

CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS,

BEING

NOTES OF LECTURES.

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CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

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No. 1.

ENTRANCE INTO THE HOLIEST.

HEBREWS X. 1-22

I DESIRE, in these lectures, if the Lord permit, to bring before you the blessings which are peculiar to Christianity. I beg you to bear in mind the words I use, "peculiar to Christianity;" that Christians only enjoy those blessings, and that they are connected with Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. I dare say some here may not quite understand what I mean by peculiar to Christians; I mean peculiar to the saints of this present period during the rejection of Christ. I suppose there is no one here who will not admit that Christ has been rejected on the earth. Apparently as to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, His going away shattered all their hopes of blessing here; so much so that they said, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" All was over. It is a terrible thing that God's Son was refused here; hence you read in Psalm cx., as the Lord quotes it in Matthew xxii., "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand

till I make thine enemies thy footstool." He is called away for a certain time. Now what occurs in that interval? It is of the deepest importance that you should bear in mind that He has been called away, but instead of thinking, like the two disciples, that all is over, new blessings come out from Christ in His exaltation; a new company is found on the earth.

I desire to describe the blessings which have come out, and I begin with entrance into the Holiest; though I must remark that the varied blessings are so interwoven that you cannot put them in succession. Still, I think it is a main point for the young believer to get hold of the fact, that there is a class of blessings which are connected with Christ's exaltation at the right hand of God, in addition to all that He accomplished on the earth, and that it is into this class of blessings you are brought.

I refer first briefly to Leviticus xvi. There are plainly two classes there; there was the high priest and his house, and there was the congregation. The high priest and his house typifies Christ and the saints of this present time. The confusion of Christendom arises from trying to mingle the two classes, and to bring in the congregation as if *that* part of the type was fulfilled. The congregation was not blessed till the priest came out; and the Priest has not

come out yet. He has gone into heaven itself, gone in for His house ; “ Whose house are we,” thank God ! You see this is connected with the fact of His exaltation.

I submit that in Leviticus xvi. there is a great difference between the scapegoat and the high priest gone within the veil. Now that is exactly the difference between the christian blessing, and the blessing of the congregation in the millennial day. But many Christians do not get in their souls beyond the latter blessing. The scapegoat carried away the people’s sins into the land of forgetfulness. The people of God on the earth, where all their sins were committed, had this wonderful assurance in their souls—all our sins are carried into the land of forgetfulness. But when the high priest went into the Holiest, it was not a question of sins at all, it was the contrast to sins—the holiness of God. If you apprehend this one sentence, I think you will understand my aim. I maintain that in the Holiest there is *no thought of sin at all*, because it is *the holiness of God’s presence*. It is a wonderful grace to be assured that in the place where all our sins were committed, they are completely removed into the land of forgetfulness ; but then you are in the place where they occurred. But when you enter the Holiest of all there is no sin there ; it is the contrast—the holiness of God’s

presence. You get the idea where the apostle says, "Righteousness unto holiness." Now many are justified by faith, but they do not know entrance into the Holiest. We have sung, "His presence is our home." There is not a shade there, not a spot. You can never understand the Holiest until you are in it.

I now turn to the scripture I read, to shew you that we have the right to enter the Holiest ; this you get in verse 19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Christ is there, and we have now the antitype of Leviticus xvi. ; the High Priest has gone in, and we are His companions who share with Him in that place. I shall prove this, and shew you that it is our right.

The first thing in the opening of this chapter is that "The worshippers once purged," shall have "no more conscience of sins ;" it does not say "consciousness," but "conscience ;" nothing can be stronger. In Hebrews i. we read, "When he had by himself purged sins, sat down ;" here (chap. x.) it is definitely in connection with His exaltation. Verse 11 : "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins ; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever " [or "continually "] "sat down on the right hand of God ; from henceforth ex-

pecting" [or "waiting"] "till his enemies be made his footstool." (See Psalm cx. to which I had referred.) The fact of His sitting down there proved that all was done ; "There is no more offering for sin." I dare say some will say, We commit sins : I will come to that presently. But there are two things which it is necessary to see. First, that it is God whom you have offended ; and secondly, that it is God Himself who has reconciled you to Himself. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; He has effected the reconciliation. I refer to this passage to prove that His sitting down is proof positive that sins are gone. I do not want to occupy you with sins. I know some quote Revelation i. and Revelation v. ; but in those scriptures the reference is to the earth, and not to the Holiest. You may ask, Do you object to the recalling that sins have been put away ? I say that if you are in the place where the sins have been put away, as in the millennial day, then there will be a continual recalling of the fact ; but you have a right to enter the Holiest, where there could not be a sin, and this is of the deepest importance. I believe (I speak advisedly), that if you do not understand the wonderful place of nearness into which you are brought, even that you have the right of entrance into the Holiest, you will never understand the

blessings which are peculiar to a Christian. If I look at the Corinthians or the Galatians, where did their failure begin? They were not dead to sin. I believe no one advances till he has learned to be dead to sin. But this is not my subject now.

It is wonderful grace that in the place where we are, sins are carried into the land of forgetfulness ; but we have the right of entrance into the Holiest ; the difference is, one is negative, and the other positive : one is that sins are gone ; but the other is that you enter the sphere of holiness where there never was a spot : you draw near with your heart purged from an evil conscience and your body washed with pure water. You may say, Do we not get soiled? I am coming to that presently. As I said before, you must see two things—that man has offended God, and God Himself has removed the offence : it has been, for every believer, removed from His eye for ever, in the sacrifice of His own Son : “ That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Take the history of a soul. Many a convert has got relief in his conscience from his sins, because of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ ; that is, he does not see further than Romans iii., he has faith in the work of Christ, but he has not come in faith to Christ. He is like the woman who touched the hem of Christ's gar-

ment ; assured of His work, but not yet acquainted with Himself.

Turn now to the end of Romans iv. ; there we read that He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification.” I believe Romans iii. answers to Exodus xii., and Romans iv. answers to Exodus xiv.—the Red Sea ; you not only know that you have shelter, because God sees the blood, which is true, but you believe that God has raised Christ from the dead. This is a wonderful moment for the soul. You see a man out of death—God raised Him from the dead. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” The first eleven verses of Romans v. describe your state ; I do not say your standing, justification is your standing ; those eleven verses unfold the terms on which God is with you. The prodigal son could say, when his father kissed him, I now know something of my father’s feelings towards me. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith into this favour wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;” the conclusion is (ver. 11), “We boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received” [not “the

atonement," but] "the reconciliation;" that is, you are brought to God on the terms which He Himself has effected. You have not to make terms with your Father, but He has made terms with the believer in Jesus, and it is on His own terms you meet Him, on the terms of affection and intercourse which He has effected for you through Christ. We were estranged from God, He has reconciled us unto Himself; we created the distance, and God has removed it. He was the first relieved.

I now turn to Romans viii., though I cannot go into it fully. Here I may remark that the Holy Ghost coming down from a glorified Christ to dwell in the believer is another blessing peculiar to a Christian. No saints of whom we read in scripture will be equally favoured. They will have the Holy Ghost *on* them, but not *in* them; the distinction is an important one. Hence when Peter quotes Joel to shew that the Holy Ghost will be poured out on all flesh, he adds the present blessing, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The Holy Ghost was to remain "with them" and to be "in them" according to John xiv. We read in Romans viii., "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which

are in Christ Jesus," and then (ver. 2), "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." You are justified, and you know the terms on which God can meet you. Thank God! that we saw in chapter v. But here it is the blessed state in which you are before Him in Christ, the Spirit is in you, and you have liberty: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" that is, sin has been condemned, not only is there no more remembrance of sins, but sin has been condemned. At the close of Hebrews ix. we read, He hath appeared to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and, He "was once offered to bear the sins of many."

I trust you apprehend this twofold state; that you are justified, and that sin has been condemned in the cross of Christ. Still, the entrance into the Holiest is not yet; you are ready for it. It has been well said, Romans rather describes Exodus, that is, escape, deliverance, redemption; and Hebrews describes Leviticus, which is APPROACH. This is most important, because I think many are satisfied with the knowledge of justification who do not know *approach*. The blessed God looks for approach.

We see in the case of the ten lepers (Luke xvii.) they were all cleansed, and nine went to ritualism according to Leviticus xiv., to work up to approach ; only one came directly to the Lord (I believe he is a sample for us), "and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." This was approach.

I now turn to Hebrews, to present the way we approach. We are through grace Christ's companions. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He has gone within the veil, a priest after the order of Melchisedec. There is a remarkable difference between the present and the millennial day. In the latter the high priest comes out and blesses the people. Hence in Christendom a clergyman cannot pronounce the blessing until he is priested, on the ground that a priest only could pronounce the blessing. It is all a mistake ; the High Priest has not come out yet. The blood was carried in, that the high priest might come out and bless the people. It is quite true Christ has gone in, but He has not come out yet. We know Christ will bless the people when He comes out ; but now we are to know Him where He is within the veil. In Hebrews you do not get beyond the right of entrance into the Holiest ; you do not get to Ephesian ground.

Now in Hebrews ii. 11 we read : "He that

sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." In chapter iii. we read we are His house—"Whose house are we." We are the consecrated company ; I refer to Leviticus viii.—the consecration of Aaron's sons. We, as Christ's house, are identified with Him. Aaron and his sons went in, in a common fragrance ; they were filled with what he was, it was a common filling ; and that was the consecration. People speak of consecration as what they give the Lord. The consecration, or the filling of the hands, is from the Lord. We are His "companions ;" we are "all of one ;" we are His "brethren." As in John xii., "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit ;" that is, many grains ; we are altogether a new order. We are not of the stock of Israel, but of quite a new one. May the youngest in this room ponder it for himself or herself. We are justified ; "Our old man is crucified with Christ ;" we are His companions in the fragrance of Himself ; but more, we are of His own order.

The Lord give you to understand that you are of this consecrated company, that is, that you are of His house. And the consecration took place (which is important to bear in mind)

after all the offerings, which typified Christ's work, were offered ; then followed the consecration ; and as the consecrated ones, they accompanied the high priest into the holy places. If the veil were removed, they would have the right of entrance into the Holiest.

Now I pass on to chapter x., which I read, and here I find in verse 19 : " Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near." It does not speak as it does in Ephesians of what occurs there ; all you get here is the right to go in. There is not a shade of sin there. I press on you earnestly, that if you are dwelling on the great fact that your sins are gone, which is true and most blessed, you are connected with the earth where they were committed ; hence many Christians refer to their sins being gone, in order to revive the assurance of the grace ; but they have not left the earth, they have not boldness to enter the Holiest.

Our hymns suit souls in a variety of state, and to choose one is a test often of your spirituality. It is plain to any one who considers it, that if your place is on the earth, you will speak of sins being removed ; but if

you are in the Holiest, you will be occupied with the order of things there.

First, you must apprehend God's grace in its fulness, and then we may consider for a little the objection, "But when we fail, we lose it." Certainly, when we fail we lose the enjoyment of it ; but first be assured of enjoying it, before you speak of losing it. Do you know that you have the right to enter into the Holiest, where there is no spot, and all through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the infinite satisfaction and glory of the blessed God? Now, you say, I may lose the sense of it : that I do not at all deny ; but I say, first you must have it. God does not send angels to teach us ; He sends teachers who are just as feeble and just as liable to fall as anybody else ; and therefore it is only by the grace of God that one is kept or restored.

Now I turn for a moment to speak of failure. You have lost your true place ; you find that practically you are not walking in the Spirit. What is to be done? Well, beloved friends, the first thing I must press is, that if you fail and do not judge yourself—discern yourself is the more correct expression—you will be judged of the Lord ; you are chastened of the Lord that you should not be condemned with the world. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

It is important to bear in mind that God has judged your flesh in the cross, and He never revives it ; but when we revive it and do not discern it before Him, He chastens us : that is discipline. There are two classes of discipline : one is to correct you when you are wrong, and the other is to help you when you are doing rightly. When any sin is on your conscience, confess it. " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And I believe if you are truly exercised, you will have the sense by the Spirit of God, that Christ bore the judgment of God for that gratification of the flesh to which you have yielded, according to the type of the ashes in the running water in Numbers xix. This is true exercise, and you are cleansed ; you are brought back, or restored, to the place you lost. The Advocate is with the Father ; He restores to communion. If any one has enjoyed being in the Holiest where there is not a spot, and has lost it, when you are restored you are restored to what was lost, and not to anything less. The priests were consecrated only once. You are not newly consecrated, you return to your consecration ; you come back to what you are ; but not without exercise.

There is one point more I would like to say a word on. It is as to losing communion ; I

think sometimes we are not sensitive enough about it ; and it is connected with the Holiest. It is a remark of much value, that Peter's conscience was relieved in John xx., but his heart was not until chapter xxi. Many Christians walk with a clear conscience, who have not yet known intimacy with Christ. If you are not acquainted with Him, you cannot be conscious of a break in it. You may be like Peter, with your conscience relieved, and happy affections restored ; but the root of the failure not touched, as in John xxi., when the Lord said to him, " Lovest thou me more than these ? " The root of his failure was, that he was seeking to be prominent above all the disciples for loving the Lord. The very quality for which you think you are creditable is the one in which you will fail most, and then you will be humbled ; here the washing of the feet applies. As has been said, and very truly, advocacy is always going on ; but when your feet are washed you are conscious of it.

I have said this to shew you how you are restored to communion, but the great point I had before me is, the holiness of the place to which we are brought—the Holiest.

Oh what a great thing if every one in this room had that sense ; not only, I am on this earth where all my sins are gone into the land of

forgetfulness, but I have got to a **new** place where there is no sin at all: and what occupies me there is the wonderful perfection of the blessed Lord, by faith and in spirit in association with Himself, where there is no shade of sin, no question of sin, but of holiness, where everything is in keeping with God's mind! We do not go in alone, we have "a great Priest" over the house of God.

I have no doubt at all that if you once had the sense that it was not a question of sin being gone, but of your being brought into a scene of unclouded light, where all is according to God—the Holiest, where the cherubim of glory rested on the mercy-seat, of which the antitype is Christ in glory, your heart would be more and more set on enjoying this great blessing.

The Lord lead each of you to apprehend the great portion of every believer. May you say, I know the desire of my Father's heart for me, and I look to Him that I may be up to His desire. Is there one in this room who would not say, I should like to be up to His desire?—not only to receive the Father's kiss, but to share in the joys of the Father's house—blessed be His name!—in heart assured that we have "boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 2.

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE NEW STATE.

I CORINTHIANS II. II.

THE subject I have already commenced and desire to continue is—"The blessings peculiar to the Christian." We find that these blessings date from the time when the Lord had gone away, and was exalted to God's right hand ; then blessings of a new character were vouchsafed to His own on this earth, where He had been rejected. On the former evening I was dwelling on the difference between being assured that our sins, where they were committed, have been carried into the land of forgetfulness—a very great thing to know, and that we also have the right of entrance into the Holiest. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

This evening I desire to bring before you the gift of the Holy Ghost.

As I mentioned the last evening, these blessings are so interwoven that it is not possible to put them in succession, still we have to learn them. Now we have received the Spirit of God, and nothing can be plainer than the verse I have read. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so knoweth no man the things of God, but the Spirit of God." This is very definite. Now I desire to trace the Spirit's work.

I begin with the fact that the Holy Ghost came down when Christ was glorified, as we read in John xiv., to remain "with you," and to be "in you." No other company except the church will be favoured in the same way. Peter in Acts ii. quotes Joel's prophecy in order to prove that the Holy Ghost would be poured out *upon* all flesh; and then he makes an addition, that Christ being exalted to God's right hand, and "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." That is an addition to Joel's prophecy, and is the blessing peculiar to Christians; as Paul in Ephesians i. writes, "In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." I believe this is the first sense you have of a link with Christ personally.

I must refer to several scriptures, and I trust

you will be able to take a note of them. The work of the Spirit is divided into two parts in John's Gospel, and I think it is a great help to see this; the Holy Ghost is given for your benefit, and also for Christ's service. Now there is a danger of confounding these. Turn to John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well" [or rather, "a fountain"] "of water springing up into everlasting life." Plainly this is in yourself. It is entirely new, and a contrast to John ii., where the wine was out, while this marvellous gift is to be in you. There is a new power in you, and that power the Spirit of God. You could not know the things of God unless by the Spirit of God. Everything you know of God, you know by the Spirit of God; and you never lose that knowledge. You may lose something you had heard, or a conception of your own mind, but you will never lose anything the Spirit of God has imparted; it is yours; and that is properly your true state. You start with this fact—that all the will of God for you has been finished by Christ; you do not know it all, but it is all done. The Spirit of God gives you conscious knowledge of His work, and all you learn by the Spirit of God remains. If you are under a cloud, you lose your enjoyment of this grace, but when the

cloud is gone, you are sure to come back to where you were. If a babe in Christ falls and is restored, he is restored to a babe. If a father in Christ falls, he is restored to a father. The Spirit's work remains; it is not of the flesh, hence it is your true state.

For the first part of the Spirit's work, I turn to Romans v. 1-11. I believe the first great thing that a believer learns by the Spirit of God is—the terms on which God can be with him. You have offended against God. The mistake often is, that souls are not set on ascertaining how God whom they have offended, stands towards them. Their conscience, or how they can be relieved, is before them. Now the first 11 verses of Romans v. set forth how God is towards you; that is, if I may use a familiar phrase, the terms of affection on which He is, so that "We joy" [or "boast"] "in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." The prodigal son could say, I never expected that my father would be on such loving terms with me. I was trying to be on terms with him, but I find he is on terms with me. The Spirit leads you into the joy of this great acceptance.

I must add to this Romans viii. It is the saying of another, that as chapter v. 1-11 sets forth how God meets you, so chapter viii. sets

forth how you are in Christ before Him. The Spirit effects it. Verse 2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." If you would understand the greatness of the gift in John iv. 14, you must study Romans viii. You will find there four parts of the work of the Spirit. First, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Marvellous grace! The second is the greatness of your relationship, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The third is, though you are in a groaning creation, you are "Waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body." And the fourth, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," but you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you; He is your friend, so acquainted with your concerns that "He maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

I trust I have given you some idea of the first work of the Spirit. I merely add that if you do not know this work you will not advance to any other. The Corinthians and the Galatians failed here; they were not dead to sin; though they had the Spirit, they did not know His first work (as detailed in Romans v. and viii.) It is most blessed that the Spirit of God first settles questions about yourself, for you have not rest of heart until they are settled; hence many are

looking for holiness by faith, or perfectionism, simply because they are not in the power of the Spirit. When you walk in the Spirit you are superior to the flesh.

For the next work, I turn to John vii. 37-39, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." I know it is often thought that this refers to serving others; but I think the meaning is that your blessing is so full that it overflows. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, as they were celebrating how God had made the earth to minister to them, the Lord challenges them, when He said, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." I can do infinitely better for him. The state of those here is a contrast to chapter iv. ; there we see a woman in the most deplorable condition, and the grace of God will set her up in a most blessed way. Here man is surrounded with every earthly blessing, and the Lord says, I can do more for you. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." You may

say, What is it? It is the Spirit making known to us the resources which are in Christ personally. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." I believe the fatted calf is a figure of it. It is individually known. The man in John ix. had it when he said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him."

The next work of the Spirit I find in Hebrews. It is this, if you have learnt something of the resources which are in Christ, you are soon aware that He who is so much to you is not here. I hope to go into this blessed subject fully another time, if the Lord permit me. I refer to the priesthood of Christ: He can sympathise with you in the greatest weakness, because of sorrow and pressure here, and He also would maintain you in the brightest spot in the presence of God. The effect is, that you are drawn away from earth to a Person who is not here; you are attached to Christ in another place—hence I consider it a distinct progress in the Spirit's work. I am pointing out, as far as I see, the order in which the Spirit of God works in the believer.

There is one thing of deep importance, I cannot fully explain; it is, that every Christian in his behaviour, in his body, discloses the measure of the Spirit's work in him.

I will give you three examples. The first is in Romans xii., "That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. . . . Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Surely that is your body, your personal appearance? I do not mean merely dress; I mean your whole bearing. The second is, not merely that you are not conformed to this world, but that you are transformed into the same image (2 Cor. iii. 18). This is a great advance. And again, running the race set before us, looking out unto Jesus, encountering every obstacle on the way, is still more. (Heb. xii.) Your personal way and course indicate the measure of the Spirit's power in you.

The next work of the Spirit is to lead you to be here for Christ. He was here for you; the Spirit first makes this known to you, then He leads you to be here for Him. The Lord in John xiii. and xiv., knowing that He came from God and went to God, prepares His disciples to be here for Him in His absence. It is in the assembly you learn your calling and duty: you are to have part with Him outside and above everything here. He has gone to the Father. He is supreme, and as you are led by the Spirit, you please Him in your service. To this end the Spirit of

God was to bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said to them. There were two periods in the Lord's life on earth ; there were thirty years of private life, and three years of public life. It is to the three years of public life the Lord alludes here. You will find the importance of it. In the thirty years of His private life He set forth what a man was to the eye of God, so that at the close the Father announces, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But in the three years of His ministry He was setting forth what the Father was to man—quite different—and hence, at the close of this period, when on the holy mount, the voice came, "This is my beloved Son, hear him : " as you read in the gospel narrative. It is in the assembly that we get our mission, as we learn from John xx., which is the assembly in pattern : "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The work of the Spirit, in order to fit us for service, is enunciated in chapter xiv., and it is only as this work is known that you are qualified for service ; you receive considerably for yourselves in order to be of use to others.

The next work of the Spirit is in John xv. You have come out here to be as the branches of Christ ; you must abide in Him, and He in you. As far as I see, this is the knowledge of

Christ as Head, and, as deriving from Him, you bear much fruit. As you abide in Him and He in you, you set forth the blessedness of God's heart to man ; and this is true service.

The next work I do not find easy to explain, because the less we know of a truth the less we can explain it. In John xv. 26 we come to another action of the Holy Ghost: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." I ask you to bear in mind the difference between the Spirit's work in chapter xiv. and His work in chapter xv. I am trying to shew you the great position in which you are set on the earth. In chapter xiv. you are prepared for service. But in chapter xv. you bear fruit, you are His branches, His servants. Here in chapter xv. 26 the Holy Ghost is sent from Christ in heaven for a special purpose: "He shall testify of me." It was not merely to testify *for* Me, it is to "testify *of* me." I cannot conceive anything greater than this—that the Holy Ghost should enable you to stand forth here in testimony of Christ in heaven, as well as to bear fruit. You are both a servant and a witness. I see many serving who are not witnessing. A witness testifies of a Man whom the world would not have—the

heavenly Man. Here doubtless we enter on the Epistle to the Ephesians, you must be a heavenly man before you can testify of Christ in heaven. No one else could do it. I cannot dwell on this ; but I trust you see that the Spirit leads you to testify of the heavenly Man on the earth. Though this will expose you to all the opposition of Satan, yet you will be personally, in the armour of God and in the power of His might, able to withstand all Satan's wiles ; you will come out in a new character. As I have said, your manner of life always indicates the measure in which the Spirit of God works in you. It is a solemn fact that if you are a witness, that is descriptive of the heavenly Man, you cannot seek nor maintain a position in the world. The Spirit first demonstrates that the world is in sin, because they believe not on Christ ; of righteousness, because He has gone to the Father ; and finally of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

I must add a little on John xvii. The Spirit, according to it, enables us to be here as belonging to the Father, kept by Him and learning of Him in such unity and sanctification that the world should believe that He had sent Christ ; and eventually that the world should know, not only that Christ was sent,

but that we are loved by the Father as Christ is loved. The more we are led by the Spirit, the better we shall apprehend the great place to which we are called here during the absence of Christ.

In conclusion I would call your attention very briefly to a subject very often overlooked. It is, that as we suffer with Christ we shall reign with Him. I have already stated that your body indicates the measure of the Spirit's work in you, it characterises you. Everything you do, "The deeds done in the body," will affect your position with the Lord when He comes to reign. Hence the Spirit leads you to look for the coming of the Lord: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." People speak of going to heaven; I would add—Are you waiting for His Son from heaven? Every believer without doubt will go to heaven; but it is as you suffer, or endure with Him, that you shall reign with Him. The harder your life is here for Christ, the better will be your place with Christ in the kingdom. If you have an easy life here, you will have a very small place in the kingdom. And therefore if you are walking in the Spirit, He is sure to lead you; it is not a question of how much you do, but how the Spirit leads you to be here for Christ—not so much what you do, but that you endure.

I think many, with very little ostentation, are well-pleasing unto the Lord, like a star which you see in a dark night : or like Mary sitting at His feet, hearing His word ; she was doing nothing apparently, while Martha was very busy ; yet Mary had chosen the good part ; she was seeking her Lord's mind. And if you are led by the Spirit, it will be with you as it was with Mary ; when she did act, she quite surpassed Martha. In order to complete the subject of the leading of the Spirit, you must learn that He is conducting you here in view of the kingdom. James and John asked for the chief places ; the Lord answered, " It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." I fear that there is too much indifference about the kingdom generally. Are you thinking that Christ will reign here ? In the epistles, I find the kingdom much referred to. Saints were thinking of the Lord coming to reign, to take His place here ; hence, " the day of the Lord," or the appearing of the Lord, is kept prominently before them.

I need not add more : I trust it may interest the youngest believer in this room, and be a stay and cheer to his heart to know that the Spirit of God has been given to him : " In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Most blessed ! God's

greatest gift to us! He could not give anything greater.

Beloved friends, if the Lord has been pleased to bring this subject in any measure of interest before you, may He also grant that you may discover the wonderful nature of the blessedness into which you are brought, because sealed by the Spirit of God, for His name's sake.



CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 3.

OUR PRIEST IS IN HEAVEN.

(HEB. VII. 11-17.)

OUR subject this evening is—Our Priest is in heaven. I must press upon you, beloved friends, that you will not comprehend the subjects which I am bringing before you unless you realise that Christ has been rejected here, and that the Christian's blessings are consequent on His exaltation to God's right hand. In Matthew xxii. there is a quotation from Psalm cx.: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand." I want you to apprehend the gravity of this fact, that the Son of God has been rejected in the world, the scene where we are. The world was never so guilty, for God was never so fully revealed; and He was never so absolutely refused: "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father:" "They have no cloke for their sin." If you do not apprehend the gravity of His rejection, you cannot take in, you cannot seize, the greatness of the blessings

which have come out from God, consequent on Christ's exaltation to His right hand. The mass of Christians think of Christ as He was on the earth, and they speak of Him as Jesus ; but Jesus is not on the earth ; He once was. The pious sometimes speak of Him as King ; He is not yet King, He was refused here.

The subject this evening is, that our Priest is in heaven ; and the greater the subject the more it is perverted in Christendom. It is not intentional, but the attempt to explain the word of God by the human mind has perverted it. The unfailing mark of a human interpretation of the word of God is, that God's side is omitted, the human mind cannot take it in. In Christendom they have a priest or a minister between them and God. The human mind has the word of God as to the fact that there is a priest for the Christian, but it has perverted it by placing the priest on man's side. Nothing can be a greater perversion than the attempt to set up a priest on the earth. Among the more enlightened Christians a clergyman cannot pronounce the blessing unless he is priested. Their priesthood is not of Christ, for if He were on earth, He would not be a Priest. You have a Priest ; but He is a Priest only in heaven ; this must be accepted. You may ask, Must I be in heaven to know my Priest ? You are not

looked at as in heaven in the book of Hebrews ; you are running to heaven, and your Priest is there and is not here. If you say, I do not understand it, you should be troubled at your state, that you are satisfied to be here without knowing Christ as your Priest. The first thing to see is that consequent on Christ's rejection, He is our Priest in heaven. Though apparently the sun had gone down at noon-day and there is no more hope, yet then God, in the boundlessness of His goodness, made known entirely new blessings, as we read—“Blessed with all spiritual blessing.”

The first point is that your Priest is not here ; He is in heaven. If you do not accept this, you will not understand nor enjoy the blessing connected with this truth.

The Book of Hebrews opens in an important way—God, having spoken by the prophets, now speaks by the Son. It is divine. In chapter ii. we read : “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” And in connection with this I will turn to verses 11 and 12. “For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto

thee." Now you see that we are His brethren. We read in John xii.: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone ; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit," or "many grains:" that is, a new order of man springs from Him. Adam was the earthly order. Christ is the heavenly order ; hence, "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The apostle is writing to Hebrews, who naturally would have said, Christ is of our stock : but No ; we are *His* brethren—"All of one." It is of immense blessing to apprehend this. Through grace you are brethren of Christ. Christ had no brethren before His death. True, we read of His brethren in the gospel ; brethren according to the flesh. But He was alone ; a beautiful, peculiar, unique Man in the sight of God. He had no fellow until He rose ; when He died He removed that which was in the way, and now He is not ashamed to call us brethren ; we are really of Him. You must start in the assurance of this grace. The tendency of the Hebrews, from education and Jewish feelings, was to settle down on the earth ; hence the great object of the book is so to attract them to the Lord where He is, that they might be drawn away from the

earth. I do not believe any one is drawn away from the earth unless he is attracted by a Person who is not here. It is plain that if your heart is taken up with a person who has gone to another place, you are drawn away from the place where you are to where he is. "Love enchants the spot where the loved one dwells." Christ has gone away, but you are His brethren; He is not ashamed to call us brethren—"he that is born of God cannot sin." I believe you get immense comfort from the fact that you are His brethren. In chapter iii., we read "Holy brethren." Turn now to chapter iii. 6: "But Christ as Son over his house"—that is, God's house—"whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." It is not only that we are His brethren, but we are His house, made partakers of Christ (ver. 14); "partakers" is the same word as "fellows"—really companions. We are His house, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;" that is, if you do not deviate from your true place.

Turn now to the end of chapter iv. that you may apprehend the great blessing of a Priest in heaven. The Hebrews had not turned back, but they were in danger of being like their forefathers; not going to heaven, just as their

forefathers had refused to go up to the land on the plea that they were not able to do so. Caleb tried to still the people in his day, and said, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land." Hence, in chapter iv. we read, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The "rest" was really the rest of God. Now come out two great helps. The word of God is one, and Christ the Priest in heaven is the other. Of the latter we read: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Now bear in mind that you are His brethren and His house—His companions. In Leviticus xvi. we read, Aaron offered a bullock for himself and his house. So far the type has been fulfilled; the remainder, as to the congregation, has not been fulfilled as yet, because the Priest has not come out to bless the people. (See chap. ix. 23.) The subject is your infirmities, not your sins; weakness from any cause; the pressure of circum-

stances, or illness, or, the greatest of all, bereavement : still it is pressure ; you are weak, and ready to droop under it. As I have said, there are two helps. First, the word of God exposes where you are, reveals your motives, whether you are making your weakness an excuse not to go on—engrossed with the pressure instead of with the rest of God. You are very ill, or sorrowful, or bereaved, or greatly oppressed by circumstances ; now the Word discloses all : “ All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Then follows in verse 14 : “ Seeing then that we have a great high priest,”—mark the language—“ that is passed through the heavens ”—as Aaron passed through the holy places—“ Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Do not give up. Our Priest in heaven sympathises with us. He is outside of everything here, He has gone through every pressure. His sympathy is not the same kind of help that you read of in the Psalms, when God made a way in the sea, and the like, by His mighty hand ; but here it is that you have a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, you are brethren to Him, you are His house, and He was in the circumstances

that we are in, and He knows what they are, and He sympathises with us in them ; He bears us company in the pressure. Take the case of a person in bereavement : no pressure—severe illness or great pain—is equal to the agony of bereavement, there can be no alleviation of the blank, for no one can repair the blank but the one who has caused it. Now the marvellous grace is, though it be little understood, that the Lord uses the blank as the opportunity for making Himself known in the tenderest way. As you see with Mary, in John xi., He walked with her, and impressed her with the assurance, as He wept beside her, that if she had lost a brother she had found “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” in Himself, that she had really gained. You may think it impossible ; but the Lord is so much to you that you are borne up and drawn to Him. The word “support” will not fully express it, He who is made higher than the heavens bears you company.

The sense of His nearness as One above it all, but having passed through it, endears Him to you in a peculiar way. It is not that He removes the pressure, but He so supports you that you are so raised above it by His sympathy that instead of drooping under the pressure, you come boldly to the throne of grace. But I would press on you, and I trust the Lord will lead you

to apprehend, that whatever the pressure is, the Lord would come to you and be such a solace and support to you, that He would be more endeared to you than ever before. When He relieves you, things are easier for you here, but when He bears you above the pressure, you will never forget it ; He Himself becomes indispensable to you. This in a measure I dare say Ruth found in Naomi—a solace to her in the hour of her sorrow. The Lord can come close beside us in our sorrow, and share with us in it, and so lift us above the pressure to the height of Himself. May we all better understand His sympathy. Every one can speak of a mercy. But can you speak of being lifted above the pressure in company with the Lord who sympathises with you ? You must bear in mind that the great object of the book of Hebrews is to make the Lord, who is not here, so dear to your heart that you will be drawn away from this place to Him, who has so endeared Himself to you that He is indispensable.

I turn now to chapter x., verses 19–22 :
“ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart in full assur-

ance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The High Priest in chapter iv. comes down to your lowest point, under the deepest pressure, "In all points tempted like as we are," so that He is able to sympathise with you, to bind you to Himself. Now you are in company with Him, you are of His house. In the type, Aaron offered a bullock for himself and his house. We are, through grace, the consecrated company, and all can enter in a common fragrance into the Holiest where Himself is. In the Holiest there was the golden box, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. If I were speaking to a Gentile, I should speak of the Lord's glory, of which the Holiest was a type. Now you can draw near and be maintained by our great Priest in the brightest spot. You have the right to enter into the Holiest in company with Himself.

In the close of chapter x. you have the effect on you when your heart is drawn to a Person who is not here, but is in another place. You will long to get to the place where He is; as the Lord is endeared to you, so is the place where He is. Hence the Lord said to His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." The Lord counted on their knowing. Is your heart attracted to the Lord? Where is He?

In heaven. Then are you going on to heaven? Or are you trying to be comfortable on the earth, the place *where He is not*? Then be assured that you are not much drawn to Him. At the same time I quite admit a certain amount of comfort is necessary. I think a person is distracted when he is uncomfortable; but that is a different thing; the point is, Who is paramount with you? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Where is He? You can say, He is my Saviour. Yes, but I want you to be able to say, He is the One that meets me in the lowest condition in which I can be found; in my weakest moment He comes to me, when no other hand or heart could come near me, and assures me of the interest He takes in me, and so draws me to Himself that I am lifted out of it to have company with Himself. And I do not believe He lifts you out of it for anything else but to have company with Himself. If you know Christ in His priestly service, you are so drawn to Him that you can say, "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." And then you are set on leaving this place for the place where Christ is. It is not dying, it is simply as with Israel, they had to journey through the wilderness in order to possess the land, and through faith in God they

could surmount every difficulty ; so you are in faith to surmount every difficulty until you are with Christ where He is. Hence you read in chapter xii. 1, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith ; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is a simple question, Are you set for Christ where He is? Would to God I had been more set for it! I should have had a happier course ; one is very easily turned aside by something here ; but if your heart is really fixed on Him, then nothing could divert you. I may illustrate my meaning by a dog's fidelity in following its master ; all the wit of your head would not divert the dog from following ; you might beat it, or tempt it, but nothing would induce it to swerve. The right idea of following we get in the words of Ruth, "Whither thou goest, I will go."

Now you will encounter difficulties ; and you cannot surmount difficulties but by faith, and therefore you are looking off unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith ; He has gone the

road, and you are His brethren through divine grace, and He gives you of His grace, and you are looking out to where He is ; you are running to Him. You have to lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset you, because you are set for Him in another place ; you have to contend with difficulties, and therefore you need patience ; that is you endure, you do not give in ; for when your heart is truly drawn to Him, nothing will suit you nor satisfy you but Himself where He is.

In chapter xii. the importance of discipline is described. As I understand, the discipline here is not for failure, but to help you, even that you might be partakers of His holiness. Stephen's suffering in testimony, God turns to good account for him, even to remove everything which would separate him from the Lord. As we read in 2 Corinthians iv., " We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." There is a very great difference between discipline to help you and discipline to correct you. Jacob at Shechem was disciplined to correct him, he suffers greatly from the Shechemites. But he goes to Bethel—a very bright day—Rebekah's nurse dies, and the place is Allon-bachuth, the oak of weeping. This was discipline to help him ; to clear away every thing unsuited to his bright position.

I turn for a little to chapter xii. 18, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," &c. You are not come to God in that way; you now have the right of entrance into His presence. Verses 22-24: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and to the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." It begins at the chief place on the earth, mount Sion; there will be a day when God will rule in mount Sion: "The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Sion." AND unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (the word "*and*" distinguishes one part from another), and to the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and then to the highest thing of all, the church of the firstborn, whose names are registered in heaven. The church of the firstborn would be understood by the Jews better than by us, because the Levites were taken in place of the first-born of Israel. Then you descend until you come to the great fact here—"The blood of sprinkling, which speaketh bet-

ter things than that of Abel." I trust you see the greatness of your position. You are racing on to Christ in heaven, you have been drawn away from many an association here, interesting to man naturally, but you have come to something infinitely greater. Not only are you, once sinners, brought to God, but you have come to an immense range of present blessings.

In conclusion, one word on chapter xiii. Here your true appearance on the earth is described in the simplest way. The first is, "Let brotherly love continue." You may think that is easy, but you will find this requires most grace ; you can love saints who are going on well, but when they are in error and wilful, then we find how little we love them. Next, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ;" hospitality to Christians, I suppose. And then, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them ;" then the domestic circle, "Marriage is honourable in all." Then comes a very important mark, which often a Christian lacks, and we all know how ready we are to fail as to it : "Be content with such things as ye have." Who is content with such things as he has? A man in the world is nobody if he is not set on acquiring. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have ; for he hath said, I will never leave thee

nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." If you suffer from the pressure of circumstances, the Lord is your helper. A man might be in want for the Lord's sake, though few are up to that; yet if a man like Paul or John suffer for the Lord, be assured that they do not lose by it, they receive "manifold more," because of the Lord's nearness to them. There is an universality about a Person that no combination of circumstances can equal. In the garden of Eden it was *things* which were given; now it is a *Person*. And little as I know of it, I know this, that Christ can make up for the loss of everything; hence you are inside the veil on christian ground, and you are outside the camp bearing Christ's reproach, unknown here. By Him you "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"—praising God and doing good.

I need not add more, but I trust each heart here may be more drawn to the Lord where He is, and thus more drawn from the earth where He is not, for His name's sake.

CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 4.

HEAVEN IS OUR PLACE.

PHILIPPIANS III. 20.

THE word "conversation" in this verse is more correctly "citizenship;" our polity, our citizenship, is in heaven. If you simply accept the fact that you are a citizen of another country, then you are not a citizen of this country. Nothing can be more definite than that if you belong to another country, you do not belong to this one. This is the great point. I will go through the subject in order, but the first thing to accept is, that the earth is not our place, but that heaven is our place. You may say we are not in heaven yet; still, it is our country, and therefore this is not our country. I quite admit we are subjects here, but subjects and citizens are quite different; we are subjects, but we are not citizens; we are bound to obey the powers that be, but our citizenship is in heaven. I believe it is of immense importance to apprehend the fact, and I do not think any one

can form a just idea of the alteration it would effect in him. Practically there is nothing that a man abhors more than to be displaced from the earth. The earth suits the natural man.

Now, firstly, the earth could not be your place, because Christ was rejected here, and He has been called to the right hand of God. "The light of the world" has gone away, and if you seek the light you will find that it is in another place, and that you cannot find it here.

The subject I am pressing is, that your blessings do not come from the earth. It is true that immense blessing has been effected for you here. Christ died for you here; but if you look for the blessings peculiarly christian, they do not come from this place, but from Him who is exalted to God's right hand. And hence there are many Christians, who, though true and devoted, do not enjoy the blessings peculiarly their own. They do not seek them where they are, and they cannot find them anywhere else. They come from heaven. I remember the immense effect it had on me when I first heard the truth that heaven was my place and not the earth. I press, then, on you, that the earth could not be your place, because Christ has been rejected from it; and I think

any heart true to the Lord would say, I thank God that the place where Christ was refused is not my place, and that the place where He is accepted is my place. I do not say that you are in heaven, but, as I was shewing you the last evening, if your heart is drawn to Christ in the place where He is, the effect is, you are running to that place: heaven is the hope of the gospel.

I turn next to our Lord's words in John xiv. : "I go to prepare a place for you." Some commentators think He is now preparing it. No; your place was prepared when He went there. This is a corroboration of what I have said, that the earth could not be your place, seeing that there is a place prepared for you in the Father's house. When you realise that you have a place in heaven, it has the effect, though you never were there, of drawing you to the Lord who has gone to that place; and if your hearts were true to Him, no other place could fully please you. The Lord counts on this when He says: "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Can we all say we know the way? Like Thomas, we have to say at first: "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" If your heart is simply fixed on Christ, you will soon find the way. Surely deep affection would soon find

out where He is. This was the distress of Mary Magdalene: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." The Lord then tells where He would be. Evidently it is one of the rewards connected with service: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am*, there shall also my servant be." And ordinarily, if an affectionate wife knew her husband had gone to Australia, and that she was to follow him, all her thoughts would be about Australia; she would not go into a shop or anywhere but she would think of the things that would suit Australia. The place would be before her because her husband was there.

Again, if you do not accept heaven as your place, you will not enjoy the blessings peculiar to you as a Christian. I turn to Luke xiv. A pious man in verse 15 said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God;" no doubt with reference to the millennial day. The Lord replied, as much as to say, There is something before that—"A certain man made a great supper." Now, beloved friends, the first question is, *Where* the great supper is. The supper is in the house, and not in the land, Israel, man naturally, would like to find it on the earth. Many Christians—alas! I have done it myself—look for blessings in the wrong place.

One buys a piece of land. There is no sin in a piece of land, but it is a gain in the wrong place. The first thought of every man, even of the working man, is to purchase enough ground to build a house on, and he thinks that it is a mark of God's favour when he succeeds. You cannot do without a house, I admit; but you are seeking possessions here in the wrong place. Are you not often drawn away from the Lord by something here? You are looking for blessings, advantages, in the place where Christ was rejected! Hence the servant was told to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come into the house—not the land. Some quote this passage and say, Come to Christ. Of course, if any one does not come to Christ, he could not come into the house, to the feast, but the feast is the celebration of grace. It has been remarked that you get the feast in chapter xiv., and the guest in chapter xv. But where is the feast? It is in the house. In the passage, "When he hath found it" [the sheep], "he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home," is correctly "being come to the house." Naturally you would have brought a sheep to the pasture. Now you find the home for the prodigal is the Father's house. I do not mean to say that this is the same as in John xiv., but I insist that

you have a home in the Father's house. Your home is not on the earth ; you ought to rejoice that you have such a home. We have to learn how little we really enjoy our home. You may say, We are not at home yet. But we have home comforts though we are still here. They come to us by the Spirit of God, but they come from our home. The desire of the Father's heart for us is that we should share the joys of His own house. You cannot know these joys unless you look for them in the place where they are. You probably are like many who are looking for advantages on the earth. The fact is that every advantage you obtain here, though it be a comfort for the moment, will be a cause of sorrow some day when it fades away ; whereas the blessings which come from your home, through grace, only add to your joy more and more.

I would that each one could walk through this world with the sense—my Lord was refused here, but I am not downcast, because, though He chooses to leave me here, my home is where He is. Without this assurance you lose your proper blessings, the blessings peculiar to Christians. Most Christians dwell on the fact that they are forgiven their sins, they have the satisfaction that they are Christians, and they look for proofs of God's favour all day

long, and this mercy and the other, they say, is a mark of His favour. No doubt His mercies are "new every morning;" but there is much more. The greatest mark of God's favour is a fuller revelation of His mind; if you were to be given Europe it would not be equal to the favour of a better acquaintance with the One who has done everything for you. Any day that you see more of Him in His own greatness and preciousness, then you are most highly favoured.

Again, scripture says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." It is plain that if you have not your treasure in heaven, your heart cannot be there. You must know that the treasure is there first; otherwise, though you may speak of being pilgrims and strangers, yet you really are not. If you were in Turkey, you would not try to be a pilgrim and a stranger, because you are one there, you are not at home, you are travelling through. I hope to come presently to our calling and service here. I am trying first to establish your individual portion, and the blessings which you miss if you do not see that heaven is your place. The forerunner is for us entered; He has gone in, and now we lose if we do not know Him where He is.

Now bear in mind ~~the fact that the Lord~~ has gone away, and that He is at the right hand

of God ; but that we are here, and yet that our place and our home is where He is ; hence we come to the grave question—What is your calling and service here? I have spoken on a former occasion on being sealed by the Spirit : “In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” The Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and now you are connected with Christ in the place where He is. Your heart is bound to a Person in another place. If your heart is really bound to Him, you are necessarily apart from the earth. This is the great test ; because the earth suits man, “The earth hath he given to the sons of men.” And it is here where failure begins. The Corinthians had the Spirit of God ; He had come down from heaven ; but Christ in heaven was not paramount to them ; they were led away and swayed by their natural minds, and not by the Lord. Their heart would have been in heaven had their treasure been there.

The Galatians, on the other hand, were seeking to improve the first man. I quite see that you might be clear of those two failures, but I want you to lay hold of the fact that one who has the Spirit of God, as the Corinthians and the Galatians had, may not have Christ as the paramount object. With every one walking in the Spirit, Christ is paramount ; and you learn

from the way the apostle corrects both the Corinthians and the Galatians, where the lack was. He corrects the Corinthians by presenting Christ in glory outside of everything here. The effect was that the flesh was in abeyance ; it could not be in the glory of God. If Christ is paramount with you, your heart is fixed on Him. Christ in glory supersedes the man here ; there is no place for him there. On the contrary, you are transformed into the same image, and practically the effect is that you would be "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus." It is important to see that not only the Holy Ghost dwells in you, but that Christ is in His true place, when you are walking in the Spirit. In like manner with the Galatians, the apostle sets Isaac in his right place, and then Ishmael must go out ; that is, the man under the law must be cast out. If you are occupied with the man born after the flesh, you are sanctioning the Ishmael who persecutes Christ. You belong to Christ in heaven, and the Spirit of God has come to you from Him in heaven, and as you walk in the Spirit, Christ is paramount, and you are in this world for Him. I have not come to your service yet, I am speaking of your gain personally when you receive the Spirit. I fear there are many who do not walk in the Spirit ; hence they rejoice only in their salvation ; they have

not the power to act here for Christ. But when you are walking in the Spirit, His normal action in you is to lead you to heaven. "He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven" If you meditate for a moment you will see that it must be so. I often say to myself, "If the Holy Spirit can come down to me in all the contrariety of things here, would not it be more natural to Him to lead me to the place where everything suits Himself?" No doubt it would ; and that is, as I may say, the new line.

Now I would direct your attention to your service here for Christ. I must begin by saying that no one can serve Christ here who is not in concert with Him in heaven. I shrink from distressing any of you ; but I am sure that if any one is not in concert with Christ in heaven, in His place, in His exaltation, he cannot be for Christ in this place, the scene of His rejection ; he could not know His mind, nor how to act for Him. Hence, in John xiii., when the Lord announces that He is going away, He first washes the disciples' feet. While He was here with them, they were in the closest intimacy with Him ; leaning on His breast at supper, and the like ; now He rises from supper, and washes their feet. This means that every soil must be removed ; there must be no shade of distance,

but fitness for Him in His own sphere. It is not merely that you are to have a good conscience ; but you are to have communion with Him. You cannot have communion with Christ if you have not acquaintance with Him. If there be not acquaintance, there could not be a break in it. You may be at rest about your sins and walking with a clear conscience, but to be in communion is much more. Communion is being in concert with Him. He had come to your side of things, but communion is your being in concert with Him in His things. Ask yourself, How much do I know of Christ's present interests? How much am I in communion with Him? First, every soil has been removed ; there is not any break between you and Him. You may find, as has been said of Peter, that he had his conscience relieved before his heart was restored. Many have not been intimate enough with the Lord to feel a cloud, a shade of reserve between Him and them. Like the bride in Canticles v., there is, not any known sin, but a cloud, a sense of reserve. Peter had his conscience relieved in John xx., but he was not restored until chapter xxi. • Though he was attached to the Lord, he was not in communion with Him. Affection in itself is not communion ; but when communion has been known, the heart is not satisfied until there is a return to communion.

I turn now to Colossians. We find there the hindrances to the servant of Christ in this day. The Colossians were evidently a nice company ; they had faith in Christ, and they had love to all the saints ; but they were exposed to a grievous snare. I do not think that we are exempt from it. I have already referred to the Corinthians, and the Galatians, but the snare here is much more subtle. The Colossian snare is that a man can use his natural ability and his religiousness to contribute to Christ's service. I assure you it is a great snare. It is not to improve yourself like the Galatian, or to please yourself like the Corinthian, but it is that you use your learning or your natural ability to make your ministry for Christ effectual. How often a servant of Christ expects that his language will produce an effect. I do not believe eloquence will have a divine effect. I have sometimes tried myself, I must own, to be eloquent, but I have found that I lost power instead of gaining it. Your faith is not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. If you expect by your ability to be divinely effectual, you have fallen into the snare the Colossians are warned of—that is, the natural mind. Neither human philosophy nor sanctimoniousness—religious culture, will help on Christ's work. There is only one divine way of being preserved

from this snare, and that is by knowing Christ as your Head.

The apostle is greatly pressed that the Colossians should know this mystery: "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment [full knowledge] of the mystery of God." (Col. ii. 1, 2.) The knowledge of Christ as Head. Where is Christ? He is in heaven. It is a wonderful fact that you can know the glorified Man in heaven as your Head; that He is not only your Head, but the Head of every Christian, though I grieve to say every Christian does not know that He is his Head. If you do not know Him as Head, though He is your Head, you do not reap the benefit of this great fact.

You must be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, before you can, as risen with Him, seek the things above where Christ sitteth. I hope you will keep definitely before you the importance of knowing Christ where He is. You cannot know Him as Head, but as risen with Him where there is no human voice. I look to the Lord, that your hearts might be arrested by the great blessedness of knowing

that Christ in heaven is your Head. My subject is that heaven is your place ; hence I repeat that you must seek Him where He is, or you cannot know Him as your Head. I wish to convince you of the greatness of knowing the Christ in heaven as your Head ; hence the word is, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead"—or "have died." I am pressing on you the greatness of your place.

Finally, it is plain enough that we are united to Christ in heaven, and this corroborates all I have been saying. In order to realise union with Christ, you must be led to Him in heaven. I do not mean bodily, but by the Spirit. As you read in Ephesians i. 19, you must have conscious knowledge of "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." It is by the Spirit we are united, though I do not say every one knows it. I have no doubt Stephen knew the gain of union, though union was not then revealed. Union with Christ could not be known except in the place where He is. Rebekah had to be conducted all the way through the wilderness in company with the steward (which figuratively is the Holy Ghost), to the spot where Isaac was. And if you are not led by the Spirit of God to Christ where He is, you do not realise union with Him, although through grace, you can say. "We are members of

His body.” “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him,” yet you cannot comprehend union except by the power of the Spirit ; and unless you know union you cannot understand the blessings connected with it. For instance, you could not understand the prayer in Ephesians iii. It is a prayer that all the advantages which you acquire by union should be made known to you. The Lord lead each of you to apprehend the immense blessing which is yours because of your union with Christ in heaven ; the greatness of your position, that now your individuality is merged, for Christ’s interests are your interests, He dwells in your hearts by faith ; His things are disclosed to you, and better than all, “to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled to all the fulness of God.”

Reverting for a moment to service, you see from Colossians that unless you know the Head you cannot be preserved from ritualism and rationalism. Nothing can preserve us but the knowledge of Christ as Head ; and in order to be descriptive of Him here, you must be heavenly, and you cannot be, except by union with Him, the heavenly MAN, and then you can come forth in heavenly grace in all the details of your daily life. You have gained immensely. A slave would gain by his master

being heavenly, for he would be a better master. It is a great principle that the nearer you are to God, the better will you behave in every duty appointed by God.

I need not add more. The Lord lead each of you to understand (the youngest can begin) that heaven is your place, and that your peculiar blessings come from that place.

The Lord grant, beloved friends, that each of us may be so assured in heart that the place where Christ was rejected is not our place, but that the place where He is accepted is our place, that we seek to be acceptable to Him in this place, and in order to be so, we cleave to Him where He is.



CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 5.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.
THE RULE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

(MATT. XIII. 18-48.)

I HAVE been endeavouring to bring before you the blessings peculiar to the Christian. What we have in this scripture is that though Christ has been rejected here, yet His rule is still on the earth. It is not the rule of the King; that you must bear in mind, but the rule of the word of God. Hence you get in the first parable, the sower sowed the seed, the word of the kingdom; there were four different kinds of soil, but only one brought forth fruit to perfection. Next, there are six similitudes of the kingdom of heaven (the first parable, that of the sower, is not called a similitude); three of them are public, and three are private. Three describe the word of God as appropriated by man, with the most painful result, and this is the only way to account for the state of things in Christendom. Man has interpreted the word of God to exalt himself. Nothing can be plainer than that the man who appropriates most from the word of God while retaining the natural man has a preponderating influence with men. Peter can receive

great light, and yet be so human in his feelings that the Lord calls him Satan. It has been said, and it is a lamentable statement, that it is not the world which has spoiled Christianity, but it is Christianity which has spoiled the world ; because man has been made pretentious and preposterous by the light of it. What could be worse than to assume to be a Christian when one is not? To be so self-deceived that one appropriates to himself the greatest position in which God has set a man ?

I will now refer to the first three similitudes. The first is that of the wheat and the tares ; the wheat was of God ; and the bad seed sown by the devil were mere professors, assuming to be equal with the wheat, the work of God. The servants wanted to root up the tares, but they are in the field, that is the world—not in the church. In Christendom the field is supposed to be the church, and that the real and the professors are mixed up in the congregation. It is sad to find some real saints thus mixed up with worldly professors. The second similitude is the monstrous position Christendom obtains in the world. A little grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree, and the fowls of the air lodge in it ; so powerful and extended is the system formed by man's interpretation of the word of God, that even the powers of the world

seek for the countenance of the hierarchy. This is the present state ; but eventually the beast, which is the Latin power, will carry the harlot, the apostate church, a system reared up by man's interpretation of the word of God. The third similitude is the leaven hid in three measures of meal. There is not a pure sentiment in man's religion ; though the word of God be quoted, you cannot rely on it. I do not say that you cannot rely on man's words, but I say that the human idea, however based on the word of God, is not to be trusted. I do not know a single doctrine of theology which is fully according to the mind of God. This appears to be a strong statement, but you will find it is correct because man's mind has reduced the word of God to its own level. And the unfailing mark of human interpretation in any statement is that God is not paramount in it. It is a human sentiment, though doubtless there is a measure of truth in it. If I adduce the gospel in Christendom, it is, that if you believe, you will be saved and go to heaven ; not one word as to God's part in that gospel ; it is a human appropriation of it. I fully admit that souls are blessed ; but they seldom or never are brought to God. I am trying to point out the nature of the rival (if I may use the expression), that we have to contend with.

Any learned man in Christendom could discern the first three similitudes. He could understand them. But in verse 36 the Lord sends away the crowd and goes into the house ; and when His disciples come to Him, He explains about the tares and the wheat, and tells them of three other similitudes.

We now come to the greatest blessing peculiar to Christians during our Lord's rejection ; we are His, sustained here for Himself, now at the right hand of God. These three similitudes set forth how the word of God effects that which is according to the heart of Christ on earth. First, He sets forth that His treasure is here, where His rule is by the word of God. The treasure was not only hid in the field, but *He* hid it. The church is His treasure, where His heart is set. It is not visible to the world. Next, "the pearl" expresses the beauty of the church in His eye. The third is the net, and now is set forth the work of the fishermen, who know Christ's estimate of the church. They separate the good fishes from the bad ones ; they put the good into vessels. Here many a laborious servant has failed through ignorance of his Lord's mind ; he did not separate the good from the bad ; he did not see the importance of separation in order to suit the Lord. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean."

I desire now to draw your attention to the assembly, the circle of Christ's interest on the earth. I could not bring before you a subject of greater importance. He has been rejected, and I have been presenting to you, in the previous lectures, the varied blessings which come to us from Him as exalted to the right hand of God and now we come to the assembly, which is exclusively His, and for Him on the earth. As yet, He has nothing else on this earth; as He says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." Now as shut in with the Lord, apart from the crowd, we should learn the assembly as it is to Him. The subject ought to arrest each of you. We are in a world where our Lord was refused; and now, there is only one circle which is exclusively His. I am not speaking of His purposes or thoughts or counsels about things, but of the circle that belongs to Him, as He Himself calls it in Matthew xvi., "MY assembly." It was consequent on His rejection by the Jews, that He revealed the assembly. His own would not receive Him, but the assembly is His own building, and all the powers of hell cannot prevail against it. The Lord grant that each one of you may leave this room with a deeper sense of Christ's interest in the assembly.

There are two aspects of the assembly, one is

the house, the other is the body, and I will try to explain the difference presently. I often say to myself, Well, there is one thing to solace me in this evil world, and that is that Christ's treasure is here and not in heaven ; it is hid in the field, but the heart in concert with Christ knows that it is here, and that it is His object. It is marvellous that Christ's treasure is in the very place of His rejection ; He purchased the field, He sold all that He had ; as has been said, all that He was entitled to as Messiah He gave up for the church ; the church is His treasure.

Christ's desire for the church on the earth, I briefly refer to. In John xiii. to xvii. you get it detailed. You are first in seclusion with the Lord. (Chaps. xiii., xiv.) Next you are fruit bearing (chap. xv.) ; next you are witnesses of Christ in heaven (chap. xvi.) Finally in chapter xvii., as has been said, He first presents us as Himself in the presence of the Father, and then presents us as Himself in the presence of the world. I believe it will be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem in Revelation xxi. John presents the house in its fulness, and Paul the body. These are the two aspects of the assembly.

I turn now to speak of our introduction into these things. If you desire to be taught of God in the matter you find instruction as to it in Matthew xiv. In this chapter, the Lord accepts

that He is rejected because John the Baptist was beheaded, as we read in verse 10. Hence being rejected by Israel, the Lord enters on new ground. In order to join Him, you must come to Him on this new ground. He has taken new ground. He walks on the water. It is interesting to know that Matthew xiv. and John vi. occurred at the same time. You have both the divine side and the practical side. The first step, and one of deep interest, is to be of the assembly. Of course you must first be converted ; but being so you are to be of His assembly ; you must be of Him to join Him there ; you cannot get there of yourself. Like Peter you leave the ship, all that suits man naturally, and you join Him ; you come to this " Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, precious ;" and you are built in. The Lord, in Matthew viii., in the storm, was superior to it ; but now (chap. xiv.) He is walking on the sea, He is supreme, He is the Son of God with power ; He is above all the power of evil. This is His new place. When by faith you join Him there, you are in the presence of the Son of God—Son over God's house.

The first pattern of the assembly you get in John xx. : the Lord comes into their midst and says, " Peace be unto you." No believer can come in unless he has peace : he could

not meet the risen Christ unless every disturbing element had been removed. And besides pronouncing peace, He breathes on them, saying, "Receive Holy Ghost." They are now on altogether new ground; He was with them, though they did not know much. This is a pattern; there He was in the midst; and also, you see here the state necessary for every one in company with the risen Christ. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the saints are looked at as the congregation of God, Christ as Son, speaks, even with relation to us in our infirmities: "Seeing then that we have a great high Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Beloved friends, the real defect is, that souls are more occupied with Christ on the cross, as the sacrifice for sin, than as the glorified Man at the right hand of God—"the Son of God with power by resurrection from the dead."

I ask you to give the Lord His place—the One "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, precious." Having come to Him, you "as living stones are built up," etc. Many, I fear, do not enter into the deep reality of "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Take the case of a young Christian; according to John xx.,

when he comes into the assembly he comes to the One who has accomplished peace, who has risen from the dead, out of all our ruin and misery, and is now in the glory of God. If you begin incorrectly, you will suffer much loss and delay until you retrace your steps and begin rightly. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." How many are still suffering from this

I would dwell upon the momentous blessedness of the assembly. A godly man in Psalm lxxiii. went into the sanctuary of God. The effect on him was wonderful ; you have much more. Our great Priest is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." In the tabernacle there was only a cloud of glory, but you have Christ in glory ; you come to the Son of God crowned with glory and honour in the Holiest of all, of which He Himself is the antitype. I desire to present to you a great attraction. If a godly Israelite, puzzled by the state of things here, could, in the sanctuary of his day, receive such wonderful help and light, how much more should you find in the presence of Christ, on whom all the glory of God rests. If this were accepted in faith, how blessed our meetings would be ! Little as one may know of

it, it is an immense comfort to the heart to pass from all the difficulties and sorrows here, and find a spot where the Lord is present in His own power, where He rules, though He is not reigning yet on the earth. The world has refused Him, but He is Son over God's house ; there His interests are known ; there He makes known His mind, and gives gifts for the edifying of the body.

I am dwelling long upon this, because, if your beginning is faulty, there can be no divine progress until you are set right.

The first thought is, like Peter, to join Christ, apart from this world, outside of all that man is constructing with his interpretation of the word of God, where Christ is supreme, and where the Spirit unfolds the word of God.

Now I would present to you briefly the church as it is to Christ. You begin with the assembly as God's house on the earth. That came first in order according to Acts ii. ; the Holy Ghost filled all the house where they were sitting, and filled each one of them. That is the assembly in the house aspect ; there is nothing yet about the body. I do not find in the Acts any mention of an assembly knowing the mystery. Many pious men now believe that the Spirit of God is with us, and they look to be led by Him ; and yet, as it was at Corinth, they do not know

the mystery. Where the mystery is not known, the most devoted servant may be led more by his own state at the time than by the Spirit in the assembly: as it is termed, "I have it on my heart." It might be on your heart for yourself, as a hymn or a scripture would be on the heart of a sister; but that would be no authority to give it to the assembly. The more Christ is before the servant, the more will he edify, the assembly, and give what is so essential—"meat in due season."

I turn now to Colossians iii. The Colossians were a faithful company; they had faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the saints; but they did not know the mystery. Now if you have accepted that in coming to Christ in the assembly, you come to Him outside of the world which refused Him, you will be prepared for another step, even that you come *from* Him. You not only come *to* Him, the "Living stone," but as members of His body you come *from* Him. The Colossians, as I have said, did not know the mystery, hence the apostle tells them that he had great conflict for them. There would not be a great conflict if there had not been a great opposition. As far as I know, I do not think there is much knowledge of Christ as Head, which is the part of the mystery referred to here.

The Colossians were an exemplary company, but they did not know Christ as Head. I must not speak beyond my measure, but I believe the consciousness of Christ as Head cannot be surpassed—even that you have parted with your own head, and hence you are “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,” and are risen with Him: “Ye are dead [or have died], and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And what then? When you accept the circumcision effected in Christ, you are where no human voice is heard, where “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ everything.” Now you know Him as Head. Many can say Christ is chiefest, but can you say He is everything? You must be outside of every human voice in order to know Him as everything. Blessed indeed is the moment when you are assured that He dictates to you outside and apart from all of the old man—that He is now consciously your Head. The effects will follow: “bowels of mercies, kindness,” &c. There are many Christians who would not accept the pope or the sovereign as the head of the church, and assert that they own Christ only as the Head, who I fear regard Him so merely in the sense of the head of a family. According to scripture, “Holding the head” is individual; you have

parted with your own head, and you hold another Head common to all Christians; be they five hundred or five million, each has the same Head; but alas! all are not "holding the Head." If there were an assembly where each one was holding the Head, every ministration then, be it hymn, prayer, or teaching, all would be done under the dictation of Christ. Most blessed truth! You do not apprehend Christ's rights in the church until you know Him as Head.

Finally, when we are in conscious union with Christ we enter into His interest in the church, and it is then only we can know Himself in His fulness. In Ephesians i. 19 you have conscious knowledge of the power that wrought in Christ; by the Spirit's power you rise to the place where Christ is. Now union with Him is known, and you are here in the power of the heavenly Man. You cannot be in heavenly power but by union with Christ in heaven. The fact is that every believer *is* united by the Spirit to Christ, "Now hath God set the members every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him," but every one does not know that he is united, and is not in the power of it. If to the assembly in Acts ii. the knowledge of the Head was made known, they would have gained immensely: every one ordered by the Head.

Now add to that the knowledge of union with Christ, and that assembly will be here in heavenly power; every one not only has the Spirit of God, but is in heavenly power, because united to Christ in heaven. You come out in the power and grace of the heavenly Man in every ordinance of God. Under the law there was no direction about the family, except about children obeying their parents; but for a heavenly man there is direction as to his own house as well as to the house of God.

If we were walking in divine consciousness of Christ's supremacy in the assembly in the world where He has been refused, how emboldened and encouraged we should be to do His pleasure. You can see in Revelation xxi. that we shall be the new Jerusalem, a most blessed prospect, and every assembly now is called to have the same traits. Though we are in such feebleness, yet we are called to this great position, and the day will come, as we read, that "the throne of God shall be in it," where Christ—blessed be His name! now rules in all the might of His word.

May the Lord grant that each of us may have a deeper and more comprehensive idea of what the church is to Him, and be able to apprehend the greatness of His power and interest in it, for His name's sake.

CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 6.

THE NEW COMPANY ON THE EARTH DURING
THE ABSENCE OF CHRIST.

PART I.

LUKE X. 38-42; XI. 1-13.

MY desire this evening is to point out to you the traits of the new company on the earth during the absence of Christ. I have endeavoured to present to you the blessings peculiar to the Christian, and which come to us from Christ in exaltation: not merely all that He effected on earth, but those blessings which are consequent on His exaltation to the right hand of God. I desire now to conclude this evening and the following, if the Lord permit, with the traits of the new company on the earth during Christ's absence. If your hearts simply accepted the fact that Christ was rejected here, surely it must be of deep interest to you to know how to be for Him in the place where He was rejected. We have seen that His treasure is hid in the field; but now I would draw your attention to your "manner of life" here as awaiting His coming and kingdom.

There are two parts,—first, our manner of life as He is our object ; and secondly, what our portion is as awaiting His kingdom. The characteristic of those who really look for the Lord is that they are looking out for Him to reign ; hence the closing character of the church is, ‘The Spirit and the bride say, Come.’ You get it in the parable of the wise virgins ; the kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins. The cry was, “Behold the bridegroom,” and they went forth to meet him. I have remarked before that you get very little in the epistles about going to heaven. Christians, as a rule, talk about going to heaven ; and there is no doubt that we shall all go to heaven—the youngest believer. But you do find a great deal in the epistles about the kingdom ; we overlook the kingdom too much ; we overlook how we shall be on this earth for Christ eventually. The way you are now indicates the way you will be then ; many do not think so, but if you suffer with Him you will reign with Him. If you endure now, you will be honoured by-and-by ; but if you have an easy time now, you will have a small place in the kingdom. It is not that you will not go to heaven and be in all the blessedness there ; but I am dwelling on the place we shall have with the Lord when He reigns. We can understand how James and

John wished to sit one on His right hand and the other on His left ; the Lord replies, It will be given to them for whom it is prepared. Still, that was a right wish ; I should like to be with Him in His kingdom, and to be for Him here. In the description of the new Jerusalem, we read, ‘ His servants shall serve him.’”

The first trait of the new company is the word of God and prayer : these are to mark them. But I must premise, because it is of great importance, that we have to be free from all the religious element. The legal element, and anything that recognises man, is a great obstruction. Anything that gives man a place really hinders your true position ; because if man has rejected Christ—and he has—it is plain that that man can have no place. Talk not of cultivating man, and getting beautiful ideas from him, and all that sort of thing ! If man rejected Christ, no good *can* come from him ; all must be of the Spirit of God.

The first thing you get in the scripture I have read is the difference between Mary and Martha. Mary sat at His feet and appeared to be doing nothing ; but she was hearing His word. It is a great comfort at times to think that there are many unobserved, unostentatious people who are really nearer the Lord than the most busy people, because the latter are thinking of

doing ; and, as has been said, there is more or less of the legal character about their doings. Martha was thinking of her work. Mary sat at His feet and heard His word. That is the first part of the first trait ; you are here to hear His word, you are to learn and study His mind. It is not merely knowing a great deal of scripture ; many know much who do not know His mind. . The Lord says, “ Why do you not know my speech ? Because you cannot hear my word.” It has been said, and it is a very good remark to bear in mind, that you know a man’s meaning by his words, but you must know God’s mind before you can understand His words ; and nothing can give you that but the Spirit of God. Mary sat at His feet hearing His word, learning what would please Him. I see this defect in natural life ; people think others must like what they like ; it is themselves they have studied, and they act from what would please themselves, instead of studying a person so as to know what would please him. What would please the Lord ought to be the great thought with me ; if I am in a place where the Lord has been rejected, the very first thing I should like to know is what would please Him.

The second part of the first trait is prayer. Here (chap. xi. 1-13) the Lord gives them a prayer to suit their then condition ; and there are very instructive elements in it. They

could acknowledge that God was their Father ; they could take that ground because they had seen Him in Christ, and they also looked for the kingdom. But it was a prayer suitable to the time when the work of the cross had not yet been accomplished ; sins had not yet been put away : but I need not dwell upon this. Then the Lord goes on to explain what prayer is. He says, " Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not : the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." Here you learn how to pray. The way is set forth here—that you know your friend has the thing you want, and that you do not look for it elsewhere. I believe that is an immense thing. It is sometimes the case with us all that we pray to the Lord about a certain thing, and yet we have a reserve in our minds that if one plan does not succeed we will turn to another. That is not prayer ; prayer is that I know He has it, and that I want it

and I know that if I do not get it from Him I cannot get it elsewhere ; that is, I am actually shut up to God. And you will find that is what the Lord continually does : He shuts you up to Himself. For an individual the way of prayer is ordinarily what we get in Philippians iv. ; you make known all your requests ; you may not get the answer, but you get what is a great deal better, the peace of God ; though you did not pray for it you get it because you are near God. The Lord here (Luke xi.) announces that " Every one that asketh receiveth," and He winds up by saying, " How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The Holy Spirit had not come yet, but that was the highest thing they could get. These (the word and prayer) are the first trait.

Now I read a verse or two further in chapter xi. to shew you the second trait. Verse 33 : " No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the

whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light"—it is really "brightness." This is a wonderful statement; your body is to be a body of light. The Lord was the Light of the world, and He has gone out of it; now the point is that if your eye is single, your object is that Light. It is on the same principle that if you walk in the Spirit you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. A person is walking in the Spirit when Christ is the paramount object to him. It is not a question of having this thing or the other thing before him, it might be a good work or the like, but he has an object, and that object is the Lord Himself. Then the eye is single, and the effect is, the body is light; luminous is really the idea, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give its glare, its brightness. It is a wonderful thing, if you think of it for a moment, that in the place where my Lord was rejected I am to come out in the light of my Lord; the Light has gone out of this world now; He has gone, but in the very place whence the Light has gone, I look to Him, He is my object, and as the light takes possession of me, there is no part dark. If you had no part dark, and were completely under the rule of the light, your body would express it; I do not mean merely your dress, I mean the whole of your bearing. It is

what is morally contrary to the darkness ; people could say—that person is moving differently from everybody else here ; he is separate from all the darkness around. It is very hard to explain, but it is a moral influence, and I have no doubt that many a one has the sense at times that there is a moral influence about another, so that you would not like to say anything to offend in that person's presence ; you would feel it was unsuitable, his very presence checks it. What a wonderful relief to your heart to think that though the Lord has gone away, and you are here in the world where He was rejected, yet He says that if your eye is single you will be a body of light, you will not be in concert with the darkness around, but in complete antagonism, or rather contrariety to it. Light is a reflection of Himself here upon the earth. The moon has no light of itself, but if the earth does not come between it and the sun, it is a full moon. If you have nothing between you and Him, you will come out as light. That ought to be an immense consolation to you.

I turn now to the hindrances ; the hindrances must be removed, and therefore I must know the nature of the conflict which precedes a body of light. The Lord says (chap. xi. 21), "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than

he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." The first thing you have to learn is that Satan has been turned out, and Christ has full possession ; He is the "stronger," in fact He has abolished Satan's power in that sense ; He went into death that He might destroy him that had the power of death ; a wonderful thing ! Satan had power over man's body, but he has been expelled. Further on I may be able to shew you that even his power as to infirmity is gone ; the woman (chap. xiii.) is loosed from infirmity. But now I am dwelling on the fact that the actual power of possession is gone, and therefore we read in another place that your body is the Lord's : " Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ? " Satan's power is gone ; that is one thing. The other is what you get in verse 27 : " And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." As has been remarked, it is not miracles, it is the word of God now ; the word of God is the real power of the kingdom of God ; the King is not here, but the power of the

word is here. You might say of man's mind, That is a beautiful sentiment, with very deep feeling. Yes, but it is not the word of God. It is very hard, beloved friends, to eliminate the human sentiment; nothing is so practically difficult: the finest sentiment that ever came out of the human mind does not suit the Spirit of God; spiritual things are only conveyed by spiritual means. I have alluded to it already in connection with Colossians, that the snare there was that they thought they could contribute to Christ's service by human ability and religiousness.

The Lord now adds, No sign shall be given to this generation but the sign of the prophet Jonas. Jonas and Solomon combined to set forth Christ in a twofold aspect; one, Christ in suffering, and the other, Christ in glory; as Peter puts it, "The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." He is the One who has lain in the grave, as typified by Jonah, and He is the true Solomon. Then He says, no man lights a candle but he sets it upon a lamp-stand, an open place, that all that come in may see the light; and then if your eye is single your body is full of light. I trust what I have said may lead you to study this interesting scripture, and get more out of it than I can convey to you.

Having set forth this wonderful statement,

that your body is to be light, we come to the difficulties of the way: "As he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him." Here is the first thing you have to contend with. Many a pious person can say, I desire to have Christ as my simple object, to have my whole body full of light; but now comes out the snare of Pharisaism, and that is, to make an external appearance. That was the case here, and there is an imitation of light in Christendom in this day. There never was a great reality yet without an imitation, and the only way to correct an imitation is to present the reality.

The great instruction here is, that you must be on your guard, or the religious element about you will baffle you; and therefore the Lord exposes the Pharisees in a very scathing way, because they were seeking to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, while their inward part was full of ravening and wickedness. The Lord, on the other hand, would set the light inside. What is the practical effect? Your body will be indicative of the condition within. I have referred to it on a former occasion; and it is important to remember that the body is always indicative of the measure of the Spirit's work in you. It is not effort, but the Spirit's work.

Now I turn to chapter xii. in order to set forth the characteristics of the body of light.

The first great characteristic is, you do not fear them that kill the body. "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." The moment I fear God, I find out the wonderful care He has for me; what I could not number myself He numbers: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." I want to keep definitely before you, that if you are here where He is not, and glad to be here for Him a body of light, your first great characteristic as a body of light is, you do not fear them that kill the body. You see it in Stephen, and you see it in the apostle Paul. I have no doubt that if a person were thoroughly with the Lord, it would be easier to suffer for Him as a martyr than to endure a lingering illness. What a beautiful position a Christian may be found in on this earth where the Lord was rejected! He seeks nothing from the earth, but he gets on the earth from his Lord who is not here. Then the Lord adds that He will reward you in the kingdom: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him

shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

I just refer to verse 13, because there you get again the nature of the conflict; it will disclose to you the Jewish element. A man wanted the Lord to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him; he was looking for something on the earth, and the Lord gave him an example of a man who so prospered in earthly things, that he had to pull down his barns and build greater; but God said to him, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." That only comes in as a check; and then we get the next characteristic in verses 22-32. Here the Lord, after saying to His disciples, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on," directs their attention to the ravens, how God feedeth them, and to the lilies, how they grow, and how God clothes the grass of the field, and adds: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the

kingdom." As I have said, the first great characteristic is, not to fear them that kill the body. If Christ were simply my object, I should not fear them that kill the body. That is what is outside of me ; and the second characteristic is inside ; instead of taking thought what I should eat, or what I should drink, or being of doubtful mind, I say, My Father knoweth that I have need of these things, and it is His good pleasure to give me the kingdom ; and therefore the principle is, "Seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Then verse 35 brings in the exhortation connected with it : "Let your loins be girded about"—that is that you are ready for service, "and your lights burning"—that is, your candles ; "the light of the body is the eye ;" your loins girt and your lights burning, "and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding : " that is, you are waiting for Him to come here. And what will happen ? Verse 37 tells you, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching," &c. ; they are serving Him now, and He will serve them then. Peter wants to know whether the parable is spoken to them or to all ; "And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his

lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." It has been said there are two things here, the expectation of the Lord, and service. I desire to press much that if you were looking for the Lord, and really expecting Him to come (and that is the meaning of watching) you would be occupied with Christ's household. He is not speaking here of the church dispensationally, but of His household. Matthew xxiv. 45, 46, will make it plainer: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." That shews you that the characteristic of a servant watching for the Lord to come back, is that he is looking after the interests of His household, giving them their meat in due season. In that sense it is brought out very distinctly at the close of Revelation, where we read, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Then is added, "Let him that heareth say, Come;" you are not occupied with yourself, there is another range, another circle of things that you are occupied

with—the circle of His interests ; “ Let him that heareth say, Come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I believe it is of deep importance to understand that you are not only watching, with your loins girt and your lights burning, but you are taking care of the Lord’s interests. The force of the word “ watch ” is that you are keeping awake. Watchmen used to walk about at night, and tell the hours of night ; so one that is watching is wide awake, looking for the Lord to come ; and not only so, but he proves it ; he is not looking out of the window to see if there is any appearance in the sky of His coming. No ; he is so assured that the Lord *is* coming that he is taking care of those who belong to Him. See how Paul speaks to Timothy of the Lord’s appearing, and His kingdom. And John says, “ That we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” He does not say, “ That *you* may not be ashamed,” but “ we ;” that *he* may not be ashamed of his work ; and in another epistle we read, “ But that we may receive a full reward ;” and again, “ They watch for your souls, as they that must give account.” We shall all have to give an account. How little we have served ! You may say, Do you mean that only one person is to do it ?

I think if you are set for it, you will be glad of every one who contributes to it; if you contribute, you are seeking to support it, as the apostle speaks of the women who laboured with him in the gospel; they were not preaching, but they were aiding, helping on spiritually, and thus contributing to the service of the apostle.

I need not dwell upon how judgment comes upon those who are not prepared (v. 45, &c.), because I desire to bring before you the place of privilege to which we are called; but I will say a word or two on chapter xiii. You understand, I trust, that you are to be here a body of light; that is your true place here. In chapter xiii. there is an important warning, you are not to seek to be anything on the earth; the chapter closes with, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets your house is left unto you desolate." What you get in this chapter is the kingdom of God upon earth, how man has used the word of God; that is in verse 18: "Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in

three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The word of God by the human mind has produced this. The more a man adopts the word of God with his human mind, the more influence has he with men, because he suits men ; and the huge system of Christendom is the result. You are not to be that ; the fig tree, the Jew (v. 6), has failed, but do not seek to be a mustard tree. What then? There are two characteristics that are to mark you ; one is that of the woman who was eighteen years bound and who is loosed from her infirmity ; and the other is that the only path for you is to enter in at the strait gate. It is really conversion : " Strive to enter in at the strait gate ;" and you cannot seek any distinction or any acknowledgment from the world. The thing that had acknowledgment, that had a place, was Jerusalem, and the Lord says to it, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together"—but it is all over. What has brought about the state of things in Christendom is the word of God appropriated by man's intellect. And we see it, alas ! very often even among Christians ; the truth appropriated with the carnal mind, and instead of helping the truth, the very truth they have only makes

them of the mustard tree. It is not pleasant to dwell upon the unhappy side of things, but it is very blessed for us to see the beautiful path that is set before us.

The Lord grant that each one of us may understand what are the traits that belong to those who really care for the Lord in His absence. And what are we to do? Are we to do any great thing? If your eye is single your body will be full of light. Many Christians are taken up with their doings, and this thing or the other comes out, and not the Lord. It is true that Christ is at the bottom of the heart of every Christian ; but the great thing is that He should be at the top, should have the whole ; and then your whole bearing would be characteristic of Him.

The Lord grant that you may see what a wonderful path of privilege it is to be found here upon the earth for the Lord in the place where He was rejected, so that you may be looking for His return, and as you look for His return be a body of light, and be serving His household, giving them "their portion of meat in due season," looking after the interests of your Lord.



CHRISTIAN BLESSINGS.

No. 7.

THE NEW COMPANY ON THE EARTH.

PART 2.

(LUKE XIV. 15-35.)

ON the previous evening I took part of these interesting chapters, from the end of chapter x. to the end of chapter xiii. nearly, setting forth the characteristics of the new company on the earth during the absence of Christ. I suppose no subject could be more interesting to one to whom the Lord is dear, than what really characterises the new company on the earth. In the previous chapters we had the first part, that is, how we are for Him here, waiting for His coming. Now the other part is our portion here, as belonging to His kingdom. I can only give you a mere outline, but I trust you may be so interested in the outline that you will study the chapters for yourselves.

I have said the *first* part is how we are here waiting and watching for the Lord to come. Now we come to the *second* part, which is how we are placed here ourselves. It is of deep

moment to understand that if you are really for the Lord in the time of His rejection, instead of losing, you gain immensely. I think a great many true Christians do not really understand it, and therefore they have not got the blessings peculiar to the path ; it is in the path you get the blessings.

This chapter opens with the Lord curing the man with dropsy on the sabbath day ; He there shews the character of His grace, really to the Jew, and no doubt He set forth there what He will do to the Jew eventually. We must bear in mind that blessing was first offered to the Jew ; and when the Jew refuses the offer of blessing, then it is offered to the Gentile ; that is the order all through Luke. Then the Lord marked how they sought the chief seats (ver. 7) ; and He said, No, take the lowest place : “ For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Then He adds to His host, the one who had invited Him, “ When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind :” not those who can recompense thee. That is what He did Himself. That is the opening of the chapter. Then one of the company, no doubt a pious Jew, who was moved by what the Lord had set forth, said, ‘ Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.’ Mind, it is “ the kingdom of

God" that is set before us, how we are here in the place of Christ's rejection, and how we are blessed in this place, and how we are looking for the kingdom. The Lord in answer to this remark announces that there is to be a great feast before the kingdom. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready." You have the feast in this chapter, and the guest in the next (chap. xv.); but it is important to know where the supper is; the supper is in the house. He sends out the invitation; first to the Jew. That is always the order in Luke. The servant is sent to say "to them that were bidden"—that is the Jew—"come, for all things are now ready; and they all with one consent began to make excuse." One said he had bought a bit of land; there is nothing wrong in a bit of land, or in five yoke of oxen, or in a wife; but their hearts were holden by these things. They preferred them to the feast. That is uncommonly like ourselves; more or less we have looked for our blessings in the wrong place, the place of Christ's rejection. Success in the place where Christ was rejected is no mark of God's favour; I assure you it is very hard to convince us of that. It is not that a man may not do his work and do it well; but to become eminent as a man

in the place where Christ is rejected is not of God. They all refused the invitation to the supper, and then he sent his servant out into the "streets" (that is still to the Jew), and then into "the highways and hedges" (that is where we come in), "to compel them to come *in*, that my house may be filled." That is not to come to Christ, as is often said. Of course, if they did not come to Christ they could not come into the house; but the point here is to come *into the house*. Even in the next chapter, when the shepherd finds the sheep he "cometh home" to the house; ordinarily he would have brought it to the pasture; but it was not only of the sheep he was thinking, but of the joy that he himself had in finding the sheep; he brought it to the house, and called the neighbours and friends together to rejoice with him because he had found his sheep which was lost. I am speaking of the guest now, but the point is that the feast was in the house, and the guests were to be brought into the house: "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

One word more before I turn to the next chapter. What is to be the character of the persons who have this peculiar blessing? Verse 26 tells us, they must hate their own life; nothing that belongs to that life commends you to God; you have your duties, but you fulfil

them on another principle ; and therefore “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” And then the Lord gives two figures to set forth what He was teaching—a tower and an army. A tower signifies defence, and an army conflict ; you are to protect yourselves like a tower and you are to count the cost. Now the cost is generally thought to mean what you would lose by it, what you would expend ; but I believe the simple meaning is, that nothing will stand but Christ ; anything of your own material will perish ; and therefore He closes up by saying, “ So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” You may think the terms hard, but if you understood better the wonderful nature of the blessing which you are brought to, blessing in His own house, you would not think them hard. We have the blessing that belongs to the house *now* ; we have not left the earth, but we have the blessing *on* the earth, though not *from* the earth. The mistake is in looking for blessing *from* the earth ; if you look for blessing, there is the greatest blessing for you : “ Joy unspeakable and full of glory,” as Peter says ; but where does that come from ? Not from the earth. I am speaking of the bless-

ing that is given to us while we are waiting for the kingdom. Do you think all the earthly possessions that ever were can equal it? Most of us know something of earthly possessions, and the man that has most is the man that knows best how unsatisfying they are. Prospects are much more attractive to a man than possessions, because he thinks there is something in the distance which, if he possessed, would make him happy; but when he possesses it, he finds that happiness is not in it.

With reference to the last two verses of the chapter, Israel was properly the "salt," but the salt had lost his savour, wherewith could it be seasoned?

In chapter xv. we have, as I have said, the guest, but it is the delight of the finder that is set forth. The object of the parables is not the joy of the found one, but of the finder. There is the shepherd, and the woman with the light; it was no action on the part of the sheep that brought it back, and no action of the silver piece. The shepherd found the sheep, and the light shone on the silver piece. Finally the work of grace is set forth in the prodigal son, who is an example of us all naturally, alienated from God. He is turned to God, and is brought back, counting upon the goodness of God; there was nothing in himself to count on, but he

counted on the goodness of his father. And this is the work of conversion—the first step ; you turn to God, believing that there is goodness in Him ; but you have nothing to say for yourself. What he finds is that the father receives him in the most tender way, “ fell upon his neck and covered him with kisses.” You get in the three parables the whole work of grace.

If the shepherd had not gone out the father could not have met the prodigal. God would not have been able to come out, according to al His righteousness, and embrace a poor prodigal in his rags ; and if the light had not shined into the prodigal, he would never have turned towards the father. So you have all the Persons of the Godhead at work in the blessing of a soul ; and the prodigal is brought to it ; the father says to the servant, “ Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. . . . And they began to be merry.” Just think of that, the happiness in God’s presence ; and that is what the prodigal is brought into. In heaven ? No ; it is in the place where Christ was rejected that this joy is known. It is known on earth, though it is not from the earth. People may say, But I have not got that joy. Why ? Because you are looking for something from the earth. The great importance of chapter xiv. is to expose to us the disturbing element, that which would

lead you to look for blessing in the wrong place, to look for some blessing in this world. The first thought of a man, if he can manage it, is to get a plot of land to build a house on. It is not anything really wrong, but it shews where the heart goes. You do not belong to the place where your Lord is rejected, and you are to look to another place—the place where He is accepted, for your joys. “They began to be merry.” The elder brother (figuratively the Jew), says, “Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” He is angry, not because his brother is forgiven, but because his brother is feasted; “Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.” What the legal man objects to is the wonderful position in which grace sets us. I have often asked myself what is the measure of the grace? No one can tell, because it is not the need which is the measure of the grace, but God’s heart that is the measure; He has removed everything to His entire satisfaction in the cross of Christ, so that He can now do His heart’s pleasure in taking this poor prodigal and conducting him into all the blessing of His own presence, and that not by-and-by, but *now*. This is not what you get in John xiv., where the Lord says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.” Here the believer has

got a home *now* in the Father's house. Would that every believer knew and enjoyed it. But if you do know it, you must learn and accept that the man that refused Christ here must be in abeyance, otherwise you cannot be His disciple. Therefore the Lord says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." You may say, "I should be a nonentity;" no, you would not be a nonentity, you would be Christ's servant; your body is the Lord's and He would order it according to His pleasure. We should be taken care of a great deal better, for when we think we are taking care of ourselves we are very often pleasing ourselves, and when we are pleasing ourselves we are doing damage to ourselves, whereas if we were following the Lord He would take care of us.

I turn now to chapter xvi., where we have the parable of the steward. The Jew failed in being steward, and was to be steward no longer. No one is steward now in Christ's rejection; it is all Christ's property, and the point is that you are to make friends of "the mammon of unrighteousness." "The mammon of unrighteousness" does not mean the mammon of dishonesty, but it means that you have no divine right to it; that is the great point. You may say, "I have it in my possession, and I got it from my father, or I got

it by my industry." Well, I do not deny that, but still it is the mammon of unrighteousness ; because the owner of all has been refused here, and therefore what you are to do with it is to make friends of it ; that is, to use it in view of the future. A person might say Am I not at liberty to spend it on myself? If you do you get the present good of it, but if you make friends of it, they will receive you, or rather, as it should be, you are received into everlasting habitations. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, ye may be received into the eternal dwelling." (New Trans.) The idea is, to use it in view of the kingdom, or, as Peter says, "the day of visitation."

Here we read "the lord commended the unjust steward," not for his unrighteousness in taking his master's property, but the instruction the Lord means to convey is, that if you use the property entrusted to you, in view of the future, as the unjust steward did, He will approve you. The Lord says, It is all My property, and if you use My money in that way, I will approve you. They were looking at the present advantage of riches ; but the point is, that the Lord connects it with the future ; therefore the chapter finishes up with the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Which was the best off in the end, the poor

man or the rich man? "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things;" but what is their place in the future? You see, beloved friends, you must take into account that you are in a place where the Lord is rejected; the Lord takes an interest in every one of us, whether poor or rich; but what He is shewing here is that earthly goods are His property, and the way He would like you to use them. It is not that He would like you to neglect yourself and be ascetic, but the real good of the possessions is that you can make friends for the future; that is, that as you spend for the Lord and for the benefit of others what is properly His, but entrusted to you for the time being, it will be for your advantage in the kingdom. Therefore it is said "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come"; that refers to earthly possessions. Some think it is an easy thing, but I believe it is a very difficult thing: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" "Your own" is heavenly things. I believe we have to own how little we have regarded what is called

earthly means as really belonging to the Lord, so that we seek His approval whether we spend it on ourselves or on others. It is not merely a question whether you can afford it, but whether He approves of it.

Now we come to chapter xvii., and here the Lord brings before us another test: He says, "It is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him through whom they come." In such a scene as this is we necessarily find it difficult to get on; we are baffled by the things about us here, therefore the Lord says in verse 3, "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." They as Jews knew what it was to look for their rights, but it was entirely a new lesson that they were to forgive a man that had trespassed against them seven times in a day if he repented. (There is a good bit of the legal element in us all.) Therefore the apostles say to the Lord, "Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree"—(the wild fig-tree, that sets forth the Jewish order of things)—"Be thou

plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Then He tells them that whatever they do they have only done their duty, and in what follows He gives them an example.

As He was going on there met Him ten lepers, who besought Him that He would heal them. "And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God." They were all cleansed, but there was only one man who came to Christ. You may say, did not the Lord desire them to go to the priest? Yes! but when they were cleansed they ought to have understood the presence of God. The nine who went on were like the mass of Christians now, healed, but seeking by ordinances, or in one way or another, to learn approach to God. Practically, these nine lepers turned to Leviticus xiv. in order to find approach; but one man went direct to the Lord, and found approach. Any one who has found approach will understand the great difference. This man found approach to Christ! What a moment! This is literally what a soul finds when sealed by the Holy Ghost: "In whom, also after that ye believed,

ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." He "fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." And that is plainly approach ; he has to do with the Lord Himself. No one is in the happiness of all sin being removed, until he has found approach. Many have found escape who have not found the blessedness of approach—of going to Himself. In this chapter we find what is the true place for us here upon the earth, because it shews that we are in a world of difficulties, and we have to help one another, and shew grace to one another, and as we learn this, we have to break with all the legal order of things ; we are outside of it all, but outside it, we find approach to the Lord. No language of mine could convey to you the nature of the enjoyment that that man had when he was at Jesus' feet. In figure he had parted company with himself, but he was in the company of the Lord : it is a moment of inexpressible joy, a moment that could never be forgotten ; he became acquainted with the Lord.

The subject of the kingdom comes in at the end of this chapter, but I do not dwell upon it because it relates to the judgment that is to come ; the Jewish remnant is referred to and the judgment ; "One shall be taken, and the other left."

In prospect of the kingdom there is great instruction for us in seeing the characteristics of those who belong to the kingdom. If you turn to chapter xviii. you will see that the first characteristic is that a person has nothing to say for himself: "He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:" two men went up to the temple to pray; the one had nothing to say for himself—that is the first characteristic; he says, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then, following on that, in verse 15, "They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Now, beloved friends, it is of deep importance that we should see the characteristics of those who belong to the kingdom. The Lord says of little children, "of such is the kingdom of God," because what characterises a little child is, it has no antecedents, nothing that it can fall back upon; it clings, and it cries. There is something extremely touching in the way a soul truly rests on God. There is dependence and confidence. I have no dependence in myself; I may not even know what to ask Him;

but just like a child I cling and I cry, and I know that He understands. An infant has three or four different cries, and a mother understands the meaning of each cry. But I want to press on you the wonderful dependence and confidence that such a soul has, and that is the first great characteristic of being in the kingdom of God. Any of you who have been truly exercised will corroborate what I say, that often the time you have found the deepest blessing was when you did not even know what to say, but all you could do was to cling; you knew that He had what you wanted, and you were shut in to Him; you could not perhaps explain it to yourself, but you were really cast upon Him. "Of such is the kingdom of God."

That is not all. Now (ver. 18) comes a certain ruler, saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up." The Lord only asked him five commandments—those which relate to man; the four commandments that relate to God were not

mentioned, nor did He name the tenth commandment, which relates to the secret motive of the heart—"Thou shalt not covet." Clearly he was an admirable young man. In Mark's gospel, which gives the servant character of the Lord, we read: "Jesus beholding him loved him;" but He tells him that he lacks one thing, according to the Lord's requirement in chapter xiv., and that was, to forsake all that he had. "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Follow Me, the rejected One; but he could not follow Him, he was too much interested in his possessions. Beloved friends, what a picture it is of many a Christian, who is too much interested in his possessions here to follow the Lord. The characteristic of the one who is waiting for the kingdom is, that he follows Christ in His rejection.

I trust the Lord will give light to every one of us to see that it is a beautiful path; it is indeed a path outside this world, but what wonderful blessings and wonderful interests we find with the Lord in that path. "And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich." Why was he sorrowful? He would like

to follow if he could follow and still keep what he had. Many Christians would like to follow, but they do not, because they think if they take that path they will have to lose earthly things, like this young man. He would have been very much pleased if the Lord had said, You may *keep* all you have and come with Me: but no, it was to *part* with all he had and come with Him. "When Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, he said, How difficultly" (it should be translated) "shall those who have riches enter into the kingdom of God"! It is not a question of the riches themselves, but of the riches holding him. "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;" that is, a man that is well satisfied with his possessions here. "And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?" It was strange to the Jews to hear this; but you must bear in mind that the Jewish element is the thing that hampers *us*; we may think we are free of it, but we are not. "And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Now in the next verse we get Peter's boast, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." We read in chapter v. how they forsook all and followed Him; it was not in the day of their poverty that they followed Him. And that

is what I like to see—a man breaking with things here to follow the Lord, not when he can find nothing else, but when he is in his brightest day naturally. It was when their ships were full of fish that “they brought their ships to land, forsook all, and followed him.” We can understand how the crowd around would say, “What fools they are! they have got a great blessing from heaven, for this great take of fish was a miracle, and what did they do? They brought their ships to land and forsook all, and followed a poor man”! Do you think they lost by it, beloved friends? No, they had His company. While He was here upon earth it was a wonderful time to them, little as they understood it, and they must have felt when He went like unfledged birds that fall out of the nest; they were scattered. Peter says, “We have left all and followed thee.” And the Lord’s reply is important for us to bear in mind. “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” There is nothing that you have parted with for the kingdom of God’s sake that you do not receive manifold more for in this present time; I do not say you get it in natural things,

I think it is a mistake to say so. Peter might have said, I never made by it, but he would not, he dare not say so, for he had got manifold more in the company of the Lord, and the company of the Lord is compensation for the greatest losses and the greatest sacrifices that ever were made by man upon this earth. I have seen men sorry for the sacrifices they had made, sorry that they had parted with their fortune or profession or business or whatever it was, and I have seen the Lord give it back to them ; but it was not for their spiritual prosperity. Here the Lord says, " Shall receive manifold more in this present time ;" and what did they receive ? HIMSELF ! I trust many in this room will say, Well, Himself, His own company is better than anything we could lose in this world ; that can more than make up for any surrender or any loss on this earth.

I need not add more ; I desire that every one in this room may be really moved in heart to be here for the Lord in this scene of His rejection. I trust that we are glad to be of His new company, not expecting anything from the place where our Lord was rejected, but daily receiving joys unspeakable, joys *in* this place, though not *from* this place ; and thus we shall prove that as we follow the Lord we are

not losing, for we have deeper acquaintance with Himself. And therefore, as Paul says, "If we suffer" (endure), "we shall also reign with him." We are looking for the day of His appearing: we "love his appearing."

The Lord grant that each of us may be more distinctly for Him as we walk on the earth, in this place of His rejection, for His name's sake.

