

PARADISE:

THE PRESENT ABODE OF THE
DEPARTED SAINTS.

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“The silent call may come unexpectedly to any of us, or the shout of the archangel and the trump of God may summon us all together: but in whatever way the summons into the presence of the Lord comes; it is but the call—‘Come up hither,’ which will have a fuller and more glorious meaning when at the Advent, resurrection consummates, in our collective gathering together unto Him, what those who fall asleep in Christ already foretaste.’

Henry Groves.

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*“ Faith sees the Paradise of God,
The better Heavenly land;
That holy City faith espies,
Not built by human hand.”*

*“ O Earth! We only ask of thee,
When saints in Jesus sleep,
A grave, which till the Bridegroom come,
Our brethren's dust shall keep.”*

R. C. Chapman,



Introduction.

PARADISE and Hades are among God's words for describing to us the disembodied state—that intermediate condition of men between their death and their resurrection. By tracing the use of these words in the Scriptures, some sure and reliable knowledge may be gained as to what that disembodied state is. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally, is God-breathed], and is profitable for instruction," etc., was Paul's word to Timothy. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," was our Lord's prayer to the Father. And this part of God's Word will be found both profitable and sanctifying if learned and received in fellowship with Jesus and by the Spirit's teaching.

The present "far better" of the disembodied state will be seen to be a distinct step and stage of the mighty triumphs of our Lord Jesus, and of God's

glory by Him, although it be not equal, nor similar to, that of the coming resurrection morning. The disembodied state is only for this brief span of time ; in eternity there will be no such thing. Adam and Eve and all their offspring will then have received either "resurrection unto life," or else "resurrection unto damnation." All will have bodies for ever, and thus differ from angels, unfallen or fallen, who are and ever will be spirits, and spirits only. But at present there is the disembodied state, and God's Word does give light upon it. Not much indeed, for God's glory is in resurrection, and all His aims and ends concerning men are *there*. Jesus Himself is *raised* from the dead. All the fulness of the Godhead now dwells in Him BODILY ; and God would hasten on our hearts to the day of all things being subdued unto Jesus, either in resurrection likeness to Himself of all the redeemed, or in "the second death" of the impenitent. But whatever knowledge is supplied us of the departed ones as they now are, must not be undervalued nor passed by. Also as time moves on, the greatness of this matter grows, for the multitude of the dead, both believing and ungodly, immensely increases. In the present old age of this earth, the

bodies of the dead form no small part of the very soil we walk on.

“Earth to her sons is but a grave,”

has indeed become solemnly true; and the raising of them all to life again is a correspondingly vast subject of faith and expectation. But meanwhile, where is the equally vast multitude of their disembodied spirits? What is their measure of happiness or of misery? And in and by whose power are they thus kept? Let us consider these questions so far as they can be soberly and clearly answered from Scripture.



Paradise.

THE bright and happy word "paradise" occurs only three times in the New Testament. 1st. In our dying Master's words to the trusting thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in *paradise*." (Luke xxiii. 43.) 2nd. Paul says of visions and revelations he had had "that he was caught up into *paradise*, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. xii. 4.) 3rd. Our Lord Himself again uses it in His message to his Ephesus saints: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the *paradise* of God" (Rev. ii. 7.)

The third passage differs from the other two. Here it is "the *paradise of God*;" in the others it is simply "paradise." This is important. "The *paradise of God*" would appear to be our Lord's name here for that "place" He has gone to prepare (John xiv. 2),

where we are to be with Him in *resurrection bodies*—“that city, “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife,” “the holy Jerusalem,” subsequently shown to John, and to us also in Rev. xxi. 9: xxii. 6, for there is the same mention in her of “the tree of life.” It grows “in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river.” (Rev. xxii. 2.) This identifies “the paradise of God” with “that city,” and makes it to be the place and time of our being “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven;” *i.e.* the resurrection body. But this is yet future; it waits for our Lord’s coming, and for His mighty “shout,” as in 1 Thess. iv. 16. We do not therefore enter the “paradise of God” singly, nor as disembodied spirits, nor any of us one moment before others. “Caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with *the Lord*,” are words which describe our entrance into “the paradise of God,” and make it perfectly distinct from the disembodied state.

What, then, is the “paradise,” spoken of in the other two Scriptures? It is the name given to those unseen, shut-in joys and delights that our Lord Jesus *already has*, and rejoices that His loved and ransomed ones should share with Him. He will make

us share His kingdom with Him the moment He possesses it ; but at present it is only His in prospect. He is the acknowledged Heir to it. As such God has seated Jesus at his own right hand (*see* Ps. cx.), but He is at present only the "Nobleman" who has gone "into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return ;" but has not yet "returned having received the kingdom." (*See* Luke xix.) It is when as "the Lord Himself" He has descended "from heaven with a shout," and has caused all His saints to "meet Him in the air," in bodies like His own, that He can have *His kingdom*, and not till then. But to whatever joys and delights He now has, He can welcome His saved ones, and He delights to do so ; and "paradise" is His own term to express them. Hence the perfect fitness of our Lord's reply to the dying thief. By precious faith he saw in Jesus not only a Saviour but a King, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (or rather, "IN thy kingdom ;") that is, in all its pomp and majesty.

Our Lord's reply to him was *not*, "To-day shalt thou be with me in my *kingdom*," for He had not His kingdom that day, nor has it even yet. But

Jesus knew that His mighty death would that very day give Him victory over death and hades, and would thereby make a "paradise" of rest, and joy for His own; and He delighted in His dying hour to assure this newly-saved sinner, of a welcome to it. "Paradise," then, is the joy and triumph Jesus already has over death and hades, and all those pleasures that are His even now at God's right hand before His kingdom-day; and to be in paradise is to be with Him sharing those pleasures, as joint-heirs with Him of His kingdom when He has it. The word paradise in the Greek tongue means "*Garden*," or park, and expresses the enclosed and private pleasure-grounds belonging to any one of rank and wealth, to which he can welcome his personal friends, and which only they enjoy with him. Hence it has been commonly applied to the garden of Eden, but in Scripture it is used only of the shut-in, unseen joys of victory over death, which Jesus has and gives His departed ones to share with Him. There was not a paradise till there had been a Gethsemane, and its bitter cup of death had been drunk at Calvary. The garden of His agony, where His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, stands in precious but solemn

contrast with His paradise-garden now ; for one deep joy there, both of Jesus and His saints along with Him, is this—"the bitterness of death is past."

To depart then, and "to be with Christ" in what is to Him the garden of His present occupations and delights, is paradise. Even in earthly kingdoms the acknowledged heir to the throne is a nobleman before he is a king, and as a nobleman has a park and pleasure-grounds of his own, in which to receive his friends and make them his guests. Just so with Jesus our Lord, as Heir of the kingdom for which He so patiently waits. He knew that instantly upon His death, God would acknowledge Him as Heir, and would give Him a nobleman's honours and wealth ; and He speaks to the trusting thief in nobleman's language, and calls paradise and all its pleasures His own. A previous passage in Luke xix. prepares us for this language of our Lord. He was even then "nigh to Jerusalem," and with His soul filled with "His decease" (His mighty *exodus*) which He should accomplish there, He even then described His pathway through death and out of it, as that of "a certain NOBLEMAN" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

This only place of His ever calling Himself a "nobleman" perfectly agrees with His speaking of "paradise" as His in chapter xxiii.

It is then as "Nobleman," and Heir of His yet future throne, that He thus takes us with Him now, one by one as we depart. And it is as this crowned One, even now with the Victor's Crown, that we by faith see Him. "We see not yet," says Paul, "all things put under him: but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, *crowned* with glory and honour." Not with the kingly-crown, for He waits for that when He shall return, "having received the kingdom"; but with the glory and honour garland of being Victor over death, and as the acknowledged Heir. "We see Jesus" with the "nobleman" coronet of heirship already His, and we rejoice to depart and to be with Him, which is "far better."

And what a token it is of our Lord's most warm and tender love to us, that He should be so ready to welcome us to whatever His death has already procured! Soon will come the resurrection morning of our complete likeness to Himself, and in that prospect He rejoices, we are well sure, even more

than we do; but this is not enough for Him; He must also make us sharers with Him now of His present joys and riches. And what better pledge could He give us of our sharing His kingdom when He receives it?

Observe also that it was a *thief*—a dying robber—newly pardoned and saved, to whom this word of a paradise-welcome was first spoken. Not an Abel, dying at the altar of his believing worship; nor a John the Baptist, suffering for his faithful testimony; but a just-rescued sinner, washed in the fountain of the blood of Christ, and his heart only then and there subdued. He it is who is made in God's Word to lead the way, as it were, into this paradise with Jesus. How like this is to God's steadfast purpose, "that no flesh should glory in his presence!" It was at the death of one of this world's *criminals* that all generations of the saved first heard the joyful word "*Paradise.*" Prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints innumerable are there; but it was a common malefactor's entrance there, that first gave us the knowledge of its name. Just as it is by the death of David's child, that the salvation of all the infant dead is first so clearly shown us in Scripture. A babe in Israel at

whose birth shame had to be felt rather than joy, even by its own parents, is the babe chosen for teaching us this mighty truth. "*I shall go to him,*" said the believing and forgiven David, "but he shall not return to me."

These words of David point us to our meeting again with all the infant dead, a marvellous theme of glory to God, and joy to all saints. This is taught us too, not at the cradle of an infant Moses, "exceeding fair," and circumcised the eighth day, nor over the dead child of the woman of Shunem, where the mother's zeal and service might have seemed to give some meritorious plea; but taught us where no such idea could be entertained for either child or parent. Surely in every way God does "stain the pride" of human glory; and thus He makes the praise of His own grace the more fully appear.

The second mention of the word "paradise" is in 2 Cor. xii. 4. We are here reminded of quite a different use our Lord Jesus makes of His present joys and triumphs, whereby He instructs His servants in His Church, and strengthens them for their labours and their sufferings. Paul here tells us "that he was caught up into *paradise*, and heard unspeakable

words" connected with his "visions and revelations of the Lord." The issue of it in his soul was this: "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It was a blessed use for Jesus our Lord to make of paradise, to rest and to rejoice His departed ones; and now through His servant the apostle, He would also use it to profit us who "are alive and remain."

The connection between paradise and hades, and the difference between the two, will guide us to other Scriptures.



Hades.

THE Scripture uses of the word "paradise" have been considered in a former paper. It has been found to set before us all those joys which our Lord Jesus already possesses as the Overcomer of death, and as Heir to His kingdom. And He calls each saved one of His who dies to share with Him these His "nobleman" riches and joys, and thus gives them a pledge of reigning with Him when He receives His kingdom.

Such is paradise ; but what is hades ?

It is the name given in the Old Testament, and also in the New, to the state and the place of those who have departed this life. In this respect it is of the same use as the word "paradise ;" but there is this important difference : "*hades*" in the Greek of the New Testament, and its equivalent "*sheol*" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament Scriptures, present to

us the whole of the human dead—godly and ungodly—as in a common abode, while “paradise” is the bright and joyous dwelling-place of souls of Christ’s saved ones only.

Paradise is a New Testament bright resting-place from both sin and sorrow along with Christ, and has not one unhappy, doomed soul in it; *sheol* (or hades) expresses simply the idea of the region of the dead, whether godly or ungodly.

Old Testament saints understood that in it there was a difference between the two—a sheol and a lowest sheol. The latter was distinguished as the part assigned to the wicked, those who had died under the wrath of God—see Deut. xxxii. 22: “A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell” (sheol). Still it existed then as one abode for all, and was so known to the faith and intelligence of God’s people. And this side-by-side position of the dead in sheol (or hades) was suitable to Old Testament times. In the *living* world God had not then called out His own believing ones into outward and visible separation from the unbelieving. All Israel went to the earthly “house of God in company.” All the circumcised were entitled and

were commanded to come up to Jerusalem and keep the feasts, whether they were regenerate or not. Hence when death took them, they had all gone down from this *upper* scene of light and activity, to a common *under-world* (sheol), a dark unseen and unknown place, (ha-des means in Greek "unseen,") the highest advantage of which was rest, and that only obtained by loneliness and loss of all fellowship with the living. But this New Testament age is the time of God's calling out and *visibly separating* His own from the unregenerate, by gathering them unto Jesus Himself, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. How natural, then, that when any of His own now die, they should go to be "*with Christ*" in a "paradise" entered by *none but themselves*!

Yet the use of the word "paradise" in the New Testament does not cause the word "hades" to cease; but it greatly lessens its use, as compared with the Old Testament, and limits its meaning. In the same "days of His flesh" in which our Lord, as He was dying, promised paradise to the trusting thief, He had on three occasions spoken of "hades." Once to tell of the eternal punishment of Capernaum: "Thou shalt be brought down to hell" (hades, Matthew xi.

23; Luke x. 15); once to warn His hearers of the individual bodily torments of the finally impenitent: "In hell (hades) he (the rich man) lift up his eyes being in torments" (Luke xvi. 23); and once to express the living activities of Satan and his followers: "The gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it" (the Church) (Matt. xvi. 18). These are before 'paradise' had been named. We next have Ps. xvi, quoted by Peter in Acts ii. 27': "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (hades); here it is simply Old Testament language. But Paul uses it in 1 Cor. xv. 55: "O grave (hades), where is thy victory?"

Here the paradise or disembodied happy state is passed by, because *resurrection* is the subject of the chapter, and a death term is used. The same also in Rev. i. 18: "I (Jesus) have the keys of death and of hell" (hades); for Jesus the Conqueror brings us through both death and the grave; the one when any of His saints die, and the other at the first resurrection. There is likewise a similar use of the word in Rev. vi. 8: "His name (the pale horse rider) was death, and hell (hades) followed with him;" and in Rev. xxii. 13-16: "Death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them. . . . and death

and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire." That is, at and after the great white throne day, the grave will cease to be; there will not henceforth be an individual of Adam's race lying in either the grave or in hades.

All this distinguishes most clearly *hades* in the New Testament from its contemporaneous *paradise*; turns our thoughts into two most *opposite* directions for the godly and the ungodly dead, and not to one and the same sheol, as is the case in the Old Testament.

But if paradise has now in it all the disembodied spirits of the righteous, and hades has none but the wicked now remaining there, there must have been a time and a means of removing the righteous from the one to the other. As to this also Scripture guides us



From Hades to Paradise.

PARADISE as an abode for departed believers instead of hades, was first named by Jesus at His mighty death; hence Heb. ii. 14, 15 may be named first: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through *death* he might destroy (frustrate) him that had the power (authority) of death, that is, the devil; and DELIVER them who through fear of death *were all their lifetime* subject to bondage."

It is those, then, whose days on earth are *past* who are here spoken of as *delivered*; and the deliverance is accomplished by Jesus at His death. Their deliverance, then, can only be from the *hades*, the state of the dead, in which Satan as an adversary and

an accuser has held them, and has made the same claim over them as he also did over the body of Moses when contending with Michael. (Jude 9.)

Jesus, our Lord, thus in measure fulfils His own parable: "When a strong man armed (*i.e.* Satan) keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he (Jesus) shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and *divideth his spoils.*" (Luke xi. 21, 22.) Compare also Eph. iv. 8.: "Wherefore he saith, When he (Jesus) ascended up on high, he led captivity captive (or, he led a multitude of captives, see margin) and gave gifts to men." "Gave gifts to men" means the endowment of the Spirit on living believers at Pentecost and subsequently (see v. 11); but the "captivity led captive" may well point us to the deliverance of departed saints from hades through Jesus' mighty work on Calvary.

" By weakness and defeat
 He won the meed and crown;
 Trod all our foes beneath His feet
 By being trodden down.

" He hell in hell laid low;
 Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew."

And it is only natural to suppose, that the Saviour's victory by dying, would as surely and as really add to the joys and blessings of His departed saints as we well know it did, and still does, to the blessing of His living saints. To us, the living, it is by the "gifts to men" at Pentecost; to the departed it was, and still is, by captivity being "led captive."

It would appear, therefore, that Christ did immediately upon His death pass through hades, claiming as His own all there who had from the beginning ever believed in Him, and bore them at once with Him to the paradise that He had gained by dying. His soul could not be *detained* one moment in hades, any more than His flesh could see corruption. (Acts ii. 31.) Also, even His passing through must be that of a conqueror, a mightier one than Satan—the "strong man armed." And this speed of His delivering work agrees with the *time* He spoke of to the dying thief, "TO-DAY shalt thou be with ME in paradise."

But there is yet another Scripture very definite on this precious subject. It is Romans xiv. 9: "For to

this end Christ both died and revived (omit "and rose"—see Greek Testament), that He might be Lord both of *the dead* and the living."

We are here distinctly told that lordship over "the dead" was one object of Christ's dying; and by "the dead" is meant *His own servants* who die, or have died; for the subject-matter of Romans xvi. is Christ's own servants, and, the widely different and even opposite ways in which they truly serve Him. One eats "to the Lord; another equally "to the Lord" refuses to eat. One serves Christ in his regarding of one day (some Jewish day) above another; whilst another serves Him in not any longer so regarding any such day. But the domain of Christ as a Master is wide enough for Him to own both of them as serving Him; for He has a power and a liberty which the strictness and letter of Jewish ritual could not allow Israel's service to have under Moses.

But the subject still enlarges, and takes in the *dying of believers* as well as their living; "for," says Paul, "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Under Moses, as God's "king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together" (Deut. xxxiii. 5), if any died, they passed from the domain of Moses and the reach of his authority. They had been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea" as they left Egypt; but by death this link was severed. Not so, says Paul, with Christ as a Master and Lord. His care of His servants, and His authority over them, is with them even in death, and after it. The date and the means of Christ's obtaining this wide dominion are then given; viz., He "died and revived," *that He might have it*. It dates from Jesus' mighty death, and springs from it as from its only possible source.

The truth is, Jesus our Lord is Captain and Leader of His saints on both sides of the Jordan stream, taking Jordan, for illustration' sake, as an emblem of the death of believers. Only Jesus could be this; for He only can say, "I am he that liveth, *and was dead*; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and *have the keys* of hell and of death." Moses was leader of an earthly Israel up to Jordan, but could not cross it; Joshua had to be captain through it

and on the other side. Aaron was high priest on this side the stream ; but it was Eleazar who went with the ark through it, and knew its triumphs at Jericho. And of "the Israel of God" of our time, it is true that

*"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now ;"*

and Jesus only can be Captain and Priest, both for them and for us also "that are alive, and remain." His power as Captain, and His sympathy as High Priest, avail for ALL His servants ; for He has died and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.

How this great change for us of this age from hades to paradise should affect our souls and our service may be the subject of another paper.



Death Disarmed.

IN previous papers the difference between hades and paradise has been shown from Scripture, and the transition of Old Testament saints from one to the other. It only remains to bring the subject to bear upon our souls and our service.

One instant effect of "paradise," and not hades, being now recognised as the abode of any of us who depart until the resurrection morn, is the joy thereby afforded to the feeblest child of God at the prospect of dying. To Old Testament saints, dying was as a rule a gloomy thing, because it removed them from all that was bright and active in the earthly scene around them, to the sheol or under world of silence and solitude. Its very tranquility was inseparable from its darkness. Hence it needed the sorrow of a Job and a Jeremiah, to make death seem to them

preferable to life. It was only when Job had lost his property, his children, and his bodily health, and in the bitterness of his grief cursed the day of his birth, that he ever spoke of longing for death, and of men being "glad when they can find the grave," or described it in the attractive words, "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest." (See Job iii. 3, 17, 22; also Jer. xx. 10-18.)

Nor was its near approach under more ordinary circumstances a thing of gladness. In Psa. xxxix, where David—submissive under the hand of his God—is "dumb," and opens not his mouth in any murmuring like Job or Jeremiah, he yet ends by saying, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be NO MORE." These last words were the brightest he had to say of the disembodied or hades state.

Similar were the thoughts and feelings of king Hezekiah when he was "sick unto death." It does not appear to have been a mortal sickness on him as any special rebuke from God, and therefore causing him gloom. On the contrary, Hezekiah was himself able to plead, "Remember now, O Jehovah, how I

have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." But "Hezekiah wept sore," and his own subsequent "writing" was, "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." (Isa. xxxviii. 3, 10 11.)

Such was the prospect of death to Old Testament believers. It was to them a passing away into an unknown and a gloomy region—of safety, it is true, and of rest, but of solitude and silence and inactivity; and they shunned it, and preferred "length of days" in this world not only as a well-known Old Testament token of God's favour, but as in itself preferable to departure.

But how changed is all this now! It has now become easy to die, but hard to live—"easy to die," one has well said, "because of the blood, but hard to live because of sin and temptation;" and not only because of the blood, but also, as Paul says, because "to depart" is "to be WITH CHRIST, which is far better."

Just as our Lord's words, "*with Me* in paradise," gave to the dying thief the double joy of not only

" There is no condemnation ;
There is no hell for me,
The torment and the fire
Mine eyes shall never see ;"

but also that his approaching last breath would usher him *into the presence* of his new-found Saviour and Friend for ever.

Death is therefore now as truly without terror, or even repulsiveness to the believer's *feelings*, as it is without a sting to his conscience. If he dies, he does not even "see death ;" bystanders see it (and perhaps in some painful bodily form), but the dying one sees Jesus, and sees the paradise to which Jesus welcomes him. This makes dying to be only a step of nearer approach to Jesus for the saved one than he ever knew before. Whatever had been his enjoyment of *believing* nearness whilst still in the body, his dying moment is to him an increase, a vast increase, of that same kind of joy.

Nor is death felt by the believer's soul to be even a rough or difficult passage into Christ's presence ; for the same Holy Ghost who now "witnesses with our

"spirits" all our believing lifetime "that we are children of God," is no less divinely "with our spirits" also as we leave the mortal frame. With utmost liberty do our souls "enter into the holiest," now by *faith*, by day or night, through the *blood* of Jesus; and with utmost joy can the believer now depart to be with Christ by dying, because His power has made "death" as truly ours as "life." (1 Cor. iii. 22.) Thus joy in departing and the welcoming of death, so far as our own soul's happiness is concerned, is one blessed effect to us of paradise being ours instead of hades. In the lit-up evening sitting-room, with its pleasant company and cheerful surroundings, a child dislikes the very mention of the dark and solitary sleeping chamber to which the kind parent bids it go, and wishes bedtime were not come; but another evening, when for some reason the child is to have the unusual pleasure of sharing its own mother's chamber and bed, it will be found wishing the bedtime were come, even though the sitting-room company and surroundings were the very same as before; and this simply because of the great change which its dearly-loved mother's company has made in the matter. Such is the difference proper to the

child of God in this age between a *Paradise* of being "with Christ," and the dim *Sheol* or *Hades* of former ages.

And if throughout this whole age this joy in dying is proper to the saints, it is still more true as its *guilty close* draws on. The thickening of sin and temptation around, which makes it harder still for us to live in it as saints should, makes it more and more blessed to depart. This seems the meaning of the word "*henceforth*" in Rev. xiv. 13, and the reason of the express command to John to write it, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from thenceforth*." Ever since Jesus by His death became "*Lord* both of the dead and the living," it was always blessed to "die in the Lord;" but Rev. xiv. is the first mention of Babylon in the book of Revelation, and no sooner has that harlot iniquity appeared, both secular and religious, than it is *emphatically* declared *from henceforth* to be blessed to depart. "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest* from their labours; and their works do follow them." This rest they could not know as long as Babylon's defilements were always surrounding them with sin and temptation. Such

too was Daniel's experience in Old Testament Babylon from the outset of his godly life, when in youth he had as a Hebrew to watch against defiling himself with the "king's meat," on to his old age, when he would still pray three times a day to Jehovah only, spite of the atheistic edict of Darius. No wonder his gracious dismissal from a life of such spiritual toil and conflict is thus worded, "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou SHALT REST" (which he had never been able to do in Babylon), "and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. xii. 13.) How like are such words to the corresponding New Testament comfort in Rev. xiv. 13. (Compare also Isa. lvii. 1, 2.) Surely therefore in the deepening evil of the present century, our individually departing to be with Christ should be joy to any of us, and be reckoned "blessed" indeed. Well may one of our own time say,

"Were I from this, my house of clay,
By death's *kind hand* set free,
My spirit would, by angels borne,
To Jesus' bosom flee.

"No guilt can there benumb my soul,
Escaped from Satan's wiles ;}

Atoning blood perfumes that place,
And nothing there defiles.

“ Ceaseless my new and holy song,
And sung with heaven-born skill,
Of Christ the Lamb, that soon shall be
Enthroned on Zion's hill.” *

* HYMNS, by R. C. Chapman.



“With Christ which is Far Better.”

BUT paradise in view, instead of hades, also *strengthens* us for present spiritual conflict, and in two ways.

First, by weaning us from our natural love of this present life; for it shows us how near to us our Lord Jesus is to receive our spirits, and how short and easy, as well as blessed, the step for us into that “far better” state. “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John xii. 25), was our Lord’s word to His own who would serve Him and follow Him; and again, in Luke xiv. 26, “If any man . . . hate not . . . his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Whatever therefore helps us to let go present life, and, Paul-like, not count it dear to us, nor yet the things of it, also arms us for our warfare,

and makes us joyful to end our pilgrimage at any moment ; and paradise being ours, does this. To the Old Testament believer death was terrible, because *dispensationally* he had such hold on present life, as well as by a soul that naturally cleaved to the dust ; but to us death is but the stepping into a luminous chamber, the light from which has already reached us in our house of clay by chinks which service to Christ has made.

But secondly, paradise also guides us in the *character* of our service, so that in that service we may not spend time or strength amiss. Had Martha been in our privileged time, her somewhat missing the mark in the aims of her service to Christ would have been with less excuse ; for paradise in view teaches us not to be cumbered with "much serving" of viands for the body. The supply of only needful food is surely taught us, by the fact that we may at any moment be taken where our pleasing of our Lord "far better," and loving Him far more, than we possibly *can* do here, will be without any use of the mortal body at all. And since to be "with Christ" is now shown us as the very essence of our joy should we die, are we not thereby guided to an abiding *in Him*,

and a communing *with Him*, as our highest present service, and as our best and our only successful attitude of soul against all present spiritual foes? Certain it is that Paul, who had so distinctly known what it was early in his ministry to be "caught up into paradise," and to hear its unspeakable utterances of joy, was so marked in his subsequent service by keeping his body under, and not beating the air; and it is to him we are indebted for the expression, "FAR BETTER," as to departing this life at any time.

If then our Lord should call us to depart ere He comes, may every view we have of *paradise* as ours instead of *hades*, guide and strengthen us during our short remaining stay below. Amen.

In Memoriam:

Mr. Henry Dyer.

"God took Him." *November 15th, 1896.*

○ RAPTUR'D worshipper!

Our hearts would follow thee within the veil,
As wrapped in wonder, first thine eyes beheld,
Without a cloud between, thy glorious Lord!
What were thy feelings then? Say, did thy speech
(On earth so ready) find a fitting word
To make thy heart's full adoration known?
Or low in solemn silence didst thou bow—
Silence more eloquent than oral speech—
Before the LAMB once slain on Calvary?

Well we remember with what rev'rence thou
On earth didst worship at His sacred feet:
And with what mingled feelings—joy and grief—
Thy spirit contemplated Calvary's woe!
But who shall tell what that glad moment wrought
Within thy breast, when thou didst see his face,
And on thine ears Heaven's sacred *Hallel* fell?
That song had oft on earth entranced thy soul,
But with what holy rapture thou wouldst haste
To join the anthem and to swell His praise,

While in the body pent *our* spirits are,
Mem'ry will oft recall the sacred hour
When round the hallow'd Table of our Lord,
In sweet communion, thou didst lead our souls
In worship low to bow before the throne.

Brother, belov'd and longed for, we shall miss
Thy saintly service in the church below!
Vig'rous in mind and strong in soul wast thou—
Like fiery steeds which Pharaoh's chariot drew,
So were they as compared to thy frail flesh.

Thy sacrifice of self, thy zealous love,
Endeared thee to our hearts in either sphere,
Yet not one moment would we bring thee back;
With patient expectation we would watch,
And wait the mighty Voice which soon shall call
To union everlasting with our God.

Leominster

M. M. D.