

Eleventh

NOTES

OF AN

ADDRESS TO CONVERTS.

ACTS XI.

It is worthy of remark, that in this chapter we have the first account of Gentile converts:—of the receiving, in sovereign goodness and grace, poor sinners who had not even the promises to boast of which God had given to the Jews. To such it is, too, that Barnabas comes with the earnest exhortation contained in verse 23: “That with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.” What Peter was taught here as to the Gentiles we all have to learn as to ourselves. When the blessed news of grace and pardon first reaches a sinner’s ears and heart, he rejoices in the thought of pardon and forgiveness. He does right. Jesus, the blessed Son of God, has met him in mercy with His precious blood. But with this the light enters into his soul. When there have been deep discoveries of sin before the soul has become happy, the peace of the soul is more settled. The sin to which grace is applied is in a measure already known. But when, through the proclamation of divine pardon, without previous convictions, the soul has suddenly received joy, though there is always the discovery that we are sinners, the knowledge of the depth of sin in the heart, and what has to be forgiven and cleansed, is very small. The consequence is, that, after God has called us, and the divine light has broken into our souls, we feel disturbed and uncertain, and even

begin sometimes to doubt the fact of our being cleansed. This is wrong. The deeper discovery of sin, and the knowledge of our own heart is useful. If we walk humbly and near to God this knowledge will be made comparatively speaking peacefully; if not, in humiliation and failure. But you may not call unclean what God has cleansed. God has brought cleansing and pardon to us down here. We have not to wait for it until we go up there. God has cleansed you. You are clean *now*. But I desire to lead you to some further exercise of heart upon it, and clearer apprehension of God's ways: a fuller exercise of conscience, that your peace may be as solid as your joy was genuine when you first heard of grace and forgiveness. In Luke xv the great principle set forth is, that it is God's happiness when we are brought back to Him. Of course the joy of the restored one comes in, but is not the primary thing. The object of all three parables is not to show our joy, but the joy of God in our restoration. The three parables all teach the same grace, but we get, I believe, the joy of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father. But remark that in the two first we find a grace which finds and brings back what was lost, without any further question of the state of the soul. In the third we have man's departure even into the lowest degradation of sin, and what passes in his soul on his return, till he is clothed in divine righteousness, with Christ, in His Father's house. God has foreseen and provided for the whole case of the sinner. The younger son was as really a sinner when he left his father's house as when he was eating husks with the swine. He had abandoned God to do his own will. But the Lord pursues the case to the full degradation of sin, for sin degrades man. The young man comes to himself, turns back towards God, is converted; but he has not yet met God, nor has he the best robe on him. He did not know in his conscience divine

righteousness. When he really meets his father, not only is he in tender love—only the more shewn because he had been lost—received when in his rags into his father's arms, but he is made righteously fit for the house, clothed with Christ. His father was on his neck when he was in his rags, but he was not received into the house in that state. He could not have been. But God has provided for the sinner what Adam in his[†]innocence had not. He has provided Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness. The best robe, no part of the son's portion before he left, is now put on him, and he is fit for the house to which that robe belonged. All the extent of the soul's departure from God has been weighed. The soul may be exercised about it, and will, till self is wholly given up as a ground on which we can stand with God. No going in legally as a hired servant—before God it is rags and exclusion, or the best robe and joyful admission. All true experiences lead to that emptying of self, and Christ all, and we in Him before God. Then, as I have said, our peace is as solid as the joy of the thought of forgiveness was blessed, and the joy itself deeper, if not more genuine. Another truth is connected with this. God having perfectly cleansed us by the blood of Christ, the Spirit dwells in the cleansed heart. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit gives us the consciousness of our relationship as dear children. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." What manner of persons ought we to be, who are the temples of the Holy Ghost? we may well continually ask ourselves. But do not let failures make us doubt that we have it. Low and wretched as was the state the Galatians had fallen into, they never doubted they had the Spirit of God; but they were getting wrong as to the ground of their standing, as to how they had

received it; so that the Apostle had to ask them, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii, 2.) "We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." We have life as truly as Christ is alive; but we are not yet in heaven. The thief, indeed, was privileged to be taken directly home, believing only to-day, but to-day the first companion Christ had in paradise. We do not look for such immediate departure, but our ground is the same; we are as truly saved, but not so soon to be in heaven. Rather have we to go through this evil world: to go through it as crucified with Christ, dead indeed, but risen—to go through it with His Spirit dwelling in us. Be careful lest you grieve that Spirit. You have to go through the world bearing the name of Christ upon you. See that you bring no reproach upon that blessed name by being *inconsistent*. The world will be sharp to exclaim, There are your christians! You will have to go through the world with God dwelling in you. To carry this treasure in an earthen vessel. Entrusted with this treasure, an habitation of God through the Spirit. Of course it is only through His grace that you can carry such a treasure through an evil world; but there is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have you to do or be. He exhorted them that they should cleave to the Lord. Depend on Him! Some are allowed to have a long season of joy on first believing, but God knows our hearts, and how soon we should be depending on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object! joy is not our object. Do not let your joy lead you to forget the source of it, and then it need never wane. This joy is right and beautiful in its place; I am not saying a word against it—God forbid. But I warn you against resting in it. Do not let your joy be your dependance. Do not lean on it for strength. There

is danger of joy, however genuine, making you forget how dependent you are every moment. Depend upon Him—cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Do not be content with being happy (may you continue so), but with Paul, forgetting the things which are behind, press on, &c. (Phil. iii.) I have seen many christians so full of joy that they thought there was no such thing as sin left. It is true sin no longer remains on you; but the flesh is in you to the end. The old stock is there, and you will find that, if you are not watchful, if divine life is not cherished and cultivated in your hearts by looking at Christ and feeding on Him, it will be putting forth its buds; if it does they must be nipped off as they appear. No good fruit comes of the old stock. It is the *new* that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ—cleave to Him; and may your souls be maintained in this truth, that Christ is your life! aye, that Christ is so your life, that Christ must die (the thought of which is blasphemy) before you can perish. And as He is your life, so is He the object of that life. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. ii, 20.) As you grow in this knowledge of Him, a joy grows deeper than that of first conversion. I have known Christ, more or less, between thirty and forty years, and I can say that I have ten thousand times more joy *now*, than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down from a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the water that runs in the plain is deeper, calmer, more fructifying.

Observe, they are exhorted with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. A distracted heart is the bane of a christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith,

it will not be the question, What harm is there in this, or that? rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him. Do not let the world come in, and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones; we who are older, have had more experience of what the world is, we know more what it is worth, but it all lies shining before you, endeavouring to attract you. (What does it fill its shop windows for else?) Its smiles are all deceitful, still it *is* smiling upon you. It makes many promises, it cannot fulfil: still it *promises*. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven: yet will He fill you to overflowing.

Observe again, It is cleave unto the Lord. Not cleave to duty, or law, or ordinances, (though these are good in their places,) but to the *Lord*. He knew how treacherous the heart was, and how soon it would put anything in *His* place. You will have to learn what is in your heart. Abide with God, and you will learn your heart with Him, and under His grace; else you will have to learn it with the Devil through his successful temptations. But God is faithful, and if you have been getting away from Him, and other things have been coming in and forming a crust round your heart, and you want to get back again, God says, What is this crust? I must have you deal with it, and get rid of it! Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, and not the world's. The denial of this fact is an artifice of the Devil. Do not let the Devil come in between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have got away from Him, return to Him; doubt not His joy in having you back,—count upon His love,—look at the sin which led you away with horror, but do not wrong Him by distrusting His love, any

more than you would an affectionate husband or wife, by throwing a doubt on their love if you had been for a moment ungracious. Hate yourself, but remember how He has loved you, and will love you until the end! Mistrust not His work—mistrust not His love. “It was granted unto the Gentiles to have repentance unto life.” All is of God!

I would have you carry away in your minds three things which by grace are given you. 1st, cleaving to the Lord; 2nd, perfect forgiveness; 3rd, a purged conscience. To illustrate this last, take the case of Peter. He denied His Lord—denied Him to a serving-maid; but the Lord had turned and looked on him, and he had gone out and wept bitterly. A few weeks after this (Acts iii), he could say that they were a lost and ruined people, because “they denied the Holy One and the Just;” the very thing he had done himself, in a worse way, too, for he had been with Him as His friend for three years. But his conscience was purged; he knew he was forgiven; and now he could turn round, and fearlessly charge others with the very thing he had done himself.

One word more. Talk with Him. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near intercourse with Him who has loved you with such manner of love!

J. N. D.



*Price one Halfpenny; 4s. per 100.
For Gratuitous Distribution, direct from the Publisher, 3s. per 100, Post Free.*

London:—W. H. BROOM, 48, Paternoster Row.

WORKS BY J. N. DARBY.

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
The Righteousness of God	0	6
A Lecture on Prophecy	0	2
Two Warnings, and an Example	0	1
Substance of a Lecture on John v	0	1
The Believer entering into God's Rest.....	0	1
Obedience	0	2
Romans viii and ix	0	2
Superstition not Faith	0	2
Separation from Evil, God's Principle of Unity	0	1
Discipline	0	1½
The French New Testament. A New Translation	3	6
The German New Testament. A New Translation	2	0
Melchisedec Priesthood of Christ.....	0	1
A Dialogue on Christian Perfection	0	6
On Ministry ; its Nature, Source, Power, &c.....	0	6
Dispensation of the Kingdom of Heaven	0	1
Resurrection, the Fundamental Truth of the Gospel	0	2
God's Grace and Man's Need	0	1
Notes on the Offerings	0	2
Types of Leviticus.....	0	3
Thirteen Sermons. 1d. each ; in Cloth.....	1	6
Operations of the Spirit. In Cloth	1	0
Divine Mercy to the Church and Israel	0	6
Remarks on the Psalms	0	6
Father and Prodigal	0	1
Evidence from Scripture of the passing away of the Present Dispensation	0	3
The Feasts	0	1½

Food for Believers. By G. V. WIGRAM

0 4

W. H. BROOM, 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.