

**THE
CHRISTIAN'S BLESSINGS**

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Scripture quotations which differ from the Authorised Version are from the New Translation by J. N. Darby.

CHAPTER I

The Light of the Morning

"THE Light of the morning . . . a morning without clouds," is to break over the dark horizon of this world very soon, and the glorious light of that cloudless day will dispel the evil and ignorance of the present time.

The "last words of David," which are recorded for us in 2 Samuel 23, contain the beautiful expression quoted at the head of this chapter. The sweet Psalmist of Israel is prophetically speaking of Christ, and he says, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

For us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Day" has already dawned and the bright rays of the Light of the morning have already shone into our hearts. To faith's view the Sun of Righteousness has already risen, not yet with healing in His wings for the world, but with healing for those whose trust is in Him; for such know Christ as a risen and glorified Man in heaven.

The present condition of the world is darkness, for the Light of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been rejected here, indeed, crucified with shame! The rulers of this world knew not the Lord of glory. He came as light into this world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. We, who believe, can

' . . . look beyond the long dark night,
And hail the coming day.'

But more: already the Light of the morning has shone for faith, since Jesus is risen from among the dead, and we are called to walk as in the Day. We are not actually in the Day yet; it has not come;

it is night now. Yet knowing our Lord Jesus as risen from among the dead, we have begun a path in the light of the coming Day, a path that increases in brightness each step we take therein. As the quotation from 2 Samuel 23 tells us, there is to be a result from the rising of the Sun. There is that which answers to the "tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Our knowledge of the Lord Jesus has results. We have turned to Him. If we may use another figure; like the Children of Israel of old, we have pitched towards the sun-rising and since we are believers, we have entered the "path of the just" that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The bright rays of the *Light of the Morning* illumine our path through this dark, dark world, where we are to shine as lights.

The object of this little book is to help those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have therefore entered the path of the just, to tread that path with greater intelligence, liberty and devotedness.

There is great need in these days, when the very foundations of our faith are being attacked, that we all should be well established in our souls and perfectly clear in the fundamental elements of the truth. Indefiniteness and uncertainty in such matters is disastrous. We shall not be definite in our path if we are uncertain of the truth and uncertain in our faith. The light and truth are to lead us.

In the following pages, therefore, the blessings of the christian, viewed as an individual, will be considered. He has other blessings, since he forms part of the church, or "the assembly" as the word is in fact; but, as forming part of the assembly, his blessings are collective in character, that is, he is to enjoy them with others who, with him, share them in common. The gospel, however, tells us of blessings secured by and in Christ, which are ours individually,

though in their full scope they necessarily involve what is collective, and our place in the assembly.

The christian's blessings are to be known by faith, and enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit, as we may see in our consideration of the subject. They consist very largely in the enjoyment now, anticipatively, of what will be publicly known in the "world to come," in **THE DAY**.

Although a challenge may be raised now and again in the pages of this book as to the spiritual state of the reader, it will be generally assumed that he is a believer on the Lord Jesus. In other words, it is supposed that he has found out that he is a sinner, that he has repented towards God and has faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That these spiritual exercises need to be deepened in our souls is only too true; but in this little book it will be assumed that such experiences have begun.

There is great encouragement for all who have seen, by faith, the light of the morning and who are therefore in the path of the just; for we are told that it is "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Since we know the Lord, since we are in the path of the just, it may be said of us in the words of the first epistle of Peter, chap. 1 : 8 "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Or, as the concluding phrase may read, "filled with the glory." Our pathway shines more and more; each step in it brings us into greater light, and the end of it is **THE DAY**. The Light of the morning has shone for faith; the Day fast approaches in fact.

"The night is far spent," the apostle tells us in his epistle to the Romans, chap. 13 : 12, "the day is at hand." Our conduct now is to be as if we were already in the day. We are to put on the armour of light and thus protect ourselves from the dangers of

the night, for this world is still in darkness. By faith in the Lord Jesus, the believer anticipates the joys of the world to come—THE DAY. The light of that quickly coming day, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, has already brightened his path. He has seen the Light of the morning, a morning without clouds; he has entered the path of the just, and it shines more and more unto the perfect day.

CHAPTER II

The Knowledge of Christ as Saviour

WITH many of us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, there is quite a difficulty in saying when we first knew the Lord, though we have no doubt about being the Lord's now, and with some of us certain definite movements of soul can be recalled. Since we have been under christian influence from our childhood, this is not surprising. If brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it would be but reasonable that such should be the case.

With others, however, the exact time when we were blessed is quite easily recalled—that day, never to be forgotten, when we first knew the joy of saying “Jesus is *my* Saviour.”

We, all of us, have found out that we are sinners, and the experience of repentance towards God has in some degree been ours—“repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”

THE SENSE OF OUR SINFULNESS.

We may not all be able to say what first caused us to find out that we were sinners; but we are all now quite sure that we are such; and, through God's gracious work in us, we have learnt, each according to his measure, that sin is an awful thing in the sight of God. Godly sorrow about our sins has led us to repentance, never to be regretted.

The fact that we shall never bear the judgment due to us for our sins, because Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree, does not in any way lessen our feelings of repentance and our horror of sin, but quite the reverse. The fact that our sins necessitated the suffering of our blessed Substitute, Jesus, and that He actually suffered for us, makes us hate sin the more; and the more we think of the cross, the more our feelings of repentance deepen.

We hate our sins and we hate ourselves for committing them ; but we love Jesus for suffering for us.

It is a great gain spiritually to have a deep sense of our sinfulness, a sense that we needed to be forgiven so much, for it has the effect of making us love Jesus the more. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," Luke 7 : 47.

THE CALLED OF JESUS CHRIST.

Whether it were a mother's loved voice, a father's word, a gospel preaching, a word spoken to us by a friend, a gospel tract or some other means, that first led us to know the Lord Jesus, it is well that we should realise that it was, *in fact*, the voice of Jesus that reached us, though we may well be thankful to the person, or for the means He was pleased to use. We who know Jesus as our Saviour are "the called of Jesus Christ." It was He who found the lost, straying sheep and brought it home rejoicing.

The expression "the called of Jesus Christ" is found in the epistle to the Romans, chap. 1 : 6, and implies an individual, or personal, link with the Lord Jesus, which is very sweet to the soul. There are many further experiences that are to be known in our spiritual history, some of which are collective in character ; but they never set aside, and should in no way lessen, this sweet sense of an individual link with a personal Saviour.

It is probable that no two of us have had exactly the same spiritual experiences ; but taking the various details together, there is a general similarity in their issue. We may safely say that every one who is the Lord's has in some way or other been marked by two grand features, one of which has been already stated, namely,

REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD.

Details may have differed, but this general trait

marks all believers in a greater or lesser degree. We have all found out that God was right and that we were wrong; that He is good, infinitely so, and that we are bad, terribly so. The more we know God and the more we know ourselves, the more these feelings deepen, and we have honestly and soberly to use the language of Job who said, "I abhor myself, and repent!" That God grants repentance to us is a great mercy.

The other feature is:

FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The two experiences generally go on together and increase, as we learn more of God, and of our Lord Jesus, and know ourselves better—know how really sinful we are.

What a happy moment it is for us when we can look up to heaven and say, "Jesus is my Saviour," knowing that He who died for us on the cross, the Just One for us the unjust ones, is now at the right hand of God.

That Jesus is a Saviour, *the* Saviour who came into the world to save sinners, is a fact. It was shown by His own blessed grace when on earth among sinners; it is testified to by the Scriptures, and has been proved to be true by millions of persons each of whom could say, not only that Christ is the Saviour, but that He is *my* Saviour; I am the sinner and He is my Saviour. We, who know Him, could add much; for having come to Him by faith, having trusted Christ, the many blessings spoken of in the Bible are ours, and we enjoy them according to our measure.

That we all needed a Saviour is clear; we were sinners and no one but a Saviour could have met our need and delivered us from the power, and eventual penalty of sin. A *Teacher* might tell us what we ought, or ought not, to have done; he might tell

us how wrong we have been ; but such a one would not meet our need, though he might make us feel it and how hopeless was our case. An *Exemplar* would not deliver us. His example might show us how we ought to live, and give guidance for the future, but if it were a perfect example it would only show how unlike it we are, and leave us in our misery. A SAVIOUR meets our need and delivers us from our misery. Yes! it was a Saviour we needed, and God has made Himself known in Jesus as a Saviour God. Our faith is directed to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has made Him known.

A PERSONAL SAVIOUR.

It is remarkable that, in the gospel preachings recorded in the book of Acts, it is always the Lord Jesus Himself who is preached and presented as the Object of faith, not exactly His work, wonderful as that was. We must not conclude that in these preachings no mention was made of His work on the cross. We learn, indeed, from the apostle's own statement in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 15 : 3, that the gospel he preached to those at Corinth included the announcement of the fact that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." He tells us also that he had himself received this good news; for, though he was sovereignly reached by Christ Himself from heaven, yet he had to go into Damascus where Ananias, the chosen vessel, baptised him and told him what he had to do. Nevertheless, it is the Lord Jesus Himself, a living Man raised from among the dead, who is held up as the Object of faith in every preaching, as it is recorded in the Scriptures. Let the reader turn up the following passages and read the context:—"His name through faith in his name," Acts 3 : 16.

“To him give all the prophets witness, that . . . whosoever believeth in him,” chap. 10 : 43. “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins,” chap. 13 : 38. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” chap. 16 : 31. “By faith that is in me,” chap. 26 : 18. It is generally so in the epistles also.

The Lord Jesus is thus personally presented in the gospel, so that by faith we may come into touch with Him, as a living Person, our Saviour, the One who died, was buried, rose again, and is now

A LIVING, GLORIFIED MAN IN HEAVEN.

We believe on *Him*. We may not yet understand the full meaning of all He has done. Which of us does? We have much to learn. Hence the teaching of the gospel is necessary, by which we learn how God could and does bless us on the ground of what Jesus did on the cross; but our faith is already in Him who did it all, and who is now glorified. We know a living Man in heaven on whom we have believed, our Saviour.

How very important it is to come, by faith personally, into living touch with the Saviour, with Him who died on the cross for us, but who is glorified in heaven now. Never let us lose sight of what He has done. What lessons there are for us to learn there! We have much to learn, too, of the blessings that have resulted from His death and resurrection; but we need not, yea, we did not, wait until we understood these things before we believed on Him. Having heard of a living Saviour, we trusted in Him and how rightly we did so. We believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and what blessing and joy this brought us!

CHAPTER III

The Confession of Jesus as Lord

WHEN we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who suffered on the cross for us, but who is now glorified in heaven as Man, it is of the greatest importance that we should definitely confess Him as Lord, that we should let others know by our words and ways that we are His. It is a real joy to tell others that we belong to Him; but quite apart from the question of the joy it gives to us, to confess Jesus as Lord with the mouth is one of the conditions of salvation. "Confession is made unto salvation," Rom. 10 : 10.

God alone can read the heart, and He knows the moment we believe, and He blesses us as soon as we do believe. God is just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus, Rom. 3 : 26. We believe unto righteousness. Salvation, however, is another matter and in connection therewith Scripture speaks of confession with the mouth, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" (or Jesus as Lord)—which is something in addition to believing.

It is not at all uncommon to find that a believer has been definitely hindered in his spiritual progress because he has not confessed to those about him that he is the Lord's. The enemy has many arguments which he uses to try to keep us from confessing the Lord's name, and the human heart only too readily avails itself of the reasons and excuses suggested; but we may be quite sure that unless we do confess the Lord, that is, take our stand as belonging to Him, we shall be weak all along the line, for we shall lack His support. The reason why

CONFESSING THE LORD'S NAME

is necessary, if we are to know salvation in any

practical sense, is because Christ has been, and is still, rejected here. The Lord of glory has been crucified. Instead of a crown of glory being given Him, He was crowned with thorns and robed in purple in mockery of His royal claim! Instead of a throne of glory, a cross of shame was given to Him by the rulers of this world.

Although, since the day when Jesus was crucified, the world has assumed a christian garb and would profess to reverence Christ, it has not changed in its real character. Let anyone confess with reverence the worthy name of Christ, either in the drawing-room of the rich, the lodging house of the poor, in business circles, or in the world of pleasure, in theatres, or on football grounds, and he will soon find out that Jesus has no real place here. The world is still ready to say, as Pharaoh said long ago, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Do we not often hear it remarked, "May I not please myself?" Now the believer's motto of life, so to speak, is "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The believer's course of life should be quite different from that of the world.

One reason why we should confess Jesus as our Lord is because

CONFESSION BRINGS SALVATION.

Salvation does not only mean that we are eventually to go to heaven, and be saved from judgment, but that we should now be delivered from the rule of sin and the power of the world. It is true that "we shall be saved from wrath through him" (that is Jesus); but in addition to this, salvation means a present deliverance from the course of this world, see Gal. 1 : 4.

The subject of salvation will come before us in a later chapter, if the Lord will; it will suffice here to say that we shall only realise the present gain of

salvation if we confess Jesus as our Lord. If we remain secret disciples, that is, those who really believe but who say nothing about it, we are likely to be overcome by our companionships or associations, and the customs of the world will soon govern our course of life; indeed, we may never get free from the power of the world.

Let us take an illustration. A young man, we shall suppose a believer, but

A SECRET DISCIPLE,

starts his business life. Leaving his home (it may be in the country) he comes up to London or some other big business centre. He obtains employment in an office or warehouse, and finds himself one among many other young men.

One evening he is asked by one of his fellows in a friendly way if he will join him for an evening's outing, and a music-hall is suggested. The secret disciple may easily say that he does not care for music-halls and evade the real issue. His kindly companion, thinking it to be a mere matter of taste, suggests a theatre, or says, 'Perhaps you would like a game or two of cards, or shall we go on the river?' Now the things suggested may not be thought at all wrong. The young believer really wishes to do what is right, but he does not like to say anything about the *Lord*. His companion has not the slightest thought of anything of the kind. He has an evening's leisure and cannot understand his friend's lack of interest and puts him down as morose. If he accepts the invitation, a difficulty arises later on, or the evening is given up to pleasure and Christ is not spoken of. Perhaps another invitation is given and accepted, and in a few months the lives of the two men are practically the same. Little by little the secret disciple becomes worldly; he never speaks of Christ and his testimony is nothing.

Let us suppose, however, that instead of being a secret disciple, the young man definitely confesses Christ, and, in reply to the kind invitation, politely declines and *explains why*. He is the Lord's; he wishes to serve the One who has done so much for him, though he freely admits how much he fails in carrying out his desire. Of course he is thought old-fashioned; he may be ridiculed, possibly persecuted in a mild way or even in a severe manner. One thing may be said of him: he has

COURAGE

and he is not ashamed to confess Christ. (Ashamed! ? Can it be that we are ever ashamed! No, shame on our cowardly hearts!) Further, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God," Luke 12 : 8. Who can tell the results of his definite stand? The very one who had no concern as to spiritual matters may be led to enquire, What is it makes this fellow independent of what I so much need? He is happy and wants none of my pleasures to give him joy; why is it? The disciple may also through *his* confession discover another believer, one who is perhaps longing for a companion to share his joys and help him in his pathway. His worldly companions separate him from their company; but this is really an advantage spiritually; it means practical salvation.

No one except the Lord knows what we believe unless we confess; but it is impossible not to confess in some way or another if we are to be true to what we believe.

Another matter in regard of confession is that

CONFESSING THE LORD IS A TESTIMONY.

It is a testimony to Him. This fact is very clearly seen in the history of Noah. His building of the

ark, not only his preaching, was a testimony. Why was it necessary to build the ark? If he were doing this, were others safe? So also with the one who confesses Christ as Lord. Should He be owned as Lord? If one person is doing so, should not others do so? Our confession of Christ implies that others ought to own Him also. If we confess Him, it is a testimony to the Lordship of Christ, and He may use it for the blessing of others.

If we have not confessed Christ as Lord, there is evidently some hindrance or reason why we have not done so. One very obvious cause may be that we are not quite sure that we *are* His. If in our hearts we cannot truly say, "Whose I am," it is, of course, useless and indeed it would be unreal for us to say so with our lips. There are some that say, "Lord, Lord"; but in a coming day the Lord will say of them, "I never knew you."

Let it be stated, however, in the plainest manner possible that if you, dear reader, are not the Lord's, if you have not believed on Him, there is no reason whatever why you should not believe on Him now, and so be His. Do you remember how the jailor at Philippi came trembling and enquired, "What must I do to be saved?" How simple was the reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." When we believe, we may well confess that we do belong to the Lord.

Another possible hindrance is a sense that we think we are not now, or may not be in the future, quite true to what we profess. Better not say anything, it may be argued, than make a profession and be untrue to it. While this sounds very plausible, it is really the enemy's suggestion. Would the Lord ever tell us to hide our light? Has He not said just the reverse? Did He not say,

"LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN"?

If in our ways we are not now true to what we believe, the remedy is not in being silent and hiding our light, which would be more untrue, but to get to the Lord about our failure and confess to Him and judge ourselves for our inconsistency, and count upon *His* grace for power for both confession and conduct. If we think we may not in the future be true to our profession, the remedy again is not in silence. That is what the enemy desires—anything to keep Christ in the background or out of sight altogether! Are we to rely upon what we can be? Can we not trust the Lord? Is it not written, “He will keep the feet of his saints”? 1 Sam. 2 : 9. If He has said, Confess; may we not count upon Him for grace and power to support us if we do so? Most surely we can! How very encouraging the epistle of Jude is in this respect. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen,” Jude 24, 25. Confessing the Lord’s Name in itself imparts a moral stimulus to the life of the one who confesses, and only those who confess know how really the Lord helps whenever they do so.

Another hindrance is:

THE FEAR OF WHAT OTHERS MAY THINK OF US,

a nervous, timid feeling. The enemy uses this weapon of his with terrible results. This fear of what others may think is sometimes found in people who, in other matters, are as bold as lions. This act shows how truly Christ is rejected here. It also reveals that in such instances we have ourselves before us.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Thank God he came. We may be perfectly certain that he

never regretted it. Yet he came by *night*. To be *seen* coming to Christ would probably be too much for a ruler of the Jews, and a teacher in Israel. The situation, however, became difficult later on, and in John 7 : 51 we may read how he politely raises an objection to what his confreres in the Sanhedrim say. But how brightly his conduct shines in the acute circumstances accompanying the crucifixion of the Lord! How happy he must have felt then! Only those who confess Christ, only those who definitely and openly declare their allegiance to Him, know the blessed and holy joy it imparts, and only they prove the Lord's power for support.

What would "they" think of me? What did "they" think of Christ? Would they think worse of me than they thought of Him? Do I wish that the world should think other of me than it thought of Christ? What *do* they think of us? How the question exposes us! Have we really faced what we are? What are we (but for grace)? If only what we really are (apart from what God's grace has made us), if what we are as of Adam's stock, were exposed, what would others think of us? And what would we think of ourselves? Thank God for the cross. Where should we be without it? With hearts out of which can proceed the evils enumerated in Matthew 15 : 19, what can we think of ourselves! If the cross has for ever removed from God's sight what we are, and the Lord Jesus suffered there for us to that end, shall we be afraid to confess His worthy Name for fear of what others may think of us? A definite and clear confession of the Lord brings to an end all this terrible self-saving, and in its place gives a humble sense of our own nothingness and of His greatness.

It may be urged, however, that we must wait a favourable opportunity. We must, surely. If I am

employed, say, as a gardener, or a clerk, my righteous obligation is to fulfil my duties as such, so as to

“ ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR

in all things,” Titus 2 : 10. What a really remarkable expression this is—“Adorn the doctrine.” That is to say, we are to set it out in beauty. When the moment comes, however, and the opportunity does occur, what shall we do then? Many of us well know that it is not long before an opportunity does come. Let us be faithful to the Lord in our daily toil, let us be true to Him at all times and we shall find many opportunities of confessing His Name and showing that we are His.

When circumstances are such that in fact we find opportunities do not present themselves, it is well to ask the Lord to arrange for one to come about, and to ask Him also for grace that we may be up to the occasion. The Lord has often answered a prayer of this kind.

Sometimes an opportunity of confessing the Lord may be made by seeking the welfare of our fellow men and asking, possibly, one of them to come and hear the gospel at some meeting of which we know. We may be quite sure the Lord will greatly help us if we move on these lines. Do we *desire* to be true to Him? Do we desire to be identified with His Name and the reproach attaching to it? If so, He will not fail us in affording an occasion that would be suitable for the confession of His worthy Name.

Another plea against the definite confession of Christ is that

OUR LIVES SHOULD SPEAK ;

they should, indeed! The enemy triumphs if only he can get us to deny in our lives what we affirm with our lips. The daily practical life of the believer is exceedingly important. We are told, however,

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Now it is quite obvious that if I am not known as a believer, my conduct if right and marked by grace, may be attributed to mere kindness of disposition or something of the kind, and the tendency will be that those who note my ways will merely think well of *me*. That is a great danger and an evil. If the result of our conduct be that people only say nice things about us, we have sadly failed. How is it that they have heard nothing of Christ? Note the words of Scripture, “Let your light so shine . . . that they may . . . glorify *your Father*.” By all means let our lives be consistent. Indeed, the practical life of the believer should, according to his measure, have the same result as the wonderful and holy life of Jesus, as it is said, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” When He began to testify by word of mouth, however, it resulted in the people leading Him to the brow of the hill to destroy Him. Our testimony if faithful may have a similar result. We must be careful that the issue of our entire life, words and ways, is that our Father is glorified. It is a very poor, and indeed a dangerous, thing to gain praise and personal approbation merely.

To use the argument that “life” is better than “lip” in order to keep our lips closed so that Christ is not spoken of, is a subtle effort of the enemy to prevent testimony to Christ. We must not hide God’s righteousness, but declare it; nor must we conceal His loving-kindness, but make it known (see Psalm 40). Otherwise our lives have no real testimony about them, whatever our conduct may be.

“THE FEAR OF MAN

bringeth a snare,” Prov. 29 : 25. This fact may

well warn us of another possible hindrance to our confessing that we are the Lord's. The remedy for this evil is to be "in the fear of the Lord all the day," Prov. 23 : 17. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die . . . and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" Isa. 51 : 12, 13.

How truly God knows our hearts. All is naked and open to Him. What words of comfort He gives to our timid spirits: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee," Isa. 41 : 10.

As we have seen, a definite confession of Christ brings with it a most confirming sense of His support. The timid and uncertain feelings of the secret disciple are no longer experienced, but in their place the soul possesses a deepening sense of power from on high. Moreover, fear takes hold of those in whose presence we confess; for how do they stand in regard of the One we own as Lord?

Confessing that we belong to Christ is an honour, an honour indeed! Let our concern be to walk humbly with self-distrust, but with increasing confidence in Him whose Name we confess; for Scripture says, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," Rom. 10 : 11.

CHAPTER IV

Conditions for Growth

EVERYONE who is the Lord's has been "born again." Just as our natural life had a beginning when we were born, and we each then began our separate and individual existence, so our spiritual existence began when we were "born again." In John 3, however, the Lord not only speaks of being "born again" but of being "born of water and of the Spirit," and of "every one that is born of the Spirit." The first chapter of this gospel, v. 12, 13, also speaks of those who received Christ as being "born . . . of God," and having the right to be the "children of God."

Taking the general bearing of these expressions, we may note that the analogy of "birth" is applicable to our spiritual experiences. The expression "born again" in John 3, describes our earliest spiritual experiences, while the other terms express the development and character of this which is basic to spirituality and a place in the family of God. Our early experiences may have given vent to what was very much like the cry of a babe, giving expression to our distress of soul in finding out what sinners we were; but when we are born of God and appreciate our place in God's family we "know the Father," 1 John 2 : 13. In God's family we all begin as babes.

There is no shame attaching to a babe because it is "only a babe"; to be a babe to begin with is perfectly natural and right. To see a child fail to develop, however, is an exceedingly pitiable sight. There must be some serious reason or irregularity when such is the case; it is certainly not normal. So it is also in our spiritual existence. Growth and development are normal. We begin as babes, but

we are not to remain such. There are babes, young men and fathers in the divine family on earth, 1 John 2. It is a shame to any who have known the Lord for some time if they have not grown spiritually. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul rebukes those of that assembly because they were as babes, when they should have become men. We find a similar rebuke in the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 5.

GROWTH AND FOOD.

One of the most important things to consider, as a help towards growth, is good food. The apostle Peter speaks of food in his first epistle, chap. 2. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word," he writes, "that ye may grow thereby." Much is told us about food in the Bible. How clear were the instructions in the Old Testament. The unleavened bread, the Passover lamb roast with fire, and the various other offerings speak, as types, of different spiritual foods which we may now enjoy; as also does the manna and, later in Israel's history, the old corn of the land. How carefully God guarded His people against undesirable and unsuitable food may be seen from the instructions given in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14.

Similarly today, as young believers, the sincere milk of the word is food which will nourish our souls and help us to grow spiritually. "Grow in grace," Peter says, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Our minds and hearts must feed upon Christ.

We should not, however, remain in the condition of babes and be only able to take milk; but, as our spiritual growth takes place, be enabled to take other available forms of food, even to strong meat. Having received the Holy Spirit, if we give ourselves to spiritual things, we shall soon find that even "the

deep things of God" are available to us (see 1 Cor. 2). Our minds and hearts need food. The enemy of our souls has a great variety of mental food which is served in a manner calculated to attract the fleshly mind; but such food would not help us to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but spoil our spiritual appetite.

Scripture, which brings Christ and the truth before the heart, affords much food for us. How the mind and the heart are fed by the truth! The Gospel feeds and forms us. Hence the *teaching* of the Gospel is so important. Then, too, the truth of the church, or as we rightly say, the truth of the assembly, forms the mind and the heart. Both the Gospel and the assembly are so closely linked with Christ Himself, that as we learn more of them we learn to know Him better; and as we learn to know Him better, we shall know the truth of the gospel and the assembly the better.

In our next chapter we shall consider some of the facts and blessings of the Gospel. If we give our hearts and minds to the consideration of these things and become nourished in the truth, we shall grow spiritually.

HEALTHY CONDITIONS OF LIFE.

In addition to food, healthy conditions of life are necessary for growth. How important in natural life are light, sunshine and fresh air. So spiritually; the knowledge of God is like light to us; the truth, as well as being food, is also light. "O send out thy light and thy truth," says the Psalmist. Christians normally walk in the light as God is in the light; for God is fully declared now (see 1 John 1). We must remember, as doubtless many of us have found out, that light manifests everything; it shows up everything exactly as it is. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." By the light we see things

clearly. Through having more light, we sometimes find that we cannot go on with practices that we may have previously allowed; we may also find out that our associations are not according to the truth. Light brings in what is good and positive, and therefore exposes what is wrong, and we may rightly become disturbed thereby. "Light is sweet," we are told. Without it, healthy growth does not take place.

Then, closely connected with light, there is sunshine, which is also necessary for healthy growth. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," the epistle of Jude says. The love of God is like sunshine. God is light, but the light that shines is the light of love. The love has provided all that is necessary so that we may be in the light with ease and happiness; for the way God made Himself known to us was by meeting all our need in love. Hence we read, "If we walk in the light, as he (God) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John 1 : 7. The value and efficacy of the blood enable us to be in the light with God, in perfect happiness.

We find we have companions in the light, and have fellowship with them. This fact reminds us of atmosphere—fresh air.

To go in for worldly companionship is like breathing impure air. We rightly speak of an unhealthy atmosphere, when young folk keep bad company. The only good company for a believer is that of those who fear the Lord. The Psalmist said, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee," Ps. 119.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE.

Another important contributor to growth is exercise. This is so physically; it is equally or more so spiritually. "Exercise thyself rather unto

godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. 4 : 7.

There is much said now-a-days about "fitness"; the need of physical training is being constantly brought before the minds of young people, as of vital consequence. How much more so are the spiritual exercises of prayer, the reading of Scripture, taking part in the service of praise, visiting the sick and needy (whether the spiritually sick and needy, or those in want of temporal things), and activity in the gospel.

All these exercises develop spiritual growth. The writer of Hebrews 5 : 14 speaks of "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Such have grown up and are no longer babes.

We cannot make ourselves grow, though we may very easily prevent growth; but we may keep in conditions and follow lines of spiritual conduct that induce growth.

May we all be concerned to keep ourselves in such conditions; eating good spiritual food, taking regular spiritual exercises, keeping ourselves in the sunshine of the love of God and breathing the pure air of christian companionship.

CHAPTER V

Redemption

THE glorious day is fast approaching when everything shall be publicly placed on the basis of redemption. God will assert His rights and claim both heaven and earth, with the myriads of the redeemed that shall dwell therein.

The light of that glorious morning has already dawned for faith, and there are now on earth many millions who love to own the claims of the Lord Jesus, who has redeemed them by His precious blood. Our precious Saviour has suffered for us, the Just One for us the unjust ones, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.

That Jesus had to suffer for our sins is, indeed, an affecting fact; it rightly touches our hearts and draws out our love to Him. The work of Christ on the cross, His death and resurrection, were an absolute necessity if ever sinful man was to be blessed. Redemption was a divine necessity if God was to be glorified, and we, poor sinners, ever were to be forgiven and blessed.

Sin is a wrong against God, though some sins may also be against our fellow men, or against ourselves.¹ We as men, as God's creatures, had responsibilities to Him, and we had failed in these responsibilities; we had sinned. Consequently, we were under liabilities to God and were subject to His righteous judgment, having committed sins which were wrongs against Him and incurred His wrath.

Had God executed the judgment upon us that we rightly deserved, He would have expressed His holiness and the righteous claims of His throne; but we should have been for ever lost, and where

¹ See Prov. 8 : 36; 1 Cor. 6 : 18.

would have been the expression of God's love then? This was not God's way.

THE RIGHT OF REDEMPTION.

In His wisdom and love, God devised a way so that His righteous claims should be met in an action of unparalleled mercy. He, who was Creator, became Man and undertook the work of redemption.

We learn from the Old Testament, that to redeem anything, the redeemer must have a title to do so, by having at one time possessed the property. When redeeming a person, the redeemer must be a *kinsman*, that is, a near relative.¹

God, being Creator, rightly possessed man; but sin came in, and man was lost—lost to God! In giving us the type of a redeemer, who had title to redeem because of former *ownership*, God foretold the wondrous action of mercy that He was about to perform. But more than this—the infinite Creator would become Man and thus fulfil the other type, that of the *kinsman* redeemer. He, who was Creator, became Kinsman Redeemer!

An important question may now be asked:

WHAT WAS TO BE THE METHOD OF REDEMPTION?

Man was a sinner and had therefore wronged God; he had offended the majesty of his Creator and was rightly subject to His judgment. Death had been pronounced as the penalty of sin; later on “the curse” was the lot of whosoever had broken God's holy law; and then, after death, there was God's judgment to be faced, for sin was *against God*. Therefore the “liabilities”—death, the curse and judgment—had to be met.

“Shadows” had foretold the coming great event. The plan of redemption was typified by the death

¹ See Lev. 25 : 25-29, and the book of Ruth.

of the Passover lamb, when Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage. From that memorable day onwards, the divine right was repeatedly asserted by God's claim of every firstborn of Israel's race, as well as the divine method repeatedly shown by the firstborn having to be redeemed by a lamb. God asserted His claim, and every firstborn male, whether of man or beast, had to be devoted to Him. If it were a firstborn of a beast suitable for sacrifice, it had to be offered to God; if of man, or an unclean animal, such as an ass, it had to be redeemed by a lamb.¹

In the Passover as it was first kept, the *blood* of the slain lamb had to be sprinkled on the door posts and lintels of the houses wherein the Israelites ate the lamb; and, when God saw the blood, He Himself passed over the houses and protected them from the judgment He was executing. On the basis of this God-devised way—the blood of the lamb—God protected His people from His own judgment. God's rights and man's needs were met by the blood of the lamb. Hence in the New Testament we read: "Ye were . . . redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."²

Long before the Passover night in Egypt, God had asserted His rights to the life of man. The divine decree, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," showed God's governmental protection of man's life; and His instruction to Noah and his descendants not to eat flesh "with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof," expressed how jealously He regarded His sovereign rights to the life even of animals (see Gen. 9 : 4-6).

Man being under penalty as a sinner, only death could meet the divine claim. Hence the Passover

¹ See Exodus 12 and 13.

² See 1 Peter 1 : 18 and 19.

lamb had to be slain. It was the *blood* of the lamb that secured the divine protection.

This was the type. When we come to the Antitype, how wonderful all appears! It is not now a lamb, a mere creature (for, as we read in Hebrews 10 : 4, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"); it is one who, being God, becomes Man and is the LAMB of GOD—JESUS! What a moment it was in the history of time when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,*" John 1 : 29. Never had there been such a moment before.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

We read that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Note the word "suffered." The question of sin was not easily settled. In the type, the Passover lamb had to be roast with fire. This fact signified that the judgment, the punishment that sin deserved, was to be borne by the coming Lamb. Fire is frequently used in Scripture as a figure of God's holy judgment, as we may learn from the fact that a flaming sword—a sword of fire—had kept the way of the tree of life, and from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹

What a stupendous fact it is that Jesus *suffered* for sins; He, the Just One, suffered for us, the unjust ones. Yes, He endureth the wrath of God! He was abandoned by God. It is amazing, beyond all thought, that He took up such a place on our behalf and suffered thus.

These two facts are of vital importance: (1) Jesus suffered for sins, and (2) nothing but His death, His bloodshedding, could have wrought redemption.

¹ See Gen. 19 : 24.

The statements in the New Testament are perfectly clear on this matter.

THE RESULTS OF REDEMPTION

One of the present results of redemption, as far as we are concerned, is that we have the forgiveness of sins. "Without shedding of blood is no remission."¹ Such a verse shuts out any other method of dealing with our sins. Then there is the positive statement, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," Eph. 1 : 7. It is only in Christ we have this blessing, for God has taken up His rights of redemption in Him. Yet we must remember that redemption is "*Through his blood.*" This was the divine way of effecting all.

The subject of justification will come before us in a later chapter, if the Lord will; here it suffices to note that the very riches of God's grace have been expressed in the way God has acted towards us through redemption. No debt, so to speak, could be too great to be discharged, for the riches of God's grace are illimitable. There is no question of merit, works or anything of the kind, for we have forgiveness of sins according to *the riches of His grace. In Christ, "the beloved . . . through his blood . . . according to the riches of his grace."*

Another effect of redemption is that, seeing we have been bought with a price,

WE ARE NOT OUR OWN.

The blood of redemption was the ground of God protecting His people from the judgment that fell on Egypt; it also established His claim to all the firstborn, Exod. 13. In principle, all Israel was Jehovah's, the firstborn being taken as the representative of the whole.

The apostle Paul pressed home to the Corinthians

¹ See Heb. 9 : 22.

that they were not their own, for they had been bought with a price.¹ Redemption not only has the effect of setting the redeemed free from bondage or liabilities to another, it also establishes the right of the redeemer. Therefore we read in Isaiah 43 : 1, "I have redeemed thee . . . thou art mine." So also in Revelation 5 : 9, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God." Note the words "Thou art mine" and "redeemed to God." We *owe* obedience to the Lord for He has a claim over us. He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, or lawlessness²; self-will must never mark us.

In Old Testament days the Levites, instead of all the firstborn, were taken to be wholly for God. The reason for this was that in a time of crisis, when Israel had made the golden calf, the tribe of Levi had loyally responded to the appeal Moses made, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me."³ In Numbers 8 we read, "The Levites shall be mine . . . for they are wholly given unto me."

When the "Day of Redemption" comes publicly into view, when the "morning without clouds" dawns, *all* in heaven and on earth will own Jesus as Lord and recognise His rights. What a day that will be! How far different from this present time when His rights are spurned. It is our great privilege to own Him now.

May the claims of redemption ever be owned by us, dear reader. Let us remember that we have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ, that we are not our own. God says, "Thou art mine." This is an immense honour for us. May we yield ourselves without reserve to God! seeing we have been redeemed by the precious blood

¹ See 1 Cor. 6 : 19-29.

² See Titus 2 : 14.

³ See Exod. 32 : 26; see also Num. 3 : 40-51.

of Christ, so that it may be true in practice that we are "wholly given to" God.

THE TRADITION FROM YOUR FATHERS.

The apostle Peter speaks of being redeemed with the "precious blood of Christ" from what had been handed down from our fathers. As this epistle was written to believers who had been Jews, it has a special word to those who have been linked with what is merely 'Traditional religion,' of which there is a great deal in the circles of professed christianity. We are all so apt to receive things, whether doctrines or practices, just because our fathers have believed or done them before us. In the case of the Jews much of what they had received had been originally given of God. Never are we to make little of what God has said, whenever He said it. We may have to learn that earthly religion is to give place to what is heavenly in character; but that is quite another thing from setting aside what God has said. Indeed, this was just what the traditions of the fathers did, as the Lord said, "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered," Mark 7 : 13.

The death of Jesus changed everything. His perfect sacrifice made the repeated offerings of old unnecessary and obsolete, yea impossible. Shadows had to give place to substance. The teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews makes this perfectly clear. Peter's epistles are somewhat of the same character; for in them he shows how natural and earthly things were to give place to spiritual and heavenly things. Much that was merely tradition, had been added to divine commands as the passage in Mark shows. Peter now tells the believer, who had been linked with such traditions, that the "precious blood of Christ" had redeemed him from all such religion.

Let us test our religious thoughts, dear reader, in the light of this statement. Are we clear of what is merely tradition, or are we acting on what we have merely received from our fathers. What we have received may be right, but to believe things just because we have received them thus, is *not* right. We must search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. If they are according to Scripture we may well believe them; indeed, we must do so. We believe, not because of the tradition of our fathers, but because *God* says so. To be delivered from mere traditional teaching is a great mercy. The precious blood of Christ has redeemed us from such bondage. Not only have we the liberty to turn from such teaching, but our Redeemer has a right over us, and we owe it to Him to abandon all such traditional religion, and follow Him only. To do so may mean that we have to leave associations with which we have had links for long, but the Lord's authority must be recognised; and, cost what it may, we must do His will. Christ, by His precious blood, has a claim upon us that is greater than any religious sentiment, friendship, or even natural relationship; for "he that loveth father or mother more than me" the Lord said, "is not worthy of me," Matt. 10 : 37.

May the Lord give us all to recognise the claim of redemption in every sphere of our lives, and live for Him whose love is beyond all others and has given His blood—His precious blood—to redeem us.

CHAPTER VI

Justification

To be justified means to be cleared by God from every charge of sin. It is an immense favour to men that God is prepared to justify the ungodly, Rom. 4 : 5. This being the case, it is clear that no question of merit can have any consideration in the matter. Justification is one of the blessings proclaimed in the gospel—God's glad tidings.

In the *preaching* of the gospel, God is presented as a Saviour God and made known in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In an earlier chapter we noticed that in the gospel the Lord Jesus is brought before us as a living Person, a Saviour ; for God's good news is concerning Him. It is through faith in this Person that we receive blessing.

God would not only have us believe the gospel, however, but understand what the gospel is and what it involves ; hence there is the *teaching* of the gospel. The teaching of the gospel is largely given to us in the epistle to the Romans, where we may learn the answer to the question that Job asked, "How should man be just with God?" Job 9 : 2. Through the teaching of the gospel we learn *how* we are blessed, and how God has glorified Himself in the way He has met our need, through our Lord Jesus. By this means we get to know God and grow spiritually. We learn that He has acted righteously in the exercise of His mercy, and in expressing His grace and love ; for He has at the same time maintained His holiness. One of the chief objects in the gospel is that we should *know God*. Hence, we find that the apostle tells us quite early in the epistle to the Romans that he is not ashamed of the gospel, for not only is it the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, but in it God's righteous-

ness is revealed. In the gospel God is made known as

A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR.

To consider the epistle to the Romans in any detail would take us far beyond the immediate object of this little book. A brief glance at the structure of the early chapters, however, may help us.

After the "introduction," chap. 1 : 1-17, in which we are told that God's gospel is concerning His Son, that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and that in it God's righteousness is revealed, we have a solemn review of man's lost and sinful condition. Whether the barbaric heathen, with his gross forms of idolatry and in his degraded state, chap. 1 : 21-32, or the cultured Greek with his philosophy, chap. 2 : 1-16, or the Jew with his boast in God and immense privileges, chap. 2 : 17 ; 3 : 9, *all* are proved to be under sin and guilty before God. Chapter 3 : 10-19 gives the divine summing up of man's case. There is none good, no, not one. ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Against this dark background of man's ruin there shines forth God's perfect remedy, which is spoken of in chapters 3 to 8.

God has come down to deliver us. He has devised a way so that His banished need not be expelled from Him. When we had no righteousness (but only sins) God provided a righteousness for us, even His own righteousness. Many a prophet had foretold this great fact in such statements as, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. 45 : 24, 25. "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. 61 : 10.

The law of Moses, also, had borne witness to it by forgiveness being pronounced to the offender on the basis of the blood of the sacrifice—the judgment

of death being borne. Let us note that this righteousness is

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ;

hence, human righteousness, if it existed, would be unavailing. Sin was an affront to the holiness of the divine majesty ; God's righteousness demanded its judgment. Had God swept the scene in judgment, it would have shown His justice, but His love would not have been expressed and we should have been for ever lost ; eternal doom our righteous portion. This was not God's way, as we have seen in an earlier chapter. He had other plans and purposes, designs of mercy and love.

One who was God became Man ; our Lord Jesus Christ took up the question of sin and glorified God as Man by vindicating His holy judgment, bearing wrath on account of sin, going even into death and the grave on man's account. He thus satisfied every demand of divine holiness. The very way in which Jesus did this work, His obedience, love and devotedness to God, as well as the perfect display of what God was in His judgment of sin, and His mercy and love to man the sinner, has brought more glory to God than if there had never been any sin at all. Every claim of God's holiness has been met, and God Himself expressed in the work of Jesus on the cross. Hence, God is able now to justify freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, every one who believes in Jesus ; and in doing so He acts consistently with what He is Himself. He is just in doing so.

In Old Testament days God gave a type of this great work of Christ and its result. The day of atonement foreshadowed it. (Read Leviticus 16.) Not only was the victim slain and its carcase burnt with fire outside the camp—a figure of Christ bearing the judgment of God against sin—but on this one

occasion the blood of the sacrifice was brought by the high priest into the holiest of all, and sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, which was made of pure gold. The mercy seat with the cherubim of glory was in that day

THE THRONE OF GOD.

God dwelt between the cherubim and appeared in a cloud on the mercy seat (see Psa. 99 : 1, Lev. 16 : 2, Exod. 25 : 22). God's holy presence would have demanded judgment on His people because of their sins; but the blood of the sacrifice being on the mercy seat, the throne of God, enabled Him to go on with His erring people; also the "scapegoat" carried away all their sins to a land of forgetfulness.

Today God has set forth Christ as a mercy seat through faith in His blood. That is to say, on the ground of what Christ has accomplished by His sacrifice on the cross, God in the gospel presents Christ publicly to men as the One in whom He approaches them; He has set Him forth thus. He will meet at the mercy seat—Christ—any sinner who comes to Him.

God's first object in telling us this, is that we may believe on Him. He then desires that we should understand how He was righteous in passing over the sins of those who believed on Him in times past, that is, in Old Testament days, and that He is equally just today in justifying every one who believes on Jesus. God desires us to understand how He has acted, and learn thereby His righteousness and mercy. Knowing *how* God acts helps us to grow spiritually. Hence the importance of the teaching of the gospel.

The apostle Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel; he did not feel as if he had to apologise for the way God had acted. There is a moral dignity in the gospel. That the supreme Governor of the

universe should justify a sinner is, indeed, amazing; it is still more so that He should find a way of doing this without overlooking the claims of His majesty or the holiness of His throne in any respect! God is *just* in justifying him who believes in Jesus, however great and many his sins may be. God's object in telling us these things, as we have seen, is that we may *know Him*, as well as be assured that we are righteously cleared of every charge of sin before God. One of the ways God has of making our hearts know Him is through the gospel.

The ground of our justification is thus clearly set out; it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or as Romans 5 : 9 says, we are

JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD.

The great work of Christ on the cross, in which God was glorified about the question of sin, is the basis of our justification. On the ground of what Christ has done, God can act righteously in clearing from every charge of sin the one who believes. To repeat this statement is not unnecessary. Our hearts are so slow to take it in. It is the statement of a fact that, if believed, would change the outlook of many uncertain, unhappy and burdened believers.

Hence the ground of our justification is entirely outside of ourselves. It is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; we are justified by (or "in the power of") His blood.

Romans 3 : 24, which we have already quoted, tells us how God has acted in justifying us; it shows us the principle of His action. We have been justified freely by His grace. The word translated "freely" here is particularly instructive. It is the same word that in John 15 : 25 is rendered "without a cause." "They hated me without a cause." There was no cause in our Lord Jesus that He should have been hated; the reason was in the evil hearts of those

who hated Him. Similarly, there is no reason in the sinner why he should be justified; the cause of his justification is the pure, freely bestowed grace of God, as the ground thereof is the work of Christ upon the cross. We are justified without a cause in us, freely by God's grace. Grace supposes no merit, no claim; and no demerit, therefore, can hinder its activity. The source of the action is God Himself. We are

JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE.

A further fact is told us when the method of our justification is spoken of in detail. In Romans 3 we are shown how God is justified in His actions; He is shown to have been just in having acted as He has done in the past, and just now in justifying sinners who believe. His actions, too, are free, gratuitous, unmerited by us. In chapter 4, however, we learn in detail the way we are justified. Jesus, who was delivered for our offences, has been raised again for our justification. That is to say, we are as clear of our sins as Christ now is in resurrection. He took up our offences on the cross, but is now raised and is clear of all that for which He, as our Substitute, suffered and died. In a *risen* Christ we see how perfectly we are cleared. Our justification is set forth in Him as risen. It is of the greatest importance that our faith should apprehend and rest upon a *risen* Christ. He has passed out from all that which He took up on the cross. What a load He bore there! He was delivered for our offences. His death was the settlement of the stupendous question of sin! In Him in resurrection, we see a new region brought to light in which there is no sin, no judgment, no condemnation nor anything for which Christ suffered. All that was secured by His death has been brought to light in His resurrection. He has been

RAISED AGAIN FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION.

That is to say, the resurrection of Christ was the actual means of our justification. We are justified by (or in the power of) His blood; but we are justified *in* a risen Christ.

It now remains for us to see the principle upon which we *receive* our justification. God's righteousness is towards all; that is, all may have it; but it is only *upon* those who believe.

It follows that no question of our works can enter into the matter, since the ground of our justification is wholly outside of ourselves, being through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and God's action towards us being that of free, unmerited grace. Since our justification is set forth in a risen Christ, we can only receive this blessing on the principle of faith. The testimony God has given to the work of Christ and to His present place as raised from among the dead must be received by faith.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH

is no new one in God's ways with men. Abraham was justified on this same principle. God told him that his seed should be like the stars of heaven for multitude; and without considering his own weakness or any other human disability, Abraham believed God. Nor did the greatness of God's promise cause him to stagger. *God* had promised; and without any human calculation Abraham believed God, and God reckoned him righteous. God justified him on the principle of faith.

It was not that Abraham was actually righteous in himself and had no sins. We know he was a sinner, as are all of Adam's fallen race; but he was reckoned righteous by God on the principle of faith. As the Scripture says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," Rom. 4: 3. God viewed him as a righteous man, as justified. The apostle insists that those who believe

on God, who raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, are in the same manner reckoned righteous on the principle of faith.

Oh! that many souls, uncertain about their standing before God, would act as Abraham acted and:—

- (1) Consider not themselves—their virtues or shortcomings.
- (2) Stagger not at God's promise through unbelief, but
- (3) Be fully persuaded that what God says is to be believed.

We *must* believe God. Let us repeat: righteousness is reckoned to us if we believe *on God* who raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead. We are

JUSTIFIED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH.

We have no evidence in ourselves that we are justified; the expression of our justification is in a risen Christ. There is no question of merit; God acts freely by His grace. Yet God has not overlooked the holy claims of His throne in so doing, for in the death of Christ every claim has been met. As we have seen, God has set forth Christ as a mercy seat through faith in His blood, to show that He was just in passing over the sins of Old Testament saints, and that He is equally just today in justifying every one who believes on Jesus.

The effect of the believer being justified is that God will not impute sin to him, for He regards him as righteous. God views him as clear of every charge of sin as Christ is, who is risen from the dead. Come what may, God *will not* impute sin to the one whom He has justified. The believer stands before God as abidingly justified. Nothing can possibly alter this blessed fact.

The apostle in Romans 4 cites the case of David

as illustrative of a sinner justified without works; one justified by God. In a quotation from Psalm 32—a Psalm which David himself wrote—Romans 4 : 7, 8, reads “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Note, dear reader, the words, “the man to whom *the Lord will not impute sin.*” This statement is always true of every one who is justified; God will not impute sin to him.

The consequence of our being justified is that we have peace with God. This subject demands consideration in some detail, and we must leave it for another chapter.

CHAPTER VII

The Reign of Grace

Blessings Through Our Lord Jesus Christ

PERSONAL faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour is essential if any one is to receive the blessings of the gospel. Knowing *about* Christ is not at all the same thing as believing *on* Him personally. As a familiar hymn says:—

‘ We speak of the glory to come,
Of the heavens so bright and so fair ;
But, unless thou’lt in Jesus believe,
Thou wilt not, thou canst not be there.’

Christ is risen from among the dead; He is a living, glorified Man in heaven, and God’s disposition to men is expressed in Him. As we come to Him by faith, believing on Him, we receive the blessings of the gospel, for it is only through Him that they are dispensed. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Antitype of Joseph. All the treasures of the storehouses of Egypt were dispensed through Joseph. Whoever came to Pharaoh for corn in that time of famine was told, “Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.” So today God is dispensing all blessing through our Lord Jesus Christ. No one can get any blessing from God unless he comes to God’s great Administrator.

In this present world matters are handled by men of ability, but alas! they can only be selected from Adam’s fallen sinful race, and things are dispensed through them according to the various forms of government existing in different countries; but very soon

THE WORLD TO COME

will be brought into display, and then everything

will be managed according to the principles of God's world and God's kingdom, and blessing will be dispensed through our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone on earth, as well as in heaven, will own Jesus as Lord then, as Scripture says, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," Ps. 72, for evil will have been removed in judgment. At the present time it is only to those who come to the Lord Jesus by faith, those who believe on Him who died for them, but is raised from among the dead, that He dispenses the blessings God has for men.

In raising Jesus from the dead, God has brought into existence conditions of blessing, which have been secured on the ground of His death—conditions of righteousness, peace, joy and the favour of God. All the blessings enumerated in Romans 5 are to be received "*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" It is God's desire that all men may have them. Christ risen is the great storehouse, so to speak, of the provisions of divine grace for *all* men; but it is only possible to receive them through Him as Lord, for He is the great Administrator of divine grace to all who will come and receive the blessing.

These blessings will be universally and publicly known in the world to come, or the "Millennium" as it is sometimes called, when the "Sun of righteousness" will have arisen with healing in His wings, Mal. 4 : 2. The Light of that glorious morning has already shone into the hearts of those who believe on Christ. Such anticipate by faith the blessings of the DAY.

In the death of Jesus the basis was laid for our blessing—that mighty work of atonement and redemption through His blood; but it is under the rule and administration of our Lord Jesus, who has been raised from the dead that these blessings are now known.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

God's kingdom has been established on the foundation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a kingdom that never can be moved, Heb. 12 : 28. The rights that were refused Christ on earth by man have been given to Him in resurrection. He has been made Lord and Christ by God, who has crowned Him with glory and honour.

As "Christ" He is the anointed Head of a divine system of grace, the Treasury of divine blessing. As "Lord" He administers those blessings to all who believe on Him and thus come under His rule, to those who by faith now enter the kingdom of God. God's desire is that *all* should be saved and receive blessing; but there is only one Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, who can dispense this blessing. No one can be blessed apart from Him. Moreover, if we do come to the Lord Jesus, He does not give us the blessings to be enjoyed apart from Himself, even if this were possible. In believing on Him as Lord, our souls are brought into God's kingdom, where these blessings exist abidingly. They can only be known through our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, as under His rule.

The sin question has not been publicly settled in the world yet. No one has even attempted it. No one is without sin to first cast a stone, John 8. But God is going to settle it soon. When He does so, He will have to bring judgment on the world system, and on all who have not submitted to the Lord Jesus. This will be when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 1 : 7, 8. The Son of man will then "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and

them which do iniquity," Matt. 13 : 41. The kingdom of God will then be publicly established and all evil removed, and righteousness (or the forgiveness of sins), peace with God, and joy will be known by all who will then be under the reign of the Lord Jesus.

FAITH'S ANTICIPATION.

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ does not wait for that day to know these blessings. The question of his sins has been settled by the death of Jesus and His resurrection. Already, by faith, he is justified, he has peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit, for he has come under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all these blessings are administered; he has entered the kingdom of God *by faith* before the time of its public manifestation. As we have already seen, he knows Christ as the Light of the morning. He awaits the glory of God and boasts in hope of it, assured that very soon the Lord Jesus will come again in glory, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Hab. 2 : 14.

The apostle Paul tells Timothy to remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to his gospel. Or, as the passage may be rendered more correctly, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead." One fears that many who believe that Jesus died for them, have not Him before them as *risen* from among the dead. The blessings of christianity are set forth in a risen Christ. Nothing can disturb the settled conditions of

PEACE WITH GOD

which exist where Christ is, for He is raised from among the dead. Sin, death, the power of Satan and distance from God were all faced and dealt with by our Lord Jesus, when as our Substitute He

stood in our stead and was delivered for our offences. All these matters were for ever settled then. In resurrection He has entered a region where there is no sin, where death cannot come, where the power of Satan is unknown and where the favour of God is experienced. If we believe on Him *as risen*, we come, in our souls by faith, into the light and joy of all that is actually true of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember that these things exist. We have not brought them about, but Christ has. Blessed be His name! We have but to believe and all is ours.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever,” Isa. 32 : 17. These conditions will be known publicly in the “world to come” of which the chapter, in which this verse occurs, speaks; when a King shall reign in righteousness. By faith’s anticipation, we who believe on the Lord Jesus experience them now in our souls. Such conditions belong to the DAY, the glorious light of which is already known to us. The blessings of peace with God and access into His favour are not affected by the ups and downs of our lives or our feelings. Indeed, if we see by faith that these things always exist, it greatly affects our feelings. Faith gives feelings undoubtedly; but our feelings will never produce the joys that faith imparts. Facts exist; faith believes; feelings follow.

THE FAVOUR OF GOD

is also known to the believer through our Lord Jesus Christ. We come into the realisation and enjoyment of this favour by faith. By faith we apprehend that God’s favour is towards man through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the exercise of faith we come into it. We have access by faith into this grace, or favour. By faith we are perfectly assured, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that this favour is

towards us. Oh! that all would come simply by faith into the conscious sense of this favour.

This fact, known to faith, does not in any way depend upon what *we* are. Romans 5 leaves us in no doubt about what *we* were as children of Adam. It tells us that we were sinners, that we were ungodly, that we were enemies and that we were without strength, and thus were unable to make any improvement in the situation. Sinners, ungodly persons, enemies of God, do not merit favour! But through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we see that, notwithstanding all we are as of Adam's sinful race and by our own sinful conduct, God is favourable towards us. We have access into this favour by *faith*.

THE GLORY OF GOD.

We await the glory. No fear of judgment has any place in the hearts of those who know blessings through our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not look forward to judgment with hearts full of misgivings. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Since we have been justified by (or in the power of) Christ's blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

The wrath of God is to fall upon this world soon, this world of which Satan is the god, the world guilty of the death of God's Son, as we may learn in the book of Revelation (see chap. 15 : 1, 7 and 16 : 1). Jesus is our Deliverer from the coming wrath, for He will take us to be with Himself before the wrath comes, as the apostle tells us in 1 Thess. 4 : 16-18. Then after the wrath of God has fallen on this guilty world, Christ will appear and we shall appear with Him in glory, Col. 3 : 4. We rejoice in hope of this glory.

This present world is full of the display of fallen man's glory. In the world to come the Lord Jesus alone shall be exalted. The glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Another blessing is spoken of in Rom. 5 : 10, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." What a wonderful blessing!

RECONCILED TO GOD.

It is wonderful indeed that we, who were enemies in our minds by wicked works, have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son. God needed no reconciliation. Although hymns have stated this, it is quite a mistake and an unscriptural thought; indeed it is a serious error. God is love; He is the source of all good and is infinitely holy, and His holiness will not and can never be other than it is. His righteousness will ever remain what it is, as well as every other attribute and quality of Him who is infinite.

Unsparring judgment and holy wrath, which our enmity against God merited, were endured by Christ on the cross, and His death closed up and removed for ever for God, and for faith, the whole condition of enmity in which we were found. We have been reconciled to God by that precious death. An action of divine love met the situation; for in our need and ruin we were without strength to alter things, even if we had desired to do so.

There was more, however, in the death of God's Son than merely the removal of what was displeasing to God, great as that work was. An excellence was expressed in what Jesus did. In that tremendous work accomplished at the cross by Jesus, there was exhibited what was infinitely pleasurable to God, and in this excellence we now stand reconciled. The believer is thus entirely set apart from his condition of enmity by the death of God's Son, and is retained before God for His pleasure in the excellence expressed in Jesus—God's Son who did all for God's glory and perfect satisfaction and delight.

In Romans 5 we are told that the precious sense of reconciliation is ministered to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Reconciliation is one of the blessings God has in His mind for all men, and which those receive who come under the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation gives us the sense of being suitable to God's presence and that we are before Him for His pleasure. The climax of our blessing, as brought before us in this chapter in Romans, is that we have God Himself as our joy and boast. What an immense favour that we, who were at one time full of enmity to God, should be brought to find our delight in Him, our joy. He has done all that was necessary to bring this about, making Himself known in righteousness, power and love in doing so.

JOY IN GOD.

What an elevating Object for the heart of man. Man must have an Object. Nothing supplies an object sufficiently great except the gospel, which brings God before us as One who meets us in grace and supplies all we need, in His mercy. It thus frees us from all cause of self-occupation and gives us Himself as an ever blessed Object for our hearts. What a deliverance from sin and self! What could be more elevating! The great end in the gospel is that God may be known in the heart of man. Marvellous grace that such a thing is possible, especially when we consider what man is in his sin and ruin.

'How good it is when weaned from all beside,
With God alone the heart is satisfied!'

CHAPTER VIII

Salvation

As there is a certain amount of confusion about the subject of salvation in the minds of some who are the Lord's, it will be necessary to go into the question somewhat fully.

Let us note, to begin with, that we never need to be saved *from God*. He is Himself our Saviour God and has come down to save us. It is true that, being sinners and therefore subject to His holy judgment, we need to be delivered from the wrath to come; but even in this God provides our salvation through our Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul speaks of Jesus as "our deliverer from the coming wrath" as 1 Thess. 1 : 10 reads.

We need salvation from our sins, from the world, from our bodily conditions of weakness and from the wrath to come; that is, from everything *against* us. God is *for* us. The name Jesus was given to our Lord, as we may recall, because as Matt. 1 : 21 says, "he shall save his people from their sins." "This is a faithful saying," the apostle writes in 1 Tim. 1 : 15, "and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

We must not confuse salvation with justification. We rightly say we are now justified. God will not impute sin to the one who believes in Jesus, because, as we have seen, He has justified him freely by His grace on the ground of the blood of Christ. In *God's* account we shall never be more justified than we are now, for He accounts us righteous (that is, cleared, from charge of sin and guilt). We cannot, however, speak in the same way of salvation.

Of course there are, in a general sense, but two classes—the saved and the lost, and we speak perhaps of someone who is saved. And while this

is right, as we may see, yet we must be careful to remember that salvation is spoken of as continuous and also as future, as well as being true characteristically of all believers now. Let us then notice some of the ways in which this important subject is spoken of in Scripture.

We may see in 1 Cor. 1 : 18, that two classes are spoken of: "them that perish" and "us which are saved." *The one class*—"them that perish"—know not the Lord and are on their way to eternal ruin. Already they are lost, but they may be saved. Soon, alas! if they do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that they may be saved, they will perish. In that sense they are "them that perish."

The other class have heard and believed the gospel which is God's power unto salvation and, to use the expression found in Acts 16 : 31, they have each responded to the word "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." We who have done so are therefore characteristically described as those "which are saved." Just as those of the one class have not yet reached their awful end and perished, so it is with "us which are saved"; we have not yet reached our glorious terminus and *fully* proved salvation. We are the saved, as the others are them that perish, but we are going on to full salvation. Hence the apostle says "we are saved by (or in) hope," Rom. 8 : 24, 25. That does not mean that we hope we are saved. Not at all. There is no uncertainty about the matter. Salvation, *in its entirety*, is necessarily a hope since it is future and embraces complete and actual deliverance from sin and infirmities, and involves our bodies of humiliation being transformed into bodies of glory like unto Christ's glorious body. Thank God, it is a sure and certain hope!

How then do we experience salvation at the *present* time? The reply to the Philippian jailor

shews very clearly that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is the first essential. Anyone who truly believes on the Lord Jesus Christ—note the word LORD—proves present salvation from the world. He comes under a new rule; the rule, and thus the protection, of One who has loved him and died for him and is now risen and glorified. The Light of the morning has shone into his soul and, as governed by the light of the coming day, he is delivered from the world and its darkness. He believes on One who was refused here and died on the cross, but who is made Lord in resurrection.

We must confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord, that is, tell others we are His, if we are to get the joy and gain of present salvation (see chapter 3). We shall soon experience salvation from the world and unholy company if we make a good confession, if we tell others that we belong to the Lord and we wish to do His will. They will not want us!

What protection is experienced under the rule of the Lord Jesus! First, we believe on Him, then we confess we are His, then also we seek to obey Him. Coming under His rule we get salvation from our self-will and the rule of the world. This subject will come before us in more detail in a later chapter. It may suffice here to say that coming under the rule of the Lord Jesus we prove the power of the kingdom of God.

A remarkable type of present salvation is seen in the history of the Children of Israel. They had been in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God had promised to bring them into the land of which He had spoken to Abraham. In order for this to be accomplished, God not only redeemed them to Himself by the blood of the Passover lamb and thus sheltered them from the judgment that fell on the land of Egypt, but also delivered them from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. We shall remember

how God brought them out of Egypt by their leader, Moses. God selected the route that led them to the banks of the Red Sea. It seemed almost as if Pharaoh would have overtaken them; their way appeared closed, for the sea lay in front of them.

At the direction of God, however, Moses held up his rod over the sea, which thereupon miraculously divided. We are told that it was "by faith" the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. Similarly it is by faith that we recognise that Jesus is risen from the dead, and own Him as our Lord. This is the first step. We stand still, so to speak, and see the salvation of the Lord, and then "go forward" to a new position in faith. We take a spiritual journey, as Israel took a literal one. In order to realise fully the benefit of this new position under the Lord, we must confess Jesus as Lord.

Romans 5 : 10 tells us that "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by (or in the power of) his life." Hebrews 7 : 25 confirms this fact to us. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is in this connection we prove the present service of the Lord Jesus as our High Priest. He proved His love by dying for us on the cross, but He still proves His love to us in interceding for us while He is in heaven. He ever lives to make intercession for us; thus He is able to save us to the uttermost, that is, completely. Many a temptation or spiritual danger would prove too much for us, did not Christ intercede for us, as He did for Peter when he was tempted. So that, while Peter was allowed to deny the Lord so grievously, his faith did not fail and very soon he was repentant, weeping bitterly, and was afterwards fully restored through the Lord's dealing with him. In a similar

way the Lord now deals with us, so that we are practically saved with a continuous salvation.

Then, too, the Lord Jesus supports us by His grace, so that we are not overcome and unduly depressed by our infirmities. He has been here in this scene of sorrow, weakness and death, and thoroughly understands all our bodily infirmities; for when here, as Scripture says, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," Matt. 8 : 17. The Lord, as Man here, had no germ of disease or of death in His holy body; not even in death did He see corruption, but He took up in His spirit, and entered into, the feelings of *our* infirmities. Hence He can sympathise with us and support us now in all we pass through.

As we have seen, His place in heaven as a glorified Man sets forth our place of perfect acceptance before God. The Lord exercises His priestly grace to maintain us here in accord with our place of acceptance before God.

We read in Romans 13 : 11 that "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." This verse speaks of *full* salvation. Each day draws us nearer and nearer to the DAY, when the Lord Jesus shall reign here. The Light of the morning has already shone into our hearts, but soon we shall reach the DAY. This being so we would rightly desire, and are in this passage exhorted to "cast off the works of darkness, and . . . put on the armour of light." Thus, practically, we shall be saved from the elements of darkness which are in the world. Daily we draw nearer to full salvation, and daily we should be saved more practically from everything which is against us. The epistle to the Philippians (chap. 3 : 20, 21) also speaks of this full salvation. "We await the Lord Jesus Christ (as) Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the

working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself." This will be the last act of His saving power. Hence 1 Thess. 1 : 10 reads "to await his Son from the heavens, whom he raised from among the dead, Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath."

The wrath of God will soon fall on this world system, as we may learn from the book of Revelation (chap. 16, etc.), but being now justified by the blood of Christ we *shall* be saved from wrath through Him, as Romans 5 : 9 says. The Lord will do this by coming Himself from heaven and taking us to be with Him before the wrath comes, as is so simply explained in the scriptures we have referred to, as also in 1 Thess. 4 : 16-18. Well may we sing :—

' O what a Saviour is Jesus the Lord!
Well may His name by His saints be
adored!'

There are two passages of Scripture that speak of salvation as ours now in an absolute way. One is found in the epistle to the Ephesians (chap. 2 : 8). "By grace are ye saved through faith." Here, as the context shows, believers are viewed as already quickened by God, that is, made to live spiritually, and raised up and seated in heavenly places in Christ. Indeed we are viewed anticipatively as if the Lord had already come, and we were already with Christ in heaven, where we shall soon be actually. As we are *not actually* there, it is said that we are seated in heavenly places *in Him* (not yet with Him). Hence though grace is the cause of this marvellous salvation, even from earth and all that marks us here, it is *through faith*. The blessing is not *actually* ours yet; but it is as true for faith as if it were. We *are* saved by grace through faith. Viewed in this anticipative way how truly it can be said, "Ye *are* saved." Similarly in 2 Tim. 1 : 9 we read "Who

hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling," etc. Here again we see that the passage speaks of what is true according to divine purpose and grace. There can be no question of measure, or of present, continuous or future salvation if we thus speak. God *hath* saved us. His work is viewed as complete according to His own purpose and grace.

How far any one of us has, or has not, answered to His purpose, is another matter. The way God's work is viewed in these two passages should have a very great practical effect upon us, delivering us from all that marks us here as still actually on earth and once morally dead in trespasses and sins.

What a mercy indeed, to be among "the saved." Already we have believed on the Lord Jesus, and confessed His name and proved His protecting rule and His Supporting grace, and have the gain of His intercession for us. We await our full salvation when we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son, in the conditions of God's purpose. Soon the Lord Himself will come and, with our bodies changed in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air to be for ever with Him. He has said: "Surely I come quickly." We may well say "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

CHAPTER IX

Acceptance

To understand rightly the measure of acceptance in which the believer stands before God, we must bear in mind that the present place of Christ as Man glorified at the right hand of God gives character to everything in christianity, and in particular sets forth God's thought of blessing for men. Those who believe are entitled to know that Christ's place is their place, for as Scripture says, He has "entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," Heb. 9 : 24.

Christ, as the Antitype of the burnt offering, glorified God as to the stupendous question of sin when He offered Himself to God an offering and a sacrifice "for a sweet smelling savour." His death is thus the basis of our acceptance. At the cross He glorified God, and in answer God has glorified Him as Man; and since He did that great work on our account (for He gave Himself for us and stood, as it were, in our place there) His place before God is now ours. The Israelite who offered a burnt offering was accepted in all its excellence (see Lev. 1 : 4). So the believer today is accepted in all the excellence that *God* sees in the perfect work of Christ, for it ever remains before Him in its preciousness.

THE FIRSTFRUITS.

Christ is not in death now, we well know, though the sweet savour of His sacrifice ever remains. Hence in the types we find that the firstfruits, which had to be offered on the "morrow after the sabbath," that is on the first day of the week, give us a further thought about our acceptance before God. Will the reader kindly turn to Leviticus 23 and read verses

9-13. He will see there that when the Israelite had come into the promised land and reaped his harvest, he had to bring the sheaf of the firstfruits to God. With this wave sheaf he had to offer a burnt offering and a meat offering. The meat offering typified the perfect *life* of Jesus here in manhood; there was no blood in this offering. The burnt offering, as we have seen, set forth the perfect *death of Christ when He offered Himself to God* and glorified Him as to the whole question of sin. Hence when Christ rose again from the dead He carried over, as we may say, into resurrection all the excellence of His perfect life and the sweet savour of His death to God's glory. Therefore we read that the wave sheaf of the firstfruits was accepted on behalf of the offerer; he was accepted in it.

CHRIST A GLORIFIED MAN IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Applying this type to ourselves, how wonderfully it sets forth the perfect acceptance of the believer. Christ on the cross took our place; it was there He glorified God as made sin for us. Now in resurrection and as glorified He takes a place as Man for us, having been given that place by God in answer to His wonderful work on the cross. We are accepted in Him, as Man before God. He was made sin for us, and we become God's righteousness in Him. Jesus, as Man in the presence of God, sets forth our place before God.

In our previous chapter we saw that we, as believers, have access by faith into the favour of God; we may enter His presence with a sense of favour resting upon us. What then is the measure of this favour? What is the measure of our acceptance before God? To learn this we must turn to an epistle that takes us far beyond the teaching of the epistle to the Romans, valuable as is that teaching, which came before us in our earlier chapter. It is

in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians that the full thought of our acceptance is brought before us.

GOD'S PURPOSE OF LOVE.

In the opening verses of that epistle, the truth is not presented from the standpoint of our appreciation of it, or of our entrance into things by faith, but from the standpoint of what God has done according to His own purposes of eternal love, quite apart from us, save that we are the happy recipients of the blessing and the subjects of that purpose. In this epistle we have God's purpose brought before us; we have *His* thoughts and what He has done, and will yet do, according to His own good pleasure.

The epistle to the Romans, generally speaking, tells us how God has perfectly met our need in the exercise of His grace and mercy. It is good at times, however, to leave *our* side of things and the exercises involved in learning how God has thus met our need; learning, too, the blessings of His kingdom—righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; and to consider restfully what *God* has done for His own pleasure, and told us of His own thoughts and His purposes of love.

It is remarkable that the first part of the teaching of these great things is brought before us in the form of a doxology. An outburst of praise is the chosen manner by which the Holy Spirit would teach us truth of such elevation and magnitude. By so doing, He shows us very simply that what He tells us was enjoyed by the one who wrote the epistle, and we may therefore reasonably assume that we are to enjoy these blessings also.

Many are the blessings spoken of in the epistle to the Ephesians; it must suffice here to consider only the subject immediately before us, namely our perfect acceptance before God.

THE GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE.

It will be noticed that when it is stated that we have redemption through Christ's blood, and the forgiveness of sins, it is said to be according to the *riches* of God's grace. God has taken up His rights in mercy through redemption, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, and His actions in forgiving us are expressive of the riches of His grace; on our part, no need can be too great to be met, on God's part, by the rich supplies of His grace.

When, however, the question of our acceptance is spoken of, we are told that the *glory* of God's grace is expressed therein. The glory of anything implies that it is expressed in its fulness. Hence, the glory of God's grace is the full expression of that grace, irrespective of any need it may meet. What, then, will God do in order to express His grace fully, and show forth what grace is in itself? What could He do so that His grace should be told out in all its magnitude? To accept us in His Beloved was the only thing that could do this. There could not be a greater expression of grace. God has taken us into favour in the Beloved, for that is what "accepted" means.

As we have seen, the burnt offering typified acceptance on the basis of the death of Christ; the wave sheaf of the firstfruits set forth Christ as risen from the dead, carrying over all the excellence of His life as Man here, as well as the perfect savour of His death, into the new place He took as risen; but

"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED"

conveys a more intimate idea than excellence, however wonderful that excellence is. The very expression "Beloved" speaks of an acceptance in the *nearness of love*. Who can tell what is conveyed in that word Beloved? Who can say what is

the measure of the love or what the nearness of the Beloved? If we can define these we can measure the acceptance we have before God as accepted in the Beloved. It is beyond measure, save that the Beloved is the measure. The full expression of God's grace, the "glory" of it, is told forth in this act of unequalled favour. Such an act on God's part is to the praise of His grace in all its own excellency; it sets forth the expression of grace in its fulness.

Oh! that our hearts might let the glorious light of this purpose of divine love shine into them. God has blessed us in this manner because He has been pleased to do so; it is the outcome of His own love. What ease in the presence of God our Father the enjoyment of such acceptance would give, what confidence! It would rid our hearts of every thought of self and fill them with a sense of the excellence of Christ and the greatness of the love that has so blessed us.

SELF-OCCUPATION.

Much of our self-occupation is because we are not in the free, happy enjoyment of this blessed acceptance in Another. Why think of self at all as we come before God, when our place before Him can only be because of what Christ Himself is? We could have no place at all in His presence but for what Christ has done and is. Our place and acceptance there are the fruit of God's love, which blesses us because it wishes to do so, and can only be measured by what Christ Himself is and this is told us in the sweet word "Beloved."

The greater our appreciation of Christ, the greater will be our sense of what the word Beloved means, and the greater our *conscious* sense of acceptance. In God's account all believers are equally accepted before Him, and the measure is infinite, for it is Christ. We, however, grow in our appreciation of this acceptance. That is why there were different

kinds or degrees of burnt offerings, such as a bullock, a lamb or turtle-doves or young pigeons; the largeness or smallness of the offering sets forth typically the measure of the apprehension of the one who offered. It would, indeed, be a poor thing if our appreciation of Christ were not to grow; and the more it grows the greater will be our sense of His preciousness to God, and, therefore, of our acceptance before Him.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

A sense of perfect acceptance before God would shut out from the thoughts any idea of self-improvement. Why attempt such an impossible task when our acceptance depends entirely upon what Christ Himself is? Surely we should be concerned that we should grow more like Him, that we should accept more really the teaching of His death, that we should give more place to the Holy Spirit's control; but these exercises suppose that we do not expect from the flesh any good thing, therefore they exclude all thoughts of self-improvement. Before Christ took His place in heaven as a glorified Man, fallen man had been tested and proved irremediably bad, and the cross expressed God's judgment of man of Adam's stock; the death of Christ removing in God's account all that we were as born of that sinful race. This subject may come before us later. It will suffice here to say that an appreciation of the perfect acceptance of the believer in Christ the glorified Man, the Beloved, would for ever remove from the mind all thoughts of self-improvement. The knowledge that we are accepted would increase the desire to be found acceptable to God in conduct.

May reader and writer alike accept more simply the place that God's love has given in its activity of grace, and enjoy the sweetness of being consciously "accepted in the beloved."

CHAPTER X

Deliverance from the Power of Sin

IN the previous chapters we have considered subjects relating to blessings which are ours because of what God has done *for* us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, on the ground of His death, resurrection and glorification at His right hand in heaven. In other words they are *objective* in character—blessings bestowed by the grace and sovereign love of God. These blessings are received by faith.

It is because of what God has done for us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are now the happy recipients of blessings that await a future day for their public manifestation. The "Light of the morning," Christ, is already known to our hearts, and faith and hope make present to us what is actually future. We are not to have by faith only the light of these things which belong to the world to come, but, through God's work *in* us and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to enjoy them consciously.

Another side of truth, therefore, is presented in Scripture, namely, the work of God *in* us and the experience and blessings flowing therefrom. In chapter 4 we glanced briefly at the beginning of this side of things, when considering the subject of growth, and touched on the fact of being born again. New birth is the beginning of God's work *in* us. This line of truth we may rightly speak of as *subjective*.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN.

One of the great facts, that give to the present time its distinctive character, is the presence on earth of the Holy Spirit of God. He has not become incarnate, but, nevertheless, is here as really as the

Lord Jesus was when He trod the streets of Galilee or Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church, or assembly, which is composed of all those who have received the Holy Spirit after having believed on a glorified Christ. The whole body of believers on earth "are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit".

One of the first effects of the Holy Spirit being given to us is that we are made conscious of the love of God. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit had worked *in* us before He had been given to us. He it was who made us feel our sins. He led us to repent Godwards. Then, as Ephesians 1 : 13 says, "After that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: . . . ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." In Romans 5 : 5 we read, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

Following this statement in Romans 5, certain spiritual experiences are brought before us in chapters 6 to 8—experiences consequent upon God's work *in* us, although the Holy Spirit Himself is not again mentioned until chapter 8. Up to chapter 5 the prominent theme is how God has dealt with what we have *done*, our sins. From chapter 5 : 12 to chapter 8 inclusive, what we *are* is considered, and our new position here as having been baptised to Christ's death, as well as the results that flow from our having the Holy Spirit. In chapter 8, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as our power of life and as giving character to our state as believers.

WHAT WE ARE BY NATURE.

It will be appreciated that to deal with what we are by nature is more far-reaching than merely to deal with what we have done, great as that is; just as to change the character of a tree is a greater matter than merely to pick off its fruits. If a

gardener wishes to make a crab apple tree produce Cox's orange or any other selected apple, he must graft a vital part of the new apple tree into the old stock. In other words, a new principle of life has to be introduced. The old will only produce crab apples; only the new as it grows will produce the desired new fruit. It is similar (though not quite the same) with ourselves spiritually. What we are as born of Adam's stock will only produce sins—the undesirable fruits of sinful flesh. For, however our sins may clothe themselves with respectable outward expression, they are still sins.

When we are born again we have new desires, and when we receive the Holy Spirit He becomes power in us to enable us to carry out our new spiritual inclinations. Hence in contrast to the works of the flesh, we read of the fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, peace, etc. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and, however educated or polished, can only produce the works of the flesh.

THE WORLD SYSTEM.

The enemy of our souls was not slow to help fallen man to build up a world in which his fleshly desires could find gratification. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and his descendants endeavoured to make themselves as happy as they could be away from God. Other features appeared in the world after the flood, such as combines, empire building and idolatry. A huge system was thus developed in which man sought happiness away from God, and the world, as we know it, took shape. Satan is its god, sin its ruling principle (that is, lawlessness in regard to God), and all that is of the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father. The whole world lieth in the wicked one.

It is in this way that sin is spoken of in Romans 6.

It is the ruling principle of the world system and of man who lives in it. In saying this, it is not implied that all that is the world is either criminal, immoral or the like. Sin is not limited to crime, immorality or offences against man.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SIN.

Sin is lawlessness—lawlessness in respect of God, which, of course, includes wrongs done to man. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Note, dear reader, "*we have turned every one to his own way,*" Isa. 53 : 6.

One of the world's principles is, 'Every man has a right to do as he likes provided he does not infringe the rights of others.' This principle would be recognised as a *right* one in the world. In the sight of God it is a wholly wrong principle. It leaves out God altogether. Has God no rights? Man as a creature is primarily responsible to God. What does *God* like? What is *His* will? To live without *considering the rights of God, is to live in sin, and a life thus characterised is a sinful life.*

Our fallen nature is dominated by this principle of lawlessness, or sin. We naturally love to do our own will and turn "every one to his own way." The whole system of the world is also ruled by sin. Moreover, Satan, the god of the world, holds men in bondage in the slavery of sin by gratifying their desires, which are the fruit of this evil principle of sin, through the cleverly constructed world system.

Before we (who now believe on and love the Lord Jesus) were reached by grace, before we were converted, we were all in this position and walked according to the course of this world. If we were sheltered by being brought up in a christian household under the nurture and admonition of the Lord, even then our sinful desires often turned to something of

the world for self-gratification ; for, however shielded we were, we were *by nature* just the same as all other human beings, namely, *sinful*.

GOD'S WORK IN US.

In His infinite mercy, God, by His Spirit, has worked *in us*. He has given us to see ourselves as we really are—sinners ; He has led us to recognise that *He has rights* and, in *His* goodness, has led us to repent and believe the gospel. These matters we have already considered. It is necessary once more to refer to them in order to understand rightly the bearing of Romans 6, 7 and 8.

As we have noticed, in Romans 6 the principle of sin is looked at as a power ruling us, just as a slave owner had power over his slaves. Sin rules men and holds them in bondage. Satan held us thus through our sinful desires which found gratification in his world system.

Since God has worked in us, giving us new desires, we *feel* the *bondage* of this rule of sin, by means of the world. Believing on the Lord Jesus and owning Him as our Lord, we desire to please Him and do God's will.

FREEDOM FROM SIN.

The question now arises—How can we get our freedom from this powerful rule of sin which hitherto ruled us through the world system? We are slaves by nature ; what can bring us liberty?

It is here that the meaning of our baptism has such force. We have been baptised to Christ's death. Death is to be our door to liberty.

The Lord Jesus was here in this world once, moving among men in the midst of sin, though absolutely sinless Himself. On the cross He was made sin for us. He then died and left all the scenes of sin, laying down the life of flesh and blood in

which He was made sin. He died *unto* sin. Let us carefully note this remarkable expression and ask the Lord to help us to understand its meaning.

It is not only that Christ died as a sacrifice *for* sin; this He did, surely, but He also died *unto* sin. By death He passed out of the world, the region where sin rules, and where our sinful natures found and would still find their gratification. It must have sorely pained the Lord to be in the presence of sin and to see its effects on every hand. This was one of the sorrows of the Man of sorrows. When He died, however, He left all this, He died *unto* it. He is now in a region where there is no sin, and He lives to God.

DEATH THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE.

Just as the Lord Jesus has literally left this world, the region where sin rules, so the believer is entitled to reckon himself to have also died *unto* sin. Since Jesus died for us, we may regard His death as our own. This is the meaning of baptism. We have been baptised *unto* Christ's death. In obeying from our hearts the *form of teaching delivered unto us* (or, into which we were instructed, see New Trans. Romans 6 : 17), we shall experience freedom from the power of sin. The teaching refers to the meaning of Christ's death. In baptism we *are* identified with Christ in the likeness of His death and we *shall be* of His resurrection. We are buried with Him by baptism *unto* death, and as Christ has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father so we also should walk in newness of life, Rom. 6 : 1-6.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.

The figure of baptism in this passage does *not* refer to resurrection. We are planted together in the likeness of Christ's *death* and we *shall be* of His

resurrection. We are not said to be risen with Christ here. Christ has been raised; yet since Christ has been raised, we walk in newness of life; that is to say, our path here where Jesus died is an entirely new one, entirely new in character. We *shall be* of His resurrection; we are *now* to walk in newness of life. In our minds and hearts we leave, by death, the world where sin rules, we escape from the slavery of sin by way of death. As Job said: "The servant is free from his master" in death, Job 3 : 19. In whatever a man may have lived, he leaves it when he dies. He may have been a member of the most distinguished Society or Club, or of the most undesirable association; but if he dies he ceases to be a member of any of these. Supposing he had been a Freemason or a life member of any other such fellowship, death sets him free. So in regard of sin the believer may *reckon* himself dead. If he does as exhorted to do in Romans 6, he will experience freedom. The captive is freed!

Although we do not actually die, Christ has died, and we are entitled to regard, or consider, His death as ours; our minds may take up this attitude. Just as the Israelites, by crossing the Red Sea, escaped from the slavery they had experienced in Egypt, so the believer escapes from the rule of sin and the world through accepting Christ's death as his own. Baptism is the figure of this way of freedom.

We obey from the *heart* the form of the doctrine, or teaching, which was delivered to us, or, as the verse might read, "into which ye were instructed." We move intelligently and affectionately after Christ, and say, as it were, "If Christ died and left the world by death, we shall accept His death as *our* way out from this world of sin, we shall reckon ourselves also to have died." The attitude of our minds and hearts shall be as if it were actually so

with us. Just as Ittai said to David, when he was driven out from his kingdom by his son Absalom, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be," 2 Sam. 15 : 21.

YIELDING.

There are three important words in Romans 6. Let us read the chapter through once again. Some things we are said to know; then we are exhorted to reckon certain things as true; thirdly, we are told to yield ourselves to God. Notice—know, reckon, yield.

We know that Christ has died and risen again; He died unto sin and now lives to God. We are also to know that "our old man" has been crucified with Him—that is, our state as governed by the evil principle of sin. Then, since we know these things which are facts, we are entitled to reckon some other things as true. In other words, we are to consider them also to be facts. Our minds are to take up the attitude that we also have died unto sin, and are now alive to God in Christ Jesus. Then as a practical consequence we are privileged to yield ourselves to God as alive from among the dead.

First, facts are stated which we are to know; then our minds are to take up an attitude in correspondence with the facts, we reckon; and then practically we may yield ourselves to God in keeping with our spiritual attitude of mind. It is often on the practical line we are weak.

OUR NEW OBJECT IN LIFE.

We were bondmen to sin once; now, as Romans 6 says, "being made free from sin, and become servants (or bondmen) to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." It is in this

new service of love to God that we walk in newness of life. It is a slavery of love.

We are not left to live without objects and occupations in life. Indeed, no! When in the world, we had unholy objects and occupations of our own evil selection, "doing what the flesh and the thought willed to do." Now we have an infinitely holy Object, God Himself, and our occupation is to be doing His will as bondmen in a service of love. Instead of the rule of sin in the world, which meant slavery, we are under the rule of the Lord, the reign of grace, which is liberty. God Himself is our ever blessed Object, the Lord Jesus our Leader and Protector, His people are our companions and His interests our happy occupation. This, indeed, is newness of life. The present fruit is holiness, and the path leads to the present and practical enjoyment of eternal life, the gift of God!

When the Sun of righteousness shall arise and the DAY come, eternal life will be enjoyed in a public way on earth, the very circumstances of earth shall be changed. Today, those who know Christ are already in the light of that coming day and are called to walk in newness of life, taking a path through the world which has become a wilderness to them—a path that leads on to the land of promise, the purpose of God for us, our inheritance, eternal life.

CHAPTER XI

Newness of Spirit

THE exhortations in the New Testament are not given as commands to control a contrary nature, but directions to guide, or warn, those who desire to do God's will.

We are not only to know the blessings that are secured to us through our Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, and which are set forth in the place He has now taken for us as a glorified Man in heaven; but we are to be for God's pleasure here. Through God's work *in* us, we have new desires which find their joy in having God Himself as our infinitely blessed Object, and which find delight in God's law, in contrast to the law of sin which governs the world; this evil principle or "law" of sin, however, still exists in us, alas!

Through the work of God in us, we find pleasure in doing God's will, and consequently we would seek as companions those who fear His name. This is a life of liberty and, as we enjoy it, we are glad of directions to guide us in our path which shines more and more unto the perfect day. The exhortations in the New Testament give us this guidance.

However, there is a danger into which we may easily fall, if we do not rightly know the gospel. We rightly feel that we ought to do God's will, but, instead of learning God's way of securing His pleasure in us, we may seek in our own strength and by our own powers of resolve and effort, to walk in a path that can only be trodden in the power of the Holy Spirit and as we are supported by Christ Himself. If we attempt to do so, the more devoted we are the more legal shall we become; and, instead of a life of liberty being ours, one of bondage and dis-

appointment will be our experience. It is for this reason that the teaching of Romans 7 : 1-6, and the experiences recorded in the remaining verses of that chapter, have been given to us. We are not to be slaves serving in "hard bondage," but slaves—bondmen to God—in the bonds of love, serving in "newness of spirit."

THE RESULT OF A SELF-IMPOSED LAW.

Although we, as gentiles, were never under the law of Moses, yet many of us virtually place ourselves (if not actually under law) under what is possibly more testing, namely, the demands of *what we ought to be as christians*. Some, indeed, do place themselves under the actual law—the ten commandments—repeating frequently, and with deep sincerity, "Incline our hearts to keep this law." Now both these attitudes imply the principle of *law*, that is, of demand. Many who would not put themselves on such a ground for their justification, place themselves on this footing as a "rule of life." The result is, the more sincere they are, the more they are in bondage, and consequently have a sense of condemnation, feeling that they are not what they should be. If we are on such a ground we are not under grace, but under law (see in contrast Romans 6 : 14).

In His mercy, God often uses this mistake of sincere zeal to teach us the irremediable badness of the flesh; and when the gospel is really understood, with intense relief we thankfully accept God's way of deliverance.

TO WHOM DOES THE LAW APPLY?

In the first part of Romans 7 (verses 1-6) we learn that the law has its application to a man so long as he is alive. It is meaningless to tell a dead man not to steal or kill. Nor can death, the sentence of the law, be executed upon a man who has already

died. A murderer cannot suffer capital punishment if he die before the day of execution.

Now the believer has become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that is by Christ having died. We are entitled to take up Christ's death as our own, for God regards it thus. Since this is the case the law would have ceased to apply to us, or have any dominion over us, had we been Jews, for it only applies to those alive in the flesh. As gentiles we were never under the law of Moses, yet we may virtually place ourselves under a law of what we ought to do, or be, as christians. If we do this the same principle and way of deliverance applies to us.

In Romans 7 : 5, we read "When we were in the flesh." Clearly this does not mean actually alive in our bodies. Both the apostle and those to whom he wrote were alive. "Flesh" means the state of man as born of Adam's race, and since we are all sinners it is sometimes called sinful flesh. "Flesh" denotes the state of Adam's race; "sin" governs that state. The apostle, however, speaks of that state as now past, and says "when we were in the flesh."

Since we may regard Christ's death as our own, we are entitled to view ourselves as having died in the state that is described as "flesh." Now it was to men in that state of flesh that the law applied. The law was like a plumb-line that showed the irregularity of a crooked wall. As we read in Galatians 3 : 19 the law "was added because of transgressions," and made sin appear "exceeding sinful," Rom. 7 : 13.

If we have taken the exhortations of the New Testament as mere commands, which we must try and obey in our own strength, or have set before our hearts the life of Christ as that which we ought to follow, and endeavour to do so in our own power, we shall find out our utter badness by our sad

failures. Yet, as we have already noted, God may over-rule our mistaken ideas for our good, teaching us thereby the irremediably bad character of the flesh. This is one of the experiences given in the latter part of Romans 7.

“ I MYSELF ” AND “ SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME. ”

The writer of Romans 7 tells us that his first conclusion, as he tried to do what he knew was right and failed, was that he was carnal (or fleshy), sold under sin. That is, he identifies himself with his inability to do right and his constant inclination to do evil. His groan therefore is “ I am carnal,” that is, fleshy. He feels condemned. He learns that in himself, that is, in his flesh, good does not dwell. His saying, however, “ that is, in my flesh ” implies that he realises that there is “ something ” else in him *not* the flesh ; he finds something that delights in what is of God.

His second conclusion, therefore, is that since *he* is grieved by his evil practice, and that *he really wishes* to do what is good (though he feels his inability to do it) it cannot be himself—his true self—that acts thus, but sin that dwells in him, v. 17. He now identifies himself with his *right* desires. These proceed from his true “ I.” Hence he says “ I delight in the law of God after the inward man ” and “ with the mind I myself serve the law of God,” v. 22 and 25.

It is a moment of great importance when we distinguish these two contrary elements in us ; but it is still more so when we *identify ourselves with the work of God in us*. This is “ I myself.” The other is not “ I myself ” but “ sin that dwelleth in me,” v. 17. What a lesson to learn, however, that “ in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing,” v. 18.

The battle is not over yet, however. Another

cry, a cry of anguish, is now heard: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The figure is taken from a punishment inflicted upon Roman soldiers. A dead body—a corpse—was tied to the offender. The apostle likens "sin" in him to this corpse; "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is at this point that we are prepared to learn how deliverance comes to us. We turn away from self, and, looking outward, say Who shall deliver me!

THE GROUND OF OUR DELIVERANCE.

What a relief it is to learn that what we have arrived at as the result of our evil practice, or our efforts to do good, and our failure and sad disappointment, God proved long ago and plainly showed at the cross of Christ. Through God's work in us and our experiences, we have been led to condemn sin which dwelleth in us. At the cross, God condemned sin.

Had we heard and believed the gospel in its fulness, that God not only dealt with our sins (what we had done) but also with sin (that evil principle that governs the flesh—what we *are* by nature) we would not have expected any good from the flesh but most of us have to learn things by experience.

What a mercy it is that God has taken the whole matter in hand; He has not only dealt with our sins but "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, . . . condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8 : 3. Jesus, our blessed Substitute, suffered on the cross when He was made sin for us. We may, therefore, thankfully turn away from what we are as in the flesh and cease all efforts to make ourselves any better, or rather, to make "it"—sin in the flesh—better; for, as we have seen, "it" is no longer I, "but sin that dwelleth in me." We condemn what God has condemned.

THE POWER FOR DELIVERANCE.

In addition to condemning what we are as in flesh, God has given us, in the Holy Spirit, an entirely new power for life. The greatness of this gift cannot be over-estimated. It is in our acceptance of what God has done at the cross, and in our practical recognition of the Holy Spirit (that is, in our giving place to Him as our only Power) that deliverance is known from the power of the flesh, and consequently from all legal efforts to improve the flesh—what we are by nature.

How different is serving God in liberty in the power of the Spirit, from serving, or endeavouring to serve Him in bondage; always feeling condemned because we feel we are not what we ought to be, trying again, and failing again, till we are almost in despair.

It may be enquired, however, Do we not fail? Do we not feel how poor our service is? Indeed we do; but when we fail, we are not to be self-occupied, or in a morbid or unhealthy manner, continually thinking of our failure. Such an attitude of mind really overlooks what God has done at the cross, and may lead to bondage, or even a subtle form of pride. Why not *judge* ourselves for allowing what both God and we ourselves have condemned, and then turn from it with thankfulness, since "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," and since God has condemned it in our blessed Substitute, Jesus. What we have allowed, and now condemn, was long ago condemned at the cross.

By self-judgment and confession we sever ourselves morally from our failure. Our very failure may be used to give us a greater sense of the evil that is in the flesh, and an increasing and deeper appreciation of Christ.

THE WAY OF LIBERTY.

How thankfully we turn afresh to Him, who is set before us as our Pattern and our Guide, and an Object for our hearts. There is power in being occupied with good. Through God's work in us, we desire to do His will. Jesus did it perfectly. We may turn to Scripture and learn in detail God's direction for our path; for the exhortations in Scripture show us what that will is, and warn us of dangers, the Holy Spirit giving us the necessary power to carry out all in "newness of spirit."

There is no bondage or legality in such a path. The presence of the Spirit brings liberty. We have an ever blessed portion for our hearts in God; we have a perfect example for our path in Christ, who also supports us in it; we have power in the Spirit; we have directions for our path in Scripture. God has worked in us giving us holy desires which are really ours; all else in us morally has been condemned at the cross. The "flesh" will never serve aught else but the "law of sin"; but "with the mind I myself serve the law of God." We may serve in newness of spirit, in liberty, gratifying our holy desires. May we do so, watching lest at any time we allow what we have condemned.

CHAPTER XII

Power and Victory

FROM what is told us in Romans 8, it is evident that the path of the christian is not to be one of moral weakness and defeat, but of power and victory. Through Him who loves us, we are "more than conquerors." Outwardly our position may truly be one of weakness and defeat; such was Jesus' path here. "Accounted as sheep for the slaughter" speaks of weakness indeed; but it is just in such circumstances that it is said, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

What, then, is it that enables the believer to tread such a path of victory in the midst of the most contradictory and trying circumstances?

The scope of the teaching comprised in Romans 8 is remarkable. Through it we may learn that: (1) *there is "no condemnation" for those in Christ Jesus*; (2) in the Holy Spirit we have abundant power for our pathway here; (3) we are now the children of God; (4) complete salvation, of which we now have the certain hope, will soon be ours; (5) while in our present state of infirmity the Holy Spirit intercedes for us; (6) we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son in accordance with God's purposes; (7) Christ now intercedes for us in heaven; (8) nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As far as our path of responsibility here is concerned, what more could we desire or need? Let us think over these wonderful blessings and provisions of grace. If we enjoy them and avail ourselves of what grace has provided, we shall indeed experience "a morning without clouds."

The first thing stated is that the believer is in a position to which **NO CONDEMNATION**

can possibly attach. This is not only a statement of truth, a fact as in God's sight, but is a conclusion reached by the writer of the epistle himself, through the exercises related in the previous chapter (7). Hence the expression, "There is *therefore* now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Were we viewed as "in Adam," condemnation would be our portion. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men." The effect of the one man's offence was that condemnation was towards all, Rom. 5:12 and 18. God has, however, brought in another Man, Jesus Christ, and His act of favour, by that "one man," is as wide in its bearing as was the effect of Adam's transgression. Those who through grace are linked with the Man that God has brought in, are cleared of all condemnation.

In the beginning of chapter 8 we see how this has been brought about. In sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, God condemned sin in the flesh. Mercifully, it was not condemned in us personally, or we should have all been eternally lost. "Sin in the flesh" was condemned, but, thank God, it was condemned in His own Son, as our Substitute on the cross. What an expression of love this was! What a debt we owe to Him!

Now so long as in our minds or spiritual outlook, we are identified with what we were as "in the flesh," that is, of Adam's sinful order, we shall, even though believers, be necessarily under a sense of condemnation. When, however, we come to the judgment of ourselves that God has expressed and executed at the cross in our blessed Substitute, we are free to turn away from ourselves as "in flesh," knowing that God has condemned what we were.

Further, as now condemning it ourselves and learning that our true self, the new "I" of which we spoke in our previous chapter—"I myself"—is not sinful flesh, but what we are by God's work in us, we are entitled to view ourselves as "in Christ Jesus."

It is, however, in the power of the Holy Spirit that this deliverance from a sense of condemnation is practically effected. Hence the writer of the epistle adds, "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death." It will be noticed that in the first fifteen verses of our chapter, the Holy Spirit is not exactly spoken of personally (though He is, of course, a divine Person) but is presented in certain characters, and also as dwelling in us; as for example, in the verse just quoted. Again, in verse 9, "God's Spirit"; in verse 11, "The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus"; and in verse 15, "a spirit of adoption" are all expressions descriptive of the Spirit rather than personal references to Him. Hence, as dwelling in us the Spirit gives character to our state, and we are said to be

"NOT IN FLESH BUT IN SPIRIT."

Our new position is that we are "in Christ Jesus," and corresponding with the new position we have a new state, which Scripture speaks of as "in Spirit." "In Adam" and "in flesh" go together; so also "in Christ Jesus" and "in Spirit" go together. In whatever form "flesh" may present itself, no help can come from it; the believer's only power is in the Spirit.

A practical question now arises, In which direction are we going to turn? Are we going to mind "the things of the flesh" or "the things of the Spirit"? Normally, we are "after the Spirit," v. 5, and we mind "the things of the Spirit"; but *practically* it is quite possible for us to be "after the flesh."

That is to say, we may turn in the direction of the flesh, and seek to gratify ourselves on that line. The Corinthian believers are spoken of as carnal, or fleshly, though they had received the Holy Spirit. What encouragement there is to mind the things of the Spirit, for it means life and peace.

A similar idea is seen in John 4. The Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life," v. 14, 'New Translation.' It is not enough to have the water (that is, the Holy Spirit) given to us; we must drink thereof. We must turn to spiritual sources for our refreshment. If we turn to the pleasures of earth, such as sport, music or other forms of so-called recreation for our happiness, we shall surely thirst again! If, however, we turn to the things that God has provided for our spiritual joy and help—such as prayer, the reading of Scripture, occupation with Christ, seeking the company of our brethren, etc., and thus drink of the water which Christ gives, we shall prove that the living water becomes a fountain springing up to eternal life. What a promise!—to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Whatever blessings the christian has, faith and the power of the Holy Spirit are the only means whereby he can now enjoy them. When "in flesh," weakness, sin and death were our lot. Now that we are "in Spirit" power, righteousness and life are ours! Moreover the positive enjoyment of the highest blessing is ours in the power of the Spirit. Hence it is said we have received

A SPIRIT OF ADOPTION,

or sonship. We are brought into relationship with God as our Father. We are His sons and our hearts

are now to enjoy the actual feelings proper to that relationship, for the Spirit of sonship enables us to cry "Abba, Father," Gal. 4 : 6.

What liberty this implies! The prodigal son's suggestion, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," Luke 15, could never be allowed. As Galatians 4 : 7 says: "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son." The place of sons, the liberty of sons, and the feelings of sons are to be ours. We await, however, the glorious condition suitable, or proper, to sons—we await "adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." We are saved in hope, and in an earlier chapter we saw what that meant. The blessing of sonship is set forth in Christ, God's Son, as a glorified Man in heaven to whose image we are to be conformed. We are already sons, but we await glorified bodies suited to this wondrous calling. We are not, however, waiting to enjoy the blessing, for we have now received the Spirit of sonship (see Note g, New Trans. Rom. 8 : 15, Gal. 4 : 5 Note i).

CHILDREN OF GOD.

Complete salvation is future; we are saved in hope (see chap. 8). Before we reach our glorified condition however, God has given us the Holy Spirit who, personally, now bears witness with our own spirit that we are children of God. Notice, dear reader, the change of the term here. We are now *children* of God to which the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. Underlying this statement is the fact that we have been born of God. As "in flesh" and "in Adam" we were born of a sinful fallen race, but as children of God we are born of God.

We are thus heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs. The glory awaits us, for soon we shall actually enter upon all that of which we are heirs, and shall be in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

We do not, as is sometimes said, hope that these

blessings may be ours. We are assured that they are ours; but as the actual possession of bodies of glory—the proper condition of sons and that in which complete salvation will be enjoyed—is still future, we have them all in prospect or “in hope.” It is a sure and certain hope, indeed, and the Holy Spirit enables us meanwhile to enjoy all in anticipation. We are still in circumstances of suffering, v. 18; indeed, it is a privilege to suffer with Christ, v. 17. We may not only suffer as having part in a groaning creation, but we may also suffer *with* Christ. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense His people, and glory is the answer to such suffering (see 2 Thess. 1 : 5 and 7).

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION.

The fact that we have now the Spirit of sonship and are soon to be in glory, conformed to the image of God's Son, may appear difficult to reconcile with our present condition of weakness and suffering.

The whole creation groans and travails in pain together as having come under the disastrous consequences of the fall. Still more astonishing is the fact that even we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves. God, however, allows us to suffer, and, if we take up the suffering rightly, it will give us a moral title to the coming glory. He also provides perfectly for us in our condition of weakness and need.

In our present state, things are so complex that we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit Himself produces feelings in our hearts according to God, and He uses this method of interceding for us. There may be much in our hearts that is not according to God; but God, who searches them, sees what is of Himself and knows what is the mind of the Spirit who intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

What a wonderful thing it is that the Holy Spirit, a divine Person, joins His help to our weakness! He produces feelings in our hearts according to God, amidst all our confused thoughts, and uses these divinely given exercises of heart (which *we* could not even utter intelligently) as a means by which to intercede to God for us.

Whatever may be our difficulty in knowing what we should pray for as we ought, we *do* know that God has all things in His hand, and all is working together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. Love to God has been produced in every one in whose heart God's love has been shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. We love because He first loved us. We are subjects of God's purpose and are to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Here we find the real end or object towards which God's ways are working. It is all for the glory of Christ; that *He* might be the Firstborn, the Chief, the pre-eminent One among many brethren.

Every detail has been thought out to bring about this end. We have been called, justified and even glorified (not only in the purpose of God, but morally now in having the Holy Spirit given to us).

GOD FOR US.

Well may the apostle triumphantly ask: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What challenging questions follow! "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of

God, who also maketh intercession for us." No enemy even attempts to answer this challenge.

It is clear from this passage what it means to be justified. We are cleared from every charge which might rightly have been brought against us before God. If God justifies, who can condemn? If Christ has died and is risen and is now at the right hand of God interceding for us, who can separate us from His love? His love is greater than any pressure and stronger than any power. Though we might be accounted as sheep for the slaughter we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Our victory is secured by the strength and ceaseless energy of the present love of Christ. With grateful hearts we may well conclude our consideration of this scripture, which assures us of power and victory, by quoting the last few magnificent verses in full:—

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 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."

CHAPTER XIII

“The Rest of His Time”

THERE is a very encouraging word for us all in 1 Peter 4 :2, “That he (that is, the believer) no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

“The time past of our life” is clearly divided from the rest of our time. However much we may regret our past, there is no reason why the rest of our time should not be spent in the happy path of the will of God. It is well to remember that every day “the time past” increases and the rest of our time diminishes.

The apostle Paul in Romans 12 would encourage us on similar lines. The Spirit of God in this epistle has shown us how God, in His compassion, has abundantly met our need in every way. He has justified us freely by His grace, and has brought us into a region where righteousness, peace and joy abidingly exist under the rule and administration of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, He has made a way of deliverance for us from the dominion of sin and the world, liberating us also from the bondage of law, and placing us in a position to which no condemnation can apply. By the gift of the Holy Spirit we have an all-sufficient power to set us free from the power of the flesh and a supply of strength for our pathway here. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our weakness through the very feelings and groans of our hearts; the Lord Jesus intercedes for us at the right hand of God; God Himself is for us; and nothing can separate us from His love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. What blessings! What salvation! What a Saviour! What a God to show

such compassion on those who were but lost sinners—none doing good, no, not so much as one! All this, let us notice, is

WHAT GOD HAD DONE FOR US.

We may well exclaim as Balaam did, Num. 23, when under God's controlling power, "What hath *God* wrought!" God knew that we, who have experienced such proofs of His great compassion, would desire to respond to His grace, and, as if to warrant a movement of this kind on our part, He exhorts us to do the very thing His grace has led us to desire to do.

In an earlier chapter we remarked that the exhortations in the New Testament are not commands to control a contrary disposition, but directions to guide a willing heart. With our past histories before us, we might have hesitated to offer to do anything for God. The effect of grace, however, is so wonderful, that those who were once unprofitable can be profitable, as we read in Philemon 11.

We are exhorted, therefore, nay, the apostle *beseches* us, to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice. Do not let us think they are unfit to present to God. They have been employed in the service of sin, and having a sense of this we might have judged them altogether unworthy of being presented to Him in this way. The application of the death of Christ, however, of which our baptism speaks, is so remarkable that we are entitled to regard ourselves as having died unto sin and its service, and are privileged to yield ourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and our very members, which had been employed in the service of sin, are now to be instruments of righteousness. If Christ has His right place in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the effect is that our bodies are dead as regards the service of sin, and the Holy Spirit is

our power of life, giving us energy and ability to do the will of God, Rom. 8 : 10.

Our bodies being thus held, they may be presented to God a living sacrifice which is holy and acceptable unto Him. What inestimable grace on God's part to allow us to give something to Him in response to all He has given to us! What a privilege to be allowed to do it, an honour indeed! The very man—spirit, soul and body—once a slave of sin, is thus

RECOVERED FOR GOD.

Everyone who has known and proved God's great compassion should learn to distinguish what is sin in him from what he himself is. "I myself," we may say, "with the mind serve God's law." The "flesh" will never change; it never will be subject to God's law, but ever will follow the law of sin. Through grace, we are "not in flesh" but "in Spirit," and in the power of that Spirit are recovered for God.

In presenting our bodies to God we prove what God's will is—good, acceptable and perfect; but this is also dependent upon another important condition. It is this:—

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Every exhortation given us in Scripture implies a danger; and, if God has told us in His directions *not* to do anything, we may be sure that we have a tendency to do the thing against which He warns us. The world, through its habits, has enormous influence over men. The flesh in us responds to it at every turn. We must watch lest we "mind the things of the flesh," and become conformed to the world.

The exhortation here may remind us of the unleavened bread that had to be eaten with the

Passover lamb. Leaven inflates: unleavened bread does not "rise." The unleavened bread is explained in 1 Cor. 5 : 8 as being sincerity and truth. The world system is largely built up on mere appearances. "Be *not* conformed" would keep us from what is superficial or unreal. Negatives by themselves, however, do not help us much on positive lines. We are to be transformed by the *renewing of our minds*. New thoughts, new habits and all that is learned from Christ as the One meek and lowly in heart, are to change our minds; and as the result of this change our manners will be transformed. We are not merely to drop some customs and take on others; that would be but a change in external conduct. We are to be changed *inwardly* and we shall be affected outwardly thereby.

THE WILL OF GOD.

It is only thus that we shall prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Our ways in the past were like those of lost sheep. We had turned every one to his own way, Isa. 53. This sentence describes the way of sin. What a mercy that believers have been recovered for the will of God—our bodies surrendered, our minds renewed, our ways transformed. This is open to us; it is the only happy path here. Do we not desire it? The time past of our life has been quite long enough in which to have done our own wills and to have lived to ourselves. The rest of our time remains, though decreasing daily. May both reader and writer alike renew their resolve, their spiritual "vow," so to speak, and be found in the happy path of the will of God.

An immense range of joy and of usefulness is now to be ours. How vast the will of God! The world of bliss, the "world to come" of which we speak, is to display the perfect order, the beautiful results

and the pure happiness secured by the will of God. Nothing less than the scope embraced in such a passage as Ephesians 1 : 3-11 defines the boundaries of the will of God—the good pleasure of His will, the mystery of His will, and the counsel of His own will! Little ‘atoms’ as we are, we are brought into the vastness of the will of God! What hath God wrought!

God leaves us here, however, in the same circumstances as all men so that we may not only prove inwardly how good and acceptable and perfect His will is, but demonstrate outwardly what it is, in a world where everything is contrary. Thus we are left here to live for Him.

The light of the coming DAY has already shone for us. Already we are *of* the day, 1 Thess. 5 : 4, 5, and are to be characterised by it. As we read in Romans 13 : 12-14, we are to put on the armour of light to protect ourselves from the effects of the world of darkness in which we are in actuality. Our hearts and minds being in the light of the day, we are now to act as if we were already there.

THE FUTURE MADE PRESENT.

“The day” means the time when the rule of the Lord Jesus will be universally owned—the “world to come,” of which we read in Psalm 72, Isaiah 32, Hebrews and other scriptures. Faith and hope bring into present enjoyment the moral qualities of that day, and we may experience “a morning without clouds.” We, who are the Lord’s, are already in the kingdom of God, a kingdom that will be displayed in the “millennium”—a kingdom that cannot be moved.

Not only has God given us faith’s anticipation of that great day, but He has given us also to know others who, like ourselves, have been brought to know and own the Lord and who desire to do His

will. Indeed, just as our physical bodies are marked by a most remarkable organic unity, so God has made one all those who know the Lord, who have received the Spirit, and who are "in Christ Jesus." By being brought into this position and into the system of blessing described as "in Christ Jesus" (see Rom. 8) we are as really one morally as the human body is one physically. We are "one body in Christ"; "in Adam" we were marked by lawlessness and independence. "In Christ" God has brought about a unity which is fittingly illustrated by the wondrous unity of the human body, Rom. 12 : 4, 5.

In the recognition of this unity we may find happy occupations in serving the Lord, as described in detail in Romans 12. What a real privilege and joy to move in such a unity, in contrast to our previous independent, self-centered and, alas! sometimes selfish lives. Feeling that we are members one of another would make every service a joy. In the measure in which we know what it is to be "in Christ" indeed, "one body in Christ"—the moral conditions of the day are anticipated by us.

Nor are we left without instructions regarding our behaviour in the world. Doing good to all, overcoming evil with good, and, as much as lies *in us*, living in peace with all men, are to be features marking us as belonging to a system of grace—a grace which we have well proved and are now to exhibit in a world of selfishness and need.

THE POWERS THAT BE.

God's providential ordering is also to be recognised by the believer. The "powers that be are ordained of God," Rom. 13. At one time God's throne of government was on earth. "Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah" we read in 1 Chron. 29. Through the failure of His earthly people, Israel, He trans-

ferred His throne to heaven. The prophet Ezekiel saw the glory departing from the Temple, and it is noticeable that He is called the "God of the heavens" after this.

In Daniel we read how God committed government into the hands of the gentiles. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar "Thou art this head of gold." The Lord Jesus Himself recognised this delegated authority when He said to Pilate, who represented the fourth empire, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John 19 : 11.

Understanding this will enable us to see the force of Rom. 13 : 1-6. The light God has given to us is to govern us and to direct our consciences; and we christians, therefore, are to be subject to those in authority "for conscience sake." The apostle Peter insists upon the same feature of subjection in his first epistle, chap. 2 : 13. We are to be subject *for the Lord's sake*.

If the "power" goes beyond the authority delegated to it and attempts to occupy the place that God alone should have, as it did in the cases mentioned in Daniel, chaps, 3 and 6, or Acts 4 : 13-21, our course must be the same as Peter's when he said "We ought to obey God rather than men," Acts 5 : 29. Happily it is seldom, if ever, we are compelled or even required by the Government to do anything contrary to the rights of God. A rebellious spirit should never mark the christian. Obedience is one of his *characteristics*—obedience to God and to those set up by Him, unless obedience to God is prevented thereby. As another said long ago, "Obedience to God is always right, obedience to man is sometimes right; self-will is never right."

May the Lord keep us near Himself, living the rest of our time to the will of God.

CHAPTER XIV

Our Companions

It is not at all surprising that we, who believe on the Lord Jesus, find that we have common interests. We all have the same Saviour; we all own Him as our Lord—to us there is “one Lord”; we have all received the Holy Spirit; we can all call God our Father; our blessings are the same; our hopes, our joys, are identical. That we should be drawn together and find spiritual companionship with one another is but what we might expect. Indeed, there is a vital bond that unites in one all who know the Lord.

This subject, as also that of fellowship, has been dealt with at some length in another volume¹ to which the reader is referred. In this chapter the question of companionship, or friendship, will be considered from a practical aspect. A friend, or friends, may be either a great help or a great hindrance spiritually.

The desire for companionship is right. Since there is a work of God in us and since He has given us spiritual desires, what is more normal, we might even say inevitable, than to love the company of others in whom His grace has wrought? A happy and wonderful illustration of this feeling may be seen in Mary, the mother of the Lord. When it had been made known to her that she was to receive this honour and highly favoured position, she went with haste to see her cousin Elizabeth to whom God had granted a like favour, though of a lesser degree, Luke 1 : 39. We are told also that after John was born all these things were the subject of conversation in all the hill country of Judea, Luke 1 : 65. What holy conversation such themes must have occasioned!

¹The Christian's Path in Days of Difficulty. From Kingston Bible Trust.

How pleasing to God to hear His people speak thus together!

In times of serious departure we find a similar feature expressing itself among those who feared the Lord. The days were dark, indeed, when the prophet Malachi wrote. God had been robbed of His due, His service had been neglected, and His people were insensible of the evil they had committed. It is of such a time that we read that "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." The godly ones of that day found companionship together, drawn by similar interests, Mal. 3 : 16-18.

In the early chapters of the book of Acts we have frequent incidents brought before us when those who loved the Lord were *together*, finding in each other's company true elements of spiritual friendship. One particular instance shows how far reaching the companionship was in its effect. We read "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . And all that believed were together," Acts 2 : 42, 44.

The blessed facts of the gospel which they believed blended their minds together, and the teaching of the apostles formed their thoughts. They could walk together for they were agreed (see Amos 3 : 3), and companionship in the truest sense was enjoyed. They knew what fellowship meant—a partnership—sharing the knowledge of a Saviour loved and adored by all, possessing together blessings that He had made theirs, and having joys in common. There was another consideration that also drew them close to each other. Christ had been crucified and they were publicly identified with His rejection. They were companions in their joys, and in their tribulations.

How truly such companionship is a help to us. Even one brother may comfort us, 2 Cor. 7 : 6.

We can easily understand that when Paul saw the brethren who had come to meet him on his way to Rome, he thanked God and took courage, Acts 28 : 15.

The concluding sentence in the third epistle of John may show us that in days of general departure the mass of those who profess christianity are not necessarily to be regarded as "friends." "Greet the friends *by name*," the apostle says. Paul's second letter to Timothy describes the conditions at such times. The mass of christians had turned away from Paul. One brother had forsaken him, having loved the present world. How could such an one be regarded as a "friend"? Discernment is necessary, as was the case also in the days of Malachi when it was said: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not," Mal. 3 : 18.

Friendship is a real matter; the Psalmist said "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Ps. 119 : 63. This consideration suggests another. We must be careful lest the basis of our companionship is some merely natural quality.

When we seek a companion for life, a partner for the most intimate human relationship—a wife or a husband—clearly what is natural has a large place and must rightly receive its due consideration; but let us ever remember that it is NOT the *first* consideration. The first matter to consider in everything is the Lord's name, His interests and His claims. How could any sober christian choose as a life companion one to whom the Lord's interests were not as precious as to himself? Amos 3 : 3 surely applies here very definitely. Spiritual affinity is essential, while what is natural has rightly to be considered. Marriage is a natural relationship and

natural considerations rightly enter into it; but if we give them the first place we shall reap a life of sorrow. The Lord must be first.

In friendship of a wider character, how careful we must be that the Lord's interests are paramount. Merely natural friendships may greatly hinder fellowship. Cliques may so easily be formed and such things destroy our true companionship, that is with those who fear the Lord. If we give natural friendship too great a place, even among those with whom we have a spiritual link, we may very greatly hinder fellowship and possibly destroy it practically.

It is difficult to understand how one who really loves the Lord can make a *friend* of one who does not do so. Such a "friend" cannot enter at all into our spiritual joys, nor find any pleasure in that, which, if we are true to the Lord, really constitutes our life. It is therefore evident that if we, who are the Lord's, maintain such a friendship, it is necessary for us to drop down to the level of what is purely natural, or of the world, to do so. The unconverted friend cannot rise to our level so we must drop down to his, or hers.

This fact raises some other questions: What really is the bond between two such persons? What are the subjects of conversation? What is the point of affinity? It must be something that is merely and only natural, to present the best view of the man. It cannot be the Lord or what is spiritual, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, though it is probable that our friendship may be influenced by the influence of the Holy Spirit. James says, "The love of the world is the enemy of the friendship of the world." The love of the world is the enemy of the friendship of the world.

As christians, we are in a bond of love with the Lord, as Romans 7 says "that ye should be married to another." The figure used by the prophets in the Old Testament, whenever they speak of the people of God being unfaithful to the bond of their covenant with God, is always that of adultery. Perhaps some who are unfaithful to the Lord in maintaining friendships with those of the world, would be surprised if they heard this word "adulteress" applied to them! The apostle James does not hesitate to do so.

A similar figure is used by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 : 22, as also in chap. 16 : 22. The words "jealousy" and "curse" are used. The reference is clearly to Numbers 5, to which we refer the reader for his prayerful and sober consideration. Are we unfaithful to the Lord?

Sometimes, however, it is replied, 'But my friend is the Lord's, although he does not quite see spiritual things as I do; at least, I think he is the Lord's.' The danger in this state of affairs is very subtle. If others, whom we regard as undoubtedly christians and godly ones, too, do not see much evidence of our friend being a believer, what is the reason? Our bond of friendship may have influenced us unduly. A useful test would be, how often are the Lord and His things the theme of our conversation? If we are faithful to the Lord, and not only confess our allegiance to Him, but also maintain an evident interest in His things, our friend will soon be either attracted into the path in which we are walking (for which we would thank God) or find that he has not the place in our lives that he would like to have, so that friendship with us is impossible. Of course, if we put the Lord and His things second and our friend first, a friendship of a sort may continue, but then the Lord will be provoked to jealousy, and then alas for our spiritual prosperity!

Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed; and, if we are faithful to the Lord, we shall find that it is impossible to maintain links of friendship with those in a path spiritually different from our own.

This does not mean that we are to be ungracious or inaccessible to people. To be courteous is an exhortation to which we must give heed; but friendship implies, indeed it supposes, a mutuality and an intimacy and oneness quite impossible between two persons, one of whom is in the path of the will of God while the other is not. Let us again remind ourselves of David's words, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

May the Lord keep us so that we ever put His things first, yea more, so that we regard them as dominant.

To wish for companionship is a right desire. The Lord has recognised this necessity, and He has given us the best companionship with those that fear His name. Isolation is not normal for a christian, yet if persecution or abnormal circumstances should place us in such a position, may we be like John in Patmos, who could say, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion . . ." Discipleship will cut us off from friendship with the world; fellowship—true companionship—is the divine provision to meet one of the right needs of our hearts.

CHAPTER XV

Conclusion

“WATCHMAN, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night,” Isa. 21 : 11, 12. Yes, “the morning cometh”! Already the Light of the morning has shone for us. It is night now in the world, but we who believe on the Lord Jesus are “not of the night, nor of darkness.” We are “the children of light, and the children of the day,” 1 Thess. 5. A morning without clouds is quickly coming, and soon “shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,” Mal. 4 : 2. He will then bring in the day when a King shall reign in righteousness, and when the rights and glory of the One who was crucified here, amidst shame and ignominy, shall be publicly owned. How worthy He is to have this place of honour! “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

It is a solemn reflection that there are those to whom this glorious morning will not bring the “Day.” Those who are “not subject to the Son” shall not see life. Those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will have no part in that bright and happy day. A night of eternal darkness awaits them, for “The morning cometh and also the night”; the morning for the believer, the night for the unbeliever. Reader, are you one of the children of the day? If you are not, with the deepest earnestness let the writer beseech you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, to believe on Him now, that you also may have the joys of which we speak.

* * * * *

We, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, have not to wait for the glorious display of the coming reign of the Lord Jesus ere we experience its happiness. The burden of the previous chapters has been that what is future in its public display—the kingdom in power—is now to be known morally by us who believe. We are already in the kingdom of God, the joys of the millennium are already in our hearts. These joys are known under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ; they are consciously experienced in the power of the Holy Spirit. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit are now our happy portion, through the infinite grace of our God, who has shown us compassion beyond our highest praise.

Indeed it is doubtful if we rightly understand christianity unless we see that it consists very largely of the present knowledge by faith, and of the enjoyment in the power of the Spirit of God, of conditions which are actually future. Some of these conditions will be publicly manifested in the world to come, and others will be fully enjoyed when we shall be with and like Christ in the Father's house eternally.

We know Christ as the Light of the morning. The bright rays of the world to come have reached our souls through faith in a risen Christ; by faith and in the power of the Spirit, we anticipate the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of the millennium. Our outward circumstances and our bodily conditions are not changed. It is a question today of what is known through faith and of what is experienced in the power of the Spirit of God, and this without any alteration in our circumstances or bodily condition.

Let the reader prayerfully consider this principle—the anticipation by the soul through faith and in the power of the Spirit of what is literally or actually future.

A few illustrations of this principle may help us. We have seen that the *kingdom of God* in its display and glory is future. Heaven and earth will then prove the blessings of righteousness, peace and joy, under the universal influence of the Son of man, all things being placed under Him, who has been refused His rights here. The believer anticipates these joys by *faith*. He has experienced joy and peace in *believing*. He knows righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; for he has already entered the kingdom of God and has come under the rule of the Lord Jesus.

In this connection it may be well to note the present character of the kingdom of God, or of heaven. It is in mystery now, not yet in manifestation. The King is rejected here. For a kingdom to exist on earth while the King Himself is rejected here, and for the present is in heaven, is indeed a "mystery." Hence the Lord Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables and expounded all things to His disciples privately, Mark 4 : 10-12, 34.

In Scriptural language a mystery means something known only to the initiated. To the disciples it was given to *know* the mystery of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom itself remained in mystery. When Jesus reigns here the kingdom will be manifested. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," Ps. 72 : 8. Today, however, His rule is only truly recognised by those who believe on Him and have received the Holy Spirit. The rule of Christ is professedly owned very widely. Christianity has assumed great outward proportions. Hence the kingdom of God has an outward or professed form, and an inward or real one. Many say, "Lord, Lord," but the Lord may one day have to say to some such "I never knew you," Matt. 7 : 23. The outward view of the kingdom is seen in the similitudes of the tares and the wheat,

the mustard tree and the leaven hid in the meal. The inward or real character is set forth in the pearl and the treasure, Matt. 13. In the present outward form of the kingdom, good and evil go on together. In the future and manifested form evil will be removed (see Matt. 13 : 24-30 and 40-43).

The idea of "mystery" is connected with much at the present time: (1) there is the mystery of the kingdom of God, as we have seen. (2) there is the "mystery" of God's will, which He has made known to us, Eph. 1 : 9. (3) we read also of the wisdom of God in mystery, 1 Cor. 2 : 6-10. (4) then there is what is peculiarly called the "mystery," which refers to the church as the body of Christ here on earth, composed of Jews and gentiles, Rom. 16 : 25-26; Col. 1 : 26, 2 : 2; Eph. 3 : 1-10, 5 : 23-32; (5) finally, we read of the mystery of God being finished, Rev. 10 : 7, 11 : 15-18. In purpose all things are placed under Christ now, though we see not yet all things under Him, Heb. 2. Soon, however, all will be manifestedly placed under Him. Then the mystery of God will be finished. All God's ways will then be publicly seen; the kingdom will be in manifestation; God's wisdom obviously shown and the church displayed in glory.

Things had been "kept secret," then they were made known "in mystery" for faith, to be understood by the spiritually initiated; soon they will be displayed in glory.

Eternal life will be known in the world to come, the power of death will be abolished and the earth blessed. Things both in heaven and earth will be reconciled to God on the ground of what Jesus has done, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As believers, we know these blessings already. Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received the reconciliation. We now experience the reign of grace under the rule

of the Lord. Moreover, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who becomes as a fountain of water springing up to eternal life in the one who drinks, we may now experience the spiritual conditions of eternal life, resulting in our joy being full, 1 John 1 : 4. We know God as in the light, that is, as fully made known; we may now abide under the influence of Christ; and we can say we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren, 1 John 3 : 14. Thus, by faith and in the power of the Spirit, we anticipate blessings soon to be publicly displayed in the millennium—the world to come (See also Hebrews 12 : 22-24.)

Then the wonderful blessing of being sons to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also to be enjoyed now. We have been marked out beforehand for this blessing, and are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Obviously we are not yet so conformed. We await adoption, which necessitates the redemption of our body. We are sons now, surely; but it is *by faith*. The actual conditions proper to sons are not yet ours. God is bringing many sons to glory; but we have not our glorified state now. Yet God has not kept us waiting for the joys of sonship. Because we are sons, God has given us the Spirit of His Son; we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." What wonderful blessings and joys we may now experience by faith and in the power of the Spirit!

Another point must be mentioned, for we should fail in our considerations of the christian's blessings were we to omit reference to their distinctly heavenly character. The christian is called with a heavenly calling; he is blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

In an earlier chapter we noticed that we are accepted in Christ as a glorified Man in heaven,

“the Beloved,” as Eph. 1 : 6, says. This fact involves that we are blessed in heavenly places; but it is important that we should clearly understand that heaven, not earth, is our place of blessing.

God’s ancient people, Israel, had been blessed with temporal blessing and had an earthly inheritance, the land of Canaan. The christian, however, is not so blessed. In the mercy of God we shall experience His constant care while we are here, and we may say that our Father knows that we have need of such things as food, clothing and shelter, and He will not fail us, as the Lord Jesus told His disciples in Luke 12. We are not to be burdened with anxiety about such matters. Our Father knows we have such needs. These are not our blessings, however, we may call such things “mercies.” As we have seen, our blessings are spiritual—we know Christ as our Saviour, we have forgiveness of sins, we are justified, we are accepted before God in Christ as a glorified Man, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and may experience deliverance from the world and the power of sin in the flesh, and are already sons of God. These are all spiritual blessings and further, we are called with a heavenly calling. Natural and earthly blessings, with which an Israelite was blessed, have been superseded by spiritual and heavenly ones which the christian should enjoy. An incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance is reserved for us *in heaven*. Already Christ our Forerunner has entered for us, and shortly He Himself will come for us and take us to the place prepared in the purpose of divine love. Meanwhile, our commonwealth or citizenship is in heaven from where also we look for the Lord Jesus as Saviour “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

Like Abraham and Isaac in their day, we are to be strangers and pilgrims here seeking a heavenly

country, called with a heavenly calling and having hopes reserved in heaven, as the first epistle of Peter and that to the Hebrews so plainly show.

By faith we have the light of these heavenly things, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to enjoy them anticipatively for we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance.

The subject of our inheritance has not come before us in our considerations of the christian's blessings. We have dwelt upon blessings of a more elementary kind and noticed the path that should be ours in the will of God. There is much more that we may enjoy.

May we all set ourselves to enter into *all* God's thoughts for us. Let us pursue these things as if we were running a race. Let us have one thing before us, as the apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 3, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

Moreover it is our privilege now to set forth the praises (excellencies) of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The grace of the present dispensation is to be expressed in us who have experienced the grace, the kindness and the love of God.

May the Lord help us to do so, that we may overcome evil with good, showing the kindness of God and living in peace in the midst of the present scenes of turmoil and strife. May He also help us to seek for our companions those who fear God and keep His testimonies, in other words, those who walk in the path of discipleship and await the coming of our Lord Jesus; for "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."