

THE RIBBAND OF BLUE: A WORD TO CHRISTIANS.

“AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying. speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders A RIBBAND OF BLUE: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.” Numbers xv. 37 to 39.

CHRISTIAN READER:—

It is interesting to know that the “Ribband of Blue,” which is occupying a place in the minds of many at the present time, is a divine institution and was commanded of God to be worn by His earthly people Israel as a true characteristic of what that people were, and to whom they belonged. It is therefore a subject of importance, and should be also, of deep interest to his people everywhere—only my readers must bear in mind that the “Ribband of Blue” itself, belonged to a dispensation of types and shadows; while, we as God’s people now belong to a dispensation in which all these things have found their fulfilment in Christ and in the “new place” which His death and resurrection has brought those into, who believe in Him. Old things have passed away. Behold all things are become new. The Lord Jesus was preparing His people for this change when He said “no man seweth a piece of new cloth to an old garment.”—Mark ii. 21.

Christianity is the new thing which God has brought in, to displace the old; and Judaism with all its types and shadows has passed away. We are taught to let it go for that which is far better, even the substance itself, and this is what we are to hold fast.

But there are three things of interest I wish to call the reader’s attention to, in connection with the Ribband: *firstly,*

with regard to the *colour*; secondly, as to the *form* it must be worn in; and thirdly as to *who* should wear it.

The Ribband, then, must be blue; this is God's own choice for His people and was used of Him to give expression to that which was in His own mind respecting them, and which he has doubtlessly revealed to us in His word. We find **WHITE** used in scripture as an emblem of purity, while **SCARLET** answers more to this world's glory, and faith will be able (without difficulty) "to match" the Ribband of Blue with the heavens above. It is the heavenly colour, chosen of God and given by Him to his people, as a type to remind them that they were a heavenly people on earth, a heaven-born and heaven-bound people who were once at home in this world and strangers to God, but now fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and strangers here.

My reader will find the *true blue* in two little words in 1 Cor. xv. 48. May we wear it ever upon our hearts, in the blessed remembrance of *whose* we are, of *what* we are, and of what we are called to now:—namely, to yield full obedience to the claim of God.

The two last words in the verse just quoted above, give us true Christian character; for it tells us we "are heavenly;" and this is our "Ribband of Blue."

And now let me say a word as to the *form* in which it was to be worn. If my reader will refer to the scripture at the head of the paper he will find the Blue Ribband was to be worn by the Israelites on the borders of their garments forming a circle, and so surround and enclose their feet; so that as the eye of the Israelite surveyed the skirts of his garment, everywhere and every way he looked, he was reminded in the place he had been *brought into*, of the place he had been *brought out of*, and also of God's claim on His people; "that ye remember and do all my commandments and be holy unto the Lord" (ver. 40).

It is well to remember it was not a *bit of blue* that the Israelite was told to wear but a border of blue; and just

as we find the answer to the "ribband of blue" in Cor. xv. 48, so we shall find what answers to the *border of blue* in Col. iii. 1. God has saved us in grace, has given us a heavenly birth, and has set us in a heavenly circle; we are risen with Christ, and this is our circle. The Lord has brought us into a new place since His death and resurrection, and we, being risen with Christ, move in a circle now (in a way) as the people of God, outside this scene while we are yet in it: there is a heavenly circle on this earth composed of all believers who are dead, and risen with Christ, and who are called therefore to walk as those who are alive from the dead and to set their minds on things above; the *border of blue* entirely encircled the one that wore it.

May we realise more fully the blessedness of the place we have been brought into and the responsibility attending it.

Let me now add a word as to *who* should wear it. This too is of equal importance as it could not serve as a mark to distinguish the people of God, if anyone or everyone could wear it; but we find that the *Israelite* was the only person privileged to wear the "ribband of blue." It was the exclusive right of the people of God; and none but they, were commanded to put it on. How sacred is the enclosure which God has thrown around His own people, and while He is rich in mercy, and will have all men to be saved, yet, His word solemnly denies the right of any person to have part with His people, or to be numbered with them until they have been born again. They must be born again and have a part in Christ's death and resurrection to have a place in this heavenly circle; as is the earthy such are they also that are earthy, and as the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly. No man can lay claim to a sixty-fourth part of an inch of that which is heavenly until he is born again; but the believer, instead of attaching to himself the least scrap of that which he, as a sinner, had no title to, now saved by sovereign grace sees how God has set him in a new place, even in the circle of his own heavenly people, here on earth, for to him this place now applies, (as is the heavenly such are they also who are heavenly;) and while God

offers salvation free, His word disowns man's right to it on the ground of his own works, (for it is to him that worketh not, but believeth,) so that instead of our good works helping us to secure salvation they **only** hinder, for Jesus says "the rent is made worse" and do we not believe him? Mark ii. 21. The great thing is to own we *are ruined* and take salvation, since that salvation is for the lost. No one therefore can claim what the ribband of blue typifies but those who are saved.

In concluding let me notice one thing more, namely, that the Ribband was not for the eyes of others but for the eyes of **the** wearer, "that *ye may look upon it* and remember!" ver. 39. How solemn and withering was the rebuke uttered by the Lord in Matt. xxiii. 5, concerning the Pharisees who did **all** their works to be seen of man, and who it appears had enlarged the borders of their garments for the sake of feasting the eyes of their admirers, and thus using it for the very opposite purpose to that which God had intended it. May the Lord enable us to see the application of these things to ourselves now as His people who are in the world but who are not of it, and may that word "Remember" be borne back to our hearts with all the freshness and power with which it was first spoken to God's people of old; may we remember we are not our own; that we are not of the world, that we are bought with a price, that we are heavenly.

But should my reader be still unsaved, permit me to say, **no** means of man's own devising can bring a soul back to God, and let me affectionately intreat you not to rest satisfied with anything short of that which *will*, namely,—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for while there is much to admire in a sober and upright person, yet a man may be this, and **after all** be lost and that for ever, whilst that man that accepts **God's** order of things is wise. Now let us hear what that order is:—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." "Believe on the Lord Christ and thou shalt be saved!" Acts xvi. 31.

Robe and ring and royal sandalls
Wait thee, lost one; come thou in.

H. H.