



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

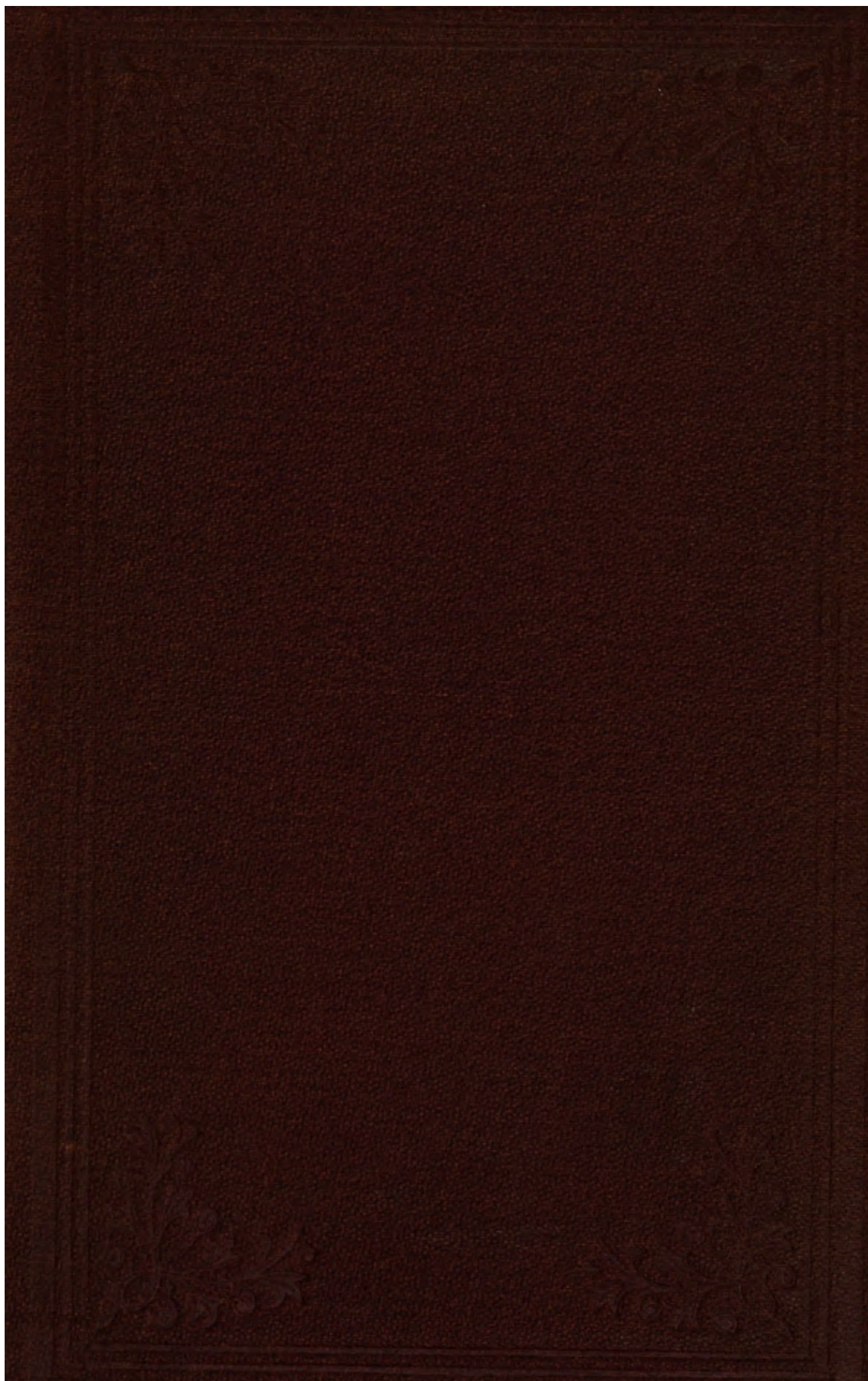
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries
and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

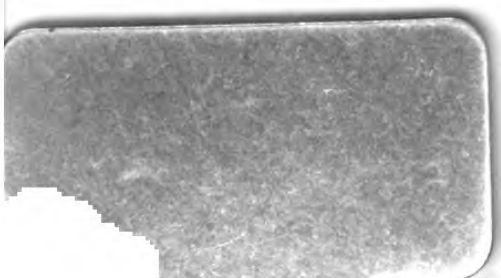


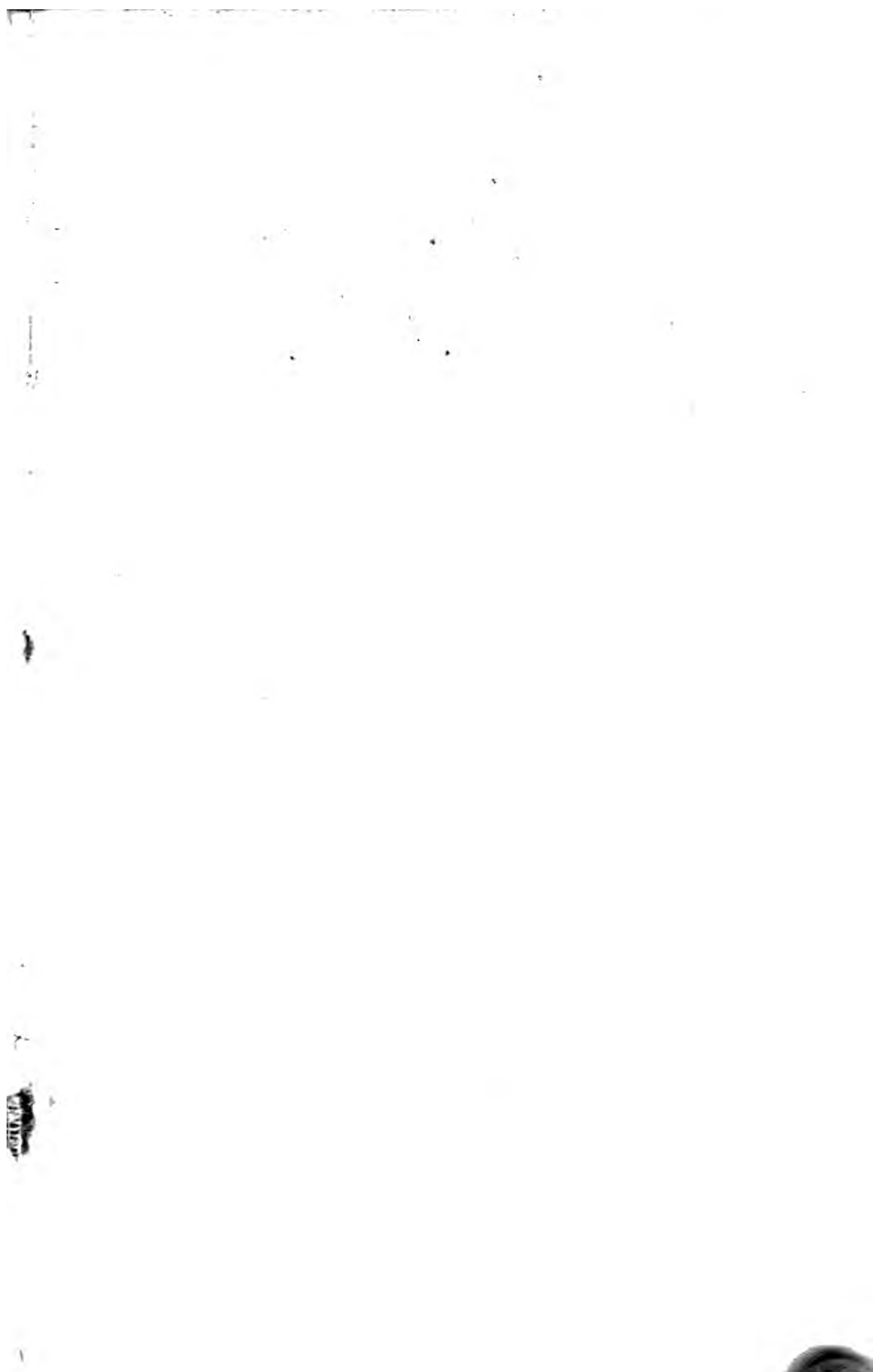
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-
ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

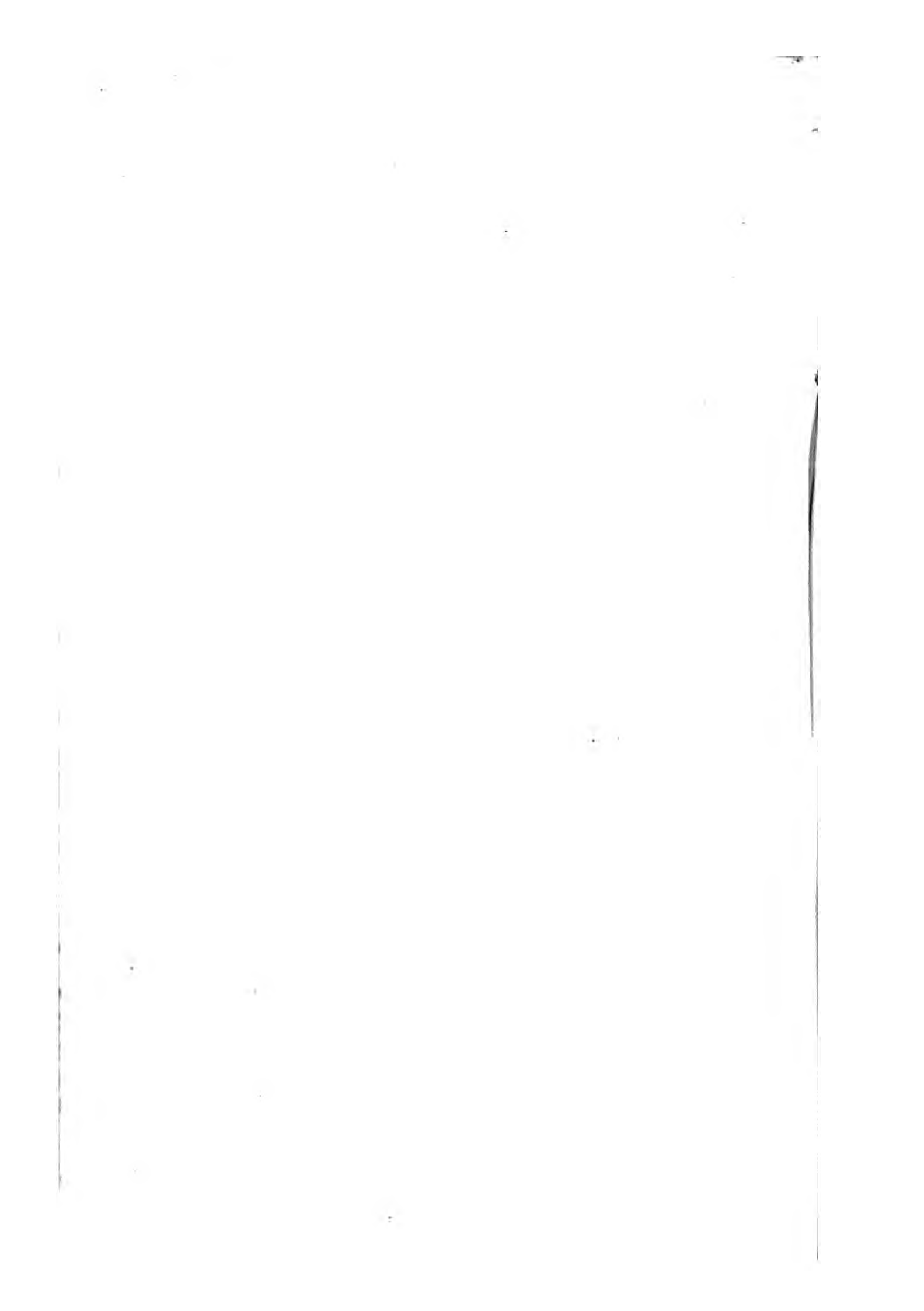




600086201N







NOTES ON SCRIPTURE.



NOTES ON SCRIPTURE.

By J. N. D.



GLASGOW:

R. L. ALLAN, 75 SAUCHIEHALL STREET.

LONDON: THE GOSPEL TRACT DEPOT,
WARWICK LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

DUBLIN: F. CAVENAGH, THE TRACT DEPOT, 32 WICKLOW STREET.

GUERNSEY: J. TUNLEY, 104 VICTORIA ROAD.

1868.

101. g 412

C O N T E N T S .

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
The Communion of God with Abraham in Genesis xv., xvii.,		9
CHAPTER II.		
Abraham and Lot. Genesis xviii., xix.,	- - - -	15
CHAPTER III.		
Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith. Hebrews xii. 2,		22
CHAPTER IV.		
The Call of the Bride. Genesis xxiv.,	- - - -	25
CHAPTER V.		
Our Joy in Heaven. Luke ix. 28-36,	- - - -	39
CHAPTER VI.		
Grace Rejected and Heavenly Glory Opened. Acts vii.,	-	43
CHAPTER VII.		
Galatians vi.,	- - - - -	54
CHAPTER VIII.		
1 John iv.,	- - - - -	61
CHAPTER IX.		
Philippians iv.,	- - - - -	68
CHAPTER X.		
John xvii. 14, etc.,	- - - - -	75
CHAPTER XI.		
Psalms xvi.,	- - - - -	87
CHAPTER XII.		
John x.,	- - - - -	95

NOTES ON SCRIPTURE.

CHAP. I.

THE COMMUNION OF GOD WITH ABRAHAM IN GENESIS XV., XVII.

It is lovely enough to see God's ways of grace and condescension. He could come down to talk with Abraham,—to eat with him. But for us it is another thing: we are called upon to feed on Christ Himself, “the bread of God that came down from heaven.”

Promises end in *myself*; they minister to my need “As thy day, so shall thy strength be.” This is most sweet and precious, and we feel the need of such a promise; but when we look at all these promises, we think of what we get for ourselves, and then our horizon is limited by what we need. In Gen. xv. God says to Abraham, “I am *thy* shield and *thy* exceeding great reward.” The word “*thy*” would bring in the thought of self and of his need; it was what God was for Abraham, as One who could meet all his need; but in chap. xvii. it is what *He is Himself*. The effect of God's revealing Himself to Abraham as *his* shield and *his* exceeding great reward was, that Abraham at once turns to the thought of his own need, and says, “Lord God, what wilt thou give me?” But directly God reveals *Himself* (Gen. xvii.), Abraham falls on his

face, and God talks with him. It produces a closer, holier character, of communion. And then, too, Abraham is not asking, "what wilt thou give me?" but he is able to intercede for others—he is taken out of *himself*. It is sweet to get back to what it was at first, and to see God *able*, as it were, to come down to the tent door in the heat of the day. God came in the cool of the day to Paradise (Gen. iii.), but it was in vain, as far as communion was concerned—Adam hid himself away. There should be a going of the soul to God, in a far more intimate way than to any one else. Communion with saints is precious; but I must have intimacy of communion with God above all; and communion of saints will flow from communion with God. Then the soul, getting into this wonderful place of communion with God, takes His likeness. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." While there is dependence upon God learnt by need, still there is a deeper thing, a forming into the image of God by the soul's getting near to Him, and finding its delight in Him. This was, in a sense true of Christ Himself. The ways of the Father were reproduced in His ways down here, through the communion which He had with Him.

There were two things in the way in which God revealed Himself in chap. xvii. First, there is the outspreading of grace to the Gentiles—"thou shalt be a father of many nations; because if He is the *Almighty* God He could not be cooped, if we may so

say, in Israel. The second thing is, I will be a God "unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee;"—that is, more intimacy of communion, immediate relationship with God Himself. The nearer we get to Christ, the more shall we enter into this.

Wherever the heart was cast upon what God was in Himself, He must go beyond Israel: this title over-reached all the barriers. It is not the law, but in contrast with it—circumcision and promise without condition; though along with it, Abraham has principles made obligatory on him and his seed, which express the character of such as enjoy God's promises. (Compare John vii. 22, and Rom. iv. 10—13.) Circumcision set forth the mortification of the flesh; but this, not as a legal binding, though peremptorily enjoined as a confession of what man is, whatever may be the grace of God. In fact nothing so condemns the flesh as that grace. As a matter of daily life, I am brought to trust in God Himself as the sole spring and source of all my blessing and strength. God revealed Himself to Abraham, and then said, "walk before me and be thou perfect." "Here is what I am: now that is what you are to be in answer to me." We see what a blessed thing it is to be loved of God. We have got God Himself in Christ, and that is our eternal life. When we see Christ walking through this world, our souls are attracted by the loveliness of all His ways; they delight in and admire all that we see, and get their life and happiness there. "Be ye imitators, of God, as dear children." As a child of God, I have got God's family likeness.

We do want promises; they are most precious, as meeting our need. But God's revelation of Himself is a creative power, which renews me into His own image. "I am thy shield;"—Then Abraham's heart turns upon himself, and therefore he says, "Lord, God, what wilt thou give me?" God puts Himself forward as able to answer Abraham's wants, and then Abraham comes out with his wants. That is most beautiful and precious. It is what we have in 1 Chron. xvii. 24. David wished that the God of Israel should be all that God could be *to* Israel. In 2 Cor. vi. 18, we get the *two* names by which God had made Himself known, *Shaddi* and *Jehovah*: but now that the Son has come, He takes the place of Father. He who was "the Almighty" to the patriarchs, and "the Eternal" to Moses and the people will now be a *Father* to them.

Gen. xv. accordingly ends with the earth. (See verses 13—21.) It is the promise to Israel, in connexion with the land,—hence speaks of their suffering in Egypt, and of their deliverance by the divine judgment of their oppressors.

It is an astonishing favour that God should thus come down and put Himself at our disposal. He binds Himself to Abraham by covenant, by death. We get the same principle in Phil iv., "*My* God shall supply all your need:" that is most sweet. Then Paul can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." But still the thought here is of need, and of the power of God to supply it all. Joy *in God* is communion, and a deeper thing. Presenting

a want to God (as in Gen. xv.) is not communion. "God talked with Abraham," "his friend,"—that *is* communion. What a different idea we are apt to have of God! Communion with God is the retiring place of the heart. It is essential for a soul to be brought into perfect confidence in God Himself, in order to a walk with God.

Promise always comes before law, and raises no question of righteousness at all. There was no question raised here as to the fitness of Abraham. Law *does* raise the question of righteousness, and God therein assumes the character of a judge. But *now*, under *grace*, it is even more than promise. "*We are made* the righteousness of God in Christ." Here, then, is an object worthy of God to delight in, and I bask in the sunshine. God looks at me just as He looks at Jesus.

Paul had seen Christ in glory—the pattern-man in heaven; and therefore he, as it were, says, "I cannot rest till I am *that*." "The power of his resurrection" (Phil. iii.) means, that no difficulties can stand in the way, because Christ has been raised from the dead. *Everywhere and in all things* the power of God to meet all need abounded. But afterwards (Phil. iv.) we come to "his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Just as in Gen. xvii.)

If I am risen with Christ, and am walking in the power of His resurrection, what is all the world to me? Paul would not merely not have his sins, but he would not have his own righteousness: he was raised clean out of everything that he had valued as a man and as

a Jew. This we have to learn often in the midst of failure, and in the details of every day life. In principle the Christian is dead to all here, and has got a new life altogether. Christ never had a motive that this earth suggested; He walked through this world with divine motives. The thing in which the disciples were following Christ so tremblingly is what the apostle says he wants to have—viz., “to know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death.” He does not count himself to have apprehended, nor to have attained, till he gets to resurrection. He goes on getting more and more; but he has not got it in full till the resurrection. Just as we may imagine a lamp before us at the end of a straight path; we get more and more of the light as we go along the road, but not the lamp itself till we get *to* it. But the Christ that we *get* then is the Christ that we *have got* already.

It is well that there is a nature given to us independent of its devolpment; there is such a poor display of it in our ways before men; there is not the “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”

How wonderful for a man in prison like Paul to say, “he can do everything!” Many have triumphed in prison through God’s grace, but still had a feeling as if they were shut out from service, and chastening was come upon them. Paul’s being in prison may have been in some sense a chastening; but in his case the chastening came, to use a homely phrase, upon good stuff—upon a man with a single eye; and so it only purged away dross, and made him see clearer.

CHAP. II.

ABRAHAM AND LOT. GENESIS XVIII., XIX.

THE destruction of Sodom is a figure of what will happen when the Lord comes. They carried themselves as if the world was to last for ever. Such is still the great sin of the world, and what marks the incredulity of the heart (2 Peter iii.) Men make all possible arrangements for the future ; and yet, since the death of Jesus, the world cannot count upon a single day. God is waiting till the iniquity of the earth reaches its height, till it is all out and open before He exercises judgment. The world takes advantage of this. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11.) It is the principle and the practice of infidelity all through : it was the history of the antediluvians and of the doomed cities of the plain (Luke xvii. 26—30).

The Church, the Christian, has properly but one object—Christ in heaven, and therefore is called to be in heart separated from everything here below. Abraham, as far as he was a stranger and pilgrim on earth, is the type of the faithful. (Heb. xi.) He saw the promises afar off, was persuaded of them, embraced them, and confessed himself a pilgrim here below. Of such God is not ashamed to be called their God. He

would be ashamed to own as His people those who make this world their fatherland. "And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: *wherefore* God is not ashamed to be called their God." Abraham had only a burying-place in the land of Canaan. As he followed God in the main faithfully, God took a particular interest in him: Abraham is called "the friend of God." There is no uncertainty in his movements. He quits Ur of the Chaldees; he and his leave Haran subsequently—"they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the Land of Canaan they came." Luke. xvii. 32.

On the other hand, Lot's wife, ("*remember Lot's wife,*") left Sodom in bodily presence, not in heart. Her judgment is recalled to mind by the Saviour. Which of the two does Christendom resemble? His people are not in a state which God can own, if they do not say such things as Abraham, if they say them not in deed and in truth.

God communicates His thoughts to Abraham, and Abraham responds, in his measure, to such grace on God's part. He is not here, as in Gen. xv., asking something for Himself; he intercedes for others. There is no lovelier scene than the opening one of Gen. xvii. upon which the infidel spues his wretched materialism, and proves his moral incapacity to appreciate God's gracious condescension to his "friend." "This did not Abraham." Accustomed to the ways and words of God, he quickly feels the divine presence; yet he

beautifully waits till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, acting all the while with a touching and instinctive deference. Indeed, such intimacy was not only most suitable to the infancy of man in the revealed blessings of God, but it was the fitting prelude and preparation for Abraham to learn the high privileges in store for him; above all, for that precious communion which rejoices in *another's* blessing, and sympathises in *another's* sorrows. God therein assured Abraham, in such a way as he could not possibly mistake, of His interest and His confidence in him. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 17—19). Abraham enjoys the closest intercourse with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him. Not only is he told afresh, with fuller light, of the promised seed, but he learns from God the imminent destruction of Sodom.

Now God has displayed other, richer, and more spiritual means of assuring our hearts of His love; but nothing could be more appropriate *then* than His dealings with Abraham. He appears to him in the plains of Mamre. He comes before the tent door, enters, converses, and walks with him. He wanted to confirm the heart of Abraham practically; and He

succeeded, we need scarcely add. The effect appears in pleading before Jehovah. For us, through infinite grace, He has provided something better still. He has come and manifested Himself in Jesus. And we have the certainty that we have, in the man Christ Jesus, one who ever intercedes for us; yea, we see ourselves in Jesus before God; and the Holy Ghost gives us an intimacy with God, which even Abraham did not and could not enjoy, because the basis which renders it possible was not yet laid. It is too likely that we have made little progress in using this nearness to God; but such is our standing privilege; though it be not a palpable visible thing, the reality of this intimacy is not the less great. The counsels of God are revealed to us in His word, and the Holy Spirit is given to us that we may know and enjoy them. What we fail in is the simple and strong faith of Abraham.

Abraham does not dread the presence of Jehovah; such fear is the effect of sin. If we have seen the glory of God in Jesus, the divine presence becomes sweet to us; we find there full strength and confidence. To know *Him* is indeed life eternal, and His presence makes us happy with the deepest possible joy.

When a soul is in this confidence God shares His thoughts, as here He treats Abraham as a friend, telling him even what concerns the world. With a friend we do not speak of mere business, but of what we have on our heart. Intercession is the fruit of the divine revelation and fellowship. Abraham, separate from the world, and with the Lord upon the mountains, com-

munes of the judgment which was about to fall upon the world below. The Church is, in a still more positive and complete way, separated to God from the world, and beloved of Him. God confides to the Church His thoughts—not merely what He means to do for her, but what is hanging over the world. The Son of man is going to judge the quick as well as the dead; and He has told us of it.

God shows the world the utmost patience. He lingers; He is not slack as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. If His love be displayed to us in ways beyond and more spiritual than that which the elders tasted, His forbearances to the guilty world is also more marked. If a man had to govern the world, he could not endure its ingratitude and iniquity for an hour. God brings His friend, in some degree, to enter into His own long-suffering, and even reproduces it, as it were, in him. The angels, in the guise of men, turn their faces and go toward Sodom; but Abram stood yet before the Lord. Such also is the portion of the Church—to stand before the Lord and learn His purposes and thoughts. She is familiar with His love for her, and has the consciousness of it. She intercedes for the world, in the hope that there is still room for grace. The heart lives above the circumstances to draw upon the love that is in God. If we cannot intercede for a person, the sin is stronger than our faith. When we are practically near God, the Spirit which sees the sin intercedes for the sinner.

Abraham is silent (ver. 32, 33), "and the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham;" but he did more than Abraham asked. He withdrew Lot from Sodom and saved him. Nothing could be done till Lot was safe (Gen. xix. 16, 22). God's eye was upon him. What blessedness to be able to reckon on His love for the righteous!

Abraham persevered in intercession, though he stopped short of the fulness of God's mercy. We know not, as God knows, all He is going to do. Nevertheless we may intercede with faith. Abraham grows bold as he goes on; his confidence increases. In result he knows God much better than before. The peace of God kept his heart. The fruit of it all is seen in Gen. xix. 27, 28, where Abraham gets up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord, and looks down on the plain, now smoking like a furnace. From far above he sees the effects of the utter destruction. Such is our position if we are heavenly. It is thus that we see the judgment of the wicked. Lot and his daughters had been spared—saved so as by fire—not to their honour, but through the faithful care and tender mercy of the Lord. It was his unfaithfulness, indeed, that had placed Lot there; it was his unmortified desire after the good things of the world. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord. . . . Then *Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan*" (Gen. xiii.); then he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Next he dwelt in

Sodom. (Gen. xiv.) On the eve of its downfall, "Lot sat in the gate of Sodom," in the place of honour there ! (Gen. xix. 1,) sad example of the earthly minded believer in the path of declension ! Such men dishonour the Lord, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

CHAP. III.

JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF FAITH. HEBREWS XII. 2.

ALL the witnesses for God spoken of in Heb. xi. are for our encouragement in the path of faith ; but then there is a difference between them and Jesus. Accordingly the apostle here singles Him out of all.

If I see Abraham, who by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, or Isaac, who blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, or Jacob on his dying bed of blessing and worship, they have all run their race before ; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. Besides, in Him there is the grace to sustain us in the race. Therefore in looking unto Jesus we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Jesus the love which led Him to take this place for us, who, "when he putteth forth his own sheep, goeth before them." For, if a race is to be run, we need a fore-runner. And in Jesus we have got One who did run before us, and has become the Captain and Completer of faith, in looking to whom we draw strength into our souls. While Abraham and the rest filled up in their little measure their several places, Christ has filled up the whole course of faith. There is no position that I can be in, no trial whatever that I can endure, but Christ has passed through all and overcome. Thus I have got one who presents Him-

self in that character which I need; and I find in Him One who knows what grace is wanted, and will supply it; for He has overcome, and says to me, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world"—not, you shall overcome; but, I *have* overcome. It was so in the case of the blind man (John ix. 31, &c.) who was cast out of the synagogue; and why? Because Jesus had been cast out before him. And now we learn that, however rough the storm may be, it does but throw us the more thoroughly on Christ, and thus that which would have been a sore trial does but chase us closer to Him.

Whatever turns our eye away from Christ is but a hindrance to our running the race that is set before us. If Christ has become the object of the soul, let us lay aside every weight. If I am running a race, a cloak, however comfortable, would only hinder and must be got rid of: it is a weight, and would prevent my running. I do not want anything to entangle my feet. If I am looking to Jesus in the appointed race, I must throw the cloak aside: otherwise it would seem strange to throw away so useful a garment. Nay, more; however much encouragement the history of antecedent faithful witnesses in Heb. xi. may give, our eye must be fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful One. There is not a trial or difficulty that He has not passed through before me, and found His sources in God the Father. He will supply the needed grace to my heart.

There were these two features in the life of Christ down here. First, He exercised constant dependence on His Father; as He said, "I live by the Father." The new man is ever a dependent man. The moment

we get out of dependence, we get into the flesh. It is not through our own life (for, indeed, we have but death) that we really live, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. In the highest possible sense He walked in dependence on the Father, and for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Secondly, His affections were undivided. You never find Christ having any *new object* revealed to Him so as to induce Him to go on in His path of faithfulness. Paul and Stephen, on the other hand, had the glory revealed to them, which enabled them to endure. For when heaven was opened to Stephen, the Lord appeared in glory to him, as afterwards to Saul of Tarsus. But when the heavens opened on Jesus, there was no object presented to Him, but, on the contrary, *He* was the object of heaven; the Holy Ghost descends upon Him; and the voice of the Father declares, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Thus, the divine person of the Lord is always being witnessed to. The apostle here lays hold of the preciousness of Christ in the lowliness into which He has come; but he never loses sight of the glory of Him who has come there. So when I get Christ at the baptism of John, I see him at the lowest point (save in another way on the cross); and finding Him there, I find all the divine compassion of His heart.

CHAP. IV.

THE CALL OF THE BRIDE. GENESIS XXIV.

IN Abraham, as being the depositary of the promises of God to the patriarchs, we find the fundamental principles of the believer. Abraham having offered up his son Isaac, and having received him back, this act gives us the type of the resurrection of Jesus, who becomes like Isaac, heir of all the goods of His Father. Rebekah, type of the Church, is called to be the bride of Isaac risen. Afterwards in Jacob we have the typical history of the Jewish people.

In Abraham we have the principle of man's relationship with God, pure grace without law. Hagar is introduced as a figure of the law coming in. Isaac, raised from the dead in figure, shows us Christ, the Head, having accomplished His work, and being in the position to maintain all the results of the divine counsels.

In this chapter Abraham sends Eliezer to seek a wife for Isaac. This represents the Holy Spirit sent by the Father to seek the Church, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." It is not Isaac who goes to look for a bride. No more does Christ return to this earth to choose a Church for Himself. Rebekah must leave her country, and come to the land of promise. In this chapter we see the features of the Holy Spirit's work, and how a soul is conducted under His guidance.

This [is what we are about to see in Eliezer and Rebekah.

Verses 1, 2. Abraham, having become old, says to the eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh ; and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell." The first thing which is presented to us here is Eliezer, who has the superintendence of all the goods of his master. He is not the heir—the son is the heir. Thus the Holy Spirit has the disposal of all things. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, *i.e.*, to the Church. Verse 5. "But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land : must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again." It is impossible that there should be any relation between Christ risen again and this world. Isaac does not go for Rebekah, but she must come to him. Abraham gives directions to his servant ; thus the first thing is to be directed by the word of God. Instead of making further enquiries, Abraham's servant makes ready and goes off to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, with no other information (verses 9—11.)

It is important that we should act in the same

manner. Natural wisdom can form a judgment up to a certain point ; but it takes the soul away from the presence of God, even when we are doing things according to God : if we begin to deliberate, there is hesitation ; we take the counsel of flesh and blood. The first thing is to put ourselves *in the presence of God* ; without that, there is neither wisdom nor power ; whereas, placed in the path of blessing, we get from Him all the intelligence which we shall need. We observe this in the journey of Abraham's servant.

Eliezer says, "O Lord God of my master Abraham." He does not say "*my* God." The promises had been made to Abraham, and God had revealed Himself as the God of Abraham. Here the servant shows himself in entire dependence, and we find him in the path of promise, not exalting himself, but acting according to the counsels of God in entire dependence, and not pretending to have anything, except where God had placed the blessing ; for the promises had been made to Abraham. For us this blessing is in Christ, and there is the answer to our requests ; nor do we desire to obtain anything save where God has put His blessing, namely, in the path of the obedience of faith.

Eliezer addresses the God of his master Abraham praying him to favour his master : "O Lord, let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink ; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink *also*, let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac ; and thereby shall I know that

thou hast showed kindness unto my master." (O Lord, thou must act, and I must know by that the one whom thou hast designed to be the wife of thy servant Isaac; the one who will do these things will be the one whom thou hast chosen.)

"And it came to pass, before he had done speaking that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her, held his peace." Why any doubt? Why does he hesitate, since his request has obtained such an answer? Here is the reason. Whatever may be the apparent manifestation of the hand of God, there is a positive rule in the word to which the Christian must pay attention, and which he must not neglect, because of his weakness in discerning what is of God. Faith looks to the power of God, but judges all by the word; for God must act according to His word; and the servant, being in communion with God, ought to act in this thought; and even when there may be signs, he should decide nothing

until the will of God be clear according to His word. He must be able to say, "This is indeed *according to God.*"

"And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold ; and said, Whose daughter art thou, tell me, I pray thee : is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in ? And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bare unto Nahor. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

God had perfectly answered the desire of Abraham. Eliezer, for his part, sees that he has been heard. Before going farther, before even entering the house, inasmuch as he had recognized the intervention of God in the whole of this business, he bowed himself and worshipped the Lord, and said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth : I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." We see the same thing in Daniel ; he betakes himself to prayer with his companions ; and when Daniel has received the revelation of the dream, before presenting himself before the king, who had commanded that he should come, he blesses God for having revealed to him that which the king wanted to know. It is always thus when God is in our hearts ; we feel that it is He who is acting, and we thank Him.

“ And the damsel ran and told them of her mother’s house these things. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban ; and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. And it came to pass when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister’s hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me, that he came unto the man ; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord ; wherefore standest thou without ? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.”

Laban and Bethuel, after having heard Abraham’s servant narrate the circumstances, acknowledge that the thing proceeds from the Lord, and say, “ We cannot speak unto thee bad or good.” (Verse 50.) Thus, if in the circumstances of our christain life we act in entire dependence on God, He will make our way plain, and will even soften our enemies, on account of this dependence on Him in which we live. Because we have set the Lord before us, He will be always at our right hand.

If I have asked anything of God, and have received His answer, I then act with assurance, with the conviction that I am in the path of God’s will ; I am happy and contented. If I meet with some difficulty, that does not stop me, it is only an obstacle which faith has to surmount. But if I have not this certainty before I begin, I am in indecision, I know not what to do. This may be a trial of my faith, or it may be that I ought not to do what I am doing. I am in suspense, and I hesitate ; even if I am doing the

will of God, I am not sure about it, and I am not happy. I ought therefore to be assured that I am doing His will before I begin to act.

Observe, in passing, that God disposes all things according to the desire of Eliezer. This is what necessarily happens to all those who have their delight in the Lord. All the wheels of God's providence go in the way of His will which I am carrying out. The Holy Spirit, by the word, gives me the knowledge of His will. This is all that I want. God causes that all things should contribute to the accomplishment of his will. If, by spiritual intelligence, we are walking according to God, He assists us in the carrying out of His will, of His objects. There is need of this spiritual discernment, that it may abound in us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." I know not whither that will lead me, but this is the step I must take to proceed in the path in which I have to walk.

Abraham's servant enters into the house. "And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told my errand." Laban said, "Speak on." What firmness of character in the servant! Look at a man who is not decided; he consults this one and that one, when it is a question of how he is to act; and even having some desire to do his own will, he will rather seek counsel of those who have not as much faith as himself. Paul took counsel neither of flesh nor blood. He saw that it was Christ who called him, and he went forward.

Eliezer, taken up with his errand, does not accept the offer of food which is made him. He does what he has to do. One secret of the Christian's life is, as soon as he knows God's will, to do his work, to occupy himself with it, to let no delay interfere with it, even to satisfy the wants of his body ; this is the effect and the sign of the Holy Spirit's work. Eliezer wishes to deliver his errand. And what was it that was in question ? The interests and the honour of Abraham his master. He had entrusted to him the interests of Isaac his son. And God has committed to us, down here, the glory of Jesus His Son ; and this glory occupies us by the Holy Ghost which is given to us ; that is, where there is a single eye—spiritual discernment, according to the position in which God has placed us. If we are there, there is no hesitation ; being in our place, we act with liberty and joy. If I think about my convenience, my interests, about what concerns myself, or my family, (there are a thousand reasons which are contrary to a prompt obedience,) this is to consult flesh and blood. But if I enquire what is the interest of Christ, the thing will be instantly decided. If I think of anything else, I have not at heart this glory which is entrusted to me, nor confidence in Him who has placed me there.

Eliezer thinks always about Abraham, who had entrusted everything to him ; his thoughts are upon this, as he sets forth before Rebekah the privileges and the good-tidings of his master's house.

If our hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit, it will be the same with us. It is very important for us to

bear in mind, that God has confided to us the glory of Jesus. He had no need of us ; besides, what can we do ? It is He who works in us, and we have but to let Him act. It is His will to be glorified in us by the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the same thing we see in those to whom the five and the ten talents were committed. Confidence in the master displays itself in the decision of the servant ; as here Eliezer says, "I will not eat until I have told my errand."

This pre-occupation with his master's glory makes him refuse to take any food until his errand was performed. This is to do God's will. He tells Laban about the matter, and how he had been guided, and that, without using any argument, without saying "It would be wise to act in such and such a way," but with simplicity committing to God the issue of the affair. "Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, the thing proceedeth from the Lord." If, instead of spending our time in reasoning, we were more simple and obedient, and presented things as the Holy Ghost tells them to us, the result would be better. But we often substitute our human wisdom for the commands of God. Often the things which are the most simply said produce the greatest effect. Peter said to the Jews, "You killed the prince of life." That is what *you did*, and what *I have to tell you* on the part of God (Acts iii.)

If we apprehend things and present them to men *such as they are in the sight of God*, the Holy Ghost accompanies this testimony, and the conscience is reached. Thus men think neither of Peter nor of John (except

so far as they recognise them to be men of intelligence according to God, according as God had manifested them to themselves); it was God whom they had found, or rather who had found them. When God gives us this simplicity, which makes us occupy ourselves with things in the manner in which God sees them, we ought to speak to any one according to the state he is in before God. If I feel that he is lost, I tell him so simply, and the most simple addresses are the best and the most blessed.

“And he did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they were up in the morning, and he said, Send me away to my master. And her brother and mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. And he said, Hinder me not; seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away, that I may go to my master.”

We see Eliezer asking that he may hasten his departure; he must make haste in this business, so as to conduct Rebekah to his master's son; and having accomplished his mission, he says, “Delay me not.” He does not trouble himself about Laban's house, and he gives no consideration to his request; he does not stop on account of it. His love for his master makes him consider *his* orders before everything else.

It is in this generally that weakness is shown; we spare the flesh and neglect what we owe to God: in reality, we are sparing ourselves through fear of not being agreeable to others. I have seen men who are faithful in what they have to say to others, blessed of

God, when they speak with simplicity and without hesitation.

“And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth, And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.” There is no hesitation here. So likewise, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the bride says, “I will go.” she makes up her mind instantly, in the most decided manner, and leaves all. “*I will go*,” she says.

Now let us examine Rebekah's position: she had neither the house of Laban nor that of Isaac. It is the same with us. We have neither the earth, on which we are, nor heaven, to which we are going. Rebekah has left everything, and said “*I will go*.” Eliezer, type of the Holy Ghost, talks to Rebekah, during the journey, of that which there is in the house of her bridegroom's father. Precious conversation for the soul which needs to be encouraged by the view of these things, so as to be able to endure the fatigues and difficulties of the journey, and not to think of the house and the country from whence they came out! For Rebekah is going, like us, across the desert; and Eliezer, the faithful servant, who is leading her, takes care to comfort her, and to speak to her of the precious things which are in the father's house—to repeat to her the greatness and power of the father, and that “He hath given all that he hath to his son.”

For us this servant sets forth the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who likewise communicates to us all that there is in the Father's house for those who are the

bride of Christ. It is He who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. It is He who leads us into all truth, while we are crossing the wilderness of this world ; and who teaches us all things.

If Rebekah had hesitated, and had thought about the country which she had left, she would have been unhappy ; she would have had neither Isaac's house nor her father Bethuel's. To have left all, and to have neither one thing or the other, her heart, isolated in the wilderness, would have felt itself in an untenable position. But she has left all ; and, conversing with Eliezer, she occupies herself with what interests her heart, and raises it above the things which she has now left for ever. And she journeys in peace towards the abode of her bridegroom. The Christian who is not spiritual, but rather worldly, has a sorrowful lot ; he cannot be happy if seeking after the world. The worldly man has at least something ; he makes trial of these passing pleasures, and finds in them his joy, worthless as it may be ; for in truth this joy does not satisfy. But the Christian finds in these things only uneasiness, because he bears about a conscience affected by the Holy Spirit. If he wishes to take his pleasure in the things of earth, and his heart hangs back from following the Lord, he is unhappy ; he cannot chide a conscience which torments him ; and as he has not listened to the Holy Spirit's invitation, and has not obeyed it, there is no joy for him. The spiritual things, which ought to have constituted his joy, produce reproaches in his heart when he turns towards them. But we have this grace of Him who calls us,

and who leads us, if we are faithful, in an uniform path, for the sake of His name. If we sin, that does not put us under the law, but we have an advocate with the Father, who intercedes for us; and God, who is faithful, cannot fail when He is appealed to. "What wilt thou do with thy great name?" Besides, His glory is involved in lifting us up again; and this is grace. Yes, we have a Saviour who intercedes with the Father for us, and who works to bring us back to the gracious God, who has begun this work in us, and will perfect it till the day of Christ, accomplishing all that concerns us. Eliezer conducts Rebekah to her bridegroom. So also the Holy Spirit conducts us to the end and goal. What Rebekah first perceives is Isaac, and Isaac takes his bride into his mother's tent. Possessing the bridegroom, she no longer takes thought for anything, she thinks no longer of the possessions, but of the bridegroom himself.

The important business was to bring the bride to the bridegroom: and, as to what regards us in the type which is here presented to us, God seeks us in this world of sin: He finds us; He desires that we should not delay to follow Him, when we have said, "*I will go*;" and He leads us into the presence of Jesus. The Holy Spirit accompanies us in the journey to help us, to comfort us, to tell us of the blessings and glory which await us, and to introduce us into the presence of Jesus, our heavenly bridegroom.

This may be modified, as regards the manner, by various circumstances; but such is the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. The efficacious principle of

our calling is that we should freely decide to allow ourselves to be led by Him, to walk with good-will; knowing that, being in this manner led, we shall arrive at the wished-for end: "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

May God grant us all this mercy. Amen.

CHAP. V.

OUR JOY IN HEAVEN. LUKE IX. 28—36.

LET us look a little at this scripture, as showing what our joy in the glory will consist of. We have the warrant of 2 Peter i. 16 for saying that the scene represents to us the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what we wait for. Our souls are not in a healthy state unless we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. The Church is not regulated in its hopes by the word and Spirit of God, unless it is looking for Him as Saviour from heaven, (Phil. iii.) And this passage, as disclosing to us specially what will be our portion when He comes, is important to us in this respect. There are many other things in the passage, such as the mutual relations of the earthly and the heavenly people in the kingdom. These it might be very instructive to consider, but this is not our present purpose, which is to consider what light is here afforded on the nature of that joy which we shall inherit at and from the coming of the Lord. Other scriptures, such as the promises to those who overcome in Rev. ii. iii. and the description of the heavenly city in Rev. xxi. xxii. give us instruction on the same subject; but let us now particularly look at the scene on the holy mount.

“ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and James and John, and

I am well pleased." Now Peter and the others had entered into the cloud; and thus we get this wonderful fact that in the glory, from which the voice comes, saints are privileged to stand, and there, in that glory, share the delight of the Father in His beloved Son. Not only are we called to the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ; we are called to have fellowship *with the Father*. We are admitted of God the Father to partake of His satisfaction in His beloved Son.

"And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." The vision was all gone—the cloud, the voice, the glory, Moses and Elias—but Jesus was left, and they were left to go on their way *with Jesus, knowing Him now in the light of those scenes of glory* which they had beheld. And this is the use to us of those vivid apprehensions of spiritual things which we may sometimes realize. It is not that we can be always enjoying them and nothing else. But when for the season they have passed away, like this vision on the holy mount, they leave us alone with Jesus, to pursue the path of our pilgrimage with Him in spirit now, and with Him in the light and power of that deepened acquaintance *with Him*, and fellowship of the Father's joy *in Him*, that we have got on the mount; and thus to wait for the moment of His return, when all this, and more than our hearts can think of, shall be fulfilled to us for ever.

CHAP. VI.

GRACE REJECTED, AND HEAVENLY GLORY OPENED. ACTS. VII.

SUCH are two of the main thoughts presented in this striking and instructive chapter. *God* was rejected, let Him speak or act as He might, and never more than when He displayed His grace. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." It is true, these Christ-rejecting Jews boasted in the law; but if they had received the law by the disposition of angels, had they kept it? They had persecuted the prophets; they had slain those who foreshowed the coming of the Just One; they had now betrayed and murdered Himself.

It was no new feature in their history. Their fathers had done the same as themselves. Man is ever resisting what God sends in blessing. Joseph and Moses had been rejected, the two prominent types of the Lord Jesus. Their fathers despised and hated Joseph: they had done the same by Christ. God exalted Joseph; and Stephen's testimony was to Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And if Joseph sent and called his kindred in grace, does not and will not Christ the same?

Moses appears. He abandons the house of Pharaoh in love to his brethren, but they resisted him, as Christ was resisted. "As your fathers did, so do ye." All boasting then was ended. They were constant only in

opposing the Holy Ghost. This is ever the case with the natural man. He cannot trust God. He ever resists the Spirit of God. There is no power in him to rely on the *word* of God; but the moment a thing is built up that can be *seen*, man can trust in that, no matter what it may be. God may be gone; but if it be the tabernacle or the temple, some settled thing for the eye, man will trust in it, though it is the very thing God is about to judge.

The testimony God gave was resisted; and man was clinging to that which God is going to pull down. All that is not founded upon the word will be shaken, and this, terrible though it be to flesh and blood, is a positive promise to us. "Whose voice then shook the earth; but *now he hath promised*, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

How far can you take this as a promise? If your hearts are resting here, you cannot. This may be easily known by the test,—how far are your hearts attached to *Christ in heaven*, unseen save to the eye of faith?

How beautifully was this brought out in the case of Stephen! He was a bright reflexion of his blessed Master, resisting unto blood in his strife against sin.

What is more, he brings before us a vivid picture to be followed in our every-day life. For we are called always to testify for Christ, through the power of the Spirit, though it may not be unto death.

Besides, the rejection of the testimony by Stephen was a turning point of the ways of God with Israel, with man, though the principle had already come out at the death of Christ. God never could directly bless the world after that. He could forgive guilty Israel if they repented, and send Christ back again, in answer to the prayer on the cross. And this is just what Peter preaches in Acts iii. that if the people were converted, to the blotting out of their sins, Jesus was ready to return, and to bring in the times of restitution of all things—a truth which their present impenitence postpones, but does not destroy: for He is coming again.

But now Stephen's testimony is utterly refused, and the witness of Christ's heavenly glory is cast out of the city and stoned without mercy. It was the fitting sequel of such a testimony.

God had been dealing with man in all sorts of ways since Adam, but it only brought out the greater evil, for man continually resisted Him. Before the law they were lawless; they were transgressors when they got the law. God had given priests, kings, prophets in vain. Then He sent His Son. But they only rejected God in all ways, and at all times. When Christ came, sin added another crime to the terrible list: the deepest of all evils was there—rejection of the Son of man in His humiliation, and of the Spirit's testimony

to His exaltation in heavenly glory. Jesus came not in the sternness of the law, but in love, yet He met only with enmity and hatred. If men, as such, could have been connected with God, they must have been when Christ came. But man needs a *new nature* for such a link; and this Christ does give to all who believe, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to maintain it in power.

So Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost," looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Such is the true place of the believer, rendered capable by the Spirit of fixing his eye on Jesus in glory, and this in presence of the world and its prince, who crucified the Lord of glory. It is not simply nor vaguely his eye opened to glory, but he sees *the Son of man* there, and the Spirit forms his heart and mind and walk according to that pattern. For the veil is rent and Jesus is seen in heaven.

We have heaven opened four times in the New Testament; and of these the first when the Lord was upon the earth. There was nothing in the actual condition of man which God could look on with pleasure till the man Christ Jesus was seen on earth. That the heavens should open on Him was no marvel. God had found perfect rest upon earth, and said, when the heavens opened, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the last occasion, viz., in Rev. xix, heaven is opened for the fourth time, and Christ

is seen as coming to judge. In each of these heaven opened to Christ. But there was a third scene when heaven opened, and not to Christ. He had been rejected from earth, and was no longer a link between it and God. Where then is He? At God's right hand. When He was crucified, the whole world was condemned, and the prince of this world judged. All had joined together—governor, priest, people—against the Lord and His anointed. The world deliberately rejected the holiness of God, and had no heart for the love of God. Yet after this, and in spite of this, we get heaven opened once more before Christ comes to execute judgment. Heaven is opened upon a believer in Christ, upon a witness to His glory outside the world. "Behold, I see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Christ Himself was the object on earth upon whom heaven opened. Christ is now the object in heaven presented to the believer on earth.

But Stephen's testimony only drew out the murderous opposition of the world. It had been guilty of rejecting Christ down here. It equally rejected Him, now that He is proclaimed as the exalted One in heaven.

But Stephen only thus saw and testified, when "full of the Holy Ghost." To have the Holy Ghost is one thing; to be filled with the Holy Ghost is another. When He is the one source of my thought, I am filled with Him. When He has possession of my heart, there is power to silence what is not of God, to keep my soul from evil, and to guide in every act

of my life and walk; so that in both, I am kept **apart** from the world. (Compare Eph. v. 18; "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with **the Spirit.**") Are we then looking stedfastly into heaven? Alas! what inconstant hearts we have; how **fickle** and changing! The Holy Ghost ever leads the eye **to**, and would keep it fixed on Jesus. He is the object of the Spirit from all eternity; whether as the Son in **the** bosom of the Father; or the rejected Messiah **on** earth; or the Son of man exalted at the right hand of God. To reveal and glorify Him is the habitual aim of the Spirit.

When we have not much power for prayer, or even to follow others, and our hearts get full of distracted thoughts—when there is little energy in our souls for praise and worship; we have but a feeble measure of the power of the Spirit; we are *not* filled with **the Holy Ghost.**

The heavens, then, can be opened upon a believer here below, when Christ, the Son of man, is up there. What a thought, what a *truth* for our heart! Indeed, more than this; for in Eph. ii. we learn the blessed fact, that God has quickened us together with Christ; has raised us up together and seated us together in Christ in heavenly places. He has taken His place at the right hand of God: and we are made to sit there in Him, because united to Him who is there. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

It is no longer, then, the heavens opening and Jesus acknowledged in humiliation to be the beloved

Son of God. It is not the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man, the object of service to those who were the most dignified and holy creatures of God. It is not yet heaven opened and a rider upon the white horse, issuing thence in triumphant judgment. It is a precious and intervening scene, where the disciple on earth sees the heavens opened, and, filled with the Spirit, sees the glory of God and Jesus standing at His right hand. It is the manifest and characteristic picture of the true position of the Christian, rejected like Jesus, because of Jesus, with Jesus, but withal his eyes opened by the Holy Ghost to higher hopes and glory, than any dependent on the Lord's return to and judgment of the earth, and restoration of His ancient people. *Heavenly* glory is the portion with which his soul is in present fellowship and with Jesus therein.

Indeed Stephen's discourse to the Jews had strikingly paved the way to this; for while he had sketched the history of the people from the very first, he had singled out Abraham, called away from his country and kindred, by the appearing of the God of glory. Abraham, a stranger in the land of promise, and not a foot of it as yet his own. He had traced the sins, sorrows, and bondage of "our fathers," till God delivered the people out of Egypt, as He had previously called Abraham from Mesopotamia. Two individuals stood out most significantly; but they were scarcely more characterized by the honour of God, than they had been previously by the rejection

of Israel:—Joseph given up to the Gentiles, afterwards the most exalted in the personal administration of the kingdom, and the instrument of the goodness and wisdom of God, in behalf of the very brethren who had persecuted and sold him:—Moses, the refused ruler and judge, whom God sent, long after, to be a ruler and a deliverer. Just such had been the features of their recent sin, and such should be the path of God in His grace. But they had no ear for Him as yet. From the very first, their idolatrous hearts had departed from Him, however slow He had been in executing judgment. And however their pride might rest complacently in this holy place, God Himself in truth was, and had been, as great a stranger, so to speak, in Canaan, as had been Abraham His friend. It was true that “Solomon built him an house.” But this had furnished the occasion for the prophet to tell them in due time, that the Most High, whose hand had made all things, would not rest in a temple made with hands; and this, in connexion with restored idolatry in the temple, and the consummated wickedness and judgment of Israel in the latter day, before the Lord shall create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

And now, the history of Christ had been the fresh and full verification of these varied principles of God, and all was caused to flash on their unrenewed and rebellious consciences, by the Holy Ghost, through Stephen. But heaven opened to him, as it can on us, in virtue of our being members of Christ; as we see in John xiv., “ye in me and I in you.” We see the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. He has vindicated the holiness of God, whose righteousness is now for me and justifies me. And the Holy Ghost gives me competency to look up into heaven, and see my forerunner there—my righteousness there. *I* am there, for Christ and the believer are united. I am one with Him. It is Paul who shows us this truth fully. It was made known to him from his very conversion, "I am Jesus whom thou persecuted." The other apostles never developed it as he did. Paul was the fitted vessel for disclosing this great truth, not yet unfolded—the secret hid in God—and thus for completing the word, as we read in Col. i. There had been, as it were, a blank left for it.

Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the Son of man standing at God's right hand—a man in heaven seen by one on earth! What an immense step. Truly blessed to have Christ in heaven! to see Him there, and be livingly associated with Him in that glory.

But the Son of man was seen standing there. Why *standing*? He could not sit until the *last* act of rejection was completed. What a tale? What sin man has wrought and woe he has entailed on himself! But Christ is set down waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. So must we wait. The righteousness we are made—we are not waiting for *that*, but for the hope of righteousness by faith. We are set down in Christ, in spirit and purpose, at God's right hand, until the heaven open for the last time,

and the Son of man comes to judge all that can be shaken. Does this alarm me? No. I am safe to the end. I *have* a city which hath foundations. I am linked in with what God has settled, and cannot be moved.

What an effect this sight in heaven should have upon our souls. In Stephen it produced a thorough practical likeness to Christ. If you look at Christ, He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, the people, &c. What is Stephen? A faithful follower of the One he sees in heaven. He bears witness to His Master, forgetful of himself or his danger, without a thought of consequences. The Holy Ghost guides and fills him with holy joy that ran over. His heart was filled with Christ to the exclusion of care for his life, or what should follow. *Christ* was the only object before him. He was like Christ in confession, like Him in suffering too, "filling up that which was behind." What a picture of practical conformity to Christ in grace—perfect confidence in looking up to the Lord, into whose hands he committed his spirit—strong intercession, as he thought of those who stoned him to death! "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

The ungrieved spirit displayed in Stephen the reflexion of the character and ways and words of Christ; but this brought on trial, and it ever will be so. The cross we shall have; and what of that? It is a *good thing* for us; it draws us away from the world; it breaks the will; it delivers from self, by cutting, it may be,

the next link to the heart. The cross has a delicious power, though not a pleasant thing: it would be no cross if it were. But it lifts up the believer, and makes him see what a portion he has in Christ; who waits to take those He has redeemed to Himself, "that where He is, there they may be also."

CHAP. VII.

GALATIANS VI.

NOTHING is so difficult as to take a man out of himself; it is *impossible*, except by giving him a new nature. Man glories in anything that will bring honour to himself—anything that distinguishes him from his neighbour. It does not signify what it is, (it may be even that he is the tallest man,) anything his pride may take up as that which gives him advantage over others.

Some may glory in their talents. There are differences in men's minds: *vanity* is seen more in some, wishing for the good opinion of others; *pride* more in others, having a good opinion of themselves. Wealth, knowledge, anything that distinguishes a man, he will glory in, and make a little world around himself by it.

There is another thing, too, that men glory in, besides talent, birth, wealth, &c., and that is their *religion*. Take a Jew, and you will find he glories in not being a Turk, the Christian, so called, glories in that he is, not a heathen and a publican. Man will thus take the very thing that God has given to take him out of himself to accredit himself with. Those who are so deluded as to be throwing themselves down to Jugger-naut may have less to glory in, or to fancy they can glory in; but the measure of truth, connected with the religion men hold, is the very occasion of their glory-

ing. Thus the Turk who owns the true God, will glory in *his* religion over those who do not; the Jew, in *his* religion—he has the truth, and “salvation came of the Jews;” the Gentile Christian too has truth, but then he prides himself upon it, and that brings in the mischief. The subtlety of the enemy is seen in proportion as it is truth in which he makes a man glory; and it is not so difficult to detect, either, for if you are *proud* of being a Christian, the whole thing is told at once. (It is another thing of course, for the true, genuine child of God walking in the power of the cross, &c., who glories in that he knows God.)

With Jonah there was just this pride at work: he was proud of *being a Jew*, and would not go to Nineveh, as God told him, because he was afraid of losing his reputation. He had rather have seen all Nineveh destroyed, than have his own credit as a prophet lost. Jonah was a true prophet, but glorying in himself, turning his religion into a ground of self-glorying.

Whatever you are decking *yourself* out with, it may even be with a knowledge of scripture, it is glorying in the flesh. Ever so little a thing is enough to make us pleased with ourselves; what we should not notice in another is quite enough to raise our *own* importance.

Glorying in religion is a deeper thing. Whatever comes from man must be worthless. A man cannot glory in being a sinner. *Conscience* can never glory, and there is no true religion without the *conscience*—not speaking now of God’s righteousness. What is it then wherein man glories in religion? It always must have a *legal* character, because there must be

something for him to do—hard penance, or anything, no matter at what cost, if it only glorifies *self*. “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, constrain you to be circumcised they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.” Man could bind heavy burdens. Why should he? Because *self* would have to do something. When man glories in *self* there may be the truth in a measure, but it is of a legal character always, because there must be something man can do for God. Glorifying in the flesh is not glorying in *sin*, but, as in Phil. iii. religious glorying, glorying in something besides Christ.

Verse 14. In the *cross* man has nothing to say to it. It is not my cross, but “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the only part I had in Christ’s cross was *sin*. *My sin* had to do with it, for it brought Him there. This puts *man* down altogether. That which saves man, and what God delights in, man could not put a finger to in bearing. “The folly of God is wiser than men.” The one single thing I have in the cross is *my sin*. There is this further thing, we are utterly lost without it. *Divine love* treats me as an utterly lost sinner, and the more I see that perfect, divine love, the more I see how vile I am, utterly contemptible, defiled and lost. I have liked defiling myself; I am a wretched slave, dragged down to my defilement. The cross, when I see what it is, destroys my glorying in *self*, and *puts truth in the inward parts*, too, for it not only shows me how bad I am, but it makes me glad to *confess* my sin, instead of making excuses for it. I am awakened to say, ‘I am guilty

of having loved all this.' Love *opens the heart*, and enables me to come and tell Him how bad I am. I thus delight to record all that He has done, all that I owe Him; and that is thankfulness. My heart tells out its vileness; there is no guile—not delighting in the sin of course, but rejoicing in the remedy. Then we have, farther, *God's* delight in the cross. "Having made peace through the blood of the cross," God gives us to delight with Him in the value of it. And first, we see in it God's unutterable *love*—not love *called out*, like ours, by a loveable object. No; "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It was love acting in its own proper energy—from itself only—so properly divine that a soul *expecting* it, as a matter of course, could not be a fit object for it. God's work and God's way are shown in a manner that man *could* not and *ought* not to have thought of. I am a poor miserable sinner, and there I see God's love in giving His own Son. When He forgives, there is the positive, active energy of love in giving the best thing—the thing nearest to itself—for sin, which is the thing farthest from itself, giving it to be "*made sin*." When I look at the cross, I see perfect and infinite love, God giving His Son to be "*made sin*." I see perfect and infinite wisdom also.

With a conscience, I cannot enjoy God's love without seeing Him dealing about my sin. A sparrow even God can be good to, it is true; but can God accept me in my sins? Can He accept an imperfect offering? As Micah says, Can I give the fruit of my

body for the sin of my soul? Cain brought the fruit of his own work, without any sense of sin: the hardness of his heart was proved by it, and an utter forgetfulness about his sin. I see in the cross *what* my sin is. I cannot look at that as God sees it without learning God. Man has forgotten God enough to rise up against Him who was God's remedy for his misery. Then *judgment* must be exercised; God's authority must be vindicated. "It became him to make the captain of salvation perfect through suffering." Are angels to see man flying in God's face, and He take no notice of it? No! therefore, "it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things," &c. God is a righteous judge, and judgment must be executed. There is judgment as well as love seen in the cross. There is not only a holy nature taking sin, but Christ is undergoing the judgment due to evil. There is the unsparing wrath of God against the sin, but God's perfect love to the sinner. There His majesty, which we insulted, is vindicated—even the Son bows to that. If He is to keep up the brightness of the Father's glory, He must vindicate His character in this way. God's *truth* was proved at the cross. "The wages of *sin is death*." Man had forgotten this, but Christ stands up, the witness of God in such a world, that what God has said *is true*. "The wages of sin is death." The love with which God wins man to Him proves this very thing at the same time.

There is more in the cross. God accomplishes all His purposes by it. He is bringing "many sons to glory," and how could He bring these defiled sinners

into the same glory with His own Son? Why, God has so fully accomplished the work that when in the glory with Him, we shall be a part of the display of that glory. Therefore He says, "That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace,"—a Mary Magdalene, a thief upon the cross, trophies of that grace, through all eternity! And how could He set them in such a place with His own Son? His own glory and love ride over all our sin and put it all away: He Himself has done it.

For *us*, then, the cross has done two things: it has given peace of conscience, and not what man can see outside, and then spoil. No, He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. All sin is blotted out and put away. I can glory in the cross, then, for my sins are gone!

Again, "After that ye have known God," or rather are known of God,—poor wretched things that we are, to be made the vessels of such love and grace! The conscience has certainty and peace, and more than that, a confidence that Adam in innocence could never have had. There is communion and peace in my own soul, and there is another thing also,—I have clearness of understanding in the ways of God. Should I go through a course of ceremonies, genuflexions, &c., to add to my perfectness which I have through the cross? You do not know the cross; you do not know what Christ—what God—has done by the cross, if you are trying other things to make you better. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" When you know the cross, you cannot use all these efforts to satisfy and

quiet your conscience. When you know it, it leaves spiritual affections free. When I see the cross, I *can* love God. If I have offended Him, I can go off to Him directly and tell Him;—I am a child, and my relationship is not thereby altered: my fellowship is with the Father and the Son—that is my happy privilege.

When I can glory in the cross, there is an end of glorying in *self*; for I am nothing but a sinner. He has brought us in by the cross, for Christ has suffered, the just for the unjust. Are our souls glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, or in vanity, or in self? If you are not glorying in the cross, it is your own loss, not to say your own sin; for you can never see God's love, God's holiness, God's wisdom, God's truth, as on the cross. It is *where you are* you may learn it, for you have not to climb up somewhere to get it; but it has come to you where you are. It is not when you are better you may come. You cannot come when you are better, though it will make you better. It is *as a sinner* you must come. The apostle came as "the chief of sinners." Then "the world," as he says, "is crucified to me, and I to the world." The very nature which is connected with the world is what occasioned Christ's death, therefore, when I glory in the cross, I am crucified to the world.

CHAP. VIII.

I JOHN IV.

IF we look at man, we shall find his whole history in the history of Adam. What Adam was in the garden, man has been ever since, from the garden to the cross. God tried man, but man only marred all he was trusted with.

When God chose a nation, it was no better. The people were idolaters, the kings rebellious, the priests soiled their garments, so that they could not stand before God. Whatever God has given in grace, creation, providence, or law, man has abandoned. When the Lord from heaven came, the iniquitous nation rejected Him. *But He never fails*, and God will prove His love and wisdom by meeting His own people in *every single* thing, in which man has broken down. All will come out in glory, as the positive fruit of the cross. We learn a great deal more of what God is by knowing man; and we learn a great deal more of what man is by knowing God. If we look at the Church, man is just the same—the mystery of iniquity working, the spirit of demons amongst them, the love of many waxing cold, until there is not a righteous one left, but all closes in perfect ruin.

God gives a power apart from man. He gives a new life; and life in His Son. In virtue of Him, it cannot fail. It is eternal life—*life in Christ*. God

was perfectly manifested in the Son, when He came down from heaven to give life. But this is not enough. What about my sins? Where are my sins? To have life without the question of sin being settled will not do. Christ had them on the cross. Christ came down from heaven to put my sin away, and He did put it away and can say, "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Christ's life is *in me*—eternal life; and this life is in the Son. I have His life, not His Godhead, of course. As surely as I have partaken of the life and nature of the first Adam, so have I life in the second Adam. If any man be in Christ there is a *new creation*. The *divine nature* is there. It is in a poor earthen vessel, it is true, but the nature is divine, and I should be showing it out in my life and character. The more I know of God, the more shall I exhibit what He is. The more I look at Him, the more I shall be *like* Him. What made Moses' face to shine? Was it looking at himself? No. It was being with Jehovah and looking at His glory. Moses did not know that his face was shining until he was asked to veil it. He was not occupied with himself: the object before him was *God*. He had been looking at *God*, he was absorbed in God, and so shows out God's glory. It will be the same with us. If Christ is the object before me, I shall not be thinking of myself, but of Him. I shall be exhibiting Him, dwelling upon what *He* is, and not upon what *I* am doing. If my eye is upon Christ, I shall resemble Him (feebly indeed) in holiness, and humbleness, and love. I find it in Him in all its blessedness

and beauty; I *see* it in all its perfectness, and in looking at Him, I am changed into His image. In Him there is all the new nature can crave or desire. In Him I can rest, and delight, and rejoice. What joy to know the Son of God is come! Satan works, it is true, but "ye are of God" (this settles the whole thing); no longer of the old nature, living and acting according to the life of the first Adam; but in the power of the new nature, that we derive from God.

What a thing to be partakers of the divine nature, made higher than angels! This is a most blessed truth, "Ye are of God," of Him, whose nature is divine. And this divine nature cannot be met but by *Himself*. Christ has washed us from our sins in His own most precious blood. He has baptized us from above with the Holy Ghost and sealed us with the Spirit of promise, "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." He has *given* us a *power* which is above Satan's power. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." "Ye are of God." I am brought to God. I am born of God. I rest in God. I learn to know God, because I have got the nature, that can know Him, just as I could only know what man is by having his nature.

I do not know all about God, that is true, but I have no uncertainty. Suppose I have a friend, I may not know all about him, but he is *my friend*, and I rejoice in him as such, I have no questionings as to his affections, because I do not know all about him. Well, God is my friend, and I have a blessed rest in knowing Him as my friend. If God is my friend,

what more can I need? What can be more blessed? To know God, I must have *His* nature. I cannot know the nature of what I am not a partaker. I do not know angels; I am not a partaker of the nature of angels.

We see two things in this chapter which give the soul immense delight. Verse 9 shows us the way God makes His love *known*. In verse 17 we see how His love is *made perfect*. In verse 9 God sends His only begotten Son into the world, that I may have life through Him. That we may have life who were dead, that we may be partakers of a life that flows from the manifestation of God's love—a life separated altogether from nature and nature's affections and pleasures. It cannot be hinged in with selfishness. And what is my nature: is it not mere selfishness? If I look at my motives from day to day, what shall I find them? are they not self? Take business, (we are not speaking of the rightness of the thing), what is the motive? Is it not self? We have no idea how we are under the influence of self. Is it not true that the trifles of dress more occupy the thoughts of many than *all God has done* in sending down His Son from heaven to save sinners? It is a positive fact, and it is no use to try to hide it from ourselves. We cannot hide it from God. On the other hand, the more I look at *this* love, the more I see of its *perfectness*. It is said "for a good man some will even dare to die." But when there was *not a single good thing* in us, God commended His love to us. It was purely grace.

We were just sinners, and nothing but sinners, when Christ *died* to save us. And I can never understand what God's love really is, until I can say I am *merely* a sinner. If you do not know what God's love is, it is because you have not *learnt* that great truth—"You are a sinner." What is it that God has given to save sinners? The very nearest thing to His heart—the most precious boon He had to bestow—His own beloved and only begotten Son. There is no accounting for His love. There is no estimating it. The thing most of all dear to Him was the Son of His bosom; and Him He gave. There is no limit to His love. He has given me Christ, and there is no end to what I have in Him. The *Son* of God was given for *my* sins. He goes down into these *depths* and brings up life. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." How can I know that God loves me? By looking at the perfect object of His love, and this gives me rest. Why? Because in Him I see how wondrous is the love that sent down His Son to give *me* eternal life, and be a propitiation for *my* sins. If I have not rest, what I want is a deeper sense of sin. I must learn what sin is at the *cross*, and then I shall see the love that has met it, and suffered for it, and thus my soul gets *rest*. Christ's love was not the theory of one who comes and merely tells what God is, but the practical exhibition of Him. He shows *out God* in all the *variety* of His *unreserved* and immeasurable love. Compare verse 12 with verse 8 of John i., "No man," &c. Nobody hath seen—He who hath been in the bosom of

the Father must declare Him. The SON must tell *what* can be known of the Father. On Christ HANGS everything. All hindrances are gone for the believer through Him; all sin is put away by Him. I here get a place of intimate nearness to God in HIM. I have learnt at the cross what God was to me as a sinner; and now I have to learn how He meets my wants as a saint, by feeling my need and bringing it to Him. To be hungry is not enough; I must be really starving to know what is in His heart towards me. So in the gospel, when the prodigal was hungry, he went to feed upon husks; but when he was starving, he turned to his father's house, and then learnt the love of *the father's* heart.

Observe in verse 15 how low God comes, "Whosoever will confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." How He steps down to meet us, so that every one shall be felt without excuse. "Whosoever shall confess, &c." The babe who can but just confess Christ has eternal life, as truly as the strong man in Christ. It is not a question of what I am, but of what Christ is. I am lost sight of. All hangs on what God is. How can I know this love? Must I wait for its full display? No, He has shed abroad His love in my heart by the Spirit He has given me. Verse 16, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." If I am dwelling in God, I am dwelling in love, and should be showing out love by looking at *Him* and not at others. Verse 17: this is a wonderful thing to say, "as he is, so are we in this world." He has taken His seat at God's right-hand, and brings me there.

We are now before God in the righteousness of Christ. He is my life, and I cannot be really, nor ought to appear, in anything separated from Him. "Herein is love with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Does the heart get exercised about judgment? Does the thought of standing before it distress you? Why should it be so? Is not MY RIGHTEOUSNESS *my judge*? Has He not perfectly put away my sin and purged my conscience from all guilt, so that I can rest in God without fear; having no longer any painful uncertainty, but calmly looking forward in the full assurance that *Christ* has been judged in my stead, and brought me into blessed fellowship with *that love*, which gives me boldness in "the day of judgment?" "As he is, so are we in this world."

"There is NO fear in love." If there is the smallest doubt or distrust in the heart towards God, you are not made perfect in love; for perfect love casteth out fear. There are things to fear, it is true; we may well fear sin, and the influence of our own selfish interests. But the practical effect of resting on God is to cast out all fear, and make the heart perfect in love. His love *is* perfect. We have but to own it, bow to it, accept it as ours in Christ, and bless Him for it. This is to be made perfect in love.

"We love Him because He first loved us."

CHAP. IX.

PHILIPPIANS IV.

It is a very difficult thing to say, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark," &c. (Phil. iii). The apostle had such a sight of what was at the end, he was so set a-going by it, that he was able to press forward towards the mark.

This epistle is not marked by great doctrines, but by speaking of the Christian course. Such a character of the epistle explains why the apostle speaks of "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" not because *God has done everything for you*, but "for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Just as when Israel were redeemed, they could speak of salvation as the end of their race, and not as the acceptance of their persons.

The enemy seemed to have got a great advantage by putting Paul into prison, but not at all so. "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." It was *not* at all a vain thing his speaking of his desire to depart and to be with Christ. "Yet what I shall choose, I wot not." He had to choose between Christ and service *here*, and Christ and rest *there*.

He says nothing about circumstances, nothing about

the Emperor Nero ; he leaves them quite out of the account. " But I know that I shall abide and remain for your furtherance and joy of faith." What we learn from scripture of the apostle's circumstances when he wrote this epistle greatly helps us to understand the spirit in which he wrote. Many epistles give us more doctrine, as Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians ; but none so gives us the likeness of the practical experience of the apostle in his Christian course.

Christ in resurrection was at the end of the vista before him, and the light of it was shining all down the path. The very thing he desired was to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings. He was looking for constant approximation to resurrection, for it was in resurrection he was to be conformed to Christ. He *was* taken hold of by grace for it, but now he desires himself to *lay* hold of it. He could count all things but loss and **dung** "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus;" and people do not like to be occupied with filth. If we are gathering up refuse, we have not such a sight of the glory of the Lord as Paul had. At the first glow of conversion there is no difficulty in this ; it is a very easy thing to count all things but loss *then*. Paul does not say, " I have made all this sacrifice: see what I have done." He does not say, " I *did* count them but dung," but " I *do* count them," &c. That which keeps his energy alive and fresh is that he does not run uncertainly. The first thing to understand is, not that we are in the course to resurrection, but that resurrection *has* put us in a certain place. This gives us energy in pressing forwards to the mark.

because we have *one* object before us. We find it so even in the natural man; he becomes clear-sighted when he has only one object instead of many. But in the things of God it is much more so, because there it is divine sight and divine energy.

"Rejoice *in the Lord* always." Certainly it could not be in circumstances, for he was a prisoner. Christians are often a great deal happier *in* the trial, than they are in thinking of it; for there the stability, the certainty, the nearness, and the power of Christ are much more learnt; and they are happier. Paul could not so well have said, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*," if he had not known what it was to be a prisoner. Just as in Ps. xxxiv., "I will bless the Lord *at all times*, His praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." Why? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." "I sought the Lord, and he heard me," &c. This was what enabled him to say, "I will bless the Lord *at all times*." He had been in *trouble*, and had been *heard* when in trouble. It must have been an exceeding trial for one of Paul's active disposition for service, to be kept a prisoner; and *this* is the time when he can say to the persons who were in the commonplace circumstances which were dragging down their hearts day by day, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*!" Grace is sufficient for favourable circumstances, but they are by far the most trying (spiritually) to the believer. There is an easy way of going on in worldliness, and there is nothing more sad than the quiet comfortable Christian going on day by day, apart from

dependence on the Lord. It must be as Israel and the manna; there must be the daily gathering and daily dependence upon God. If circumstances come *between* our hearts and God, we are powerless. If Christ is nearer, circumstances will not hinder our joy in God.

"The Lord is at hand!" Just as when you look at a light on a perfectly dark night; though it may be two miles off, it appears quite close. So, the more we prove the darkness of the world, whilst enjoying the love of Christ, the nearer the hope will appear.

"Be careful for nothing," when he had everything to make him careful; when he knew what it was to be in prison and to hunger in the prison. Why can he say this? Because he had found Christ there. What has a man to be careful for, if Christ is caring for him?

"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Not you shall keep the peace of God, but "the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds," &c. It is the peace in which God dwells; and what peace must that be? Can any circumstances shake God's throne? God is not troubled about circumstances. Lay the whole burden upon Him, "and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds," and you shall have it flowing into your hearts as a river, "passing all understanding." The word is, "Be careful for nothing, not even about the Church, though God forbid that we should not care for it.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,

whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." First, cast all the troubles and cares upon God, and then our minds will be at leisure to turn and think upon whatsoever things are lovely, &c. alone—all these blessed things, which, notwithstanding Satan, grew as fruit. If the soul is occupied with the evil, there will be weakness; but if we occupy ourselves with the good, the soul will be strengthened.

Now we have the "God of peace." You walk in the power in which you have seen me walk. "Those things which ye have seen and heard in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you," not only the peace of God, but the God of peace. You will have God's power with you. Paul had walked in that path and had found the God of peace with him all the way through.

"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again." How glad the Apostle is to see fruit! Besides rejoicing in the Lord always, he rejoices in the Lord about them: what made him happy was that he saw Christ blessing the saints. There is no such joy on earth (save communion) as seeing the saints walking in the truth.

Ver. 11—13. We are apt to take the last of these verses as a general truth, and it is so; but he does not use it in this way here. What we have here is the practical experimental acquaintance of Paul with this thing. He had been in peril, in want, and in

plenty (a far more dangerous thing); he had found a present Christ sufficient for him in all circumstances. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He cannot be our strength in circumstances which are contrary to His will. He will have an exercised soul, not seeing its path straight before it if we are walking in a path contrary to His will. There cannot be that happy liberty where the path of dependence upon God has been left. When Christians first leave the path of dependence on the Holy Ghost, they find difficulties and uneasiness; but gradually they are apt to get used to it, and then there is less conscience and less uneasiness. Where a person has left the path of spiritual power, everything takes the form of duties. The first working of the Spirit of God is to make him uneasy; then there is nothing to do but to go back the way he came. There are perplexities which arise from leaving the simple straightforward path; then the Lord comes in and restores the soul for His name's sake. The Lord does give His people rest on their way; as He did to Israel when the ark went before them to find out a place where they might rest. Circumstances need never hinder the power of spiritual joy. If I am in prosperity or in adversity, nothing can separate me from His love. It is not said "through Christ which strengthened," but "which strengtheneth me"—a present thing.

Ver. 14—18. Still He lifts them up out of the mere temporal circumstances, and leads them into the consciousness of the connexion of the saints with God—"a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

“*My* God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”—the God to whom I belong, and who, in a certain sense, belongs to me—the God whose faithfulness I know—who fed me when hungry, and strengthened me when weak. Exceeding sweet is it to see that what Paul had passed through had brought him so near to God. He has found in all things, in prison, in want, &c., the infallible certainty of being associated with *God*.

CHAP. X.

JOHN XVII. 14, ETC.

THERE are two great and evident consequences resulting from the place in which Christ has set us: one as looking towards the Father, the other as looking towards the world.

The first grand truth on which all is based, is, that He places us in the same condition, and where He Himself is. When the Lord Jesus was down here, He presented a double aspect, one towards the Father, and one towards the world: and just so is it with the saints now. What is true of Jesus is true also of those who believe in Him—His joy being fulfilled in them. He was a perfect witness for the Father, and the testimony of the saint in the world is for Him also (ver. 18.) The first part of this chapter shows the position of the saint before the *Father*, the end of it the saint's position towards the world. A blessed and wonderful thing it is, that the saints are brought by grace into the same place and position as Himself. He by right and title had it, we, by virtue of His imputed righteousness. It is testimony to the value of the redemption of Christ, and we cannot value it too highly. This exalts us not in a fleshly manner, but in the efficacy of what Christ wrought in resurrection. His disciples addressed John xx. 17:—"My Father and your Father." If I think of the state of my

conscience before God, I remember God as a judge. I love the Lord Jesus Christ when I believe something about the value of the blood; but if I love the things of Christ, I soon find much in me that is not like Christ; and if there is uprightness of heart, it is a great deal easier to get at ease as to that which is past, than it is for what is at present going on. What I find in myself now, is that which troubles me, and the conscience must get peace about this, because the affections are renewed. Even as regards the details of my conscience, as a saint, I have a holy conscience judging *itself* before God; so, the more unhappy a quickened conscience will be, till it is set at rest; for God is holy, the soul is sinful, and the Father sees sin. What does God do when coming in judgment? He put the *blood* on the door of the Israelite, and that being under this eye, the destroying angel cannot come in; he only sees the blood and passes over; he beholds the witness of the sin put away by the death of the Lamb. There is rest for the conscience by the blood. So sentence on evil has been brought in on God's part already. What meets His eye is the blood; a substitute has come in; God is satisfied in the execution of judgment. When there is uprightness of heart, there will never be *peace* till the conscience is clean before God: it can never *rest* till it has cleansing according to what God has wrought, for God wrought it, God gave it, and God makes us know His satisfaction in His own holiness. The holy desires which God has wrought in us, are not satisfied till all the demands of God are met.

Well, suppose the conscience to be at rest, what is God going to do with this people that He has redeemed? and what is the efficacy of this power? God has done it; He has not only put away the sin, but has brought us nigh unto Himself. The Son of man, the second Adam, has brought us into the same position with Himself. Thus, when risen, He says, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father," &c. The first Adam did this also, bringing us down to the same condition with himself. But we are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. viii.) What does this depend on? It is from the value of what His redemption wrought, and the power of His quickening life in resurrection. And the way in which it is to be known, is by looking at the Lord Jesus Himself. Where has this redemption brought Him? It has placed Him, the risen man, back in the presence of the glory where He was before as God. He humbled Himself; (Phil. ii; Heb. ii;) wherefore, a name is given Him above every name. He is set at God's right hand. And here I can trace the result of that redemption which the Lord Jesus wrought, and which brought Him from the bosom of the Father, in placing Him there again.

Another point of value is the life-giving power. What is this life-giving power? "Because I live ye shall live also." And (Col. iii. 3, 4,) we that have to combat with the evil in us, and to keep down the flesh, have the life of Christ in us; yet the soul daily needs the comfort of the blood. Where has God placed us? If we have not our part in the first

Adam, we must have it in the second Adam—in *Christ*. There is no place with God for any one *out of Christ*. God cannot have persons *out of Christ* with Him, nor in a *half state* of glory. There is no half glory with Him. We are sanctified *in Christ Jesus*, accepted *in the beloved*. “If any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature,” &c. &c. If redemption had not given believers a title to be with Him, He could not say, (John xvii. 24,) “Father, I will,” &c. It is the discovery of the ruin of man that throws us on the redemption that is in Christ. We cannot go higher or lower than that. The utter inability of man shows the efficacy of the blood. In the world Christians are poor, needy, and feeble; but Christ speaks these things in the world that they might have His joy fulfilled in them. Faith and love are superior to all *circumstances*, which are no hindrance, unless indeed we are in circumstances, contrary to God, which is another thing. Faith has an object. There is living power in Christ. We are kept and enabled by Him to pass though all circumstances unhurt. How does Christ set us in this place of power? (v. 15.) Not taken *out of the world*, but kept from the evil of it. He sets us in the same position as Himself (v. 16). “They are not of the world” stands good, even as regards our path and position: Christians in the world, in the same place as Christ Himself! How was Christ not of the world? Because He derived not His life from it, but from the Father. The object of that life was the Father. All His walk testifies that the world had nothing to do with the Father. But in

passing through this world as the Faithful Witness, all His ways declared that He was not of it. When He who created the world was in it, it knew Him not. (1 John iii.) "Behold what manner of love," &c. The world knows us not because it knew not Him. Our hearts would find consolation here if in conscious fellowship with Jesus. The saint has to go through this world without the support of *it*, in secret with the Father, and sustained by Him. The world cannot know from whence we derive our life, and the saint has to pass through the world without having the power to show from whence it springs. It is a thing not seen.

If the world could have acknowledged "we know this is the Son of God," it would have been a sort of sustaining power to Jesus; so with the saints, they are not only not understood, but not acknowledged—separated because their nature comes from God. If we are willing to take this place, we must have it altogether *above* and *below*, for the Father cannot own the world; so is it a place of trial for the saint, (v. 17,) not merely one act for all, but sanctified by the truth. The life of the saint down here is *continued* separation. We can put nothing between Christ and the soul, between the Head and the members. There is nothing between the unity of the Father and the Son, nor between the unity of the Christ and the Church; but there is such a thing as growing up into the Head, "Sanctified *through* the *truth*." There is not only *negative* opposition to the world on the part of the Christian, but positive opposition. We

have to pass through many trials. It is blessed to fall into temptation, &c. (not sinful temptation, of course, as in James); but there may be circumstances very humbling, without sin. Self is to be subdued. In these we see and learn God, when the soul has grown able to judge itself. He is able to uproot and cut off these things as undersuckers of the *old stock*. The Christian is not only not of the world, as knowing the character of it, but delivered from it, (v. 19.) We see the position into which the saint gets. The Lord sets Himself apart, that the Spirit may take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, that we may be more like Christ in the world. The Holy Ghost takes of these things, and comes down in living power to speak of these things to our souls—Father, Son, and Spirit, all work together. There is the Father's love, and the Son's and Spirit's power given unto us. The Church and the individual saint stand before the world to show the efficacy of the Father's love, as the epistle of Christ. I am not speaking of what we have attained unto, but what we are designed to be—*where* we are *set*, as *our place*; and though we have not yet attained to it, wherever we go, there is the living testimony of what the Father's grace has made us. Israel ought to have been what the law required, but mark the difference, failure brought in condemnation to them. We want not righteousness before God; that has been done once. So Heb. x. 14, "By one offering," &c.; and Rom. viii. 4, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c.; also Dan. ix. 24, "To bring in

everlasting righteousness." "But for manifestation down here, Paul appeals to the Corinthians for the recommendation of his apostleship. Every believer is a letter of recommendation of the grace of God, showing what God is. Christ was the *living* epistle of God on earth. If He took a child in His arms, or whatever He did, He manifested God. He says to us, "Be perfect as your Father," &c., "Love your enemies," &c.,—*i.e.*, let men see in you the Spirit of your Father. We have Christ's place before God, and in the world also—it may be in being hated or persecuted unto death. It is perfectly plain, if Christ sets us out for witnesses, that all question of our acceptance was settled. We must have union and communion with Him. If Christ had not been entirely one with His Father, He could not have represented Him. The Church is put in the place of Christ, and sent into the world to tell how great things God has done for her; being on God's behalf the epistle of Christ written by the Holy Ghost. We are now set in blessed grace, and persons judge of what the profession of Christ is by what Christians are (I do not say always uprightly). If living in communion with God we are not thinking of ourselves. Moses did not know his face shone when every one else did. He had been looking up out of himself and turned towards the earth, bearing upon Him the light of heaven.

I know so little of *Christ*, one may say, and this may be true; but *every* grace that is in Christ is in *every saint*, though not developed. Supposing you a babe in Christ, we may see many things in babes to admire and follow after. Where there is true lowli-

ness of heart, I display God, as a *babe* manifesting Him ; but if, as a *babe*, I am attempting to manifest Christ as a *man*, there will be failure. My wisdom will be, not to set myself up above that which I really am. If walking in true lowliness and manifesting that measure of Christ which is in us, there will be certain progress in us. It is in the presence of God that sin ought to be found out. I dishonour Christ if I trip in my path. If I see the secret sin in my heart, I shall be humble before *God*—I shall be humble before the world. If I detect pride, &c., in my heart, I shall go to God and confess it. I may not have power to prevent an unholy thought, but if I resist it, then the Spirit is not grieved thereby ; but He brings the soul into communion and fellowship with Christ. This is a process of joy though humbling. If living with Him, He shows the good in Christ for me ; so in our path in this present world, we are partakers of His holiness, being “changed into the same image from glory to glory” (ver. 21).

Remark, also, that unity is spoken of three times in this chapter, the first being absolute unity as having the very same nature as Christ, the communion of the same divine nature, and one Holy Ghost, and the practical unity that flows from this. “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” Now the Spirit dwells in us, and makes us *one*—not one amongst ourselves, but altogether in the Father and the Son. All question of what the individual is, is lost sight of, and the Holy Ghost, Father

and Son have communion—we, by the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, are brought into the consciousness of this, all question of acceptance settled. 2nd, not only union, but communion. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in them, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou has sent me.” 3rd, not merely quickened but He adds, (ver. 22), glory given to us that was given to Jesus. This is not *essential* union as the first, nor communion as the second, but thirdly, the *display*;—Christ displayed in the Church and Christ displaying the Father. It is *I in them* and *thou in me*—beginning up there and coming down here—the full display of redemption when the world will see the oneness and the holy angels also, and we having glory and power from Christ, shall see the Father. The miracles at the beginning were a sample, the power of healing going forth from the *Church*. Christ will be admired in His saints—that holy city (Rev. xxi. 23, 24), in the light of which the saved nations will walk. The display is, “that the world may *know*,” &c. *Now* the world does not know us, but then the world shall know that we have been loved *as Christ*. But are we to wait to know till the world does? No, by faith, through the revelation of the Holy Ghost, we know now what the world will know by and by—we believe before we see. Supposing I have the consciousness that I am loved as the Father loved Jesus, what happiness will be then! My soul filled with this grace

will show it out to others. What a spring of grace is there! The world knows it not, but if I am clothed with grace, I am armed with grace, I am living on the truth and enjoying it now. The Father's love gave Christ for you and to you. Would the world find the same grace in you and the same love (in kind, not measure) that Christ exhibited? Are ye faithful in bearing about this character of God before the world? God came down here *in Christ—in man*, that he might display the perfectness of divine dealing and divine tenderness in the form of man. If I am expecting something from you before I show love, I shall be disappointed, and I shall not manifest God. I must not wait for that, I am to act in *grace*. It did not matter in one sense what Christ met with from others; He was always satisfied with God. He had all His joy in God. If we were perfectly satisfied with God this would be *perfection*. Suppose we had no kind brother to cheer us up under trial, &c., so far as we are filled up with what *God is*, we shall be satisfied. Suppose you are left alone for two hours, if not in communion with the Lord, you crave after a book, &c., proving that God is not enough for you. In the early Church we find they were in favour with all the people. The man Christ Jesus grew in favour with God and man. He was always the servant of every one. The first thing that struck me some years ago in reading the gospel was, Here is a man that never did anything for Himself. What a miracle to see a man not living to Himself, for He had got God for Himself! Have we realized what we are in Christ, so

as to have our hearts filled with Him? God has given us Christ's place in life, then adoption and glory. Therefore the life should show itself more clearly. Are we seeking His place *now*? Is there the active energy of the Spirit in you desiring to be all this? Well, that place you have: if merely a babe, or an old man, or a young man, is it not worth having? to be bearers of the character of Christ, to be trusted with the testimony of Jesus?

Again, there is one thing more in the last verses. He sums up the result of what He had said. Not only has He put us down here, one with Himself, but He must have us up there to see all His glory, to be with Him and to be like Him. He counts on our love delighting in *His* glory.

"*Righteous Father*" (v. 25). This solemn word is the everlasting separation between the world and Christ. It will never see Him again. He says, as it were, The world will not have Me: they have rejected Me. If I am to be approved, those that rejected Me, because I manifested the Father, cannot have a common portion with Me; so now, Thou Father, must decide the point. Then we have God's answer (John xii. 31): "now is the judgment of this world." When the Holy Ghost comes (John xvi), it is because of the rejection of Christ. He says I am *here* because Christ is *there* (ver. 26). "I have declared thy name," &c. We get the Lord Jesus sustaining us in this—this is what He is doing now: communicating the knowledge of the Father to us, not only in grace, but in the fellowship of the glory. He declares it from the Father's house

and throne, according to the knowledge He has of it as with the Father. The Father, by the Spirit, shows us Jesus at the right hand of God. "I in them" (ver. 26). The blessed Jesus manifest Himself (when done with the word, in a manner it knows not) to His saints. There is a difference between good and spiritual desires, and the power of the Holy Ghost taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. There is not merely the *new nature* but the power of the Spirit wanted, if true to Christ. If I take up with other things (I do not mean sins), there is failure. An idle look even will grieve the Spirit, and I have lost the power of communion. Ours ought not to be a religion of *regrets*, but a rejoicing of heart continually, love being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. God has set us here as the epistle of Christ. Let us not seek to be satisfied with looking at ourselves or others, but up unto *Him* continually, growing in His likeness more and more.

CHAP. XI.

PSALM XVI.

WHAT we find written in the Psalms is primarily connected with the Jews, or the Lord Jesus Himself, and particularly as Messiah. They have a special reference to the godly remnant in the latter day. Many of their expressions wholly belong to the Jews, and cannot be used by the Church. Hence, the true solution of those passages which have been such a terrible stumbling to Christians not seeing it. The saints of the present dispensation cannot rightly be looking for the destruction of their enemies, as a way of escape from their sorrows. But in the time of trouble such as never has been that is to come, it will be quite proper for the suffering Jews to look for judgments as a way of deliverance. They are God's promises, and what *their* hope rests upon. But the Church looks to be caught up and escape from sorrow by being with the Lord in the heavens, whilst it is quite true that she has His sympathy in her sorrow down here. But what the Psalms are chiefly occupied with is the suffering of the soul, the sorrows of the godly Jews and remnant, and God coming in judgment, as their deliverer, by the execution of vengeance on all their foes. Christ is viewed there as associated with Israel, and enters into all the sufferings of the holy remnant.

Then there are certain psalms which belong personally

to Himself. They show out the character of the Spirit of Christ, as the Gospels show His walk and work. The Gospels display the One in whom was no selfishness. They tell out the heart that was ready for every body. No matter how deep His own sorrow, He always cared for others. He could warn Peter in Gethsemane, and comfort the dying thief on the cross. His heart was above circumstances, never acting under them, but ever according to God in them. We see that He was always sensible to them, and often get in the Psalms expressions of what His heart felt in them, "I am poured out like water." "My bones are out of joint." "My heart is like wax." He was the tried man; and, as man tried, I am called to follow Him. I should forget self, and the things belonging to self, in showing love to others. The true effect of being near Christ puts me into fellowship with Himself about others, instead of being under my own circumstances. How can I be turning my heart to the joys of one, and the sorrows of another, unless I am living close to Christ, and getting my heart filled with Him instead of self? What we find all through the life of Christ, as shown out in the Gospels, is the total absence of selfishness, never acting for self in any way whatever. He could rejoice with those who had joy, and grieve with those in sorrow. He could cheer, warn, or rebuke, as need arose. Whatever love dictated, that He did.

In Psalm xxii. we see Christ *alone*, suffering under God, enduring the wrath due to sin, but continuing the righteous man, crying unto God, and justifying Him, even when forsaken by Him: or if we look at Him, as in

Psalm lxi. suffering rather from men, God is still His refuge. His heart goes through all the sorrow sin could bring on One who takes the sinner's place. He passed through the *deepest* exercises heart could endure, but He brings all to God. We find the greatest difficulty often in bringing our sorrow to God. How can I do so, the soul of some may be saying, as my sorrow is the fruit of my sin? How can I take it to God? If it was suffering for *righteousness*' sake, then I would; but I am suffering for my *sin*; and can I, in the integrity of my heart towards God, take my sorrows to Him, knowing I deserve them? Yes; CHRIST has been to God about them. This, then, is the ground on which I can go. There has been perfect atonement for all my sins; Christ has been judged for them. Will God judge us both? No; I go to Him on the ground of atonement, and God can afford to meet me in all my sorrow, because Christ's work has been so perfectly done. In the main, all sorrow is from sin, and all help is grounded upon the atonement. There would be no possibility of my trusting in God, had not all His dealings with sin been put upon another.

God could not be indifferent about sin. Peter knew that, when he said, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The holy character of God has been fully exercised in putting away sin. He has dealt with Christ about it, according to all that He is. I may have to taste the bitterness of its fruits; God may make me to feel the effects of my sin, *because* He is not going to judge me for it. "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign

through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ." I get my conscience *perfectly* purged, through the blood of Christ shed in perfect love. The obedience of the One who bore my sins is mine. I am declared righteous through the righteousness of another. My heart is free: I can deal with God about my sin, because He has dealt with Christ on the cross about it. I can go to Him in all my sorrow on account of it. I can confess my sin; yea, more, I can say, "*Search* me, O God, and try me, . . . and see if there be any wicked way in me," &c. Through grace I can take the place before God which Christ takes; and the ground for me is the atonement.

We find divine utterance in the Psalms for all our sorrows; and it is blessed to look at them in this way. Christ entered into the full effects of sin, as none other can, in a way we never shall; and when He had been at the "horns of the unicorn,"—the very transit of death, as it were,—and had settled every question with God about sin, He could then say, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." We shall never lose Him as our companion—what a comfort! We shall follow Him to the glory. I am going to be with Him. His presence will be my delight. What a place the saints are brought to in Christ—all sorrow passed!

We get in Psalm xvi. expressions of the Lord's own proper joy,—the joy of Him whom God called His fellow. Peter, on the mount of transfiguration, would have put Him on a level with Moses and Elias;

but God said, No: He is my fellow, not man's. When the young man in the gospel went to Him, saying, "Good master,"—coming to Him *as man*—He said, "Why call me good? there is *none* good but God." Goodness was not to be looked for in man, not even in Him if He had been only man. The saints are Christ's constant delight, and the poor sinner, who puts his trust in God, has the Lord Jesus for his comforter; and He, having been tempted, knows how to help, as none other can.

In the days of John the Baptist, all who repented came to the waters of baptism; Jesus did the same. He could not repent, but He would not be separated from them, and said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." I will take My place with you—with the saints in the earth.

What abundant consolation faith gives the man who hangs on God? Christ when down here could say, "I set Jehovah always before me;" and should not I? In the details of life, do I not constantly need Him? How continually I get moved by circumstances? He alone can stay me. Christ once took the dependent place. He was raised by the *power* of the Spirit through God the Father. He could have raised Himself; *death* had no power over Him. The Son was *the* Father's delight. The Father's heart was bound up in the Son. The Lord Jesus Christ was *all* the Father's delight.

Christ is in His presence as man and for man, as our forerunner and our way. It is so blessed to look at Christ as the *way*; it brings Him so near to us. As

surely as I have, as a man, partaken of the first Adam's nature, and the consequences of his sin, so, as a believer, have I a portion in the second Adam. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the presence of God for me. There are truly difficulties down here ; but I shall be with Him where there are joys for evermore. God will be glorified as God, but He will be displayed as man also; and, as in Christ, we shall share the glory. How gracious and truly blessed those words, "Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." He will be with His saints, and His saints with Him. They shall be conformed to His image; they shall be displayed in His likeness. We shall see Him, and we shall be like Him ; and now, in the measure we are looking at Him, are we transformed into His image.

It is our positive portion, and in communion with Him we share what He is. His delight is with the saints ; He entered into their deepest sorrow : and they shall share His joy and glory, as exalted on high.

How am I acting towards Him now ? Do I take all my concerns to Him ? Do I make Him the uppermost thought in all my need, in every exercise of soul, and also in my seasons of joy ? This is the way to learn Him, and to know the love that is in His heart.

There is no condition but what I may have Him for my companion in. He has gone into the fullest

depths of my sorrow. "Deep crieth unto deep," He could say. There is not a place faith cannot find Christ in. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." But am I going on in the world with Him? Are my joys such as I can share along with Him? Am I walking with Him in my every-day life? If I am in sorrow, how far has He lifted me up? If I am resting on Him, He has lifted me up, and that is my positive privilege. The heart that is cast upon Christ finds constant comfort. The heart that keeps close to Christ gets nothing apart from Him. (See Psalm xxiii.) If I have a question of want, I can say, there is no fear, "the Lord is my shepherd." Am I saying, I am in green pastures, but they will be soon gone? Nay; He makes me to "lie down" in them. Then there are "still waters;" but may they not be *shortly troubled*? How is that, when *Christ leads me beside them*? My heart is sorrowful; I have wandered away from Him. That is sad. But Christ "restoreth my soul;" and if I have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with me, and will comfort me. Ah! but I am in the land of my *enemies*. What of that? Christ prepares a table for me in their very presence. "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." How blessed it is to look at the Lord in this way! He is

our present and eternal joy. The time will come when all our sorrow will be over, but our Friend will remain. He is our tried and true Friend. He has entered into the deepest woes of our heart, and will make us the sharers of His joy for ever. Our blessing, our safety, our hope is all grounded on the atonement. Is there a soul reading this who cannot rejoice in Christ, who knows Him not as his portion? Is there one who is saying, My sin is too great to be pardoned? To feel about your sin is right, but to be in despair about it is quite wrong. You are virtually saying, My sin is greater than the *grace of God*. You will not dare to say so if you are looking at Christ. Is Christ come short? Is grace beneath your need or above it? Christ is the portion of every poor soul who believes on Him. The atoning work is done. The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth from all sin.

CHAP. XII.

JOHN X.

THE more we study the ways of the Lord Jesus, the more we shall find what is unfathomable in goodness and beauty. In this chapter what extremes meet in reference to Him! What power, and yet what submission! There are heights of moral glory, and yet depths of humiliation. He presents Himself as the Son of God, and yet he enters in by the door, and has the porter opening to Him.

The person of the Lord Jesus will always afford food for our souls, if we study Him; and while we shall be humbled by it, we shall be strengthened with the consciousness that all that He is, He is *for us*. The heart delights in Him as one it can feel as its own, and yet admire and adore.

At this time the Lord had been fully putting Israel to the test. Chapters viii. and ix. show us how entirely He was rejected. In the eighth His *word* is rejected, and in the ninth *His works*. Thus the result of His coming is, that He is cast out, and He says, "For judgment I am come into the world;" and because of their treatment of Him, they are culpably guilty. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now, ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." Then He as much as goes on to say, "Not one bit of it is in vain." He had come as He ought, and in the

prescribed way—"by the door," and God would own and make good his coming, though He was rejected and set at nought. All His sheep should come to Him, and He could say, "I have spent my strength for nought and in vain, and yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." If He had come acknowledged as a king, in glory and power, He would have had many follow Him; but now though He was the lowly and despised one, He would have all who really wanted Him. "He that entereth not by the door, but climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." All these great messiahs, setting up to be some one, (and there were plenty of them), were no better than "thieves and robbers." We see at once here who it is that comes in by the door, and the first thing we find in Him is absolute submission; and notice that this, though true of the Shepherd, primarily, is true also of all who follow the Shepherd. All power and real effective service will be found to spring from entire submission. There was entire rejection for *Him* as He said, "They came about me like dogs."—"My bones are like wax." It was a painful thing thus to be met—everything deepening and darkening towards death as He passed along, but He went through it all, and thus entered in by the door in perfect submission. Those who found Him must be brought into the same place too, for it was there He found them. See the blind man: where did He find him? In the place of his rejection. Christ is before him when they "cast him out." There is not one such poor sheep whom His voice cannot reach. He

meets souls just where they need Him ; in distress or difficulty, no matter what He suffers Himself for them. He went in by the *door*, and He was the true shepherd—not of Israel, indeed, for they as a people rejected Him ; but He is the shepherd of the sheep—of all whose consciousness and hearts were touched. He is “the shepherd of the sheep.” Does He use His power in claiming them for Himself? No! He is the submissive one, coming in perfect dependence on God. Thus when Lazarus was dead, He did not move until He had a word from God to do it. He took the form of a servant, and a servant must be dependent and obedient.

“To him the porter opens.” “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” He was here in complete humiliation, and this was His perfectness *as man*. God, His Father, does not spare Him the suffering, but He opens the door. As a fact He has come, and the sheep hear his voice. Though trodden upon by the goats in the way, He does not care for that, but goes after the sheep : and the sheep know that He cares for them—they understand that He has an interest in them, for they “hear His voice.” Why did He bear all the contempt poured upon His words and works, Son of God as He was? It was for the sake of the sheep. He was content to bear the trampling of the goats for the sake of the sheep amongst them. Then, again, there is perfect ability in Him to deliver them. He is not going to leave them amongst the goats. No : He leadeth them out. He draws their hearts : He makes Himself known to

them, and charges Himself with their safety and deliverance. "He goes before them." When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them. What, then, are there no dangers and difficulties in the way? With Israel, when brought out of Egypt, and over the sea, were they in no danger of losing their way? Yes: but there was the cloud to guide them. Was there no danger from enemies in the way? Yes: but there was the captain of the Lord's host. So now with His sheep, He leads them out, and does not leave them. He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him. See what certainty there is there. Persons may make this remark or that, but if I know it is Christ's voice, it is enough for me. "Let us go forth to him without the camp." It is not now for me to remain in the Jewish fold. "He *leadeth them out.*" But some will say, How do you know it is not your own will you are following? It says, "*They know his voice.*" The sheep know the voice of Christ, and if they have not got His voice, they stop until they have. There is *one* voice they know. There are plenty of other voices, but they do not know them. Sheep are silly, stupid creatures, but they know the shepherd's voice,—that one voice. The moment Christ's voice has reached me, it is enough: and this gives a peace and quietness in one's path that nothing else does. It is not great wisdom or great strength that gives this, but it is hearing the shepherd's voice and knowing it. If not the shepherd's voice, it is *dreaded*. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him." The shepherd

does not frighten. He gives strength and confidence ; and His voice having once reached the heart, nothing else is needed. This is when the eye is single. If double, a man is unstable in all his ways—not in one, but in all.

Never was divine love so shown forth as in Christ coming down so low : and it was because He is what He is, that He could do it. If Adam left His first estate, it was *sin* ; but Christ could humble Himself, and it was the perfectness of love. While He entered in Himself by the appointed way, He is the door—the entrance to the way for everyone else. They would not, as Jews, have been warranted in leaving the Jewish fold, if Christ had not come as the door into another thing. He was the warrant, and so with us. By Him we may come out and enter in and find peace and blessing. What marks the sheep is that Christ is his door. He is the door for the sheep. They could not say they were saved, because Jews, though they had God's oracles and much advantage every way : it was only by *Christ* they could be saved. Mark, it says, "If any man enter in, he shall be saved." It does not say, if they follow on well, but if they "*enter in*." There must be the real hearing the voice of the good Shepherd. If he enters in, he is saved ; and he cannot enter in without being saved. Then there is a path to follow, doubtless : but that is the result of being saved. We shall find it difficult oft-times, Satan tripping us up, the world and the flesh ; but the door is to go in and out by. There is liberty of heart. I can go out into the world to testify

of Christ, because my soul is in the safeguard of Christ Himself; not pent up in ordinances, nor in monasticism. There is food also, and they "find pasture." They enjoy all the truth of God's word.

Christ's sheep thus have *safety* too. "None can pluck them out of my Father's hand." They have *liberty*, "going in and out," and they have *all* the food God can give. They "find pasture," and what more will they have. They will get the *glory* by and by.

Then He contrasts Himself with all these false teachers that have gone before, and says of Himself, "I am come that they might have *life*." Not content with giving life only, He gives it "*more abundantly*." As in Romans, "They that receive abundance of grace shall reign in life; by our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we serve in life; then we shall reign in life. What liberty, what abundance of all things it gives, when we see that He is our life! He gives life more abundantly. Cost what it will, He is intent on saving them. "He giveth his *life* for the sheep," as though He said, I am devoted to you, and I am determined to get you out of this wretched place in which you are: I'll get you out, cost what it will. "I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep." He has so given his sheep *life*, and now He will give all that they want in life. (See the contrast of these hireling shepherds). It might be said, if He has given His life for them He can do nothing more. But no! it is not so with *Him*. See verse 14, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." There is not only caring for the flock as a whole, but

for the individual sheep—"and am known of mine." Paul knew He loved *the Church*, "and gave Himself for it;" and he knew also that He loved *him* and gave Himself for *him*. Then there is as true a relationship of love between Christ and the sheep now, as there is between Him and His Father. (v. 15). Further, "There shall be one flock, one shepherd." Jew and Gentile were to be brought into the Church of God. "*Therefore* doth my Father love me." He says, "because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." This shows the wonderful value of the work done. It is a motive for the *Father's love*! Yet however low He might go, even to the laying down His life, He could take it up again. He had power [title or authority] to do it; but He was in the place of obedience. "This commandment have I received of my Father." He had power, but He was the obedient servant. What a difference there is between Him and us! We could not take up our lives again, if we laid them down. It was in virtue of His divine title and power, as well as love, that He came so low for us.

Ver. 24 (and downwards) shows us the different ways in which the Pharisees heard and received His sayings to what His sheep do. Christ's voice has *power* in the heart, and that is the secret of the difference between them and the goats. And see the full security and extent of blessing they have in virtue of the Shepherd's title and power. "I give unto them ETERNAL LIFE." It is a life that is eternal, not that which is to be taken away again. Whoever

has heard Christ's voice *has eternal life*. It must be eternal life that Christ gives; for if one of His sheep could perish, Christ must perish. And it must be a *holy* life, too, that He gives, for the same reason. What Christ gives must be *holy*, for He is holy. "They shall never perish." A sheep is a perishing thing, but *His* sheep do not perish. We may fall asleep, or we may be changed; but this same life that we have now in Him, and with Him, we shall have then at His coming. There are two points in which this blessed security consists. First, Christ is *in* them, as their life; secondly, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." They are in His hand. The Father hath given us to Christ, and He is to do the work for us. The Father's love is concerned, and *He* is able to do it all. You must get some one more powerful than God, if you can be plucked out of His hand. The Father sent the Son and the Son has sent the Spirit, so that all three are concerned in our salvation. There is, then, salvation, and eternal life for the sheep; but how are we to know who are the sheep? They are those who know His voice.

Then we get the sweet thought that as the shepherd, He leads them all the way. It is hearing Christ's voice that distinguishes the Christian, though there are sorrows and troubles, difficulties and perplexities. Hearing Christ's voice has absolute authority and power for him. "Perplexed, but not in despair."

How wonderful that He should have thus come down to let us hear His voice! How precious *here*

to be taught that Jesus and the Father are one ! that the glory of the Son's person is identified with the security of the sheep, both against inward weakness and outward violence, as it is with the height and depth of the love of which the sheep were the objects. The Father and the Son are one in divine essence, as they are in efficacious love to the sheep.

