

LECTURES
ON THE
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

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LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT,
19 WEST 21st STREET
NEW YORK

BIBLE TRUTH PRESS
19 W. 21st ST., N. Y

Printed in the United States
of America

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
LECTURE I.	
The Son of God in His Supremacy—Chaps. i.-ii. 4.....	5
LECTURE II.	
The Son in His Humiliation—Chap. ii. 5-18.....	31
LECTURE III.	
God's House and God's Rest—Chaps. iii.-iv. 10.....	51
LECTURE IV.	
The Heavenly Priest—Chaps. iv. 11-v. 10.....	73
LECTURE V.	
Apostasy; or, The Strong Consolation—Chaps. v. 11-vi.....	94
LECTURE VI.	
The Everlasting Priesthood—Chap. vii.....	113
LECTURE VII.	
The Better Ministry and the New Covenant—Chap. viii.....	134
LECTURE VIII.	
The Priest and His Sacrifice —Chap. ix. 1-15.....	154
LECTURE IX.	
The Finished Work — Chap. ix. 16-28.....	171
LECTURE X.	
The Sanctified and their Worship—Chap. x. 1-25.....	187
LECTURE XI.	
Holding Fast—Chap. x. 26-39.....	208
LECTURE XII.	
The Many Witnesses and their Walk of Faith—Chap. xi. 1-10.	224
LECTURE XIII.	
The Many Witnesses, etc. — <i>Continued</i> —Chap. xi. 11-40.....	241
LECTURE XIV.	
Girded for the Race—Chap. xii.....	263
LECTURE XV.	
The Continuing City—Outside the Camp—Chap. xiii.....	281
LECTURE XVI.	
The Glories of Christ traced throughout the Epistle	301

PREFATORY NOTE

THERE is no introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and little need for any preface here. Where Christ is the absorbing theme, everything must yield to Him, and explanations are out of place.

The main themes of the book are the person of Christ, His priesthood and sacrifice, and the place into which He has introduced His people. Everything is measured by these standards, and loyalty to Him is the crucial test for all that would claim attention.

In these closing days of the Church's history, where there is a strong tendency back into that which apes Judaism, a carnal religion without divine power, and where the person of our Lord is lightly esteemed, if not absolutely degraded, it is to be hoped that this little book will serve to call back the thoughts of His people to One who is worthy of all their attention, allegiance, and worship.

May the Lord graciously use it solely to the glory of His own peerless Name!

S. R.

LECTURE I.

THE SON OF GOD IN HIS SUPREMACY.

“Better than the angels.”

(Chap. i.-ii. 4.)

IT has often been noticed that the opening of this epistle to the Hebrews is different from all other of Paul's letters—for I make no question, though I do not enter into it here, that the epistle was written by Paul. His usual salutation is entirely wanting. The theme that filled the apostle's mind and heart, the necessities of those to whom he was writing, all pressed so heavily upon him that it would have been out of keeping to have intruded himself, if I may use the expression, when he had such communications to make as we have in this epistle. Therefore, instead of the familiar name “Paul” at the opening, we have the blessed God at once brought before us. It is a message directly from Him, a message for His people about His Son in such a complete way that we lose sight of all instruments. Whatever channel God may have used to bring His message to His people, we have our attention drawn simply to the One who is here presented—the Son of God in all His wondrous, varied characters—in all His blessed work—in all that He is for God and for us.

What we have read we might divide, as is usual, into three main parts. The entire subject is the glory of Christ: His supreme, pre-eminent excellence above angels, above all creation. In the first four verses we have the excellence and glory of the Son of God described for

us. Then, from the fifth verse to the end of the chapter, we have His supremacy over all creation testified to by quotations from the word of God; and in the third portion (the first four verses of the second chapter) we have the warning not to turn away from this testimony of the Holy Spirit to the glory and the blessedness of Christ. A very full theme indeed, and one, I am sure, which can only oppress us with the sense of our utter helplessness, save as we are occupied with the glories of Christ, and mastered by that which is before us.

“God, who in many parts and in many ways spake of old unto the fathers in the prophets, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom he hath established heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, having made [by himself] purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much superior to angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.”*

We have at the very beginning the Old and the New Testaments connected together. It is *God* who has been speaking—a word for all those who would be tempted to put a slight upon the Old Testament, or who would in any way qualify the fact that whatever channel, whatever instrument God may have chosen to use, it was absolutely *His* message;—God spake, no matter how, no matter through whom.

The “times past” refer to the old dispensation, all that took place up to the coming of Christ. It is Christ who divides all history. Everything before pointed toward Him; and everything since points back to Christ, or, rather, I might say, points up to Him. Christ is the great Centre, the only centre of God’s thoughts; the centre of all there is in creation, in the history of man, and

* The text of Scripture, throughout this book is taken from the “Numerical Bible.”

all that the heart can conceive. Christ alone is the centre and theme of all.

You notice he distinguishes between the "times past" and the times present. But there is a very significant change in the word. He "hath in these *last days* spoken unto us in His Son." The "times past" were varied. We have the age before the Flood, and the time of government under Noah and his successors. We have the calling out of the nation of Israel, and their history is divided into various parts: the time up to the conquest of Canaan; the time of failure during the life of the Judges; the time of kingly authority and glory under David and Solomon; and then of failure, going on down to the Captivity. Then we have the time of restoration. All of these are the times that are past, and during these times God was speaking, through whatever agency, "by the prophets." The term, then, does not refer exclusively to those who were technically prophets,—from Samuel on,—but to all who spoke for God, notably Moses, who indeed refers to himself as a prophet (Deut. xviii. 15). All Scripture, as inspired of God, is "prophetic Scripture." In contrast with that, we have the present times, described as "these last days." That tells us unmistakably that there is no further revelation to be had from God.

And what further revelation could there be when God has given His own Son? We can trace a gradual unfolding of divine truth from the beginning, from the first glimpse just outside of Eden's gate, on through the call of Abraham—in God's dealings with the patriarchs—His revelations in connection with the calling and deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt—their settling in the land, and all their Levitical ordinances. There was a constant, increasing unfolding of truth. But now the Son of God has come. The Sun in all its glory and splendor has burst upon the vision of faith. What fur-

ther revelation can there possibly be? It is not "the last days" as they are sometimes spoken of in Scripture, as days of the decadence of Christianity, or as the time when Israel will be restored and God will begin to deal with His ancient people—though then Messiah will have brought in blessing. These are minor uses of the expression "the last days;" but here you have it used simply as marking the revelation of Christ.

If God has spoken to us in His Son, it must be the last that He has to say—there can be nothing further. And, as you think of that, it emphasizes what you have in the close of our portion—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" God has nothing more to give. He has no reserved source of grace; He has exhausted divine fulness (if I may use such an expression of that which cannot be exhausted) in giving us Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

God has "spoken in times past unto the fathers;" that suggests that the apostle is writing to those who could call by that name those who had gone before them. He is writing to Israel according to the flesh, to those who could claim descent from Abraham, and who could say literally, as by grace *we* can say, "Abraham our father"—for he is "the father of all them that believe." But here the patriarchs are spoken of as the natural ancestors of those to whom the apostle was writing.

There are two words here which suggest the character of all God's revelation in the past. They are translated, "at sundry times, and in divers manners." They might be more accurately rendered, "In many parts, and in many ways." God has spoken in the past in many parts; that is, the sum of His truth has to be gathered from various portions of His Word. He had to give partial revelations. From the very nature of things it was impossible for Him to give a full and complete revelation until One came who could in Himself embody all that God was.

Thus we find, in looking through the Old Testament, that everything is of a partial or fragmentary character. We learn lessons of sin, and of atonement for sin. At the very beginning, outside Eden, we see God providing a covering for our guilty parents. We find Him teaching the lesson of judgment in the Flood, and of shelter from that judgment through the ark. We find Him teaching His sufficiency for those who trust Him, in the life of Abraham. We find Him illustrating the fact that He is a God who fulfils His promise, in the birth of Isaac, and an unfolding of the precious truths of sonship in connection with Isaac's life. We find Him chastening and disciplining His people in the history of Jacob, and in Joseph we see Him revealing those secrets which ever, if I may say, struggle for expression—secrets as to the glory of His own beloved Son; for God was ever yearning to express His thoughts of Christ. —

And so we could trace it all through the Old Testament Scriptures. God was giving fragmentary revelations. He was speaking in many parts. You learn one lesson here, and another lesson there. And not only that, but He was speaking in many ways—to Joseph, for instance, through a dream; to Moses through the partial revelation of Himself upon Mount Sinai; to the nation of Israel in all the varied experiences of their history, giving them the truths of redemption in the Passover, the truths of access to Him in many a type and symbol in the Levitical ordinances. In this way He was speaking in divers manners as well as in many parts. Toward the end He is speaking through those whom we know as the Prophets, though every revelation of Himself is really prophecy.

Thus, as it were, God is putting before man a great mosaic. When you take up one stone of that mosaic, and study its color, form and position, you get but a partial view of the great picture of which it forms a part. It is put in its place, and stone after stone is taken and set in

its place, until you see gradually unfolding a grand picture of what God would reveal; but it is all "in many parts, and in divers manners" revealed to us.

But now, in contrast to that, we come to "these last days." Does he speak of apostles, of prophets, of special messengers bringing this and that truth? Do we hear aught of Paul, of Peter, of James, or of John? Ah no; it is all gathered up in one blessed, simple word which brings to us the full burst of divine revelation—"He hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son."

How much that means! With what unshod feet we should tread here! What divine fulness is there! God has spoken in His Son! The Son of God, then, is the theme of this epistle. The Son of God is the One whom God has made known unto us; the knowledge of the Son of God is what, in infinite grace, He has given to every one of us. Have you ever paused to thank God, to bless Him from the depths of your soul, that you are living in these last days? Would you change places with a Moses, who saw that glory which God was able to reveal in connection with law? Would you change places with Isaiah, who in the temple saw the Lord high and lifted up, and all the glory that could be manifested in a house made with hands? Or with a David, who foresaw One who was to sit upon his throne, and all things put in His power? Ah, the feeblest child of God who lives in these last days has infinitely greater privileges. As our blessed Lord has said, "Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them." There is nothing greater, nothing more wonderful, than the fact that all of us, all the people of God in this Christian age, are blessed with the full revelation of the Son of God, all that God has to say. Thus Paul, in Colossians, speaks of his ministry fulfilling, or completing, the word of God, for it fully unfolded Christ.

Let us now look a little at the way in which He presents His blessed Son here. The mind naturally turns to the thought of One who is revealed to us in the Gospel of John as the only-begotten Son of God. As we sometimes sing,

“The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature’s grasp transcend.”

It is utterly impossible for us fully to understand all that is in that blessed relationship of the Son with the Father. The only-begotten Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father through all eternity—who can describe the blessedness of that relationship? who can understand all that was meant—the equality, the eternal blessedness, the glory, the joy, the satisfaction of divine love in the Father to the Son, and in the Son to the Father? We get a glimpse of this in the eighth chapter of Proverbs. But there are mysteries here at which we can only look and wonder. *“No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.”* We cannot intrude there. We know that He who is revealed to us was the only-begotten Son of God through all eternity. But is it not an amazing, a blessed thought that the very relationship which He bore to God throughout all past eternity is the character in which He is presented to us when He comes as Son of God upon earth! How is He described for us here? We are speaking of Jesus, of Him who called Himself ever the Son of man; we are speaking of the One in whom God has spoken in these last days; and how do we know Him? Not merely as the Son of man, but as the Son of God, with all that that blessed relationship implies. God, as it were, would tell out to us, so far as we can understand, the blessedness of that relationship which He had with the Son throughout eternity. He is revealed to us as the Son of God. The form of expression suggests, also, that not only was the Son the Messenger of God, last and greatest of all whom

He had sent—as described by our Lord in Matthew—but He is the representative of God. God Himself was speaking in the person of the Son, “God with us.”

There are here seven expressions which set before us the infinite fulness of this blessed Person, which I will first read in their order.

1st, He is the Heir of all things; 2d, “By whom also He made the worlds;” 3d, He is the brightness of God’s glory; 4th, He is the express image, or very impress, of His substance; 5th, He upholds all things by the word of His power; 6th, He is the One who purged our sins; and, 7th, He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Christ, as Son of God incarnate, is the theme. It is as Son of God who has become man, the One in whom God has spoken to us so that we can hear and see Him and understand His revelation. But the language used to describe Him in that way is with a fulness which reaches back into His eternal glory, and shows us that in leaving that, He has left nothing of the intrinsic excellence and the power which belonged to deity. He is God, though revealed as Messiah, King of Israel and Son of Man.

First, He is Heir of all things—of this creation in which we are, and the whole universe of God. God is the maker of it, the upholder of it, the possessor of it. The Son of God is the Heir of it all. A son is an heir. You find that very beautifully brought out as to ourselves as believers, in the eighth chapters of Romans, 16th and 17th verses: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs.” Heirship goes with sonship. But His heirship is spoken of here before anything but the Father and the Son is mentioned. What a thought that is! Before God had made anything, before aught but Himself existed, in His divine completeness He had an Heir to all His glory that should be revealed; an Heir to all His

infinite possessions that should be created; an Heir to all the ages as they should unfold; everything should centre in Him; everything should be in the hands of His Heir. God has given it to the Son of His love. He is Heir of all Israel's glory in the day yet to come. The time is coming when Israel will be displayed in blessing in the place of her inheritance; and when she is there she will simply own her subjection to the One who is Master and Lord and King over His earthly people.

He is also Heir of all the nations. When they are associated with Israel, they will own subjection to One who is their Lord and their Master. He is over all things in heaven as well as upon earth, as you have in that wonderful scripture in Ephesians: God hath "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet;" so that whenever you think of Christ, you think of One who possesses everything that it is possible to conceive of. He is Heir of all things, visible and invisible — thrones, dominions, principalities and powers.

The next glory is that He is the Creator of all things. How could He be anything less than Heir of all things if all things were made by Him? We read in the Gospel of John, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was nothing made that was made." In the epistle to the Colossians we read, again, "All things were created by Him and for Him." The Son of God whom we know, the blessed Lord Jesus, who is the perfect revelation of God, is the One who has made all things. We cannot be too simple here. If He has in grace veiled His glory in a tabernacle of flesh, let it ever be our joy to recognize the Creator in this lowly guise. The word for "worlds" here and in the eleventh chapter is not the

one usually found in the New Testament. It means elsewhere "ages." But there is also authority for its evident meaning here. There may also be the suggestion of all "cycles" of time.

The next revelation of Him is that He is the brightness of God's glory, the shining out, the effulgence of His glory. God dwells in light unapproachable. The very brightness of that light dazzles the eye of man, forbids him to see, to understand God. The glory of God is the manifestation of Himself. His glory fills all creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God." Wherever His works are seen, there His glory is. Wherever God's creatures are, or there is a heart to appreciate His glory, there you will have that glory manifested. But beyond the outermost limits of space, beyond all created things, reaching off into the infinite, which God alone can comprehend, you have still the glory of God transcending the universe even as God Himself is beyond it all. But Christ is the brightness, the effulgence, or outshining, of that glory.

When our Lord was here He declared, "I am the Light of the world." God is light, and the Son is light. The light of God is unseen save as shown forth by the Son. There must be an object for light to fall upon, and that Object was the Son. But the light in Him was not derived, or reflected, in the sense that we can conceive of Him as being without it. "In Him was life, and the *life* was the light of men." By virtue of His deity He was the effulgence, the splendor of God's glory, while truly Man as well.

I confess that words sound feeble before such transcendent themes as these. The heart seems weakly to grasp these amazing thoughts, but let us get them clearly in our minds at any rate, for I am persuaded that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to glorify the person of Christ, and to set before us in its completeness that which

is ever before the Father, who alone can comprehend it in all its fulness.

More than that, passing on to the next glory He is the very impress, the very image of God's being, of His substance, so that the Lord Himself has said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." What a wonderful thought! The word translated "express image" means the stamp which makes the coin. The Greek word is "character," which suggests that our blessed Lord was an exhibition of the full character of God—His holiness, wisdom, goodness, love, power. All that God is—not merely in His ways, but in His being—is expressed absolutely by the Son. This would connect, in some measure, with the expression "the Word" in John, though that applies to His uncreated connection with God; "the Word was with God, and the Word was God." When He becomes Man, He is still the Word, the expression of divine thought.

He is next described as "upholding all things by the word of His power." He is the God of providence as well as the Creator. Here is no mysterious heathen deity that we believe in in common with all mankind. Would that the God of providence were more generally recognized as our Saviour and Redeemer too. He it is who upholds all things, who brings forth the heavenly hosts, calling them all by their names, for that He is strong in might; not one faileth. But you say, "It is God, surely." Yes, but God the Son, blessed be His name.

No one has grasped what the Son of God is until he has prostrated his soul before Him as "God over all, blessed forever." I would that I could put it so strongly that every soul would bow to the truth of it, the absolutely essential, perfect divinity of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. We admit not one iota of a question, not one shadow of a doubt, not one bit of tarnish upon that glory which God has spread before us on this page

We will not permit for one moment a question or low thought of that blessed Person who in grace humbled Himself down to our comprehension, and took the form of a servant.

Turning back for a moment, let us look at two occasions on which God declared that this was His Son. Look at the Man Christ Jesus associated with His people at the time of His baptism. Repentance had been preached by the faithful forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, and the people confessing their sins had taken their place in Jordan, owning their evil desert, owning they were under death and judgment. When they are all baptized, there comes One, Jesus, whom John recognizes as the One by whom he had need to be baptized, instead of associating Him with these people. But He, in spite of John's protest, takes His place too amidst a people who had confessed their sins. He goes down into that which for Him was an anticipation, a foreshadowing of His own death. He goes down into Jordan and takes His place in all humility and grace as the Substitute of His people, identified with them. And just as He comes out of those waters of death the heavens are rent asunder, and God declares of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The very One who to outward appearance seemed to be one of that repentant throng, who had, apparently, nothing to distinguish Him from that crowd of people who had confessed their sins, God distinguishes, and declares Him to be His beloved Son, in whom He found His delight. In all those thirty years of private life at Nazareth He was perfectly pleasing and acceptable to God, who sets the seal of His perfect approval upon His entire life up to that time: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Then look on to the mount of transfiguration. There you have quite a different scene. It is as though God would give His beloved Son a foretaste of that glory into

which He was so soon to enter, as though He would show in anticipation His thoughts of Him; and to the wonder of those with Him He becomes transfigured before them, His face exceeding bright as the sun, His raiment shining as the light; and again that same Voice declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

Now these two declarations of God as to His beloved Son show His thoughts of His entire life during His path of humiliation. You can link what you please with that humiliation—everything that you find in gospel history,—the Man Christ Jesus dealing with the poor woman of Samaria, speaking with the poor sinner in the Pharisee's house, ministering blessing and goodness wherever He went, and in it all you can hear God declaring, "This is My beloved Son." He was the brightness, the outshining of God's glory, the very image of His being. In all the relationships into which He came, God recognized Him and marked Him as His Son. And if we look up where He is now in that glory, we see Him still the unchanged, blessed Son of God in whom He has found His delight.

Let us turn now to a few verses of Colossians (chap. i. 15-17), and you will see these glories of which we have been speaking, gathered together. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." What a congregation of glories we have there! In the brief compass of two or three verses you have the fact that the Son of God is the image of God: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—he has seen God Himself. He is the image of One who could not be known to us

except in the person of His only Son. More than that: He is the Creator and the Upholder. The apostle brings before our minds not this earth and its creatures merely, but all things "visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, dominions or powers"—the highest things in all the created universe of God. They were all created *by* Him, that is, by the Son of God. More than that, *for* Him; and more than that, He is before them all, He is supreme over all. More than that, by Him all things subsist—He upholds all nature.

Now we pass from these glories which are essentially divine, though they are used to describe the blessed Son of God in His humanity, to the next wondrous, precious thought: "When He had by Himself purged our sins." God is giving a sevenfold description of the glories of His Son. We have seen Him as Heir, Creator of all things, the brightness of God's glory, the very image of His Being. What is suited for companionship with such glories as these? Is it possible that the great truth of redemption will find its place along with these wondrous truths? Ah, beloved, in describing these many crowns which are upon His head, in describing the glory which is His as Son of God, we find that the blessed truth of redemption has its place along with these. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down." He does not here speak of His being the sin-Bearer; does not enter into the question of His being made sin for us exactly. That is enlarged upon later on in the epistle. He just touches the great truth that He made purification for sin. He did the whole work of redemption, and He did it by Himself; not by an angel or any other agency. The Son of God accomplished purification for sins. Think of the companionship in which redemption is! Think of the blessed Son of God, "the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person"—then think of redemption. They are companion thoughts in this scripture. We can

speak of Him not merely as the One who made the worlds and who upholds all things by the word of His power, but with the same breath we can speak of Him as the One who has made purification for sins. And can there be any question that that purification for sins is just as perfect, just as divine and God-glorifying, as every other attribute, as every other ray in this effulgence of divine glory we have been looking at? The purification for sins, God associates with all the glory of His Son, with all that He is as creator, as upholder, as divine.

Lastly, we see Him going back where He was before, into that glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Returning there by right, not merely called up there by the glory of the Father, as we know He was also, but taking His place there in His right as Son of Man and Son of God, who has title to all things, not merely by His divine being, but as Son of God, who, in time, has accomplished the whole work of redemption, and thus takes His place upon the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Do you wonder that the Spirit of God, as He sets Him forth in this sevenfold lustre and glory, should pause, as it were, and say, "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they"? It is the name of Son. We have seen what that blessed name means, the Son of God. What a name—what an unfolding of divine character—what fulness there is in that! Is there any question as to the place of angels in comparison with Him, as to the place of any creature? Can we compare any one with the Son of God? with Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? There is a beautiful touch in the original which is not brought out exactly in the English "Being made so much better than the angels." It is not exactly that. We have that expression in the first part, "being the brightness of His glory." He was ever that. But now it is "*becoming*

so much better than the angels." Thus it is after making purification for sins, and after taking His place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that He is declared better than the angels, having obtained, inherited, a more excellent name than they. As you dwell upon this sevenfold revelation of Himself, do you not say, with the testimony of the Spirit here, He indeed is better than the angels, He hath inherited a more excellent name than they; and "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"?

"For to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again when he bringeth in the First-born into the habitable earth, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And as to the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire; but as to the Son, Thy throne, O God, is for the course of eternity, and a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou abidest; and they all shall grow old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou roll them up and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But as to which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?"

Now we pass on to the testimony of the word of God. We have here God's witness from His Word to the supremacy of His Son above angels. And here again we have the number seven, the sevenfold perfection of the Son borne witness to by the infallible word of God. I

might say that all seven of these quotations are practically taken from the Book of Psalms. Though one is taken verbally from the seventh chapter of 2 Samuel, nearly the same words are in the eighty-ninth psalm. But is it not suggestive that we have these quotations from the Book of Psalms? It is as though God would say that the glories of His Son, the excellences of Christ, are material for the eternal praise of His people. Whenever you speak of the glories of Christ, whenever we have Him set before us, whether as maker, as upholder, or as purger of sins, it is to call forth the homage of our hearts. These quotations from the Book of Praise are a divine hint as to the attitude of soul that should characterize us as we dwell upon His glories. We should be associated with the choir which, back in the days gone by, began speaking of the glories of Christ. We, in these last days, on whose ear the full music has burst, should ever join in the anthem of worship and praise to the Lamb of God, to whom every knee shall bow.

The first quotation is from the second psalm: "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

The expression "this day" speaks of time as contrasted with eternity. I should say that it was really "in this day of creation," in this day of manifesting Himself in the person of His Son, that God has begotten Him, has set Him forth. He is "Only-begotten," in eternity past; but when He comes into the world, when He takes His place as the Head of God's creation, He is the "First-born."

"Thou art My Son." God directly addresses Him. The psalm from which this is quoted speaks of Christ as King, and of the opposition of the kings of the earth conspiring against the Lord and against His Anointed: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," for has He not established His King upon His holy hill of

Zion? And then we hear the voice of the King Himself: "I will declare the decree." Why is it that the King in Zion can stand against all the hatred and opposition of the enemy? Why is it that even in the day of His rejection, when His followers were but a few feeble Jews, shortly after Pentecost they could take up this second psalm and quote it back to God as an argument why He should give them all boldness to speak the Word without fear? Ah, it was because that King in Zion was His Son. "I will declare the decree," says the Son; and then He declares it. "Thou art My Son," God had said to Him; "this day have I begotten Thee." He is in His kingly place as Son of God, and who dare array himself effectually against the Son of God? Who dare assail that throne which is occupied by the Son of God, of the Eternal Himself?

The second quotation, as I said, comes from the seventh chapter of 2 Samuel, but the truth of it is embodied in the eighty-ninth psalm. It gives us the same thought, only now in the reverse way: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." The first one had declared, "Thou art My Son." This second quotation emphasizes the fact that God is Father to Him. How blessedly did our Lord Jesus enter into that all through His life here! It was ever the Father. John's Gospel is the gospel of the Father. The Son lived by the Father; He made known the Father's name. How good God made these blessed words to Him: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"! It referred primarily to Solomon himself as a type of Christ. In all his glory and splendor, Solomon typically occupied that relationship which is described in these words as ruler over God's people. But how feebly he illustrated, how partially and temporarily Solomon exhibited this blessed relationship, which is only true of God and His blessed Son in any full way!

Then we have the next quotation, from the ninety-seventh psalm. He is now bringing in the First-begotten into the world. You notice the expression "First-begotten" shows that it is not Christ in His essential deity, but as Son of God become man. It is when He brings Him into the world or "habitable earth," His millennial kingdom. The psalm describes Him as coming into the habitable earth as Judge to take His place and reign; and as He comes and takes His place there, the One who once came as the Babe of Bethlehem, comes in the clouds with power and great glory, accompanied by the hosts of heaven: the angels are associated with Him in His glory. And God, as He introduces His King in all this glory to the earth over which He is to reign, calls upon all associated with Him to prostrate themselves before Him: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." There He is, the Object of angels' worship. Of none of the angels had this been said; nay, they are worshipers, not objects of worship. How completely that sets Christ as supreme above all His ministers!

That leads us to the next quotation, from the 104th psalm, the psalm of creation. It says of the angels, "Who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire." Here God is speaking of His works of creation and providence, and the messengers that He uses: they are angels, beings who excel in strength, and delight to do His will. He makes the angels spirits, and they go as the lightning or as the wind, quick and certain in their work. Blessed position they have, the place of exaltation as far as man is concerned; but after all, they are ministers; and—as we read in the last verse of our chapter, "Are they not all ministering spirits"—not merely those who minister to God, those who go as the rushing wind or as the flame of fire to do His will, but are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to us?

There is a vast amount of curiosity as to angels. I do

not propose to take part with those who delve into curious questions. But it is interesting to look up the various allusions to their service in the Old Testament. You have them in the life of Abraham, in the history of Lot, and in various other places, scattered throughout the Old Testament. In Job they are called "the sons of God." They are God's messengers to do a certain specific work. How they seemed to crowd out of heaven's portals when there was One here in the manger, to whom they would have delighted to minister! How they seemed to follow Him out of the heavens, longing to attend upon Him, as He Himself said when in the garden, surrounded by two or three poor, feeble men, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now call upon My Father and He will send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" How they would have delighted to minister to Him! but the time was not then.

But the ministry of angels since our Lord's ascension is simply that of servants, as in Acts, when the prison doors were opened for Peter by the angel of the Lord.

What a blessed place is ours in association with Christ, that we should be the objects of service and care by those who delighted to minister, when they were permitted, to the Son of God Himself, and who will come in attendance upon Him! The angels, then, are God's servants to His Son. But the apostle is not to be turned from his theme. He goes back again to the Son.

The next quotation is from the forty-fifth psalm, and there we see Him again in millennial splendor. He is coming to reign, His sword is girt upon His thigh. In Revelation we see Him as the Rider upon the white horse, coming out of heaven, and associated with Him the armies of heaven. Is He coming forth as a flame of fire? Is He an angel of God's service? Ah, of the Son He saith, "Thy throne, O God,"—the throne over Israel, the throne here upon the earth,—“is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.”

What an amazing expression! You cannot modify it in any way. He is addressed as God, and His throne is the throne of God, and it endures forever and ever. You see Him here as the Son of Man taking His power and reigning. But God says, There is the Man who is My Fellow,—Him whom I address as God. Then He describes the character of His reign, as it had ever marked His life during His humiliation: “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God”—and now comes in the wondrous truth of incarnation—“therefore God, even Thy God,” the One who had already addressed Him as God, now is His God also. You have in those words Christ as divine, and yet human, Son of God and Son of man. “God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows”—that is, those with whom He had in grace associated Himself, the believing remnant; or, looking over the whole history of the past, all the kings of Israel who might be compared with Him—Solomon in all his glory, or whoever else it might be, God has anointed Him whom He addresses as God, above all His fellows.

The next quotation is more wonderful yet. We have seen Him addressed as God Himself, and now in this next verse there is a quotation from the 102d psalm. Those of you who are familiar with that wonderful psalm will remember that it breathes of Gethsemane through the whole first part of it. You hear the cry of the Afflicted as He pours out His soul to God—One in deep distress, who is in the depths of anguish of soul, and is about to be cut off out of the land of the living. You hear Him pleading, as it were, with God, “O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days.” And what answer does God give? Had not the Spirit of God Himself applied these words to Christ, we would have thought they were a part of our Lord’s address to God. If we read it consecutively, does it not sound as though the

Lord was going on to say, "Take Me not away in the midst of My days: Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands"? But here we are told that it is *God* who is addressing His blessed Son. You see the Son, as you might say, as He in Gethsemane poured out His soul in strong crying and tears: "O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days"; and He waits for an answer. What answer will come from the Eternal to that One who is there in the place of obedience, seeking His will? to One who has humbled Himself even down to the very dust of death, and is taking the cup which He shortly will drink to the very last dregs? Ah, God addresses Him as divine: "Thou, Lord." Think of it, beloved, God addressing Him, the One bowed before Him there in the depths of humiliation, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands."

Oh, the wonder of it! The sighing One in Gethsemane, the blessed Son of God in His place of lowliness, God addresses Him as Creator and Maker of heaven and earth! When all that is about us shall crumble to nothingness, He shall abide in His eternal power and glory. Can you conceive of, or bring together, two greater extremes apparently—most abject need and helplessness, the plaint of One crying out in feebleness to God, and the response coming from the very throne of God Himself, addressing this suppliant as God over all, blessed forever? Ah, do we not turn with adoring heart to that blessed One and address Him in that language also? When you think of Him in lowly guise, shrouded from the eye of unbelief, His glory only visible to faith; when you see Him going about clad with sealskins, as it were, hiding the glory within from view, do you not feel like saying, My Lord and my God! even as Thomas did

when there was the witness before him of His deepest humiliation: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side"; and as Thomas sees these evidences of death and humiliation, his reply is, "My Lord, my God!" Thus ever faith delights to own Him, in His deepest humiliation, as God over all, blessed forever.

The last quotation is from the 110th psalm, and there we see Him back where it is His right to be, upon the throne of God: "To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?" Here we have Him who has gone down into the place of death and made purification for sins, now exalted, and Priest upon His throne. In that psalm, which speaks of His Melchisedec character, we see Him upon the throne of God, at His right hand, waiting until His enemies are made the footstool of His feet; He must reign until all things are put under His feet, and He remains supreme. Thus the testimony is complete, and thus we see Him given the place which is His alone.

"For this reason we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that have been heard, lest in any way we should slip away [from them]; for if the word spoken through angels was firm and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall we escape, if we have neglected so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those that heard [him]; God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Ghost according to his will?"

And now it is all this peerless glory of the Son of God which gives point to these words of exhortation in the second chapter, which adds emphasis to all that has been said: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should slip away from them." They can never slip; nor

is it we letting them slip. They are the rock, they are the anchor, the ground; we are the ones, the professors, who are in danger of slipping. Just here I would simply allude to that which shall occupy us later on—the character of the people to whom the apostle is speaking throughout this epistle. You will find, time and again, a word of warning, of entreaty, which is not apparently in accord with the truth of the eternal security of the believer. I say *apparently*, for we know that God's word can never contradict itself. But we see the blessed Spirit of God warning those who have taken the name of Christ upon them, and more particularly those Hebrew Christians who for the time being had renounced Judaism, but who yet were looking back upon that which they had left—upon the partial and fragmentary revelation which God had now displaced by the full glory of Christ. These professed Hebrew Christians were in danger of turning again to that ministration of angels. Perhaps a question has arisen in your mind, Why is it that so much is said comparing Christ with angels? Is not one reason to be found in this last part at which we are looking: "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast," etc.

The law was given by the dispensation of angels, we are told in Stephen's address. The apostle, in Galatians, says that the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, and we see in the sixty-eighth psalm the Lord in the midst of His chariots at Sinai, the myriads of angels. The angels, then, were the associates, those connected with the revelation of God under the law; and therefore, when He sets up the peerless glory of Christ, who brings grace and truth to light, when He is setting forth the Only-begotten of the Father, naturally He sets aside all those ministers connected with the legal dispensation. These Hebrews were in danger of turning back to the angels again, to that ministry which they had brought, to the law, with its forms and ceremonies, as the ground

of justification, and a rule of life. Thus this warning comes with special emphasis to those Hebrews who had made a profession of Christ, and yet who, perhaps, were not really possessors of life eternal in Him. It comes therefore as a warning in this day of Christian profession, when there is special temptation for men to turn away from that which God has revealed.

One realizes how feebly we have spoken of the glories, the excellences of Christ; but what is being substituted for Christ to-day? What is called religion to-day? Is it not a form of Judaism, that which exalts the flesh, the natural man? Do we not see all about us to-day, not Judaism, but that which is worse, far, than Judaism? For Judaism had at least the sanction of God when it was given; it was God's revelation for the time that then was. But what have we to-day, after the full sunlight has come in, after the glory of the Son of God has been revealed? Men going into darkness, and lighting their poor little tapers. We see them going through wretched forms and ceremonies which are not even Judaism, going back to all kinds of legality, which is not even the old robust legality which the Old Testament would give. It is a mixture, part law, part trusting in the mercy of God, and a confusion of things which God has made blessedly and eternally distinct. We are living in a day when men are in danger of turning away from Christ, the fulness of God, to that which is worse than Judaism could ever have been, even to denying the blessed person of the Son of God. We are living at a time when men are beginning to question whether there is any great difference in religions after all; if there is not a great underlying stratum of truth in all religions—each having its errors, but each having its truths as well, and all upon one common level!

The word of the Spirit of God comes with tenfold power in these last days,—in the last hour, we may say, of these last days,—and warns those who profess to have a knowl-

edge of the Son of God that they should give the more earnest heed to the things they have heard, lest they drift away from them. The whole of professing Christendom is drifting away from the truth. Men will preach and listen to anything—on industrial questions, social topics, political questions, anything and everything—so that it is not Christ; but that which exalts Christ, that which brings man into his true place as a lost sinner, *that* is departed from by the mass of those who profess to belong to Christ. Is there not, then, need for exhortation to hold fast to Christ? “How shall we escape” says the writer, who associates himself with them—how should any one escape, who neglects this great salvation? If the law brought its punishment for every transgression and disobedience, how much more shall neglect of the gospel be hopeless. Notice here it is *neglect*, not open hostility.

He then describes that salvation. The Lord began to set it forth in His earthly life here, for “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,” in His beloved Son reaching out to sinners. Then it was confirmed unto us by those who heard it, by the disciples at and after Pentecost; and then by the Holy Spirit God was bearing witness, as He is still bearing witness by His Word. As you think of the fulness of this testimony, of our Lord, of His apostles, and of the Spirit of God at this very time continuing to bear witness to the glories of Christ, we can surely say to any one who might be tempted to take up with anything that is not Christ, How shall *you* escape if you neglect so great salvation?

The Lord give us to enter more fully than ever into the glories of His blessed Son and the perfections of that salvation which He has brought to our very doors and to our very hearts.

LECTURE II

THE SON IN HIS HUMILIATION

"A little lower than the angels"

(Chap. ii. 5-18.)

THAT part of the epistle which has already occupied us presented Christ to us in His glory as the Son of God incarnate, as He was manifested to men. We could not know Him as the eternal Son of God save as God declares the fact to us; but when He takes His place in His creation He is declared to be the Son of God. The Spirit of God, in this epistle, is most careful to declare His divine character in all its fulness, as we have seen throughout the wondrous unfolding of the first chapter. That which is before us now, however, seems to be in direct contrast to what we saw there. If we saw there the jealousy of the Spirit of God in maintaining the divine glory of the Son, we see in this portion, with equal care, the emphasis placed upon the fact that He was man. This is the great "mystery of godliness." It is "God manifest in the flesh," surely; and yet that flesh is a perfect man, so that as we gaze upon Him we can say not merely we behold "His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father," but we can also say there is the "Mediator between God and man, the *Man* Christ Jesus." And the Spirit of God is not careful, if I may use such an expression, in speaking of the divine glory, or of the human character of the Lord Jesus Christ, to check the fullest thought of His being that in each case. When He speaks of Him as God, there is no restriction, no check upon what He says. You are in the presence

of your Creator, in the presence of the God of providence, and you must bow and worship. When He speaks of Him as Man, in the same way you are in the presence of One who has all the characteristics of an absolutely genuine man, apart from sin.

It is not merely that He was manifested in the body, that He had a human form, nor that He had a human intellect as well—perfect, imperial, human intellect; but He had also human affection. In other words, in body, soul and spirit He was as absolutely and entirely a man as He was absolutely and entirely God also. Faith must always be careful, first of all, to hold the entire truth, to receive everything that God reveals, and then let the Spirit of God harmonize what may apparently seem a contradiction. The great error into which men fall is that of shutting out a part of God's truth. The way to have the light is to welcome it all. Leave the Spirit of God to harmonize that which our poor, finite minds may but feebly grasp. We may be sure that it is all perfectly consistent with the divine glory. Our care is to receive it all.

So, in the portion which is to occupy us now, what we have distinctly before us is the humanity of the Son. If we might say "the Son of God" as to the first portion, we can here equally say, "the Son of man."

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the habitable world to come, whereof we are speaking; but one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou rememberest him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honor and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not in subjection under him. But now we see not yet all things put in subjection to him; but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, who was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for all."

You notice that here we have angels again. The apostle is not done with them. The first part was occupied in showing Christ's supremacy above all angels; His place there in that peerless glory which none of God's creatures could for a moment dispute. There He is, above them all; and when He is introduced into this earth, all the angels of God are called upon to worship Him. Here we have the angels again, but the thought is just the opposite of that.

The angels, first of all, are declared not to be the future rulers of this earth when it enters upon that era of blessing which is yet before it; for that is what is meant by this expression: "Hath He not put in subjection the world to come" (*i. e.*, the habitable world), "whereof we speak?" That "world to come" means the earth during the Millennium, the time when evil shall be put down and when the glory of God's kingdom shall be fully manifested. It is the period to which men have looked forward—to which Israel in the prophets was taught to look forward—with longing. We are distinctly told here that it is a time when the angels will not be lords and masters over it at all. God has not put that in subjection to them. On the contrary, "One in a certain place testified." We know that is in the eighth psalm; but it is very suggestive that he does not say "David," or even "the psalmist," because it is the fact of what is revealed that is emphasized, and not where or to whom it is revealed. "One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

That eighth psalm is a wonderful one, as to its position and its contents. In the early part of the book, the psalmist has looked at the great principles, and the themes that are to occupy him throughout the entire book. He has presented the character of the remnant, in their obedience to God, separation from evil, and med-

itation upon His Word, with the resulting fruitfulness, in contrast with the end of the ungodly, who, like the chaff, will be driven away in the judgment. He gives expression to their allegiance to God's King, who is to take His place upon God's throne in Zion, at which we have already looked in the first chapter. He then describes all the opposition of the enemy, as you find it in the earlier psalms (iii.-vii.). Then, in the eighth psalm, having looked over the whole field, as you might say, he looks up again to God, and proclaims the excellence of His name: "How excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies." Blessed and beautiful contrast that is—God's glory proclaimed through the mouth of feeble instruments, even babes! The enemy and avenger stilled by the praises of God from the mouth of infancy, as when our Lord entered Jerusalem amid the acclaims of the little ones. Then the psalmist goes on; his eye sweeps the heavens, he thinks of all that mighty creation of God: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" God has garnished those heavens, has shown His might, His wisdom, His glory, in those works. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

Well might the gazer, one of those babes and sucklings, as he took his place here in insignificance and gazed up into that infinity of glory, say, When I think of all the might and the wisdom displayed in that, what am I? "What is man,"—any man, great or small,—"that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man,"—man in the abstract, the ideal man,—"that Thou visitest him?" We might well say that of man as the creature of God.

In one sense he is one of the least of God's creatures, so far as certain standards are concerned. As we contemplate the heavens, knowing something of the immensity of space, reaching out beyond the uttermost bounds of vision, where the time in which light, traveling with lightning speed, passes from star to star is measured by years; when we realize the number and magnitude of those heavenly bodies, their interdependence and grouping into systems; when we observe the perfect harmony and order of them all,—we begin to have some faint conception of the greatness and glory of that Being whose fingers fashioned them all, and who maintains them.

And yet creation itself is an evidence of humiliation on the part of Him who is infinitely above all His works. It is in this way a foreshadowing of that wondrous act of humiliation which we are to dwell upon, when He who was in the form of God stooped to be found in fashion as a man.

Thus man's littleness is seen as compared with the infinitude of God's creation above him. Passing now to the heavenly beings, compare him with angels: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels." They are pure spirit, whose abode is in the heavens, and who excel in strength. They are not cumbered by the body of clay which would link them with the earth. Man carries about with him the witness of his weakness, his link with the animal life, yea, with the very earth below him, as well as his link with God.

But not only in creation is man feeble; when we remember that in creation he is a fallen being, that the very link that once bound him to God has been snapped by sin, and the only tie that could lift him out of his helplessness has been broken by his own act—what an utterly helpless being is man!

The psalmist goes on to say, further, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned

him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Again we are reminded of creation when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Everything was put under man's hand. He was head of God's creation according to His purpose. But if that were true according to creation, we are again reminded that the fall has come in, and from man's hand has dropped the sceptre which he should have swayed over all creation. Fallen man is not lord and master of all this creation at all. He can see his lowliness, he can own his degradation, he can confess that he is lower than the angels; but when it comes to his being crowned with glory and honor to be over the works of God's hands, if he is honest he has to confess that such lordship is in name, is only partial, and in the very instances when it seems to be greatest is but witness of his own utter imperfection.

For look about us to-day. We are living in the days of man's lordship. He has shown what his mind can accomplish, what organization can do, in the political, in the commercial, the educational, and the literary worlds. As we look about us to-day we see the sway of man over the earth in such a way that many would fain tell us that this, to a certain extent at least, is the fulfilment of his lordship over creation. But what do you find? Take man as ruler over this world, what has he done with his government? Do you find that it answers to the mind of God? Look at man's intellect. Has his mind led him into subjection to God? to obedience to Him? Is it not a fact that to-day, as never before, the world by wisdom knows not God? that the very wisdom which ought to be light is but darkness, and is shutting God

further and further out of the minds of men? And so in every department of life, the very greatness of man, his very power, is as you have it in that description of Satan by the poet :

“What seemed to be his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.”

It is only the *likeness* of a crown ; it is only the similitude of lordship. Man after all is nothing but a poor vain creature, and his lordship over creation is but an image, a reflection, a shadow.

But what has faith left in the midst of all that ruin? Does it say that the word of God is of none effect? In the midst of all the ruin and degradation of the old creation, faith sees God's provision, and says : “In that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.” “Not yet.” The world is looking forward to a great era of peace and glory for man ; but faith says, “Not yet ;” no matter what may come to pass under man's government, faith says still, “Not yet.” But what does faith say when asked about man and his glory and his rule? “We see Jesus.” He is the Man after God's heart. He is the Man of God's counsels ; He is the Son of Man,—that title which He took for Himself when here upon earth,—in whom all God's purposes centre, and through whom God will fulfil all the glory of that world-wide, that creation-wide dominion that you have in the eighth psalm. “We see Jesus.”

And has He dominion over all things? Are all things yet put under His feet? Jesus is despised to-day in the world as much as when He was crucified—really rejected by all except those who receive Him as their Saviour and Lord. But faith can say, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.”

We see the One who took His place in His own crea-

tion amongst men, those that were lower than the angels, not to help men out of their condition by merely giving them a living example which they could follow. He took His place lower than the angels for one distinct object, and the shadow of the cross hangs over the manger of Bethlehem just as really as it did over Gethsemane and Golgotha itself. He became man for the distinct purpose of the suffering of death. But faith sees Him more than as an incarnate Saviour, more than as a suffering Saviour upon the cross; faith now looks up to where He is upon the throne of God, and declares, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor."

Let us notice something very beautiful just there. Faith has its eye upon Christ, and it will not be diverted from that blessed Object until it has seen Him seated upon the throne of the Highest. One might say, after we have seen Him in His incarnation, that faith might have paused and spoken of the benefits of His example; or at any rate, after the death upon the cross, faith might have paused and spoken of the benefits of His salvation. But faith must first see Him back there upon the throne of God. Then, when He has taken His place, the place which God has given Him, as having accomplished His redemption work, faith returns to earth, as it were, and says, "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." We know the effect of His death, He having drunk that bitter cup to its very dregs. He bore all that death meant for Him, to be cut off out of the land of the living, to lose His hopes as King of Israel, to be deprived of dominion over the earth,—it meant all that; but above all, to have God Himself turn from Him and pour out His wrath and indignation upon Him! To the last dregs He tasted the cup of judgment, of death, for all creation.

I do not think the Spirit of God limits it here. It is

not a question of who accepts this work. We know that unless one accepts it, the value of it is of no avail. The sun shines for all, but the blind abide in darkness. For those who refuse Christ there is no benefit in the redemption which He wrought. And yet its value is perfect, complete for everyone, be they in multitude as the whole human race, they are welcome to accept that which has an efficacy for all the family of Adam. Whosoever will may come; and what a comfort it is, in holding out the gospel, in declaring the love of God, to have no hidden reserve, or think it may not be sufficient for every one. We can say, "by the grace of God He tasted death for every man." May it not be more than that? For this "every one" is capable of referring not only to mankind, but to all creation as well—everything in heaven and earth reconciled by the death of Christ—so that the very heavens themselves as the scene of Satan's rebellion, have been purged by that sacrifice. His death forms the solid basis upon which the entire new creation, the millennial earth, the new heavens and the new earth will rest; nothing to be shaken because He has tasted death for everything. What a joy, what delight it is, to think that our eternal happiness and the sphere in which that happiness will be enjoyed are both alike resting upon a finished work which God has set His seal upon by placing the One who did it upon His throne!

There, then, is the blessed divine answer to the question, "What is man?" And as you go out into the night when the stars are shining bright above you, and you begin to feel your insignificance in the midst of all this great creation of God; and when the memory of your own sins and the sin of the human race comes upon you with tenfold power, and seems to crush you, a very mite, into the dust itself, remember there is a Man upon the throne of God, above the stars, who is the measure of God's thoughts for you. When we ask ourselves, "What

is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" we can say, There He sits at the right hand of God, angels and principalities and powers, and all the works of His hands, made subject unto Him.

Ah, dear brethren, there is a theme to engage the heart, to call forth worship and delight, as you think of that blessed Man, humbled unto death, now at God's right hand, and He, God's answer to the question, "What is man?"

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the originator of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God gave unto me. Forasmuch then as the children are sharers in blood and flesh, he also in like manner took part in the same; that through death he might bring to nought him who hath the power of death, that is the devil; and set free as many as through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For it is not angels assuredly upon whom he taketh hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham; wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor those that are tempted."

We come now to an enlargement of this blessed theme, to that which goes into it a little more in detail; and if in the first part we have been seeing the preeminent glory of this Son of man, here we have Him laying hold in grace and love upon those who are to be associated with Him.

Look at the exquisite beauty and grace of this 10th verse: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto

glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." That word "became" means, it was consistent with all that He was, it was suited to the character of God. Let us see what He was going to do. He was going to bring to glory. That was God's great object. And whom is He going to bring to glory? Many sons. He is not satisfied to bring a few men to glory, nor even to bring many; but when brought to glory they are to be in eternal relationship of sonship with Himself. We might easily conceive of God redeeming us without bringing us into the relationship of sons; He might have given us a distant place in His glory; but God's thoughts are far beyond that. He will have a family of children about Himself. Redeemed children they must be, but children in all the nearness and joy of a Father's presence.

How was He to bring many sons to glory? It had to be a work so blessedly complete that it would place us before Him in all the nearness and confidence of the relationship of sons. He had to do it in perfect consistency with His own character, which He could not violate in the least. He could not violate His holiness in dealing with unholy men. He could not violate His righteousness in dealing with those who had broken every law He had ever given to them. He could not violate His wisdom, or any one of His attributes. He could not violate that throne of His glory upon which He sits for evermore. Everything had to be in perfect consistency with His counsels, His glory, and His purposes. But in redemption we see every attribute of God fully vindicated. In bringing many sons to glory God has glorified Himself, He has manifested His character, He has shown every attribute; and He has done it by making the Leader, the Originator, the Prince of salvation perfect through sufferings.

I pause to say one word as to any possible misappre-

hension, which I am sure would not be in any thoughtful Christian's mind. Christ did not need to be perfected in any way save as a Captain of salvation. We know that He was ever perfect; He was "that holy thing" before His birth. He was perfect throughout His entire private life; perfect in all His ministry; perfect in Gethsemane; never more absolutely perfect than when as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot He hung bleeding on the cross. He was perfect in every detail of life, and it is only blasphemy to think of imperfection in any way connected with Himself. Personally perfect, and yet He needed to be made a perfect Saviour; as He says of Himself in one place, "I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

He was to take His place as perfect Captain of salvation, and the only way He could be perfected as that was through His sufferings. I say it reverently, that our blessed Lord's perfection could have had nothing to do with our salvation apart from the cross. His perfection would only bring out more glaringly our utter worthlessness. He might have ascended up where He was before, but had He not done so by the way of the cross we would still have been in our sins. But the perfect Captain of salvation so perfectly wrought redemption that He can lay one hand upon the very throne of God and the other upon the unclean sinner, and pronounce him "clean."

Now this perfect Leader of salvation has identified Himself in perfect and beautiful grace with His people: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Christ by His finished work has set apart His people to God. That is what sanctification primarily means in this epistle. It does not mean the work of the Spirit in our hearts:—that is the sanctification of the Spirit. We have also the Father's sanctifica-

tion, as you might say, in His having chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world:—that would be the sanctification according to the purpose of God; but the sanctification spoken of here is primarily that work of Christ which has forever cut us loose from Satan and sin, and set us before God as His ransomed people. Far be it from me to say that the work of Christ could ever, as regards a true believer, be apart from the inward work of the Spirit. It is distinct, but not separable from it.

“For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” Here is another wonder of grace. The One who sanctifies us and we who are sanctified—we have just been speaking of our sin and guilt, yet here he brings these two together, the One who has sanctified and they who are sanctified are “all of one”—belong to one company, to one family; or, as has been said by those who are devoted students of the word of God—they are “all of one Father.” I shrink personally from absolutely declaring that I believe the “one” spoken of here refers to the Father, because that is not the general theme of the epistle; and yet there is no doubt that there is strong presumption that that may be just the meaning, for He speaks of them as His brethren. But whatever may be the full meaning of this expression, “all of one,” it speaks of our identification with Christ, who has come down into our condition as the Captain of salvation, taken His place amongst us and through death has brought us into the place He has gained for us. Therefore He is not ashamed to call us brethren, to take that title upon His blessed lips which speaks of the closest and most endearing of relationships. You remember, when our blessed Lord rose from the dead, that He referred to His disciples as His brethren. He said to Mary, after His resurrection, “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”

You notice here it says: "He is not ashamed." It is an act of infinite condescension. Far be it from us to turn to Him and say, He is our brother, as frequently said by the Lord's people, without a restraining sense of His greatness when they speak of the Lord Jesus as their "Elder Brother." No; if He, in the condescension of His perfect grace, can address us as His brethren, we leave it to Him to use that language. Faith ever stands with unshod feet and bows its heart in the presence of perfect grace and perfect love. We leave it where Scripture leaves it. The heart thrills with joy as He uses that word, and we worship Him and bless Him for the grace that has stooped to call us His brethren, yea, that has brought us into that place of nearness to His God and our God, His Father and ours.

There are three scriptures quoted which give perfect testimony as to this, in that they show that He has the right to speak of us now as His brethren.

The first is taken from the twenty-second psalm: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."

It is a wonderful psalm. The first part is occupied with the cross where our blessed Lord was made sin for us, and at the very depth of His anguish you find Him forsaken of God, persecuted by man, the dogs yelping out their hatred and malice against Him, His hands and feet pierced as He is nailed to the cross; and yet, in the midst of all that, after the cloud of divine wrath is passed, we hear Him say that God has heard Him from the horns of the unicorn. And so He dies. After He has finished the work of redemption, giving up His spirit to the Father, you find a blessed contrast. It is no longer one that is forsaken, nor even one who has cried to God and been heard from the horns of the unicorn, but a strong, sweet, mighty Voice telling out the praises of God in the midst of those whom He calls His brethren: "I will declare

Thy name unto My brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."

It is our happy privilege as priests to sing praise unto God, to offer up worship and thanksgiving to Him, but is it not wondrous to listen first of all to Him who is the Priest and Psalmist, whose theme is ever, as it was here upon earth, the Father's name and the Father's glory: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Listen to Him, the risen Lord, in the midst of those whom now He can own as His brethren, declaring the glory of God's name, and then lifting up His own high-priestly, mighty voice, leading the praises of His people in all the joy of exultant worship, pouring out His heart in leading the praises of His people in worship and in thanksgiving to God who is over all, blessed forever.

What association, what a wonderful scripture to show us our association with Him! What amazing grace—we linked with One who praises God, and leads our praises!

Then there are two other scriptures, taken from the prophet Isaiah. The second one is, "I will put My trust in Him." The first one emphasized our relationship, Christ calling us His brethren. The second shows it is the perfect Man that is speaking thus, He who was the perfect Man of faith. You will find in the eighth chapter of Isaiah that the prophet is a type of Christ, in the midst of ruin, when the unbelief of king Ahaz compelled the irruption of the Assyrians upon the land of Israel. The land of Israel was in a state of apostasy, and the whole of Immanuel's land was to be overwhelmed by the enemy, which comes in like a flood. "Therefore I will trust in the Lord," says the prophet, (as the Greek version of Isaiah gives it.) Faith—realizing God's purposes as shown to that unbelieving king Ahaz: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"—faith

can look the ruin calmly in the face, and, as the enemy comes in like an "overwhelming flood," it says, "I will trust in the Lord," and looks that the Spirit of the Lord should lift up a standard against him. So with our Lord Jesus, who was ever the perfect Man of faith upon earth.

The sixteenth psalm presents Him in this lovely way, as the Leader of faith. There you find Him declaring that His goodness does not extend to God; not from divine glory, but from the place of service He is speaking here: "My goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight." His delights were with the excellent of the earth, the godly in Israel, who by confession of sin had opened their hearts to God's grace. Then He goes on through that psalm to separate Himself from every form of ungodliness. As He simply trusts in God who is His portion and His cup, He can look calmly on towards death and say, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." It is faith all through; and the faith that Christ had, it is our privilege to have also as we pass through this world — He was a Man of faith as a Leader for us.

Then the third scripture emphasizes His relation with His people: "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given Me." That is also quoted from the eighth of Isaiah, and emphasizes the fact that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. What a precious dignity is put upon us! We are one with Himself, our blessed Lord calling us His brethren; and we have these three scriptures showing that He had the right to do so!

The children were flesh and blood; that is, they were really men. I call your attention to a difference of expression here, which suggests what is in the original. The children are partakers—that is, they belong to the

order of flesh and blood; they are simple humanity. He also became perfectly man. The word however suggests that He came into it from without, in grace: "He also Himself likewise *took part* of the same." He came into the sphere of humanity. It was apart from sin, of course, but He participated, associated Himself with man. He took not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham, of all who are, by faith, the spiritual seed of Abraham; though, as he was addressing Hebrews, the apostle might well refer to our Lord being, according to the flesh, of the stock of Abraham. He has come into that condition where He can lay hold of man.

Why did He come? Here we see it brought out in another connection: "That through death He might destroy" (or annul) "him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Here we have the deliverance of Christ's people through His death from all the power of Satan. Satan had the judicial power of death. That he got through man in Eden deliberately taking his word instead of God's. "The woman was deceived, being in the transgression," and the man deliberately, with eyes open, accepted all the consequences of being under the serpent's rule. "Therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," Satan became, in that way, the prince and god of this world, and had the power of death. Thus death was the judicial infliction of God upon man, and Satan was connected with it in such a way that Scripture says he had the power, or authority, of death. Satan in that way was the executioner of God's judgment upon man. And how he has used his authority! How he has held the fear of death over people's heads! How he has driven them frantic with terror, made them suffer, turned their religion into superstition, made them commit incredible acts of cruelty through the fear of death! Sa-

tan is master of man's religion, and you will find that most of it is dictated by the fear of death.

But now Christ has come, and has delivered from the fear of death. How? By dying Himself he has become the destroyer of death, has taken away its sting and fear, and thus delivered all those who were subject to bondage through fear of death. For the believer the fear of death is now gone; it is really only sleep. Could you lie down quietly with the assurance that you would never wake again, and pass into eternity? Has the work of Christ so effectually removed every fear of death from you that you could do that? That is what He came for.

Our blessed Lord has come and broken that strong man's power; a Stronger than Satan has come and taken away his armor in which he trusted; man is set free.

The natural man fears death, for "it is appointed to men once to die, and after death the judgment." A courageous man may not fear physical death; but there is no man so courageous that he can think of the judgment of Almighty God without trembling. It is the judgment after death which "makes cowards of us all." And it is this judgment which our Lord bore in His death, and thus removed its curse from us. Instead of our enemy, "the king of terrors," death has become our servant to open the door to our Lord's presence, to enjoy sweet communion with Him while we wait for the resurrection of the body. Even His own people in Old Testament times were in bondage more or less. Witness the prayer of Hezekiah when the message came, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." Witness what he says as he turns to God with entreaty: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." He pleads and cries to God that he might be spared. He was in a certain sense in

bondage. How perfectly has our blessed Lord Jesus set free those who were all their lifetime subject to bondage! Let us indeed praise Him for this.

In the two last verses we have the third truth which is brought out: our Lord passing through death "that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." I will only refer you here to the sixteenth of Leviticus, where you find the high priest went into the holiest of all and sprinkled the blood once on the mercy-seat and seven times before it. Then, coming out, he could pronounce blessing upon the people; though failing and sinful, God could dwell among them, because of the blood of atonement which was upon and before the mercy-seat. So Christ, "a merciful and faithful High Priest," has gone into the presence of God, not "by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, . . . having obtained eternal redemption." This is His faithful work as High Priest. Then we have Him also as Leader and Captain of our salvation, able to succor His tempted people; for He knows from experience what outward temptation is. Satan assailed our Lord with every form of temptation: He was tempted to show forth His divine power by making the stones bread, and thus to doubt God's care and goodness; He was tempted to presume on that goodness by casting Himself from the temple; He was tempted with all the kingdoms of this world and their power if He would only do homage to Satan; but in all this, and at every point, He repelled Satan by the word of God.

How our blessed Lord turned from all such temptations! He suffered; He would rather go on in His lowly path of rejection, misunderstood, refused, resisted, and finally to the cross itself, than accept all the kingdoms and glory of this world from the hand of Satan.

Have you this day had temptation? has some poor, wretched little god of this world been dangled before your eye? have you grasped it, and yielded to the temptation? are you tempted to yield? Look at that blessed One who in His whole life here ever refused everything not given by His Father, and you see the perfect Example, and One who has power to succor us whenever we are tempted. Thus as a merciful priest He comes to the help of His feeble people—merciful toward us, faithful toward God.

Our blessed Lord not only—in the language of the type—sprinkled the blood in the Sanctuary, but He has also come out to put His arms about His tempted, weak, erring people, to sustain us in all our pilgrimage journey.

Here we have in some little measure the blessed Son of Man before us. Is there not enough here to fill us with joy and delight as we look upon Him, God's High Priest up there, and bow our hearts in worship to Him?

LECTURE III

GOD'S HOUSE AND GOD'S REST

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

(Chaps. iii., iv. 11)

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to him that hath appointed him, as Moses also was in all his house. For he hath been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by as much as he who hath built it hath more honor than the house; for every house is built by some one, but he that hath built all things is God. And Moses, indeed, was faithful in all his house, as a ministering servant, for a testimony of the things to be spoken afterwards; but Christ as a Son over his house; whose house are *we*, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of our hope firm unto the end."

YOU notice that the apostle addresses the professing Hebrews as "holy brethren." This would link with what has just preceded, in the second chapter, where our Lord declared Himself not ashamed to call us brethren. It is not merely that the saints are the apostle's brethren, though the expression is in that form. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, the apostle is left out of sight; but he addresses those whom Christ has also owned as brethren. This is also suggested by the term "holy." It is a divine relationship which is to abide, a holiness or sanctification which has been secured by the work of Christ. We also see that in the chapter just preceding: "He that sanctifieth" (or maketh holy) "and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" so that the sanctifica-

tion, that separation unto God by the work of Christ, which necessitates also that work of the Spirit in practically producing a moral likeness to Christ, is connected with our position as brethren, those whom the Lord is not ashamed so to own. What a precious thought that is. And now, having settled it for the saints, the apostle at once makes use of it in order to press upon them their privilege and their responsibility as well. He goes on further yet.

They are participants, he had said in the chapter just before, as children, of flesh and blood; Christ also Himself became a partaker of the same. He became a sinless partaker in our humanity. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." For what purpose? In order that we might become partakers of His position, the place which by infinite grace He has by His death won for us. We are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Notice, too, what is implied in this wondrous expression, "the heavenly calling." The apostle is addressing Hebrew Christians, those whose thoughts had naturally centered about the earth. The Hebrews were always looking toward the promises of God in connection with the earthly inheritance. From the beginning of their existence as a nation in the land of Egypt, indeed before that, when God had declared His purpose to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it was to give them an earthly inheritance in the land. Canaan was to be their portion, and so throughout their entire history the measure of their blessing was their enjoyment of the inheritance which God had given them in the land. But here is an added thought, or rather I should say, quite a contrasted thought. It is not "partakers of the *earthly* calling;" it is not those who have hopes centered about Jerusalem and the land, "the glory of all lands," as the prophet declared, but it is something higher and better.

And how good it is in the Spirit of God, if He is com-

pelled to show to these saints that they had no further claim upon an earthly inheritance, that their hopes and expectations regarding the kingdom of Israel, and for Israel, were to be yet for a long time in abeyance, and that they themselves actually were to have no part in it,—how blessed, I say, for the Spirit of God to direct their hearts, their hopes and expectations to that which was their enduring inheritance, which abides forever.

And mark another thing in direct connection with this. What is it that makes their inheritance a heavenly one? Is the description of that glorious inheritance reserved in heaven spread out before us here, or anywhere in this epistle? It is not. But that which makes their inheritance a heavenly one is that Christ Himself has gone there. Christ, the One who is going to bring many sons to glory, has entered into His inheritance; that is what marks it as the inheritance of His people. They are partakers of the heavenly calling, therefore, not merely because earthly hopes have been removed. The removal of earthly hopes might make one a cynic, but will never make him a pilgrim, if that is all. Blot out every earthly hope here, take away all expectation of a portion, of an inheritance here, and give a man nothing in its place and you will see one who is soured, disappointed, misanthropic; you will not see a true hearted pilgrim with his hopes and expectations elsewhere.

Ah, to make a pilgrim, one who is looking forward to an inheritance, you must have his *heart* where the inheritance is; and, if we are truly pilgrims, it is because we have something more than the knowledge of an inheritance yonder; it is because we know Him who glorifies that inheritance, even Christ Himself. Now that is exactly what the apostle is saying here. He addresses them in these affecting words, as we have been seeing. He reminds them of their relationship, of their sanctification. He reminds them of the inheritance that is before them, and

then he simply puts Jesus before them. "Consider," he says, "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus." It is not here His official title, as is suggested in the ordinary text. It is just the person of Jesus, as you find frequently through this epistle. Consider Him. And that word "consider" does not mean, take a glance, but dwell upon, be occupied fully with Him—in His person, in His character and in His work.

That is what is suggested also in the words that follow: "Who was faithful," or "who *is* faithful" as it really is. We are not looking back at the past faithfulness of Christ, when He was living His perfect life as a man here, but the One "who is faithful to Him that appointed Him as also Moses was faithful in all His house."

I believe that this is a gathering up of all that we have had in the first two chapters. There we had presented to us the One by whom God had spoken. These two expressions here would suggest, I might say, all that has gone before. It is, "Consider the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession." An apostle is a messenger. An angel also is a messenger, but there is this difference between an angel and an apostle. An angel is a heavenly, a spiritual being and that alone; he is a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister for those who shall inherit salvation. An apostle comes with representative authority. He comes as an ambassador. We see the apostles connected with the establishing of Christianity, and we see them men who not only came with a message from God, but with authority from Him. They came as the dispensers, if I may use that expression, of God's order and God's will, for His people here upon earth. "The apostle" is in that way an official title, and so as to our blessed Lord. He is the Apostle whom God has sent forth.

As has been frequently observed, you have no mention of any other apostle in this epistle. It is because Christ

eclipses all other apostles. *They* cannot be mentioned where *He* is the Apostle. Doubtless, too, Paul as apostle to the *Gentiles*, reserved his title when addressing Hebrews. Christ comes forth, then, as we saw in the first chapter, as the One who is speaking now "in these last days." God had previously spoken by prophets, "in many parts and in many ways." He had been making known His will fragmentarily and at various times, but now "in these last days," He has sent His Apostle into the world. He has "spoken unto us in His Son." What infinite fulness there must be in that representation of God which is entrusted to His Son! What an ambassadorship indeed when no angel can be entrusted with it, but when it is put into the hands of Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory and "the express image of His Person," the One who has made all things and upholds all things!

In that way He is the Apostle or Messenger of God; but more than that, He is the High Priest of our confession; and we have seen what that suggests: the making reconciliation or propitiation for sins by the sacrifice of Himself; entering into the very sanctuary of God, as we shall see later on in our epistle, and thus maintaining fully God's glory in connection with a sinful and failing people. Furthermore, we saw that as a merciful Priest He has a heart of sympathy with His beloved people. Thus He is both Apostle and Priest.

Now Moses represents, in a certain sense, the apostleship of Christ, just as Aaron represents His priesthood. Moses was God's messenger, God's ambassador, His apostle, we might say, to go from His presence where God had revealed Himself in the burning bush, back into Egypt, with the message and the demand for Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and with provision to effect it all. He is the apostle who establishes Israel as a nation. Aaron in like manner was the priest who maintained re-

lationship between the people and God, through the sacrifices, and by the ordered observances prescribed by God. But these were only types and shadows. Moses and Aaron were but servants. Here we have the blessed reality of it; and what responsibility and privilege it is for us to consider well and dwell upon, to study the character of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus!

Now he goes on to speak of His faithfulness,—faithful in every relationship into which He has entered. And here the Spirit of God compares Him with that most faithful servant, Moses. There is divine wisdom in speaking of Moses to the Hebrew Christians. The Hebrews looked up to Moses, of course, as the great leader of their nation. In the ninth chapter of John, when our Lord had opened the eyes of the blind man, the Pharisees and leaders asked him how he had had his eyes opened; he told them of Jesus; and when they repeated their question, he said: "Will ye become His disciples?" Then they reviled him and said: "We are Moses' disciples." That is what the Jews were; they were professed followers of Moses, the great law-giver, the one to whom they looked, in whom they trusted; the one also, as our Lord reminds them, whose words will judge them if they do not follow them.

So here, the Spirit of God takes the founder and leader of the Jewish nation, the one who had ordered it all under God, and He compares with him the true Apostle and High Priest of the Christian's confession. If the apostle can show that the one on whom the Christian's eye is to be fixed is infinitely greater than Moses, he at once has loosened the hold which the earth, the carnal worship and ritualism of Judaism would have upon Hebrew Christians. He loosens that hold by substituting better and greater things than what they already had. He does that, not by speaking of some failures of Moses, as that

which shut Moses out of the land of Canaan, or in slaying the Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand, and fleeing when he found that the matter was known. No: but having set this great law-giver and leader, this faithful servant of God in every connection before these Christians, he says: The One whom you have to be occupied with is infinitely greater than this most faithful man.

He compares our Lord thus with Moses, as he will later with other worthies. Moses was faithful in God's house, but here is One who has more honor than the house, because He who builds the house has more honor than the house itself. The house of God, as we know, for Israel in the wilderness, was the tabernacle, and that house was set with bounds and barriers about it that none could approach except those who entered by way of the sacrifice, and who were qualified, as priests, to draw near to God. But in connection with the house of God in which Moses was a servant, there is something that has greater honor than the house; that is the One who dwells in it, or as He puts it here, He who builds the house has more honor than the house itself. Every house, He says, is builded by some one, but He that built all things is God. Do you follow the reasoning there, dear brethren? How striking it is! He began by speaking of Moses, a faithful man in God's house, and he passes on to tell us of One who is greater far than that, not merely greater than the servant in the house, but the Builder of the house, and greater than it. Then he says, as every house is built by some one, who built this great habitation of God which extends to the remotest bounds of space and includes the smallest and the greatest objects? Who built all things? God, surely. But what have we read in our epistle: "By *whom* also, He made the worlds." "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all

things were created by Him and for Him." Who is that? The very One of whom we are speaking.

What glories are set before us! We are brought face to face with God in this. We were speaking of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession—faithful to the One who had appointed Him to those relationships; yes, truly, but the One who made the whole house in which He has condescended in grace to serve—how much greater than Moses, and greater than the house! He is the Maker, the Upholder of it; He is Master and Lord of all! If He is the Lord and Creator of it all, is not He infinitely above every one in all creation? It is the truth of the first chapter which is re-emphasized for us in this point of view.

Now He goes back to Moses. He is not going to rob that great leader of one single ray of the glory that is rightly his, his only through divine grace. Moses, he says, was faithful; but he was a servant in this house. We may regard the Tabernacle as a figure of the whole creation, where the outer court would answer to this world, and the inner sanctuary to heaven itself. But narrowing it down to the tabernacle in Israel, Moses was only a servant who could come in and out with unshod feet, tread softly, simply doing the will of God as a happy servant, carrying out his Master's commands in relation to that house which was a type of the future blessings in Christ.

But what about the One of whom we speak, the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He a servant in the house of God? We have seen Him as the Maker of the whole universe. Ah, it is Christ as Son over God's house, and He, not as a servant, but as Son must be infinitely above the most faithful servant, as Moses was.

Now, by a rapid and striking contrast, the apostle goes on to apply this in a distinctly personal way. He has presented the Son before us as the Apostle and High

Priest of our confession. We have had a look at Moses and have seen the infinite superiority of Christ to him. We have seen One faithful as the Son over God's house, and now the apostle says, Do you know what that house is? We might have said, We have understood that it was the whole creation of God, and we have understood that the tabernacle was the expression of that in relationship to Israel. Ah, says the apostle, *we*, believers, are that house. "Whose house are *we*." Speaking of the tabernacle itself, you remember how in one sense it was a type of all who are in Christ; the boards resting upon silver sockets formed the habitation of God. Those boards, resting upon that which spoke of redemption, were a type of all believers resting upon Christ. More than that, when we come to the New Testament, we find that, by the Spirit, God has made His dwelling place amongst His people. In Ephesians we are told that we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We are a habitation of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; and every believer is a part of that divine habitation.

When we come to the epistle of Peter, we find the same precious truth though in a different connection: "To whom coming as unto a living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." There we have a spiritual house, composed of living members; and that is just what the Spirit of God would remind these Hebrew Christians of. They were not merely partakers of the heavenly calling; they were a spiritual house, if truly and really the people of God, already indwelt and occupied by that blessed Guest, the Holy Spirit, who Himself is the earnest of the fact that God's dwelling place will be with redeemed *me* forever. Thus even here the people of God are looked

upon as His abode, His house—a foretaste, for faith, of that eternal rest of God which will occupy us a little later. God comes down to rest among us here; soon He will take us up to rest with Him there.

And now comes what may seem to be a jarring note entering into this perfect view of grace. There has been no thought, up to this time, of any condition connected with it. I might say, in passing, there is never any condition connected with perfect grace, with what God is doing. Whenever Scripture speaks of the finished work of Christ, the eternal purpose of God, the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, it never speaks of a condition: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”—not, if we hold fast, but we *are* justified. In John iii. 16, we are told that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life, and there is no condition attached whatever; and so it is wherever pure grace is the theme.

But what do we have here in Hebrews? A mass of professing Christians taken out of Judaism, with Jewish hopes still lingering in their hearts and with strong temptation and a subtle tendency to go back to those weak and beggarly elements. They were being tempted to relinquish all the blessed realities which had been spread before them in the gospel of Christ. Now what does the Spirit do? Does He mean to shake the confidence of the weakest believer in Jesus? Assuredly not; but to establish it on a firmer basis than ever. Does He mean to turn the eye within to see if we are really in the faith, as so many have wrongly taken that passage in 2 Cor. xiii? Not for a moment. It is, “Consider Him,” look off to Him. It is not in this connection, “Consider your ways.” That is why he tells you to hold fast. And for the true believer it is surely not a very hard thing to hold fast our confidence. Later on he says, “Cast not away your confidence.” It is not a hard thing to hold confi-

dence in such a precious Saviour. How worthy He is of all our confidence!

What then is the object of the Spirit of God? Ah, it is to shake them loose from every false confidence, to stir up the conscience of any who are being tempted and to make them careful to make their calling and election sure; to make them cling fast to Christ; to see that they are not merely in name, but in fact, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." I suppose it has been true of us all that there was a time when we shrank from all scriptures that spoke of conditions. Well can many of us remember when we looked with fear and trembling upon this chapter, or at the sixth chapter, or the closing portion of the tenth chapter. We would lose all the comfort given to us in the intervening scriptures, which unfold the work of Christ and the grace of God.

And surely, if a single thing depends upon our faithfulness, well may we tremble. If our salvation depends in any measure upon our own faithfulness, then we are lost indeed. But the object of these exhortations is to stir up the nest like the eagle stirring up her young, casting them out of the nest and seeing whether or not they are going to use their God-given wings and fly, or whether they are going to sink to the earth. So here the Spirit of God would stir up this nest of Hebrew Christians, to see whether they are in danger of sinking down to a mere carnal Judaism and turning from Christ, or whether they have the eye fixed by God Himself upon the Apostle and High Priest of their confession. It is only false professors who are driven away by warning.

"Wherefore, even as saith the Holy Spirit: To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; where your fathers tempted me by proving me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was wroth with this generation, and said, They always err in heart, and they have not known my ways; so I swear in my

wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another daily, as long as it is called to-day, that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Speaking still to Hebrew Christians, the Spirit of God uses naturally Old Testament similes. He continues the history of Israel just where He left it. He had been speaking of Moses, faithful in all God's house, and now He speaks of the wilderness experience of Israel according to the flesh. What was it? In Exodus—in the main—we see what *God* does. We see His provision for shelter from wrath in the passover; how He shakes loose that proud persecutor Pharaoh and makes him let the people go. We see Him opening the way through the Red Sea and bringing them on eagle's wings to Himself. All that is God's work. And then we see Him spreading His tabernacle, with all its ministry, and the glory, which speaks of better things. We have it all well done and perfect.

But follow Israel's history, in the wilderness, and what is the testimony of God as to them? Again and again they provoked God, they tried Him, they murmured even in the land of Egypt; before they had got to the Red Sea they asked Moses: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Whenever they were brought into a position which shut them up to God, the unbelief of their hearts came out. We find that whenever the natural man is shut up to God, his unbelief appears. That is what the Spirit of God dwells upon. He takes this wilderness history and turns to the book of Psalms, as He has done over and over again, to gather from that book, very significantly, God's testimony as to His people. It is very suggestive; the first part of this ninety-fifth psalm, from which this is taken, is occupied entirely with praise: "O come, let us

sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it: and His hand formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."

Notice, up to that point, there is not a single jarring note. And why? The eye and the heart are directed toward the mighty God, their Saviour and their Creator, "the Rock of our salvation." As they think of Him and are occupied with Him, they can only exhort one another to make a joyful noise. Where God is all in all, where Christ is before the soul, and fills the heart, there is only room for praise. We would be a praising people as we go through the wilderness, if Christ Himself filled and occupied the heart. This is God's purpose for us; He would ever have His people praising Him. He gave them the key-note through Moses and Miriam on the shores of the Red Sea: "Sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously." That song of praise need never have died down, nor have given place to murmuring, or fear, or disobedience, had their eye been fixed upon Him. He had sounded the key-note for them, and they could have gone through the wilderness with a pilgrim song on their lips and the pilgrim joy in their hearts; and we might also do the same, did the heart but cling to the Lord, "the Rock of our salvation."

You will notice the transition when the psalm speaks of the Shepherd, and they the sheep of His hand. It is simple and happy work to praise, when we are occupied with the Shepherd; but when we turn to the sheep, there is need of exhortation. And so it is: "To-day, if ye will

hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." You see the thought, then, that so long as God in His love and grace fills the soul there can only be praise? but when the eye turns from God to man, there is need of exhortation not to harden the heart, not to be careless or forgetful, as Israel was in the day of provocation in the wilderness. In other words, if we are to enter into our rest, we must go on. It is not enough for a man to say, "I was converted ten years ago." How is it to-day? Are the things of God of continued interest, or is the heart absorbed in the things of the world? Why talk of a conversion of ten years ago, if it has no present effect on the life? There is no sadder spectacle than a heart that is hardened by grace neglected or despised—people who boast in what God has done for them in the past, and whose present shows no power of divine life. God keep us, dear friends, from a hardened heart, from despising the pure grace of His love. If we rejoice in His love it will always make us tender, and obedient. "The Holy Ghost"—mark, he does not even say David—"the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

That is the substance, briefly, of what we have in this portion. In the twelfth and thirteenth verses, the apostle applies this to the Hebrew Christians: "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." He is not warning against falling into some outward sin. Sin, as occasionally mentioned in this epistle, is not immorality, not overt acts of wickedness, but the radical sin that produces all other sin. It is that evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Unbelief is the source from which flows every form of sin. So in speaking to professors, what he warns them against is turning away from the living God and giving up Christ. This is the sin into which they

are in danger of falling. He says, Take heed, if you want your praises to continue, if you want to go through this wilderness journey with joy in your soul, that you do not depart from the living God; but rather exhort one another daily while it is called to-day. "To-day," is whilst the Spirit invites, and continues to this present time. It is always "to-day" until we enter the bright "to-morrow" that is before us; and "while it is called to-day" we are to exhort one another lest any of us should "be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

And notice that expression "hardened." Sin is a thing that hardens—the heart and conscience becoming callous, less sensitive. In the joy of first love, Christ fills the heart, and any thought of giving Him up is torture to the soul. Oh, who with the joy of first love in his heart would think for a moment of turning from Christ to anything else? But the sin of unbelief hardens. If you turn away from Christ, if you allow the world to come in, or, as these Jewish Christians were allowing, persecutions on one side, and the desire to be identified with Judaism on the other, to come in between the soul and Christ—if these things come into the soul, the heart becomes hardened. The sin of unbelief is a deceitful thing. It detaches one imperceptibly from the object of faith, and, before you are aware of it, the result is grievous dishonor to Christ. If he is a true believer, like Peter, thank God, he will be brought to repentance. If he finds that he has failed, out of the very ashes of failure and unbelief, God will bring in brightness again. The very overwhelming flood that God permits to come upon us, the crushing sense of humiliation and sorrow because of our failure, will be the occasion used of the Spirit of God to bring out again that faith which was losing its brightness. The very sorrow of our experience will be His means of restoring us to Himself. But as the apostle is speaking of profession, true and false as well, he shows the effect of

sin upon the heart to make them careless and cold-hearted; then to allow something else than Christ to have a place, until Christ loses value in the eye of the heart and they go back again to that Judaism, — to shadow instead of the substance; it becomes an idol now, in that it displaces Christ: they give up Christ. That is the deceitfulness of sin; and we, as true believers, need to exhort one another, not against doing this or that or the other thing merely, but to exhort one another daily to hold fast to Christ.

“For we are become fellows of Christ, if indeed we hold the beginning of our assurance steadfast to the end; in that it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For who was it who, when they heard, provoked? Nay, did not they all that came out of Egypt by Moses? And with whom was he wroth forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to those who were disobedient? And we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you might seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had the good news presented to us, even as they also; but the word of the report did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”

We are made “companions,” associates with Christ who has gone on before and is leading many sons to glory. We are made associates of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. The thought here is not that suggested by the usual version. We are not speaking here of our blessings *in* Christ exactly, but of our place *with* Him.

The next is really a question. The apostle was asking who were those who provoked God in the wilderness, and answers, “Was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses? But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them who had sinned, whose carcasses

fell in the wilderness?" The whole nation who had been delivered failed when their faith was tested. They had a gospel preached to them. It was that the land of Canaan was to be theirs, a land flowing with milk and honey. They had been brought out into the wilderness, but what do you find? Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. They provoked God by their murmurings. The great provocation was, when the spies came back from the land with the fruits of it in their hands in testimony that it was a good land as God had declared it, and the people turned back to Egypt again in their hearts. They refused to enter into the pleasant land, they despised it because of the great power of the enemy that was there; they murmured, they wept, but they refused to enter into the land; and all that race, (with two significant exceptions) all the men who were brought out of Egypt, save Caleb and Joshua, died in the wilderness.

Of course, it does not raise the question whether or not they were really lost, as to their *soul's* salvation, but it takes them as figures of those who never enter into God's rest. God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. They are figures of those who make a profession in this day, who have a gospel preached to them, not about Canaan, but about a heavenly calling and a place in Christ, but who refuse that gospel and turn back from Christ, their appointed Leader, as Israel did from Moses their appointed leader, and in spite of all that had been done for them, fell in the wilderness. They are like those who for a time endure and then give up Christ, the stony ground hearers of the parable, and turn back again to a carnal religion. Thus they fail to enter in because of unbelief.

That is the root of it all. The word did not profit the nation of Israel because it was not mixed with faith in those that heard it. And what is it that profits now? A pure gospel may be preached—the grace of God in all

attractiveness may be declared—one might so speak of Christ that we would think it would surely draw the heart and mind to Him; but more is necessary. It has to be mixed with faith in those that hear. Unless there is true faith, unless faith lays hold upon the Word, it becomes of no effect. One may make an outward profession, but that will be nothing if there is not a living, divine, genuine faith that is mingled with the Word. And so he exhorts them here and stirs them up as to their danger; if they are mere professors, they, like Israel of old may fall short of God's rest because of unbelief. Ah, there is only one thing that can keep men out of God's rest: it is unbelief. A man may say he is too great a sinner, and therefore he cannot be saved. He may say he is unworthy, and therefore he dare not trust God; but there is only one thing that can keep one out of God's rest: it is the sin of unbelief.

The most unworthy that ever breathed can have a title free and full to enter into the glory of God if they only believe, if they only receive the gospel that is preached to them. Profession will never carry a man to heaven, into that rest of God; but, if there be true faith, a laying hold of God's grace in Christ by faith, there is a clear, sure and certain title to glory.

Now let us read the next part that speaks of this glorious rest which God has secured:

“For we enter into the rest, we who have believed; as he hath saith, As I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath spoken in a certain place of the seventh day thus, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; and here again, They shall not enter into my rest. Seeing, therefore, it remaineth that some enter into it, and those who first received the good news did not enter in on account of disobedience, again he determineth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time, (according as it was said before) To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Joshua had brought

them into rest, he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth, therefore, a sabbath-rest for the people of God. For he that hath entered into his rest, hath also himself rested from his works, as God did from his own."

"For if Joshua" (not "Jesus,"—it is simply the Greek form of the word) "if Joshua had given them rest," (that is, when he brought them into the land of Canaan) "then would he not have spoken of another day."

Here again the whole condition of blessing, so far as we are concerned, is faith. We who believe will enter into rest. The subject in this part is the future rest of God. The apostle says that in a certain sense God's rest had been from the time of creation: "One spake of the seventh day on this wise, God rested from His labors." God ended His work and then He rested. In that sense, the sabbath of God began. But as a matter of fact we read, when our blessed Lord was here upon earth: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God's rest, so far as this world was concerned, was marred by sin, for He can never rest in the presence of sin. As one has beautifully said: "Holiness cannot rest where sin is. Love cannot rest where sorrow is." "Ye have made Me to serve with your sins," He says. Men make God labor with their sins. There can be no rest for God save as He would immediately judge the ungodly. If He is going on with man in any way, He must resume a toil compared with which the work of creation was nothing. God ended that work of creation and rested; but the toil He entered upon as soon as sin came into this world through our first parents, went on and on increasingly, and goes on to this very day. As we may say, God is laboring,—He labored all through the Old Testament; He sent His beloved Son into the world who continued that labor; He sent the Holy Spirit here at Pentecost, and now the Spirit of God is laboring. It is a scene of divine toil, when God is seeking to induce

men by His toil to cease from their sin and to bring them into His rest.

He goes on further to David's time. Joshua had brought them into the land of Canaan; he says if Joshua had given the people rest, there would have been the accomplishment of God's purpose. But away on in David's time, who was king of Israel, the people still had not rest. Trace their history through, they have never had true and genuine rest. What is the result of it? "There remaineth, therefore, a rest," (a keeping of sabbath) "for the people of God." What is that rest? It is not the rest that comes through believing in Jesus. When our Lord said: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," that is the foretaste of this rest, in the soul. But the keeping of sabbath for the people of God, that remains where Christ is, that is the final rest; and he that enters into that rest not only ceases from his work for salvation, but he ceases from all work. He ceases from toil, in the sense of it being toil; for though activity and service will continue through eternity, it will never mar the sabbatic stillness of that blessed place where there is no sin and therefore no toil in that sense of the word.

How significant it is that God imposed toil upon man when sin came into the world! It was in the sweat of his brow that man was to earn his bread. At first he was put there to dress and to keep the garden, but the bitterness of service and toil was not there. So in that heavenly Paradise, the rest of God into which we enter, there will be service, there will be ministry throughout eternity; but no weariness, no toil, no witness of the presence of sin.

That rest remains. How are we going to enter into it? "We who believe do enter into rest." Is that what is before us? Is that the living, blessed reality that is before us *now*—the rest of God? The rest where sin never can come and which it never can mar?

Oh, we know what it is to have rest in believing in Jesus here; we know something, too, of what it is to have rest in bearing His light and easy yoke; but why do we groan? "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." Why these sighs and groans?

We will not get the full thought of this rest until we see that it is primarily God's, and not ours. A perfect Being can only rest where all is in accord with His nature. Thus even the first creation was completed and all pronounced "very good" before God rested. So in the new creation. All must answer to the divine thought. Sin must be eternally banished; evil in all its forms obliterated. The results of sin too—the sufferings, sorrows, woes of life, and death "the last enemy," must be done away. All, too, must have the stamp of permanence, in contrast with the "change and decay" which prevail now.

All the perfections of God's being can then survey with delight His wide creation—the heavens nevermore to be disturbed in their harmony, or stained with the pollution of Satan's presence; the heavenly city the Bride, and the Lamb its light and glory; the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness—all will be the object of God's supreme satisfaction. Again will those words "very good" be spoken, and God Himself will cease from His labors.

The work of Christ is the eternal basis of this rest. There the righteousness of God was glorified and every attribute of the divine nature. That is why, after completing His work, our Lord sat down. He rests, waiting till His enemies are put beneath His feet. The final rest is the outcome of that accomplished work, and in spirit we can enjoy it now, though surrounded by so much that mars our outward rest.

But, dear brethren, we are made for God's rest, and until we enter into the sabbath of our God, we will be a weary people. We are in the wilderness; the brightest

scenes of earth—nay I will not dishonor Christian life by speaking of earth's brightness—the joys of communion, the joys of fellowship one with another, are not these foretastes broken into or disturbed by the malice of the enemy? Is not the divided state of the people of God at present, and the unrest we all deplore, a witness that we are in the wilderness and have not entered into the rest of God? We are waiting for that rest, we are looking forward to that. Let us exhort one another that we do not settle down in our souls to any rest short of that eternal rest of God which He has prepared for us. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God."

"Rest, Lord, in serving Thee,
As none have served below;
Oh, through that blest eternity
What tides of praise shall flow!"

LECTURE IV

THE HEAVENLY PRIEST

“Called of God as was Aaron”

(Chaps. iv. 11-v. 10.)

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, lest any one fall after the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and effective, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is not a creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid bare unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

WE will dwell now on the close of that parenthesis which has already occupied us—the exhortation based upon the fact that Christ was “Apostle and High Priest of our confession,” and Son over the house of God, and that His people were His house if they continued to hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of their hope stedfast unto the end. This led to that which we find constantly throughout this epistle, a needful exhortation to those whom he is addressing, that they should be stirred up to lay hold of the truths which are being presented.

In concluding this exhortation, we come to the words we have read, “Let us labor.” It is not labor *for* the rest, but be in earnest, be zealous, be sincere, “to enter into that rest,” lest any of you, who make a profession of Christianity,—especially those among the Hebrew professing Christians, whose constant temptation was to turn back to an earthly religion and to worldly ordinances,—

lest any of you should "fall after the same example of unbelief." Then he shows what this word of God is, that he had been applying to their hearts and consciences. He had quoted from the ninety-fifth psalm, just one passage; we see how searching it is, how it reaches not merely to them, but how it also applies to our own condition, our own need, and our own dangers.

The apostle says, This word of God which I have been quoting is "living and powerful." The scripture which he had quoted for the special need, if they received it aright, would act upon conscience and heart and guard them from danger. That is ever the way with the word of God. It is "living and powerful," or operative, "sharper than any two-edged sword." What a comfort it is that we are handling not the thoughts of man, or his opinions, but we are dealing with God, and God dealing with us by His Word! How solemn and searching it is! It is not a mere letter; it is that which is inspired, actuated by a living Spirit—the word of God, given by Him, used by Him, applied by Him! Here is our confidence when we come to speak of God's holy word. It is not the word of man, but "as it is in truth the word of God, who trieth the hearts." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Now that is the word of God—living, operative. Ah, the dust may gather upon your Bibles and upon your hearts, but that is the living Word, and wherever it has an entrance it does its work, it shows its power. How wide-reaching that work is in conviction, which seems to be the main thought in this connection. How all the thoughts of the sinner's heart are laid bare by the word of God! All his armor wherein he trusted is taken away! The bow drawn at a venture pierces between the joints of the harness, and all the self-righteousness, all the indifference and the pride of man, must fall before

this living, energetic Word. It is "sharper than any two-edged sword."

We read of our blessed Lord that "a sharp, two-edged sword proceeded out of His mouth" when John saw Him, as in the beginning of Revelation; and at the close again, when the "sharp sword" of the Spirit, which is the word of God, proceeds out of His month. A two-edged sword cuts in every direction, not merely those who are grossly and obviously immoral, nor only those who in the sight of men are sinners, but this sword cuts also those who in their pride and morality despise others, and think they have no need of God's mercy.

If God draws the sword here to-night, it is to declare that all are sinners, that there is not one here but is a lost sinner before God, if he has not found His way of salvation. Apply this Word to the saint of God, it searches not merely his outward life, it corrects not merely certain things that he may do, but it searches also his inward thoughts, as we read here. It is not merely what I do outwardly, but "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." We are very apt to make distinctions in our lives, to divide them; a certain part is secular, another part religious. The sharp two-edged sword of God's word cuts in both directions. It shows a man that he cannot be for God on one day of the week and for self or the world on the other. He must be altogether for Him.

We may seek to apply it to other people; we sit in judgment on others, upon our fellow Christians, it may be upon the men of the world, but "thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" The sword of the Spirit cuts not merely those whose faults we can see, but it cuts us as well. How solemnly, in what dependence upon God, should we take up an instrument like that, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"!

Let us speak a little further of this searching, penetrating character of the word of God. Man usually speaks of himself as having a soul and body as if there were but two parts to him. The word of God searches down deeper than that; it divides asunder between soul and spirit, those two departments of his being which are both immaterial. The soul has to do with his affections, his appetites, his desires,—all that which he has, in a greater degree, but still in common with the lower orders of creation,—all that has to do with the emotions, the feelings, the sensibilities. The spirit, on the other hand, has to do with the higher faculties, the mind, the intellect, the conscience. The word of God comes in and divides between these two. We little realize how often people confound feelings with religion. If there are those here tonight who are unsaved, it is astonishing how many of them would describe their religious thoughts by their emotions. They feel happy, and that is their idea of being religious; or, if they are in a sense under conviction of sin, they are afraid to accept the free grace of God because they do not *feel* as if they were worthy, or as if they were saved. How constantly are the feelings put in the place of the conscience and the higher intellect which God has given man!

Now the word of God pierces “to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” You may be moved even to tears. That is no sign that you are born of God. Your emotions may be stirred. You may have the deepest kind of gratitude, as you think; your whole being may seem to be bowed as the trees of the wood are bowed by the breeze, and all that may simply be partial, external. The word of God pierces down between all that emotion, and sees whether the conscience, whether the mind has bowed in submission to the authority of God’s truth; whether the conscience has been purged by the blood of Christ, whether faith has accepted the free gift of God.

Again, he says, it pierces to the dividing asunder even of "the joints and the marrow." Here is an illustration taken from the body. The joints are what enable our body to exert its outward activities. If the body were altogether rigid, there could be no motion, no activity. The joints are thus connected with the outward expression of things. The marrow, on the contrary, is that which is within. It is the very essence, the very centre of man's physical being. Here again the word of God pierces, and distinguishes between the outward form and inward state. It shows a man what he truly is. And so it is "a discerner" (a judge) "of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I find here in the original a word which is rather commonly used. It is the word "critic." We hear of a "higher critic" and "higher criticism"—men sitting in judgment upon the word of God and declaring what of it they will receive and what they will reject. Here is a Critic; not a "higher," but the *highest* critic which sits in judgment upon men. It is not we who judge the Word, but the Word that judges *us*. It comes to ask no favors, no authorization of men. God's word comes from Him, as judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Our thoughts are shown by the word of God. It discerns the very intents, emotions, desires of our life—they are laid bare by this holy Word!

Do you say, According to this, you are putting the Bible in the place of God? Verily so! Nay; rather the Bible is but God's speech. It is God Himself speaking; the next clause shows us that: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight." We would say, "in *its* sight," to preserve the connection. Ah, no; the word of God, the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart, brings us into the presence of God: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in *His* sight."

That is what the woman of Samaria found at the well. Here was a Stranger, speaking to her and telling her all

things that ever she did. It was the word of God searching heart and conscience, discerning the thoughts and intents of her heart. What was the effect of it? It brought her into the presence of the Son of God Himself: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid bare," as the word is, "exposed," the outward covering taken off, all unreality and all that will not stand the test of God's truth laid bare "to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Do we realize that we have to do with the living God?

What emphasis this gives to the exhortations the apostle had been giving the Hebrews in the part we have just gone over! How it showed that their hearts and consciences should be exposed to the light and action of that Word; and if there was reality of faith in them, to lay fresh hold upon the precious things they had received. And if they were but mere professors, how it should have stirred them up to a sense of their lost condition, and now to accept the Christ of God! That, too, should be the effect of the word of God upon us at all times. It should cut off all that is unreal and cast us afresh upon the blessed grace of God which we ever find in Christ toward us.

Now that is what is brought out in the next portion that we read. I am sure you will mark the blessed and beautiful connection with what we have just been looking at. The Word has been plowing up heart and conscience. It has been dividing between the joints and the marrow, and showing us all the secrets of our hearts in His presence, and one feels utterly worthless and helpless, feels his nothingness. What is he to do? Ah, let us hear what God provides for those who have been acted upon by His living Word:

"Having therefore a great high priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confes-

sion. For we have not a high priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities, but one in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin. Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help." .

Here is God's provision for a people who realize their feebleness, and upon whom His Word has had its proper effect. He turns them back now to the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ. He needed to stir them up to hold fast the confession of their faith without wavering. Now that they are stirred up, they can turn their thoughts back to Christ. We have already had our blessed Lord presented as priest in two passages: the first of them showed Him as having made reconciliation, or propitiation, for sins, and, as having suffered under temptation, able to succor those who are tempted. In the second passage we saw Him as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, and we partakers of the heavenly calling. That suggested the thought that we enter upon here.

It is very beautiful to see how the Spirit of God develops and elaborates the precious truth of Christ's priesthood from the smallest germ until we have the full image of Him in all His glory and beauty in the central portion of our epistle.

Here we have a most important step in connection with Him. He is a great High Priest. To an Israelite this would contrast Him with all other high priests. If you had asked a Hebrew who was the great high priest, he would have said, Aaron was the first, and, as directly called of God, had preeminence over all others. But in this portion we are distinctly told of One who is beyond Aaron, infinitely greater than he. The greatness of His high priesthood makes Him stand out in distinction from all priests who were taken from among men. Then, as to where He is, the sanctuary in which He ministers, He

has passed, not merely "*into* the heavens," but "*through* the heavens." This imagery is taken from the tabernacle, as we have been already seeing. There we had the court in which the altar of burnt offering and the laver were; then, passing through the first curtain, you were in the holy place, with its various articles of furniture; then the veil leading into the holiest of all, into which the high priest entered only once a year.

In this earthly sanctuary the priests' main service was in the court, around the altar of burnt offering, or else in the holy place. The high priest only entered "the holiest," where the mercy-seat was, once a year, under a cloud of incense, and not without blood.

But here is a great high priest who entered in—where? Not into sanctuaries made with hands, but into heaven itself, and He has passed through the heavens. The heaven of the atmosphere above us, in which the birds fly and the clouds of heaven float, is what we may call the first heaven. Above that is the starry heaven, the firmament which showeth His handiwork; but far as eye can reach, as far as telescope can discover the most distant heavenly bodies, beyond even the reach of our thoughts, our great High Priest has passed through all the outer courts into the very presence, into the very sanctuary of God, where the throne of God itself is. "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" (Eph. iv. 9, 10).

There He is our great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, into the very presence of God. Thus we see Him contrasted with all other priests; and, as to the place where He ministers, heaven itself, the very presence of God. Now we have His person brought before us—"Jesus, the Son of God." "Jesus" describes

Him as the Man upon earth,—His human name,—the Jesus who walked this earth, who went about doing good, who went to Calvary and there laid down His life a sacrifice for sin. But this Man, Jesus, is the Son of God. God has marked Him out, as we saw in our first address, as Son of God by a sevenfold testimony of Scripture. Here you have not merely a wondrous man, but the divine Son of God made flesh, who has accomplished redemption for us.

As you think of Him, of this Priest passing into the very presence of the ineffable glory of God, I ask, Is there not divine fitness in the exhortation, "Let us hold fast our confession"? Tell me, dear fellow believer, are you in the least tempted to give up this blessed High Priest?—tempted to give up the Son of God? What would you accept in exchange for Christ? Were you offered all the wealth of this world, position and honor, power, long life,—everything that your heart could conceive,—and you were asked to give up Christ, would you not turn with contempt, with indignation, with horror, from the very suggestion of it? Oh, I am sure our hearts respond to what Peter said when our Lord asked of His disciples, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

"Were the vast world **our own**,
 With all its varied **store** ;
 And Thou, Lord Jesus, wert **unknown**,
 We still were poor."

Oh, beloved, our souls ring with the echo of this blessed exhortation! We do, we will, by God's grace, hold fast to our confession, to the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, the Son of God.

But we are a feeble people, a tempted people, a people who are passing through the wilderness, beset with snares, temptations, difficulties, on every side. We make a great mistake if we belittle Satan's power. We make a great

mistake—as I am sure your experience will bear me out—if we belittle the attractiveness and the allurements of the world. Who has not felt its chilling, blighting influence? Who has not felt the need of being doubly armed against all its attractions? And when we come to its trials, to the difficulties of the way, to the manifold assaults of the enemy, who has not felt the need of a power greater far than even the power of his own love to the Lord Jesus?

And so He is presented to us not merely as the High Priest who has gone above, but as One whose infinite, tender sympathy is ever engaged on our behalf. This is exquisitely beautiful. We can only look at it now; we can meditate upon it to the joy of our hearts at our pleasure. Here we have, not merely the great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, but we have One who is touched, or, as he puts it in a strongly negative way, “We have *not* a high priest which *cannot* be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart.”

Here we see the blessed sympathy of our great High Priest. You remember in the type that Aaron the high priest bore upon his breast, indelibly engraved in the jewels of the breastplate of glory, in that Urim and Thummim which was upon the ephod, the names of the children of Israel upon his bosom. When he was in the sanctuary these names were there. So with our blessed Lord, He bears upon His heart, in all love and sympathy, the names of His beloved people. We also know that our great High Priest bears our names upon His shoulders; that is, He upholds by His power as He sustains by His love.

What a comfort it is in the midst of the trials of the way to know that we have a sympathetic High Priest! Oftentimes we may go to one another with our trials and we meet each other with a certain measure of sympathy:

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” But how incomplete is the sympathy of the dearest friend that you may have! There are experiences, there is a sense of weakness, there are needs which you are either ashamed to speak of or realize the uselessness of telling the dearest earthly friend about. How blessed it is to know that there is not an atom of experience we may have that is beneath the notice of our blessed High Priest! There is not a trial, so small that you might be ashamed to speak of it to man, that you cannot tell out in His sympathetic ear. He was tried as we are—for that is what has given Him capacity to be a merciful High Priest! He has passed through our experiences; it is not merely One who has divine knowledge of our path—God has that: “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,” says the psalmist, “then Thou knewest my path.” God knows the path of His people. He knew the sorrows of Israel down in Egypt; but, beloved, with our blessed Lord it is something more than divine knowledge of the sorrows and needs of His people; it is divine experience of those sorrows and needs.

Look at the book of Psalms throughout; it is the book of experience of a feeble, yea, a sinful and oft-failing people; but as you look all through it you will find mingled with the experiences of a failing people like experiences of One who passed through them, apart from sin. You will find our blessed Lord there separate from an ungodly nation, surrounded by a mass of profession who had no delight in God whatever, and you see the suffering that it brought upon His soul. You find Him in the same circumstances in which we are, surrounded by a mass of ungodliness and Christless profession. He knows the sufferings which His people pass through in that regard. We read in the Gospel of John that even His brethren did not believe on Him; and one may be living in a Christless household; the wife of one’s bosom, the hus-

band, may not know and love the Lord Jesus. Dear friends, companions, associates, may be far removed from us, as to the knowledge of Christ. Ah, the Man of Sorrows, the One who took that name, knows what all these circumstances mean. One can only suggest thoughts here that you must trace out more fully for yourselves; but if you think of yourself in any kind of experience which it is right for you to be in, in any kind of need which you have not brought upon yourself by your own wrongdoing, you can think that our blessed Lord has trod these same steps before.

We read of one of John Bunyan's characters that at the close of his life he said, wherever he had found the footprints of the Lord Jesus, there he had coveted to put his feet. How beautiful that! but, dear brethren, sweeter far is the thought that our blessed Lord, when here on earth, searched wherever the footsteps of His weary people would have to tread; and He not only coveted but He did put His feet just there. Christ has gone through all the circumstances of the wilderness. He knows what it all means in a way infinitely beyond the experience of the ripest saints, for He has passed through it, apart from the deadening, dulling, wasteful experiences of sin. We pass through the wilderness, alas, too often yielding to sin. Our blessed Lord passed through never yielding in thought for one moment to a thing that was not according to His Father's will.

And that brings us to speak of what I am sure your heart rejects, the thought that our Lord had in His life any experiences which could be associated with sin. Sometimes people say Christ knew what temptation meant. Here is a man, for instance, who is tempted to angry passion, to some dishonest dealing, to defraud, or unsubdued desires of so many forms, and he says, The Lord Jesus can sympathize, He knows what such thoughts are; He knows what strong temptations are to yield to this

thing or the other. I say it with all deliberateness, that if this is your Christ, it is not the Christ of God. He *suffered* when He was tempted. Tempted in all points as we are, from *without*—by man, by Satan, by the effects and results of sin in the world; to all this He never yielded one iota. Never could temptation be from *within*. I say it reverently, had He had a sinful thought or desire, had He had to struggle against wicked passions, (the Lord forgive even the words as applied to Himself,) He would have incapacitated Himself from being either a Sympathizer or a Saviour. Oh, it was because of His spotless purity, because He was in circumstances where we fail, but where He did not fail, that He is a perfect sympathizing Priest.

That being the case, what is our resource? The word of God has searched us as we are passing through the wilderness with its abounding trials; we have a High Priest who has entered the sanctuary; we hold fast to Him. But as we pass through the wilderness, we know that the loving heart of our blessed Saviour throbs in unison with every God-given experience that His people have; therefore we can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, no matter what the need may be, to find grace for seasonable help—the grace that will help us in the very difficulty in which we are. Our Lord is not satisfied with sympathy in the human sense. Man may sympathize with you without being able to help you. The Lord Jesus not only sympathizes, but He gives grace to help. The sins and failures of the saints is not what is thought of here. That is met by our Advocate, as seen in 1 John ii. 1.

Notice that beautiful expression, “the throne of grace.” The Israelite was familiar with the thought of the throne of God. He was familiar also with the thought of the mercy-seat, with the cherubim of glory overshadowing it; but it was a strange thought to him that this mercy-seat

should be a place of free access to him. His thought of it was that the cherubim of glory guarded the way into the presence of God, just as effectually as the cherubim with the flaming sword guarded the way to the tree of life at the entrance to the garden of Eden. His thought was that God was to be at a distance. Faith's thought is that through Christ we can draw near with boldness to a throne of grace. We will look at the mercy-seat at another time, where it is brought up in detail, later on in our epistle. I merely allude to it here as we pass. It was the place where God's righteousness was manifested, where His judgment was declared, where His holy law was the basis of His dealings with man. This throne of God in righteousness, however, was covered over by a golden, a divinely given covering, and upon that was sprinkled the blood of atonement. That was the mercy-seat. For us it is become the throne of grace because of Christ's finished work, and the sprinkled blood which shows God's acceptance of the Sacrifice and that our Priest has gone into the sanctuary, whither we by faith can follow Him. It is thus the throne of grace, where God's grace, and not His judgment, is manifested. His judgment has been visited upon the Substitute; His grace now goes out to the guilty who draw near through Jesus, and we can thus "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Thus if the wilderness brings out our need, it brings out the infinite resources of Christ, the great High Priest.

"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things relating to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; being able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since he himself also is clothed with infirmity; and on account of this, he is obliged, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no one taketh this honor to himself but as called of God, even as Aaron."

We have in this portion, not a description of Christ, but of the priests according to Israel's order. The high

priests were taken from amongst men, and were ordained for men in God's matters, that they might offer "both gifts and sacrifices for sins." We have here a contrast with Christ. He was not taken from amongst men in the ordinary sense, though absolutely and perfectly a Man. He was not one ordained to minister in the ordinary way of the priesthood, to offer gifts and sacrifices first of all for himself, and then for the people. He was not one, as we have seen, who ought to have compassion on those who were ignorant and out of the way because He was compassed with infirmity. That is a human priest's compassion. A man says, I cannot be too hard upon this one, because I have been in the same position myself; I also have failed; I am compassed with infirmities. Is that God's thought of a priest? Ah no; that is the human priest. This human priest must offer, not only for others but for himself, sacrifices for sins. Is that our Priest? Did Christ need anything to fit Him for God? When heaven opened and the angels came down at Bethlehem, was there any suggestion that God did not delight in the Babe in the manger there? When He rent the heavens at the baptism of our Lord, had there been any sacrifice offered that made God declare, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" and later on, when at the mount of transfiguration the glory of God overshadowed everything and the Son of God shone out there as the sun, had there been a sacrifice offered? Ah, our Priest needed not to offer for Himself! God had infinite delight in Him, and could ever at any moment have received Him up to His own right hand by virtue of what He was in Himself.

All of this, then, is in sharp contrast with the high priest whom we are speaking of.

Further, he says, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron." Aaron was called of God. In the rebellion of Korah and his

company, when he exalted himself against Moses, and against Aaron the priest, what was the result? They were summoned before the sanctuary, every man with his censer, and as these men who would intrude into the high-priestly office drew near, fire from God's holy presence comes out and destroys them. No man taketh this honor upon himself, and Korah and his companions are witnesses of the fact that none could intrude into the priestly office, only those whom God called.

Now, passing to the next portion, we find this true of Christ Himself.

"So also Christ hath not glorified himself to be made high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

"Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death, with strong crying and tears (and being heard because of his piety), though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience from the things which he suffered. And having been made perfect, he became, to all them that obey him, author of eternal salvation; being saluted of God as high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

Our blessed Lord was not a self-constituted priest. It was God Himself that marked Him out as such, and the passage which I have already quoted at His baptism shows when God so declared Him. The heavens were opened, and the Voice from the glory cried aloud, "This is My beloved Son." That is the echo of this very scripture from the second psalm, which we have looked at in our first chapter, "Thou art My Son." He is declared to be the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit comes upon Him anointing Him for His priestly service.

How blessed it is to think of God's call of His Son to the priesthood! It is not an external appointment, as Aaron's was. He is not selected in divine sovereignty merely because of God's absolute will. He is marked

out, He is appointed, to be sure; but it is because of what He is, the Son of God, that He is declared to be the Priest of God. So, as we think of our great High Priest, we think of one who was called of God by virtue of what He is; as you read in Leviticus, the garment of the priest was never to be laid aside. He was always to wear his priestly garment. So with Christ; He can never cease to be a priest, because He can never cease to be the Son of God. He is priest because of what He is. Emphasizing that further, the next quotation is, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Melchisedec priesthood will engage us again. We have these foreshadowings of truths which will be clustered together and gathered up in all their fulness by the Spirit later on. The thought of the Melchisedec priesthood is its eternal and royal character. He abides a king continually, and a priest continually, in type. Our Lord was not only the Son of God, and so abiding and called a priest, but He is a Melchisedec priest, in resurrection. When He rose from the dead He was put upon the throne, and there "death hath no more dominion over Him"—He abides forever.

Having seen His call to the priesthood in these two scriptures, we see its character in the next three verses (7-9), "Who in the days of His flesh," etc.

Here we have the work of the priest suggested. It is only suggested, not gone into fully. The days of His flesh are spoken of, the time when He was here, His whole ministry here, particularly that time where all His sufferings were headed up in Gethsemane and at Calvary. In fact, that which is referred to here is more particularly Gethsemane. First, He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. The Lord Jesus was a Man of prayer. Read the Gospel of Luke, and see Him again and again in prayer. He delighted in prayer. He was the dependent One throughout His entire life,

and loved to pour out His soul and His needs to His Father; but there was a time when this prayer became strong crying, when it became earnest entreaty. We know when that was.

Follow Him to the garden of Gethsemane. We have seen Him weeping at other times. We have seen Him when He stood over the city, and—as He looked down upon beloved Jerusalem, and knew how soon the enemy would cast a trench about it and it would be leveled with the dust, the Gentile hordes treading it beneath their feet—He breaks into tears, and says, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.” The Lord Jesus shed tears then. We see Him again at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, shedding tears of sympathy,—of real, genuine, perfect grief. Though He knew He would staunch the tears of Mary and Martha in a moment, in the perfection of divine sympathy He first of all weeps with them.

But in Gethsemane other tears are shed. We see Him the Man of prayer in His life; but now, all His prayer is gathered up into an intensity of longing, of pleading, of holy suffering. We see tears, but they are connected with those great drops of blood which fell as sweat from His face. What means all this, beloved? It was simply the antechamber of the Cross. It was the vestibule of that awful chamber of darkness into which, blessed be God, we can never enter—the suffering which He endured at the hands of a righteous God dealing with Him because of our sins—when He who knew no sin, was made sin for us! As He looked forward to that awful cross, as He entered the penumbra of the cross, His whole soul was exceeding sorrowful, unto death. Sustained physically by an angel sent to help Him, there He wrestled with the awful, fearful anticipation of having to be cut off from the presence of God, in whose smile He had

found His heaven throughout His entire life. O brethren, we cannot, we never can, know the depths of anguish which our blessed Lord endured as Priest when He was made a Sacrifice for our sins! It is as though the Spirit of God leads us so far, even as our Lord led His disciples a little way, and said, Tarry ye here and watch, while I go yonder. The Spirit of God would lead us into Gethsemane, and say, as it were, Tarry here and contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God. He must go on further into the black depths of Calvary itself. We can never follow Him there.

There is the strong crying and tears. And when He reaches Calvary, from out of that thick darkness we hear one agonizing cry that tells of the infinite depths of sorrow in His holy soul, that tells of the awful load that He was bearing: "Eli! Eli! lama sabacthani?—My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Strong crying and tears indeed!—and high priestly work, this.

Let me pause a moment to say that the soul that looks on Calvary, and sees the priestly Sacrifice there, is freed forever from any fear of judgment and wrath. He knows that it has been borne by a divine Substitute.

But, blessed be God, we can look a little further here. We hear His agonized cry. Right from the very horns of the unicorn: it is as though you saw this fierce beast with his victim upon his horns. He is crying unto Him who is able to save Him out of death. Mark the words: it is not "save Him *from* death," (our blessed Lord was not saved from death; He went into it, in the depths of what death is,) but it is "save Him *out of* death, and was heard in that He feared"—heard because of the perfection of what He was, because of the perfection of His character, of His piety, of His obedience unto death. And so when that mighty unicorn, that aurochs, has Him on His horns as it were, instead of trampling Him to permanent destruction, (the Lord forgive such language—

I only use it by way of contrast,) instead, thus, of wreaking full and eternal vengeance, as it must have been done on us had we been under the wrath of God, He was snatched from those very horns, brought up out of the grave, raised up and seated at God's own right hand, by the glory of the Father! The Priest taken from the horns of the altar and placed now upon the throne, the very mercy-seat of God!

Did He not learn lessons there which even the Son of God could not have learned anywhere else? Yea, "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." This is suggested in that passage in Philippians where He took "the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He learned obedience unto death; and then we see, "God also hath highly exalted Him," and now He is the author, the leader, and the perfecter of faith, "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." That is, He can now "bring many sons unto glory," because, as the captain, or leader, of their salvation, He has been "made perfect through sufferings."

Who shall say Him nay as He opens wide His arms and gathers in the unclean, the unworthy and the guilty?—draws them to Himself, and says, Heaven is open for you, I shall lead you in and present you faultless before the presence of My God and Father with exceeding joy! Who would dare lay a restraining hand upon one soul, and say, This one shall not go with you? this one does not deserve to enter there? Ah, beloved, He is the author of eternal salvation, blessed be His name, to all who have in heart bowed to Him. The obedience is not the obedience of the law. It is not obedience for the obtaining of life, but it is, as the apostle says in the epistle to the Romans, the obedience of faith; faith that has bowed in obedience to Christ, that has owned God's

righteous judgment upon itself, that accepts God's perfect provision of what Christ has done.

There, then, you have His priestly work. Are you surprised that He is called the Author of eternal salvation? Who can touch Him now? Can death say aught to Him? He has been down into it and through it—it could not hold Him. Can Satan lay his unclean hands upon Him? Satan has had to say to Him, and found nothing in Him. All his malice and hatred have been vented upon Him. He has suffered for sin, and put it away. The storm is gone forever, and He is the Author of eternal salvation. He has gone on high, and God now addresses Him:—not “called of God,” as you have it in this last verse, but “saluted of God:” the risen, glorified Son of God presented there in the infinite glory of heaven: set above principalities, potentates and powers, He is saluted of the Most High God as “King of righteousness” and “King of peace”—a “High Priest for ever,” with all the dignity and glory connected with that title, with all the blessed power of salvation suggested in it for us. God gives Him His place at His right hand, a High Priest forever after the order that can never pass, the royal order of that Melchisedec priest who abides forevermore.

Are not these themes to stir our hearts to worship? to make us despise all paltry things that would swerve the heart from Christ? May they search out any hidden disloyalty to the glorious Person of whom we have been speaking, to cleave more absolutely, more simply to Him who is all in all in heaven, and who by the grace of God has been made all in all for us!

LECTURE V

APOSTASY; OR, THE STRONG CONSOLATION

"We are persuaded better things of you"

(Chap. v. 11-vi.)

WE have already had occasion to remark the frequent breaks in the line of truth being developed by the Spirit of God, in order that a word of admonition might be given to the professors whom He is addressing. Here we have again, after but a short portion devoted to our Lord's priesthood, a pause, in order that those addressed may be stirred up to pay attention to what is being said, and to judge in their own souls that which hinders them from going happily along with what the Spirit of God is unfolding.

"Concerning whom we have much to say, and hard to be interpreted in speaking, since ye are become dull in hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have again need that one should teach you what are the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe; but solid food belongeth to full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised to distinguish both good and evil."

Thus having come to the Melchisedec character of our Lord's priesthood, before entering upon it the apostle addresses them in the parenthesis which is now to occupy us. But though there are these frequent interruptions, caused by the slowness of heart of those whom he is addressing, there is a constant and steady progress in the

development of the truth which is being brought forward. Thus, our Lord's priesthood has been mentioned, then the heavenly character of it, then the fact that He has passed through the heavens, then the nature of His call and how God has addressed Him, saluting Him as the Melchisedec Priest. Each time there are added thoughts to what has gone before. So the Spirit of God is developing in an orderly and connected way the line of truth which will, a few chapters later on, burst upon us in all its effulgence.

We shall miss the thought of the Spirit of God if we think that these exhortations are simply addressed to the Hebrews. They are addressed, as all Scripture is, to "him that hath an ear," according to the need.

He says here that he has "many things to say, and hard to be uttered," concerning Christ, our Priest. You remember that Peter seems to refer to this passage in his second epistle, where he says, "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." A sluggish state of soul is natural. It is only as we are quickened and stirred up by the Spirit of God that the mind and heart become properly awake to receive fresh truth.

The purpose of the Spirit of God is that we should be ever growing. There is no thought in the word of God of our standing still. We should ever make progress, and the character of that progress is marked by the practical knowledge of Christ. So the apostle, in the epistle to the Philippians, although he knew much of Christ, says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended of Christ

Jesus." He realized that to know Christ was the sum of knowledge. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." For that he would press on; and as Christ Himself was in glory at God's right hand, Paul would never cease being a racer and a learner until he got into the very presence of Him who is the fulness of God's revelation. Scripture never speaks of the knowledge of Christ as merely knowing about Him, but it is knowing Him; as the same apostle said, later on, "I know whom I have believed." He was acquainted with Him in such a way that it was a knowledge of heart and life, not merely theoretical.

If we test ourselves by that kind of knowledge, shall we not find admonition here for us, as it was for those to whom it was first addressed? "For the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." How long have we been Christians? Here is one who has been saved for a year, another for five years; others can look back upon a Christian life of ten, fifteen, or twenty years. Very blessed it is to be able to look back and say, "For twenty years I have known the Lord;" but here is the point: for the time that you have known Christ you ought to be a teacher of Christ. We all ought to know Him so well that we can have no difficulty in teaching others of Him. I ask, How many of us are teachers in this sense? It is not a question of the gift of teaching here. God has given gifts in the assembly—some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. It is not those specific gifts that are spoken of here. It is that spiritual faculty of being able to make known to others a Person who is well known to ourselves. The only way you can introduce two persons is to be acquainted with both. So there must be heart acquaintance with Christ, a deep, real, full heart knowledge of Him, if we are to

make Him known to others. Where this is the case we can say with the apostle, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." There is a savor of Christ in one's heart that cannot be concealed.

Look at the Thessalonians. The apostle was with them, perhaps four weeks altogether, taking them from their darkness and presenting Christ in such a way that at the end of that time, when he was obliged to leave because of persecution, it was with the assurance that the Spirit of God had material to carry on the blessed work in their souls. More than that, "for the time" they were teachers of what they had received. The whole country round was ablaze with the truth that those Thessalonians had received. People everywhere were talking about them, so that the apostle said he had no need to speak, for they themselves bore witness of the character of his work among them; how they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." You notice it was Christ that they were waiting for. They had known Christ, and they were longing to see Christ, and that summed up, as you might say, their knowledge. All was included between these two great facts.

How do we compare with those four-week old saints in testimony, in the knowledge that we are giving, in the sweet savor of Christ that we are presenting? For the time, we ought to be teachers. Would to God it could be said of the saints in this place, in this age, that they were after the Thessalonian type. It is to be greatly feared that they are rather after the type we are considering here. Let us make it a distinctly personal thing.

It is a bad sign when we cease to love the gospel. There is a certain sense in which we are ever to have the spirit of the new-born babe, as the apostle Peter tells us in his first epistle: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." The

thirst for truth, for the word of God, is to be like the thirst which the new-born babe has for its nourishment. But that is very different from being babes who only want the milk, the elementary, the simplest things, and who turn away from the solid food, from that which is for grown men. It should appeal to our consciences, whether we are in a state of infancy or whether we are going on to the clear, full knowledge of Christ. He says: "Every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness." "Unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance." But we have got to use that which God has given us, if we expect Him to entrust more to us. Are you using it in teaching others? Are you using it in such a way that Christ's cause is indebted to your service for an upbuilding and a help, the loss of which would be distinctly felt? Suppose we were a company of evangelists, of testifiers for Christ, each one in our business, our circle of acquaintance, wherever we are, what a blessed contrast it would be to that spirit of apathy which settles down upon the saints of God! We deplore our coldness, so few additions, so little gospel testimony. Ah, what is the remedy for it? There needs to be a stirring up of soul and that exercise of what God has given to us. That will give the only appetite that will crave for more. As you use that knowledge of Christ which God has given, as you make use of Christ and His Word and His authority, bowing to it in your soul, you will have such a hunger for more of Christ as He Himself alone can satisfy.

And if the Spirit of God pauses in unfolding a line of truth, let us hearken to what He has to say. Let us be a people who are no longer babes, who no longer need to be carried in the arms, to be guarded against every little wind that might blow upon us, but who are able to care for and minister to others. Ought it not to be so, for the time we have been Christians?

“Therefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to full growth; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, of a teaching of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment; and this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible to renew again to repentance those once enlightened, and who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made companions of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and have fallen away, crucifying afresh for themselves the Son of God, and putting him to open shame. For the ground which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth useful herbs for those for the sake of whom it is cultivated, partaketh of blessing from God; but when it bringeth forth thorns and briers it is found worthless and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.”

The apostle now applies what he had been saying to these Hebrew professors in a more specific way. He tells them there are certain things they are to leave. There was a time of infancy, such as we see in the fourth chapter of Galatians, where Judaism is spoken of as a period of infancy, when “a child differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” He says that time has come to an end. You are no longer under tutors and governors, no longer under the school-master. You have now come to full age. He refers there to Judaism, the ordinances and truths connected with the establishment of God’s earthly testimony. He says, The time is come when you are to leave all that and go on to perfection. You are to leave that which was the beginning of the doctrine of Christ. That does not mean, as many have thought, leaving elementary Christianity and going on to the higher life. The period of infancy is Judaism, and the period of manhood is Christianity. They are to leave what had to do with the beginning, when God was giving foreshadowings of Christ, and are to go on unto the perfection of what God has revealed,

that is, Christ as He is made known to us in the new dispensation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are six ways in which the apostle here describes Judaism; and mark, it was not a carnal institution that he was speaking of, "after the commandments and doctrines of men," but of that which had been provided by God, and which was connected with certain great fundamental truths which underlie all knowledge of Him. So you will find in this description of Judaism, not merely form and ceremony, but other things as well. They are in pairs, as you will notice: "Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." All through the Old Testament repentance was constantly spoken of. Alas, His people were perpetually wandering from Him, and God was constantly calling them back to repentance. Their works were but dead works, unprofitable because they were done in disobedience to God. *Wherever there is any dealing with God it must begin with repentance, before there can be full faith.* Connected with this repentance was the faith in God; not faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is speaking of the old revelation which God had given of Himself in Judaism. Abraham, the progenitor of the whole Jewish nation, was distinguished by his faith, and wherever there had been any true worship of God it was upon the basis of faith, that is, confidence in Himself.

But these were things recognized in all relationships with Him from the beginning. But they were not things which formed the basis, gave color and tone as you may say, to their knowledge at the present time. It was not now a constant repentance from dead works. It was not now mere abstract faith in God as He was revealed in the Old Testament, but the repentance of genuine self-judgment which once for all took its place as lost and guilty in the presence of God, and then accepted Christ Jesus as God's full and perfect provision for salvation.

The next couplet described Judaism as to its ceremonial character. There was "the teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands." This "teaching of baptisms" does not refer at all to water baptism, either John's or still less to Christian baptism, and most certainly not to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It is a different word practically, with a different ending. It is the same word which is used later on in our epistle, translated there "divers washings." It was the sprinkling of blood, washing at the laver, and other ceremonial ordinances connected with outward approach to God. And in close connection with that was the laying on of hands. It is not Christian laying on of hands. You will miss the entire connection if you think it refers to things in Christianity. It is the laying on of hands, for instance, when the offerer brought the sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle, confessing his sin. The high priest did the same on the great day of atonement, putting his hands on the head of the bullock.

Those things were characteristic of God's ritual in Judaism, prescribed by Himself; they were not man's ordinances. And here is a striking thing—that when God displaces His ordinance by something better, by that which fulfils it and of which the ordinance is a type, to go back again to that ordinance is not to go back to what God has provided, but to "the weak and beggarly elements of the world." The thing ceases to be God's ordinance any longer. It has served its purpose, and now if they were to go back to that they would be giving up what God had made known; they would be really apostatizing. If that is true of what God Himself has given; if this brazen serpent, so to speak, of Old Testament ritual, becomes a *nehushtan*, a "piece of brass," when it has served its purpose,—and yet men turn back to it!—what shall we say of all that wretched ritualism which the flesh delights in to-day, which is not even Judaism,

but turning the truths of Christianity into a form? That indicates a state just as deadly, in some sense more hopeless, than the state of those Hebrews who were tempted to turn back to Jewish ceremonies after God had given the knowledge of Christ.

The last couplet gives us again two great truths which will always remain, though they are not truths of Christianity distinctively. They are simply the broad, general truths which were known under Judaism and speak for all time. It was "the resurrection of the dead" and "eternal judgment"—things which look toward the future. You will remember that Martha said to our Lord she knew that Lazarus would rise again at the last day. Resurrection, though not a prominent truth in the Old Testament, was by no means one of which they were ignorant. Faith had laid hold of the fact. We find intimations again and again that God is going to bring up the dead, that they are going to be judged, that there is a time when He is going to display all His glory, as in the fiftieth psalm: "For God is Judge Himself." So the truth of judgment was known in Judaism, as the truth of resurrection in a general sense was known; yet not in the Christian way. It was a resurrection of the dead, not a resurrection of the saints, the dead in Christ rising first, and sharing with Him in His glory a thousand years before the resurrection of the wicked dead. It was no such truth as the Thessalonian saints knew. It was simply the general fact of a resurrection. And as to judgment, there was no knowledge of the fact that the believer had passed from under judgment, that he would never come into it. All of these things are connected with the Christian revelation. They were not a part of what God had revealed in Judaism. Let us, he says, leave all these elementary things; some of them are acknowledged truths about which we have much further light; some of them are ceremonial ordinances which have served their pur-

pose, and have been fulfilled in Christ; the time for them has gone forever. Let us leave that and go on to what God has revealed now. And what is that? Absolute perfection. He has no further revelation to give. Who could add aught to it, to the peerless, perfect Son of God, or to that dispensation which He has introduced, of which the Church is the glorious expression in the word of God? Ah, there you have perfection.

In contrast with this, he brings up the next passage—solemn and dreadful for those who do not understand it. It has been a source of trouble and exercise to multitudes of tender consciences. There are vast numbers of God's people not well instructed, not thoroughly grounded in the grace of God, who have thought it teaches that a true believer, a possessor of eternal life, may yet perish. Let me call your attention to one distinct thing: if it does mean that, it seals the doom of everyone of whom it speaks. "It is *impossible*"—this is too much for those who want to teach the doctrine of falling from grace, or backsliding; they do not want to say it is impossible; they would say, Come and repent again, be saved again. But this declares that it is impossible for those who have received these privileges and turn away from them to renew them again to repentance. If this means a true believer can be lost, it seals his doom forever; there is no possibility of hope that he could ever turn again in repentance to God.

But, blessed be God, we know Him far better than that; we know that it is impossible for Him to make such a statement as that, because our blessed Lord has declared, in those passages which unequivocally do teach it, the eternal security and continuance of the believer, whom He calls His sheep. "I know My sheep, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? . . . for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If you want to learn about the security of the believer, turn to a passage which teaches it. Do not turn to a passage which is speaking of false profession and apostasy to learn about perseverance. That is the great mistake. When we come to such passages as these we are to look calmly at them, to study them on our knees before God to get the blessing out of them. There was a time, I believe, in many of our lives when we used to quickly turn this page when we came to it, for we felt as if we were reading our own doom. For who that is honest before God has not been conscious of departure, of loss of communion, of things of that kind, which a sensitive conscience, goaded on by Satan, could turn into that which would come under this condemnation? But now, having peace with God, we can look at it, and thank Him for His faithfulness in putting it there as a warning to an empty, false profession, and as a stirring up to those who are careless and settling down into worldliness. For any who are tempted to listen to anything that is not of Christ, here is a voice of thunder saying, Give up Christ and you give up everything! Suppose a child of God were tempted to dally with some antichristian teaching, you could read this passage to him and say, You are dallying with that which is going to destroy the soul. You are dallying with that which has attractions for you according to the flesh, which may offer some worldly advantage, professes to heal the body perhaps, but look at the condemnation which God has pronounced for those who have tasted of better things and turn back to this rubbish: it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. Viewed from its right standpoint, the passage is very

simple, and most needful in stirring up heart and conscience.

There are five expressions used here to describe the privileges of Christianity, and not one of them speaks of justification, or of new birth, or of peace with God. Suppose you read in this passage, It is impossible for those who have had eternal life, for those who have been justified, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. What a change of teaching that would be! But not one of the expressions in this passage speaks of the life of the soul; they all speak of the outward privileges of Christianity into which these Hebrew professors had been introduced. Let us look at them a moment.

“Those who were once enlightened.” Christ said He came as a light into the world; and when the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven at Pentecost, and the full light of divine truth was preached, there was an illumination shed all round. Minds were enlightened, they were emancipated from the superstition of the darkness in which they were before; but that enlightenment could be an entirely outward thing, not necessarily inward, unless it could be said of them also, “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts:” that is a different thing.

“Have tasted of the heavenly gift”—the gift which came down from heaven. Our blessed Lord said to the woman of Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh unto thee, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” Here is the heavenly gift, the water of life, and it has been put to the lips of people; they have had a taste of it. It has been like those who received seed upon the stony ground; they received the word with joy, and it sprung up immediately. But a taste of the heavenly gift does not mean drinking it and taking it into the soul. It means simply that it has been pressed to the lips, and

one has said, This is good; but it remains to be seen whether in their souls they have drunk it down.

Then there is "made partakers," or companions, as the word might be translated, "of the Holy Ghost." That is, brought under the benefits of the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Read the early chapters of the Acts, see the work of the Spirit of God, look at it in connection with Ananias and Sapphira, see it in the time of Simon Magus, how the energy, the works, the gifts, the fruits of the Spirit were manifested in such an amazing way that those who came into professed Christianity could indeed be said to be partakers of these blessings, the outward privileges of the Holy Spirit.

"And have tasted the good word of God." That is the word of the gospel of His grace, which had been presented to them, which they had opportunity to taste; and "the powers of the world to come" (the coming age), that is, the miracles, which belonged really to the time of Christ's outward manifestation, and so they are spoken of as the powers of the coming age—miracles which will be performed in connection with the millennium.

They have had all these advantages. Now, he says, if you have had these fivefold privileges (and I think that number is significant as suggesting Christ as man, God manifest in the flesh), having had all these privileges, if they should turn back to the Judaism which they had left, he says it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. The reason for it is that they have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame. They have set their seal to the crucifixion and rejection of Christ, just as Israel had done before. For those who cried out, "Crucify Him!" Peter says afterwards, "Brethren, I wot that ye did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers." But those who are in the full light of divine truth, if they turn away from Christ, he says, there is a new crucifixion of Christ, not in igno-

rance, but as in the tenth chapter, where he uses still stronger language, and says they have trodden under foot the Son of God. That is apostasy of a hopeless character. We can thank God that it is not a question of falling into sin, solemn as that is, but of turning away from Christ, of giving Him up.

Now I believe that that was distinctly true of the professors in the apostle's day. There is one thought which is to me a very solemn one: that this awful sin of apostasy is not a sin which is common in this day. You might say that is a good sign. I say it is a sorrowful sign. In Paul's day the lines were so clearly drawn that it was either Christ or no Christ; it was either for Christ or against Him: those who took their place in association with Christ and His people had to bear reproach, to endure a great fight of afflictions. Look at the emasculated Christianity of to-day! Where can you draw the line between that which professes to be loyal to Christ, and apostasy from Him? In many pulpits, where Christ is professedly preached, you have disloyalty and dishonor to His holy name proclaimed. The trouble is that the whole mass of professed Christianity is so far on the road to apostasy that it is difficult to draw any such line of demarcation as the Spirit of God draws here. All is tending toward apostasy. Solemn and awful thought!

He goes on to say that the earth, which has had every opportunity of tillage and culture and rain from heaven, and brings forth fruit for those who cultivate it, receives a blessing; but that which only brings forth briars and thorns—the abortive branch, which speaks of the curse rather than of the blessing—is nigh unto cursing, and the end is burning. You remember, our Lord says in the parable that some seed fell among thorns; and He declares that the thorns might be the cares, the pleasures, the riches, the prosperity of this world. Anything that would usurp Christ's place can be the thorn, and the

apostle applies it here to the full-fledged apostasy; that which, giving up Christ, becomes an absolute thorn, whose end is cursing and burning.

“But we are persuaded better things concerning you, beloved, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which ye have shown to his name, having ministered to the saints, and still ministering. But we desire earnestly that each one of you show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end; that ye be not slothful, but imitators of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”

How the apostle hastens to reassure any trembling soul that had a real conscience toward God! He is not speaking in a way to drive them to despair. He says, We are persuaded better things of you, though we speak in this faithful way, and search out mere profession and stir your consciences and hearts. We are persuaded better things of you, better than all profession, better than all outward privilege. Then, instead of thorns and briars, he shows the fruitfulness of a Christian life produced by the indwelling Spirit in the “good ground” of a heart truly broken and alive to God. Blessed contrast, is it not? There were those of whom he had previously spoken who had brought forth only thorns and briars; but of the true Christians he says, God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, that devotedness which you have shown to His name. The work and labor of love was not merely to their fellow Christians who enjoyed the fruit of it, but it was toward God’s name, and for His sake. They had not only ministered to the saints in the past, it was a present service as well—“ye do minister.” All that we desire, he says, is that you show the same devotedness in increasing measure unto the full assurance of hope. In other words, he says, You have not yet entered upon your possession. You have shown, and are showing, the fruit of a Christian life, the effect of that

rain from heaven upon your souls. God is not unrighteous to forget the fruit of His own Spirit in your lives. But he wants them to have the full assurance of hope. These Christian Hebrews were in a sad way, looked at according to the flesh: they were subjected to the persecution of their own kinsmen; and when asked, What have you got for having renounced your Judaism, for having given up all your earthly hopes and the ceremonies that God gave to our fathers? they would have had to show empty hands. Everything was still in the future. He reminds them that they must hold on until the things that they have laid hold of in hope are manifested to sight.

So, too, the believer to-day has nothing material to show for having given up everything. Some one might say, You might have had an opportunity to become a prominent man in politics, or have won great wealth if you had not taken up foolish notions of Christianity and religion. Now tell me, what have you got to show for it? You would say to him, What I have to show, alas, you have no eyes to see. I have peace of conscience, a sense of God's approval; I have the love of Christ that passeth knowledge filling my heart; but, alas, you have no eyes to see these things. In your judgment I have made a foolish choice, and until you see the end of these things I must be a fool in your sight.

Let it be so, beloved. We can never justify ourselves before the world for having turned our backs upon it. We can never get the world's approbation or acknowledgment that we have done the right thing in forsaking all for Christ; but ah, the Spirit of God declares in His Word, and that blessed hope which draws us on with ever-hastening footsteps—these declare that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. We must be content to be despised, misunderstood and rejected

as our blessed Lord was, until He who is the goal of our hope shall appear and we shall appear with Him in glory. Blessed effect of stirring up of conscience and heart that Christ Himself may be the living hope before the soul!

He gives an example of this—and it is a Hebrew example—in the history of Abraham.

“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee; and so having had long patience, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by a greater, and with them the oath is a term to all dispute, as making matters sure. Wherein God, willing to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his purpose, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.”

Here is the hope again. It is a future thing. Abraham did not have so much as to put his foot upon in the land of Canaan. He might walk up and down in the land, as God had told him, but none of it was his own. Had he remarked to a Canaanite, All this is my inheritance, he would have been laughed to scorn. The only portion he had in it was a burying-place: the death of all hope, you might say. But what did he have besides? He had the promise of God, who cannot lie. The word of the living God had declared that He would bless him, that He would give the place where he was to him and his seed after him. That was before the birth of Isaac. And when God called him to give up the dearest object of his hope, his son Isaac, it was a question whether he would take the bare word of the living God, or hold on to what he had in Isaac. He had to give up Isaac, the child of promise, unto death, and receive him back, in a figure, in resurrection. In view of that obedience of faith, God declares with an oath, in a mediatorial way, He interposes

His oath, He could swear by none greater—men always call to witness the greater—God swears by His own great self that He will bless this man of faith, who has nothing for a present possession, and that He will fulfil every word that He has promised. It is *as* though God had said that, as long as He is God—as if He would have to cease to exist before the faith that counted upon Him should be disappointed.

Look at that lonely old man, without a foot of ground to call his own, and yet the inheritor of it all! We will see when we come to the eleventh chapter that he had his eyes on a better inheritance, even a heavenly. But look at him here, without a thing to call his own, yet what did he have? O brethren, he had God's word and God's oath; and so have we; a strong consolation for us who have fled for refuge to lay hold of—not upon some present possession, not upon something that we can hold up to the world and say, See our wealth, or our glory—but upon the HOPE set before us. These are evidently the "two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie"—His *word*, confirmed by His *oath*. Abraham had these, and so have we. It has been suggested that these two things are our Lord's eternal priesthood and kingship—His Melchizedec priesthood. While these do abide eternally, and are the witness of the perpetuity of all our blessings, they are not what is immediately before us here, and we would be obliged to ignore the oath and promise of God given to Abraham.

This, then, is the basis of that strong consolation which the weakest saint has. Put that side by side with the apostasy. There we saw those who, with their backs turned to Christ, and, like thorns and briars, are going on to the burning: here are those who have fled for refuge to Christ and laid hold of the hope set before them, and it is for them a strong consolation, that which buoys up the soul, which sustains it in every difficulty until faith

and hope are changed to sight, and we enter into the joy of the Lord—the inheritance that is reserved for us. So God is not unrighteous to forget the fruits which His own grace has produced, and He is not untruthful to deny Himself and the oath which He has given.

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered, a forerunner for us; being made for ever a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”

The hope is the anchor. We are like ships in the midst of a storm; the waves are beating against our frail barks; tribulation, temptation sorely try and test us. If it were only the frail bark, who could weather the storm, who would not be dashed to pieces upon the rocks, who would not be apostates like the rest? But oh, that anchor of the soul is sure and steadfast! There is nothing in us sure and steadfast. It is not the stability of our purpose, nor the loyalty of our devotion. The anchor has laid hold upon that which is within the veil, which separates the unseen from the seen, which also barred the way into the presence of a holy God. The anchor has reached hold of that solid anchorage beyond all that is seen, and taken hold even there. So we can sing—

“The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me,
And shall I be dismayed?”

We are held fast by the anchor, on the hope that is set before us. And lest there should be any misunderstanding as to what that anchor is, he says, Whither *Christ* the forerunner, has entered,—the pledge that we too shall enter, in God’s good time. Christ has entered within the veil, a High Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.

And so the Spirit of God returns to His theme.

LECTURE VI

THE EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD

'Forever after the order of Melchisedec'

(Chap. vii.)

WE may say that the apostle has now relieved himself of all responsibility as to indifference or slowness of heart on the part of those who receive this epistle. He has again and again warned them, so they should now be prepared to enter with him into the unfolding of that which he had upon his heart. Thus the seventh chapter is a resumption of the subject which was broken off at the 10th verse of the fifth chapter, all the rest having been a parenthesis to stir up their consciences, and to prepare for what was to be unfolded in connection with the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord.

And it needed, if one may so speak, all the power of God's grace, all the awakening of the conscience by the Holy Spirit, to prepare an earthly people whose thoughts had centred about things here and the past, for the wondrous unfolding that is before us in this and the succeeding chapters; to prepare them, too, for the moral result, which would be permanently to detach them from everything connected with all that they had been taught by birth and training to hold dear. So, for any who have by early training been accustomed to hold dear certain things which are not according to the truth of God—when there is a presentation by the Holy Spirit of the word of God which bears upon our relationship with Him—they must be prepared to look fairly and definitely at

the necessity for giving up everything that is not according to the word of God, and to receive that which presents Christ in His infinite fullness.

But if God thus calls to a thing hard to nature, He calls to it by giving a most blessed, all-sufficient exchange. As we see the glories of Christ contrasted with the shadows of the law and everything that was connected with an earthly priesthood, well might we say that if faith had apprehended the reality of what Christ was, they would gladly take not only the spoiling of their goods, but also the spoiling of all their earthly hopes, things that they had clung to as so dear before. Once let Christ be apprehended, once let the beauty of His character as our Priest and the blessedness of the place into which He has introduced us be laid hold of by the soul, and the things of earth which would hold us fast, a carnal religion and all else, will lose their hold, even as the leaves drop off the trees in autumn.

We come now to this chapter, which is devoted to showing the Melchisedec character of our Lord's priesthood.

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the smiting of the kings, and blessed him; to whom Abraham also gave the tenth part of all; first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest perpetually."

You notice that we have first of all a reference to the occurrence as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. There we are told that Melchisedec, "King of Salem," who was priest of the most high God, met Abram when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings. Abram, the Hebrew, which means "the pilgrim," lived in entire contrast to his relative Lot, who had settled down

in Sodom, and was therefore liable to all the attacks of the enemies who assailed that place. So, when the king of Babylon and his confederates attacked that wicked city and carried off the people of it into captivity, Lot naturally was taken with them.

Thus, where one is settled down in the world, he too will be in danger of being led off into captivity with the people of the world. There is only one safeguard against this, and that is to maintain pilgrim isolation. Abram, "the pilgrim," the Hebrew, is not only able to deliver Lot (for he goes after the kings, and through God's mercy delivers him, just as the spiritual amongst God's people are often enabled to rescue those who are ensnared in worldliness and led captive by it), but when he returns victorious he is in a moral condition to enter into the blessed truth of the priesthood of Melchisedec. Bread and wine are presented to him, which speak to us most unquestionably of that which spiritually is the food for a pilgrim people. The bread and the wine cannot but remind every Christian heart of that which is recalled to us each Lord's day when gathered about His table, where the bread speaks to us of His body, given up to death for us; and the wine, of His blood shed, by which we have title to draw near unto God.

Melchisedec, as a priest who is himself in communion with God, able also to maintain others who are morally fit in that same communion, comes and presents to Abram these types of a perfect Sacrifice by which he could draw near to God. And what a blessed substitute for all that Sodom had to offer! Abram takes this sustenance from the heavenly priest, and receives the blessing which Melchisedec bestows upon him, the blessing of the Most High, a title which refers to His supremacy over all—over kings and all the power of the enemy, King of kings and Lord of lords. He is "Possessor of heaven and earth," the title which will be outwardly manifested in the *millennial*

kingdom of our Lord, but which is actually true for faith at all times. Melchisedec bestows a blessing, and gives refreshment, as priest, to this pilgrim who was walking in separation from the world; and turning, as it were, to the Most High Himself, he offers up his own, and leads the praises of Abram as well: "Blessed be the most high God."

Thus, in a beautiful way, we have a type of what true priesthood is. It is that which brings sustenance, bestows blessing, and then leads the praises in holy communion with God. It comes out from the presence of God, as it were, with hands filled with blessings. It returns with the worshiper into the presence of God, and leads his praises up to Him.

It is a beautiful picture; and if we follow it in the book of Genesis we find how much is morally connected with it. Abram has been feeding on the food of the mighty. He has been introduced into the presence of God through the priest, and now, when the king of Sodom comes near to offer him his share of the spoil, what can Abram say? Endowed with all the blessing of the Most High God, with a perfectly satisfied heart he can turn and say, I will not take as much as a shoe-latchet, lest he should say he had made Abram rich.

What is the secret of our being kept from what this world has to give us? It is the sense of God's blessed presence, the reality of being perfectly blest through Christ our Lord. It is in the dignity of worshipers in His holy presence that we turn from the most attractive and alluring offers which the world can spread before us, and say, I have been in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and I desire not a single thing which you have to offer. What elevation of soul that is, beloved! That is one of the moral results of being in relationship with the heavenly Priest. But I must not anticipate. Let us go a little further into the detail of what

is said as to Melchisedec, for that is what is dwelt upon here.

We have, as you know, a very striking illustration of the way in which the Spirit of God makes use of Scripture here. Not even the most fanciful interpreter would have got as much out of this occurrence (and I say it reverently) as the Spirit of God has got out of it. If we had taken up a scripture, and had endeavored to get meaning out of the names, out of the official position, out of the place where a man was king, and, more than that, out of the very order in which his personal name and his official position were given, it would have been said, You are carrying this too far; you are indulging in fanciful interpretation of Scripture. Furthermore, if we had gone on to say that Melchisedec had no genealogy mentioned, there is nothing said of his parents nor of his successors, —neither his birth nor death recorded,—and therefore he is a type of the Son of God, who abides forever, people would have said, If this is to be allowed in the interpretation of Scripture, where will it end?

And yet that is exactly what is found here. Melchisedec is taken up, the meaning of his individual name is given, "King of righteousness." He is first of all "King of righteousness;" after that, he is King also of Salem, "peace." That is his official place. Notice, not merely is he called "King of righteousness" and "King of peace," but the order in which these occur is emphasized. Now what does all that mean for us? It means that God's word is so perfect that you can take every jot and tittle of it, and need not be afraid, in a reverent, prayerful, dependent way, (using this as an example,) to go through that whole Word and seek for the treasures which you will find everywhere in it. This not merely interprets the meaning of Melchisedec, but it gives us an example of how the Spirit of God would use and interpret His perfect Word throughout.

So Melchisedec is "King of righteousness," and then he is "King of peace." Then his genealogy, or the lack of it, is spoken of. There is no account given of his ancestors, none of his successors, and this in the book of Genesis, where men's ancestry was traced back to Adam, and their succession traced onward! When you come to the Levitical priesthood, for instance in the book of Ezra, where certain men claimed priestly descent, their genealogy was looked for, and when it could not be found they were, as defiled, put away from the priesthood.

So, for an Israelite, genealogy was essential. The Spirit of God makes use of this exception in the case of Melchisedec. There he stands out, a solitary figure in its grandeur of nearness to God, of kingly and priestly dignity; and the Spirit of God declares that is like the Son of God in these respects. As to His eternal relationship to God there is no question of His genealogy, He is the only One, God's only-begotten Son in eternity, and in a very blessed sense He is God's only Son even in time. If He brings many sons to glory, it is in association with Himself, but not in succession to Himself, which is a very different thing. Here you have our blessed Lord typified by Melchisedec, the abiding One—One who comes upon the scene but who traces back His ancestry in no human way; One who, when He leaves this earth, leaves no successor, but passes into the presence of God, where He abideth a Priest continually.

Let us go back a moment and dwell upon the meaning of these names. You notice that expression, "King." The Spirit of God has seen fit to emphasize that, and we must not ignore it. I am quite aware of the emphasis laid on the fact that Christ is not King of saints at the present time, and in a broad sense that is perfectly true. I have no doubt the reason it is insisted upon is because a wrong use has been made of the Kingship of Christ, connecting it with the earthly Kingdom of the Messiah

which shall be manifested during the Millennium. And because people were not clear as to that, they have been taught to pray, "Thy Kingdom come" as though it were to be introduced gradually, by human effort, and in this dispensation.

Now we could not intelligently ask for Christ's millennial Kingdom to come as though we were going to enter into it upon earth. It is right to be clear that we are not members of the Kingdom of the Messiah in the sense in which a Jew would have understood it, and in the sense in which it is ordinarily applied by those who would use the term now. But that being admitted, is there not a very real sense in which we are under His Kingly rule? Take this epistle. Has not our blessed Lord taken His seat upon the throne? Who is it that sits upon the throne but the King? Was He not crowned even here, crowned with thorns? And is not that crown now turned into an eternal lustre of glory?

Do we not love to think of Him in royal glory now as He is, at God's right hand, as King set upon the Father's throne, one day soon to sit upon His own throne and to rule to the ends of the earth? I believe that we really lose if we fail to grasp this side of truth. There is real blessedness in dwelling upon His Kingly, royal authority. So we are told in Colossians, "God hath delivered us from the power (or authority) of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love;" a sphere in which divine love, as expressed in the Son of God's bosom, reigns and controls. So He is King. When Pilate asked Him, "Art thou a king, then?" He says, "I am;" and we too can speak of Him, think of Him with joy, as King now upon the Father's throne. All things are beneath His sway, not yet visibly, but faith owns Him as Ruler and Lord.

He is "King of righteousness." I need not say how this must first of all be His personal attribute. Unless

there was that, there could be no official fitness for any position that might be given. That was the difficulty with all the kings that had come through David's line. They were not kings of righteousness; their moral character did not answer to it. Even the best of them, David, the man after God's own heart, was simply that because he acknowledged his sin and laid hold of the grace of God. The one who was most glorious of all, Solomon, alas, while brilliantly a type of the earthly Kingdom of our blessed Lord, morally was the exact opposite of a king of righteousness.

But with Him, blessed be His name, the title "King of righteousness" described what He was personally and in His outward life. God's approval was but the recognition of that which was manifested in His entire life upon earth—righteousness in all His dealings, in all His ways and service.

But where He got His full right to the title "King of righteousness" was upon the cross where He met the whole question of God's righteousness. God, to deal righteously with His Son in His personal character, would simply have taken Him up into heaven where He was before; but to deal righteously with Him as the substitute for sinners meant to pour out upon Him all the judgment which guilty sinners deserved. If the claims of righteousness were to be met, the holy Substitute had to die, and where did He manifest His character as "King of righteousness" so fully as, when crowned with thorns, (the mark of the curse of the earth and of the hatred of man) He hung breathless on the cross, having cried out, "It is finished?" Oh, as Pilate brought Him forth, crowned with the thorns and robed in mockery, and said, "Behold your King," as we hear the rabble hooting and crying out, "Away with Him, crucify Him," faith says, Yea, behold our King; give Him to us in all the degradation you can heap upon Him; show Him to us crowned

with thorns and the object of human hatred; we delight to prostrate ourselves before Him and own Him "King of righteousness"!

Then, He is "King of peace." He is still the Lord and Ruler, the Master over all, and the result of that work of righteousness is peace; the effect of it is quietness and assurance forever. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." There is no peace to any child of Adam who has sinned against Him, and we read that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Yet we are living in a kingdom of peace. Peace is our eternal portion. It is because of the work of the "King of righteousness" that the effect of peace is ours forever. It is not a question of our feeling at peace, I need hardly say, but the blessed result of Christ's finished work: "Having made peace by the blood of His cross." So, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." That is the order.

Having effected the work of righteousness in our redemption, the effect of it is everlasting peace for us, and that is secured by the fact that the One who has accomplished it all abides forevermore. He can die no more. That is the truth which the apostle would emphasize for these Hebrew saints, and what needs to be emphasized for any who are in danger of turning to form or ritual for relationship with God. There is the Priest; there is the One who introduces into and maintains us in the presence of God. What need of any other priest coming in between our souls and God?

"Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth part of the spoils. And they indeed from among the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have commandment to take tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though these are come out of the loins of Abraham; but he who hath no genealogy from them hath tithed Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises; and be-

yond all gainsaying the less is blessed of the better. And here, dying men receive tithes, but there one of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And so to speak, through Abraham, Levi also, who received tithes, hath been tithed: for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him."

We pass on now to that which compares Him with all other priests. The apostle says, Dwell upon the greatness of this man to whom even the patriarch Abraham, the head of the Hebrew race, gave the tenth of the spoil. The giving of the tenth was the acknowledgment of superiority. Tithes are given to a superior. Therefore if there was one above the head of the whole Jewish race, how important it was for the Hebrews not to be occupied with the greatness of Abraham, but with the One greater, even Christ Himself!

He adds there were sons of Levi who as priests had commandment to receive tithes of their brethren. It was because they were in a position of superiority. Though they were their brethren according to the flesh, yet the Levites were in the place of nearness; the priests had access to God and stood in His place, and therefore their brethren had to treat them as their spiritual superiors. I need not say how that has been carried out in the priestcraft of to-day, how men have intruded themselves between the people and God; how they have made it necessary for any who desire to draw near to God, as they think, to come through the priest; and how, as the result, very substantial tithes have had to be given.

But as contrasted with the priests of the tribe of Levi, here is one who is not of that tribe at all, and therefore had no such official right to receive tithes. He is not counted from them. He received tithes not merely from the children of Israel, not from the people, or "laity," as the word really means, but from Abraham himself. And not only does he receive tithes from him, showing his superiority, but he blesses the one who had received the

promises from God. A Jew would say, Abraham is the one through whom all the promises had been given; but here is one who bestows blessing upon the very one who had received the promise of blessing from God. "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better:" Abraham is evidently, then, the lesser person. Not only so, but in the Levitical priesthood it is men who die that receive tithes, men who pass away; but here is a mighty person of whom there is no mention of death, thus typifying Christ, who liveth forever. Then he concludes the subject by saying, Even Levi, even the whole Aaronic priesthood, actually gave tithes to Melchisedec; for, as he says, Levi as unborn was represented in his father Abraham when Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedec.

Now that course of reasoning to a Jewish mind would be conclusive. The argument was faultless, and the development complete. But what an astounding conclusion! He had always looked up to the chief priests and all the leaders of the people as in the very place of God Himself, and here is One who is presented to him—he knows who it is—it is Jesus, the Son of God. He has professed to believe in Him. This One sets aside all these priests. How far inferior they are to Him; they have given their tithes to Him; they have given homage to Him as their superior. Thus the Hebrew believer is in this position at once, that all that he had considered in the chief place, as between himself and God, is only a trifle compared with the blessed reality that there is a Priest of a different order who abides continually, and with whom these priests of Aaron's line had nothing whatever to do. It was a stupendous thing for an Israelite to receive this in his soul; and, beloved, I say it is a stupendous thing for *any one* to apprehend and receive this truth in his soul.

We are in a certain sense familiar with the fact that there is no such thing as Judaism now between the soul

and God; but there is much else that comes in. Individuals often come in between the soul and God. I need scarcely speak of the gross form of this as seen in the Romish priesthood which professes even to open and close heaven to its subjects. We will look at less evident illustrations of the same error. Here are those who are in the place of ministers of religion—and I have not a word of disrespect to say of any such. Those who truly minister Christ will be the first to tell you they are simply the servants of the people of God; that they are not your superiors. They would warn you that they do not stand between the soul and God, but simply seek to show you the way of access to Him. And yet how constantly we find people *putting* religious leaders between their souls and Christ! None of us are free from the danger of that. We put one another in between our souls and God. Children put their parents; wives, their husbands; husbands, their wives. Even prayers are interposed between the soul and God. But when Christ gets His place before the soul, we see that none other must intrude between us and God. It is Christ who is our Priest, and the only Priest. Blessed truth, emancipating truth for the heart to rest upon—to be a worshiper without any need of human intervention and to be able to enter into the holiest of God's presence without any need of man's interference. What a privilege! No wonder that the Spirit of God should dwell upon it for these Christians, who for a moment were tempted to turn from Christ back to the things of the law in which they had been indoctrinated.

But still other striking and vital results follow.

“If indeed, then, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for the people had their law on the basis of it) what need was there that still a different priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be named after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there becometh of necessity a change

also of the law. For he of whom these things are said pertaineth to a different tribe, of which no one hath been occupied with the service of the altar. For it is clear that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. And it is still more abundantly evident, since a different priest ariseth after the similitude of Melchisedec, who hath been made, not after a law of fleshly commandment, but after a power of indissoluble life. For it is borne witness, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is a setting aside of the commandment going before for its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect) and the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God."

If this Levitical priesthood had brought in perfection, that is, if it had brought in a satisfactory relation between man and God, what need would there have been of speaking of any further priest who was not of the family of Aaron, but of an entirely different order? "Perfection," you know, especially in this epistle to the Hebrews, does not mean personal perfection, but the perfection of relationship with God—a perfect conscience; that is, a conscience which has been divinely enlightened, and divinely satisfied by the finished work of Christ. We know we are made perfect by the one offering of Christ.

Look for a moment at the Levitical priesthood. There were sacrifices offered day after day, but they could not make the comer thereunto perfect—they could not give the soul peace with God. Look to-day at the so-called sacrifices that are professedly offered up—offered for the dead, and for guilty people who come to secure these sacrificial services for themselves. What peace do they give to their conscience? What rest of soul do they give? Repeated over and over again, as they are in a large branch of professing Christendom, has peace with God and rest of soul been ministered to them thereby? *They* know, and we know, it has not! And so with any who would bring anything of a mere carnal, earthly character between their souls and God. Even prayer may be so

used. People ask to be prayed for as if prayers were to satisfy God in their behalf. Religious rites and services are engaged in—everything that people say is necessary to bring them into communion with God; but it makes nothing perfect, because it ignores the work of Christ. If that is ignored, nothing else can make the conscience perfect. Trust in the perfect Sacrifice once offered, trust in Christ alone, gives perfection as to the conscience.

The whole effect of the law was to keep men at a distance from God. So he appeals to the Hebrews, You have not had perfection. If you had had it under the law, you would have been perfectly satisfied, and God would have never introduced another order. Hence, many centuries after the priesthood had been established, a different order is brought in, as the Psalms declare: "Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Here you find the Spirit of God taking it up, and saying, There is a Priest who has set aside the Aaronic order.

But there is more yet in connection with this. Look at the 12th verse. It is very radical: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Under the Levitical priesthood the people received the law. Mark, it does not mean the law of the priesthood merely. You would have to rend the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers to pieces in order to get the law of the priesthood separate from the other law. Israel's law was a unit; it was one and indivisible. The Ten Commandments summarized it, and all that followed them was simply the unfolding, enlarging and application of that law. Sometimes people make a distinction between the moral and ceremonial law. They say, We know the ceremonial law has been abrogated, but we are under the law of the Ten Commandments. I ask, Where will you find any such cleavage? When you come to the Old Testament, where will you find that the

Ten Commandments are holier than the rest of the word of God? Enshrined in the Ten Commandments is one—the fourth—which is a ceremonial one. It is as though God would show that the moral and ceremonial are bound together as one in His mind. Whatever He declares has to be obeyed, whether it is, “Thou shalt not kill,” or, “Thou shalt bring a tithe of all thou hast.” I quite admit there are certain eternal principles unfolded in these commandments which abide always, things that are connected with the very character of God; but that is not raised in the question of the law. Law is law, whatever the enactment may be, and you cannot pick and choose amongst the laws of God any more than you could pick and choose amongst the Ten Commandments. You can no more say, I will keep the moral law and neglect the ceremonial, than you can say, I will keep the law which says, “Thou shalt not kill,” and neglect the one which says, “Thou shalt not steal.”

Now mark, that law was given under the Levitical priesthood. We have already seen that priesthood fading away, displaced by the mightier and eternal priesthood, even Christ, who abides forever. But if there is a change of the priesthood, there is a change also of the law. We are no longer under the law. What light that sheds upon such a scripture as that in Romans: “Ye are not under law, but under grace”! It does not set free to do our will, but brings us into the place of happiest liberty to obey Him who is Lord and Master of us all. There is not, surely, the least lowering of the claims of righteousness; just the opposite of that. The claims of grace, of holiness; the claims of the new creation, are greater far than the claims of any law written on tables of stone could possibly be. So that law in which the Hebrew rested, about which he talked, given from Sinai—as he would have to admit that the priesthood was changed, he would have also to admit that the law itself was changed, and passing away.

Now, he says, this change of the priesthood is evident, for the Lord was not even of the tribe of Levi. He belonged to another tribe, the tribe of Judah, about which nothing was said of serving at the altar. He therefore had nothing to do with the Levitical order of priesthood.

Here are two very precious thoughts. He is of the tribe of Judah, "praise." He dwells amidst the praises of His people, and leads those praises. He begets praise in His worshiping people by giving them the grounds for it in His finished work and the present position which they occupy. That is the first thought. He is the Priest of praise. And the second is, that He is made a Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, (that is, the law given in the commands of God which appeal to the flesh but can get nothing from it, "for the law made nothing perfect,") but "after the power of an endless life." He has an endless life Himself. It was not a carnal command which made Him Priest; it is not connected with that which vanishes away, but it is His eternal existence as Son of God which is the witness of His priesthood. And is it not true in a very precious sense that the exercise of that priesthood is in connection with that life as bestowed upon us all? We are partakers of life forevermore, and therefore we are not under a carnal commandment, but have a life which now exhibits the eternal character of our relationship.

And so the law is set aside. It made nothing perfect. It was weak and unprofitable. It is not, as we read in the epistle to the Romans, because the law was not "holy, just, and good," but because its appeal was made to the natural man, in whom there was nothing that could answer to the law:—"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." It is the weakness of the flesh that makes the law unprofitable, and therefore it is annulled, set aside. There must be a new basis of things—the old has been set aside. Now we have as a blessed

contrast to that "the bringing in of a better hope." That word "hope" would suggest to the Hebrews that the blessings are future yet. They are at present only for faith to enjoy. They would enter upon the glory of it in a little while. It was "the bringing in of a better hope" than was connected with the earthly promises. Under the law the effect of the priesthood was to put the people at a distance from God. The priest received the offering, sprinkled the blood, went into the sanctuary, and came out again, and the people kept at a distance from God. But here is "a better hope" by which we draw nigh to God; by faith we enter into the sanctuary where is our Priest, and engage as happy worshipers in His very presence. Here was the astounding fact for an Israelite, that his law was set aside as well as his priesthood. What had he left? He that believed had Jesus, the Son of God. The apostle says, You have Him in His perfect, abiding fulness!

The rest of the chapter gathers up these truths and applies them for the joy and the comfort of the soul.

"And inasmuch as it was not without the swearing of an oath (for they are made priests without the swearing of an oath, but he with the swearing of an oath by him who said as to him, The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec) by so much did Jesus become surety of a better covenant."

We have already seen that the oath of God emphasizes the immutable character of what He declares. When God established Aaron as priest, He did not swear that he should have an abiding priesthood. It was a temporary thing; being weak and imperfect, it could not abide. Another priesthood therefore is brought in—brought in with an oath, and therefore its stability is connected with the truth of God Himself. "Thou art a Priest forever." How He reiterates again and again this familiar quotation! I am sure if we had only read it in the 110th

psalm we would naturally have passed over it very lightly; but the Spirit of God reiterates and dwells upon it, showing us what fulness and security there is in it!

As we think of Christ on high, ever living there—God would cease to be the God of truth, or, as the apostle John in bold imagery says, it would “make God a liar” if Christ were to cease to be the blessed, merciful, sympathetic Priest that He is for His people.

Thus, established by the oath of the eternal God, our Priest is the surety of a covenant infinitely better than the legal one. That forms the theme of the next chapter, and we will not dwell upon it here.

“And they indeed have been made priests more than one, on account of their being hindered by death from continuing; but he, because he continueth ever, hath the unchangeable priesthood. Whence also he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that he always liveth to make intercession for them.”

Aaron went up to the top of Mount Hor and died, and Eleazar took his place. Eleazar too passed away, and the high-priestly robes were laid aside and put on another priest. And so they went on—some were faithful, like Phinehas; others weak, like Eli; others, alas, like his two sons, unfaithful and apostate, until, in the time of our Lord, the priests themselves were Sadducees, not believing in the resurrection. What a comment on that priesthood which must pass away, and which was connected with a law that could make nothing perfect! How striking it is that in Jesus and the resurrection the effulgence of the truth broke forth at the very time when the exponents of the earthly priesthood were denying the reality of the resurrection!

The many priests under law passed away by death, but here is One who lives forever, and therefore has an unchangeable priesthood. Growing out of that is the blessed fact that He is able to save to perpetuity—not “to the

uttermost" in the sense of saving the vilest sinner that lives, (gloriously true as that is,) but He is able to save to the uttermost length of time. Look at our earthly pilgrimage; see what experiences we have passed through; what experiences may yet await us we know not. How are we sure we are going to be brought through and presented faultless before the presence of God's glory? We know it because our Melchisedec-Priest is on high; and because He liveth to make intercession for His people they will be maintained through every need that they pass through in this mortal existence. How precious to know this!

The types in the Old Testament shine out with special lustre here. You remember that the names of the children of Israel were engraved in the jewels of the breastplate and of the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, so that they would have to be broken before the names could be obliterated. We are distinctly told that the breastplate was connected with the ephod and with the shoulder-pieces, and with the girdle, so that it could not be removed. No priest in Israel therefore could go in before the Lord without those names upon his breast and shoulders. Transfer all that imagery to our blessed Lord. The very fact that He is a Priest and abides forever ensures the eternal security of His beloved people—their names inscribed upon that which speaks of the unchangeable perfections and glory of God.

Think of Dan's name—connected with the idolatrous apostasy early in the history of Israel, whose name also we connect with the self-will, deceit and violence of the Antichrist—think of Dan's name being inscribed upon the diamond in the bosom of the high priest! Think of your name and mine, so unworthy, so worthless in themselves, yet confessed and enshrined in glory as manifested in Christ before the Father at this very moment! He ever liveth! The fact that He lives forever ensures our

being brought through, saved through every trial of life to the uttermost end of time.

“For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who hath no need day by day, as those high priests, first to offer up sacrifices for his own sins, then for those of the people; for this he did once for all when he offered up himself. For the law constituteth men high priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath sworn, which was after the law, maketh the Son, who is perfected for evermore.”

We saw in the second chapter that it became God “in bringing many sons to glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” It was consistent with His character that the Leader of salvation should be a perfect, sympathizing Saviour. Now what is it that becomes us? Where do we find what suits us, what meets our need? Christ is what is fitting to the character of God. He is the fitting illustration of what expresses the will of God in this world. And what is it, beloved, that is a fitting expression for His people? The same blessed Person. Think of Christ being the manifestation of God for us, and then think of His representing us before God. “Such a High Priest became us.” He was suited to us.

Now His character is dwelt upon, in contrast with all that the Aaronic priesthood was. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”—just the opposite of the priests of whom we have been speaking. We are here invited to dwell upon that wondrous Person, “holy,”—as unsullied as the white linen garment of the priest typified; “harmless,” or guileless, not a breath of deceit, as perfect without as within; “undefiled” by contact with all that surged about Him, for though He was the Friend of sinners He was in heart and life absolutely “separate” from them. And as the divine seal upon this perfection He has been glorified on high.

Contrast that with the best priests you find in the whole Aaronic line. The best of them needed daily to offer for themselves as for the people. Here is One who needed no offering for Himself, and who *once* made the perfect sacrifice of Himself for His people.

The earthly priests had infirmities. The word of the oath makes the Son who abideth forever.

So we have One in the presence of God who abides forever, and maintains us forever in eternal relationship, according to the character of His holy, harmless, undefiled Person.

LECTURE VII

THE BETTER MINISTRY AND THE NEW COVENANT

"That which waxeth old is ready to vanish away"

(Chap. viii.)

THE apostle has in the preceding chapter reached the highest point in the epistle; I might also add, the highest point which it is possible to reach in any contemplation of Christ as Priest.

How much it involves we saw in the seventh chapter, where the apostle, able now to enlarge upon the truth that he had alluded to several times before, sets before them the fact that the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ involves not only His personal character as possessed of righteousness, but with absolute sway and control over all His people, yea, over all things; a position of infinitely greater glory and honor than could possibly be in connection with an earthly priesthood. Therefore that priesthood displaces entirely the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants. That being the case, there was also a change of the law in connection with which the priesthood was established. Thus the Hebrew believer would find himself face to face with this astounding fact, that a Priest such as he knew Christ to be, the Son of God, having glorified God in connection with sin, and having taken His place on high, displaces entirely every form of that order which had existed before, even though ordained by God Himself.

What an awakening for a genuine believer to enter fully into such a truth as this! He had been taught from

childhood to revere the ordinances of the house of God and the temple in Jerusalem. His whole education had been a reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures and all that they contained. What an astounding thought, when that very Word showed him a priesthood foretold by God Himself in the very time when the other priesthood was still going on—a priesthood which was to *displace and change absolutely, must displace, the very thing* which he had been taught to revere and to regard as the perpetual ordinance of God! No wonder there was a temptation to hold fast to the Jewish forms and rituals! It would only be the energy of a genuine faith that would separate him from such things; and just in proportion as that faith was in absolute exercise, so complete would be his severance from all the system that had gone before.

The truth culminates in this way. The apostle had not spoken of this before, but here he distinctly brings out the fact that is emphasized so clearly later on in our epistle, that Judaism and Christianity were mutually exclusive; that you could not have both; that you had to give up the one or the other, and if one was tempted to give up Christ for Judaism, it was an absolute renunciation, and a hopeless one, as we have been seeing. On the other hand, if he was to hold fast to Christ, it involved of very necessity a giving up of the law and the priesthood and all connected with it under Judaism.

“Now of the things of which we are speaking, this is the main point: We have such an one, high priest, who hath taken his seat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched and not man. For every high priest is constituted for the offering both of gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this one also should have something which he may offer. If then, indeed, he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, seeing that there are those who offer the gifts according to the law, (who serve the representation and shadow of heavenly things, according as Moses was oracularly told when about to make

the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern which hath been shown thee in the mount) but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by so much as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which is established upon better promises."

Now that is connected with "the main point," as the word is here; not merely that it is summarized thus—that "we have such a High Priest." "Such" suggests the wondrous dignity of His person, His finished work, His glory, His sympathy—what we have been dwelling upon in the past chapters. Such a High Priest as that, we have—One suited to us. He has offered His sacrifice, finished it once for all, and now has entered into the presence of God.

Notice, also, the expression—blessed one it is—that He is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. That word "seated" suggests a voluntary act. He has taken His seat as one who had the right to do it. It would suggest what you have in John's Gospel as to our Lord's resurrection, where He says as to His human life, "No man taketh it from Me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." While His resurrection is in one connection spoken of as "by the glory of the Father," (that is, God's glory was active in raising Him from the dead) in others it is spoken of as His own voluntary act. He was not merely raised from the dead as though by a power external to Himself, but He rose as one who had right and power to do so, and over whom death had no authority, and who could not be held under its power. Having, therefore, accomplished His work, having glorified God, there is nothing to hinder His taking His seat. Yea, God Himself—His very glory, His character, demand that the One who fully magnified His righteousness on Calvary should have His place in the highest heavens. How perfectly satisfied, yea, glorified, is God that He has

placed the very person—from whom He turned, forsaking Him in righteous judgment when He hung, as our Substitute, upon the cross—placed Him now at His own right hand in the heavens.

These words suggest the absolute approval of what has been done. The right hand is the place of honor and of power, the place also which was the token of satisfaction and delight. There is no place in the heaven of heavens higher than the throne of God which is now occupied by our Priest. He sits there as one who has title, with all things beneath His feet, and swaying the sceptre over all things. Such is Christ. And as you think of Him in this glory, it is impossible to have a single disloyal thought as to the glory of His person or the value of His work, or the wondrous dignity of the place He occupies. What creature would dare draw near into the presence of a holy God like this? Here is One who has right and title to take His place at the right hand of that Majesty—equal with it all; as we sometimes sing,—

“Who without usurpation could
Lay claim to heaven’s eternal throne?”

So that is the High Priest, and there is the place which He occupies; that is what the apostle emphasizes. It is the sum, the acme of all that has been before us in the first seven chapters.

But now we have His service in that position: “A Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” A minister not in the sense of making atonement, for though the earthly priests offered sacrifices day by day, our blessed Lord offered one sacrifice, and no more remains to be offered. His ministering in the heavenly sanctuary is not for purposes of sacrifice. So far as our redemption is concerned, He has taken His seat; not a single stroke can be added to that finished work which He accomplished

on Calvary. The cry of victory which re-echoes through heaven and earth and in our hearts, "It is finished," is the declaration that not a single thing remains to be added to the work by which God is fully glorified and we eternally saved. Under the Levitical ordinances the sacrifice was slain outside, and its blood brought into the sanctuary and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. The work was done and finished outside. The witness of its acceptance was brought within. When one is seated, in that sense he has nothing to do; no need for activity on his part. And I would say to any unestablished soul, If you still feel there is something for you to do in connection with your salvation, you are ignoring, or forgetting, the fact that our Priest is seated.

What rest of conscience, what perfect peace of heart, that gives when it is seen fully! Our Priest has taken His seat, and we in faith may also take our seats, never raising our hands to do another stroke of work for our salvation. If your toiling means that you are seeking to add one iota to the finished work of Christ, fold your hands—if you are truly a believer—until you are called into glory, and your title remains just as good—yea, better; for what an insult it is to the blood of Christ that you should be seeking to add your merits, your feelings, your attainments, to the value of that which has already enabled God to place Him on the throne! I dwell upon this because I am persuaded that in the bottom of many hearts there lurks a vestige of self-righteousness which would intrude, upon every possible occasion, its own works into the place which the blood of Christ alone can fill.

I am perfectly aware that there is a place for works in the believer, a place for all our toil. We may work for the remainder of our lives, and can never do enough for Him who has done everything for us; but so far as our redemption is concerned, we are at rest where He is at

rest; the very throne of God is the place for us to rest as regards our salvation. Beloved, when God Himself is at rest, when Christ Himself is at rest, what is your poor heart, that it should still have the slightest flutter of unbelief or uncertainty with regard to that glorious work which He has completed once and forever?

Now, that being permanently settled (and unless it is there can be no genuine growth, no real joy, no true activity for Christ), we have next His priestly ministry in the sanctuary, which still goes on. We know He is in eternal activity with regard to His people's needs here and the glory of God in connection with those needs. As to the character of that work, it is not dwelt upon here except to say He is a minister, and One who serves in the sanctuary. The sanctuary is the holy place, where God manifests Himself. This will come out in our later chapters, and we do not dwell upon it here except to call your attention to the fact that a tabernacle is spoken of here, the one in which He serves, as the true tabernacle in distinction from the earthly type; it is one which "the Lord pitched and not man!"

You remember, when Moses was called up to Sinai, that God showed him the pattern of the tabernacle. He gave him a view, very likely, of all the glories of His court in such a way that Moses could reproduce it in the Tabernacle, which would thus be a model of the sanctuary of God Himself. In fact, that is what we are told here: Which things "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."

They were the example of the way of access into the presence of God; they were also the shadow of heavenly things, "as Moses was admonished of God;" "for, See, said He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." The Tabernacle, then, in the wilderness, was the figure of the way of access to God. The outer court represented the earth, and the

first sanctuary, or the holy place, answering to heaven; the holiest of all corresponding to the heaven of heavens, the very presence of God Himself, where His throne was.

The Tabernacle was a pattern, but the true tabernacle, which God pitched and not man, is His whole universe, which is linked with His throne where He Himself abides in all His glory. Our blessed Lord is a minister in connection with that. He brings together, as you might say, the outermost parts of the court—this earth and the created universe—into close connection with the very throne of God, and we who occupy a place in this wilderness world are really in the outskirts, in the outermost precincts of that tabernacle of divine glory; we are ministered to by Him who has access into the innermost presence of that glory. He there maintains a people in relation with Himself. He keeps us in the enjoyment of communion, He sustains and upholds us through all the trials of the way, and His presence there is a pledge that we too belong there,—in one sense can enter there,—and that we shall soon be called up there into the enjoyment of that into which He Himself has entered.

Let us now for a moment connect this with, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt"—literally, "tabernacled"—"among us" (Jno. i. 14). The Tabernacle was also a figure of the person of Christ. Those of you who are familiar with it remember that the curtains, which were the Tabernacle proper, were the type of Christ in His varied characteristics. The fine white linen typified His perfect humanity; in the blue you see Him in His heavenly character; in the purple, His royal character; in the scarlet, as having world-wide dominion. Thus you have in the curtains of the Tabernacle and in the veils the witness of the humanity of Christ.

In the first chapter of Matthew the Spirit of God quotes the prophecy from Isaiah where our Lord's birth from

the virgin is foretold, and says, "They shall call His name Immanuel, God with us"—God making thus His tabernacle among men. But, as John tells us, "the Word became *flesh*, and tabernacled among us"; and so Joseph, in giving the name to the blessed One who was born, does not call Him "Immanuel," but Jesus. How beautifully that reminds us of the object for which He came, and the basis upon which He abode as God's representative amongst men here! Jesus, "Saviour," is His name; that, too, is the witness that it was God with us, "Immanuel."

Going back to John's Gospel, when it is declared "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us," faith adds at once, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The covering of the Tabernacle that I have referred to was one that could only be seen when one went inside. There these splendors were unfolded in their order, proportion, and beauty. But the outward covering which greeted the eye of the stranger as he drew near to the camp of Israel, was the dull, unattractive covering of seal, or badger skins. In other words, as faith says, confessing its previous rejection of Christ, "We saw no beauty in Him, that we should desire Him." There was no attractiveness for the natural man, no beauty in Christ save when faith saw Him.

Looking at Christ outwardly, men said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;" "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in Him." Yes, even members of His own house did not believe in Him. This is like the outside of the Tabernacle—sad witness of how men have no eye for that which glorifies God, for I need hardly say how perfectly Christ glorified

God in the most casual acts of His daily life; and His holy isolation, which kept Him from contamination with this world, ever spoke with delight to God.

When faith enters, then, and gets the true view of Christ, what does it say? "We beheld His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father;" none other like Him in heaven or on earth. He was the effulgence of God's glory and "the express image of His person."

So the Tabernacle was a type of Christ, of "God with us" here, the dwelling-place of God with men when our blessed Lord was upon earth. Then the veil was rent, the tabernacle itself was taken down, (if we may use such an expression,) as our Lord said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But He spake of the temple of His body." The temple was taken down, and then reared in resurrection. He went up on high, the Minister of the true dwelling-place of God with men, "which the Lord pitched and not man."

Now, remembering that He is there in the sanctuary, let us look forward to the time yet to come. There has been a time when God dwelt amongst men, in the person of His Son; but He is no longer here. He is with the Father, and faith now sees Him there. But the time is coming when the tabernacle of God is to be with men, and He will dwell with them. When our Lord came at the first He was despised and rejected, and the tabernacle was taken down; it is no longer here, save as we, through infinite grace, represent the dwelling-place of God through the Spirit upon earth. But the time is coming when all evil is to be put out of the world, at the close of the Millennium, at the close of all temporary illustrations of divine power and government, when—out of the distance which it has occupied ever since sin has come into the world—the glorious abode of God Himself comes down in immediate connection with the earth.

Then the distance between heaven and earth shall be done away forever, (though we shall ever feel that God is infinitely above us;) then God Himself shall take His place in permanent association with His creation and "tabernacle" is again used to describe that eternal condition. And well may we be sure that the One through whom it is effected is the same blessed Person; that the One who was the tabernacle of God when He was here, the One who by His Spirit makes now a dwelling-place for God in His redeemed people, is the One through whom finally will be brought to pass that which we read, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." What precious thoughts cluster thickly here! May these suggestions of them at least lead us to look into them fully and see how much there is in connection with the Tabernacle of which we have been speaking!

"For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." A question has been raised here, and is important for us to look at, that Christ's work as Priest only began in heaven. I have already indicated the fact that His priestly work had to begin, as far as sacrifice is concerned, upon earth. If the priest was one who offered a sacrifice, then Christ must have been a Priest when He offered up Himself to God. He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit; that is, in His life here He was presented before God and accepted by Him as the Sacrifice; and already at His baptism, when He was anointed by the Spirit, we have practically God's acceptance of Him as being without blemish and without spot, suitable for a perfect Sacrifice. To this high-priestly work therefore, He is then introduced.

But notice that this expression does not confine our Lord's priestly work to heaven; it simply declares that in contrast with earthly priests, if He were here in rela-

lation to the law and an earthly sanctuary, He would not have anything to offer or any service to engage in, because everything on earth was under the hand of the priests of Aaron. If we fail to understand this, we will be denying that our Lord's sacrifice upon Calvary was a priestly work. But if He were here now, if He were claiming (if I may use such an expression) priestly functions in connection with the temple at Jerusalem, could it not be said that He was interfering with the order which God Himself had instituted upon earth? If, for instance, He had entered into the temple, had taken up the censer, or gone into the holy of holies and sought to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat, could it not have been said He was intruding? When Uzziah, king of Judah, did a thing like that, the leprosy came out upon him, and he was thrust out of the temple. Inasmuch as all the earthly sacrifices were connected with the priests of Aaron's line, could it not have been said our Lord was assuming a place which the word of God itself did not authorize?

In the provision which is made for the resumption of this priestly order in the latter part of the book of Ezekiel the priests of the house of Aaron are re-established to continue the service according to the earthly ritual. Of course it will be a very different kind of thing in that day than it was before our Lord's sacrifice. Those were types of what was to come, and had a certain amount of merit in them in connection with those who offered them; but then it will all be commemorative, looking back upon that which Christ has accomplished. Still, God will have an earthly display in connection with Israel.

They have an earthly sanctuary and an Aaronic priesthood during the Millennium: no one who reads carefully the book of Ezekiel will fail to see that that is the case. So true it is that "if He were on earth He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." But that only brings out more

clearly what we are saying as to His place in heaven. His sacrificial work upon earth was in view of heaven; having accomplished His work, He enters by His own blood into heaven itself. The earthly priests have been displaced by Him who has gone within. We too are now priests, though upon earth, but in no earthly sanctuary. We do not come in competition with the priests of the law.

We now pass to that which is intimately associated with this in the remainder of our chapter.

“For if that first one were faultless, then would no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault, he saith unto them, Behold days come, saith the Lord, that I will perfect a new covenant as regards the house of Israel and as regards the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because *they* did not continue in my covenant, and *I* did not regard them, saith the Lord. Because this is the covenant that I will make unto the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and will write them also upon their hearts; and I will be God to them, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach each one his fellow-citizen and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord: because all shall inwardly know me, from him that is little unto him that is great among them; because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is ancient and groweth old is near to disappearing.”

We saw in the previous chapter that a change of the priesthood necessitated a change of the law in connection with which the priesthood was given. We have one who is the Minister of a heavenly sanctuary, and who is Priest not after the order of Aaron; therefore it must be upon a different covenant, upon a different basis than that upon which the Aaronic priesthood carried on their service. “He hath obtained a more excellent ministry.”

Compare the ministry of the priests—who were liable to failure, who could not glorify God in their character because they themselves were sinners—with that more excellent ministry of Christ. The priests could offer only “daily the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins.” Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins, and now He has forever taken His seat at the right hand of God. The priest truly had a ministry, but Christ a more excellent ministry, “by how much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” Here everything is “better,” and I might say that in the epistle to the Hebrews you have that word “better” repeated again and again; you might almost write over the head of the whole epistle, “Better Things,” as characteristic of Christianity as compared with Judaism.

This second part brings before us the great truth of the new covenant as being a better one than the old. The old covenant was the covenant of the law which God gave to Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. That is distinctly stated for us in this quotation from the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah. I think we can clearly see the difference between these two covenants in the book of Jeremiah itself. In the eleventh chapter of Jeremiah we have the old covenant; then, in the thirty-first chapter we find the new covenant; and then, faith’s laying hold upon the new covenant in the fiftieth chapter. Let us look briefly at these three chapters and we will get the truth, I believe, of what is brought out here in Hebrews.

Before touching, however, upon the subject of the new covenant, I would merely mention that you have at least two other covenants suggested as between God and man in the Old Testament. The rainbow was the seal of God’s covenant with the earth, an agreement whereby He pledged Himself never again to visit the earth with a

flood; so that around the throne, in connection with all the judgments which are going to come from that throne upon the earth prior to the Millennium, the rainbow is seen in a complete circle, as if it were a reminder that God would act according to the terms of that covenant. He will never forget the pledge that He has given; it shall not be obliterated by all the judgments of the great tribulation.

Then, again, in connection with Abraham, we are told that God made a covenant with him and gave him circumcision as the seal of it. That covenant was a distinct promise of blessing; and in connection with that covenant we have the truth suggested that Israel will abide as a nation forever before God, because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" and therefore a covenant which He has entered into voluntarily on His part will always be maintained. But the Abrahamic covenant is one of another character than what we are going to look at. It was to Abraham individually, and is really, we might say, a foreshadowing of the new covenant; for the apostle in Galatians argues that the law given 430 years after could not set it aside. However, circumcision came later to be identified with the legal covenant, though it was not "of Moses, but of the fathers," and is so used by the apostle in Romans and elsewhere.

But now we come to the question of the old and new covenants: there is one thing always implied in the covenant of the law, and that was a condition. A covenant is an agreement between two parties upon certain conditions being fulfilled. A man promises to do certain things if the other person will fulfil his engagements. That is the covenant of the law. God promises to bless His people if they on their part will obey the law. Look, for instance, at this eleventh chapter of Jeremiah. I would suggest that you read it at your leisure. In the 2d verse, "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak

unto the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" etc., (vers. 1-4); you will find throughout the entire chapter that it is a reminder of the first covenant, of God's promises to Israel in connection with it, and of their promises to fulfil His commandments. I need hardly refer you to the engagement which Israel entered into at Sinai, and how Moses took the blood of that covenant and sprinkled it upon the book where the laws were written, and upon the people, and upon everything, and called God and man to witness that the covenant had been sealed by blood; and we need look onward but a few steps in Israel's history, to the apostasy of the golden calf, to see how they broke the first conditions of blessing under that covenant.

So far as that covenant was concerned, Israel could only get a curse pronounced upon them for disobedience. Look at Moses coming down from the mount with the table of the covenant in his arms. He carries in his arms the conditions upon which God Himself will fulfil His promise to the people. Notice the scene: God on high in His holiness and majesty; Moses with the tables of the law in his hands; and down yonder in the camp a golden calf is set up, and the people dancing in drunken shamelessness. There is a picture of the first covenant, and its futility. There you have God's holiness and man's sin, and here, in the arms of the lawgiver, the witness of that perfect law which could only bring a curse upon them.

What does Moses do? If he goes into that apostate camp with the tables of the covenant in his hands, it can only mean the judgments of Sinai to be visited immediately upon the apostate people. He breaks those tables of stone—not, as some would have us believe, in anger or malice, or anything of that sort; he is not shut out of Canaan because he lost his temper and broke the tables of stone, though he was because he failed to honor God

at another time. But we hear not a single whisper of divine displeasure when he took that which God wrote Himself and crushed it at the foot of the mountain, as if he would say, The first covenant is gone already. There could be no blessing under it, for they had violated it.

God in mercy and patience went on with them. He resumed a connection with them through Moses' mediatorial work; but again and again He is obliged to bear witness to their being a stiffnecked people who had forfeited every claim to His blessing or favor. So, as regards that first covenant, you might write "Curse" over it all: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And if any man now is trying to be in association with God on the basis of the first covenant, of the ten commandments, he is only under the curse: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

Now turn to the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, and you will find the new covenant of which we have read in our chapter (chap. xxxi. 31). Notice the added thought here, which was not the prominent one in Hebrews, for the simple reason that other things are in prominence there; it is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The ten tribes of Israel have wandered off. God knows where they are, if we do not, and the time is coming when the whole twelve tribes will be reunited. The staff will become one, the sceptre of God in His hand again, when Israel and Judah will be one nation in the land under the terms of the new covenant. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand." How graciously God brought Israel out of Egypt; or, as you read, "I brought you on eagles' wings to Myself." "Which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord." In Hebrews it is a quotation from the Septuagint, and the expression is, "but I re-

garded them not;" that is, they had lost Divine regard because of their failure. It is an instance of the way the Spirit of God makes use of an Old Testament scripture and adds the truth according to His own wisdom, as He sees it is needed. Looking at the people, how true it was that God could not regard them as under the first covenant, and yet how truly God under that covenant was a husband to Israel! He was betrothed to them, as you read in the sixteenth of Ezekiel;—clothing her with His beauty, and decking her with His ornaments, He espoused her to Himself. And, through the prophets, again and again we have the witness of the unfaithfulness of the nation to Him as well.

Now, reading further: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their inward parts;" (not write it on stone now, but) "I will write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying; Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Here you have the new covenant, and there are two characteristics. The old covenant was upon the condition of obedience. What is the new covenant upon condition of? No condition on their part whatever. Israel will have no glory in connection with the new covenant, but there are two features of it that go together. First, it is the writing of God's law in the heart, instead of writing it upon the tables of stone. That is new birth, as you have it in Ezekiel; as our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"—the need of regeneration, of a new heart, which delights in the law of God, had been spoken of already.

The other feature of this new covenant is: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." What two delightful truths are here! Forgiveness of sins for the conscience, and a new heart, that may delight in God, and walk in His ways! Resulting from this, there will be no need to say, "Know the Lord." God will be known and loved by all His people. "My people shall be all righteous." "All thy children shall be taught of God." As a nation Israel will be regenerate, and not merely certain individuals in the nation.

I must say a word as to Christians being under the new covenant. We have already read that it is with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah that this new covenant is to be made. We, as members of the Church of Christ, are under neither the old nor the new covenant. We were never put under the old covenant, and we are not under the new in the sense that Israel will be; that is, as an administrative order in connection with things upon earth. But the blessings of the new covenant, as all other spiritual blessings which will be for Israel, are for us also. The blessings of this new covenant are ministered to us by Christ now. He is "the Mediator of the new covenant," and so He ministers to us these two very things of which we have been speaking. What a delight it is to think that we, through His grace, have had God's blessed will written in our hearts; that in the new birth we received a new nature which delights in the law of God; that being born of God, His children, we have, through His infinite grace, capacity to enjoy Him; that we are indeed thus a new creation in Christ! New birth indeed has for us a wider and fuller meaning than it could have for Israel. We have "the more abundant life" of Christianity, as connected with the new creation. While the life is the same, its scope is amazingly enlarged. I need not add that new birth is not Church truth, but common to all saints.

Then, as to the forgiveness of sins, not only does God forgive, but (if I may use such an expression) He forgets; not in the human sense, as if it had passed from His consciousness, but in a divine sense, that it is no more against His people. It is as though our sins had never occurred. He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The apostle shows later that if there is no more remembrance of sins, there is no more need for a sacrifice. All is divinely settled.

"What though the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done?
I know them all, and thousands more;
Jehovah findeth none."

These two blessings of the new covenant, then, have been ministered to us by our Priest. He is gone on high, and in the light of the blessings He has made ours, as we look at the law, the earthly priesthood and their sanctuary, we can say: Infinitely more glorious and precious is our portion!

Now we come to the last passage in Jeremiah, the fiftieth chapter, which shows how Israel will come under the blessings of the new covenant, (vers. 4 and 5,) emphasizing again also the reunion of the twelve tribes. There is the activity of the Spirit of God, producing genuine repentance on the part of those who had been so long away from Himself, and, "they shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have forgotten their resting-place."

And now we see this repentant people turning with weeping to Zion, asking the way thither, and returning there with this resolve formed by the Spirit of God: We will join ourselves to Him by a perpetual covenant which

shall not be broken. This is the new covenant which we have been dwelling upon. A most attractive study in all the prophets is the unfolding of this new covenant for Israel. I will only refer you to the 119th psalm as giving you an illustration of how the terms of the new covenant are written in the hearts of the repentant people. There you will find eight times the entire Hebrew alphabet; every letter of that alphabet repeated eight times over, declaring the perfections of the law of God, that very law which they had despised, now written in their hearts, so that they can say, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee;" "Oh, how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day;" and they can pray, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." This does not mean, I need hardly say, a repetition of Sinai—the law given as God's claim upon the natural man, which could only condemn him, but the will of a gracious God, delighted in by a regenerate people.

Now the conclusion of all that for a believing Israelite would be that the blessings of the new covenant had forever displaced the first covenant, the Levitical priesthood, and the earthly sanctuary. They broke that covenant and inherited only a curse in connection with it. Christ is now set forth; as gone on high, He introduces the believer into the heavenly sanctuary; therefore, with good conscience and full assurance that it is the will of God, they turn away from the old covenant and its whole ritual which is like an aged thing, waxing old and vanishing away.

How good to realize that we have turned from all that which had to do with the flesh; and how good to know that the time is coming for Israel when they too shall rejoice under the blessings of the new covenant!

LECTURE VIII

THE PRIEST AND HIS SACRIFICE

“By His own blood He entered in

(Chap. ix. 1-15.)

THE apostle now takes up the great truths as to the sanctuary of God and the means of access into His presence. That which is to occupy us first is the sanctuary itself, and how Christ has entered in; then, in the tenth chapter, we see our privilege and right to enter in also. In other words, what we have in these two chapters is the holy of holies of the epistle—access into the very presence of God, where as priests before His throne we offer our praise and worship. It is a theme which should engage every power of our renewed nature. We can only grasp it in some measure, but should earnestly desire increasingly to lay hold upon its wondrous fulness.

“The first covenant had indeed, then, ordinances of divine service and a world-sanctuary: for there was a tabernacle constructed; the first, wherein were both the candlestick and the table and the show-bread, which is called the holy place; but after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holy of holies; having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein were the golden pot that had the manna, and the rod of Aaron that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat: concerning which it is not now the time to speak in detail.”

In these verses the first Tabernacle and its various articles of furniture are briefly described. As they are mentioned we will glance briefly at them, and note their typical significance.

The division of the Tabernacle into two parts is spoken of; in the first, or holy place, was the candlestick and the table of showbread. The candlestick was a seven-branched lampstand made of pure gold. It spoke of the divine glory of Christ, but as One who had come down and revealed Himself to our comprehension, and who now, in resurrection, is the means whereby His people are enlightened. It is the Holy Ghost who enlightens the people of God, but it is through a risen and glorified Saviour. The candlestick, thus, speaks of Christ risen and glorified.

The table, on the other hand, speaks of Christ in the perfection of His human and divine natures, as the One through whom we have communion with God. The life is imparted, but it needs to be sustained, and the table suggests Christ, the food which the people of God enjoy; the showbread also reminds us how perfectly His people are presented in Him.

You notice that one article of furniture is omitted here. There is no mention of the incense altar, which stood directly in front of the veil. The reason for this omission is significant: true worship must be really in the presence of God. Unless we are in His presence we cannot be worshipers. In the directions for making the Tabernacle nothing was said of the altar of incense until after provision was made for the induction of Aaron into the priest's office. In other words, there must be a priest before there could be worship. For a similar reason it is not spoken of as being in the outer part of the Tabernacle. But when we come to the holiest of all, the first thing mentioned is the golden censer. That, we might say, is really the altar of incense. It was not the actual piece of furniture, but when Aaron entered into the holiest on the day of atonement he carried this golden censer, and offered incense before God upon it. Thus worship is priestly in character, on the basis of atonement,

and in the presence of God; and the very fact that the incense altar is not mentioned as being in the holy place shows these things had not yet been accomplished.

We have next the ark of the covenant, which speaks of the throne of God, also of Christ Himself, who reigns. Its materials also refer to His human and divine glories. Within it was the golden pot of manna. That speaks of Christ who was humbled here to be the food of His people, but who now in resurrection is, as it were, laid up in glory, reserved for them.

There was, also, Aaron's rod that budded, the witness that God had really called him to the priesthood. It was a rod cut off, its life taken away, and then in the presence of God it budded and brought forth fruit; a beautiful figure of how Christ, cut off in death, in resurrection brought forth much fruit—is thus marked out the true Priest.

The tables of the covenant were also in the ark,—God's holy law enshrined in the only place where it could abide unbroken; that was, in the bosom of Christ Himself. "Thy law is within my heart" was perfectly manifested in His outward life. Then, over all, the cherubim of glory (witnesses of God's righteousness and judgment, which are the foundation of His throne), looking down upon and shadowing the mercy-seat whereon was sprinkled the blood of atonement.

These were the various articles in the Tabernacle, and you see at a glance that we might spend much time in recalling the wondrous fulness they foreshadowed, but, as the apostle says, "of which things we cannot now speak particularly." That is, this is not the place to speak of them fully, but mentions them in order to contrast this earthly sanctuary and its worship with the heavenly place of access which Christ's people now have.

"Now these things being thus ordered, into the first tabernacle the priests enter at all times, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priest only, once a year, not without blood,

which he offereth for himself and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holy places was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle as yet had its standing; which is an image for the present time, according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot make him that worshipeth perfect as to the conscience, consisting only of meats and drinks and divers baptisms,—fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of making things right.”

Having looked at the furnishing of the tabernacle, we now glance at its service. The whole priestly family went into the first, or holy place, accomplishing the service of God daily. They went in and out, cared for and trimmed the lights upon the candlestick, placed the showbread upon the table week by week, the fresh witness of Israel's perfect presentation to God. But here their service stopped. Into the second place, the holiest of all, not the priests now, but the high priest only, went once a year, as contrasted with the daily ministrations in the holy place; and he went not without blood, as contrasted with his going into the holy place merely after having washed at the laver in the outer court. The blood is offered, not only for the people, but for himself; and you notice it was for the *errors* of the people; that is, for their sins of ignorance.

A very important principle is suggested here, one that people are apt to overlook. Under the law the only sins that were provided for were those of ignorance. If a man did aught presumptuously, he was to die without mercy; no sacrifice was provided for that. So, in the nineteenth psalm, David says, “Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins;” that is, sins done knowingly. “Who can understand his errors?” There are sins of ignorance. “Cleanse Thou me from hidden faults;” that is, faults of which I know nothing, and yet which are there unquestionably.

But when you come to the fifty-first psalm you find

the sin of presumption: there is no question that David knew the awful character of the sin which he was committing. His conscience and heart were hardened for the time, and he went on in that fearful course which ended practically in murder. Then, when he came under the sense of that sin, after God had by the prophet Nathan touched his conscience, he could not plead ignorance, and therefore does not presume to bring an offering. There were trespass- and sin-offerings provided under the law; offerings for the sin too of a ruler,—but he could not bring that. He says, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.” How could he bring a sacrifice for the very sin for which God declared there was no sacrifice?

And yet, though the law was perfectly helpless to minister comfort or peace to David’s soul, he lays hold upon God, and there are the breathings of confidence, the confidence of a restored soul; but it is not on the basis of legal sacrifice. He says, The only sacrifice I can bring is a broken and a crushed heart. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” Ah, God will not despise that; it is that condition of heart which lays hold of the truth of Christ and His precious work.

Thus, when the high priest entered into the holy of holies once a year, with blood which was offered for his own sins and for the ignorance of the people, in order that God might abide with them, it was the ineffectual sacrifice of the law. It was the suited expression of the day of atonement, and the whole of this part of Hebrews is really an unfolding of the truth which is foreshadowed in the sixteenth of Leviticus.

Let us look a little in detail at these thoughts, and contrast them with Christ’s work, as they are in the following scripture. The high priest alone:—“The Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet

standing." There was no real access to God. One solitary individual of all the nation of Israel entered in, once a year, into that which was the figure of the permanent abode of every redeemed child of God now. What a glorious contrast between the distance of the law, and the place where Christ has introduced His people!

The sacrifices under the law could never make a worshiper perfect as to his conscience. Here is a poor Israelite who brings his sacrifice, lays his hands upon it and slays it; he sees the priest take the blood, sprinkle it upon the altar, and burn the victim. He sees the smoke ascend, and the priest says, Your trespass is forgiven. And yet on the day of atonement those trespasses, and all the others, were mentioned over again. He must conclude they were not really forgiven at all. In other words, his conscience was not perfect, he had not yet perfect assurance of acceptance, or forgiveness. And so it was with all the legal ordinances.

The reason was, they were external things, that stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings. An Israelite had to be very careful about what kind of food he ate. The law prescribed as to everything he ate or drank; all had to be clean, or else he was defiled. But these things were all external things—meats, drinks, and divers washings; or, as the word really is (we saw it in the sixth chapter), divers baptisms. There was a washing at the laver, the sprinkling of blood to sanctify the unclean, upon the brazen altar too, sometimes upon the horns of the altar of incense, and once a year upon the mercy-seat. These could not make the conscience perfect, or give real peace; they were carnal, or fleshly, ordinances; having to do with the outward man, with a relationship to God which was purely external. A man might thus be a good Israelite, might be ceremonially clean, and yet be an utter stranger to peace with God or a sense of His love, or access into His holy presence. We are told here

these things were laid upon them as a yoke—a yoke, in fact, as Peter says, “which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear”—until the time of reformation: that is, the time when all would be put on a right foundation, a right basis. These things were of a purely temporary character, but full of meaning for us, as types.

These ten verses give us the shadow “of good things to come” in the law, the sanctuary, and its ministry. As to the sanctuary itself, it was an earthly one; as to the ministry, it was a routine of carnal ordinances. The conscience was still left guilty, and the soul was still at a distance from God. Now we come, blessed be God, to that which is a perfect contrast to all this.

“But Christ being come, a high priest of the good things to come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,—that is, not of this creation,—neither by the blood of goats and bulls, but by his own blood, he hath entered in once for all into the holy places, having found an eternal redemption.”

In these two verses we have the blessed contrast of what Christ is and has done. He is High Priest in contrast with all of Aaron’s line—not of Judaism, or carnal ordinances, but of good things to come. We are looking at things from the standpoint of Judaism, you must remember: to a Jew, in the time of the law, the good things were not there. They were yet to come, and were not manifested until Christ’s work opened the way into God’s presence, into that treasury from which all the riches of His grace are poured out for us. The good things to come are the good things of Christianity, the “perfection” of the sixth chapter, of which Christ is the Minister, the things which we are now enjoying by faith.

But that does not exhaust the meaning of this expression. These things are also future. We speak of being in the sanctuary as to our nearness and access to God; but actually, as to the body, we are in the wilderness, subject to the changes and trials of the weary way; we

ourselves have part in the groaning of the old creation. The good things, in their full manifestation, are yet to come; they have been brought to us by Christ, and the Holy Spirit has made them real to faith; but our portion, our good things, are still to come. We have known the blessedness of sins forgiven and peace with God, but there are still good things to come. We have known the grace of Christ, have tested it in many a trying circumstance; He has been with us in the hour of bereavement, in trial, in disappointments; in everything that would try the soul Christ has been sufficient, and His High Priestly sympathy and succor all that we required. But there are more good things to come.

How much the future has before us! This year on which we shall soon enter, if the Lord tarry, what is hidden in its womb for us? We know not what a day may bring forth. But we do know this, that there are good things to come in the future. The good things of Christ will be sufficient for us for the rest of our lives. Look on down the whole vista of your life, till the very last moment when you will be taken out of it into the presence of the Lord, and what is it? Only good things to come all the way through. And then, dear brethren, as faith looks upward, and we think of the glory that is just beyond, where He is, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, surely the good things are yet to come that Christ will minister to us. And as the cycles of eternity roll on, we will never, never exhaust the fulness of blessing that the heart of God and the love of Christ have secured for us. And you can write over the portals of heaven itself, **GOOD THINGS TO COME.** Evermore fresh—no weariness, no dulness; one perennial joy and fresh surprises as we share with our blessed Lord the fruits of what He has won for us.

Contrast with that, for a moment (for some may need

just such a word)—contrast those “good things to come,” the fruit of redemption, with that awful word of judgment, “wrath to come.” You remember John the Baptist said to those who insincerely came out to his baptism, “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” There is wrath to come. Fortunes may be increased, pleasures may be indulged in, but there is “wrath to come.” Years of God’s patience, years of mercy despised, of warnings unheeded, are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And when comes the end of time, looking back upon a Christless life, and forward into a Christless eternity, oh awful thought, it is wrath to come! Ah, dear friends, that place of wrath, in the outer darkness, where is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, is no temporary banishment, no purifying fire; no place from which he will one day emerge a wiser man, ready now to accept the finished work of Christ. Time has closed, the day of grace is eternally past, and throughout eternity, solemn and awful thought, it will be still WRATH TO COME. As you think of it, should it not fill the heart with yearning, with longing for the salvation of souls? Should it not make us instant in season, out of season? Daily we meet men who are going on to the wrath to come, and we are going on to the good things to come. Shall we not, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men? Shall we not entreat them, yea, shall we not go out and compel them to come in? Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?

Returning to our Epistle, we see the sanctuary into which Christ has entered, and into which He introduces us, is not an earthly place, nor connected with the old creation.

Beautiful as this world is as we see the works of God, the witnesses of His handiwork and goodness, lovely mountains, seas and rivers, all nature smiling in the springtime, or ripening its stores in autumn, yet we know

that it is all the old creation, everything subject to decay, its fairest scenes passing away; there is nothing abiding. It is because of sin, which has marred God's old creation, and therefore it must be all purged with fire, the very works that are therein shall be burned up, and all that we see now shall pass away.

The ministry of Christ is not in connection with this old creation; He has come down into it, and has accomplished redemption here. He has laid hold of a poor, sinful people, to lead them on to glory; He has gone out of the old creation, and entered into the new sphere, in a greater and more perfect tabernacle.

Look at that Tabernacle in the wilderness, which, small as it was, forbade the entrance of any into its sacred precincts. Look at that, and compare it with the heaven of heavens, the eternal glories where Christ ministers for His redeemed. Who shall describe, who shall give the limits of that land of glory? Even the limits of God's earthly inheritance for Israel were never filled out, and who shall describe the boundaries of that land which lies up yonder in eternal glory, with which the new heavens and the new earth are connected? That is the greater and more perfect tabernacle.

Then, as to the way in which He enters in, it is "by His own blood." The blood of goats and calves, offered under the law, could never take away sin. So Christ has not entered by the blood of such sacrifices into the presence of God, mere temporary expedients which could never glorify Him, but "by His own blood he entered in."

Let us dwell upon that for a moment, familiar truth as it is. You find constantly in this Epistle the mention of the blood of Christ. The life is in the blood; and the reason why it is so constantly spoken of is because the blood shed means the life given up under the judgment of God. Righteousness demanded the judgment of sin. It was a thing which God Himself could not waive,

though He might pass over for a time the sins of His people in view of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Yet if He forgave David's sin, it was on the basis of something which He foresaw would fully glorify Him. David might lay hold upon God's mercy. Abraham, and others, could lay hold by faith upon that mercy. But for every sin that God forgave in the past dispensation, He had His eye upon the precious blood of Christ, the sufficient atoning Sacrifice which would vindicate His righteousness. Therefore, when we speak of the blood of Christ, it is understood that we mean Christ's sacrifice under the wrath of God, bearing judgment for sin.

Looking back again to the sixteenth of Leviticus, you find the high priest clothed in white, answering to the spotless purity of Christ, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The priest entered into the sanctuary with the cloud of incense, with the blood in the basin, and going before the throne of God, the mercy-seat, he sprinkled of the blood upon it, and seven times before it. That was the type, the shadow. Christ by His own blood has entered in;—we do not mean, of course, nor does Scripture say, He entered in *with* His blood. The type was but a shadow, to make plain to our comprehension what our blessed Lord did in His priestly work. He entered in by virtue of His blood; the blood was shed, the work was finished upon Calvary and the Sacrifice accepted; God giving proof of it in rending the veil and raising Him from the dead. Christ is passed into heaven, He has gone into the presence of God, and we know that it is by His own blood that He entered there. He might have entered heaven at any moment during His perfect life here, but He would have gone alone, as He came alone; there would not have been a single one to share His glory with Him. But He has not entered heaven in that way. He has entered by, or in virtue of, His blood—not by His perfect character, not by His keeping the law

of God, not by His personal worthiness even; but He has entered by His blood, after having accomplished redemption: and because of that work He is there before God.

That brings us to the expression "having obtained (or found) eternal redemption." But where had He to go to find it? He had to go to the cross. It meant that He had to shed His blood, to give up His life, in order to get redemption for us. Look at that expression, "eternal redemption," as contrasted with everything they had before. The high priest might say when he took the censer in his hand on the day of atonement, "I have a redemption here that will last for a whole year. O Israelites, if ye are only faithful, I have here the assurance that God will remain among us in His Tabernacle for one whole year; I have remembered and made atonement for your sins since you left Egypt to the present time." But some one might say, "Did you not put them away last year, and the years before that? Did you not make mention of these sins?" In contrast with that we have the glorious entrance of our blessed High Priest; He has entered in *once*, into heaven itself. He has found a redemption that seals our relationship with God forever!—not for a year, nor conditional upon our good behaviour. Who would dare to have his relationship with God dependent upon his good behavior? What may we not do during the coming year, save as we abide in self-distrust in the presence of our blessed Lord? But, dear brethren, as we look forward, not for the next year merely, but our whole earthly life, whatever may come in, whatever power of Satan may be manifest, whatever the needs of the way, there is a redemption which He has found which is eternal in its efficacy, which can never lose its power, upon which we rest now, upon which we will rest as we pass from earth into glory, and in eternity itself.

“For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the defiled, sanctifieth for the purity of the flesh, how much rather shall the blood of Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God? And for this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, they which have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

We have here not only a general reference to all the Levitical sacrifices, but a special reference to the day of atonement, when a bullock was offered for the sins of the priest and his house, and a goat for the sins of the people, and the blood of both was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat.

The ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean reminds us of the service spoken of in the book of Numbers, in the nineteenth chapter—the provision against defilements by the way. The heifer was offered without blemish, the hands of the priest laid upon it, it was slain, and completely burnt. Its ashes were laid up in a clean place outside the camp, and whenever an Israelite was unclean by reason of any defilement that had come upon him,—contact with the dead, or anything of that sort,—the priest was to take the ashes of the heifer and mingle them with water, and sprinkle the unclean on the third and seventh days. He would then be restored to outward communion with the people of God. That is, it availed for the purifying of the flesh. This had to do, not with access to God, but with communion, as you might say. It was wilderness provision, just as there was sanctuary provision.

And so we have the two extremes of the Levitical provision—the best that it could do as to bringing to God, and the best that it could do for maintaining communion. They typify the two great sides of redemption—the work of Christ for us before God, and, as our Advocate, keep-

ing us in communion with God by His Word and Spirit here.

But how utterly ineffectual they were! As to the presence of God, we have been already looking at the sprinkling of blood upon the mercy-seat, which was only the witness that God could endure, tolerate His people for another year; and as to the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, what did it effect? What was the defilement? It was an external defilement; he had touched a dead body. Is there anything in that which could defile, save in a ceremonial or typical way? But when there is genuine defilement of soul, that which unfits for communion with God—as any disobedience would—could the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean really purify and fit for the enjoyment of communion? Suppose you fall into any defilement of soul through contact with anything in this chamber of death (this world where we are living) and the ashes of a heifer be sprinkled upon you, what effect could it possibly have? Absolutely none. So the law, with all its intricate provisions,—beautiful when you translate them into the language of grace,—is utterly unfit to satisfy, save for the purifying of the flesh.

But now, he says, if this twofold cleansing did satisfy in that external way, how much more shall the blood of Christ? The Spirit of God puts against all these sacrifices that one solitary, finished, perfect work. Does one ask, What is the basis of our relationship with God? The answer is, The blood of Christ. You may have fallen into defilement, you may have, alas, dishonored our blessed Lord in daily life, you may have grieved His Spirit, you may have grieved His people. You may have contracted that defilement which necessitates that you be shut outside the camp, outside the company of the people of God; but oh, the blood of Christ, has it not given peace, and glorified God in your redemption? It is also

the pledge that God will yet recover to communion with Himself. That blessed, precious Sacrifice is the basis upon which all communion is maintained, and the pledge of the restoration of the wandering sheep who has been away from the Lord. This is typified in the ashes of the heifer.

It was through the eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself without spot to God. He was born of the Spirit, His whole life here was under the power of the Spirit. The Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, and led Him on through His whole earthly ministry, on to the cross. It was thus through the eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself without spot to God. And you can think of Him in His life here as being conducted by the blessed Spirit throughout all its varied phases, ever on to Calvary, and there, as we see Him upon the cross, offering up His life as the spotless Lamb of God, it was under the perfect guidance and power of the eternal Spirit.

How that word again reminds us of the efficacy of it all! He has found eternal redemption because He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit. It was no evanescent work, but an eternal work. The stamp of the whole Trinity is upon it: the Father gave the Son, the Son gave Himself, and the Holy Spirit led Him in this self-sacrifice; so Father, Son and Spirit are one in this work of redemption. Put alongside of that all the ritualism of the law, all the self-righteousness of man, and what a mass of rubbish! By that precious work the conscience is purged from dead works. Dead works are those done by a man who has no divine life, no true relationship with God. They are done under the law. The apostle does not say sinful works merely; it is dead works, whatever they may have been. They may have been mere ritual performances, or acts of philanthropy, outwardly blameless, amiable works. There may be much that is commendable in the eye of man, yet God

may write "dead works" upon it all. A man might give all his goods to feed the poor, yea more, does not the apostle say he might give his body to be burned? but if there is no love in his soul, no life, everything that he does is dead—dead works. What then can purge the conscience from these?

I am sure you will agree with me when I say that the conscience divinely awakened is not only troubled about sins which it has committed, which the world calls sins, but by the iniquity of its holy things as well; a divinely awakened conscience is convicted in the best that we have ever done—it is all stained with self-will and pride. We realize that we need to be purged from those things just as truly as from those outward sins in our lives that were contrary to God's outward laws. The blood of Christ purges the conscience from all sin. A purged conscience! A conscience that can testify to our acceptance in the holy light of God's own presence, illumined by His truth! A conscience that says, The precious blood of Christ has made me clean every whit! A conscience that gives us right to say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Does Satan know anything against us? Ah, that adversary knows our whole life; but can he lay anything to our charge? Can we lay anything to our own charge? Let memory do its work, let the whole life be brought up, and as you look at it all you say, "The precious blood of Christ has purged my conscience from all sin."

"How bright, there above, is the mercy of God!

And void of all guilt, and clear of all sin,

Is my conscience and heart through my Saviour's blood—

Not a cloud above—not a spot within."

How precious this blood of Christ which has purged the conscience so perfectly, and by which God Himself can find nothing against His people! "It is God that justifieth—who is he that condemneth?"

But if our consciences have been purged from dead works, does it mean now that we are to be careless, indifferent, unconcerned? Does it mean that one who has a purged conscience will think lightly of sin? Far be the thought. The man who thinks lightly of sin, thinks lightly of the blood of Christ. The man who trifles with sin, trifles with that which has put the sin away. No, we are purged from all our dead works in order that, in blessed contrast, we might serve the living and true God. Christ has introduced us into the presence of that living God, and our service is to Him now. It does not speak directly of the works of righteousness, or of the fruits of the divine life, but it suggests the blessed fact that we are now under the eye of God. As the living God, we realize that He must rule in heart and conscience and life.

This service is of a twofold kind, as is mentioned in the last chapter of our Epistle. There we are told that we are to offer continually the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of the lips confessing His name: and with that we are to do good and to communicate, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The word for serving, in the original, includes both these thoughts; it is priestly service, both within the veil and out in the world. As a holy priesthood before God, and as royal priests outside before the world, we serve the living God.

Christ our Lord is the Mediator of this new covenant. The first covenant, the law, could only condemn; but He by means of His death has redeemed us from the curse of the law: now those who are called have received the promise of an eternal inheritance.

Thus we have been speaking of an *eternal* redemption, and of the *eternal* Spirit, through whom our Lord offered Himself spotless to God, and the result of it all is an *eternal* inheritance; and by the gospel of His grace we enjoy these eternal blessings.

LECTURE IX

THE FINISHED WORK

"Once in the end of the world"

(Chap. ix. 16-28.)

"For where there is a testament, there must needs come in the death of the testator; for a testament is of force when men are dead; since it is in no way of force while the testator liveth."

WE have had, in this part of our Epistle much said about the covenants,—the old covenant of the law, and the new covenant whose blessings have been ministered by Christ, and on the basis of which Israel will be brought into eternal blessing. In the original, the words for "covenant" and "testament" are the same, so that what we ordinarily call, "The New Testament," might be called, "The New Covenant"—perhaps more properly; covenant being the administration of things according to God's order. In speaking of the covenant the apostle was led to dwell upon this other feature of a testament, which we ordinarily call a "will." He had just before been speaking of the eternal inheritance which is ours through Christ's redemption which has put away the transgressions that were under the first covenant, so that now those who by the grace of God are called, inherit eternal blessings.

Speaking of the inheritance, seems to suggest how it is made good in ordinary life. Here is a person whose father has enormous possessions. His son practically is a poor man. His father might, for instance, lose all his property, then the son would be reduced to the level of the poorest; or, through the misconduct of that son, he

might forfeit the right to his father's approval and be cut off without inheriting any of his estate. In this way, so long as the father lives, while the son has the promise of an inheritance, and bright prospects, you cannot say he is a person of wealth in his own right. But the father makes his will, he devises his property; he bequeaths it to this son, and the son knows that his father's word is pledged, and that so sure as his father's will is carried out, he will one day be heir of all his wealth. At present he has nothing. His expectations are future. The will is written, it expresses the wishes of the father; but before it becomes operative, death has to intervene.

Now apply that to spiritual things. Think of the inheritance of God. Who can describe the wealth of that heavenly inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away"? There is the inheritance, and it was the will of God that it should be for His people in and through Christ. You might say the will was drawn up in eternity, as we read in Ephesians, He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." But does that insure the inheritance to us? Does the devising of this eternal property insure our possession of it? Something has to come in, in order that the will of the Testator may be made good—it is the death of the Testator. So, before we could inherit any blessing, there had to come in the death of Him through whom all these blessings were promised. And this not only looks forward to the eternal inheritance, but back over all our blessings; so that everything we have had, even our temporal mercies, are a part of those purchased and bequeathed blessings; everything is sanctified by the precious death of our Lord Jesus Christ. How that dignifies the simplest mercies of each day! How, as we bow our heads in thanksgiving for our daily food, we can rejoice at its coming to us, in

a distinctive way, as purchased for us through our Lord's death; things that you might say have cost Him His life.

"Whence, neither was the first covenant inaugurated without blood: for every commandment having been spoken by Moses according to the law, to all the people,—having taken the blood of bulls and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you. And he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of service. And almost all things are according to the law purified with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was necessary, then, that the representations of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Now as we have been seeing all along, while the law was a contrast to the blessings of grace, it was also a foreshadowing of them. That is distinctly stated for us at the beginning of the tenth chapter where it is spoken of as "having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." In many ways it was in contrast. You can see its feebleness. It waxes old and must be set aside, but at the same time it foreshadows. So, in this sprinkling under the law we have both a contrast and a foreshadowing of "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." When the representatives of the people came forward to enter into covenant relationship with God, this sprinkling occurred.

If you turn to the Old Testament passage, you will find there is no mention there of the accompaniments of this sprinkling. We are simply told that he sprinkled half the blood on the altar and the other half on the book and the people; but here we are told that the medium through which he did this was "water, scarlet wool, and hyssop;" and that connects with what we were seeing a little while ago. These details suggest the two kinds of

atoning work, if I may so say: that which had reference to the sanctuary—the blood of the sacrifice carried in and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat; and the ashes of the red heifer which was burned entirely, with cedar and hyssop and scarlet wool.

But what did this act mean? We know that first covenant was a ministration of death; it could not give life. It was a ministration of condemnation, it only sealed man's guilt upon him. Man did not continue for a moment to fulfil the part that he had engaged to do. The blood is sprinkled, as though calling God to witness. Sprinkled upon the altar it was a witness that the law, if broken, called for the shedding of blood, the execution of judgment; upon the people, it declared that if they broke that law they would be the objects of God's wrath according to the terms of the covenant; in other words, that they would not merely be condemned as the mass of the world because of their general sinfulness, but specifically condemned as having entered into and broken the covenant relationship with God.

I need not say how they did violate the terms of that covenant. So the sin of those who have had a revelation from God is far greater than of those who live in heathen darkness. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." There is no such teaching in Scripture, however, as that those who are ignorant of the Bible are therefore guiltless before God, as simply unfortunate. Every man by virtue of his creation is a responsible being; and because responsible, he must give account to God for everything he has done; but it will be on the basis of his knowledge. The Gentile will not be judged for violating the law as the Jew will; still less will he be judged for having rejected Christ.

Ah, we speak of the privilege of being in a Christian land! The privilege is great indeed, but the responsibil-

ity is equally great, and fearful if, with all these blessings, there is still a disregard of the grace of God. That I conceive to be clearly what is meant by the sprinkling of the blood upon the book and the people. It was a declaration that if the terms of this covenant were violated nothing but judgment could follow. What self-confidence and spiritual blindness it reveals when the people entered into this covenant, not realizing their utter helplessness to keep the law, thus incurring its terrible condemnation the moment they violated it! And they have been ever since, as you might say, a people living under the condemnation of that sprinkled blood. They have also added to this by taking upon themselves the guilt of the death of Christ when they said, "His blood be upon us and our children." And in an equally solemn way, the knowledge and profession of allegiance to Christ is an awful sentence upon those who in heart despise and reject the gospel of the grace of God.

But the fulness of Scripture is not apprehended when we look only at one side of things. While the law of the old covenant was a ministry of death and condemnation, it was at the same time a figure of the good things to come. It was in connection with the giving of the law that provision was also made for God's dwelling among His people. Sinai stands between the Red Sea and the Tabernacle. Now, in that sense, the law prefigures the obedience of faith which is the result of redemption; and while we have been speaking of the responsibility which the blood sprinkled upon the book and the people suggested in view of their failing to keep the law, we can also see in it a suggestion of the precious fact that the blood of redemption, the blood of Christ, has brought us into permanent relationship with God, so that our obedience and everything else is under the power of that precious blood.

Think of it as you take up this precious Book: every

page sprinkled with the blood of redemption! We read it, not as those who are pledged to keep it in our own strength, but as those who are first of all redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. More than that, we can now turn to it and seek, by that grace which has saved us, to carry out the righteous requirement of the law as we walk "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thus redemption seals us as those who belong to God and brings us into a relationship in which it is possible now to obey that very law of God which otherwise would have been our condemnation.

I have thus ventured to give what I believe to be the two foreshadowings of what this sprinkling of the blood means.

In addition to what we have seen, the Tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, "and almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." The meaning is very distinct and precious, being that, I have no doubt, which we have just been dwelling upon. It was to show that God's dwelling place among His people was upon the basis of redemption; that the only ground upon which a holy God could dwell in the midst of a sinful people was the ground of the blood. And as the priest went into the Tabernacle to accomplish his ministry, if an intruder had been allowed to go in there, he might have asked, What do you mean by these marks of blood upon that glorious veil, upon the sides of the Tabernacle, upon the table and the altar and the candlestick? Everything is marked with blood. Why do you not remove these stains which mar their beauty? And the priest could reply, That blood gives true beauty to it all. It is a pledge that we, a sinful people, have a title to enjoy the privileges which are ministered by these precious things. A holy God could not dwell among us, nor minister to us, nor could we offer our worship to Him, were it not on the basis of the blood.

And when you come to Christian worship, what joy and liberty it is—in connection too with all ministry—to know that the mark of the blood is upon it all! Thus it is on the basis of redemption that we are ministering one to another, and offer up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Ah, the precious truth of the blood! Wherever the believer looks,—back upon his guilty past, he sees it blotted out by the precious blood of Christ; if he looks forward to the eternal glory, he sees it secured for him by that precious blood; if he looks upon himself, poor, failing, feeble as he is, he can say, The very blood which is upon the throne of God is upon me also and is pledged to bring me into that place of eternal blessedness. There is no thought of our worthiness, of self-satisfaction or self-complacency. As the apostle says: “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” The precious blood humbles us, glorifies God, but brings us into abiding blessing.

One would pause and say just here, if there are any who are seeking acceptance with God, and yet may be trusting in themselves, in their own righteousness, how these words set all that aside with one stroke: “Without shedding of blood is no remission”!

The patterns of things in the heavens were purified with the blood of sacrifices which had no intrinsic value; they were simply valuable as types of that better Sacrifice, “of richer blood than they.” But “the heavenly things themselves” must be purified “with better sacrifices than these.” I call your attention to this remarkable expression, “the heavenly things” needed to be purified. The Tabernacle itself would have been a defiled place because it was in the midst of a guilty and defiled people. God distinctly declares that the only ground upon which He could dwell among them was the ground of the blood. (See Lev. xvi. 16.) If God’s dwelling is to be with a people in themselves guilty and defiled, it must be purged from

the sin that has penetrated there. What a solemn thought! A man committing sin may say, It is only myself that I am injuring; nobody has anything to do with it. And he is rightly told that no man is so isolated from his fellows. If one came with a contagious disease into a city, he would not be allowed to remain. And the sinner can rightly be told, You are not only affected yourself, but you influence humanity. You set an example, and defile those with whom you are associated. You are degrading the moral level of the human race.

But there is a more solemn thought than even that. Every sin committed has penetrated heaven itself. If heaven is to be in association with man—if God is to take knowledge of His creatures in the least—from very necessity of that fact, every sin has penetrated there. The place for a sinner to look for his sins, is not merely to read the record of his life as he can keep it—not to look into his bosom and see the secrets there concealed, but—how solemn the thought! it is recorded in the presence of God's glory. And how defiled for a holy God would that heaven be, if it were not purged from the presence of sin there recorded!

But we look further. Who has become the ruler and prince of this world, the god of this age? It is one who gained control and authority over man, by man's disobedience in listening to his lie. So you find that Satan, too, has an entrance into heaven itself. In the book of Job we see he presented himself before God; and so in Revelation he accuses the saints of God day and night before Him. What solemn thoughts are these! Our sins up there defiling that holy place, and that unclean intruder claiming, so to speak, a right to be there to accuse, because God is allowing sin to go on in this world!

But what is it that will purge that place? What is it that has purged it and removed from it, so to speak, all taint, all evidence of any inconsistency on God's part?

Ah, it is a better Sacrifice than those that purged the earthly sanctuary. The heavenly sanctuary is purged by the precious blood of Christ; and, carrying the thought on further, the power by which Satan is overthrown and cast out of heaven is the power of the blood. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

Now, these are profound and yet most precious truths. We read in Colossians that Christ has reconciled by His death, not merely persons, but actually reconciled all things, so that God can dwell in abiding communion with His people. God could never dwell in association with an earth where sin is. The heavens are not clean in His sight because of their association with the creature's sin, and the only way these could be purged is by the blood of Christ. When His blood was shed, there was the basis upon which heaven itself was purified from all the charge which could be brought against God because of His condoning or allowing sin; He abides in eternal righteousness in relation with His creation.

I am sure, as we go on to learn the basis on which God has to do with His whole creation, from eternity past to eternity to come, it will be found to be the precious blood of Christ. The Cross is the centre upon which rest, and around which revolve all God's attributes, all His ways, His counsels, His purposes. But what a transcending thought! What a wondrous thing to realize that that precious blood which has so glorified God in the heavens is the seal upon us too; it has cleansed us and made us meet for that glorious place, so that we have the same mark upon us that is upon the throne of God itself!

Ah, brethren, God has no light thoughts of the Cross. No secondary place in the plan of salvation. It is the display of God's righteousness and grace, the ground of our peace and of all our blessings.

I need hardly say that it is not a literal sprinkling upon the throne, but that God is fully glorified by what

is done. The actual bearing of sin by our Lord upon the cross, and God's acceptance of that work, is all that is meant by the sprinkling of the blood.

"For Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; and not that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy places every year with blood of others; for then would he need often to have suffered from the foundation of the world; but now once in the completion of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by his sacrifice."

In contrast still with the Tabernacle and the Old Testament figure, Christ as our Priest has not entered holy places made with hands, as the high priest did, but into heaven itself; the witness there of the establishment of an eternal basis of relationship between God and His people. How has He entered in? He had a personal right to enter because of what He was personally; but He could not enter in that way as our representative. If He is to appear for us, it must be with the witness of the blood. The priest, who appeared for the people and himself, had to carry the blood into the holiest. Christ has gone in by His own blood, having accomplished eternal redemption.

Think of that Man who walked this earth, who passed through all its trials, who magnified God in His daily life; He is now in the presence of God! He is not there for Himself, but appears in the presence of God for us! A Man before God, a Man as our representative, a Man who is God's delight, is the pledge that just so surely as He is there, so surely does God delight in every one of His redeemed people! If you want to know the measure of your acceptance before God think not of your poor, feeble, unworthy self, but look up yonder upon the throne and see One who has entered into heaven itself and appears in the presence of God *for us*. You remember in the fiftieth of Isaiah, the Lord asks, Who is it that will

lay anything to His charge? God is near who justifies Him. When you turn to the eighth of Romans, you find that identical language used of His people!

He appears in the presence of God for us—how much that means! It means that the journey is already over, so far as our standing is concerned; that the whole question is eternally settled. Christ Himself would need to be dragged down from His place of glory before the acceptance of a believer in Him could be questioned. Doubts dishonor God's grace, and practically dethrone Christ! If we but realized it, to have a doubt of our perfect and eternal security is to have a doubt of Christ's place in the presence of God—He appears there for us.

Then, he goes on to say, it is not that He offers Himself often, as the high priest who once a year entered into the holy place with blood of others. If that were the case, think of the centuries of suffering for the blessed Lord Jesus! "Then must He often have suffered from the foundation of the world." Instead of the oft repeated sacrifices which could not really take away sin, instead of coming over and over again, making mention of the same sins every year, what is there? That blessed word "*once*, in the end of the world."

"The end of the world," people say, means the time when this world is coming to an end. If we want to see the end of the world, we look back at Calvary. People talk about the world improving, about its progress, but the Cross has ended it all. It is God's sentence upon it. Man had been tested in every way. God had given him every opportunity. The dim light of promise, before Noah, had waxed brighter by special revelation. God had called out a chosen people. He had given them all the privileges of a priesthood ordained by Himself. He sent them prophets and kings and everything that could possibly minister to them. What was the result of it all? It only meant added condemnation. If He sent His only

Son, they set a seal upon all their iniquity by putting Him on the cross. There the history of the world came to an end. There Christ appeared, in the end of the world,—the consummation of the ages, as it is better rendered—when man had been fully tried. All his iniquity, all his helplessness, all his hopelessness had fully come out.

He appeared to put away sin, to blot it out from before God's face, to deliver us from its guilt and power. And in what way? "By the sacrifice of Himself." Ah, nothing else could put away sin, and He has appeared *once* to do it. No need of repeating that. When those words of triumph rang out from Calvary: "It is finished," all was done. In the very language of the Son of God Himself it meant that nothing could be added to the work now accomplished. Oh, let that precious word take hold of our inmost souls, a *finished* work, to the praise of His glory!

"And forasmuch as it is reserved unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Christ also having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him the second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

The apostle now speaks of a fact which is admitted by all men: "As it is appointed unto men once to die." Solemn word that is! Word uttered in Eden before the fall! "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,"—a word which has found its echo in every sob and grief by the bed of death, from that day to this. Death has reigned from Adam to Moses, and spreads its dark pall everywhere, a solemn witness of the universality of sin. Death has come in because of sin, and there is never a death but is witness to the fact of sin and separation from God. God declared it should be so, and He has carried out inexorably that solemn declaration in the whole history of humanity.

Men may try to put off the day of death. All the skill, the ingenuity, the science of man, conspire to put off that

evil day, and yet you would be considered a madman if you should say to the most eminent physician, I want you to insure that I shall not die. Ah, the hand of the most skilful operator will one day be pallid and cold in death itself, and those who have ministered to the needs of the sick and dying, will be a witness that they had no power to help themselves.

“It is appointed unto men once to die”—that is only half the solemn truth. Equally appointed, equally certain: “After death, the judgment.” Death, instead of being the end of all, is rather the beginning. This present time is but the ante-chamber of eternity. No one can deny the certainty of death for the human race; and after that comes the judgment. No one can deny that, either. The very God who declares the one and who witnesses to it in countless deaths, witnesses and declares the certainty of that judgment which is also coming,—solemn realities for every one to face!

But I want to call your attention to one word which sheds the light of grace over the whole statement: “As.” What then? “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” In the very scene where death witnesses of sin and where judgment hangs in the future, darkly threatening and certain to come, Christ was offered, to bear the very judgment and death which we deserved for our sins. Man gets death first, and after death the judgment. Christ, our blessed Lord, bore the judgment first, going to the cross, bearing wrath. Look at that scene upon Calvary; think of, ponder upon those cries which came from the cross. Hear that cry of forsaken anguish when all was darkness about Him, for you will never fully understand the reality of the cross until you have entered into the meaning of those words: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” That is the very thing that the ungodly will realize in the judgment. The word will be to them: “Depart from Me ye cursed, into

everlasting fire." We read that Christ was made a curse for us, the very thing the sinner deserves. The sinner will be cast away from God; so Christ was in that outer darkness. He bore the judgment of God inflicted upon Him as the full penalty upon the whole world of His creatures.

He bore judgment and then death, which is, after all, not the deepest, not the most solemn part of it, having to do with the body only. But our blessed Lord delivered us completely from all the results of our sin, bearing in His body the sentence of our transgressions, and laying down His bodily life upon this earth. So He has borne judgment in this twofold way,—judgment upon the soul and upon the body. He has taken it all away by the sacrifice of Himself, "Once offered to bear the sins of many."

I call your attention again to that blessed word "once." It is a finished work. Would you dare to think of His coming down from that excellent glory and being nailed afresh to the cross? Impossible, impossible! So, for a believer, it is utterly impossible for his sins to come back upon him again, for they have all been put away forever by the sacrifice of Christ.

Now notice the blessed conclusion. How we mount higher and higher! "To them that look for Him." We are not looking for death, though it is the common portion for men. Christ has annulled death for the believer, by removing its sting—by removing sin. It may come in as an incident, but for the people of God it is called by a new and different word—"those who sleep in Jesus." If He should call to-night, dear brethren, if He should put His hand upon us and put us to sleep this night, would there be any terror in it, any sting, any fear? We are ready to go to Him this very night, to lie down in quiet rest.

But even that is not the blessed hope that is before us.

Death has been taken away so that we do not even dwell upon the probability of our falling asleep. "To them that look for Him." We have looked at Him upon the cross; we have seen the work which has put away our sin there. Now we are looking not merely at Him in the presence of God, but we are looking for Him, for His manifestation: "To them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

Once He appeared in lowly guise, the Man of sorrows here. It was only faith that could pierce through that outer covering and see the glories and beauties within. He appeared to be a Sin-offering, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. We look for Him now to appear the second time, apart from sin. No question of sin upon Him now, is there? We saw Him on Calvary, with all the judgment of His redeemed people; but we look at Him now in glory, and there is not a shadow upon His face. No sin upon Him now, nor upon us. We are not looking for Him to put away our sins when He comes, nor to purge our conscience. We are looking for Him the second time, apart from the whole question of sin, unto salvation.

Blessed hope, this coming of the Lord! As we have traced Him thus, traced the precious blood of the new covenant from the cross up into the presence of God, and think of the Lord coming back again, we see how utterly out of place would be any thought of His coming except for one special object, and that is to take His redeemed out of this scene where sin is, into that scene which He has purchased by His own blood, our habitation with God forever.

How the soul thrills, how the heart delights at these glorious themes and the soul fills with adoration! We think of the grace which has thus given us a perfect redemption and made it our business to be waiting. To be sure, we must work while we wait, but work out of love.

We work, not for life, but by reason of life; and we wait for God's Son from heaven. There is no joy, or hope, or victory for the believer that can compare with the glad shout that shall ring in every heart as we shall mount into His own blessed light, to be forever with Him.

Salvation will get its full significance then. It is not the salvation of the soul, which we know now; it is not deliverance by His grace from the bondage of sin, which we are privileged to know now; it is not His sustaining us through various circumstances of our pilgrim path; but His full salvation, when He shall have His own way with us at last. Alas, we have not yielded ourselves up to His will as He would have us here; but when at last He shall have His own way with us, when He shall fashion our bodies of humiliation and make them like unto the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself, His full desires will be attained.

Such, beloved, is the value of the blood of Jesus Christ, as we contrast it with all works of our own, with all human ritual, all Jewish ordinances, with all basis of acceptance in any other way. As you think of it, how you long to put it so simply that the heart shall grasp it and believe it. Nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ, nothing but the Man at God's right hand, as the witness of what we are in God's sight; and nothing but His coming again to cheer us and to give us songs in the night, as we think, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

LECTURE X

THE SANCTIFIED AND THEIR WORSHIP

“Boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus”

(Chap. x. 1-25.)

“For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never by the same sacrifices which they offer perpetually, year by year, make the comers thereto perfect. For then would they not indeed have ceased to be offered? for that the worshipers having been once purged would have no longer any conscience of sins. But in these there is a calling to mind again of sins every year: for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”

I HAVE no doubt we often fail to remember this first verse in connection with the law, from the fact that we go back to the Old Testament with the light of the New. When we turn to the book of Leviticus, with all its sacrifices and ordinances, there seems such a beautiful harmony and unfolding of the truths of Christ that perhaps we forget it was all enacted centuries before the coming of our Lord Jesus. If we could obliterate from memory the knowledge of Himself and all the truths made known to us by the Holy Spirit in this present dispensation, we would find that the law was indeed a shadow; there was simply a contour, an outline of divine truth. This is not to cast a slight upon the perfect word of God,—perfect in its place, as surely it is,—but to show that until the coming of our blessed Lord everything was in abeyance. These were shadows of things to come; the body, the substance, is of Christ.

The apostle illustrates and emphasizes that in these

verses. There was a shadowy forgiveness, a shadowy access to God, a shadowy putting away of sins, but there was not the very image of those things, as shown in the fact that these sacrifices were offered year by year continually. The effect was, that those who brought them could not be made perfect. This does not mean perfection of the person, of course, but perfection as to his standing and relation to God. It is the same kind of perfection that we have spoken of afterwards in connection with the work of Christ, where it says, "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The various sacrifices under the law could not give that perfection as to one's present and eternal acceptance. The apostle says, If it had given such perfection of conscience, they would have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. If those sacrifices had brought actual peace to the soul and conscious relationship with God, it would have been an insult to that sacrifice, and a denial of its value, to have repeated it. So the very repetitions were a witness of their utter ineffectiveness.

Now in the expression "the worshipers once purged" we have Christian truth, the very opposite of this imperfection which was under the law. An effectual substitutionary sacrifice having been made for sin, the conscience is at perfect rest in God's presence, so that the question of sin and relation to God is never raised again. Notice the expression. It is not "no more *consciousness* of sins"—which would be contrary to all our experience; for who is there that has not consciousness of sins—the countless sins against God in the days before his conversion, or since that time? who cannot remember with bitter sorrow again and again that which has dishonored a holy and a loving God? And who that knows his own heart, with the possibilities of evil that are in it, could doubt for a moment that if left to himself he may fall into that which

would dishonor God again? But while there is consciousness, there is no conscience of sins; that is, sin is not resting upon the conscience as affecting our relationship with God, or our standing before Him. The work of Christ has perfectly settled that question; so that, in spite of the sin of the past life, in spite of the sinfulness of the heart, in spite of failures, nothing remains upon the conscience between the soul and God.

That is Christianity as contrasted with everything that had gone before; and I might say, also, as contrasted with every device of man, as to the ground of his relationship with God. Wherever you find anything that takes the place, confessedly or unconsciously, of the sacrifices that were under the law, you will find sin upon the conscience and the need of repetition over and over again. We have a glaring illustration of it in Romanism. It professes, in the sacrifice of the Mass, to repeat the sacrifice of Calvary. Here, in this city, there are professedly numbers of altars called Christian altars (dreadful misnomer!) where the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass is not offered up merely year by year, but day by day, continually. Mass is said, in which it is declared that the "body, blood, soul and divinity" (blasphemous expression!) of the Lord Jesus Christ are in the wafer which is offered up by the priest. Admit for a moment that it is true, what does the Word here tell us? It declares that if there is repetition of such sacrifice it is valueless. And if Rome's claim is true that her wafer is her God, whom she sacrifices upon her altars day by day, then the solemn and awful fact confronts them that it is utterly valueless, that it can give neither peace with God nor rest of conscience.

That is a glaring, revolting illustration. But there are many ways in which people may, consciously or unconsciously, substitute something for, or would add to, the finished sacrifice of Christ. It may be the whole circle

of their religious life, the attendance upon religious services, the offering of prayers, the giving of alms, anything that may have a certain value in their mind in connection with their standing before God. Now the moment anything adds value, in our mind or conscience, to the finished work of Christ, the conscience at once begins to condemn us. That is the great reason why religious people are unhappy. I use the term "religious" in the ordinary sense of the word—those who are going through a round of religious duties. Let them pray hours each day; let them go daily to church, or anything of that sort; let them deny themselves, fast, do everything to mortify the flesh; if it is at all an intrusion into the work of Christ, their conscience has no rest—for the simple reason that they are insulting the finished work of Christ.

Nay, we go further yet. If experience is made a make-weight; if our feelings, our happiness, our growth in grace, anything at all, is added to that one Sacrifice, it vitiates it in its effect upon the conscience, and the soul has no rest. Blessed be God for the solitary, eternal value of the sacrifice of Christ and nothing added to it! Everything else comes in its proper place afterwards—the experience, service, worship, everything that would flow from a blessed place of nearness to God, falls beautifully into place afterwards; but absolutely nothing is to be added to that one Sacrifice which alone purges the conscience forever, and by which God is glorified in our eternal redemption.

That is what is enlarged upon in the next scripture.

"Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I am come, (in the roll of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, (which are offered accord-

ing to the law,) then he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

This is a quotation (an adaptation) from the fortieth psalm—the burnt-offering psalm, as the twenty-second is the sin-offering one. In this we see our blessed Lord looking at the whole array of sacrifices provided under the legal covenant. There are the peace-offerings, the meat-offerings, the burnt-offerings, and the sin-offerings. He looks at them all, and, "when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not."

God in the prophets repeatedly declares the same thing—the negative side. In Isaiah, for instance (where we have the added thought of being a mere empty ritual, a carnal form without any piety or devotedness in it) He says, "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams; I delight not in the blood of bullocks." That was because of the want of faith and piety in those who brought them, but still it suggests the truth that we are looking at here. God could not really take pleasure in these sacrifices. As David said, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it."

Look back over the whole history of Israel, and you might say that whenever they were in the path of obedience to God they were in the path of sacrifice. Trace sacrifice all through the Old Testament—in the days of Moses, follow it on through Joshua and Judges—wherever there was recovery to God, you find sacrifice. When you come to the Kings, it enlarges; there you have the burnt-offering constantly being offered. Look at the time of Solomon, when the myriads of offerings as it were concealed the very heavens by their smoke.

The history of Israel in the path of obedience was thus a history of sacrifice, of a sacrificing people; and what emphasis it puts upon this statement, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not." It tells us that God could

take no pleasure in mere animal sacrifice, but that He craved that which was to speak peace to the heart and conscience by the blood of Christ.

But notice another thing here: "When He cometh into the world He saith." It is not merely in the counsels of God and Christ in eternity past. Unquestionably there were such counsels; the heart prostrates itself in adoring worship as we allow ourselves to be conducted by the Holy Spirit back into that eternal past, in which so little can be made known to us because of our incapacity. But, reverently I would say it, as we see the persons of the Godhead looking down upon the race of men yet to be, foreseeing the sin and ruin that was coming into the world and the doom because of sin, we can somewhat understand how in the counsels of eternity God the Son offered Himself for the work of redemption; how He would say to the Father, I will go and make atonement for the sin of that apostate world which is to be. We can understand how the blessed Spirit would add His seal to those counsels, to do His part of the work in regeneration, in witnessing of Christ, and in all that He has been accomplishing ever since. Of course, we dare not intrude here beyond what faith can lay hold of as enlightened by the word of God, but we know that in those eternal counsels, before the foundation of the world, the Lamb was foreordained to do the will of the Father.

But we have here more than that. It is "when He cometh into the world." At what time did He say this? I do not know the specific time; but think of each period of His incarnation,—as the Babe in the manger; as the Man who grew up in Nazareth and the grace of God was upon Him; as the One who presented Himself to John at His baptism, when the heavens were rent asunder and the Spirit of God came down like a dove upon Him;—perhaps it was at that time that He said,

“Lo, I am come. . . . Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me.”

If we turn to the fortieth psalm we do not read, “A body hast Thou prepared Me,” but “Mine ears hast Thou digged.” Some have thought it an allusion to the boring of the ear of the servant in the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, where he refuses to go out free; when, from love to his master, to his wife and children, he will remain a servant forever. That is a very precious truth, and unquestionably is true of our blessed Lord. He might have gone out free, and left us in our need here; but instead He chose to be pierced,—not His ear to the doorpost, but by the nails and the spear on the cross, in order that He might abide a servant throughout eternity; in resurrection now, blessed be God, a Servant in eternal union with His redeemed family, and to that blessed God whose service He delighted in. These are precious thoughts, that I would not exclude from this passage, but I do not believe they are absolutely what is taught in the expression.

In the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah we have an expression where the Lord speaks of having His ear opened as the learner. There, again, is the thought of obedience, and how perfectly obedient He was in every particular we need not say. But when the Spirit of God quotes Scripture, He is quoting His own composition (if I may use such an expression), and He has the right to add to or alter in order to give a fuller thought. These quotations from the Old Testament are sometimes taken from the Septuagint—a Greek translation which was made prior to the coming of our Lord, and which has in it many suggestive and striking things not found in the Hebrew text as we know it to-day.

In quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, then, the Holy Spirit sometimes adds or omits certain words, to give fuller and clearer meaning, corresponding to the ful-

ness and clearness of the New Testament revelation. That is what we have here. It is not merely the boring of the ear of an obedient servant; nor yet the opening of the ear to hear the Master's command; nor yet the formation of the ear, as though God had formed the ear for hearing; but it is the making of the whole body. "A body hast Thou prepared Me."

This is the precious truth we have here—the blessed Son of God, the Word made flesh, standing before the Father, and saying, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not; this body, this temple, hast Thou prepared Me." It was the body which God prepared; not born according to the ordinary laws of creation, but formed by the power of the Holy Ghost, and without a stain or taint of sin upon it, though born of the Virgin. This opens up the whole blessed mystery of the incarnation.

Now He goes on again to say, "Lo, I am come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God." He comes to do God's will—which could not be accomplished by those sacrifices—which could not find an expression for His love save in one way.

Notice the parenthesis, "in the volume of the book it is written of Me." Here, again, some have suggested that it is the volume of God's eternal purposes, the archives of heaven, as you might say; in the volume of the book of God's eternal purpose it was written of Him that He should come into the world to do this mighty work. Very precious thought it is, and I would not exclude it absolutely; but is it not rather, after all, the volume of the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus, for instance—the book of all those sacrificial ordinances? When you get this thought you can go back to Leviticus and read there of the burnt-offering, of the sin-offering, and say, In the volume of the book it is written, not of the offering, but of Christ Himself. So whenever you come to that which speaks of the blood, from the time of Abel throughout the entire Old

Testament record, you say, In the volume of the book it is written of Him. How precious it is thus to find Christ in every reference to sacrifice in the entire Old Testament Scripture!

He repeats again the list of sacrifices, and then, in the ninth verse, our blessed Lord says, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God:" thus He puts these two in direct contrast; "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." He takes away the sacrifices under the law, that He might establish the blessed will of God; and that will is our salvation. Did you ever notice in the sixth chapter of John what God's will is? "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." God's will is our eternal security, the present possession of eternal life by every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that those so redeemed should be brought in resurrection into the presence of His own eternal glory.

And how is that will to be accomplished? Through the perfect obedience, unto death, of the Son to the will of the Father. We might call the Gospel of John the Gospel of the obedient One, shown to us in His burnt-offering character. In it He speaks of laying down His life; He asserts His own divine prerogative. Of His life He says, "No man taketh it from Me." It was not man; it was not the cruel Romans, who nailed and pierced Him upon the cross; it was not the Jews, who gave Him up to be crucified; it was not Pilate, who gave sentence that it should be done. "No man taketh it from Me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." But what does He say in this immediate connection? "This commandment have I received of My Father." O blessed

obedient One! it was ever His Father's will; not merely His love for sinners even, precious as that is; not merely His pity as He looked upon a lost and guilty world, but the will of His Father: to let the love of that Father show itself out to the poor, wretched, lost and guilty ones. That will of God, that almighty onflowing torrent of divine purpose and love, how was it accomplished? By the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.

Do you see the emphasis, then, put upon the next expression, "by the which will we are sanctified"? Not merely sanctified by the blood, by what Christ has done, though it is all through that, but by the which *will* we are sanctified—God's will, purpose, counsels, His almighty power, engaged in our eternal setting apart unto Himself! What are we? A little feather, floating upon a mighty torrent which nothing can stem. Our sins rose up like dark rocks to bar the way of that onflowing torrent, but in the work of Christ upon the cross those sins have been put away forever, and the mighty torrent of God's will bears us on its bosom to that great ocean of eternal love and joy where we shall know forevermore what the will of God is, what His purposes have accomplished for us through the work of His beloved Son. What holy, precious things are these! What joy it is to dwell upon them, and link thus the thought of the will of God with our eternal salvation on the ground of that perfect offering of Christ!

Thus you see we are linked with the Throne. As the apostle says in Galatians, "Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem us out of this present evil world, according to the will of God." If it is according to the will of God that we are redeemed, it is unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Peter, in his epistle, tells us of our whole pilgrim path; but it is a blood-sprinkled path, a path of obedience sprinkled by the precious blood of Christ, in order that we may tread

it with confidence and assurance. Thus we have the most practical as well as most precious truth that Christ's work, in accomplishing the will of God in our redemption, secures a practical obedience in our daily life.

“By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering often the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but he having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God; from henceforth waiting until his enemies be made the footstool of his feet: for by one offering he hath perfected perpetually those who are sanctified.”

Here the same precious truth is dwelt upon, with a few thoughts added. Under the law, the priest stood. There was in the Tabernacle a table, a candlestick, an altar; but there was no seat. The priest was standing continually, as his work was never finished—always doing, never done. How like that is much of the work to-day, where there is no repose for the soul. Provision is made for doing, but never knowing that a work is done forever. In contrast with that, our Lord, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down. He is blessedly engaged in activity for us, we know—in intercession for His people's need, and all that; but so far as the sacrifice is concerned, He has offered that—it is finished. What could add to the value of that sacrifice? Can you conceive anything to be added to it? As I look at that Cross, how filthy are all the rags of human righteousness which man would dare to offer in connection with it! He offered one sacrifice for sins; there it stands in its solitary grandeur, and *nothing* can be added to it. Perfect, it stands in its value before God.

“After He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down.” Remove the comma, if it is in your Bible; it is not that He offered a sacrifice forever, because that suggests a perpetual offering; but when He had offered

it once, then He forever sat down; His seat is eternal, so far as His work is concerned. He has forever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Now He is waiting; He has done the work for His people, those who are the purchase of His blood; and as to His enemies, He is waiting for the time when they shall be made the footstool of His feet. The time is coming when those who despise and reject the Lord Jesus shall be beneath His feet. As the Lord Himself has said, those who stumbled at the Cross, who fall upon this Stone, shall be broken; those who have not faith in Him are broken—they are lost; but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder. Those who openly reject Christ, despise and turn away from Him, when He makes His enemies His footstool, it is to grind them beneath His feet. A solemn and awful thought, reiterated in the book of Revelation, is “the wrath of the Lamb;” more terrible in a way than the wrath of God. The Lamb has been slain, He who once offered Himself for sin; but if rejected and despised, what will His wrath be? He that despised Moses’ law, as we read a little later on, died without mercy. We will look at it there, but you see how it connects with this truth.

And so in the fourteenth verse the subject is summed up: by one offering He hath perfected forever. As He sat down forever, so He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. The sanctification is by His blood; we are set apart to God according to the value of His perfect work.

As we have seen before, sanctification is spoken of in many ways in Scripture. The Father’s sanctification refers to His will and authority; the Spirit’s sanctification refers to His work in us; the sanctification of the Word is that which practically cleanses our ways and conforms us in our walk to the will of God; but the sanctification by the blood of Christ is that which sets us before God

according to the value of His finished work: it is the sanctification of our standing as contrasted with the inward fruits of sanctification in our lives. This distinction is an important one.

Perfected forever! Every believer in Christ, every one who has come under the value of that precious blood, is perfected forever. It is the very word that is used of His sitting upon the throne. And who could take Him from that throne? Not all the rage and malice of Satan can remove the blessed Son of God from the seat which He occupies as our Redeemer. But if He has taken His seat there forever, He has perfected us forever. We look on down through the vista of time into the broad portals of heavenly glory, and on through the myriad cycles of eternity, to see ever-increasing joy and delight; and in connection with it all we say "perfected forever," clean forevermore by the precious blood of Christ!

"And the Holy Spirit also beareth us witness; for after what was said, This is the covenant that I will establish towards them after those days, the Lord saith, I will put my laws into their hearts, I will write them also in their minds, and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more. Now, where there is remission of these there is no longer an offering for sin."

We have already dwelt upon this passage, quoted from the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah in the seventh chapter of our Epistle, and therefore the mere mention of it is all that will be necessary. The testimony of the Holy Ghost is not the witness of the Spirit in our hearts, but the witness of the Spirit in the scripture quoted, which, of course, is brought home to our heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. God will make a covenant with Israel, and we have the blessings of that covenant ministered to us, the law now written in the heart and mind, and sins and iniquities remembered no more. If God remembers sins and iniquities no more, then there is no more offering needed for sin. If a believer come to God to-day

and say, O God, pardon my sins; might He not well ask, What about the work of Christ? Might He not well say, I have remembered your sins and iniquities when My beloved Son was bearing them on the cross, and they are to be remembered no more? So that the fresh request of pardon for sin in connection with salvation is an insult to His Word and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. May the Lord keep us from such dishonor, and give us the full joy of knowing with absolute assurance, by His precious truth, that we are perfected forevermore.

“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness for entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new death-made and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water.

“Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering (for he is faithful who hath promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some, but encouraging one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

Here you reach the highest point as to the believer's nearness and privilege. Looking back upon what we have seen, Christ has entered into heaven, into the presence of God, by His own blood. He has taken His seat at the right hand of God; and now what is there for us? We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. The word here in the original is not only “the holiest,” but “the holy places,” both the holiest and the outer sanctuary. When the perfect work of Christ was finished, the veil was rent; thus the holy place and the most holy were united, and made one sanctuary for the priestly family.

The word for boldness means “all speech,” speaking

everything, no concealment—perfect liberty. We do not come as those who have some reserve in mind or heart, some things that have never been brought into the light of His presence and which we would be afraid to have brought out. Nay, the lips are opened wide in full confession of all sin; as the woman of Samaria said, “Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did.” Those holy eyes, like flames of fire, pierced into the innermost parts of her being, dividing between soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart; nothing in His creation was hid from His holy view. He saw all about us; He knew the whole record of our past; He knows everything as to our present; His eyes scan the future too, and know all the way that we shall tread. What possibility of concealment is there in His holy presence? Yet we have boldness, we have all speech, to enter into His sanctuary by Christ’s precious blood!

But confession is twofold. Not only we own our sins, the whole record of our lives, but, oh, we also confess the glories of Christ’s precious name, while His praises fill the heart. Thus we have boldness,—not silence, not fear, not constraint,—but holy boldness in the power of the Spirit, as priests, to offer the fragrance, the preciousness of Christ before God.

But what is our title there? It is the blood of Jesus. Do I have boldness to draw near to God on the ground that I have known Him for many years? or that I have had a happy past experience? or that I have been doing faithful service for the Lord, and have honored Him? No! but by the blood of Jesus: that precious blood, which has glorified God, is our alone title to enter there.

This is a “new and living way” by which we enter, says the apostle; and this word “new” I must remind you, is not merely new in contrast with old, but literally it is “a newly sacrificed way,” a way opened by the new sacrifice which Christ offered—new, in contrast with all

the sacrifices under the law. Then, too, it is "a living way." Under the law, for one to draw near to the presence of God was death; under Christ, it is death to stay away. What a blessed contrast! Under the law, anyone daring to draw near would be stricken with the fire coming out from the sanctuary: through the work of Christ we now draw near, and the way is a way of life. The nearer we live to our blessed God, the more we will realize the strength, the freshness and vigor of that life which we draw from a divine source. This new and living way is through the veil that was rent; the veil was His flesh, as He tells us. You will remember, on the cross, when our Lord gave up His spirit, the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. It was the flesh of Christ, His body, that was rent. As His spirit leaves His body, as He dies, the veil (that separated our soul from God, and that separated God from His people) is rent. His work is finished—His body broken—His blood shed—the veil is rent! A crucified Christ is the rent veil through which we draw near to God. The marks of the rending will ever abide. In the risen Lord we have the memorial of His finished work and the witness of His perfect humanity all there, not as a barrier to the soul, but as the very way of access to God.

We have seen that we have a sacrifice; it is the one finished sacrifice of Christ. We have seen that we have a sanctuary, it is the holy place, the presence of God Himself, and absolute nearness to Him. Now we have a High Priest over the house of God. Let your mind run back upon what we have been gathering as to this priest. Think of Him as the Son of God in the first chapter, and all the perfections that are unfolded as to Him there. Think of Him as the Son of Man, as you have Him in the second chapter, humbled unto death, able to succor His tempted people. Think of Him as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, as you have Him in the

third chapter. Think of Him as the great High Priest with a tender heart of sympathy, who has passed through the heavens, as you have Him in the fourth chapter; as called of God unto that priestly place and saluted of God a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, as in the fifth chapter. Think of Him as He has gone in within the veil, carried the anchor of our hope and fastened it securely there to the very throne of God, as in the sixth chapter. Think of all the unfolding of truth as to that Priest according to the order of Melchisedec in the seventh chapter, and gather 'all there is as to His sacrifice and work, as you have learned it in the ninth and tenth chapters; then, beloved, as the heart revels in all these truths, you know something of what is meant by the expression "having a High Priest over the house of God." Oh, whom do I meet in the sanctuary, whom do I see there before God? I see the Priest in all the glory of His person, in the perfection of His life, in the fulness of His character, that has opened up this way for me who was far off, now made nigh by His blood. How these things stir our souls to praise Him for this new and living way in which we draw near to God!

Now what is the practical effect of all this? The apostle declares it to us in the three exhortations growing out of it. First of all, "Let us draw near." Under the law all the people removed and stood afar off, but we draw near: it is not even a command, but an invitation. The apostle, in introducing this subject, again addresses the Hebrews as his brethren, as he did in the third chapter—"holy brethren;" now it is, "Let us, brethren, draw near in full assurance of faith, with all boldness."

Are *we* practically there, brethren? I speak not of certain meetings, though sometimes we may enter more fully into this than at other times; but do you draw near daily in full assurance of faith, no waver of uncertainty, no shadow of unbelief in the heart at all? Does con-

science suggest that there is sin? is conscience fully at rest, as purged from all sin by the blood of Christ?

We have now a thought which we have not had before in the Epistle, referring to the laver outside the door of the tabernacle. You will remember that when the priests were consecrated they were washed at the brazen laver, which speaks of the new birth and washing of regeneration, the work of the Spirit by the word of God cleansing the heart and mind, and fitting the man morally for fellowship with God, as he is also fitted, as to his standing, by the work of Christ. The body washed with pure water speaks, then, of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in new birth; and also, doubtless, of the practical cleansing in connection with the daily life as the priests, who were not only washed all over once for all at their consecration, but daily and constantly, as they ministered, used the water in the laver.

So, as our blessed Lord says in the thirteenth chapter of John, "He that is bathed," that is, washed once for all, "needeth not save to wash his feet;" that is, what comes in contact with this earth needs constantly to be cleansed by the word of God. Thus we draw near in full assurance of faith, the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, (a heart that does not accuse) and the work of the Spirit has fitted us morally for the enjoyment of the presence of God.

That is the first exhortation. Then he says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He is faithful that promised." Here is the hope set before us, the inheritance that awaits us in the future. He says, Let us not be uncertain, let nothing shake our confidence as to the future, as nothing can as to the past, or as to the sense of our present nearness to Him. If I am in the presence of God now, why should I be uncertain as to the future? Is He not fully able to carry us through, spite of all difficulties? So we are to hold fast

that confession of hope, remembering that He is faithful that promised.

And now he exhorts, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." All this time the eye has been upon Christ. We have been occupied with the glories of the sanctuary, the nearness of our position, the wondrous privileges which are ours. We have looked forward as to the future, and been exhorted to hold fast the confession of our hope; and now comes in the place for our fellow-Christians. Notice it is at the close, not at the beginning. You cannot get your salvation from your fellow-Christians, nor your assurance: you cannot get your liberty of worship from them, nor your perseverance to the end. The eye must be fixed simply and ever upon Christ for all these things; and after you have all that in your soul, settled there by the Spirit of God, you can direct your eye to your brethren. For what purpose? To see if you can find their inconsistencies?—how much better you are, or more faithful? Ah, the Spirit of God never helps in work like that. We are not to consider one another to find out the faults, nor that we may see wherein this one or that one has failed, but in order that we may provoke to love and to good works. God desires to see us stir up one another—not provoking to anger, envy or strife, or malice, or discontent, but to provoke unto *love*, and good works.

Thank God, there *is* such a provocation; and when the eye is filled with Christ, as we see our Priest with ointment that has run down from His head even to the very skirts of His garment, there will be a practical unity amongst the saints; we will be knit together in love, as the precious ointment of the Spirit of God flows down from Him to us, and thus provoke unto love and to good works.

We are told to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; in Galatians we are told to consider

ourselves, lest we be tempted; and here it is our privilege to consider one another, to stir up to those activities that are the fruit of the divine life. One practical effect of this love and good works is seen in the next and last verse: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." You will remember, when the two disciples turned their backs upon Jerusalem to go to Emmaus, that they sorrowed as they spoke of Jesus and His sufferings; and when the Lord Jesus drew near and talked with them, their hearts burned. But when they came to the house and entreated Him to remain with them, and He in breaking bread revealed Himself to them, what do you find is the practical effect of it? Immediately they retraced their steps to Jerusalem to meet their brethren. They went back where they knew they would meet them: Christ was before their eyes again. It was not a past Christ, so to speak, but a present Christ in resurrection who had revealed Himself to them; He was before their souls, and they go back to their brethren to bear their testimony, The Lord is risen, and to hear from them the same blessed word.

And so, if Christ fills the soul, the effect of it will be to draw us together. We read in the early part of Acts that they were with one accord in one place. With one accord they continued in prayer; everything was done with one accord. What was the reason? Christ touched the chord in their hearts, and it rung responsive in every heart that loved the Lord Jesus. We are not drawn together because we have similarity of taste in natural things, or are in the same circumstances of life, or have the same education, or the same nationality, or anything of that sort. What is it that draws the saints of God and holds them together? It is Christ, and Christ alone. Thus we see how fitting it is that when the sanctuary and the Priest are before us, the exhortation comes in not to forsake the the assembling of ourselves together.

Why, some one says, is there any need of such an exhortation, "As the manner of some is?" There is a tendency even in the heart of those who know Christ, if they grow cold, to separate and remain apart. This we see in Thomas. He was not with the disciples at the first. It was only when they bore witness that Christ indeed was risen that his heart is kindled and he comes back, even in his doubt, to have his doubts removed by the Lord Himself. If we grow cold, or worldliness comes in, if anything obscures Christ from our vision, the manner of some is to turn away from the fellowship of saints. Thus we need that exhortation. Let us take it as an index of our state of soul that if we do not love to meet with the people of God, if we do not love to come together for prayer, for exhortation, and, above all, for remembering our blessed Lord, it shows He has not the supreme place in our souls; let us judge the root of it, and come back at once.

As we are thus gathered and united together, there is abundant ministry by the Spirit through the word of God for all our souls, and thus we can exhort one another, stir one another up, point out the needs and apply the word of God to one another; and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Those saints whose eyes were anointed could say, The end of all things is at hand. They knew that Christ had appeared in the end of the world; that soon the day would come when His enemies would be placed beneath His feet; and as they saw that day approaching, they stirred one another up all the more. What shall we say, then, we who live centuries later? How much nearer is that day for us! And as we see it approaching—with no terrors for us—how it ought to draw us away from the world toward which we are tempted to wander, to dwell in fellowship with our God, and the privileges of the sanctuary!

LECTURE XI

HOLDING FAST

"Ye have need of patience"

(Chap. x. 26-39.)

THE apostle has been gradually passing into exhortation, the form of which we have had occasion to look at, at some length, in the sixth chapter; but what we have here, presents some differences from what is dwelt upon there.

"For if we go astray wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no longer any sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and heat of fire about to devour the adversaries."

"Sin," in Hebrews, is not used in a general sense, but refers, rather, to that special form of sin to which those by nature Israelites were particularly exposed. Their danger was not so much falling into immorality, in any of its various forms, as falling away from Christ. The constant temptation and pressure upon them was to deny Him who had ever been a stumbling-block to His earthly people. To this there was every inducement that could appeal to the flesh: persecution was on one side, and all that natural affection could use on the other; so that according to nature, they were both driven and drawn away from Christ. What more effectual remedy could there have been for such temptation than the glorious truths upon which we have been dwelling? And we may be sure that one who has consciously entered into the full enjoyment of the sanctuary, realizing the value of the blood of Jesus as bringing us there, faultless before the

presence of God's face as worshipers, could not be tempted to give up Christ.

As we have already seen, a full apostasy would indicate a soul that had never been moved by divine grace—in which there was no spark of life. Therefore, both in the sixth chapter and here, we find the apostle assuring the true-hearted among them, that he was persuaded better things of them. Only those who had merely made a profession, no matter how much it might have been accompanied with exuberance of joy and excitement at the time, were in danger of giving up that which they had received. To such, this admonition would have special meaning and weight.

On the other hand, we must not forget that even where complete apostasy is, through the grace of God, an impossibility, there is need to check any tendency in that direction which would produce bitter fruits in the life and testimony. Thus, the true-hearted never despise the chastening of the Lord or His admonitions. They welcome them as ever reminding them of that flesh which is still in them, and which is, as ever, "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Therefore, instead of resenting, as unsuited to themselves, such warnings as we have here, or, on the other hand, being overwhelmed with fear lest they have committed this sin, or are in danger of committing it, they will bow in subjection to the truth of God and learn more than ever to "rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh." Good it is ever to be suitably exercised by whatever the word of God may have to say to us. Thus we are sanctified by the truth, and kept with "the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." The enemy will be foiled, and we will go on with rejoicing in the ways of our God.

You notice the emphasis which is put upon the word, "wilfully." It is not slipping or being "overtaken in a fault," or even in an evil hour of self-confidence yielding,

as Peter did, to pressure from without, and denying his Lord. Grievous and dreadful as this sin was, it was not wilful. The will of the renewed man shrank with horror from such dishonor to his Lord, and one look from the Lord Jesus brought the poor, self-confident one, broken-hearted back to Him. Thus it ever is where divine life is in the soul. "A just man falleth seven times and riseth up again."

Of course, we do not understand for a moment by this that Scripture makes the least provision for looseness or disloyalty to our blessed Lord. It should be worse than death to us in any way to compromise His name; still more to deny it. But the sin contemplated here is one in which the will is deliberately involved; that is, the whole man willingly, deliberately, intentionally goes with the rejection, the renunciation of Christ.

Dreadful and solemn thing, beloved, to contemplate the possibility that any who have in any measure heard the precious truths which we have been already dwelling upon should wilfully give them up! It only shows what the heart of man is, its irremediable wickedness and the perversity of that nature which, when everlasting love has poured out the riches of its stores before us, could yet turn from them all back again to that which is Christless and hopeless!

After the knowledge of the truth has been received—such truths as we have been dwelling upon here, of the Priesthood of Christ, His finished sacrifice, His purging our sins, His entrance into the Holiest, there appearing in the presence of God for us, by His one offering perfecting forever those who are sanctified, and our boldness to follow Him into the sanctuary of God,—where there has been a knowledge of these truths, what more can be done in the heart that is still untouched and would still turn away from such a Christ?

God Himself declares here that "there remaineth no

more sacrifice for sins." All the Jewish sacrifices under the law have been shown to be valueless. Their worth consisted simply in the fact that they were divinely appointed types—shadows of the genuine Sacrifice which has now been offered. After the knowledge of that perfect Sacrifice has been received, Judaism and its sacrifices can avail no longer, even as a shadow. They are absolutely worthless, and the soul is left without any offering for sins, standing in all its naked guilt before a holy God; doubly guilty, not only because of the sins which in all their blackness are arrayed against it, but because of its deliberate, absolute, final rejection of the only possible remedy for those sins.

No sacrifice then remains. In the place of waiting for the Saviour from heaven, as we saw at the close of the ninth chapter, there is nothing but a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." The future is one of terror, for there is nothing to mitigate the dreadful doom that awaits those who have arrayed themselves now on the side of the adversaries of God. What an awful thought it is that those who have heard the ministry of reconciliation, who have had put before them every witness of that divine Love which gave its only Son to be the propitiation for sin, should refuse that love! What can be left for them?

It is impossible to conceive of any future sacrifice for sins. What more could be done than God has done? Who could come out of heaven to lay down his life for the guilty now, if the Son of God Himself has been despised and rejected? The guilty soul is left in all its horror to await the certainty of that judgment, that fiery indignation which finds its expression in the awful "lake of fire," reserved for "the devil and his angels." In association with such are all apostates who, having received the knowledge of the truth, wilfully turn from Him who is the Truth.

Well may we cry to God that in this day of apostasy, where so many are giving up even that which they knew of Christ and turning away from Him who has been presented before them, there may be such an awakening that multitudes will be brought to a genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are hastening on to the final apostasy of the latter days, when the Antichrist who comes "in his own name" will be received by those who would not receive Him who came in His "Father's name." Already the moral signs of these last days are with us. The apostle Paul himself declares that the mystery of lawlessness already is at work, and will continue until its full development; and the apostle John declares, with holy jealousy for the Lord Jesus Christ, that already there are "many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." There is but one preventive against apostasy, and that is a divinely given and maintained faith in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor can we be so unfaithful as not to remind those who are preachers and teachers in the midst of what claims to be the Church of Christ, that they have a fearful responsibility if they are preaching anything but the Christ of God as we find Him unfolded, for instance, in our Epistle. It is solemn enough to be apostates, but still more awful to be leading other souls astray. Does this sound unduly severe? Is there no occasion for it? It is a solemn and awful thought that there is only too much occasion for just such warning as the apostle gives us here!

"He that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much worse punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he hath been sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the

Lord; and again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

As in the second chapter, the apostle compares sin under the law of Moses with apostasy, and shows how much more dreadful the latter is. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." "Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." Is God less holy under grace than He is under law? Does He think less of denial of His holy, spotless Son than of the dishonor done to the commandments written and engraven in stone? What greater insult could be offered to the living God than to insult the Son of His love, and to intimate that He is an impostor and a liar?

It is well for men to be brought face to face with what is involved in the rejection of Christ. It is worse than all the sins forbidden in the decalogue. We need to be on our guard against any false thoughts of those who are deniers of Christ. Unitarianism may boast of its morality, its enlightenment, its liberality and philanthropy; but Unitarianism represents just that upon which we are dwelling at this time, for it had its origin in the bosom of that which professed to be the espoused bride of Christ. It has not come from heathenism, but owes its origin to the self-will of men in taking up the word of God and wresting it to their own destruction, until finally they become rejectors not only of the Christ who is presented in the Scriptures, but of the Scriptures themselves as the word of God. It is to be feared that the true people of God do not realize the unspeakably dreadful sin of those who deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we fully believed that the intellectual, amiable person who can speak so enthusiastically about the progress of the world, and the needs of the masses, is on his way to the lake of fire as an antichrist, would we not with holy fear seek to warn such an one to flee from the wrath to come? Visit

the penal institutions where the law of the land punishes its criminals, and it is a solemn thought that such are not so guilty as those who have "trodden under foot the Son of God" and have "counted the blood of the covenant" as "a common thing."

Our beloved apostle uses no moderate language in characterizing this awful sin of apostasy. Christ is upon the throne of God, crowned with glory and honor, and all heaven is filled with the light of His glory; but those who turn away from Him, after having professed to be His, have Him beneath their feet so far as they themselves are concerned; or, as we have it in the sixth chapter, they have crucified afresh for themselves the Lord Jesus, who was crucified by His enemies when He was upon earth. What more dreadful description could be given of guilt? The murder of an innocent babe, treason to one's country, the burning of a city as Nero burned Rome, are not to be compared with planting the feet upon Him who is higher than the highest, the Son of God Himself.

That blood of the covenant which sanctifies unto God, which, as it were, has been sprinkled upon the mercy-seat—the very throne of God; which has purged the heavens and cleansed every guilty soul who has come beneath its value—what can be so holy or so precious? It is the basis upon which the very throne of God abides in the midst of His people. It is the foundation upon which the whole new creation rests immovable, and for eternity. Take the word of God and see what His thoughts are of the blood. Trace it all through the Old Testament, from the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts at the the Passover, through all the countless sacrifices provided; then pass into the New Testament and collect every reference that is given by the Spirit of God to the precious blood of Christ, and see what an unpardonable insult it is to count this an unholy thing! And notice it

is not said that they count the blood an *evil* thing. The word is really a "common," as contrasted with a sacred thing—an ordinary matter, the blood of a mere martyr, of one who was living before his time and suffering the necessary persecution of those who would introduce reformation and break up the established order of things. There are plenty of men who would declare that the blood of Christ was this. Amongst his own kinsman according to the flesh we will find, at this time, those who will speak in terms of praise of "the liberality of Jesus," that He was a true Jew, a genuine patriot, that He suffered, as all leaders must suffer, at the hands of those who were reactionary and behind the time. If that is all they have to say of the blood of Jesus, they are counting it a "common thing."

We have heard the expression that the gospel of the grace of God, that which is based upon the precious blood of Jesus Christ, is "a religion of the shambles" and not for intellectual men. Oh, beloved, we can only say that if such expressions issued from those who once received the knowledge of the truth, who once confessed Christ, whom now they consider merely as a man, alas!—that is the apostasy spoken of here. The blood of the covenant has been despised and counted as a common thing!

In a similar category we must place all such thoughts as that the death of Christ is a perfect example; that the blood of the Lord Jesus is an exhibition, in a general way, of the love of God and not a real satisfaction to divine justice. There may be those who, in their ignorance or partial apprehension of divine truth, unintentionally put dishonor upon our Lord by using such expressions; but the character of them, when truly understood, is of the same nature as that of which we have been speaking.

You will notice, also, that the apostle says: "The blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified." As

we have already seen, "sanctification," in Hebrews, is outward and positional rather than that work of the Spirit of God in the soul by new birth. So far as the efficacy of the work of Christ is concerned, it is of eternal value; but it is always presumed that the objects of this work have a saving faith wrought in their souls in connection with the new birth. Thus, if a man in Israel was associated with the nation, he participated in that outward sanctification or setting apart to God which was done for the whole nation. The Hebrew was familiar with this thought, and therefore the expression would have no difficulty to those to whom the apostle was primarily writing. Nor can it easily be misunderstood by any of us. Neither here, nor elsewhere, as we well know, does Scripture mean to say that a single sheep of Christ can ever perish. Our Lord's own words: "I give unto them eternal life," "neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand" give the seal to this. But there is such a thing as positional, outward sanctification, and this is what is contemplated by the apostle.

The Spirit of grace has borne witness to the value of that blood of the covenant: therefore, to deny its value is a direct insult to the Holy Spirit. It is through Him that the precious truth of the accomplished Sacrifice and the sprinkled blood has been declared. His testimony has been given, as we read in the sixth chapter: the works of the coming age have been done by the power of the Holy Spirit. His testimony was unequivocal in the companies of those who had been led to true faith in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, for one to turn away from Christ would be a distinct insult to that Spirit of grace who had made Him known. How true it is, also, that sin against one of the persons of the Godhead involves sin against all. Thus, if the Son of God has been trodden under foot, the Holy Spirit has also been insulted, and God the Father, giver of the Son, has been denied.

The fearful doom of apostates is again dwelt upon. We know the One who has said, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense:" and again, "The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He is long-suffering, His vengeance lingers, judgment is His strange work, for He delights in mercy; but "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

But He will recompense. Just so surely as sin is committed, will it be punished; and just so surely as men depart from the only, the last remedy which divine love has provided, will they receive the full, and dreadful, and eternal recompense that is assured in this solemn Scripture. Jehovah is a Judge. He will judge His people. We read that judgment will begin at the house of God—amongst those who have professed to be His, as in Ezekiel's day.

Indeed, those who take the place outwardly of being His children are the first who will come under the searching, testing fire of that judgment. So true is this, that for us (of whom it is said we shall never come into judgment, but are passed out of death into life) our works will be appraised at the judgment-seat of Christ; and the same holiness, which will devour the adversaries and would consume us did we come before God to be personally judged, will test, and as a consuming fire burn up everything in our works that has not been "gold, silver or precious stones." It is in the light of this that the apostle says: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The judgment-seat of Christ is such a holy place, the searching eye of God pierces so completely into the innermost secrets and recesses of the heart, that the believer, from whose bosom all false dread has been removed, still realizes what a dreadful thing it

would be to stand before that piercing eye to be judged. Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord, he persuades men.

Who can describe the awful terror of those words: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"? Who can exaggerate the dread of the irresistible judgment of the Great White Throne? No wonder when the kings of the earth and all men, both great and small, think the day of the Lord has come, and the time for the visitation of His fierce wrath, that they cry to the mountains and hills to fall upon them and cover them! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He is a silent God. Day by day the heavens pass silently over our heads, and night after night the silent stars look down upon us; no voice from them. We travel the earth over, we witness evidence of God's presence in sea and shore, in the storm which breaks the rocks asunder and bows the trees of the forest before it, but we hear no voice of the living God. Men have come to believe that He is not a living God. They would fain think that He is removed so far from His creation that He can never again visit it. But our God does not slumber, though He is silent. The time is coming when He shall rise to shake terribly the earth, and who can describe the awful scene when the living God shall call men to answer for all their sin?

I have thus dwelt, beloved, upon the solemn thoughts which are suggested by this passage before us. We have sought to drink in the abundant consolation and joy from the precious truths of the sanctuary and the Priest upon the throne, and it ill becomes us to turn away with indifference from these solemn warnings which are put side by side with that precious comfort.

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which after having been enlightened ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; on the one hand, when ye were made a spectacle both in reproaches and afflictions; and on the other, when ye became par-

takers with those who were passing through them. For ye sympathized with those in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better and an enduring substance."

But the tender heart of our blessed God, speaking through one whom He had also touched with the same feeling, will not allow even the weakest among these Hebrew Christians to be oppressed or overwhelmed by the solemnity of this warning. He therefore, in this portion, goes on to recall to them the previous sufferings which they had endured for the sake of the Lord Jesus. "Call to mind the former days," the times of the first love, when they were first enlightened: when these truths of God first flashed into their souls and brought peace and joy and comfort, how they endured a great fight of afflictions: how their kinsmen according to the flesh, perhaps members of their own family, delivered them up to the council, and when (as the man in the ninth chapter of John) they confessed Christ, they found that their own parents had turned their backs upon them! How they were looked upon with suspicion by those who had previously looked upon them with regard, and how they were branded as blasphemers "against Moses" "and this holy place and the law," because they declared for Jesus and the resurrection.

They were made a gazingstock, held up to the scorn and mockery of others, as Stephen was brought before the council, and while his face was lit up with the light of heaven itself, was railed upon and cast out of the city and stoned. So these Hebrew Christians had in some degree tasted similar sufferings. They were themselves either actually persecuted in this way or were companions of those who suffered like this. How the Spirit of God would dwell upon any degree of faithfulness there had been to the name of the Lord Jesus, even if it showed itself only in identification with those who were the direct

objects of persecution! They sympathized with those who were in bonds. Like Onesiphorus, they were not ashamed of the prisoners of the Lord; and if their goods were taken, instead of resenting it or considering it a token of divine discipline from Him who had assured Israel according to the flesh that they would be blest in basket and store, they took it with joy, realizing in themselves that they had a more enduring inheritance in heaven.

Beautiful and sweetly simple description is all this of the manner in which faith receives the trials which only serve to strengthen it and to manifest that its portion is not here. Blessedly, too, does it remind us of that association with One whose pathway out of this world was by the cross, and who found nothing here but a borrowed tomb and the hatred and reproaches of those who, for His love, were His adversaries.

Thus the apostle stirs up all that had been wrought by the Spirit in the souls of these Hebrew saints: calling them back, if in any measure they had departed from it, to their first love, and thus guarding them from the dreadful danger which hung over them, as professors, of denying the Lord that bought them. And what more effectual way could there be of preventing dishonor to the Lord in those who really loved Him, than by reminding them of what they had already, by His grace, endured for His sake? This would not feed pride, but would stir them up to endure still more for Him, who had endured so much for them; would stir them up too, to run with patience the little that yet remained of the race, as they realized how they had already passed over, perhaps, the most thorny part of the way. Perhaps that which was specially tempting them at this time was not so much outward persecution, the enduring of a great fight of afflictions, as it was that more subtle and deadly allurement, that lethargy of soul which makes possible declension from the Lord.

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense; for ye have need of endurance in order that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.”

The apostle thus exhorts them not to throw away, not to cast off their confidence, because there is great recompense of reward laid up for them in heaven. They had a confidence; the grounds of it we have been dwelling upon. It is the same word which is translated “boldness” in the earlier part of this chapter: “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.” They were not to cast away this boldness; they were to hold fast the rejoicing of their hope and their confidence steadfast unto the end. They had received no reward at present, save, of course, that blessed witness of the Spirit in the soul, which is its own reward; but the recompense remained. The rest was there, where God Himself was resting in His own eternal day. In a little while all the pressure of the way would be over, all the persecution for the name of Christ would be a thing of the past. How sweet in glory to be able to look back upon a course run in which Jesus had not been denied, confidence maintained, and now throughout eternity to enjoy the fulness of that blessing, the foretaste of which sweetened all their sorrows in this life! He reminds them that they have need of patience, as we all have; or as the word really is, of “endurance.” And it is tribulation that “worketh patience, and patience experience.” Experience and patience do not come from an unexercised life; and they needed that endurance which abode under every stress; that after they had done the will of God, after they had bowed to that will as expressed in the Gospel, had confessed and suffered for Christ, they would still cleave to Him, and thus obtain the promise which was laid up for them in heaven. All this is very simple. It needs not so much exposition as it does application, and I am sure it has a voice for our souls which will be

most sanctifying if we bow to the truth which is here pressed home upon us.

“For yet a very little while he that cometh will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; and if he draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Lastly, the apostle gives them the cheer that it is only a little while that there will be need for this endurance. The One who is coming, that One whose promise is, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself,” will soon be here. There is no delay, for “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness.” The patience of the present time is a patience of grace, “not willing that any should perish”—not indifferent, we surely need not say. At any moment, the welcome shout, with the voice of the trumpet, may be heard from heaven, and saints snatched from their place of trial will enter into the joy of the Lord. This very inducement is held out for perseverance. This sharp trial may be the last. This temptation to turn into an easier path may be followed by the coming of the Lord. It is only “a little while.”

Meanwhile, faith is the principle upon which the righteous are to live. “The just shall live by faith.” That is the principle which actuates the whole life and upon which the apostle enlarges in the following chapter. There is no other principle to control, no true power to actuate us. The opposite of that is drawing back—turning away from what was once known—giving up the precious truth. How important to see that the opposite of faith is apostasy; and if any one thus draw back, denying Christ, “My soul,” says God, “shall have no pleasure in him.” Whatever else there may be about him to attract the natural man, even amiability and morality, these things have no attraction for God where

Christ is denied. It is most essential to realize this at the present time, when a strong current is drawing away from the great realities of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and contenting men with certain results in the life which seem to answer very much to the Christian virtues produced by a living faith; but wherever the root is gone, there is no real fruit, however much it may have that appearance. God has no pleasure in externals. If Christ has been given up, the soul is an apostate. Solemn and awful thought!

But our apostle, according to his manner, cannot leave the subject with those solemn words. There must be a word of cheer for true faith, and so, in the last verse, he identifies himself with them, with all true believers, in saying: "We are not of those who draw back unto perdition;" we are no apostates. For us, it is Christ now as ever. We are of those who believe, whose faith is not of that temporary character, like the seed upon the stony ground which endures for a season—which, under stress, withers away. We believe until the full, eternal outcome of faith is manifest; "the saving of the soul" in that day of glory, when all the fruitage of faith will appear to view.

LECTURE XII

THE MANY WITNESSES AND THEIR WALK OF FAITH

“ Without faith it is impossible to please Him ”

(Chap. xi. 1-10.)

THE portion of the Epistle with which we have been occupied up to this time is devoted almost exclusively to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the place into which He has brought us. Beyond the exhortations given from time to time, in view of the possible turning away of the hearers from Christ, there has been very little of what is called subjective character. But there is a marked change in the chapter upon which we enter now. It has been sometimes called “The Westminster Abbey of the Scriptures,” because here are enshrined the names of the great men of faith. It is occupied entirely with showing the workings of faith, and therefore has to do in a most practical way with ourselves, as setting us an example that we should walk in the steps of the same faith.

It is very suggestive, and, I am sure, according to the purpose of God, that this chapter occupies this place in the Epistle. It is the outcome, as you may say, of all the truth which has been before us in the earlier part; just as in the Epistle to the Romans the first eleven chapters are an unfolding of divine truth which is the basis of exhortations following. So, too, in the Old Testament. The great thought in Exodus is redemption. In Leviticus the truths of divine holiness are emphasized, and the means by which communion is maintained through sacri-

face. After all that is settled,—redemption, access to God, communion with Him,—we pass, in the book of Numbers, to the practical wilderness experience of the people. So here we have, on a smaller scale, a book of Numbers, having learned, by God's grace, some of the lessons of the sanctuary in the ninth and tenth chapters.

We will also notice that what has led up to it is the last exhortation in the tenth chapter, where the walk of the just is described as a walk of faith. "Now the just shall live by faith." This same scripture is quoted elsewhere to show that justification is by faith: "The just shall live by faith," quoted in Romans; then in Galatians, you have it again as showing that the life of the saint is not under law. As you might say, in Romans the emphasis is put upon "the just"—"the *just* shall live by faith." In Galatians it is put upon "live"—"the just shall *live* by faith"; and here the emphasis is put upon "*faith*."

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by this the elders obtained witness."

"Faith is the substance," or "the substantiation of things hoped for;" that which makes the "things hoped for" a reality in the present. It is "the evidence," or, as it should be, "the conviction,"—that which is borne into the soul in the power of divine truth as a reality, "of things not seen."

These two things show us what faith has to do with, and are especially appropriate to the saints whom he was addressing. We have already spoken of Christianity as "the good things to come," and saw that the coming of those "good things" was even yet postponed in a certain way, because we have nothing visible, or tangible, yet. The "good things" are still to come, save as faith has made them a living reality now. "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" It is just as real as when we shall behold it in glory, but that which makes it

actual to the soul is not something visible that we can hold up for the world to see. It is faith only which can see the blessings which are ours now. One day all the world will see it.

Did you ever think what you would do with the glories described in Revelation if you had to make use of them here in the body as you are now, and with the flesh still in you? Would there be any real enjoyment of them in a divine way? We may rest assured it is in perfect love and wisdom that God postpones the glories of the new creation to the time when we ourselves, even as to our bodies, shall be in it and fitted for it. That which has to do with the new creation now is faith. Faith makes it a very real thing, and, though it is future and unseen, brings it vividly before the soul now for enjoyment and power in our lives. That is what is illustrated in this chapter.

The second verse, we might say, is rather an introductory word: "By it the elders obtained a good report." That familiar expression shows he was addressing Hebrew Christians, who could look back upon the fathers and call them "the elders," with whose history they were well acquainted. "The elders" of the Old Testament had obtained a good report by faith. What was the basis of their reputation? Was it any special intrinsic worth in themselves? Could you hold up any of these Old Testament characters for full examination and say you could glory in that? Not in the judgment of God; and faith always looks at things as God looks at them. So, as he speaks of one after another, and shows how they were men of renown in the history of Israel, he says it was *faith* which gave them that distinction in the eyes of God and in the eyes of His people.

"By faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that that which is seen should not have its origin from things which appear.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he having died yet speaketh.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had the testimony that he had pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that draweth near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him out.

“By faith Noah, oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

In this portion we have the first principles of faith; the foundation upon which all walk must rest. There are four illustrations of that character of faith: the principles not merely of our present relationship with God, but those which govern His people in all time. They give us a complete view of all God's people, and show that, whatever dispensation they may have lived in, they were actuated by faith, and it will be so to the end of time.

He begins, as you might say, with the Old Testament Scriptures before him, turning over page after page and finding examples of the faith which he wishes to press upon these Hebrew saints.

First is the great fact of the world in which we are, and all God's creation. How has it come into being? What is the nature of it? You ask the world's wise men, and they will tell you of the form in which things have appeared, what Geology has to declare, what Physiology unfolds. They will bring forward their various theories of evolution. And when they have told you everything, what is it? Not a single shred of truth for the soul. If they are honest, they say, We have only learned how nature has manifested itself; we have not been able to go back and see the origin of all these things!

Is it not significant that the wisest men of the world,—

leaving revelation aside and dependence upon the living God, which faith is,—have not one gleam of light as to the origin of all we see about us! They can tell you how things are formed by natural growth, how they have apparently developed; but when they come to propound a theory, God is not there. He is left out. As a matter of fact, it is understood that the greatest proof of wisdom as to the relation of God with His creation is to reach the point where men confess they know nothing; so the name that has become familiar with them is “Agnosticism,” (knowing nothing). And it tells the truth; they know nothing of God, for without faith you cannot know Him. That is what our scripture tells us: “Through *faith* we understand.” Faith receives the knowledge that is imparted; and if you close your eyes and ears to what God has to reveal, there is absolutely nothing that you can know.

So much for the wisdom of the world. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” Let us add to that the solemn arraignment of the wise men in the first of Romans: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

Not only is the world ignorant of God, but it is a guilty ignorance. They might have known. There was the light of nature. The whole creation about us, if one has a heart for God in the least, speaks of Him. How blessed it is to think, when we know God by faith, when we have received the revelation which He gives to us in redemption, that we can go back to the work of creation, over which the world stumbles and the wise men grope, and

find the fullest witness of God's wisdom, His goodness, His power; yea, more than that, Christ's atoning work is spread upon the page of nature as well as upon the page of Scripture. There is constant witness, not merely to God's creative power, and in a general sense to what is called "Theism," but to that which speaks of Christ Himself. The basis of all that is faith.

If we pass to the religions of the natural man, as we have been speaking of his wisdom, we find the same thing. Look at the mythologies of the ancient world, with their grotesque fables, and all that which speaks of utter darkness. You have a witness to the fact that natural religion is not that which will *bring* man to God, as some people would have us believe, but is a witness that man has *departed* from God. And though we find in the religions of the world some glimpse of truth as to creation,—take, for instance, the Babylonian accounts of creation, in some respects slightly similar to what you find in the book of Genesis,—yet it is only a sad and humiliating witness of a people who had the light once, but have gone away from it into darkness, and made the light they had the basis of idolatry and superstition.

So it is in all the world, whether it be the world's wisdom or its religion—they know not God. And what you find yourselves shut up to is the simple fact stated here: "Through faith we understand" the very things which the world cannot understand, over which it stumbles, gropes in darkness, and falters where it once firmly stood. All that uncertainty for the world is changed to absolute assurance for ourselves. The simplest babe in Christ knows that the "worlds were framed" by the word of God. "He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast." "All things were created by Him and for Him." "The things which are seen" (the visible world about us, in its organized life, in everything that witnesses of design) "were not made of things that do appear."

Scientists would tell us that the world as you see it now has been gradually evolved; the things which are seen were made of things which do appear. But faith says, Things that are seen were made by God, by His Word; God is above His creation, the Author of it, the Ruler, the Lord of it.

The first and great fundamental principle of faith is that the creature is dependent upon the Creator, and that is where all sin and all apostasy and departure from God begin; man turns away from the Creator, and soon he knows not God.

The second point suggests this departure from God, the universal fact of sin. God made man to glorify and enjoy Him, in subjection and obedience. We find man fallen away so far from God, groping in darkness, debased in sin, even to ignorance of God his Creator, and doubt as to His being. What does God provide *for faith in view of this alienation, this spiritual death?* Abel's sacrifice gives the answer.

Cain and Abel are contrasted. Here are two persons presenting themselves, as you might say, to hear what God has to say to them. Cain brings the fruit of the ground upon which God had pronounced a curse—the fruit, doubtless, of his own hands as he had toiled and sought to develop that which he had planted. He brings that which is the sweat of his brow, and offers it to God. Abel, on the other hand, brings of the flock a sacrifice which he offers to God in its death.

From that day to this God has been approached by men in these two ways. There have been various forms of Cain's offering. In various ways men have brought the fruit of their own toil to Him. Sometimes they have brought that which represents their moral life; sometimes it is their liberality, their gifts for the poor and needy. Sometimes they bring their religious offerings, their prayers, their professions and promises; but whatever

form it may take, the offering of Cain has the same moral character. You find in it no recognition of man's utter ruin, and therefore no atonement. It originates with the man himself, instead of in the provision which God has made.

On the other hand, Abel's sacrifice ever points to the one great fact which God taught our first parents as soon as sin had come into the world. As soon as they discovered that they were not fit for the presence of God, He made coats of skin and covered them. The skin meant, of course, that the animal's life had to be given up. There is the gospel at Eden's door, which pointed on, ever clearer and clearer, to the Lamb of God who gave up His life in order that we might be provided with a perfect covering to hide the shame of our nakedness.

What is dwelt upon in Abel's faith is not his personal character, not the fruit of his life, but the "more excellent *sacrifice* than Cain." That is what distinguishes the two men. They are not held up to us, one as wicked, and the other as righteous. As a matter of fact, we know Cain a little later to be a murderer. We know the fruit of a Christless life is sin in one or many forms, but it is not of the moral character that Scripture speaks here, but of the sacrifice which they brought. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice to God. He obtains witness by what? Not by his works, not by his faithfulness or his character, but by the *offering* he brought. By *that* he "obtained witness that he was righteous."

Here you have one of those touches which suggest to us that the apostle Paul was the writer of this Epistle: for it is Paul ever who speaks of righteousness in this way, justification before God on the ground of the work of Christ.

As we see, Abel brings a sacrifice, and God by that sacrifice declares that he is a righteous man. That does not mean that Abel was intrinsically righteous. Righteousness

has to do with our standing, not with our personal condition, when spoken of in this way. God declares a man to be just even when he is an ungodly person. That is the great truth of justification. It is on the ground of Christ's sacrifice. Sins were borne by the Substitute; they are put away; and now, as a man by faith accepts the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, God declares him to be righteous. His faith is reckoned for righteousness. It has put him in the place where righteousness can be put to his account. Abel was justified by the sacrifice which he brought, God bearing witness of his gifts, "and by it, he being dead, yet speaketh."

This clause is frequently quoted. You will find it on the title-pages of biographies of faithful men: "Being dead, he yet speaketh." But notice two little words which precede that. It is not merely the example, the devotedness, the life of piety. What was it by which Abel speaks? "*By it*," that is, by the sacrifice which he brought. Abel has been speaking from that day to this. He is speaking wherever Christ's gospel is faithfully preached, and saying, Never approach God without a sacrifice; you can only approach Him through the blood of a Substitute. And so Abel speaks "by it" of the great fundamental truth that redemption is the only remedy for sin. That is the second great fundamental principle of faith.

Are you trying to approach God by virtue of anything good in yourself—by faithfulness or good deeds, by your prayers or good feelings? These are right as fruits; but if you are putting them as a Saviour, if you are bringing them for your acceptance on the ground of which God will be pleased with you, it is simply Cain's offering, and you cannot be accepted. On the other hand, if you realize your guilt, your unworthiness, that you are not fit for the presence of God—like the publican of old, that you can only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Abel's sacrifice is at the door; it is ready for you; you can lay

the hand of faith on Him who died for sinners, for the ungodly.

The next principle of faith we see in Enoch. Enoch was the great example of the blessed results of a perfect redemption and a simple faith. He does not even die; he is translated. When they looked for him, they could not find him. He lived a brief time as compared with the other antediluvians; but he was taken out of the world—he was gone. Death and decay did not touch him; he was lifted out of it all and carried up to where God was, to be with Him—blessed result of redemption. Faith in Christ, in His Sacrifice, so fits us for the presence of God's glory that we are not waiting for death, but for the coming of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our humiliation-bodies that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

What a perfect view of redemption that gives you! God is so perfectly glorified that, changing our bodies, He can take us right up into His presence. He has given us an example of it in Enoch, and another in Elijah, and He has given us the assurance of it in the resurrection of our blessed Lord from the dead.

Meanwhile His beloved people are falling asleep. We are so given to speak of death as the universal necessity that we are prone to forget that Christ's death has even put away the need of our dying. We shall fall asleep if the Lord tarry. We would grow weary with long waiting. Suppose the apostle Paul had been compelled to wait here through all these weary centuries, would we not long that that beloved servant might be released from his toil to wait up there with the Lord?

For ourselves, too, as we look soberly at it, can you not say, with the hymn, "I would not live alway"? Would you desire to live always as you are—to live on here, if the Lord tarried yet a long season? We are to wait here and serve Him for a time; but if the Lord Jesus

does not come soon, the brightest thing for us is to be taken to be with Him, to be "absent from the body" and to be at home with the Lord. But He is waiting to gather in all the redeemed. So far as His work is concerned, He has fitted us for the presence of God's glory.

Sometimes we hear it said we have a title to heaven by the blood of Christ, and that we remain here to be morally fitted for heaven. But we have not only a *title* to heaven, but *fitness* for heaven, the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The thief is an example, not of extraordinary faith, nor of an unusual way of saving sinners, but of the only way. I believe God has singled him out in order that we may have an example, unencumbered by any subsequent details, to show us that the title to and fitness for heaven are both given the moment the sinner believes. Look at that familiar story a moment. Here is a man with his hands red with sin. He is rightly upon the cross, as he tells us himself; and he has really been blaspheming the Lord, as one of the Evangelists tells us, along with his companion; but a change comes over him. He begins to rebuke his companion for his sin and blasphemy; he confesses his own just condemnation, and then turns to the Lord and says, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." You remember the Lord's answer, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." There was no need for preparation for Paradise beyond the preparation which divine grace gave him. He was fit for it by the precious work of Christ, which gave him his title to it unquestionably. There was the new birth which had taken place to fit him for the enjoyment of the things of God, but it was all instantaneous, and all connected with the faith that laid hold upon Christ.

That is what is brought before us in the Lord's Supper, the great memorial feast for all His saints: "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the

Lord's death"—there is Abel's sacrifice. "Till He come"—there is Enoch's translation. And there is nothing, so far as God is concerned, between Abel's sacrifice and Enoch's translation, save His abundant grace to sustain us here. So far as title and fitness for heaven are concerned, the moment a man believes, he is ready to be translated like Enoch. That shows what a perfect work Christ's is. Enoch left behind a bright testimony—that he pleased God. Turning to the Old Testament, the only record we have is that he "walked with God." He lived an ordinary kind of life—begat sons and daughters; but he pleased God by walking with Him. How simple, yet wide-reaching! To walk with God means, to be in accord with His mind and will, to be separate from all that is not according to that. But this necessitates faith. One who has to do with God must believe in His reality—"believe that He is." He must also believe in His goodness—"that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Dispensationally, I have no question that Enoch speaks of the Church, of the people whose hope and expectation is heavenly, and who are going to be taken out of this scene. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we are looking for the Saviour from heaven, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." That is the hope that is before the whole Church of Christ, without a single exception. That many of them are not aware of it is their loss, but it does not affect the precious truth that the coming of the Lord means the translation of every blood-bought child of God, of every member of the Church of Christ.

Coming to Noah, we have, no doubt, the dispensational side of things even, perhaps, more clearly emphasized than in Enoch. He represents God's earthly people Israel, who, after the translation of the Church, are brought to repentance,—the remnant of them,—and go through

the fearful tribulation which is described in the book of Revelation, and which would answer to the flood which came upon the world of the ungodly.

Noah, we read, was a preacher of righteousness. He was constantly bearing witness in the midst of an ungodly world of impending judgment. He was "moved with fear." He realized that it was "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" that there must be shelter from the impending judgment; he believed God, therefore he prepared the ark, to the saving of his house. The effect of that was to condemn every one who refused to believe that the flood was coming and accept the shelter which God had provided. Thus he was "a preacher of righteousness."

So, in the latter day, the remnant, in fleeing to Christ, will not merely be preaching righteousness to the world in which they are, but they will be practically condemning the world which will be following Antichrist, bowing to the authority of the beast, and helping to build up that vast political and ecclesiastical system, which will be engulfed in the flood of divine judgments. They will condemn the world, and will become heirs to all that righteousness by faith gives.

Noah, as he looked over the world where he was, might have said, I will be heir of all this one day, because I only am sheltered, believing in God. So, in a very real sense, faith is ever the heir of everything that God has. People in the world to-day, the great men of this world, are not the real possessors of all that they have. Even for us, the apostle says, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;" for the blessed reason that we are "Christ's."

So Noah condemned the world. By his testimony he convicted it of sin, and became heir of everything that righteousness by faith gives. So when he came out of

the ark he looked upon a world of which he was sole possessor. He was lord, ruler, master of it all; and he had been made that by the faith which laid hold of God's promise.

Applying it also in a simple gospel way, we have, no doubt, another beautiful type of shelter from judgment in Christ and His work. There is no shelter but in Christ. The men of the world might have looked about them and mocked, and said, Where is there any indication of a flood? They might have trifled, as they doubtless did, and laughed at Noah for what he was doing; but the only safety was in God's provision. And to-day the world mocks, as it did in the days of Noah. Our Lord specially speaks of it as true of the last time. Men will eat and drink, marry and be given in marriage, and mock at the thought of judgment; but just as surely as the flood came upon the ungodly in the days of Noah, so will judgment come upon the ungodly in the last days.

In the great facts of these first four illustrations of faith, the fundamental truths connected with it are plainly declared. We find now, in what follows, an illustration and enlargement. The faith that is based upon these great truths will ever express itself in like manner; examples of which we read next.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into the place which he was to receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he was going.

“By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which hath foundations, whose designer and maker is God.”

Here, first of all, you have Abraham obeying the call of God. We read in Stephen's address, in the seventh of Acts, that “the God of glory” appeared unto Abraham, and called him out from the country where he was. It was “the God of glory;” the God whose glory had

manifested itself to his faith. We are not distinctly told that Abraham was an idolater, and yet there are suggestions that he was. (See Josh. xxiv. 2.) We know that the whole family connection, in company with all the rest of mankind, had gone off into idolatry. But the God of glory reveals Himself: He tells Abraham to come out from his country, from his kindred, to give up everything that nature held dear and go to a country of which He would tell him; and Abraham believed God. There was the beginning of faith. We know there had to be a work in his soul deeper even than that, which he learned in the land of Canaan; but he learned the lesson of believing God in the beginning when he went forth, not knowing whither he went.

That is the obedience of faith shown in the first step which Abraham took. Then the next is his life in Canaan. When he got to this land of promise, what did he find there? Not that which was tangible, or actually possessed by himself. He had not so much as a foot of land which he could call his own. It is very significant that the only part he ever possessed was a tomb, a place of burial, which reminded him that in life he had nothing, but which was also an anticipation of a resurrection. He had a faith that laid hold upon the God of resurrection, that his descendants would have the very land he was in. He would leave his bones there, the witness that he laid claim to it for his descendants. He dwelt in tents, along with Isaac and Jacob. His habitation was in a form which suggested that his home was not here. A tent speaks of a pilgrim life, and it is very interesting to see Jacob associated with him in this. We know Jacob lived comparatively little in the land of Canaan. Through his own waywardness, he spent much of his life outside of his own land; and yet what God sees here is his life of faith in a tent, as well as that of Abraham and Isaac. They were "heirs together of the same promise."

Then he goes on to say that Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Here is a thought we would hardly expect to find the Old Testament would give any inkling of at all. It should remind us that we ought to be very slow in saying that the Old Testament saints had no hope beyond this present life. I am sure faith always lays hold of that which is unseen. I am sure that as Enoch walked with God and enjoyed communion with Him, he knew something of that blessed future that was before him. So with Abraham. What a touching thing it is that he "looked for a city that hath foundations"! It is very suggestive in the original. There it is not "he looked for a city," some kind of a city; but "he looked for *the* city,"—well known,—only one such. He looked for *the* city which had *the* foundations, for they are well known foundations. There could be only one kind of foundation for a city like that. In Revelation you find it in precious stones, which speak of God glorified in Christ. Christ Himself is the foundation of that heavenly city, and His atoning work the basis upon which it, as all else, rests.

Abraham, the man of faith, looked for that city. He was not looking for a possession in Canaan. His tent was all that he had there. He was looking for the city whose designer and builder was God. God designed it and God built it, and that was the city that Abraham was looking for.

Have you noticed that in this chapter you have nothing of Lot? Yet Lot was a child of God, and we are told that he was a "righteous man." But Lot was not an example of faith. He looked upon a city. It was the city of Sodom. He saw it there in the valley of Jordan, like the garden of the Lord, and so he pitched his tent toward Sodom. He went toward it first, and the next thing he has given up his tent and is living in Sodom, a city which had no foundations; its builder and maker

was sinful man. That city was a type of the whole world, even as Cain's city. Man makes himself comfortable away from God by building a city that was doomed to judgment, and Lot was snatched out of it by God, barely escaping.

No danger of any judgment falling upon the city for which Abraham was looking. There shall in no wise enter into it that which found its abode in Sodom, but only those that are written in the Lamb's book of life. It was for that Abraham was looking—dear man of faith!—looking forward to the city for which we also are looking, in whose glories and joys he as well as we shall share.

Thus faith hears the call of God and lives in separation from everything that is about us here. It looks forward to the time when it shall enter into the full joy of the Lord, in the abode which He Himself has built for *His redeemed people*.

LECTURE XIII

THE MANY WITNESSES AND THEIR WALK OF FAITH

"Of whom the world was not worthy"

(Chap. xi. 11-40.)

"By faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and that beyond her time of life; because she counted him faithful who promised. Wherefore also there have been born of one, and that of one who had become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable."

IN these verses we see the faith which laid hold upon the God of resurrection, when everything was as good as dead. It is only in this chapter that we find mention of the faith of Sarah. You look in vain in the Old Testament narrative for any evidence of faith on her part. How good it is to remember that God's eye can detect what we cannot! When the heavenly visitants came to the door of Abraham's tent, Sarah was listening behind the door at the astounding promise which the Lord was giving to Abraham, that he should be the father of a son, and she should become a mother. She laughed; and when the Lord spoke to her, she denied it. So the two things which characterized her at that time were unbelief and untruthfulness. This seems most unpromising soil on which any plant of faith could grow; and yet God could see there the elements of a faith which in His sight was of great price. We will find a similar instance, to a certain extent, later on, in the untruthfulness of Rahab. God marks the faith, and has recorded it here.

Now this is not to put a premium upon unbelief, nor to

encourage us to doubt God, but to stir the heart to lay hold upon Him. If the feeble faith of Sarah was rewarded, why not yours? If faith is so dim that you are scarce conscious of it, may this testimony as to Sarah encourage to lay hold more simply upon God, counting Him faithful that has promised; for surely He will fulfil His own blessed word. This faith, as a grain of mustard seed, is next shown in its results. There springs from one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore for multitude. What encouragement we have here both to cheer the heart and to banish our unbelief!

“All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off, and hailed them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth; for they who say such things show clearly that they seek a country. And if they had had in mind that from whence they went out, they would have had opportunity to have returned; but now they seek a better, that is a heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.”

We are here reminded that even when Abraham reached Canaan he had not reached the object of faith. He was as much a pilgrim in the land as he was in journeying to it. His whole life was a pilgrimage. He never *possessed* what God had promised him. Through his whole life Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob also, was a pilgrim. “These all died in faith,” or, as the word is, “died according to faith.” They died according to that which faith had laid hold of. By faith they saw but did not receive the promises connected with the inheritance. Nature waxed feeble; its powers decayed, and they were laid away in death; but they died in *faith*, clinging to the promises yet afar off—convinced of them, so that there was no uncertainty.

It is sometimes said that the Old Testament saints had very hazy views of resurrection, or of any life beyond the

present one. What was it, then, that sustained Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What was it that they were persuaded of and saluted while they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth? It was that which is to control *our* lives also, though *we* have not entered upon our inheritance. If this life only is our portion, we are "of all men most miserable;" but we have seen the promises afar off; we too have greeted them, saying, We shall soon possess and be where the promises are laid up for us, and we confess that we also are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

As we look about us and see the world accumulating its wealth, gaining power; as we see one and another occupying places of prominence and distinction, does there come a vague sort of unrest, and a longing to have something here? Ah, then, let us turn to the precious promise of God as to our inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" to those riches more enduring than gold, and a name better than any upon earth; then we shall be content to await our portion, and our heart be set free from anything that would drag us down.

When Abraham appealed to the sons of Heth for a place to bury his dead, they said, "Thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead." But Abraham refuses to be thus recognized: he says, "I am a stranger and a sojourner."

No man likes to be without a home. There is the longing in every one's heart for a resting-place. The young man looks forward with eager anticipation to the time when he can have what he calls his own home. It is an instinct of nature, as it is of birds to build a nest, and of the animals to seek a resting-place for themselves. But you will remember there was one blessed Stranger here who, as He looked upon the birds or the foxes, said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have

ness, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He was the true Pilgrim; and He says to those who would follow Him that His was not a path of ease, of wealth or power. They that followed His path, therefore, might have, so far as this world was concerned, less than the birds or the foxes. However we may have what we call a home, is it not true that as regards the real home for the soul we also are in association with Him who had not where to lay His head?

"They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Notice that expression, "they declare it plainly." It is not that they always talked about it. The pilgrim-garb is our best witness—not the outward raiment, surely, but the whole pilgrim character. Did any one ever question that the Lord Jesus was a stranger here? that He was not seeking wealth or a place here? Who could question it, as they followed His footsteps from village to village, where He scattered blessing and ministered to the need of everyone? And as you hear those tender last words of His to His disciples about going to His Father's house, do you not see Him, as it were on the shore, bidding farewell to the dear ones He is leaving behind for a season, and at last going home? Oh, what thoughts were in the heart of our blessed Lord as He lingered here to minister comfort to His beloved disciples ere He went home! His whole life, His attitude toward the world, His whole separation of soul, declared unmistakably that His heart was elsewhere. So will it be with us if our hearts are with Him up there. People instinctively get an impression of a heavenly man when his character, his conversation, his whole life breathes an atmosphere that does not belong to earth. Is it not a practical question for us, dear friends? Is it unmistakable that we are seeking a heavenly country? Do our neighbors know us as those who are going towards heaven, who are pilgrims upon earth, and evidently

not belonging to this world? This is not something that can be secured by imitation, but by association in spirit with Christ.

Had those saints of old been mindful of the country they had left, says the apostle, they might have returned. There was no constraint or necessity laid upon them. Abraham could have gone back to Mesopotamia, or to Haran, where he had tarried for a time. He could have even continued in the land of Egypt, where, in unbelief, he went for a season. But the faith that had caused him to hear the word of God made him continue looking for a better country.

So with ourselves, as the Lord said to His disciples when multitudes were turning away from Him, stumbled at the doctrine of the Cross: "Will ye also go away?" There was the opportunity. He was not holding them back. There may have been a wistfulness in the love which longed, at least for some who were loyal to Him, who had entered into His own thoughts as to these things. How it must have refreshed His soul to hear Peter say, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Yes, dear brethren, if you are mindful to turn back to the country from whence you came, you can do so. I speak as a man. If you are minded to give up Christ, if you will hereafter devote all your energies to earth, do so. No one says Nay, save the divine nay of love, which would hold you and keep you every day. And, thank God, our inmost soul cries out against the very thought of turning back to that country from whence we came out.

Look back at Egypt, with its flesh pots, and its fish, and melons, and leeks, and everything that pandered to the flesh, and tell me—do you want it? Look at this great city in which you live, surrounded by evidences of splendor and power and wealth—do you wish it? Would

you barter your birthright yonder for all there is here? Suppose the prince of this world were to stand before us and hold up the whole bauble of it and say, I will give it all to you if you will only give up that vague hope of some better country; would we not cry out, Let us have here nothing but ashes, we would give up everything rather than for one moment lose our hope? I thank God that I can speak thus for you, beloved; that we all thus respond in reality of soul, for He has made us to desire a better country, a heavenly one.

Now notice the blessed consequences of this: "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." They were not ashamed to own Him as their God, and He was not ashamed to own them as His. We read constantly in the Old Testament, "I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "He is not ashamed to be called their God." But you never hear Him called the God of Lot. Did Lot declare that he desired a better country? Look at him in Sodom, seeking to accumulate wealth in the valley of Siddim. See him settling down in the city—not the city God had prepared. Angels are sent to Lot in Sodom to draw him out of it, but it is the Lord Himself that speaks to Abraham. When it is to go to Sodom, the Lord does not go. He tarries with Abraham, listens to his intercession, and communes with him about the terrible judgment which should fall upon the doomed city. When they visit Lot, it is not even as men, as upon terms of familiarity, but as angels; and when he hospitably opens his house to them, they decline, and would remain out on the streets all night. It is only under pressure that they will yield to his entreaty. Was not that one of whom God was ashamed? Lot had compromised his profession; they said, He has come in here to sojourn with us, and now he is posing as a judge. His own family even mocked at his warnings when he told them of the impending

judgment. What was the reason? It was because Lot had failed in his pilgrim character, and God was ashamed of him. His heart had indeed been quickened by divine life, but his interests and concerns were defiled by contact with what was contrary to God; neither could his name be mentioned here therefore, for the simple reason that God is ashamed to be called his God.

There are many of His own dear children, it is to be feared, of whose testimony here God is ashamed. Sad and solemn thought! Thank God, not one of His own will fail of communion in glory; but what of the responsibility and privilege as to our walk and testimony in the world?

We have seen faith looking for the city which hath the foundations, and God kept it for them. Abraham's faith was looking beyond Canaan for a city which God had prepared. Like the astronomer who fixes his telescope in a certain direction and says, There you will find a planet, though it is not visible to the naked eye: so faith, in all like Abraham, would say, By the Spirit of God, (though not with the naked eye, and though feeble faith sometimes falters) we can see the city.

"By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he who had received for himself the promises offered up his only-begotten son, as to whom it had been said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him even from among the dead; whence also he received him in a figure."

Isaac means "laughter." As Abraham looked upon Isaac he would be reminded of his and Sarah's laughter when God first made him promise of a son. When the child was born, Sarah says, as she names him Isaac, "God hath made me to laugh." It is no longer the laughter of unbelief, but that of joy "All they that hear it shall laugh with me."

We can imagine how all Abraham's expectations centered upon that child of promise. How his aged heart

would throb as he thought of all the blessings centered in that son! Think of what it meant for him to hear God saying, "Take now thy son, thine only son." Why did God remind him that he had no other son? It was to bring him face to face with the fact that he was to give up everything in which his hope was centered, everything in which his faith had seen fruit up to this time. And then He wrenches his heart as He says, "whom thou lovest." Why should God have to remind him of his love? Did He not know it would make Abraham's obedience all the more difficult? Ah, yes; impossible to nature, but not to faith. God would show him the full cost of what he is going to do, in order that it may be a genuine, a marked act of faith.

"Get thee to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering." Give up the heir of promise? Give up the one whom God Himself had given to him? Yes. How is it with us to-day? We have enjoyed some little blessing; some experience of God's grace; some precious fruits of the knowledge we have had; and it seems as if God is going to bring a shadow upon it all. He asks us, Are you trusting in the things that I have given you, or trusting *Me*? are you willing to sacrifice all, and see what I will do with you? What a testing and searching thing for us!

But Abraham takes that son, without hesitancy and promptly, and goes to the appointed place. He goes through the whole terrible test; he lays the wood upon his child; they go up the mountain side together; and the boy's question comes to him, "My father: behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" How it must have pierced that father's heart! but what faith shone through that answer, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Did he mean to say that Isaac was not to be put to death? He knew that if he *was* to be put to death, God could

raise him up. He counted upon the God of resurrection, and he received him thus, in a figure, as from the dead.

I need not enlarge upon what is so precious to us, how this is a type of God giving up His only begotten Son. God would not call upon Abraham to do what He, later on, had to do. Not only was the wood put upon Him, as Jesus bore the cross; not only was He bound to the altar, when our Lord was nailed to the cross; but when divine Justice lifted up the hand, there was no voice to stay. The Son was given up to death. That is where God's love transcends all other love—where He is infinitely beyond the type. He *gave* His only Son.

If we speak of the anguish that rent Abraham's bosom, what shall we say of the anguish of the Father that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all? Oh, what love in our God, the God of Abraham, the Object of Abraham's faith and ours as well!

Isaac is raised up in a figure; and so faith can let the sentence of death come upon the dearest objects we have. If God should visit us and claim that which is dearer to us than life itself, faith may count upon the God of resurrection, knowing that He who takes away will give again, in a better way than it could possibly have been retained, every blessing which He may remove for a season. There upon mount Moriah, with his only son upon the altar, what had Abraham left? The living God! You may have lost home, means, health, dear ones, the friendship of those you loved. But tell me, have you the living God? Then He will make good to you in resurrection everything that you may have been deprived of for His glory.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

“By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshiped upon the top of his staff.

“By faith Joseph, when coming to his end, made mention of the

departing of the sons of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones."

In Isaac personal faith comes out but little, still we have it here, in his blessing of Jacob and Esau "concerning things to come." It is very suggestive that this was done in opposition to nature. Isaac's natural affection was toward Esau, the first-born. Thinking his end was near, he called upon Esau to go out and get him that which he craved for the gratification of his appetite, that his soul might bless him. Had he forgotten the word of God to Rebekah, "The elder shall serve the younger"? If that blessing had been given by him as one who had authority to do so, it would seem as if the promise of God were to be set aside. Jacob would have failed of the blessing, and Esau, who was a profane person, would have been the recipient and channel of everything that Isaac would have promised.

Is God going to be thwarted? Is He going to be hindered in His purposes? Never! Isaac himself, unconsciously at the time, but with the full sense of authority, bestows the fullest blessing upon Jacob, although he was under the impression that it was Esau. That was faith; not in his purpose, (for God ruled that,) but in bestowing the blessing, and realizing, after he had done it, that it would stand as the act of God, and he could not reverse it. It is a striking illustration of the power of Divine purpose. Here is one who, contrary to his own intention, bestows the blessing just where God would have it! I do not enter upon Jacob's machination, and Rebekah's. He paid dearly for it all. God had no need of his deception, for His purposes will be carried out in spite of nature on the one hand or the other.

We come to Jacob. He also was a man of faith. It did not look like it, in what we have been considering, when he clothed himself with his brother's raiment, and put on the hairy skin of a kid in order that his father

might think it was Esau. Yet there was an element of faith in it, just as we have seen there was faith in Sarah even when she laughed so incredulously. We can see that Jacob prized the blessing, as he had prized the birth-right. He had not faith enough to count upon God to make good the blessing to him apart from himself. For his artifice to secure the blessing which he prized he became a wanderer from home, spending the best of his life out of the land of Canaan. The same deception he himself had practised on his brother and father was practised upon him by Laban as to the wife he had bargained for; it was God's governmental retribution which Jacob could not fail to realize. He was deceived, too, by his own children as to their awful sin in the matter of Joseph.

In all the life of Jacob, where shall we glean an example of faith that we can follow? The vision of those opened heavens and God's promise to him at Bethel was pure mercy. His little schemes to get the wealth of Laban did not savor of faith surely, nor his contrivances to meet his brother Esau; nor his building in Shechem after his return to Canaan. But now we see him at last, his experiences over, an old man, a weary pilgrim, leaning upon the top of his staff. For how many of us does it take a lifetime to learn to lean! Why should not the brightness, the vigor of youth be accompanied with the simplicity of faith that absolutely leans upon the arm of God? But Jacob was not a worshiper at Bethel when he awoke, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" Nor at Jabbok, when he was struggling with the angel. But here at last he had learned to trust and to worship.

Now it is that he can declare God's blessing upon the two sons of Joseph as they are brought before him. Joseph would have had the eldest in the first-born's place; but Jacob blesses the two sons of Joseph according to the purpose of God. Ephraim (fruitfulness) is put before

Manasseh (forgetting); that is, the positive side of divine things as more important than the negative side.

Then we have Joseph, whose faith, like his father's, is looking to the future—to the fulfilment of the promise. Joseph had been ruler over Egypt, with all its splendor at his feet. Raised to the second place in the kingdom, men had cried, "Bow the knee," before him. All that, now, is a thing of the past, and he has to die, as all the rest. Joseph had nothing but his bones left. What does he say? "Take them up into that inheritance which God has provided, where I shall be raised." He looks forward to the time of the inheritance. His faith is looking onward and upward—not thinking of his glory in Egypt, but of the future glory when Christ shall reign.

We have seen faith looking forward to the blessing to come. Now we see the trials through which it has to pass before it reaches its hope.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

"By faith Moses, when he had become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense."

Moses is taken here as the great example. Faith begins (and it is a great comfort to think it often begins) in the parents. The apostle speaks to Timothy of the unfeigned faith that dwelt in his grandmother first, then in his mother, "and I am persuaded in thee also." When everything was going to pieces, the Spirit of God loves to go back to the faith that dwelt in the bosom of a faithful woman, then in her daughter, and then in her child.

Faith in Moses' parents was shown in the fact that he was hid by them three months, "because they saw he was a proper child;" or, as Stephen says, "fair unto

God." They believed he would be a fitting instrument for God to use, and so they hid him in spite of the commandment that every male should be cast into the river. And when his mother could no longer hide him, she takes the king literally at his word. She puts the child at the river's brink, but in the ark—typically, in Christ.

So with us now. As we look upon the children God has given us we say, Oh let them be beautiful for God throughout eternity! First, we throw every safeguard about them; we try to hide them from the evil in the world; and as they grow up and we can no longer keep them under our eye constantly, as we have to launch them out in this great world,—sent off to school or to some employment,—how faith, by God's grace, does as Moses' parents! They put the child of their care in the ark as it were, and say, If he must be launched out upon the river, we put him in this ark, and we will count upon God for him. So godly parents commit their dear ones to Christ, as they send them off—not in a careless way, but counting upon that precious Saviour who has saved us, to keep our dear ones and to bring them unspotted out of all that into which they will be thrown.

Let us not be afraid to have faith for our children, to lay hold upon God for them before they are able to lay hold upon Him for themselves. People say, A child must believe for himself. You cannot believe for him. Yes, you can in a very real way, as Moses' parents believed for him. Suppose they had not believed for him. Suppose they had said, If he were large enough, he might trust in God; but we must cast him into the river. That would have been the end of Moses as far as human power was concerned. But what a place they put him in! You know how he was taken from the river's brink by Pharaoh's daughter, adopted by her, and then put back under his mother's care until he was of sufficient age to go permanently back to the king's court. Every advantage was

given to him; but God's tender care had given him also all the benefit of a mother's love and training in the fear of God and His ways. How diligently that dear mother must have made use of her time! How she must have instilled into his mind the promises of the God of their fathers! How she must have taught that young child that he was identified with those bondsmen who yet were the people of God! How she must have told him of the promises of God, that He would visit them and bring them up out of that land, and give them an inheritance! No doubt she made faithful and diligent use of her opportunities; and, as Pharaoh's daughter said to her (in a higher sense than Pharaoh's daughter meant, she heard another Voice saying,) "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." What wages has a faithful mother, if she has spent time and strength and prayers in bringing up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

Moses comes to years. His feet are upon the steps that lead up to the throne. He was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." He had every opportunity that a great civilization could give. What opportunities, what a chance to reform Egypt!—to make it a place where the children of Israel could have their inheritance, instead of some vague, intangible thing in Canaan that might never materialize!

Let us note here what the Spirit of God singles out in Moses for His approval. "When he was come to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter"—he gave up that which God Himself had put him into, as it were. Humanly speaking, there was no limit to his prospects. If a Joseph, who was brought out of the dungeon, was exalted to a place second only to the king, what might not a Moses hope to attain, who was adopted into the king's family? Was not the throne even a possibility?

Moses was not in the immaturity of his life, for he was forty years old. Then, taking in the whole field in his survey, seeing the possibilities connected with his position in Egypt, seeing the disgrace of his own kinsmen according to the flesh, calmly looking at both sides, what does faith do? It refuses all this greatness, its dignity, its expectations, and says, My place, my heritage is with those people who are groveling there in the brick-kilns, and crying out under the lash of the taskmasters! That was faith. He chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Ah, Egypt's greatness may be attractive, its pleasures may be manifold, its power unlimited, but written over all the greatness of Egypt was, "For a season;" and so it is with all this world has to offer. Faith says, Those things are temporary, and, thank God, the affliction is temporary too; I will take the affliction; I will identify myself with my people. With some consciousness that God would deliver them by his means, he undertook to do so, but they refused his help; human energy was there, but genuine faith was there too, which identified him with that suffering people rather than enjoy the pleasures of Egypt.

"The reproach of Christ!" Think how the Spirit of God describes it. Here were a people suffering and rejected; and God calls it the reproach of Christ. "In all their affliction He was afflicted," and faith sees in that the affliction of Christ Himself. As the Lord Jesus afterwards, in speaking to Saul of Tarsus, says, "Why persecutest thou Me?" It was the reproach of Christ, and not merely that of His suffering people.

Look at it for a moment. Is it possible? Here are the treasures of Egypt: put in that side of the balance all you can think of wealth and glory of this world. Here is the reproach of Christ: put in this side, all the suffering, the scorn, the self-denial, the poverty, the feebleness, the

trials, which come upon us. Read the apostle Paul's description of some of the reproach of Christ. See what it means to endure affliction at the hands of persecutors on the one side, and at the hands of those who were God's own people on the other. And as you look at those two things, which in your estimation outweighs? Surely, if we judge according to sight, we would say the treasures of Egypt will outweigh all that suffering. But Moses, as he looks forward to the recompense of the reward, as he thinks of the outcome, says, I will cast in my lot with those who are suffering reproach and affliction, rather than have all this other!

"By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he celebrated the passover and the sprinkling of blood, that the destroyer of the first-born might not touch them.

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land; of which the Egyptians making trial, were swallowed up."

In the burning bush God reveals Himself to Moses. He is brought face to face with the invisible God. God's power is put in his hands, and he is sent back to face the king of Egypt. The demand on God's part is that Israel be released from their burdens. He has seen the One who is invisible, and so he boldly stands before Pharaoh. Again and again he reiterates God's demands, and brings upon Pharaoh one judgment after another until God's will is accomplished, and he leads the people out. So the fear of God delivers him from any fear of an earthly potentate on the one side, while, on the other, the blood of the passover is their shelter from divine judgment. Thus Moses and Israel pass out of the land, "not fearing the wrath of the king."

Then, there is the Red Sea, through which faith also finds its way. An utterly impassable sea confronts them, the enemy is behind, the mountains on either hand. Unbelief cries aloud, but faith hearing the voice of God lifts

its rod, and passes through the sea as on dry land, while the pursuers are engulfed in the waves.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, when they had been compassed about for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with those that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace.”

From the Red Sea the apostle passes on to the walls of Jericho. Notice that the whole wilderness is passed over. Mercies from God in their behalf were many indeed, but not acts of faith. There were murmurs at the waters of Meribah; refusal to enter into the land at Kadesh-Barnea; complaints many and great there were along the way; so the wilderness journey is wholly passed over.

But we come to the land, to the walled city Jericho, and the harlot Rahab in connection with it.

Here faith, with the mighty power of God, is manifested in the destruction of Jericho—type of this proud world, which shall one day crumble into nothingness before God; type, too, of the powers of the world which shall one day be prostrated before the triumphant people of God, who, as the remnant, will be marching around all the haughtiness and might of the beast and antichrist; but who, when the time comes, when the Jubilee trumpet sounds that announces the coming of the Son of man in power and great glory, shall see all the power of the enemy fall prostrate. There shall be no power which can stand before that feeble remnant who are associated with the Ark of the covenant and with the priests of the living God. That is the side of power that faith is associated with; and on the other you have, in the midst of all the crumble and decay, faith standing out in one poor woman who had nothing absolutely to commend her but this one single thing—she laid hold upon God.

As we think of this crumbling world upon whose wall we are living, with faces looking outward for deliverance

—not within, when it shall totter and fall, not a single one who has living faith in God but will be brought out and into association with His redeemed people. Thus faith will ever triumph.

“And what more do I say? for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Barak, and Sampson, and Jephthae, and David, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who by faith overcame kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness became strong, became mighty in war, turned to flight the armies of aliens. Women received their dead again by resurrection; and others were tortured, not having accepted deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others underwent trials of mockings and scourgings, yea also of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, they died by slaughter of the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil treated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

“And these all, having obtained testimony through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that not apart from us should they be made perfect.”

And so the apostle, having traced throughout their familiar history many an example of genuine faith, finds his time too short to go more fully into these precious things.

He runs rapidly over these others, taken chiefly from the book of Judges. Each one in his place had a faith that counted upon the living God. Each of the enemies by which these men were confronted represented a certain kind of spiritual evil. It was in times of ruin that this faith was in exercise.

In previous examples given, we have seen the faith that had to do with the future; then, the faith that was passing through the testing. Now we come to the faith that shines in the midst of the ashes of a failed testimony, a thing that ought to have appealed to the Hebrews in that day as

they realized that they were living in the last times, and which surely should appeal to us who are living in the days of the ruin and decay of so much that was bright for God. But even if many have fallen by the way; if the corporate testimony has decayed until it is only one here and there, only a little flickering lamp where there should have been a general illumination, still faith shines forth in the midst of the ruin which is the reaping of the very thing which God's people themselves have sown. Faith lays hold upon God in it.

There are seven names given here, including "the prophets;" which seems to speak of perfection and perfect victory in the midst of abounding evil.

We have kingdoms subdued, as Gideon subdued the Midianites and others, who judged Israel and subdued their oppressors.

"Obtained promises." Examples upon examples were given in their history of promises obtained from God when everything on man's side was hopeless.

"Stopped the mouths of lions." There we are, down in the den of lions with Daniel. He realizes that his God, whom he serves continually, can keep him as safe among the lions as though he was upon the throne of the king.

"Quenched the violence of fire." There we see the Hebrew young men in the flaming fiery furnace into which they had been thrown by the idolatrous king, Nebuchadnezzar, and where they found, instead of destruction, their bonds loosened and companionship with One whom the king himself declares to be "like the Son of God."

"Out of weakness were made strong," as Gideon, who felt himself powerless, and would have excused himself from leading a band of 300 against a great host, and, after the great victory over the Midianites, still following up the fleeing army, in order that victory might be com-

plete. You remember the words are, "faint, yet pursuing."

"Waxed valiant in fight," as when David's mighty men fought until God gave them the victory, even when all nature's force was exhausted, as in the case of that brave old hero whose sword clave to his weary arm till he knew not which was arm and which was sword—complete identification with the instrument that he used.

"Women received their dead raised to life again." We remember the Shunamite woman, who reproduces in her history, in a minor way, that of Abraham and Sarah, the child of promise being given to one without natural hope, and then taken away in death, only to be raised again. Something similar is seen in the history of Elijah.

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." These did not get salvation out of death. Their faith counted upon the better resurrection. All martyrs were not rescued from the impending death. Some had to drink deep of the bitter waters, and, so far as this world was concerned, bid farewell to all. They would not accept deliverance, however, at the price of loyalty to Him who had called them to that better resurrection on which the eyes of their faith were intently fixed.

"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment." They had trial of that which may be harder to bear than physical suffering—the scorn of those who do not know our Lord. How keenly sensitive natures feel the slights put upon them! The neglect, the coldness, the sarcastic, supercilious smile of pity, are scourgings which bite more deeply than the lash laid across the shoulders; but faith endures, and triumphs over it all.

"Yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment." How the whole army of martyrs passes in array as these expressions come before us!

"They were stoned," and Stephen's blood cries out from the earth while he looks up into heaven and sees the face of Jesus, the Son of God, upon the throne.

"They were sawn asunder," referring perhaps to the time between Malachi and the New Testament, when such persecutions were inflicted.

"Were tempted." The character of the temptation is not mentioned. Doubtless some inducement to escape suffering by giving up Christ, as was so frequently tried in the case of martyrs for the name of Jesus, during the heathen persecutions of the early Christians, and the no less heathenish *auto-da-fes* of Spain, where promise of deliverance was offered even after the victim was in the flames, if he would only deny the truth which had emancipated his soul. How keen such temptations were, we can well conceive when dear ones, wives, little children, all appealed to the father to remain with them, rather than seal with his blood the faith which he had confessed!

"Were slain with the sword." Here we are reminded of James, (Acts xii. 2) who in the first great success of the gospel had to seal with his blood the truth which he had preached, and who thus found our Lord's word verified, that he was to be baptized with the same baptism as Jesus Himself. Do you think that James would have coveted an earthly throne in preference to the martyr's crown?

What an army!—no gold lace or uniform upon them; no great glory and honor. You see them yonder in the caves and dens of the earth, clad in sheepskins and goatskins. Is your place with them? Is that reproach of more value in your eyes than "the treasures of Egypt?" Ah, faith will ever identify us with that company "of whom the world was not worthy"—whom Christ is not ashamed to call "brethren!"

"They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth." How the apostle lets it

all accumulate before the eyes of these whom he was addressing! It is as though he were saying to them, Your affliction, is it worse than that of those who have gone before you, heirs of the like precious faith with yourselves? You are talking about what you have been enduring. I have set before you the whole array of faith from Abel down. You see what the portion of faith is,—nothing here, everything in the living God, everything in the future. You cannot get your portion here, you must wait for it too.

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” The “better thing for us” is Christianity with its fuller blessing,—blessing which the Old Testament saints could not have conceived—“that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Thank God, everything looks on to perfection. The time is coming when all these worthies who found but caves, and dens, and persecution and martyrs' sufferings, will be introduced into the full glory that awaits all the people of God. We shall share it with them. We, in this present dispensation, as members of the bride, the body of Christ, have a place of higher glory even than theirs. These witnesses of old are patiently waiting with God. They have not yet entered upon their full glory of inheritance. Will you bear a little persecution? Would you dare give up the peerless, glorious name of Jesus and all that that means to you? And oh, what an appeal it would be to the truehearted among them. How they would rise as one man and say: Oh, forgive us that we ever for one moment doubted the full sufficiency of Christ our Lord; forgive us that we ever for one moment allowed the mind to turn back to the attractions of anything that would shut Christ out from view.

LECTURE XIV

GIRDED FOR THE RACE

"Looking unto Jesus"

(Chap. xii.)

"Let us also, therefore, being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with steadfastness the race lying before us; looking away unto Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

THESE verses connect closely with the previous chapter. The great cloud of witnesses are those spoken of there: witnesses, not in the sense of being spectators (though in a certain sense we are running our race under the eyes of all who have gone before) but the record of their lives bearing witness to the truth and reality of all that God has promised, of His sustaining grace in the midst of every circumstance, and they bear witness to us of this. The effect of that upon us should be to stimulate us to run in the same path. The apostle here, as in Philippians, uses the familiar illustration of the race-course; only here he dwells more particularly upon what would hinder the saints.

We are to lay aside first the weights, and then the sin which so easily besets us. The weight is not necessarily a sin in itself, but that which hinders one in making progress. We often hear, alas, the question: What is the harm or the sin in my doing this or that thing; engaging in this business, or indulging in that pleasure? The question is answered just here. Is the thing a weight,

or is it a wing? Is it that which speeds you on your course or does it hold you back? If it is a weight, it will lead inevitably to that which follows after.

Here again Lot gives us a sad example, as the other witnesses show a faith that presses forward. Morally speaking, Lot was separate from the wickedness by which he was surrounded; he vexed his righteous soul about it, but his business interests, the facilities for heaping up wealth, outweighed his pilgrim desire. What do you find as a result? Follow him a little further, and see him in that mountain cave all tarnished with unspeakable sin and corruption. There you see the sin which easily be-sets those who are held down by weights.

If a child of God is to be a racer, he has to lay aside what will hinder him in his race. Suppose a man has a real desire to run a race, and one should offer him an attractive garment to put on, or something pleasant to eat or drink as he was about starting, or a bag of gold and say, You may have this if you will carry it with you. If he desires to win the race, everything of that sort will be laid aside; not because it is inherently evil, but because it is injurious to him as a racer.

These weights are not necessarily external: they are first of all in the heart. We all have our duties in this life to fulfil, yet these are never weights. But the moment a thing gets a place in my heart and mind which is not in God's mind for me, it becomes a weight, no matter what it is; and the effect is soon manifest.

● To illustrate further from Israel's history,—in the book of Deuteronomy Moses reminds the people of what Amalek did to them when they came out of Egypt. The host was being led forward by the pillar of cloud and of fire: we may be sure that divine guide—type of the Spirit—lingered not. But there were some who lagged behind; they were the stragglers, the camp followers—doubtless some of that mixture that had come out of Egypt. Ama-

lek fell upon the rear—such attacks are always upon the rear—involving the whole of the children of Israel in a conflict which would have been unnecessary had all been pressing forward diligently.

That is an important spiritual lesson. Our heavenly Guide is leading us on. If, as the apostle says, we are “forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling,” Amalek (the lusts of the flesh) will not overtake us. We may struggle against fleshly lusts; we may conquer, by the grace of God through Christ’s intercession; but why should there be such a conflict? Does not the very fact of such conflict point unmistakably to the fact that we are lingering behind?

There is also a conflict in front, but it is not with the flesh and its lusts, dragging us back to Egypt. The enemy in front is the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, who would hinder us from entering fully into our inheritance. To fight that enemy is the mark of genuine spiritual growth—a very different thing from struggling with the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul. The apostle Peter says, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims” (that is, those who are running this race) abstain from these things which are behind—fleshly lusts, which assail you if you linger. If your eye and heart are in the world, if you linger there, the first thing you know you are engaged in a rear conflict, that brings nothing to your credit.

The sin “easily” besets us. Let us never forget that; nor think for a moment that we can get in a position in which sin will not be natural to the flesh, or where we do not need to be on our guard. Sin is as natural to the flesh as it is for an animal to breathe. And the moment the eye is taken off Christ, you have the certainty of the sin besetting you. It follows after, and we can only run

away from it by pressing on in the race. Then you will distance fleshly lusts like wolves in the distance; as you speed on your way the shouts grow fainter, with less likelihood of your being overtaken.

We are to run this race with patience, or endurance. The Galatians began to run well. Their faith was so bright, it was as though everything was enacted before their eyes; and their love so fervent that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to the apostle. But look how they began to falter. Questions come in as to the law—teachers subvert them from the gospel of Christ—and those who were running so well have been hindered. It is not enough that we have run up to the present time; until we reach the goal we are to press on. Where Christ is, is our goal; and until we are there with Him, we will never have finished our race.

It is an appointed race. Every step of this course has been marked out for us. We know not how long it is, but God knows every step that each of us has to take. It is one race that all the people of God have to run—from the cross up to the glory. Those are the two termini. You begin at the cross, when, as a poor sinner with nothing in your hands but your sin, you come to Christ. The other terminus is the goal, where He is, at the right hand of God.

Those are the general marks of the race course, but each of us has a specially appointed race answering to his life down here. Some of us live longer, some a short length of time. Some have passed through outward persecution, others have had very little of that; whatever the course may be, it is the race set before us. Our blessed Lord has gone the whole way before us; He has marked out the appointed course for His people. We are never called upon to take a single step where we do not find His footprints ahead of us to show us the way.

Thus in running the race set before us, it is "looking

unto Jesus." Looking *off* unto Him—for that is the force of the word. Looking off first from the weights and the sin,—on to Jesus; for that which gives power to discard the weights is to catch the eye of the One on high. We will then insensibly drop everything that is not consistent with the perfect will of that blessed Master.

But there is more even than that, I think. We have had a whole chapter of witnesses, from Abel onward. We can look at them and thank God for them; but in the race we are to look away even from them. We are not so much to think of Abel, as of the sacrifice he brought; not of Abraham and his circumstances, but of the living God in whom he trusted; not of Moses and the Egypt which he gave up, but rather of Christ and the power of His riches to detach from the world. In other words, we are not to be entirely occupied by any of the examples of faith, whether past or present, but to look off from them all unto Him who is the Leader and the Perfecter of faith.

The word Author is the same as in the second chapter—the "Captain" of our salvation. It is the Prince, the Master, the One who has completed His course and perfectly exemplified what faith is. As I have said, in different individuals you have partial examples of faith; but in Christ, blessed be His name, you have the perfect example. We could trace with delight and worship His whole course as it is marked for us in the four Gospels. He is the Leader, the Captain of faith.

But I think there must be something more than that suggested in the expression. It is not merely that Christ is the Chief one who has walked in this path of faith, but He is the *source* of power for His people. He is the Captain leading His people; and He gives them power to follow. He is the Originator of the life of faith, not merely in our souls, but in our walk also.

He is also the Perfecter of faith—the one who has brought it to full completion; He has run His course

and finished it with joy. He has gone on high, and just as surely as He is there, we will finish our course too. As the psalmist says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Or, as the apostle says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun the good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." He is the Alpha and Omega of everything He undertakes—in salvation, in accomplishing the purposes of God, and in bringing His people, as we are now seeing, through their appointed course.

What was the joy that was set before Him? He was a stranger to earthly joy, though He did not check it where it was of a proper character; but wherever He went, whether it was at the marriage supper in Cana of Galilee, or at the tomb of Lazarus, whether it was joy or sorrow, everyone who saw Him felt that His springs of supply were elsewhere than in this world. His source of joy was the sense of His Father's presence and the accomplishment of His Father's will.

But He had a joy that was set before Him. In the sixteenth psalm He says, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." He was going to be in the Father's presence, not merely as at the beginning, when, before the world was, He sported (as the word is in the original) as One brought up in the Father's family, Object of His Father's love and joy. His joy, while a Man down here, was that He was going to be there after He had accomplished redemption. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." His joy was that when He got back to His Father He was to have others with Him. He was going to bring many sons to glory.

Oh, who can describe what was ever beckoning our Lord on His way! He knew that when He had finished His course and had sat down at the right hand of that throne, every hindrance would be removed that had prevented His people from being associated with Him.

As He thought of that great joy, there looms up the cross between Him and the goal. That awful cross!—not merely bodily suffering, nor the reproach of man, but as its dark shadow loomed up before Him, He saw the blackness of divine wrath; God Himself dealing in judgment with Him about sin. Will He swerve from His appointed course because of that cross? Is the joy of doing His Father's will and of having us with Him sufficient to lead Him up to that cross? Yes! for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross. His disciples are amazed as they follow Him up to Jerusalem, for they see one who had set His face like a flint and will not be turned aside from His appointed course. Thus He endured the cross.

And then the shame. Think of the Lord of glory, the Possessor of all things, being treated with contempt by His poor wretched creatures. Think of the spitting, of the buffeting, all of that! What does it say about the shame? Did He shrink from it? How is it with us if some point the finger at us? If men sneer, if they but smile at what they call our peculiarities, how do we feel as to this little bit of shame? Does it say that the Lord Jesus endured the shame? No, He *despised* the shame. It does not say that He despised the cross. We know that was an awful reality—He could not despise *that*. But for the shame, the reproach, the ignominy, He did not think of it for a moment, in comparison with the joy of having us with Him there.

Now He is the One that is before us, and we are to look off to Him, not merely for strength, or power to run our race, but also for the example which He gives us so perfectly. The apostle applies that in what we have next.

“For consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, wrestling against sin.”

Are you sometimes tempted and discouraged? Do you

feel as if your cup of bitterness was a little fuller than that of your brethren; that your trials are a little more difficult to bear? Look away from your brother's cup, at the cup which the Lord drank. Are we not ashamed, then, to talk about our little bit of suffering and reproach as compared with His who could say, "Reproach hath broken My heart?"

And then someone says, Where is the limit to patience; how long must I suffer? He tells you here: "Ye have not yet resisted unto *blood* striving against sin." There is the limit. When the cross had done its whole work and they had cast Him out of this world, that was our blessed Lord's only limit; and the apostle bids us to fix our eyes upon Him, and follow Him. As long as He was here He was a sufferer at the hands of man. Even when they had nailed Him to the cross, they still mocked at Him. But when He said, "It is finished," there is no longer any reproach that can fall upon Him; we do not even hear of any being offered after the wanton malice of the spear-thrust. Hands of love take Him down from the cross, and wrap up that visage which had been "so marred more than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men:" it is wrapped up with the precious spices that speak of how fragrant to God all that suffering was, and laid away for a little season in a new tomb. His humiliation and sufferings are over.

So will it be with us. "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye;" it is only for a little while; the limit of it is your brief life. But remember, do not set any other limit; do not say, I will wait a month, a year, and if this persecution continues, I will have to do something to make it stop. Say rather, I will resist unto blood striving against sin. "The sin" is that to which the Hebrews were in special danger—the one that eclipses everything else. It is the sin of denying or giving up Christ.

And have ye quite forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto sons, My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reprov'd by him, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth? It is for chastening that ye endure. God dealeth with you as with sons; for who is the son that the father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, of which all are made partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh who chastened us, and we revered them. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed chastened for a few days, after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening at the time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby."

While we are thus to set ourselves for the race to the end, it has a most sanctifying effect, a chastening effect upon our daily life. In view of the tendencies of our nature, how needful to keep it in check. He says, If you are a child you must expect chastening. "He that spar-eth the rod, hateth his own son." In very love God is pledged to chasten us. His rod we are to receive as a part of the proof of that love which gave His own precious Son for us.

It is very interesting to notice the character of these chastisements. They are—persecution, scorn, hatred, the reproach of man. You say, if God would only lay me on a bed of sickness, I could stand it. If it were God who had done these things, but it is just the wretched malice of man. I cannot see Him in it. Well, *faith* sees God in it. Whom did the Lord Jesus see in all that He passed through—which was not, I need hardly say, for His discipline, for He needed neither correction nor prevention? If He could say of the bitterest part of the cup, "The cup which My Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it," He could say it of everything else. These things which we bear, no matter how much

they seem to come from malignity, envy, or hatred, we know they also come from a Father's heart who permits them for our blessing.

Look at Job, for instance: Satan was let loose upon him. He took away his property and his family. He afflicted him with grievous sickness. And then the wife of his bosom, unconsciously lends herself as an emissary of Satan. She says, "Curse God and die." See his noble answer: "Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—he will not receive it from the hands of Satan. Ah no; we do not even read that Job knew it was Satan who was acting in it all; whatever the chastening might be, it was the chastening of God. Oh for faith to look past the poor tools that Satan may use—whether it be the world or the flesh in fellow Christians—to look past all second causes, into the Father's loving heart.

Now that is not an easy thing to do: for, as he says further, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Do you know what we all have a desire for? It is a kind of chastening that does not hurt—that might be a pleasure to go through. But that would be no chastening. It must be grievous in order to be a chastening.

Then he reminds us of the effect of this. We have had earthly parents who corrected us according to their pleasure. A father smote us with the rod, rebuked us with his lips, cut off some pleasure, or did something that showed his desire to deliver us from evil; and the effect of it was that we gave him respect, and reverence. But now he says, Shall we not much rather, if our Father sends affliction, bow to Him? It is not for a few days with Him, but forever. Earthly parents have done the best they could for our temporal profit, but He, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

Notice that expression: not merely partakers of holi-

ness; but there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, whereby we might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter i.)—brought to the place where we can drink from the fountain-source of holiness, the divine nature itself. God chastens us in order that we may partake of His nature, that we may drink that in, as it were, and have the fruits of holiness in our outward life as the result. After the chastening come the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby.

You will notice here that there are three ways in which we can be affected by chastening. We can despise the chastening of the Lord—we may think it a trifle, and throw it off. We have been speaking about reproach and scorn. A man may say, I don't care for people's opinion—that is nothing to me: he may brave it out, in his own strength. He is “despising” the chastening of the Lord. He does not have to go to God about it. It cannot be a severe chastening that does not bring us to God. Then, on the other hand, there are those who “faint” when they are rebuked of Him. They are overwhelmed, and the hands hang down, they are discouraged.

These are the two extremes—neither of which is faith; but now we have: “To those who are exercised thereby.” We are to be exercised by what we pass through, not to despise it, not to faint under it, but to learn the lessons which God would teach us, to go to Him for comfort, succor and guidance, to lay hold upon His grace and mercy.

“Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the failing knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame may not be turned aside, but rather it may be healed. Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which none shall see the Lord: watching lest there be any one who lacketh the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and

many be defiled by it; lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright; for ye know that also afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he he was rejected (for he found no place for repentance) although he sought it earnestly with tears."

We are encouraged thus to lift up the hands, and to stiffen the knees, to stand steadfastly, and to run steadily. Then there is a word for our conscience. We are to make a straight path for our feet. We will make a straight path if we are looking unto Jesus and running with patience; but if not, it is not only that we have turned aside from the appointed course, but that which is lame will also be turned out of the way. God keep us from turning any of His lame ones out of the way. Oh for the faith that, instead of turning others away, or stumbling the feeblest, shall heal those who would be tempted to wander.

Then He goes on to say, "Follow peace with all men." God does not wish us to be men of strife. He wants us both to have and to promote peace with the saints, and peace in the world as far as we can; but notice one thing that goes with the peace: "and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Peace and holiness" must go together. If they are separated, it is a false peace indeed.

The word for "looking diligently" does not mean looking at ourselves lest we should fail. We are to be overseers. Cain insolently asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and we can answer, "Yes." We are to see that no one of our brethren fails or is lacking in the grace of God. Notice that the object of oversight is not primarily the walk or the details of the life, but its source. It may be necessary to take knowledge of a brother's walk, to deal faithfully with such as have turned away from the Lord or dishonored Him, but the primary object of brotherly oversight is to see that no one is lacking in

the grace of God. If you see a tendency in any to lose the sense of God's grace, if the free grace and love of God cease to have a charm for the soul, that is the danger sign for us. And oftentimes we would be of the greatest help to one another if we guarded against this.

If grace is lacking, some bitter root of self-will is bound to come up. The bitter root is in the flesh and it is only grace that can keep it down. When it springs up and troubles us, how many does a bitter root defile! Achan did not suffer alone; and the rebellion of Korah was accompanied by widespread murmuring. May the Lord enable us to judge everything that is contrary to His grace. Let us be established in grace, and the bitter roots, the self-will of sin will not have opportunity to spring up and defile.

This is further illustrated in the case of an open outbreak of sin. If grace is neglected, immorality, or profanity as with Esau, may come in. This is in line with what we have already seen was the special temptation of these Hebrew saints, and therefore he particularly warns against anything like apostasy. There came a time when Esau desired repentance on the part of his father; he desired to change Isaac's mind, but he found no place for it though he sought it carefully with tears. He said, "Bless me, even me also, O my father;" but he could not change his father's mind, for his father had expressed the mind of God in the matter.

"For ye have not come to the mount that might be touched, that burned with fire, and to obscurity, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard entreated that the word should not be uttered to them any more: (for they were not able to bear that which was enjoined: and if a beast should touch the mountain it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake)."

The mount was a mount which could be touched, and

yet which they were forbidden to approach. Sinai was all afire; darkness, blackness, smoke and tempest were upon its summit—an impressive, solemn sight connected with the giving of the law. God was speaking, and men entreated that they should not hear His voice again. They could not endure that which was commanded; the lawgiver himself said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” What a figure of the effect of the law making demands upon man, by a holy and righteous God,—demands which man cannot meet.

The people withdraw to a great distance, but the effect is not to produce righteousness. We next see them making an idol and dancing around the golden calf, with Sinai’s awful summit but a little way off. Hardened by the very proximity of that dread law which did not appeal to their hearts, which did not reveal the love of God, but only made a claim upon them which they could never fulfil. Now, thanks be to God, we have a contrast to all that.

“But ye have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, a heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the first-born ones who are registered in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel.”

There are here eight things. Eight suggests a new beginning; it is the number of the new creation, therefore; the basis whereon grace rests, and the atmosphere in which the new-born soul lives and delights. We have not come to Sinai, the law and its judgment; but we have come to Mount Zion, the mountain of God’s grace. You will remember that Mount Zion is contrasted even with Shiloh where the Tabernacle was first set up—the last stage, we might say, of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel. It represented mingled law and

grace; it was not pure grace, and the result was that even the ark of God was carried into the Philistine's land. When it was brought back, it was put away at Kirjath-Jearim, the city of the woods, where it was lost sight of, and the people had no divine centre.

When God began to work in grace again, when He chose out—not king Saul, who was the people's choice, the man who was excellent according to the flesh—but chose David, the youngest of eight sons (significantly the eighth) from following the sheep to set him as leader of His people, it was in perfect grace. He chose Mount Zion and put His name there, and said, "This is My rest forever, Here will I dwell for I have desired it." "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," on the sides even of the north, dark and forbidding naturally as it is. Mount Zion, well protected on every side, the enemies that come up against her flee away. "They are confounded, fear and trembling take hold of them." Mount Zion then, speaks of the perfect grace of God, a grace which shall be exhibited in connection with Israel during the millennium, and I would add, on through eternity. For us it is the great principle of grace as contrasted with the law. But how significant it is that we have come even to these earthly blessings; not that we are to be citizens of the earthly Zion, but we have come to all the blessing which will be given to Israel from Zion. We have it in a spiritual sense even now, as we enjoy the blessings of the new covenant. During the millennium and throughout eternity in our better inheritance, we will still have the joy of being associated with Christ in dominion over the whole world in connection with Mount Zion His earthly centre.

But we mount higher. We have also come in point of blessing (already in anticipation, and soon actually there) unto the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem. Mount Zion is the city of the great King, but the city of

the living God is the heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem is a type of the heavenly, and we know that during the millennium the communication between earth and heaven will be intimate and constant. The kings of the earth will bring their glory and their honor unto that heavenly city. There is our home, dear brethren; even now we are linked with it.

But we have come also to an innumerable company, to the general gathering of the angels. We have been seeing in this epistle that angels are inferior to Christ, and that man is a little lower than the angels; but grace sets aside all distinctions and we have been brought in the grace of God into association with the innumerable host of the angels. Think of the host of the angels, of the various orders of which the apostle speaks when he says, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named—angels, and archangels, principalities, powers, dominions, and every name that is named. We know but little of the powers of the heavenly hosts, but their number is stupendous. They are myriads of myriads,—and we have come to that universal gathering. We know we are not angels, and never will be; we have no desire to be, our place is nearer and dearer than that; but we are brought into association and companionship with all the heavenly host.

Our place is next given: “the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven.” Just as Israel is the first-born upon earth, the Church is the first-born in heaven; our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. In this Epistle the apostle does not go into the truth of the Church as the Body of Christ, or His Bride. Here we have the simple declaration that its place is up there. The first-born have their abode in the new Jerusalem.

And then you have “God the Judge of all.” We are brought to Him, the One who will judge the ungodly, but who will never condemn His people, though He

judges their ways. We have come to Him; we no longer shrink from Him, as Israel at Sinai did.

Then there are "the spirits of just men made perfect"—those just men of whom we were reading in the eleventh chapter. We will share companionship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; we can converse with Abel about his sacrifice; we can talk with Enoch about his walk with God; we can speak with Jacob of the manifold chastenings of God; with Moses of his path; we can converse with these just men, who will be made perfect when we are made perfect; but meanwhile their spirits rest in the presence of the Lord.

Then, blessed forever be His name, we have come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, who is better than angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the whole line of faithful men. We have come to One through whom every blessing is secured for us, whose precious blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood cried from the ground for vengeance upon the guilty Cain, but the blood of Jesus speaks peace before the very throne of God; by it, righteousness is manifested in the pardon of guilty sinners.

Think of the effect the enumeration of these things would have upon the Hebrew Christians. How unseen things would be seen to outweigh all earthly advantages; what force it gives the closing exhortation in the light of eternal realities.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they did not escape who refused him who uttered oracles on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him who speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven. Now this, Yet once, signifieth the removing of that which is shaken, as that which is made, that that which is not shaken may remain. Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear; for our God is even a consuming fire."

Refuse not the One who puts all this blessedness before you; "for if they escaped not who refused him that spake upon earth, much more shall not we" (anyone, no matter who he may be, the apostle can associate himself with them all) "escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven." All this truth that we have had in Hebrews is heavenly truth, as contrasted with Sinai. It is the gospel of grace as distinguished from law. He says, How shall we escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven; reminding us of the question in the second chapter, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." He is the one who shook Sinai. But He says, Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but heaven also; and you read in Revelation how the very stars of heaven are shaken from their places like the droppings of untimely figs shaken from a fig-tree in time of storm. The time is coming when God will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land; *everything will be shaken but the Kingdom which cannot be moved*, the Kingdom of divine grace, the Kingdom of Christ into which we have been brought. This can never be moved, and as we have received this Kingdom, He says, let us have grace; for grace alone can enable for His service, and it is "exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Let us have grace, then, whereby we may serve our God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire (not merely as is sometimes said, that "God out of Christ is a consuming fire;") He will indeed not spare the adversaries, and will also judge His people's ways, both here and at the judgment-seat of Christ.

LECTURE XV.

THE CONTINUING CITY—OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

“Let us go forth unto Him.”

(Chap. xiii.)

“Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful of hospitality; for some have thereby entertained angels unawares. Remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them; and those evil-treated, as being yourselves also in the body. Let marriage be held every way in honor, and the bed be undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your manner of life be without covetousness, being content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will never leave thee, neither will I forsake thee; *so that we may say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?*”

IN these verses the apostle speaks of the walk befitting the grace that has been unfolded. Everything is of a very simple character, suited to those who are pilgrims and strangers, subject to the trials and difficulties of the way.

You notice, he does not say, Have brotherly love, but, “Let brotherly love continue;” as the apostle says to the Thessalonians: “As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” The Spirit of God never contemplates the saints as being without love; but encourages them to let it abound, by putting no hindrance to the natural outflow of every renewed heart. It is to show itself practically, as in the next exhortation, as to hospitality. This refers to the familiar scene in the life of Abraham when he received the three guests

at his tent door at Mamre, and found that he had been entertaining, unawares, the Lord Himself and His angelic messengers.

As these Hebrew saints had, through grace, opened their hearts to the love of the brethren, so also were they to open their homes to any one who might have need; a word appropriate to times of stress, when limited abilities might tempt them to selfishness.

There had been allusion already to the affliction and persecution to which some of them had been subjected, or in which they had had companionship with others who were passing through it. He exhorts them now to remember those who are in bonds; not in mere pity, but in spirit partaking with those in affliction, although they themselves might be free. What a lovely identification of faith with the suffering people of God! "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;" "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

He then reminds them that grace does not mean lawlessness. Holiness ever marks even the ordinary relationships of life, which have been established of God from the beginning. Anything else, God Himself will judge. There is no trifling with anything which would bring dishonor or reproach upon the name of Christ, and be a denial of what true grace is; for grace ever secures holiness.

Now he comes to inward individual condition. "Let your conversation be without covetousness." A great temptation for Hebrews is to be gathering more and more. Prosperity in temporal things was the indication of God's favor, and therefore, passing through bitter trials, having their possessions taken from them, their temptation would be to doubt God's love.

How beautifully he gives them the remedy for any discontent of this sort: "Be content with such things as

ye have have." Instead of reaching out after that which you have not, and having the spirit filled with discontent, remember One who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

As we look around us to-day, we see that covetousness is characteristic of the whole world. The word "covetousness" in the original means "having more." It is not necessarily wishing for what some one else has, but wishing for more than I have; the root of all covetousness is being dissatisfied with what we already have.

Nothing can fill the heart in this world. If you turn to Ecclesiastes, you will find a man who had everything. He was king; all wealth and power were at his disposal, so he had only to make known his desire. What effect did all this wealth, knowledge, power, and pleasure have upon him? It filled his mouth with ashes, as it were; it disgusted him with the whole world. He says: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

What will take the carking care out of our heart, and keep us from discontent? If we realize that we have Him who is the source of all wealth, the living God as our portion—if He fills the heart, there is no room for covetous desire. If we have Christ—Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells—what more can we have? Is God's creation of more value than Himself? Suppose you could have everything that your mind can conceive of in all creation, would you be happier? Look at the men of wealth to-day; are they distinguished for contentment, peace of heart and joy of soul? We know that the resources of this world are but trash, so far as feeding the soul is concerned. But when we have the Source and Author of all blessing, as the meal may reach the bottom of the vessel, and the oil in the cruse be so little that it seems almost worthless even to pour it out, we hear Him saying to our widowed circumstances, "I"—oh, blessed substitute for all the hoarded wealth of this

poor world—"I," the living God, "will never"—not merely at this time of need, or in these circumstances of strait, "I will *never* leave thee nor forsake thee." As that precious assurance takes possession of the soul, we can look care, need, poverty, distress and everything else in the face, and rejoice, as the prophet Habbakuk does when he says: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

That is the blessed substitute and cure for all covetousness and discontent. As we think of that we can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper." Sometimes we are tempted not to be bold in this, but in our precious Epistle we are encouraged to all boldness, both in the presence of God and before the world.

Some may say, You do not know what the future may bring forth. Ah,—

"Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say:
Let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may.

"It can bring with it nothing
But He will see us through.
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe His people too.

"Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread."

Are we not ashamed of our unbelief, of the doubt that trembles under circumstances? Does employment fail for the time? Do things press upon us and look very dark this wintry weather? Do we feel we know not how

we are going to have food for our little ones next week?... Has the living God given His Son, or has He not? and "How shall He not with Him"—blessed association!—"freely give us all things?" Who has ever answered that question? Who can answer it?

We have our title to everything we need throughout our entire pilgrim journey in the gift of Christ Himself. "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper"—no matter what are the circumstances; no matter what confederacies of men may do—whether the vast associations of wealth close down the little honest business in which you have been earning a livelihood, or labor unite and shut out of employment every one who will not bow to its mandates. Still we have the living God, the Lord and Master of all; and shall we not be in peace, and boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man"—one or all—"shall do unto me"? The Lord pour into our hearts the balm and stimulus of this precious truth!

"Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the issue of their walk. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for the ages to come. Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines; for it is good that the heart be established with grace, not meats, by which those have not been profited who walked in them."

It is very suggestive, and quite in accord with the spirit of the whole Epistle, that the apostle should three times in this last chapter speak of their guides: here they are told to remember them; later, to obey; and lastly, to salute them.

All through the Epistle the apostle had refrained from any mention of men, except to set them aside if they came at all, in the minds of the hearers, in competition with Christ. But now all those questions have been settled. Christ's preeminence has been declared; and, as

in the eleventh chapter he was able to take up examples of faith, so now he can remind them of their guides.

God has guides for His people. It was notably so in connection with the whole history of the Jews. He always guided them through leaders. In days of ruin, when failure had come in, He would raise up a judge for the special emergency. The fact that we have Christ in glory and the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church down here, competent to control and lead His people, does not set aside human instruments whom God has endowed with special qualifications to be leaders, overseers, pastors, caretakers of the flock of God. There is no contradiction therefore in the thought of Christ having the supreme, the only place as Lord over all, and our recognizing those who labor among us and admonish us, and esteeming them "very highly in love for their works' sake."

The guides spoken of here are those who had passed away. We may think of them as including Old Testament saints, though primarily referring to those who had spoken to them the word of God since their knowledge of Christ—as James, for instance, who had been "killed with the sword," and the early leaders at Jerusalem. This shows how we are to recognize a guide. He is to be known, not by mere human appointment, but in the fact that he speaks to us the word of God. He is not using his own authority or will. Sometimes we hear it said that people of strong minds and wills are the ones whom God can use. Those whom God uses are the channels for His word, which alone controls. Anything like the force of human will, or the expression of authority by majority, or names which people are accustomed to bow to, is contrary to the whole principle of Scripture. God guides His people by His *Word*, and guides are those who have spoken to us that Word.

He goes on to say that we are to imitate them, but not in detail: we are not to be Peters or Pauls. We are not

to take some great Christian as our model, and imitate him. That will sooner or later result in shame to the one who attempts it. But we can always imitate their faith. "Whose faith follow." And so we can look at the whole list of servants who have gone before us: we can go back to the whole Old Testament history, as we did in the eleventh chapter, and say, Wherever I find one who had the word of God and walked in faith, in dependence upon God, I have one whose faith I can imitate. Thank God for guides. Some of them we knew and loved truly. The precious Word they spoke to us is with us yet. Let us imitate their faith! What was the end and whole power of their life? If it was a life of faith, it was, in one word, Jesus Christ. It was Christ for them to live; and we can imitate that faith which makes Christ the object for our lives. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." There is never any danger of being followers of men if we make use of our guides in such a way as this. We will never allow them to displace Christ. They minister *Christ* to us, and we esteem them because of that.

Now he goes on further. Those who had gone home to the Lord had been under the power of Christ in their life. The outcome of their life was Christ. Let it be the same with us, he says; and particularly he warns them as to the danger of being led astray by false doctrines. The eighth verse has this twofold connection. It shows what measures a believer's life and service, and is a safeguard against error. Christ is the sum of our life and testimony; and, thank God, He is the end of it too—it is to be with Christ on high.

He reminds them of the eternal stability of Christ Jesus, in the threefold way in which He is revealed to us—His past, present, and future; not, of course, going back into past eternity when "the Word was with God" and "was God," in His uncreated Deity; but "that which was

from the beginning," as we have it in John's Epistle. He is the same yesterday; that is, when He was here upon earth, ending with His work upon the cross. Consider Him as you see Him, coming on His errand of love, humbling Himself and taking the form of a servant in Bethlehem, a little babe. Watch Him as He grew into manhood. See how He honored God in everything He did, and how all that He did had reference to one thing—making known God's love to those who needed that love. It was the ministry of grace to sinners.

But follow our blessed Lord through all His gracious life. Sometimes one is tempted to say, If I had only been upon earth when the Lord Jesus was here, I would have gone to Him as the poor woman did in the seventh of Luke. I would have entreated Him for my dear ones, I would have brought them to Him to deliver from the power of Satan. I would have gone to Him with my own needs and wretchedness, and not have let Him go till all was answered.

Blessed be God, Jesus Christ is the same to-day that He was yesterday. You can look back upon His yesterday and know that He has not changed one iota; upon the throne of God He is the same gracious Saviour He was upon earth; He does now for us just what He did for poor wretches then. We can take up every illustration, every case of mercy bestowed upon the undeserving and the needy when He was on earth and say, Jesus Christ is the same to-day. That earthly life which closed with the cross, and all the blessed results of redemption, have the stamp of eternity upon them. Upon the throne of God, He is the same Jesus—the same as to His person and as to His work as when He was here.

And as to the future? Will it not be the Lord Jesus, with the same tender love, as He was in the past? Cast your eye forward as far as faith can reach, as far as the word of God unfolds the future to us, throughout the

boundless ages of eternity, Jesus Christ abides the same. His yesterday on earth is the same as His to-day on the throne; and forever His future will present to us the One who never changes; the One who is, who was, and is to come—God and Man in two distinct natures, but one person forever.

As you dwell upon that, if there come in these strange doctrines, these thoughts of men (all kinds of doctrines as to man, as to his sin, his improvement, and his development; doctrines as to the world and its present condition, its future destiny and how it can be improved,—a thousand different doctrines, upon a thousand different subjects) what are you going to say to them all? Here is one who tells you there is a certain new wonderful revelation for the latter-day saints, and he leads astray multitudes of poor, silly people who do not know their Bibles. Another says, You must observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, for you are under law. Others tell you that all humanity will one day be restored; others, that the wicked are going to be annihilated; others, that there is no such thing as sickness, sin or death—that these are all chimeras of the mind. What does the light of God show, as all these things are presented? How does He test them? By Jesus Christ. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;” and, as the apostle John says, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and need not that any man teach you.” We have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ and His truth. Why should we want anything to lead us in the way of truth when we have Him who is the truth?

So we are not to be “carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” For the Hebrew Christians their special danger was in the familiar doctrines of Judaism which he had been dealing with in the body of the Epistle. They at one time had God’s sanction, as His revelation for the time that then was; but they were only the “shadow of

good things to come." Now the shadow is only a worthless husk if it is used as a substitute for Christianity. They have become "divers and strange doctrines;" an intrusion upon those who have "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

So, "it is good that the heart be established with grace,"—the grace that is centered in Christ. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is good to be so firmly rooted in the divine principles of redemption that "meats," and "clean and unclean," as connected with Judaism, will have no attraction; such as "touch not, taste not, handle not." These things "have not profited those who have been occupied therein."

Now he becomes, if I may use such an expression, bolder yet, and applies things more stringently than he had yet done.

"We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who are serving the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burnt without the camp; wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate. Therefore, let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have here no abiding city, but we seek the one that is to come. By him, therefore, let us offer a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is the fruit of the lips confessing his name; but to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

He had already spoken of the altar of Judaism, where their sacrifices under the law were offered; these "meats," ordinances of those sacrifices, had not profited those who had been occupied in them. But now, "*we* have an altar." It is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." In Romans the apostle says, "Whom God hath set forth a propitiation," or mercy-seat, "through faith in His blood." So, then, Christ is also the altar. Christ has offered a sacrifice of infinite value; and as we think

of that altar, of Christ Himself, we can feed upon the offering with delight.

There were sacrifices according to the law: burnt-offerings which went up wholly to God; sin-offerings which, in their full character, were burnt outside the camp, or, at the best, partaken of only by the priest—never by the offerer. Then there were the peace-offerings, which were shared in by all—the offerer, the priest, and God Himself. The fat was consumed upon the altar, and went up to Him. The priest had his portion, and the offerer also had his. Those serving at the altar ate of the altar; and so in Christianity we have Christ, and can feed upon the wave breast and the heave shoulder, the food for those who know Christ as theirs. We can feed upon the affections, “the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;” and upon that which gives strength, the shoulder, suggesting how the Lord upholds and bears us ever through this world. These things are our food, and those who serve in the Tabernacle have no right to eat these things. Those who are merely Jews have no part in our enjoyment of Christ.

Now he goes further. He had been speaking of the peace-offering. Next he speaks of the sin-offering, and shows us the place which has been given to us by it in a twofold way. The blood was brought into the sanctuary and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat as the witness of the perfect standing of those who have an interest in that blood. Christ has entered in by His own blood into the holy place, once having obtained eternal redemption. You will find in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus that the body of the sin-offering was taken outside the camp of Israel, and there burnt to ashes. So the apostle would apply this truth of the sin-offering to our adorable Lord.

We have seen how Christ has carried the value of His atoning work into the very presence of God. Now follow

Him as He went outside the gate. Turn back your thoughts to Golgotha. Follow Him from Pilate's judgment hall, where He had been mocked, rejected by His own nation, they crying out, "Away with Him; away with Him; crucify Him:" the very leaders of the people giving their voice against Him; the voices of the people and the chief priests prevailing against Pilate's conviction, against his conscience and the testimony of God Himself through Pilate's wife. So Jesus is given up to be the Sacrifice, and there He is laden with His cross;—do you not envy one who was privileged to be associated with Him in bearing that cross? He goes without the gate unto Golgotha, "the place of a skull," the unclean place. Outside the gates of the city, yea, at a distance from God, Jesus suffered the full infliction of divine judgment: the Sacrifice was there completely burnt under the wrath of God.

Here are the two extremes, and well do we know what they mean. Out yonder, beyond the gate, we hear the cry of anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" There, in the inner glory of God's presence, the veil is rent, and you hear Him saying, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise Thee."

The apostle had unfolded the truth to them that they had boldness to enter into the sanctuary; and here is the other side, which speaks of their earthly connections. As Jesus suffered outside the gate, as He took the place of reproach, "Let us, therefore, go forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach."

"Unto Him." It is that which marks our separation. We talk about separating from this and that, and we must separate from many things; but, after all, the whole question of separation is settled for us by one word: we go forth "unto Him." It is a small matter whether you have left this company of people and associated yourself

with that company, but it is everything if you are identified with Christ in His reproach. If we have come outside the camp, we are not thinking so much of what we have left as the One to whom we have come. We go forth unto Him, and it is His presence that marks the separation from everything that is not of Him. But oh, how sweet is this!

This expression takes us back again to an Old Testament occurrence. He reminds them that when the law had been given,—a very significant thing,—the first thing they did was to apostatize from it and make the golden calf; and when Moses came down from the mount and found the people in their idolatrous worship, he took the temporary tabernacle, the one where God had revealed Himself up to that time, and pitched it outside the camp; as though to declare that God's holiness could not be contaminated with the violation of the law. Here were those who had professed to keep the law; and yet, breaking it, they had crucified the Lord of glory. Can God's presence abide amongst them?

What is the camp? It is anything where Christ is in *name*, not in reality, not enthroned supreme. I care not how ancient the authority may be. It may have all the authority of the law that Judaism claimed for itself; it may have all the antiquity which Rome claims for itself; it may have rules and regulations which appeal to men's judgment as being right and proper; but wherever there is a human organization which displaces Christ, which is not according to the word of God as given us in the New Testament,—above all, wherever Christ is not directly and immediately recognized in absolute control by His Word and Spirit,—there you have the camp.

I have no question, of course, that primarily it had reference to Judaism; and the apostle boldly says to them, Now you have seen where Christ is; you have seen where He is gone within the veil, and the place which He had

to take here, outside the camp: "Let us," he says,—it is not even a command, but an exhortation, just as you had in the tenth chapter, "Let us draw near"—"Let us go forth to Him." What an appeal to our loyalty, that we go forth unto Him! If the face is turned toward Him, the back will be turned upon everything that is not according to Him; and if Christ fills the heart, if the Lord Jesus is the sum and substance of my life, so that I can say, "To me to live is Christ," will it be a hard thing to give up that which is not Christ? Will it be a difficult thing to bear a little reproach? Whose reproach is it, after all? Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Let us do the same thing. Let us go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

"Here we have no continuing city." Jerusalem was soon to be trampled under the Gentiles' feet. Of that temple, in which they boasted, soon not one stone would be left upon another. "Here we have no continuing city," but, like Abraham, we look for "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We seek one to come.

Then he goes further. If that is our attitude; if we are within the veil as to our position before God; if we are outside the camp as to our position toward all the religions of this world; if we are pilgrims seeking a city to come, what are we to be occupied with while we tarry here? Praise is to be our occupation. Think of it: people who, in the eyes of others, are looked upon as the offscouring of the world, as utterly repulsive,—think of them, priests unto God, whose happy employment is to be offering continually the sacrifice of praise unto Him!

We have here an important definition of praise. Sometimes people have an idea that it is the feeling in our own hearts; but that is its results, rather than praise itself. Praise is "the fruit of our lips confessing His name."

God appreciates your joy, the happiness that fills your hearts and wells over; but there is one thing He appreciates infinitely beyond all our feelings, and that is Christ Himself confessed to God. It is a wonderful deliverance to realize that true praise is simply offering up to God the fragrance of Christ. That which delights God will delight the heart of every one who knows and loves Christ.

There is no limit to praise. It will endure throughout eternity, and shall we limit it here? Let your whole life be one of praise. It is never by anything—energy or skill—in ourselves. We offer it by Him whose name gives acceptance to the feeblest whisper that tells of His worthiness and beauty before God.

That is one part of the sacrifice we offer. Then, looking at the earth side of things a moment, the apostle says, Forget not to do good; forget not to communicate of your earthly substance. How divinely balanced, how accurate is Scripture! One might be overwhelmed with the thought of heavenly praise. We might say, Our face is up towards heaven, and then forget to look at what is in front of us here. You will always find that those whose eyes are in heaven are walking a straight path here. Thus the Spirit of God reminds us that this sacrifice of praise is to be supplemented by doing good and communicating to those who have need. Here you are, offering to God the infinite value of what Christ is, in praise to Him; and, linked with the fragrance of that, is our earthly service. With the little coin which you may give to a poor needy one you associate Christ's name, and it is well pleasing unto God. How delightful it is to think of the smallest service being linked with worship—any little ministry of Christ here being connected with the praises of heaven!

“Obey your leaders, and submit yourselves, for they watch over your souls as those that shall give account; that they may do

this with joy, and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

“Pray for us: for we persuade ourselves that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to walk rightly. And I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

There is a submission to Christ shown in receiving whoever brings the word of Christ, in obeying those whom God has made overseers, made responsible for the welfare of the saints. We are to submit to the word of God that is brought. How important it is not to resent that! If we resent the ministry of those who would seek to bring the word of God to us, we are disobeying not man, but God who has given His Holy Spirit.

We are to obey them, “for they watch for your souls.” Ah, brethren, do we? Are there any of us who thus realize that we are set to watch for souls?—not to watch for the slipping of saints; not to watch, as Peter says, “as busybodies in other men’s matters;” but are we looking diligently lest any man is lacking in the grace of God? Are we so our brothers’ keepers, that we must take up our brother’s walk, or things connected with the testimony of God, or with that which would involve our Lord’s honor, in the fear of God, and judge them as in His presence, and in accordance with His Word? Let the Lord stir us up to realize that if there is any reproach connected with this, it is the reproach of Christ, and we are to bear it as that. We are always responsible to associate ourselves with those who are set of God to watch for the spiritual prosperity of the saints, for they desire to do it “with joy, and not with grief; for this would be unprofitable for you:”—unprofitable to the one showing insubjection, and not to those who exercised their oversight with grief. The Lord give us to realize that grace does not set aside responsibility, and that there is such a thing as having to give account to God!

Then he very beautifully refers to his desire that they

should pray for him, and the reason for it is very striking. Who is it that can ask that familiar favor, "I want an interest in your prayers"? The apostle says, "Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." His desire was to glorify Christ. If some one says, "Will you pray for me?" might we not well ask, "Have you a good conscience? Are you willing in all things to live honestly before God? Is it your desire to live according to God's will; or, do you want by prayer to have God's will turned around to your will? The essence of all prayer is submission. "Thy will be done" precedes the petition for daily bread.

Now comes this glorious benediction:

"Now, the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, perfect you in every good work to do his will, working in you what is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen."

God is known here as the God of peace. Blessed title! Peace has been purchased by the blood of Christ. God's glory, righteousness, holiness, and love are enlisted on our side; not one attribute is against us, and all His omnipotence is for us. So He is the God of peace, whose attitude toward us is ever peace; a peace which is eternal because it is based upon the finished work of Christ. God has declared His acceptance of that work by raising Him from the dead. This is the only direct reference to our Lord's resurrection in the Epistle. The everlasting covenant reaches back into eternity in the purposes of God; it takes in, in its blessed ministry, the whole family of the redeemed through all time, and will, throughout eternity, manifest its blessings to the earthly people and to the heavenly as well. It is not temporary, and can never grow old like the first covenant. It is sealed in the precious blood of Christ, and that blood was the ground on which God raised Christ from the

dead. His resurrection declares God's acceptance of the blood. As Christ entered into heaven by His own blood, so, in virtue of that blood He was raised from the dead and has gone into heaven, the "great Shepherd of the sheep."

Pause a moment and think of "the Shepherd that died." Think of "the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep;" think of Him coming out from the grave leading captivity captive, passing into fields of glory, leading up there His flock: "Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, . . . shine forth." He has shone forth; He has led His flock out, and in the fields of heaven forever He has made the twenty-third psalm to be the pastoral for us. Is He not the great Shepherd? and what wolf or lion or bear can harm the sheep?

There is to be no half-hearted response to this grace. The prayer is that we may be made perfect in every good work: it is "to do His will." With all that grace has done for us, with all the display of the love of God, our hearts would still be barren unless it were God Himself who was working in us, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Thank God, He does work. Let us see to it that there is no hindrance on our part to the mighty working of that blessed Spirit who carries out the will of God in us. It is all "through Jesus Christ," the blessed One who has accomplished everything. If it is redemption, it is through Jesus Christ. If it is access to God, it is through Jesus Christ. If it is worship as priests, it is, "By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise." If it is service, if it is doing the will of God, it is still through that same precious One. And do not our hearts add their "Amen" to the doxology: "To whom be glory forever and ever?" Let His name be crowned with every glory!

"I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." The apostle uses the familiar entreaty which we

have already noticed several times—appropriate to those under grace, as contrasted with the stern demands of the law to which they were in danger of inclining. The whole Epistle is the word of exhortation of the strongest character, being emphasised by the fullest unfolding of the person and work of Christ. Such a theme will require eternity for its full enjoyment, and we can well understand how the apostle could speak of this Epistle as containing but a “few words.” We are reminded of the close of the gospel of John, where the Evangelist is so filled with his theme that he declares that if all about Christ should be written, the very world itself could not contain the books. Thank God, we have a future ample enough for the delight which shall be ever fresh, as it is inexhaustible.

The apostle next refers to the release of “our brother Timothy,” also a significant word for Hebrew Christians; for Timothy’s father was a Gentile, but he himself was circumcised to meet the scruples of Jews in the quarters where he was known. He is their brother, by birth and by grace, and has been released from an imprisonment of which we read nothing elsewhere. It is an interesting allusion to one whose faithfulness, while marked, was coupled with a shrinking which was peculiar to his natural disposition, and which needed the encouragement and exhortation of the apostle. Using the expression in an entirely spiritual way, might we not say that the apostle was writing to those whom he desired to see released from a greater bondage than that of prison?—even from the chains of Judaism, which was now nothing more than a delusion for those who knew the better things which Christ has brought in.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for it is in but few words that I have written to you. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he should come soon, I will see you. Salute all your leaders and all

the saints. They from Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen."

With Timothy, he hopes soon to visit them and to continue that precious ministry which, whether present or absent, it was his joy to be about. We can well imagine his thought to be that expressed to the Philippians: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, in one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Then follows the final greeting to their leaders of whom he had already spoken. These are to be saluted as objects of love and not of suspicion, and with them are associated all the saints.

"They of Italy salute you." Italy was a strange place for a salutation to come from. It was outside the camp, as it were. If there were Hebrews in Italy, they had left the land of earthly promise—a sort of witness that Jerusalem and Palestine were no longer the earthly centre. They, as pilgrims, send a greeting to encourage Hebrew saints to also take their place outside the camp. These closing salutations are so like the close of all Paul's Epistles, that it must be a perversion of will to refuse to recognize him as the author of this wondrous Epistle.

The fitting close is the simple yet full blessing pronounced: "Grace be with you all." In the knowledge of that grace and the joy of it, let us tread with unwearyed feet and joyful heart the path which leads up to the presence of the Lord:

"Stand up my soul, shake off thy fears,
And put a cheerful courage on.
March to the gates of endless joy,
Where Jesus, thy great Captain's gone."

LECTURE XVI

 THE GLORIES OF CHRIST TRACED THROUGHOUT THE
 EPISTLE

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

(Chaps. i. 1-4; ii. 5-9; iii. 1-6; vii. 1-3; ix. 24-28; x. 19-25;
 xii. 1, 2; xiii. 8-16.)

WE will now gather up in a comprehensive view some of the glories of our Lord Jesus which we have learned.

In the first chapter (vers. 1-4) the glory of the Son of God is presented to us as He was revealed in the world. Though incarnate, I need hardly say He did not lose a single attribute of Deity.

We have a wondrous collection of glories here—a sevenfold display. First, He is "Heir of all things." Everything that we can conceive is His by right and by gift: His earthly people Israel; all the Gentiles associated with His people in blessing in the millennium; the Church which is the Bride, the Lamb's wife,—everything is His as Heir and Lord of all. God has put all into His hands; as Abraham gave all his possessions to his son Isaac.

"By whom also He made the worlds." Here we have Him as the Creator. "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him," as the One whose power brought them all into being; and "for Him" were all things made, as the One for whose glory the whole display of creation exists.

Then, He is "the brightness of His glory." That carries us back into the inner glory which He ever had with the Father. God dwelleth in light unapproachable, "whom no man hath seen nor can see;" but "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He has made known God to us, and all the majesty and splendor that is about God finds its revelation in His Son.

He is "the very image of His substance." He is not merely the outward exhibition of what God is, but He is the very impress, the very character of God's own being. He is thus one with God, so that it is impossible to think of the Son without thinking of God; as our blessed Lord declared: "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father;" and faith ever delights to worship Him as "my Lord and my God."

He upholds "all things by the word of His power." He is the God of providence, and has not left His creation, or retreated back into the invisible glory where He was, but presides over the whole universe. He calls the stars by name, brings them on in their courses, "for that He is strong in power; not one faileth." All the providential ordering of the world, all God's ways in government have been entrusted to His Son. "By Him all things consist."

Now all these are glories of Deity, although possessed by Him who came into the world. But next you have that which seems to speak of Him simply as Son of man; and yet this, too, is but another ray of that glory which declares Him Son of God. "When He had by Himself purged our sins:"—purging of sins is sacrificial work. The details of it are not gone into here. It is simply declared that the divine Son put away sin according to all the value and perfection of His nature, for none other than a divinely valuable sacrifice could have availed for the sin of a guilty world.

And lastly, the seventh glory, He has taken His seat at "the right hand of the Majesty on high." His work of redemption is finished, He has gone on high to sit upon the throne, Lord, Ruler, Master over all things. As you gather the precious thoughts of His divine glory together, one ray (of redemption) shines through them all. As you look upon the throne, and see Him upon it whose brightness is like that of a jasper and a sardine stone, with the rainbow of millennial glory about the throne, (the pledge of God's permanent covenant with the earth) the One who is in the midst of it all, whose place is there by right, is the "Lamb as it had been slain." It is before Him that all heaven delights to bow, even as we delight here to prostrate our souls and to cry aloud:

"Worthy O Lamb of God art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

Now we pass to the second scripture (chap. ii. 5-9). The Spirit of God is as careful to dwell upon the details of the perfection of our Lord's humanity as upon those of His deity. There is no fear that you will lose the sense of His divine dignity by dwelling upon the fact of His perfect humanity. Both are blended together in such a perfect way that the heart can worship Him ever.

The question was asked of old in a certain place: "What is man?" As we think of the infinity of creation above us and about us, how small, how puny, how feeble we are! How is it that God takes knowledge of us, that He actually visits us? Why is it that the angels do not occupy a place in the thoughts and purposes of God such as man occupies? We ask again, Why? and we find the answer in the blessed Son of God, in Jesus. Faith says, "We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that He by the grace of God should taste death for every

man." Man is lower than the angels in the order of creation, so Jesus has taken His place lower than they. And when we ask, Why did He take that place?—in the answer we read our salvation.

He is made lower than the angels for the suffering of death. But where do we see Him now, as Man, the One who came down, even unto death? We see Him crowned with glory and honor. And as we look upon that crowned Man on high, the Man upon the throne of God, the Man whom God delights to honor, we can say that He by the grace of God has tasted death for every one. His redemptive work has brought in blessing for all men who will receive it. The whole creation will be, in the coming day, under the blessed results of that redeeming work. This is God's answer to the question, "What is man?"

But we glance now at another glory (chap. iii. 1-6). To an Israelite, Moses was the great leader—you might say, the father of the nation. They rightly looked upon him with the greatest reverence and regard; but if Moses occupied a place to the exclusion of One whom God presented to them, he must be set aside. Moses was a faithful servant in all the house of God. But Christ is the maker of the house, and greater than it. He that made all things is God. Moses was a servant in the house; He is Son over God's house. Thus, with a thrice greater glory, is Christ beyond Moses.

Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, and Joshua led them into Canaan; rightly they looked upon him, too, as their leader. But Joshua did not give them rest. They had conflict and fightings in Canaan, and Joshua himself had to predict that if they did not walk in obedience to God, they would be carried out of that good land and lose it after all. But Christ is greater than he, for, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God," and it is Christ who introduces into that rest, as we sometimes sing:

“When of the prize possessed,
We hear of war no more,
And, oh sweet thought, forever rest
On that eternal shore.”

Neither did David give them rest. Wherever there is a great deliverer spoken of throughout the Epistle, it is simply to look at him, and, comparing him with Christ, he passes out of view, leaving us free to be occupied with the holy Son of God in all His perfection.

So, also, there is a reference to Aaron, the head of the priestly family who was called of God to the service. But he is only mentioned as an illustration of Christ who has displaced him.

We look at Him next as Melchisedec (chap. vii. 1-3), both King and Priest; as King He displaces Moses, Joshua, David and all the kings who had gone before Him. He is King of “righteousness.” His kingship is founded upon His personal righteousness, and His having magnified the righteousness of God. He is moreover, “King of peace;” that is, He has effected eternal peace as the ground upon which God can be the God of peace for us.

Thus in Melchisedec there is a suggestion of royalty, and we rejoice to recognize it in our blessed Lord, though the main thought in His Melchisedec character is the perpetuity of all that He is as Priest.

The apostle brings up Abraham just as he had Moses and other leaders of Israel. Here is one to whom Abraham had to pay tithes as to a superior, who, as the greater, blesses the lesser. Then he speaks of Levi, the parent of the whole Aaronic priesthood. “Levi, also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.” Christ is thus seen above Abraham and all the priesthood of Aaron. But this greatness is eternal. The priests of the house of Aaron were not allowed to continue by reason of death. So there was constant succession of priests;

but this One abides forever. He is made "a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." As you think of the blessedness of His priestly work, of all the perfection and results of His sacrifice, of His almighty intercession for us, of His ability to save "to the uttermost end of time," it all has the stamp of eternity upon it.

He has entered in the Sanctuary, (chap. ix. 24-28) better than the Tabernacle in the wilderness (all of which typically spoke of Him) as the substance is better than the shadow. He has entered into heaven itself. He has found eternal redemption; and there, before God, He is the witness of it. The high priest entered into the earthly sanctuary once a year, with the blood of sacrifice which could not take away sin. Christ has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. He did not enter heaven by His divine right, nor on the ground that He was a perfectly righteous Man—He did not enter merely as the One of the sixteenth psalm. In the fifteenth psalm the question is asked: "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." The sixteenth psalm describes this perfect One, the Man of faith and the perfect example of it; but you do not find Him entering into heaven at the close of the sixteenth psalm, though He says: "Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

You have to go on past the sixteenth psalm to see Him enter into heaven. Go on to the twenty-second and there you see One who is forsaken of God. First He must shed His precious blood, and then in resurrection He declares God's name to His brethren.

Then go on to the twenty-fourth psalm and you have at last, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall

come in." Wherever He enters, the gates are opened wide to receive the "King of glory," whether it be His earthly city or the heavenly Jerusalem of which the earthly was a symbol. He enters by His own blood into the glory, and the welcome which is given Him there, as King of glory, is on the ground of His having accomplished an eternal redemption, of having glorified God.

If the redemption is eternal, the inheritance which has been purchased by that redemption is also eternal. Our redemption, our blessings, the good things that we have, the peace, the joy, the knowledge of God, the assurance of salvation, the place of sonship, everything has the stamp of eternity upon it. As you look about at the world's power, glory, or pleasure, you can say, They are but for a time. Sin has its pleasures and attractions, but they are evanescent, and soon men have to say with the poet:

"My life is in the sere and yellow leaf."

The melancholy days have come, and one realizes that life's sweetness is gone, and only the ashes and bitterness are left behind. But oh, how contrary to all that are the blessings which are ours—which abide. "Your joy no man taketh from you." When everything begins to fade, when the outward tabernacle begins to crumble, instead of chilling the heart, or making us feel that the dark days have come, it is rather the bright shining of the light more and more unto the perfect day.

In the Sanctuary He appears "in the presence of God for us." "Once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." I look back at all my sin with all its blackness and shame, and what do I see about that past? That Christ appeared here to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and the past has been all settled by His perfect work. Here we are compassed with weakness and trial and infirmity; but we can look up where He is, in the presence of God,

appearing there for us, ever living to make intercession for us. As our High Priest, He bears our names upon His bosom and upon His shoulders of strength. As we sing:

“Whose love is as great as His power
And knows neither measure nor end.”

As we look forward to the future, what is there? Christ still, blessed be His name! His cross behind barring the way between us and all our sins, and the judgment against them; Himself above on the throne, sustaining us while here, and Himself before us for whom we are waiting and desire to see. Not only Christ has entered into the Sanctuary, but we too have a place there (chap. x. 19-25). Wherever Christ is,—the work of the cross being accomplished—faith boldly can follow Him, though it be heaven itself. Where Christ is received, it is as the Representative of the people for whose sins He died. God has already welcomed Him with the acclaim of heaven, and given Him a place there commensurate with the delight He has in Him; but in the welcome of Christ, blessed be His name, He has welcomed us too.

It is a new sacrificed way, a way opened by His death; the veil that separated us from the holy presence of God because of our sin, by the death of our Lord was rent from the top to the bottom. Now, in the sanctuary, we find the High Priest over the house of God, who leads the praises of His people; and the exhortation is, “Let us draw near.” Under the law, with burdened conscience, man stood afar off; but with the conscience once purged, we draw near into His presence, “in full assurance of faith.”

Now then we are to “hold fast” the confession of our hope. It is not that we are to be in fear about it; we need not be tempted to give it up; for what would we take in exchange for the blessings which are ours through Christ?

That is what is enlarged upon for us in the twelfth chapter (vers. 1, 2). The apostle had shown them the necessity for holding fast; for there were some among those Hebrews who were not genuine children of God; or else, strongly tempted, their faith held feebly to Christ,—the persecutions and difficulties of the way tempting them to give Him up. He had devoted a whole chapter to a review of the Old Testament men of faith,—Abel, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses were made to bear their witness. As he gets on towards the close, he has not exhausted his theme, but presses on to that which fills his vision—Jesus. He says, we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, but there is one Witness above all these, one of whom we have been speaking all through,—it is Jesus!

Here is the Leader of faith, the Originator, the Author of it—the One who begets it in us, and who is the full example of it; and He is also the perfecter of faith, who will bring His people into the place of perfection. We can only run our race with patience as we look off from everything else unto Jesus, remembering how He ran it here. There was a joy set before Him: the joy of accomplishing the Father's will, of being back with His Father after His course was run, and of having us associated with Him in the Father's presence. For that joy He endured the cross—endured wrath and judgment at the hand of God; He despised the shame heaped upon Him by man, not allowing it for one moment to swerve Him from His course and object. He has marked a straight way in which we are to follow Him, and a single object for us to run after. Here is a path for the people of God. All the stones have been cast out. It is the highway of the Lord, the way of holiness. No lion or ravenous beast is found there. No one can dispute your way, in the path which Christ has marked for you. If you leave the path, Satan has power; but he

has no power when we are in the path which Christ has marked for us. How needful to make straight paths for our feet! How needful that we should not turn the lame out of the way! Christ thus beckons us forward; He would allure us on ever more swiftly as the years go by. The weights, realized as that and laid aside, we find wings to press forward with increasing joy and greater speed on to Himself.

There is next the thought that we have in the last chapter (xiii. 8-16). Still, it is Christ! Christ throughout. The Spirit of God is careful to point out that if we have Christ, we have no connection with the sanctuary upon earth. Everything of Christ is outside the sanctuary of man, and this He emphasizes by bringing out what was familiar to the Hebrews, the service of the Day of Atonement. "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." There was no place for Him in Jerusalem. He instinctively knew this when He drew near the city on His last journey, and wept over it. And though He enters the city according to prophecy, (it is but a little glimpse of that triumphal entry which shall then be effected when He returns to reign for the Millenium and "the King of glory shall come in") He then withdrew and lodged all night outside the city. His place of sorrow and anguish was outside, where He pours out His soul in strong crying and tears unto God. When sentenced to death, the cross was laid upon Him, and He is led out as a malefactor.

Outside the gate, followed by the mocking rabble, followed by the high priests, perhaps in their robes of priestly dignity, all joining in the outcry against Him, whom for His love they nail to the cross. Jesus suffered without the gate:—without the gate of the religious world; without the gate of Judaism; without the gate of everything that apes Judaism; without the

gate of everything that speaks of a carnal service, of a carnal religion, that makes the flesh excellent or would seek to improve it; Jesus suffered outside of it all.

As He has introduced us into the Sanctuary, let us also follow Him with joy outside the camp. "Let us go forth," he says; let us leave that which savors of the flesh; which speaks of the shadows and the darkness and the distance from God; let us leave that which fosters man's self-righteousness; let us turn our back upon it all. Our place is in the Sanctuary before God, and in the place of rejection, of separation from the world and its religion.

"His reproach." No matter what evil may be said against you, if it is for Christ's sake, it is His reproach. Men may mock the little, feeble company. They may say, What do these feeble Jews? as we seek to build the wall or erect the temple and the altar in separation from everything that is not of God. But if Christ's glory fills the heart, we long to bear His reproach—it is an honor. Are you repining at your lot because your path is not quite as easy as it might have been had you gone on smoothly as before? because in your home things are not as they once were, or as you wish them? Are not you willing, do you not esteem it an honor, to bear that little reproach for Christ's sake? Have you persecution from those about you in your daily work because you are a Christian? You may leap for joy that you have the privilege and honor! The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Let us bear His reproach; let us welcome it; let us invite it, as you might say, by increased devotion to Christ; not challenging the reproach of the world, but choosing rather the reproach of Christ; not stirring up opposition, save as increased devotedness to Christ does so.

Then he would not leave us with merely the thought of bearing reproach, though it be for Christ. It is going

forth unto Him. Thank God, you find the Priest in the Sanctuary. If you enter the Holiest, and if you take the outside place for Christ's sake, you also find Him there.

Jesus found the man whose eyes He had opened. He was put out of the synagogue. He seemed to have lost home and friends; he lost his religious leaders; he lost his place in the synagogue. What did he find? Rather, who found him? Jesus found him and revealed Himself to him as He has revealed Himself to us in this wondrous Epistle. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" We go forth unto Him, then. It is to be with Him. It is not separation from this and from that merely. It is Christ who is the mark and the measure of our separation from all that is here.

Then he says, This lonely path does not continue. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," one "whose builder and maker is God." And what is the glory of that city? In one word: "The Lamb is the light thereof." So as we are seeking a city to come, we are seeking Christ. We would see Him.

As we wait here, we learn to sing the songs of Zion before we reach the place. When Israel was carried into captivity, the enemy required of them a song. They said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." And the answer is returned: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Away from Zion, in a foreign land their harps were of no use there; their hearts and their hands drooped because they had been carried there for their sins. But though their city lay in desolation, they say: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." And, as we think of our city that hath foundations, can we not say the same?

But we are not kept from singing the songs of Zion on our way thitherward. Our harps, thank God, are not hung on the willows of Babylon. We have gone forth

from Babylon. "By Him, therefore," we offer the sacrifice of praise continually; pilgrim songs on our way: "the fruit of our lips confessing His name."

The pilgrim song is the song of heaven itself, which we shall sing when gathered by the sea of glass in the presence of the Lamb and the glory of heaven. Heaven's glory will not change the song, but make it sweeter and add to its volume. We will offer praise continually there: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." But as we tread our way, the pilgrim way as it is, we are singing the song of Zion: not to please the enemy who has carried us captive, but with the joy of the Lord filling the heart. And as the home grows nearer, as we catch glimpses of the glory that is before us, it quickens into fresh song, with triumph and praise: "Unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

We are like a little band of refugees from some foreign country who have landed on strange shores and have found toil and trial there, but who have kept up the songs of their native land. They hear the welcome news that they can go back to their homes. As they take shipping, going across the ocean, you can imagine, as each day brings them nearer home, that they sing those national airs with renewed joy and increased volume; and when they land at last, that song which was so feeble merges into the full strong harmony of their fellow-countrymen *at home*.

That which we enter into so feebly, the glories and beauties of Christ, is the theme of our praise. As we go on across the wide sea, ever getting nearer to heaven itself, the song of praise and joy should grow sweeter, clearer, fuller and louder until, as we behold Him as He is, there is one burst of praise: "Unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." It is Christ, dear brethren. He is all that we have to tell

one another of. But He is enough! Christ, Christ Himself, Christ alone! Oh, may He be everything to us; may we adore Him as He should be adored, here as well as in eternity!

*“If here on earth the thoughts of Jesus’ love.
Lift our poor hearts this weary world above,
If even here the taste of heavenly springs
So cheers the spirit, that the pilgrim sings,”*

*“What will the sunshine of His glory prove?
What the unmingled fulness of His love?
What halleluiahs will His presence raise,
What but one loud eternal burst of praise!”*



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