accepted and gone through with God, and patience is developed. Then, secondly, we gain an experimental knowledge of God through them, for we learn God in them. The trials by the way produce exercise, so that the chaff is gradually got rid of. God comes in in His goodness, and God is experimentally known. With the three Hebrew children (Dan. iii. 13-30) there was persecution as well as tribulation, but their case illustrates the principle. By going into the fiery furnace they gained an experimental knowledge of God. They knew God as the One who not only *could* but *did* deliver them. In the same way in our circumstances, which are ordered by God providentially, we are placed where, day by day, if we are under the control of the Lord, we can gain an experimental knowledge of God. The result is that hope is developed. The soul *confides* more in God Himself.

Then we reach the very heart of God. The Christian hopes in God, and he never gets "ashamed." His circumstances may not be altered, his difficulties may even increase, but he never gets ashamed. The secret is that the Spirit of God has shed

abroad in his heart the love of God, so that he is able to look at everything in the light, not simply of divine power, but of divine love. How different it would be, dear friends, if all our circumstances were accepted in the light of divine power, infinite wisdom and perfect love. The One who loves us is infinite in power and in wisdom, and orders things for us the best way possible in view of spiritual gain. How could the one who places his hope in God be put to shame? He looks at whatever takes place in the light of that heart that has been manifested and declared in the gift of His beloved Son going down to death. Hence two or three verses follow bringing before us the death of Christ as the revelation of God's heart. We see that our deep need was met in that death, and how everything was secured for God in it, and we also learn from that same death the great love of His heart. I repeat, how it changes everything if we look at things in the light of the love of God's heart! And that is where experience brings us. The trials and difficulties of the way produce exercise. God is learnt experimentally, and we reach the very heart of God, so that everything is looked at in the light of His love.

Then we reach God Himself, which is the

climax of all experience. If we reach God's heart thus we reach Himself. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" ("reconciliation").

It is interesting to notice that when it is the revelation of the heart of God it speaks of *Christ* dying, but when we have come to the thought of reconciliation it is the death of *His Son*. It is not simply that we are regarded by God as justified and approved of by Him, but we are before God in all the fragrance of the death of His Son; we are reconciled to Him, and being reconciled, we are able to joy in God Himself.

Now, before passing on, let us ask ourselves, "What do I know experimentally of travelling the path brought before us in this scripture?" Some persons appear to think that these verses give what is true *of* every one who believes on the Lord Jesus. It is very clear that many believers do not know what even the first verse states. Everything is true *for* all, but the thing is for each to be exercised and to see that he is treading the path of spiritual progress. Have we, dear friends, through the very circumstances that God providentially has placed us in, been brought to know Him experimentally? Do we look at it all in the light of God's heart? It

is easy to speak of these things when not passing through any special trial, but it is quite another thing when a positive test comes. Are we then able to accept all, and to thank Him for it through viewing it all in the light of His heart? Let us remember that it is a real thing to be brought to God Himself. Christ has died that He might "bring us to God." If I am brought to God I joy *in Him*. It is not simply that I joy in what He *gives*, not simply in what the gospel brings; but joy in God Himself—in the One who is the *source* of the gospel.

The first verse of this epistle speaks of the "gospel of God," and the eleventh verse of chapter v., which closes that part of the epistle, speaks of joying in God from whom the gospel comes. Do we know, dear friends, what it is to be so brought to God in the experience of our souls that we know what it is to be joying in Him? I do not think that the thought in verse 11 is saying anything to others, but of the soul secretly joying in God Himself while passing along through this scene.

We have now had before us the path of spiritual prosperity along which we are led if we are walking under the control of the Lord. To be under His control must mean continual increase in spiritual wealth. Not

that we learn anything *perfectly* while here, for we are continually learning the most elementary lessons in a deeper way; but it is our privilege to be led along gradually so as to know livingly in our souls what is stated in these verses.

Now in the second part of this chapter the Person of Christ is presented as the *one Man*. As the one Man He is, I think, in relation to every man though every man is not brought into relation to Him. I am not speaking of the Spirit who links us with the Person of Christ, neither of *how* we live, but *where* we can live, and there only is spiritual health found. All were lawless, and so in order to live we must be brought into relation to Christ, and to be in spiritual health we must be kept under His influence. In verse 19 we read: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made [or constituted] righteous." A person is constituted righteous by being brought into relation to God's centre—the ONE MAN. Then he moves under His influence. If he has been brought into relation to the one Man he has been placed where he can live under His influence. Let us bear in mind that what we are speaking of is not dependent upon meetings or being

together. A Christian should always be under the Lord's control, and always under the influence of the one Man. In practice we all fail, and we would willingly admit it, but divine progress is only made when we are kept under His control, and we can only live and be in health under His influence.

Another thing that I wish us to notice in these verses is the thought of "justification of life." I would suggest that justification of life does not give us the idea of something that is in us, but refers to what we are called to *enter into*, and then it enters into us when we have entered into it. The one Man has brought in justification of life.

Sin came into the scene and everything has been defiled, and the whole world is polluted. There is no part of this world but what is permeated by sin. The moral atmosphere is polluted and the whole system of things is defiled and defiling. In certain parts you feel it more than in other parts, but, nevertheless, every part of the world is corrupted. God has been revealed in Christ—the one Man, and faith recognises Him as the Head of all mankind. The Christian is brought into relation to the one Man, and coming under His influence he lives apart from that which is around him, and is thus preserved

in spiritual health. Some days when it is foggy, suddenly the sun begins to shine through the fog in its brightness and warmth. How great is the result! What a great effect there is in a little while. The sun shines in its power and the fog disappears before it. Instead of the cold, damp atmosphere, we feel the warm, genial rays of the sun. The blessed Person of Christ as the Sun of righteousness is shining, and, as the Christian is maintained under its warmth he is kept in spiritual health. Spiritual health can only be known as we are maintained under the influence of the one Man who shines in His glory which only those who have faith can see.

In this part of the chapter we have not practice, but we have clearly what is practical, and what produces godly practice. The great division of the epistle is at the end of this chapter, for chapter vi. starts with "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The last part of chapter v. presents the Person of Christ as the one Man. The "many," or the mass, were made sinners by the disobedience of one man, the "many" will be made righteous through the obedience of the one Man. In the world to come it will be fulfilled, and at the commencement

all will be constituted righteous. This verse will then be completely fulfilled. At the present time it is only true of those who, through divine grace, have been brought into relation to Christ as the one Man. The power by which we live under His influence and under the control of the Lord is taught in chapter viii. But in this chapter it is the greatness of the position that the Person of Christ has and what He brings in. It is not *how* we live, but *where* we live. It is living under the influence of THE ONE MAN that gives spiritual health. Then, dear friends, the result will be in daily life there will be that which is according to God.

The thought of justification of life is rather difficult for young believers to understand. The contrast helps to simplify the idea. The bearing of Adam's one act was that all were involved in a state of sin so that condemnation rested on all, but now through Christ's one act of righteousness, a life to which sin could not be attached is presented to all. A life not only outside of sin's dominion, but a life in which we are eternally in the favour of God; a life in which righteousness is maintained by those approved of God. We can contrast that in our minds with what is true of man fallen, and also with what was true of Adam

in the Garden of Eden. He was there in responsibility and he fell. In "justification of life" man is not on trial, but in a life that sin cannot be attached to, and where the favour of God is eternally enjoyed.

Those who have justification of life are in relation to Christ, and therefore *constituted* righteous—that is, as being brought into relation with the ONE MAN they move according to God. Adam before he fell had God as his centre, and would move in relation to God. Man fallen has no centre which is of God, and so moves independently of God, and this is sin. Now God has been revealed in the ONE MAN, and the soul is recovered for God by being brought in relation to Him, and, as in relation to Him, he moves according to God.

Then, at the close of the chapter, eternal life is mentioned, but what it is is not there unfolded. You have in this epistle the road that leads to it. Justification of life and being constituted righteous precede, in our experience, eternal life. Justification of life stands in contrast to what has come in through sin. Eternal life stands in contrast to death and eternal punishment, and is connected with the purpose of God. It is God's act of favour in Christ Jesus our Lord, and is not simply God meeting man's needs.

The thoughts that I wish to leave with you are—first, that Christ is Lord, and that it is only as we are kept under His control that we tread the path of spiritual prosperity as unfolded in these first eleven verses. Allow me to ask each one (as I ask myself), Do you know experimentally what it is to be treading this path? How is it, dear friends that so many of God's people are not satisfied, and that they are hungering after one thing and another around? Is it not because they are not under the control of the Lord, and therefore not led forward in spiritual prosperity? The soul that is gradually led in the path indicated in these verses is prosperous, satisfied, and perfectly happy.

Then, secondly, we must be under the influence of the ONE MAN. This is the second part of the chapter and is of great importance, for it shews *where* we can live in order to be maintained in the vigour of spiritual health. How important it is to be spiritually healthy! Spiritual health cannot be known when we are striving to live in that which is connected with man fallen. We must be living under the influence of the Person of Christ as the ONE MAN, and the result will be that we shall know what spiritual health is while we are still in a scene where everything is contrary to God.

May the Lord give each one of us to know practically a little more of what it is to be kept under the *control* of the Lord that there may be spiritual prosperity, and also to be more under His *influence* that there may be real spiritual health.



ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF DELIVERANCE.

(ROM. VII. 7-25.)

SPEAKING generally, I think we are weak in connection with being able to take account of ourselves as God's workmanship. What I have before me is to seek to lead up to that point, if the Lord will, and I hope we may be able to treasure up more in our souls what we are as formed by God. This chapter teaches elementary principles, but they are of immense importance, and unless they are laid in order in our souls, through the work of the Spirit of God, we must be weak as Christians throughout our whole career. These simple principles are, I fear, very little understood, for if they were better known, there would be very distinct results to the glory of the Lord.

The Lord Jesus is presented in this scripture as the One through whom God delivers us. It is not exactly that the Lord Jesus is the deliverer, but God delivers us "through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is through Him alone that any person knows anything of deliverance. It has often been said that in

these verses Christ comes before us as the object of our souls. I think that is true, but it does not go far enough.

I understand that this scripture presents Christ as One whom I am brought to prefer to myself. I think that all will agree that this is a most testing question to put to ourselves—Do I prefer Christ to myself? No person prefers Christ to himself at the start. That is an impossibility. In fact, we cling to ourselves until it is impossible to do so any longer, and if we think that we do not, it is because we are deceived by our own hearts. The moment the gospel is received Christ is before the soul as an object, but He is not at that moment the *supreme* object, so as to be preferred to oneself. We read in the Old Testament that when David had won the victory over Goliath Jonathan stripped himself even of his robe, sword, bow and girdle. He gave that which distinguished him, and that which he valued most, to David, but the sequel proves that he did not prefer David to himself.

Perhaps we can look back to when, through grace, we were brought to know Christ, and perhaps for a day, a week, or it might be years, we were ready to forfeit anything and everything for Christ. Happy

moment, grand experience! but has this been maintained? This happy experience is brought about through the presentation of Christ as Saviour, but for this to be maintained we must know deliverance, and this is according to the measure in which my soul appreciates Christ more than myself through being formed according to Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are only brought to prefer Christ to ourselves by passing through the exercise portrayed in this chapter. It is an experience that each one must know for himself. It is not exactly Paul's experience, but he went through an experience so that he could intelligently write it. There is no way to arrive at the end reached in this chapter save by individual exercise. This chapter commences by explaining that a Christian is dead to the law, "by the body of Christ, to be to another, who has been raised up from among [the] dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God." We are clear from the law, "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter."

The important question is then asked, Is the law sin? Now immediately follows one of the principles already mentioned, and the man supposed in this scripture learns that

each internal movement is sin. Every movement he makes is sin. Some have great difficulties with regard to this, but let us remember the fact. There cannot be a movement by you or by me, according to what we are naturally, without sin. It is an impossibility, and this is one of the important lessons that the man personified in this scripture learns. This shews that this scripture is not speaking of guilt, nor of sinning, but of man's *state*—what we are as fallen sinners, according to Adam's race.

We must now consider *how* it is that each movement of the natural man is sin. An Old Testament scripture will prove this fact. We read: "The plowing of the wicked, is sin." (Prov. xxi.. 4.) A person exclaims, How can that be sin? He has to plough his field. There is clearly no sin in the *actual* ploughing, because a Christian can plough and please God. But why is the ploughing of the wicked sin? Simply because he can only do it *lawlessly*—because God is not before him as an object that holds him in relation to God.

When God placed man in Eden he was an innocent creature. God should have been an object before him that governed his motives, so that he would not have desired anything apart from God and that which God had

surrounded him with. There was everything in that garden that a wise Creator could provide, and if man had remained an innocent creature, he would not have desired anything outside that circle. Now Satan succeeded in displacing God as a governing object before man's soul, and thus man became lawless. He is now a captive to his sinful desires, "sold under sin." The motive underlying his actions is sinful, and this is through God having been displaced as an object that held him to God as his centre. Hence he is a lawless creature.

Man was distinguished from all creation by having a spirit. The spirit was that which came immediately from God, and it was through this that he was an intelligent creature in relation to God. After the fall he was no longer dominated by his spirit, but fell under the power of his own desires as a natural person. The soul took the lead, he came under the power of sin and Satan. Hence he was a lawless creature—having departed from his centre like a wandering star. After that God in His goodness gave the law. If man could have kept the law, he would have been blessed; it would have been life to him. He would have continued to live on earth under the blessing of God in righteousness and holi-

ness. He would have loved God and his neighbour as himself. These things would have characterised his life. But man could not do or be what the law required, and therefore, instead of giving him life, it brought home to him that death was his portion.

God had been displaced before man's soul as a governing object, and man had become a fallen creature. He was now a slave of his own desires, controlled by the wicked one. This scripture exposes to our view the solemn fact that our whole state as men in the flesh is sinful, contrary to God, and that in that state I cannot make one movement that would be pleasing to God.

The first question raised is—Is the law sin, as the Christian is not under it? No! but he has died to it. The law has exposed to him the fact that he was in complete bondage to sin. The law is not sin. It is that which gives *me* the consciousness of sin. The law is that which is used to shew me that every internal movement is sin. Saul learnt this through the statement, "Thou shalt not covet," being brought home to him by the Spirit of God. To covet is to desire something apart from God. If man had not fallen, God would have been before him, and he would not have coveted. He covets

because he has fallen. The law simply exposes our true state. Unfallen man in the Garden of Eden would not have coveted. He would have been satisfied in the position the good Creator had placed him. The law shews the very desire is sin. The New Testament says that covetousness is idolatry. The heart is not satisfied with God. The soul desires something or some one besides God. An idolater is one whose heart is not satisfied with God.

The law, thus making known what God requires of His creature, is used to shew that every movement of my nature is sin. This is an important but serious fact, and if not seen, the truth unfolded in chapter viii. will not be understood. The supposed person here learns that every movement of himself as a natural person is sin, and when this came home to him he says, "I died." The law brings death home to him. His state is, that there is no real enjoyment according to God. He is the very opposite to what he should be, and in his own conscience he dies. The law does not bring him death ; it is sin that does that ; but the law brings home in power to him his true state, which is death.

So there cannot be any movement of man naturally without sin, and this is indeed a

serious fact. We are naturally in complete bondage to sin, and the law has only aggravated this and exposed our condition. We may be what the world can approve of; what man can approve of; we may even be a fine specimen of human nature like the rich young ruler, but a slave to sin as he was, which is seen in him preferring his riches to Christ. God was not before his soul as an object which governed him. It is thus learned through exercise that the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. It slew me by bringing death home to my conscience.

A second question is now raised. The law is indeed holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good. The commandment is holy, for it simply demands that which is according to God. Was then that which is good made death unto me? The law which was good did not bring death, but shewed me that death was my portion through sin. Then, through that which is good, another solemn lesson is learned, which is that I am carnal (fleshly), sold under sin. Let us ponder the expression, "sold under sin." Sin is looked upon as an enemy—a master that rules over men, and each one is under his power. Sin predominates, and though a person may do

what he thinks is right, if he has not the Spirit of God, it would only be to sin, because he is completely under its power. He is fleshly ; he is governed by what he is, when as a creature his whole moral being has been completely corrupted through falling under the power of sin. Hence he does that which he condemns and hates.

We may well pause and ask ourselves, Do we hate the very desire for something apart from God ? We must bear in mind that what is spoken of here is not the outward acts, but movements within which no one knows anything about save one's own self. The lesson has to be learned that every movement of what I am naturally is only sin, so that I may take God's side against myself and hate it. Have we been brought to hate it ? How is it, dear friends, that we speak lightly of what is wrong ? How is it that things can be excused and justified by arguments that are of this world ? Surely it is because it is not seen that every movement of man away from God must be sin. If through the mercy and grace of God we have been renewed, then, as under the power of grace, every movement of ourselves must be abhorrent to us. Job, like many around us to-day, thought that there was some good at the bottom, but he had to learn

that there was nothing but badness there, and he was brought to abhor himself and to repent in dust and ashes.

It is indeed an important question. Have I been brought to abhor the very movement of myself as a natural person? Have I been brought to abhor every internal movement, because of it being entirely unsuitable to God? When brought thus to abhor myself I begin to prefer Christ to myself.

The man who is personified in this chapter can now speak positively of his own state. Viewing himself in the flesh, he says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Notice he says I *know* good does not dwell there. This is because he finds that there is no power to do good. "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." So he knows now that there is no good in him, every internal movement being contrary to God and to his own mind. Hence he concludes that in himself good does not dwell, for there is no power whatever to do that which he in his mind desires to do.

Then he states another conclusion: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Let us bear in mind what I have already men-

tioned, that the Spirit of God is speaking here of internal movements, and not of outward acts. He speaks of movements within a man which no person could know of but himself. The man contemplated here is outwardly a most consistent man. He is a man that you could not find fault with in his outward life. He is seeking after holiness. He wants to please God, and desires to be right inwardly, but has to learn that inside all is wrong. The thoughts which come into his mind he abhors because they are contrary to God, therefore he says, "It is no longer I that do it, but the sin that dwells in me." He has now arrived at this fact, that not only is there no good in him but that he has a dangerous and powerful foe within him named sin. He now regards sin as an enemy—an enemy that he carries about, and one that he is under the power of, but that foe inside him is not himself.

He now states a third fact, namely, the law in his members brings him into captivity to the law of sin. He is powerless. He is completely under sin's power. He says, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind [with the law of his mind he desires only to please and inwardly to be according to God], and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which

is in my members." He is a helpless captive under the power of sin. When he would do good, evil is present with him. He would have every thought according to God, but finds that every thought is contrary to God. The thoughts that he hates are always entering his mind. The result is he abhors himself. He finds not only that he will not do for God, but that he will not do for himself. What he is is obnoxious to the taste and the desires which he already has in his mind. Hence he cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I am a wretched man, for I want everything inside to be according to God, and it is all wrong. There is nothing but death there. That is my state. Who will deliver me from this dreadful condition as a natural man dominated by sin?

There has been a great advance in his experience, for he now says, "*Who* shall deliver me?" Hitherto it has been, "How can I overcome that which I find in myself and which is so contrary to what I desire?" Now he looks outside himself and it is not "How can *I*?" but "*Who shall deliver me?*" Then immediately he breaks forth into thanksgiving. He says, "I thank God." God Himself is the deliverer. The gospel comes from God, and God is going to dis-

place in us every trace of what we are as fallen creatures. There is not going to be one trait left of that which we are as fallen, for God will have us formed after Christ. Christ must displace what I am. As soon as the man, having looked away from himself, asks, "Who shall deliver me," he immediately sees that God will deliver him through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has now before him an object that he prefers to himself.

He had desired to be holy, to be that which he knows is according to God, but found nothing within but unholiness—unholiness in thought and desire. He looks at Christ. He sees One who is absolutely holy. He sees a Person who is everything he desires to be. God delivers through Him by displacing every trace of *me* by the formation of Christ through the work of the Spirit.

Let us notice the very words that are used: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We were speaking last week of Christ as Lord and as the one Man. Here the word is "through Jesus Christ our Lord." That precious name—Jesus—is placed first, Jehovah the Saviour. The One that became Man, but One who stands in marked contrast to each one of Adam's race—One in whom

God found His delight ; One who inwardly and outwardly was all that God could desire, and that is the One I prefer to myself. In that One every desire, which is the result of God's working within, finds an answer in the unchangeable grace of His Person, and He is great enough to give character to a universe, and I am taken up in grace to be formed according to Him. He is Christ, the Anointed, the One now to fill my heart and mind, and in a little while to fill the universe of God. He is Lord to control me, that I may be formed in Christ and led into the present enjoyment of all that God has given me. Is it any wonder that in some little measure we prefer Him to ourselves ? Surely the surprise is that we travel that road so slowly. I find that in myself I am the very opposite of that which I now desire to be. I have desires that cannot be satisfied in what I am, but in that blessed Person there is a perfect answer to every desire within. God has taken us up for one end, which is that we may find our whole joy in Him. God produces desires within us that only find their answer in Him. We read in Proverbs viii. that "his delights were with the sons of men." And, dear friends, God takes us up, that we may find all our delight in Him, and to this end God works in pro-

ducing desires that only can find an answer in "Jesus Christ our Lord," through whom God delivers us.

The soul never says, "*Who* shall deliver me?" but once. A person might say a million times, "O wretched man that I am!" If we have gone on with God, we have said, "O wretched man that I am!" with an increased sense of its truth, but not "*Who* shall deliver me." The soul is brought to know the secret that God is the Deliverer, and is no longer in the misery and bondage which is the result of not knowing God as the Deliverer. God is now known not only as One who forgives, who saves, but One who delivers from the sinful state that I am in through being a captive to sin.

Now the individual is able to take account or to think of himself as one that is of God. He is a moral being. He has a mind that is formed by the presentation of Christ, and a heart that loves Christ. God has thus formed him. He still carries with him all that he is as of Adam's race, but he himself now is one who thinks according to God and loves Christ better than himself. He says, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God."

Have we ever been able to think of ourselves thus?—"So then with the mind I

myself." The "I myself" is not that wretched man in whom there is no good. The "I myself" is one formed by God, so that he can say, "So then with the mind / *myself* serve the law of God." With the mind he does God's revealed will, which is the mark of a person formed by God. He was once a person that had no desire after God, and his every movement was sin. God in His great mercy had brought him to know Himself, and now the one who knows God is, "I myself." He delights in the law of God, and viewing him as formed of God he can only do the will of God. But, dear friends, he still carries about all that he was before he was brought to know God, and therefore adds—"but with the flesh serve the law of sin."

This verse does not teach that I have two natures, but the individual "I myself" can move either as one that has been brought to know God, or with the flesh. Viewed as the former, he can please God, but viewed in connection with the latter, he cannot.

We will briefly review the road that we have travelled. The first question was—"Is the law sin?" The scripture shews that could not be, for it is through the law that I learn that every movement of what I am by nature is sin. This is what the law exposes.

God's demand upon man exposes to me that I am a creature of which every movement is sinful. Paul thought that he was serving God, but the moment the word, "Thou shalt not covet," came home to him he saw that death was his true state. Then he learnt that his very desire was sin, and that death was his true portion.

Then the question is raised, "Was, then, that which is good made death unto me?" "The law is holy, just, and good," but coming home to me, I find that *I am* sold under sin, and wholly under its power. The sin that reigns supreme in the world according to chapter vi. is a master over me, and I learn that I am a slave to it in chapter vii. The supposed man states the fact that he *knows* that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwells no good thing, because there is no power to do the will of God, though he has the desire to do it. Then he learns to look upon sin as a positive enemy within him.

Thirdly, he learns that there are two opposing forces within him, with the result that he always comes into captivity to the law of sin. This brings him to abhor himself and to know that he has no power in himself to overcome sin which is obnoxious to him. This turns him away from himself and he asks, "*Who* shall deliver me? *Who*

will lift me right out of this dreadful condition in which I am found? When I want everything within me to be according to God I find it all contrary to God." He immediately thanks God that it is through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has now One before him who answers every desire of a man renewed by grace. Every desire finds its answer in Him. He is now able to think of himself and speak of himself as "I myself." "I myself" is the individual that has been brought to know God. With the mind His will is done; but to move with the flesh is only to sin.

May the Lord produce exercise in each one of us so that it may be true of us that we prefer Christ to ourselves, and that our lives may declare it to the praise of God's glory.



CHRISTIAN STATE.

(ROMANS VIII. 5-27.)

MANY seem to be afraid of what we call subjective teaching. Yet in the scriptures we find a great deal unfolded regarding the formation which takes place in the souls of the saints. There is also a presentation of Christ, but there is always a full unfolding of how we are formed by the work of the Spirit. This shews that both lines of teaching are of equal importance. To slight either, to make more of one than of the other, or to overlook either, is to miss that which God in His goodness has given to us for the profit and help of our souls. No doubt some fear that the presentation of the subjective side of the truth may lead to self-occupation. But I think that, if you consider the matter, you will see that it is a mistake. God has brought to pass His thoughts in Christ objectively, and it is God who alone can effect them in us. The knowledge of this turns me to God, and does not turn me in upon myself. It is, I suggest, of very great importance that we should under-

stand how God works in us, what will promote that work, and also that which would hinder that work from progressing.

Are not children taught what is good and what is injurious for them to eat? Are they not instructed to shew them the danger of inhaling poisonous gases, and that fresh pure air is necessary for life? They are not instructed as if it were in their own power to grow and cause their bodies to develop, but they are instructed that they may avoid everything that would hinder their development, and to abide where growth and health may continue. If I do not understand my spiritual constitution, and what is necessary for supporting it, I shall be in danger of going in for what will hinder growth, and also into that which would mar my spiritual career and progress. Hence it is most important to consider the scriptures that unfold to us the subjective side as well as those that present the objective. It is clear that Romans viii. 1-27 is the subjective side, or, if you will admit of the use of the word, it describes my spiritual constitution.

We will first seek to gather up the principles which are necessarily learned in measure to prepare us to consider what the wonderful constitution of a Christian is. The first thing is—the soul has the Son

of God before it as an object. (Chap. i. 4.) He sees that God's righteousness has been established in the death of Christ (chap. iii. 21-31), and that the power of God was displayed in the resurrection of Christ. (Chap. iv. 24, 25.) He has come under the Lord's control (chap. v. 1-11), and under the divine influence of the *one Man*. (Chap. v. 12-21.) His mind has been formed by the presentation of Christ as the One who died to sin, and who lives to God. He has learnt his own weakness, and that Christ, through whom, and in whom, he has everything, is the only One that can uphold or maintain him here so that he may live to God, which is the intent of his mind and the desire of his heart. This brings us to the point where we closed last week, which was that the supposed man in that chapter (chap. vii.) had been brought to appreciate the Person of Christ better than himself.

We may well allow this to search us, and we should judge ourselves, because we know so little of what it is to appreciate the Person of Christ better than ourselves. We know what it is to meet those who are beyond us, and we admire them. Then if living with the one admired, the individual gradually, unknown to himself, becomes to a certain

extent like the person before him. We know that married persons grow in taste, &c., to a certain extent like one another. That is the principle that is in my mind when I speak of appreciating the Person of Christ more than myself. This is entirely through mercy and grace. God gradually works to bring our minds into accord with His, so that I abhor myself but I appreciate Christ because He answers to every desire that God has formed in me. Thus we arrive at what is expressed in Solomon's song, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

It is healthy in this busy age that we should ask ourselves—Do we know what it is to sit down under His shadow? Do we know what it is to move and walk through this scene under the influence of One whom I love better than myself? If a person has thus been brought to appreciate the Person of Christ, he will gradually drink in of His Spirit. He now learns that God has been pleased to give him a good constitution, in which is the spring of that which he sees in perfection in Christ. God has set him up here on earth in divine power—in the power of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God is spoken of in several

different ways in this chapter, and thus we have placed before us the marks which characterise the constitution of the Christian. The soul loves the Person of Christ, who is a real living Man in the presence of God. He is holy. Holiness marks Him. We read of Him being marked out Son of God in power, "according to the Spirit of holiness." He is totally different from all others, even from what Adam was in innocence. Christ is marked by the "*Spirit of holiness.*" Now, as we appreciate Him better than ourselves we drink in of that spirit. Those who have the Holy Spirit have the spring of holiness within; but the more we sit under His shadow and feast on His fruit the more we drink in of that Spirit of holiness that characterises His state as man. Of Christians we read, "But *ye* are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you." (New Trans.) I want you to notice the words, "God's Spirit," or "Spirit of God." It is the Holy Spirit, who is a divine Person, and the thought cannot be separated from that fact; nevertheless it is *Holy* Spirit as characteristic of the state of the Christian. His state is characterised by the presence and power of Holy Spirit, similar to what is spoken of Christ in chapter i. 4, but He of whom we read as

marked by the Spirit of holiness is the Head and Source through whom it is given to us. We find a similar thought in the Old Testament, but then it was not accompanied by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now all these moral thoughts are connected with the indwelling of the Spirit of God and must not be separated from it, though they can be distinguished. In Psalm li. we read: "Take not the spirit of thy holiness from me." (New Trans.) David was afraid that through his sin that holiness of spirit which had marked him prior to his sad fall might be lost. This state was through God's work in mercy by His Spirit. He was a man after God's own heart. Idolatry was abhorrent to him, and he loved the Lord. He feared that, through his sin, he might lose this spirit of holiness and thus not be kept in real touch with God. Let us ask ourselves, dear friends, are we in the secret of our own souls exercised to be with the living God? The way God effects deliverance is through giving us to drink in of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Spirit of holiness seen in Him characterises the Christian state given of God. Then as maintained by grace, having Him before us, we continue to drink in of His Spirit and are kept in touch with God.

May we, like David, desire more earnestly to be characterised by this holiness of spirit that we may be in touch with the living God, and so more faithfully to represent Him here.

These moral thoughts connected with the presence of the Spirit of God are of great importance. The more we appreciate the Person of Christ better than ourselves the more we drink in of His Spirit, and find that in the power of the Spirit of God our desires correspond in measure with His desire. What a stupendous fact it is that we have the Spirit of God.

But we have another moral thought expressed by the words "the Spirit of Christ." "If any one has not [the] Spirit of Christ *he* is not of Him." (New Trans.) We need to consider the words "of him." They do not simply mean that we belong to Him. We are *of* our earthly parents after the flesh, having received being and character from them. Now, through grace, we are spiritually *of Him*. A person who has not the Spirit of Christ is not yet *of Him*. God may, in His sovereign mercy, have wrought in that person, but he has not by the reception of the Spirit been placed in relation to the ONE MAN and drank in of His Spirit so as to be "of him."

Through having the Spirit of God there is the source from which holiness springs, so that what is of God is loved and what is not of Him is abhorred. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of that Man in whom God finds His delight; the Spirit of the meek and lowly One; the Spirit of the One that will give character to the universe of God; the Spirit of the only Man who will suit God. There is only one Man who will do for God, and there is only one Man who will do for those who have been brought to appreciate Him more than themselves, and it is to them that the Spirit of that Man is given, and they sit under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is pleasant to their taste. (Song of Sol.)

There is another moral thought, and these three are linked together in thought. "The Spirit life on account of righteousness"—that is, the Spirit is the power of life, that there may be righteousness, so that we might live consistently with the revelation of the righteousness of God which has been established in the death of Christ. There is an old but important statement, namely, that "The value of an act lies in the motive." If Christ is in our hearts and minds new motives energise us. By the Spirit Christ gradually gets the supreme place in our

hearts, and we enjoy what God is, and according to the measure of this, in the power of the Spirit, our life is in accord with the object before it.

These are the three leading features of the constitution of a Christian—"Spirit of God," Spirit of the Man that will give character to the universe of God, and the Spirit life that there may be righteousness. These three are the moral characteristics of those suitable to be in relationship with God. But before we pass on, let us again ask ourselves, Have we ever thought of ourselves as persons formed of God, living in the Spirit, and so free to enjoy Christ, and through this to gradually grow and take character from Him?

These three moral thoughts shew how the man ended at the cross has been displaced by God in His saints. Thus not only has God ended sinful man in the death of Christ, but He has displaced him in me by giving me the Spirit. Saints have therefore what I have called a spiritual constitution that is given through God's grace.

In verse 11 we see that the Spirit who forms our moral beings will quicken our mortal bodies. That is a divine consequence. There could not be any other result. Seeing that God has illuminated me

by the Spirit in my moral being, He will bring the body into accord with it. Seeing that God has glorified us in our moral being by giving us the Spirit of glory, He will accomplish the same in regard to our bodies—there could be no other result. Having glorified us inwardly He will glorify us outwardly. Verse 17 speaks of the latter. “If indeed we suffer with [him], that we may also be glorified with [him].” (New Trans.) Then verse 30 says, “Whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified.” (New Trans.) We are not glorified outwardly before the gaze of an adoring universe, but we can take account of ourselves as moral beings glorified, for the very Spirit of glory from that blessed Man on high has been given to us. Thus there is a moral being, though still in an earthen vessel, illuminated with glory, sustained by being in the enjoyment of what God is, so that even now, while still in bodies of humiliation, there may be the shining forth in us of what God is. It would be a great thing, and our meetings would not indeed be in vain, if we were enabled to take account of ourselves, and cherish in our souls what we are, through God’s wonderful goodness, in having been made to live in the Spirit.

In the light of this we can only think of going forward. The Christian should always be moving Godward. God has taken us up that we may experimentally be led into His great thoughts concerning us. We never knew a full-grown man born into the world. Babes are born, and they have to grow up to become men. When a person is born anew and has received the Spirit of God, he is a babe, and has to grow up spiritually to become a man, and every step of the way is experimental. Would it not be a foolish thing if it were possible for a young boy to think he is a full-grown man! In the first creation God made a perfect man, but spiritually we all start as babes, and it is no disgrace to be born a babe, though it would be a disgrace to *remain* one. We do not start as men in Christ, for we have to grow up to that end. God gives us good constitutions, good food, and places us where we *can* grow. If we walk with God we have good appetites and we *do* grow.

We are now ready for the truth connected with going forward, and there is only one line on which we can travel, which is by the Spirit putting to death the deeds of the body. Are we alive to the marvellous fact that the Holy Spirit is here, and that God is dwelling in us by the Spirit? If we walk in the

Spirit's power we put to death the deeds of the body, for the principle on which we live is to ignore the desires of the flesh, to give them no place. Then the body is not to be used for fulfilling our natural desires, but to be luminous for God's praise and glory. If we live where we like, and gratify our natural tastes and appetites, and dress to look nice, we are moving on the line that leads to death and robbing our souls of heavenly joy. It is not a question of which street we live in, or of what actual food we eat, or of the colour of the clothes that we wear, but is God before us so that we are governed by what He is? Do we look at things in relation to Him and His glory? We often speak of the truth of deliverance, but, alas! we know very little of it. How much is Christ displaced in us so that whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God? Some think this involves living an unhappy life, but it is the only happy life. To consider for myself brings unhappiness, but to consider for Christ is true happiness, and for this we have all the power of the Spirit to support us. That is the only line on which that which is really life is experienced. To move on the other line is to live after the flesh, and that is the road which leads to spiritual death. There

can on that line be no real enjoyment of what God is. Look at that brother, how gloomy he is! It may be he has been breaking bread twenty or thirty years, and apparently has not moved on. His voice is never heard in the prayer-meeting, and if you go to see him it is difficult for him to speak of Christ, though quite free to converse on the topics of the day. How serious it is to be living after the flesh! Let us see to it that we are walking in the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body, and in liberty doing the will of God.

On that line we go forward, and become spiritually intelligent. Hence we read, "For as many as are led by [the] Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (New Trans.) Sons of God are marked by divine intelligence. They are not blindly following a book of rules. They are able to discern what is of God, and are intelligent in the path of God's will. They are in sympathy with God, and understand intelligently the movements of the "cloud" and the journeyings from stage to stage.

Then all is done in the liberty of a known and enjoyed relationship, "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (New

Trans.) There is no bondage in Christianity. If a person is in bondage, it is through moving with the flesh.

A spirit of sonship is already given to us, so that there may be adequate response to the wonderful love of God that has given us the place of sons before His face for ever. We have received the Spirit whereby this response is produced. Other epistles shew the response produced; but here we are told that the Spirit is given whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

Then further, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." The Spirit bears witness to the blessed fact that we are children of God. Do we treasure up in our souls that we are children of God? The Spirit bears witness with that which He has produced within us, so that we are conscious of being children of God. How very sweet is the thought! Children of God, called to live in the same love of the Father that rested upon the blessed Person of the Son of God when here. That is our place as children. Let us ponder over this divine reality, that the Father's love—the same love that rested on the Son of God when here, now rests on us. The Spirit bears witness that we are children, heirs also; "heirs of God, and

Christ's joint heirs ; if indeed we suffer with [him], that we may also be glorified with [him]."

It helps in the understanding of the following verses to bear in mind that the word translated "creature" is the same as "creation." God will bring the whole creation into the blessed results that will flow from the manifestation of the sons of God. It could not share the glorious liberty of the *sons* of God, but it will enjoy the liberty of the glory that will result from the *shining forth* of the sons of God.

Now we can cherish the thought of what we are inwardly, what we are as formed by the Spirit. We can live to God in Spirit, and enjoy our place with God as children, and as heirs rejoicing in the portion before us. We are still linked with the old creation by the body, and so are able to sympathise with that which is around. God feels for His creation. He does not look with joy upon the earth in its barren state, with its mouth wide open crying for the coming blessing. God does not find pleasure in the suffering of the creation which is the sad result of sin. He remembers the suffering even of the brute creation and will have an order of things in which the whole creation will enjoy His blessing to His praise and

glory. In the meantime we can be in sympathy with God's heart, and sympathise with the groaning creation around us. In freedom we can groan in sympathy with a groaning creation, and rejoice in view of the wonderful moment when it will be delivered. We are privileged to suffer *with* Christ, and not merely *for* Him. In every step He took through this scene He felt that everything was contrary to God, and we are privileged in liberty to suffer with Christ and sympathise with the groaning creation around.

This leads us to turn to God in prayer, but the deliverance of the creation is such a great subject that we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. Then God, who understands these groans, will answer by introducing and publicly establishing the world to come.

This groaning is not connected with the prayer-meeting. Scripture speaks of coming together to pray and not to groan. It is our privilege to come together to pray intelligently about the Lord's interests. But, when it is a question of the deliverance of the vast creation, words cannot fittingly be found to express our feelings, and so the Spirit comes

in and produces this groaning which God understands.

We will now briefly seek to sum up what has been before us. The person of Christ is before the soul as an object, which is appreciated more than myself. Then I drink in of His Spirit, and am characterised by holiness of spirit—Spirit of Christ, doing righteousness in the liberty and intelligence of sonship, enjoying the fact of being one of the children of God. Then I can rejoice in view of what God will soon publicly establish, and in the present I am in liberty able to sympathise with a groaning creation around.

May God give every one of us a deeper sense of what we are as formed and set up in the power of the Spirit of God, so that in His power we may be growing and increasing in the true knowledge of God.



THE RESURRECTION SPHERE.

(COL. I. 17, 18 ; II. 1-13.)

LAST week we were looking at Romans viii. in connection with how God is pleased in His goodness to set His people up here in the Spirit. We must bear in mind that in that epistle God's people are presented as individuals in the kingdom, in the wilderness. They are set up according to God in His favour in the power of His Spirit, so that they are capable of doing His will. Their state being in the Spirit, they delight in the will of God, and have power by which they can fulfil their responsibilities. There is no need to be afraid of the thought of responsibility, for the Christian has power to accomplish it in full liberty through the Spirit. Christian responsibility is to do that which, if walking in the Spirit, the soul delights in and accomplishes without effort. The person who enters experimentally into the truth of chapter viii. is here on the earth for the will of God, and proves that it is perfect, good, and also acceptable to him.

The Epistle to the Colossians is different,

and the few verses which I have read in chapter i. bring before us one great divine fact. In chapter i. Christ is viewed as being the Head of the body. He has been here and has been rejected. He was presented to man, and, if He had been received, He then would have been the Centre and Head of the universe. Now, though He has been rejected, He *must* have something upon this earth, and He *has* something, for He has His body. He has His body for His pleasure, and He influences and directs the movements of His body. This is a great and wonderful fact.

Now the body, as presented in this epistle, is viewed on the other side of death; it is that which exists in resurrection. It is divine and heavenly in character, and consequently over Jordan. It is very clear that no person in his experience starts there. It has to be reached and it is only known according as we are led by the Lord and formed by the power of the Spirit.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians we have the body looked at in what I will call its *earthward* aspect; that is, it is looked at in a way that men—*people* around—are able to see its movements. In that epistle the body is a consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and *one* Spirit animates it. But in

Colossians "the body is *of* Christ." There is a new creation, we have a sphere where Christ is all in all. The body being of Christ will be quite clear to the mind if we remember that God took a rib from Adam, and of that rib He builded the woman. I do not say that we reach the antitype of Eve in Colossians. I hardly think that we do; but we can use it to make clear the thought of being "of Christ." It is very clear that Eve was of Adam. So the body is "of Christ." If in Romans God's people are looked at in their path of responsibility, in Colossians we have the presentation of Christ as Head, and the assembly as His body, in which He is continued here. Saints are looked at in a sphere of immense privilege. In Romans we read: "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Our souls view the Person of Christ, who has died and has been raised, and, by looking at Him, we know *how* God regards us. We know that we are justified, for we see God's mind concerning ourselves expressed in Him. Then, later in the epistle, we learn that it is only in the life brought in by the risen One that we are justified. In Colossians ii. the apostle speaks of persons circumcised (cut off) in the circumcision of Christ, and "buried with him in baptism,

and risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead." This expression—"the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead"—is of great importance. In Romans we see the power of God displayed in the resurrection of Christ; but the teaching there is that those who believe on God are justified. We know how God regards us, and this consciousness is through the Spirit that He has given to us, that we may be formed and thus answer to what He has made known in the Person of Christ.

In the Epistle to the Colossians we look again at Christ, but we also learn that not only is it the pleasure of God that we should be justified, but that we should now know that we are risen with Christ. We know that it is the pleasure of God that we should be risen with Christ by faith in the operation of God in raising Him, and through that power operating in us, which has operated in Him, we know that we are risen with Him. God has "raised him from the dead," and that plainly shews His pleasure regarding us. At the present time no person is actually or literally risen with Christ. It is "through faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead," that we can know we are risen with Christ. The moment that is

known the soul touches that circle where Christ is all and in all. There Christ is the one absorbing object as the centre of His own circle, and He is the life of all there, for all are of Him. Hence in Romans it is through looking at Christ that we know how God regards us, and in Colossians we also learn from Christ that the pleasure of God concerning us is that we should now, through faith, know that we are raised with Him. The power that had operated in Him had operated in the Colossians that, through faith, they might take up in their souls their position with Him as risen; and through the operation of that power they had a state suited to that position. What a cheer to our hearts! How it makes them rejoice to think of the fact that Christ has a circle where He is supreme. How encouraging it is also that the power that operated in Him operates in us that we may know what it is to find delight in Him in His own circle where He is the centre—yea, the all in all.

In our individual pathway there is great blessing. If we are here upon earth to do the will of God we are supported by the Lord in the power of the Spirit. But the Lord supports no one unless he is here to do the will of God. It matters not what I may think, or what I may take up, or how

one may be commended by men, even by the people of God: the Lord supports *no one* unless he is set here to do the will of God. The path of God's will is one of great blessing and encouragement, but in it we have to encounter elements that are entirely contrary to us. In Christ's circle He is supreme; there is nothing there but what is of Him; everything revolves around Him, and every one is delighting in Him. In Romans the man is produced who has tastes and desires that could only be satisfied either in that circle or in heaven itself. In Romans it is the *man*, but in Colossians the saints are viewed in association with Christ in the circle in which He is supreme and where all is of Him.

In the first chapter we have the fact that Christ is the Head of the body. That great fact is presented, but the second chapter is distinctly on the experimental line. The apostle desires the saints to know what a conflict he had for those at Laodicea and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. This conflict was that they may enter into the full enjoyment and truth of the mystery. The particular aspect of the mystery in Colossians is Christ in the saints, and in it all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found. It is like a great masterpiece in

which everything else is eclipsed, so that the Spirit of God can say that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in the mystery.

Christ has been rejected here, and is sitting at the right hand of God, but He lives here in the hearts and minds of the saints. He is chief, source, and the supreme influence of His body, which is here that He may be continued where He Himself has been personally rejected. What a marvellous triumph on the part of God! Man, led on by Satan, refused and rejected Christ, but He is here in the minds and hearts of God's people, and in moral character, and therefore the body is *His* body. Hence the triumph of God is complete and perfect. The apostle so entered into the reality of this great fact that he was in a conflict, or agony, that the saints might enter into the truth of it.

I have often put this question to myself: "Do I know anything of an agony that saints may know this truth?" Alas! the greatness of it is not entered into, for if it were we should in our measure be like the apostle. He was in an agony, and we should, in our measure, be in an agony that saints may enter into this which was so important for the glory of Christ. This very distinctly shews that the second chapter is

on the line of experience—the road that we are privileged to travel so as to progress in the things of God, and to understand His thoughts. It is not simply what exists in God's mind for His people, but that which we have to enter into through being formed by the Spirit of God.

The first statement we will notice is: “For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (New Trans.) What a marvellous fact! The fulness of the Godhead dwelling in that blessed Man. All that God is dwells in and is completely set forth in Him. All the divine fulness is there. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in One that is a Man, so that, through divine grace, our souls can be captivated, controlled and held entranced by Him, and find their whole enjoyment and delight in God who is revealed in Him.

The next expression is: “Ye are complete in him.” This is not exactly an individual thought, though true of each one in the assembly. It is not the idea expressed in the hymn that we sometimes sing—

“Complete in Him at God's right hand.”

We must distinguish this thought from being justified, and also from being “accepted in the Beloved.” It is that the saints collec-

tively have everything that they could possibly require or desire in Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead is found. They are "complete in him," or "filled full." Being filled full in Him, nothing could be added or contributed to them. How could they for one moment recognise anything apart from or outside of Him? Some in this day say "Christianity is a very good thing, but we need something else as well. We need philosophy, the opinions of the learned, the good elements of this world added to it." How could this be if we are complete in Him? Then nothing can be added. That which is full can contain no more, and "filled full" shews that there can be no contributions from the outside.

Again I will refer by way of illustration to the Book of Genesis. Where was Eve's completeness? Surely it was in Adam. Her mistake and sin was in allowing an outsider—an enemy, to guide her. She ignored her completeness in Adam as saints do now with regard to Christ. God had given Adam wisdom, and Eve's completeness was in him. The saints now not only have completeness in Christ, but they are complete in Him. Practically we often shew how little we know of it, but the divine fact remains: "Ye are complete in him."

To this is added, "Who is the head of all principality and authority." (New Trans.) In the second chapter Christ is not viewed simply as Head of the body, but as Head of all principality and power. Whatever principalities, whatever powers there are, He is Head of them all, and the saints are complete in Him who is over them all. Saints have their completeness in Him, who is higher than the highest authority, and He is the One to influence, direct and contribute to all. Saints being filled full in that blessed Person cannot receive from any other source without denying their completeness in Him.

Another expression is, "In whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ." (New Trans.) It should read, "the body of the flesh," and not "the body of the sins of the flesh."

You all will remember that circumcision was a mark put upon God's called and separated people. It took place on the eighth day, and speaks of cutting off in view of entering into a privileged order of things. A man when circumcised was incorporated, and could share in the privileges belonging to the nation of Israel. That was done with hands, that is, through human in-

strumentality, but now it is through a divine Person becoming Man and in that Man's circumcision. The blessed Person of Christ has been here, and He has been cut off. He has been deprived of that which belonged to Him here, and has become the Head and Centre of a heavenly order of things.

He having been cut off, our privilege is to take that up in our minds which is formed by the Spirit, so that we can think or take account of ourselves as circumcised in Him. It is not simply that Christ has been cut off, but in whom *ye* have been, &c. Neither is it that we are circumcised in ourselves, but in Him. He has been actually cut off, and we have to arrive at this in our mind through the work of the Spirit. The Spirit of God points us to Christ and to what is true of Him, so that in mind and heart we may reach Him now, that it may be true of us that we are circumcised in Him. The verse says, "In whom also *ye* have been circumcised with the circumcision not done by hand in the circumcision of the Christ."

Now let us just quietly consider, and ask ourselves the question, have we reached in our soul-history that we have been cut off? "Why," you say, "every Christian is." I reply, "Is he?" It is no use for us to say that every Christian is, for their lives declare

plainly that they are not, and there could hardly be a greater or more serious delusion. It is of very little use for me to tell you that I am cut off in Christ when my life declares plainly that in mind I am in the world or under the power of the earth. It *has* taken place in Christ. It is the mind of God for all saints, and it is true in measure of each one when reached in his own mind. The question for us to-night is, Have *we*? Let us remember that it is very searching. It is not that which we can talk lightly about. To speak lightly of being cut off, not to weigh the force of it, with exercise of conscience before God, is profanity. It is treating the things of God lightly, and therefore living an unreal life. It is maintaining that something is true when it is not true. Christ has been absolutely cut off, and this has to be accepted by the renewed mind, so that it becomes a fundamental principle in the soul which underlies every movement.

This is God's mind for every saint on the earth, but it is not true of a person until he has travelled in his own soul and reached it in his mind in the power of affection.

Let us refer to the typical teaching. The people of Israel were circumcised after they had crossed the Jordan, and the things which happened to them illustrate the road that we

have to travel. Still, there are many things that are different. In Christianity everything is entered into on the principle of faith in heart and mind in the power of the Spirit, but Israel will enter into their blessing after divine power has publicly set aside the present world-system. Hence Israel were circumcised after they crossed the Jordan, and we are circumcised before. This scripture places circumcision before the Jordan. The people of Israel will actually in a future day enter into the land, and I judge that what was set forth in figure will be made good in their souls, but it will be when the resurrection sphere has been brought in publicly that they will enter into the truth of circumcision. The first thing here that we arrive at in soul-history is that, as far as the body of the flesh is concerned, we have been cut off in Him. It is not now simply, as in Romans, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, knowing that our old man has been crucified with Christ, but in mind arriving at the fact that we have been cut off with Him; but this with us is only at present arrived at through affection.

This is followed by another important statement: "Buried with him in baptism." Romans gives us the divine intention in baptism, but Colossians supposes persons in

the reality and truth of that intention. It does not merely give where we arrive by being baptised, but what is true of those that have entered into the truth and reality of their baptism. They have been cut off in the circumcision of Christ, and in baptism have passed out of sight.

It is a very testing question—Have *we* passed out of sight? Has the world and earth lost its attractive power through Christ becoming an absorbing object for us, so that we have disappeared? Many Christians in London live for self-gratification, for pleasure, for self-advancement, to make money, and thus prove that they are not in the truth of their baptism. No man can be here for these things if he is in the truth of his baptism. No man could seek after position in this life if he is in the truth of his baptism, for if in the truth of his baptism he has passed out of sight through having another and better order of things before him. The saints at Colosse, speaking generally, were a company of saints that were out of sight as far as this world goes. They were no good to it, they had nothing to contribute to it. They neither sought to get up or on in it, and could only help to deliver others from it. The light of God shone forth from them, and they were no

help to any part of the world's system. They had been cut off in Christ, and buried with Him in baptism, wherein also they had risen with Him through faith of the operation of God who had raised Him from the dead. The state produced by the work of the Spirit had enabled them in faith to link the operation of God in raising Christ from among the dead with their coming out of the water, and by faith they knew they were risen with Christ. If we have been cut off in our minds, buried and gone out of sight, where could we be in mind and affection, having come out of the water (if indeed in the light of God's pleasure seen in Christ), but in the circle where Christ is everything. We do not come out of the water to have a part or position where Christ has passed out of view, but to have a part and position in a circle where Christ is adored, where Christ is all, and where Christ is in all. We come into a circle where everything is of Christ and all is encircled around His blessed person, where no foes or adverse elements are found, and where He is supreme.

This sphere is on earth. Resurrection places us on earth. But a person who is risen with Christ, though on earth, is entirely outside of everything connected with the earth, and is privileged to enjoy a circle

where Christ is the source of all, and where He is the one supreme object that fully engages all. This circle is immediately in touch with heaven, and where divine and heavenly things are enjoyed, but it is here on earth.

Our privilege then is to know, in our own minds, that we are cut off in the circumcision of the Christ, buried and gone out of sight, and to enjoy a circle where every desire produced, through the formative work of the Spirit, is answered in that blessed Person in whom God is revealed.

There is one more expression which is another line of truth. What we have had follows up the truth opened up in Romans. Verse 13 is connected with the line unfolded in Ephesians. This shews clearly how we reach the truth of the full purpose of God. The word "quicken" is of great importance, and we must look at the meaning of it. All would agree that it means "made to live." Saints of God are made to live, and that shews that this must give the soul most blessed experiences and joys. A person who is quickened must have certain experiences and enjoyments, superior to anything that he has ever known before. It will be found, I think, that the Spirit of God uses the word in scripture in a particu-

lar sense. It is not the mere fact of being made to live, but made to live in *another sphere*. It would be impossible for Christ to make me to live in the system that has rejected Him. Hence, I think, you will find that in scripture, quickening always follows resurrection and does not precede it. It is not that we are quickened and raised, but raised and quickened. Resurrection places persons upon earth, and quickening makes them to live in that circle where Christ is all.

We surely need to ask ourselves—Have we been made alive in the circle where Christ is supreme, and where everything is of Him? I understand quickening really means that subjectively we are made livingly to respond to what is presented in the person of Christ objectively. The person, as a spiritual moral being, is made livingly responsive to that presentation which is found in the person of Christ as the Centre and all of His circle. Quickenings is the completion of the subjective work in our souls, in connection with the thought of life. It is our privilege at the present time to know what it is to be quickened or made to live in the circle of which we have spoken, where Christ is all and in all.

We must now close with a few words

bearing upon the result of the truth in this epistle. The effect of the truth in Romans is that I am here for the will of God. That is very searching, but there is now no lower standard than the will of God.

Now in Colossians that man enters the assembly. He enters the assembly now, and he is still here for the will of God, but with the increased light of that circle where Christ is everything. The grace of that circle is now expressed in that same man, as he does the will of God here. It is not simply now that he does the will of God which he has been brought to delight in, but he does it coloured with that grace which he has known and enjoyed in the assembly. He now knows a little of how dear the church is to Christ, and Christ and the assembly is now the circle of his interests. Christ on high and the assembly here become the object of his life. Hence he now walks from the assembly to the family circle taking the grace of it there; and from the family circle to the business circle (the "without"). He cannot leave behind him the *grace* of the assembly that he has known and enjoyed, because it has become part of himself, and in principle he would be a hypocrite to do so. When once the grace and the blessedness of the assembly is known by us,

our lives express, wherever we go, the sweet savour of it, according to the measure it is known, and it colours everything that we touch and take up. It is now easily seen why the family relationships are not mentioned in Romans. No man can fully answer to the mind of God in his family, or in his business, until he has come under the grace of the Head in the assembly, and then only according to the measure in which that grace is known. The Epistle to the Romans provides a man with tastes and desires delighting in God's will, and those tastes can only be satisfied on the other side of Jordan—in the assembly, or in heaven itself.

In Colossians, having been made to live in the assembly, wherever he goes, he takes Christ as known in His own circle, in his heart, in his mind, and Christ is expressed in him in moral and spiritual character.

God grant that each one of us in our souls may know more of the reality of what it is to be made to live in the sphere of His assembly, that we may have Him in our hearts and minds, that what He is may be expressed by us, to the praise of His God and Father.



OUR HEAVENLY PLACE.

(EPH. I. 3-7, 15 TO II. 10.)

On previous evenings we have been looking at different passages in the Epistle to the Romans and Colossians, and this evening we are taking a few verses in Ephesians. It is important to have before the mind *how* saints are viewed in these three epistles. The Epistle to the Romans views saints in the kingdom supported by the Lord in the power of the Spirit of God, so that here upon the earth they are capable of doing the will of God. The Son of God having been here to do the will of God, nothing short of God's will as our standard could be pleasing to God. In Colossians we have Christ as Head and the assembly as the body of Christ, so that Christ is continued here where He was rejected. The assembly is for Christ, and for the glory of God. Immense privileges in this connection are brought before us in that epistle, and the way the soul enters into them, with also the practical result upon those who enjoy them. The Epistle to the Colossians does not take

saints off the earth. They are viewed as risen with Christ, but here on earth, though in touch with One who is in heaven—in touch with heaven, but upon earth. In Ephesians we have Christ risen and exalted, and therefore the full christian portion. We often have unfolded in scripture what we are in God's mind, then the way the saints livingly enter into it, and also the practical result.

The first chapter of Ephesians presents the great scheme of God's purpose—what is in God's mind, and chapter ii., how the saints are livingly placed in it. The first chapter presents that which is true in the mind of God concerning His people, and it is made known so that we might know the greatness of His thoughts. The second chapter is the power of God which had wrought in saints, so that they had been brought to enjoy their full portion in Christ in the heavenlies.

In connection with entering into the truth, it is well to notice that certain passages give details of the journey that we have to travel, and other passages give no detail, but pass, we might say, from one terminus to another. I may leave London for Glasgow and make six calls on the way. It would be quite true to say that I went from London to Glasgow, and also true that I went from London, calling at

this place and that place, mentioning the six, and so reached Glasgow. In the one case I give no detail, in the other I go into the detail of the route. Sometimes the Spirit of God presents the truth apart from the experience by which it is reached, but the detail of this experience unfolded in other passages is included. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there is no detail of the wilderness journey, nor is it even mentioned, and often in the Gospel of John it is also omitted and thus the Spirit passes from terminus to terminus.

We will turn to chapter i. to look at what we are in the thought or mind of God. God has the same mind concerning all His own. The third verse expresses their fortune, the fourth their state, and the fifth the relationship which is God's mind for all His people. These are marvellous statements. The apostle cannot even state them without his soul rising up in adoration to God. Hence he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Let us notice the words "blessed with *all* spiritual blessings." How many is "all"? All is all—there can be no more. Then let us remember that it is *God's* "all," and that

with reverence we can say God could not give more. Such is the extent of the fortune He has blessed us with—"all spiritual blessings," and not in earthly places, but in the heavenlies in Christ. God has nothing less than this in His mind for all His people.

We are not told, nor could we be told, the number of these spiritual blessings, because they are beyond all numbering. We may have certain ones mentioned, but the great fact is stated that we are blessed with *all*.

The Spirit having now given the extent of our fortune passes on to the state suited for the intimate and heavenly relationship which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has thought of to satisfy His heart. He has chosen us in Him that we may be holy, without blame before Him in love. We must be formed in the divine nature to be before Him. We must be holy, blameless in movement, and in the blessedness of His nature revealed in Christ to be in association with His Son. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has marked us out for sonship. Thus He satisfies His heart, and glorifies Himself in *how* He blesses those whom He has taken into favour in the Beloved.

Now I want to call your attention mainly to one thing mentioned in the prayer. There

are three things spoken of. One is the calling, another is the inheritance, and the third is the power of God. This power has been displayed in Christ, and is us-ward. The calling we have briefly spoken of, and verses 8-14 give detail as to the inheritance. Then there is a third thing—the power of God, which is toward *us*, but is displayed in *Christ*.

God has raised Christ from the dead. He has also set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. The greatest display of divine power that has ever been seen has been displayed in the Person of Christ. The One who went down into death God has raised from among the dead. He also set Him down at His right hand, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

This can be connected in thought with the name which God took with Abraham—“Almighty.” Here is the full revelation of His Almighty power. He has placed Christ far above every evil or good principality, or power that is in existence, “and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him [to be] head over all things to the assembly.” This position of universal headship over all things

has been given to Him. God has given Christ this place in view of the assembly—in view of His purpose concerning Christ and the church. He gave Him that place of universal supremacy over all in view of His counsels. The woman was given to Adam to share in that which had been given to him. So Christ has this place, and the church will share the glory with Him. He is Head over all things, but specially Head to the church. Then is added: “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

We must remember that the body is looked at here in a different way to the epistle to the Corinthians and the Colossians. In this verse it is the body, including the whole of the saints throughout this present period—that is from Pentecost to the moment when the body will be dispensationally completed. Hence in the words “the church, which is his body,” we reach in thought the antitype of the “help” which was suitable for Adam. The church is the suitable companion for the One who has universal supremacy over all things, and the placing Christ in His present position was in view of the assembly having her portion with Him.

The body is here viewed in its complete-

ness. In Corinthians it is looked at as it exists now, as the result of the coming of the Spirit, and is largely a local idea. In Colossians the body includes all saints upon earth at any given moment. In Ephesians it is the saints of the whole Christian era, and Christ has His place of supremacy given to Him in view of divine counsel as to Christ and the assembly.

God in the beginning created one man, but at that moment there was under His eye the woman in the man, for she was to be formed out of him. She was not yet formed, but she was there in Adam in the mind of God. Adam being there, the woman was there in purpose. She had yet to be formed, but under God's eye she was there. Thus the moment Christ went up the church was there under the mind of God. Christ being there, the church was there in Christ.

God did not call Adam's wife Eve. He called their name Adam. "Adam called his wife's name Eve; because," he said, "she is the mother of all living." In this chapter we have Christ raised up, and at once the Spirit can speak of the church, for she was to be formed out of Him.

In the second chapter we have what is quite different. In principle it is the building of the woman. We have Christ exalted

and the thoughts of God concerning the church in chapter i., but chapter ii. shews how saints, through the operation of the power of God in them, are brought into the enjoyment of the blessing now.

The Spirit had spoken of Christ in death, and He now (in chapter ii.) speaks of saints who were once dead. They had been dead toward God, but they were not dead world-ward or sin-ward; they had walked according to the course of this world. Here (vers. 2, 3) we clearly have the state that saints were in before God commenced to operate in His mercy. That which was true of Jew and Gentile is stated in the plainest language. But God, who is rich in mercy, had operated and *they* had been quickened and raised up and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. This clearly shews how souls are brought experimentally into the enjoyment of what is stated in chapter i. *They* had been quickened with the Christ, *they* had been raised up together, *they* had been made to sit down together in heavenly places in Christ. The apostle is no longer speaking of what only exists in God's mind, but of that which had been effected and had been brought to pass in the saints. Necessarily, therefore, we

have to raise the question whether through divine grace *we* have ever touched the reality of that which is here presented. If we think of saints around us and of ourselves, we have to own that the full truth of Romans is little known and enjoyed, much less that of Ephesians. If what is unfolded in Ephesians were known it would produce the heavenly man presented in the practical part of the close of this epistle.

The Epistle to the Ephesians appears to be a general epistle, though no doubt it was sent to the saints at Ephesus. It contemplates Jew and Gentile brought together into the consciousness of the full blessing of Christianity. But while it is a general epistle, the Spirit of God leads the apostle to send it to the saints at Ephesus, and this shews that they were in a condition of soul for this great light to be presented to them. He was not led to send this epistle to the saints at Rome or Galatia. Each epistle sent to a company of saints would certainly be suitable to meet the condition of soul they were in.

In chapter ii. we read, "*And you.*" This evidently connects with the words "raising him" in chapter i. 20. He says, "And you, being dead in your offences and sins." Then he describes their past state—"in which ye

once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." We will not delay to look at each of these things, though they are solemn statements, and it is profitable to weigh them well. How lightly the world is touched—the world that is under "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The third verse specially refers to the Jew, the privileged nation, educated under law, but this only demonstrated his state more plainly. "Among whom *we* also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do, and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest." The Jew, though comparatively near, was, nevertheless, one of the children of wrath the same as a Gentile. The state of mankind exposed all alike to wrath.

Then we have in verse 4 a great change, and a most beautiful statement. "But God, who is rich in mercy." Look at the state of things described in the first three verses. No one could move there but God. Man dead God-ward, and completely under the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, he was able to do evil,

but unable to make one movement toward God. God alone could come in, and He "who is rich in mercy" came in. Nothing but sovereign mercy would do, and "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us," moved in creative power. At the back of His mercy there was the love of His heart. He was going to satisfy His heart by bringing those in the secret of His purpose near to Himself. He in sovereign love came in in His great mercy. "(We too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ." (N. T.)

There was a scene of chaos and ruin in Genesis i., and God moved, bringing in light, order, and life. This scripture describes a still worse state of things. Man, who was created to be centre and lord in the midst of that fair creation, had fallen and was dead. Again God had wrought and quickened persons with Christ. The word "together" is found in verse 6, but the New Translation omits it in verse 5. The Jew and Gentile, who were both alike in the state of being dead, God had quickened and exalted them together, and made them sit down together in the heavenlies. The Gentile had not been exalted to a position occupied by the Jew, but both being in the state of death, both had been exalted

and together brought into a position of privilege and blessing according to the sovereign love of God. The word "together" hardly refers to Christ and the saints, but to the fact that Jew and Gentile were together brought consciously into the enjoyment of the full christian portion in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies.

Now we must consider the force of the words "quicken^d with Christ." As remarked, the word "together" refers to Jew and Gentile, and the meaning of the word "quicken^d" is *made to live*, but the Spirit of God always uses the word "quicken^d" to express being made to live in a new sphere and order of things. It is not used in connection with the commencement of the work of God in the soul, but is the climax of the thought of life subjectively. When with Christ in our glorified bodies it will be actually true in all its completeness and fulness. But in Ephesians ii. 1-6 we have presented that which God had wrought in persons while they were still actually on earth. These persons had been made to live in their affection and mind "with Christ" in an entirely new scene of heavenly blessing. This could not mean that *they* were quicken^d when Christ was raised, for they were not then in existence. Then

further, this quickening is what had taken place in persons whom God forms in His great mercy. *They* had been made to live where all things are of God, and thus God secured a response to His great love that had led Him to work in mercy even when they were dead. In the end of the first chapter the power us-ward had wrought in Christ, and then the Spirit can speak of the whole church as existing in thought, but in the second chapter it is those who had been dead made to live.

They had been made to live so that in their affections and minds they already knew what it was to live with Him in the enjoyment of the eternal purpose of God in the heavenly places.

In the first chapter the power of God had wrought in Christ, and in chapter ii. that same power had also wrought in saints of God, making them to live together with Christ.

It would be very solemn and serious if we treated these heavenly things lightly. The holy things of God cannot be taken up lightly, and we must remember to read them brings responsibility. Let us therefore challenge our hearts and inquire, Do we know what it is in any measure to be made to live together with the Christ who has

been raised and exalted? Do we know what it is to live in affection and mind with the Christ in that holy, heavenly sphere where He is actually?

Let us remember that anything that is known in the affections and mind is expressed in our lives here on earth. It is our life that demonstrates whether it is true of us. If we were made to live in affection and mind with Christ in that blessed place, should we be attracted by the things around? We should be in the enjoyment of something far better, and Philippians iii. shews the practical result. The measure in which that chapter is true of us is the measure of our experimental knowledge of Ephesians ii. 1-6. Ephesians ii., when known, produces the practical result seen in Philippians iii.

Now we will consider the expressions, "has raised [us] up together, and has made [us] sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" In Colossians we read of persons risen and quickened, but here (Ephesians) we read of being quickened, and then raised up together. The being raised up together here appears to be the thought of exaltation and not simply resurrection. It gives a further thought than quickening. Quickened is made to live with Christ, so that the whole of the moral

being livingly responds to the love that prompted God's intervention in mercy for the fulfilment of His purpose. Then follows the expressions "raised up together," and then "made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ." These saints, from amongst Jews and Gentiles, had been in their mind and heart exalted and *made at home* in the enjoyment of the full heavenly portion. What will *actually* be true in the future had through the work of the Spirit become morally true already. What is stated is not merely God's mind for them, which is true for all, but this state of soul had been formed by God in them, so that they were perfectly at home in the heavenlies, in the enjoyment of the full distinctive portion belonging to the church. It is a disgrace to us if our spirits are not perfectly at home in the heavenlies in the enjoyment of our full heavenly portion. We should be perfectly at home there *now*, and be morally and spiritually ready for the moment when we shall *actually* enter in in the future. In heaven in the future we shall all be *actually* raised up and made perfectly at home in the enjoyment of all that God has given us; but it is our privilege to know already in the Spirit's power the enjoyment in mind and heart of

that blessed place before being actually taken there.

Thus it is clear that in chapter ii. we have persons formed by the work of God by the Spirit. These persons had been brought experimentally in their souls into the enjoyment of the distinctive present portion of the church. It starts with viewing them first as dead, then as quickened with Christ, and raised up and made to sit down together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In the future we shall actually be there with Him; now it is not only our privilege to know that He is there representing us, but that we are seated together in Him already in mind and affection.

The Spirit, having wrought in persons so that they had been brought into the present enjoyment of the church's portion, can now speak of the whole assembly when it will shine forth, displaying the fulness of divine grace in the coming ages.

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." God brings His people into blessing and nearness to satisfy His own heart, and thus shews the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. The grace of God will be fully manifested in the

assembly. The purpose of God in the assembly is gradually being completed in view of that time of display when the assembly will set forth "the exceeding riches of God's grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Then we have, "By grace are ye saved through faith." Saints having been "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ" expresses the full thought of salvation. It is "through faith," and that, as well as the grace, is "not of ourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." What saints are as His workmanship finds present expression in "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

To sum up, in the first chapter we have God's mind concerning His people—the full thought of God concerning those who form the assembly. Then in chapter ii. we have what the power of God had wrought in saints, bringing them into the present enjoyment of the position which is God's thought for all, *but which each one has to be brought into by the work of the Spirit.* This will only actually be true of all in the future, but it is given to us as heavenly light that we may know the end for which the Spirit carries on

His work in us. God works in us by the Spirit to gain a living response from us to His great love, and this is only produced according to His desire, through being quickened, exalted, and made perfectly at home in heart and mind in the enjoyment of our full heavenly portion in the place where soon we shall actually be.

May the Lord in His goodness produce exercise in us, so that we may not be contented short of the enjoyment of those things that are our own. Those who form the church have a portion which is unique, and other families could not enjoy it. This unique portion is unfolded in this epistle, and the Spirit is given to us that we may be formed in it and that we may grow intelligently into the present enjoyment of it.

The Lord grant that exercise may be produced in our souls that the Spirit may guide us into the reality of these things, that we may be found more to the praise and glory of His name while still remaining in the scene of our Lord's rejection.

