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ESTABLISHMENT

ADDRESSES GIVEN

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by A. E. MYLES

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*Where quotations from Scripture differ from
the Authorised Version they are taken from
the New Translation by J. N. Darby.*

ESTABLISHMENT

Rom. i. 11-12 ; v. 1-11

WHAT is before me, dear brethren, is suggested in the words of the apostle Paul in Rom. i. 11; where he expresses a desire to see the saints that he may impart some spiritual gift, to the end that they may be *established*. The great thought of this epistle, as I understand it, is that the saints should be established. The people of God, as they move about in this world, are to be marked off from others as being morally established. Their course is not to be up and down, it is not to be marked by slackness on Saturday and an outward devotion on Sunday. It is not to be marked by spasmodic efforts, but the believer is to stand and walk before God on the basis of a moral foundation; as it says, "The just shall live by faith."

This epistle is written in view of the fact that the people of God may stay on the earth for a time. It takes a great deal of power and much grace to enable a man to live on the earth in righteousness before God and men. To be taken to heaven is part of the Christian blessing, the work of Christ and the will of God

form the basis for this—but for a man to be set up on the earth in the very place where he has been a failure, a bankrupt, and an offender, and to be maintained in righteousness, is a marvellous matter, involving the work of God in the man. Yet that is what God proposes to do, and the purpose of the glad tidings as it is presented in this epistle is not exactly to show us the way to heaven, but to show the way to live on earth in the favour of God, enjoying such moral liberty that no enemy—neither the flesh nor the devil—can bring us into bondage.

If I were to speak to a dying Christian I do not think I should present to him the epistle to the Romans. A man that is facing death is delivered from influences and powers that tend to hold men and women when they are in health. If a man were going to die in four hours it would be of no use to say to him: “There is a nice bit of property on the island which in twenty years’ time will reap financial gain.” Money does not mean much to a person who is about to die. If I were speaking to such an one I should try to interest him in what is presented in the epistles to the Colossians, or Ephesians, where you have presented the way divine grace has moved in view of blessing being secured to us in Christ, on the other

side of death. But to a person who is to live here, and who desires to fill up his life for Christ and for God, this epistle is of immense value, for it shows how righteousness is imputed and how righteousness is maintained. The first attribute of God with which a man has to do is righteousness. God is a righteous God. He has certain rights, and He moves in relation to man on clearly defined lines. You never know what a sinful man will do—his heart is like a deep well—and you never know what Satan will do ; but if you know God, you know on what line He moves—to-day, to-morrow—He will not change. His movements are marked by principles, and when you learn these principles you can anticipate how God will move in relation to man. He will never do wrong—He is a righteous God.

One object of the death of Christ and the giving of the Spirit, is to make the people of God like God in a moral way. If God is a righteous God He would set up His people in righteousness ; they would owe no man anything. If a person owes anything, either to God or man, that they cannot or do not pay they are unrighteous ; but God would set up His people, so that they are morally like Him. When unbelievers take account of those who are believers, they should see something

of God in their ways and conversation ; they should get an impression of God.

The first point to which I would call attention in the fifth chapter of this epistle is that the people of God are "justified by faith . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is not much in this epistle about forgiveness. It is referred to, but it is not the theme of the epistle. Romans brings in the blessings of righteousness, justification, our standing in grace, and life by the Spirit on account of righteousness. All these things are needed to live on the earth ; they are not in view of our place in heaven, though morally true of us as there. Righteousness and justification are in view of our being left here in this world. You need righteousness, and justification, and standing in grace, in view of filling out your life here on this earth. I hope that is plain, for it cannot be made too plain. Much of the gospel preaching that obtains to-day has in view merely that a man's conscience should be relieved, and that assurance should be given as a result of the work of Christ, that believers will go to heaven when they die or when the Lord comes. Preaching that goes no farther than that leaves a big empty space between the time when a man is converted and turns to God, and the time when he

passes away or the Lord comes. What I should like to give you is a sense of the deep value with which God regards the present moment, and how He has made it possible that we should fill out our lives here—perhaps even in tribulation or suffering, but in such a way as would be pleasing to Himself. So I say again that the purpose of justification is that we might be set up in the very place where we have been bankrupt, and where all kinds of charges could be brought against us. We are to be set up righteously, as an answer to the death of Christ, and to live as justified persons.

The idea of justification, as it is understood in the world, is connected with a person who has not been guilty. A man is brought before a judge, and proved not guilty, and he goes out fully vindicated. But only God can take a guilty man, a sinner deserving of wrath and eternal punishment, and justify him as a result of his believing in Jesus (Rom. iii. 26), setting him up again in the selfsame place where he has sinned, where perhaps he has been a drunkard or a liar or guilty of owing money as the habit of his life. God would set him up in the very same place, and the man can lift up his head in the consciousness that all is clear between God and himself ; he has peace with God

here, resulting from this justification. There are many who have faith in Christ who have not peace with God. They are filled with doubts and fears, or depend on how they feel in themselves; but justification is not connected with our feelings: we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," and it is on the principle of faith. It is on that basis that we have peace with God, or, as it might read, "peace towards God"; meaning that the outlook Godward is entirely peaceful and restful. You have no anxiety nor care; you understand that the Lord Jesus was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"; you understand that He went down under the judgment of God bearing your sins and guilt, and all that was due to you, and by faith you see Him raised again clear of all, for your justification. The justified believer is as free from charge of guilt as the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Saviour; just as free of charge as He is. For whatever charge there was against us He undertook to meet it, and having met it, He was raised from among the dead that we might be justified. The man who was guilty, the offender, the proved sinner is justified, and now his outlook is towards God in peace. God is the One

who is entitled to raise charges, He had the right to condemn, but *He* is the One who has justified us on the principle of faith. Faith in God opens the way for Him to do all that is in His heart: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have you peace towards God from Monday to Saturday? Have you it when in the workshop, in the home, in private, when you are alone with God? Do you look towards God, a righteous, holy God, in the happy sense that He has justified you on the principle of faith? You cannot begin a proper Christian history until you have peace towards God; and you will never have peace towards God until you realise that He has justified you "freely by his grace." Now you can make a start in life here—not to go immediately to heaven. Heaven is all right, the Lord Jesus will take care of that. My confidence is that wherever He is I am to be; He has decreed it, and His love would call for it. The will of God has given us to Christ, to be His companions for ever; but how are we to fill up the few days or years that are left of our lives here? How are we to meet our former companions in sin—the temptations of the way—all the influences that

once held us, and attracted us, and caused us to sin? *God* will show us how to meet them, and He would first appeal to us as to the bearing and power of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon us.

The next thing I would refer to is "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." We get here the thought of access—access into grace wherein we stand. A Christian's standing is indicated here. You know the idea of a standing. I might say to you: "How do you stand with your master? What is your position?" You may answer: "Sometimes he is favourable, and sometimes he is not." Well, your standing with God, as having believed is one of unalterable favour! One of the first things a believer learns is this, that God's favour does not change with his conduct or feelings, or with his faithfulness or unfaithfulness. God's favour does not change—His favour is fixed. As having believed in God, you are taken into His unchanging favour; it never alters, that is your position in grace; and you have access, that is, an open door, to God. It is a great thing to have access to God, for as being justified we have peace through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by Him we have this access. So having time available—perhaps only

two or three minutes in the course of a busy day—too short a time to read a book, too short a time for a rest from daily toil, it is not too short to speak to God ! You have not to knock and wait ; the door is always open, and His face is always towards you ; His unchanging favour rests upon you through our Lord Jesus Christ. It has come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not on account of anything relating to us. I would commend to you the thought, for access into the favour of God would make you conscious of His favour ; that is the idea. Whenever the opportunity serves, make use of this access, this open door. It has a marvellous influence on a man's daily life. Do you think a man who habitually goes into the presence of God would be marked by telling lies or cheating his fellow-man ? The man that has been into the presence of God will come out in the moral character of God ; he will be God-like. It is a great thing to take advantage of having access into this favour and grace in which we stand, and in which we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

I pass on now to refer briefly to some of the great agencies that God uses to deepen the work in our souls. We could not do without these things. The Lord does not always see fit to shelter His

people from every kind of hostile influence, but what He does is to work within them so that they are made superior to the influences that are against them; the man who was a drunkard in his unconverted days being able to walk in all the dignity of a man who is in the favour of God, set free from the chains that bound him.

The first of these agencies I refer to is tribulation; and this is where things begin to test us. Up to this point everything is favourable. It is a fine thing to get free of the workings of a guilty conscience, to get the joy of the Saviour's love, to be justified through God's grace, and know that you stand in grace and have access to God at any time, His face ever towards you in Christ; but now we come to something the flesh does not like—tribulation. I have known a case of a man who had good health and a good situation when he was unconverted and lived for himself, but when he became a Christian he lost both, and an onlooker who knew nothing of God's ways might say: "There is not much advantage in being a Christian, if that is to be one's experience!" The outsider does not understand. He sees others enjoy the Scriptures and the meetings, and delight to speak to God, but he knows nothing of the spiritual joy

of the knowledge of God. The outsider does not understand that God is going to bless us through tribulation. The believer will understand, and he will learn to boast in it ; he will glory in being made weak, for weakness makes room for the strength of the Lord Jesus. As long as I feel strong and able to get along myself I will never turn to Him for my strength. As long as my will is unbroken I will never learn to love the will of God. And so this agency of tribulation is brought to bear on us, this means by which God deepens the work of grace, and we learn to boast in it. If God takes me into a hard path it is that He might bless me still more. He is going to make room in my heart for Christ. A lot of things would keep Him away, so God is making room ; and as He subdues me by sending sorrow, pain, and suffering, it is to make way for Himself, so that we may draw upon the grace of Christ and thus He may become great to us, and that God too might become increasingly great to us.

The way God blesses man is by making Christ indispensable to him, by making Him known. It is a marvellous way of blessing ! The unbeliever knows nothing about it ; but the soul that has to do with God knows the value of tribulation as making God a reality to him, and as

making the grace of Christ something that he could not do without. So real does God make these things, that just as you would miss your meals in regard to your physical condition, if you were denied them, so you would miss the support of God and the grace of the Lord Jesus in regard to your spiritual health.

Whatever your daily calling, you must do it righteously in the power of God's support. What a power grace is! If you do what is unrighteous, it will not put you outside His favour, for that depends upon the Person and work of Christ; but it will cause you to lose the joy of His favour. His grace is still towards us in spite of what we are, and when we confess the thing that has caused a cloud we shall see *that the sun is still shining in its strength*. God has only one standard of favour, it is expressed in Christ, and it is there for all men.

Before I close, I want to point out, for the help of the young, the importance of noticing how Scripture groups things together. In verse 9 justification is connected with the blood. A sinner proved guilty needs justification, and it is in the power of Christ's blood—for that is the true meaning of the passage. That will never give us cause to be proud of ourselves; for while a justified man can lift

up his head before God and before men, it is in the power of the blood of Christ. That blood had to be shed ; its preciousness, its value, its power are made manifest only through death ; we never understand the justifying power of His blood till we see Him pass through death. The sense of that will keep us humble ; for in order to give us this marvellous position of favour before God, the Lord Jesus had to give up *His* life. *We* have forfeited our lives as being sinners, as it is written : “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die ” (Ezek. xviii. 4), and “ The wages of sin is death ” (Rom. iv. 23) ; but Christ the holy and righteous One, upon whom death had no claim, has died for us, and He has been “ raised again for our justification,” but all rests on the value of His blood before God (Rom. iv. 25, and v. 9).

You will notice in verse 10 a reference to us as “ enemies.” Viewed as enemies, we need reconciliation. Reconciliation brings God’s outlook before you. I spoke about peace towards God as being our outlook, but reconciliation describes how God looks upon His people. He has done away with enmity and distance. The one who was an enemy is reconciled, brought near to God for His pleasure. God looks down upon His people as reconciled “ by the death of his Son.” The death of

God's Son is to touch our hearts ; it means reconciliation for us. The laying down of that blessed life in manhood was necessary, if men who were enemies were to be reconciled to God. Then the Scripture says : " We shall be saved by his life "—that is, in the power of His life. Now carry these thoughts in your mind. A sinner needs justification, an enemy needs reconciliation, and a believer needs salvation. That is how the passage stands. That is how Scripture links the thoughts together. The believer needs salvation. Some of you may think that is strange, but I hope to show you that it is not so. As you read the Scriptures you learn to distinguish between these thoughts. I remember the day when I thought that forgiveness, justification, and redemption all meant the same thing, that I was to be relieved from the guilt of sin and made happy in the sense of a Saviour's love.

The fine detail of divine thoughts, as set out in the Scriptures, is worthy of our attention. Things are opened up to us gradually, so that they do not come to us in a mass, but line upon line, and by divine teaching. I would urge the younger brethren to learn the terms of divine teaching ; each term has its own significance, the intention being that we should

have a large apprehension of what was involved in the death of Christ. The believer needs salvation every day. He needs it that he might live on the earth. You need salvation on the earth ; you do not need it in heaven. Who is there in heaven who will do you harm ? In the scene where enemies are seeking to harm you, to take you away from Christ, to cause something to come between your soul and the Lord Jesus, and to rob you of your joy, so that you do not love to pray and speak to God, or read the Scriptures, or seek the company of those who love Christ—it is here in this world that you need salvation. And yet all the time you may be a believer. A believer needs salvation, so that no enemy can put a shackle upon him : that is the idea. He is to live here rejoicing in hope of the glory of God ; to live here in all the dignity of one who takes character and colour from the Lord Jesus Christ. You want salvation for that. You may live in a home with those who have no link with God ; you want salvation there to cope with ungodliness ; you want salvation there that the influence of that which is against you might be annulled. Salvation is by a living Person, through faith ; it is connected in verse 10 with the power of His life : not His death, but His life.

Think of the power at the right hand of God where Jesus is! He lives, He is not simply a Saviour who died for you 1900 years ago; He is a Saviour who lives for you. We may know that Christ died for us, but when we awaken to the fact that He lives for us, that gives us a new outlook. To save you every day, to save you from every enemy, to keep you in the enjoyment of His love. There is great power in knowing that the Lord Jesus lives for His own and that we are in His affections. We can think of the Lord Jesus looking down upon every one of us—a living Person taking the most wonderful interest in the smallest and most obscure of His people. He would make Himself and His love more attractive than all that is in the world. He would make righteousness attractive to us, so that we delight to do what is right. Doing right is an affair for every day. You do what is right because you love it; the practice of what is right is likeness to Jesus. Let this enter into our hearts, this mighty, attractive power in the One who lives for us that He might save us every day.

LIBERTY

Rom. vi. 1-4 ; 2 Kings v. 11-14.

I HAVE in mind to speak about Christian liberty. The Christian who is in the gain of the teaching of the epistle to the Romans is the only free man on the earth. Men think and boast that they are free, but man's idea of liberty is to do what he pleases. God's thought of liberty is to make us "bondmen to God." In being bondmen to God you will find the true secret of Christian liberty. The subject is an important one, and the first element of liberty is to be delivered from the power of sin. I am not alluding to the forgiveness of sins—I am assuming we have already received the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, through faith in Christ. God not only blesses us in order to set us at liberty, and make us at home in His own presence, but He gives to us the Holy Spirit that we might have within us a power greater than all the power that is in the world. The purpose in the Spirit's service as unfolded in this epistle is to lead us into true liberty, for we are to be delivered from the dominion of sin—sin is not to

reign over us. Now I think you will perceive that this is a stage farther on in our experience than the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. What I am speaking of does not in any way belittle the blessing of forgiveness of sins—a blessing which is communicated to us as we have faith in God, and which is never varied or altered, but which stands for eternity.

This epistle, as remarked, is to show us how to live on earth—I commend the thought to you. God would have us live in liberty, so that sin should not have dominion over us, and that we should not yield our members as “instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” Anyone who has passed through soul experience with God in regard to this question, will know at once that what I am speaking about is a great matter. God has greater things—precious and wonderful blessings for us, but He has to clear the ground in our souls, in order that He may have room to build us up and endow us with spiritual blessings in Christ. What I am speaking about is connected with clearing the ground in our souls. There is a lot of extraneous material about us, for until God takes us up there is *nothing* in us for Himself; but when He begins to work, there is that which is precious to Him, something that is of God as a

result of having to do with Him, and of coming under divine teaching. We learn how to be with God, and how to rejoice with God in the way in which He has dealt with all that pertains to the flesh, for He must bring us into accord with Himself. We know that in the death of Christ, God dealt with the question of sin in the flesh ; but while I may know that as a doctrine, God must pass me through certain soul experiences in order that I may understand *how* He dealt with sin in the flesh in the death of Christ, and the reason for His doing so. In the death of Christ as presented in this Scripture, God has opened the way for His people so that they can be delivered from the dominion of sin.

The death of Christ is a marvellous matter! We often think of it as an historical fact, and it is such ; but how much divine teaching, how much tribulation, and sorrow, and soul experience God has to pass us through in order to teach us the meaning of the death of Christ. Now I want to show the way God has opened for us, whereby the death of Christ is made available to us in a practical way. We want to be practical. Christianity is most practical and workable. God does not deal in theories that cannot be worked out. He is set for what is

practical. Every Christian doctrine can be worked out in our practical every-day life.

I would draw your attention to Rom. vi. 11-13, where we read: "Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to obey its lusts. Neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead." The verses that precede set forth the doctrine of baptism: "We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, in order that, even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (verse 4). He has been raised up from among the dead; He is no longer living in flesh and blood condition. He is not in that order of life at all, but has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father. The effect in us of understanding His resurrection is that we should walk "in newness of life"—a new kind of life that is different from that in which we once walked, is to mark us down here. In order to arrive at that, we accept baptism in its moral and practical import, that is to say, the Lord Jesus was buried and passed out of sight, and we too must pass out of sight as to this

world. He passed out of sight by going through actual death and burial; the burial of Christ was vicarious, that is, it was for others—for us—on account of God's judgment against sin. He passed out of the sight of man, and in baptism this is practically applied to us: "we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death."

Now how are we going to live? Obviously a person who has died, and has been buried, can only live in another kind of life. It is "*newness of life*"; it is not like the old life. The application of that is to encourage us to live to God, not to man in the flesh, but to find our joy and happiness in living to God. The Lord Jesus is not alive in flesh and blood condition. He has been "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," and He lives to God, and we are to live in a new kind of life that takes character from the One who thus lives to God. There is against us, as a hindrance to entering into that, all the mighty power of sin, that vast system set up by Satan in this world; whatever form it may take, whether gross or what is regarded as respectable according to men, we are to be delivered from the whole dominating power of it, by our practically answering to the death of Christ. It is not by struggling against it—if we struggle we

shall find it is too much for us, and our members will be yielded to unrighteousness ; but as our affections are moved in response to the death of Christ, we reckon ourselves dead to that to which He has died—the whole sin system. We disown its claims. The death of Christ entitles us to do so ; as the apostle says : “ Reckon yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Notice the word “ reckon ” ; it is a valuable word. I would press it upon the young people. “ Reckon yourselves dead to sin.” Refuse its claims in every form. You reckon with your mind—it is a mental process in the power of the renewed mind which you have by God’s work in your soul. That is the way you begin. It is not a question here of your hands, or your feet, or your mouth, but of how *in mind* you place yourself in accord with the death of Christ. Is there any power in reckoning yourself dead to sin ? There is ; because the Lord Jesus has died to it, and God helps us as we seek to correspond in any little way with Christ. The moment a man is dead he is delivered from all the bondage of sin. Sin does not work in the members of a dead man. But how can I be dead while I am still alive ? On the principle of reckoning. As appreciating what has come to me from God through the

death of Christ, I refuse to own the claims of that on account of which He died. My mind, as renewed, is in accord with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ and His death.

There is another valuable word here, and that is—"yield" in verse 13. "Reckon" is one word I would press you to remember, and the other is "Yield." What do you think would interest and occupy one who was alive from among the dead? Not the things of men or of the world. Sin, as a principle, would have no power over him, for the power of sin ends at death; it does not go beyond it. As "alive to God in Christ Jesus," we are to yield ourselves to God; meaning that the God whom we know by His compassions in Christ has become attractive to us. The mighty power of this affection over one's soul is evidenced by the manner in which I yield myself to God, and my members as instruments of righteousness to Him. We are thus brought to enjoy this newness of life, a kind of life where sin has no dominion or power. We are called upon to yield ourselves to God in view of that. It is the way of entering into the fruits of the death of Christ. The Lord Jesus wants us by reckoning, and yielding, to come into the gain and good of His death and resurrection even now. He want us to know the mighty power of

His resurrection over our souls even now. What a power resurrection is ! It will deliver the people of God from every trace of bondage to sin and from every enemy, so that there will not be an element of defeat.

You know what the members of the body are—the hands, the feet, the mind, the eyes, the mouth, and so on ; these members have been instruments of sin. How much sin these members have been guilty of ! The lust of the eye and the covetousness and sin that is connected with it. The feet which we are told are swift to shed blood. All these members have been truly members of unrighteousness to sin ; but now they are to be for God—every one of them is to be for God. The Lord not only wants your mind and heart, He wants every member of your body to be held in Christian liberty, that is, in bond service to God. As I said before, Christian liberty consists in being delivered from every form of bondage, so that we might be bondmen to God. To be bondmen to God is to find the perfection of creature liberty—no responsible creature could have greater liberty than that. Of necessity the creature is dependent on the Creator ; man is dependent on God, yet in unrighteousness he seeks to find his happiness without God outside the sphere of dependence.

Now, having said that much, I turn to the passage in the second book of Kings. Scripture has its own illustrations, and the story of Naaman sets out the truth illustratively which is referred to in Romans. I do not say that what is seen in Naaman does not go further, but it covers the teaching before us. Naaman was a leper, and we all know leprosy in Scripture is a type of sin working in the flesh, as in Rom. vii. 5, it speaks of sinful flesh. You will remember that when Adam was made his bodily condition was flesh; that is how he was made. Sin took control over him when he disobeyed God, and the flesh of which Adam was made became sinful flesh. In other words, the active principle of sin was implanted in the condition of man, and became inseparable from man, and there has not been born one single child, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who was not born in sin. All others have been born in sin, with the active principle of sin in the flesh, so that, as Scripture says, it is "sinful flesh."

Now Naaman is a type of this: not of how a sinner gets forgiveness, for the matter of forgiveness does not enter into the passage. In Naaman we see that underneath the exterior there was the active working of sin in the flesh. If we

confess our sins, we get forgiveness ; but the Lord not only forgives ; He proposes to “ cleanse us from all unrighteousness ” and to show how our members can be made available for God. You all know the story of Naaman, how he was bidden to go and wash in Jordan seven times. While seven is a perfect number and suggests complete experience and exercise, yet “ seven times ” supposes going through it in detail. God would teach us how the death of Christ bears on this matter. In yielding our members to God He would teach us in detail. Indeed, things are not presented in a way that we could not take them in, but in detail. I will refer you to Rom. iii. 11 to show with what detail the Spirit of God exposes the features of the flesh, how the members are made tributary to it. “ There is not a man that understands, there is not one that seeks after God.” Now, understanding is connected with the mind. The mind is a member of the man—a most valuable member—and God would lay hold on the mind. He wants the mind—it is a member of the body. It is to be for God, to be yielded up to Him. Unregenerate men let their minds wander as they choose ; there is no idea with them of controlling the mind. Now one of the first features of Christian power is

that one has a renewed mind, and that it is under control.

Unregenerate men have no understanding as to God. Christians, as having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, are marked off from the men of the world as having an understanding. What do we understand? We know God; we have an understanding—our mind has thus a right basis on which to begin to think. That is a great asset—to have a right basis! The literature of the world is infidel and imaginative, showing that men have no understanding. In unregenerate men the mind is lost to God. In Christianity the mind is laid hold of; it can rightly take account of God, for it is a recovered member of the body, brought by the power of the death of Christ and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, to become a most useful member. Nothing is so productive of good as meditation about Christ, and reading of the Scriptures. A mind that is recovered to God has right thoughts about God. Use that mind as under the control of the Spirit, for it is most valuable to you, and to God.

Now take the second member referred to in chapter iii. 13: "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Four members are referred to, all of them adjacent, and

together they form the organs of speech. First, the throat; second, the tongue; thirdly, the lips, which in unregenerate men "carry the poison of asps"; and fourthly, the mouth, which is full "of cursing and bitterness." These four organs are the organs of speech—throat, tongue, lips, and mouth. It is by use of these organs that we can articulate—we can make sounds, speak words. This matter of speech is of the greatest possible importance in our Christian history, for in having to do with God, and having to do with one another, speech is essential. A man who is recovered finds abundance of matter to speak about to God and to men. I would commend that to your prayerful attention. How definitely the organs of speech are exposed in the man of the world, and how definitely the organs are recovered in the converted man so that they may be used for God! If you refer to Rom. x. you will find that one feature of salvation mentioned is confession with the mouth. Is it not a triumph for God, that the mouth that was full of cursing and bitterness should be used in the confession of the name of Jesus as Lord? That the lips which carried the poison of asps—those very lips should be found speaking the truth! You know how it is in the world among men, how men learn to

speaking deceitfully and with a sting in their speech, but every man that knows the Christian should be able to discern that the element of deceit has gone from his lips, and that there is no poison under his tongue, no malice, or gossip, or lying stories to cause trouble, no poison. These lips, this mouth, this throat that was an open sepulchre, are now, as recovered members, to be yielded to God. How much the idea of speaking enters into Christianity! If all took account of this there would be no silent brothers—not one! A silent brother has missed four features of recovery. If you have never confessed the name of Christ you have not yielded your mouth to God, and if you are amongst the Lord's people and find your place in the meetings and have never stood up to praise God, you are not in liberty.

Let me refer to other features. The next is in verse 15: "Their feet are swift to shed blood." The feet are the members of movement, bringing in the idea of usefulness—utility. God does not deal only with what is beautiful and ornamental. In the world the most beautiful things do not move about much. The more beautiful they are, the less you find the idea of movement connected with them. Take a beautiful ornament—there it stays

in the house ; it is stationary. God's people have feet—once these feet were “ swift to shed blood ” ; you know what they are to be like now, according to chapter x. The feet that were swift to shed blood become “ beautiful feet,” carrying the gospel of the glad tidings of the grace of God ; they have been yielded to God as instruments of righteousness ; they are not employed in the ways of sin, but are yielded to the service of God and have become “ beautiful.” I like to think of the eye of God looking down on His people. The feet of a man are what touch defilement most—in contact with the ground. Once the feet were marked with blood—that is, they followed the ways of death. The feet get the nearest to defiled paths. You go in the ways of men, where every path is defiled—marriage vows broken, dishonesty practised, nothing held sacred—but the people of God have to walk through all this crookedness and defilement with feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You would not look for beauty down here, but God takes note of the feet of His people. What we say with our lips is not to be denied, or weakened by where our feet are found. There is one more feature, the eye, referred to in verse 18 : “ There is no fear of God before their eyes.” These seven members

referred to here are described as being members of unrighteousness, yielded to sin. But it is the whole man that God wants, and his body is to be presented as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. xii. 1).

Now to return to Naaman the leper. He was told to dip seven times in the Jordan—not once, but seven times. You may have passed through some deep experience in life to learn something connected with the flesh in its true character, and deliverance from the power of it in relation to the death of Christ—but there are to be seven dips in the Jordan. Perhaps many of us do not take the last dip till we come to our death-bed. When a man faces the fact that he is going to die, he will take the last dip in the Jordan, and during the last hours the power of sin and the flesh over him are broken entirely and the man after the flesh disappears from his eye. *All* his members are for God. He will not talk to you about his property, but about God and Christ; but such is the power of the Holy Spirit that we can anticipate what we must pass through when going into death, so as to get the benefit and the gain now.

Let me say a word about these servants of Naaman—he had some good servants. I do not doubt that they stand for the brethren, and the greatest help that the

brethren can give you is to help you to go down into the Jordan. In the main you find that influence amongst the saints ; if they see you are getting big in your own eyes, that the workings of the flesh are still evident, they will help you to get the gain of the death of Christ in this character. These are valuable servants : do not despise the man who helps you to go down—he is moving on the same lines as God Himself ; he is in accord with God, and is a good servant to you. Naaman needed a lot of help, and we all need help to go down. When a person is facing these painful and bitter exercises they need help. You may have been in fellowship for forty years, and yet you are only just learning that the flesh is absolutely unchanged ! Nothing changes the flesh ; all the favour of God does not change the flesh. The death of Christ was not to change the flesh but to bring it to an end—a judicial termination ; and the Holy Spirit given that we might have a new state before God. In the power and understanding of these things we arrive practically at the same point, that the man after the flesh cannot be tolerated. We are thus in liberty, and freed practically from the dominion of sin and from its workings so that we can be wholly yielded to God for His pleasure.

POWER AND SECURITY

Rom. viii. 28 to end.

WE have looked at the stability and restfulness of the Christian's position as set out in the thought of peace towards God (Rom. v.), and also at the idea of Christian liberty illustrated in that we have become the bondmen of God (chapter vi.). As such we enter into liberty according to God, for the creature must always stand in the position of bondman to the Creator. I propose now to look at two further thoughts connected with the Christian's position on earth. The first is *power* and the second is *security*. Both are developed in the eighth chapter of Romans, and in order to illustrate what is in my mind I shall refer to another passage in the second book of Kings. I am particularly concerned that the younger brethren should understand these thoughts. In the world the thought of licence and liberty are much akin, men think that liberty consists in freedom to do as they like.

Christian liberty is that we are brought into bond service to God, and as bondmen of God are privileged to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God.

There is then the power for Christian life, and the security connected with the love of Christ and the love of God. These are foundational pillars of the truth, and as they are apprehended we shall have a basis in our souls for greater and more blessed things.

In order to illustrate my first thought of power I will refer you to a well-known passage in 2 Kings iv, to the incident when one of the wives of the sons of the prophets came to Elisha and told him the sad story that her husband was dead and the creditor had come to take her two children as bondmen. Elisha draws attention to what she had—something which in her eyes had little value—she had a pot of oil in the house. Oil is frequently in Scripture a type of the Holy Spirit, and this chapter and Rom. viii. run very closely together. In the latter passage the Spirit is referred to many times and under many titles, corresponding to the way in which Elisha drew this woman's attention to what the oil meant to her. You will remember that he told her to get vessels—typically, vessels for the Spirit. To preach only from the viewpoint of relieving men of burden and guilt does not go far enough; for if they are relieved of their burden and guilt and left in the world they will not be found

here for the pleasure of God. That is, the *man* has got something, but what has *God* secured from him? Little or nothing! There can be nothing for God from man living in responsibility on this earth, until he receives the Holy Spirit, and is conscious of the Spirit working in him. In other words, the power for Christian life lies in the Holy Spirit.

If we refer to this widow woman we find she was told to get vessels, to borrow vessels, and when there was not a vessel more, the oil stayed, meaning that there was more oil than there were vessels, and that is the position. If you secured all the vessels in the world, there would still be more oil. The Spirit of God is a divine Person, and He can fill all, and still the Spirit would be greater. Elisha draws this woman's attention to the intrinsic value of the oil, and he says: "Go, sell the oil." If we are to live here amongst men according to the righteousness of God, and in the liberty of Christianity, we cannot have debts unpaid. We are to be neither debtors to sin, nor debtors to men for anything. The Spirit is brought before us under this figure of oil, as having intrinsic value, so that the believer, as having the Spirit, can be here as a debtor to none. The oil was not only to pay this woman's debts, but she was

told to live of the rest. It suggests a steady income, a steady source of supply for life, with all its responsibilities and obligations, whether in the workshop or office, or in the home or family, amongst the people of God, a steady income is assured in the Spirit to maintain the saints down here in righteousness and life. This brings us to the eighth chapter of Romans—a most precious chapter, where something positive is brought out. Christianity is very positive; it is not simply a negation of certain things, it is a positive system of blessing. Those who know nothing of the Holy Spirit within them think that Christianity is all negative—that you must not go here or there, or do this or that, or read this or the other; but in this chapter Paul reaches a point in the unfolding of the great foundations on which God is blessing man, where he comes to what is positive. He has been exposing man according to flesh, dipping down into what Peter calls a sink of corruption—exposing all the hideous nakedness of sin working in the flesh; but he has brought in the great blessings of justification and peace with God, and the exercises of learning that the flesh is still in us, although we are not in the flesh as before God. Much of that is negative teaching, and many beloved Christians

spend their lives in what is negative. There are many dear believers in the Lord Jesus who never get a sense of power till they come to their death bed. All this shows us the great importance of recognising that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. There are two great possessions that a Christian has in present enjoyment—the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. I want to press upon you, dear brethren, if I can, the immensity of the thought that God's Spirit dwells within us! I would raise the question with each one of us. What value do you attach to the Spirit as dwelling in you? If you were asked by what power or by what means you can fulfil the righteous obligations of Christian life would you say: "By the Holy Spirit, and by nothing else"? *That* is the great secret of the Christian's power. I would call attention to some remarks in Rom. viii. as showing the variety and extent of the help that the Holy Spirit affords us.

You will notice in verse 2 that the Spirit is called the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," showing at once that the power of God would bring us into life. We have to learn the working of death in our members, but the power of the Spirit is in us to bring us into life. God has life for you. Whatever you may have

touched so far of the blessing of Christianity you may depend on this—if you get into the right path He has life in view for you. He is the Spirit of life. The extent of what is to be known by the believer lies in the Spirit. You know what the term “life” covers—it embraces the whole man. The Spirit of life is to energise the whole man; to make every member of the man respond; to fill our hearts, to direct our feet, and to help us in all our weakness. He will teach us to pray, and He will intercede for us.

The Spirit as presented in this chapter has before Him the whole range of Christian experience, and He enters with us into every Christian experience, so that all His power should be brought into our circumstances. It says in verse 4 “that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit.” The Spirit is to be the guide and power of the Christian’s walk. You know what “walk” means—it is the thought of the Christian’s pathway. Where do your feet go—into what paths and places do they carry you? How do you move? Here we see that we are to walk according to the Spirit. Hitherto the flesh has directed our walk; we have turned aside to gratify and please ourselves; but now

the Spirit is to enter into this matter of our daily walk. There is power in the Spirit to control and direct that walk, so that it will be delightful to God.

In verse 6 the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. The Spirit is to take control of our minds: there is the mind of the flesh, and there is the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit would bring us into all the thoughts of God, for He is the thinking power of the believer. If that were not so, then a man with a trained mind would have a great advantage over one that was untrained, but God does not work like that! No qualification in nature ever gave a man any precedence in God's things. "The mind of the Spirit is life and peace," showing that the Spirit takes note of your mind. *He* would be mind to you, and would help you into "the deep things of God." Sometimes you hear people say: "I have not got a mind for this or that," but the Spirit is here, and "the mind of the Spirit is life and peace." He will lead your thoughts, He will help you and give you thoughts. Perhaps in the middle of the night there flashes into your mind in a moment some precious thought of Christ. Who brought it there? It was the Spirit; and He will see to it, if given His place, that our minds are held and filled with thoughts of Christ.

Then in verse 14 we read about the leading of the Spirit: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The leading of the Spirit would bring before us how our lives are to be controlled. We need to be led, we need to be controlled by the Spirit that dwells in us, so that the counsels and purposes of God should be known; all that is before us to enjoy down here, and the Spirit would undertake to lead the believer into it: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." You get here a touch of sonship, not an unfolding, but just a touch to show the Spirit's relation to us as sons and how He would lead us. Verse 29 tells us we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that Christ might have suitable companions, and the Spirit is leading us there, guiding us along the road, taking charge of our lives and circumstances, so that all should tend towards the great goal of conformity to Christ in the many sons.

We have the witness of the Spirit in verse 16, and the intercession of the Spirit in verse 26. The Spirit is here witnessing with our Spirit that we are the "children of God"; we have thus, by the Spirit, a true sense of relationship with God. A cry of relationship is produced by Him,

that precious cry "Abba, Father." God would give us the sense in our souls that we have a link with Him ; it is not theoretical, the cry is that of the sons of God, for we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba Father." And then we have the intercession of the Spirit, for He enters sympathetically into all the weakness that marks us. We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit is with us. If everything rested on our prayers how poor the result would be ! But He is with us to intercede, and He takes note of the weakness, and intercedes with groanings which cannot be uttered and deep feelings. He enters into our exercises with an intercession that is perfectly according to the mind of God. I hope I have said enough to show how fully and completely the Spirit dwelling in us enters into all our exercises. The power of the Christian life lies in the Spirit, and whenever I yield to the Spirit, and submit to the Spirit, and walk according to the Spirit, I find there is a power in connection with my life that will make me triumphant down here.

I turn to the second thought, which I spoke of as *security*. Men's ideas of security take form in bonds of one kind and another. If a man wants to hold two things together he puts a bolt through

them, or something like that. If he wants to bind things up legally he prepares a document, and stamps that document with the authority of the law. Security according to divine thoughts is in love—there is no bond like love, no cementing power like love, and hence the apostle, having traversed in this epistle the various stages of soul experience, is now at liberty to unfold the marvellous security connected with the love of Christ and the love of God. In order to develop this thought I began reading at verse 28, to illustrate the idea of foreknowledge, and predestination, and calling. These features of divine movements are properly introduced when the believer has been fully established, so that verse 28 speaks about persons who love God, in relation to whom it says: "All things work together for good." Persons who love God are in a suited state of soul to be enlarged in their thoughts of the greatness of God. Previously in this epistle God has been moving within the range of what is known to man. The existence of sin in the world is taken up and exposed, and the work of Christ is brought in to meet it; but now, having brought to light persons who love God, the apostle brings in certain features of divine movement that are to make God greater to us; and he

introduces the thoughts of foreknowledge and predestination, taking us behind the scenes, so to speak. All that has gone before is in front, but having introduced the persons who love God he takes us behind the scenes. If you want to know God in the greatness of His majesty and power, you must be a lover of God. Only lovers of God can take in the greatness of God. The moment you go behind the scenes, there are things that the natural mind cannot understand at all. The mind of man cannot understand God's movements from His own glorious standpoint, and according to His own mighty power! He is a God of foreknowledge! Long before we were born—indeed before there was anything created—the foreknowledge of God reached out and took account of us. When you learn that, you say what a great God He is. But if you tell that to an unregenerate man he will rebel against it, for he will not allow the thought of predestination; but so great is God, so marvellous is His knowledge, so absolute His will, that before He created anything He foreknew all that would happen! Foreknowledge comes before predestination; and that will help you to understand predestination. His foreknowledge is presented first, and predestination second, and then His power

to call us. This is where faith comes in. He calls, He justifies, and He glorifies. What a marvellous, mighty God we have, One whose purposes have never been in danger of failing. He is a mighty God, and although He in grace explains to men, He is still *God* in all His incompassable greatness! You learn how much you are loved as you are taken behind the scenes. You learn there how great He is—but also how much He loves! Two thoughts stand out here which give the best idea of security I know of in all the Scriptures—it is the most comforting and assuring knowledge the believer can have—the knowledge of the love of God, and the love of Christ. That is where security lies; that is an unbreakable bond of security! As brought into this marvellous region of the love of God and the love of Christ, you learn what security is—absolute security.

The apostle says: “What shall we then say to these things?” (verse 31). You will remember that we have referred to the organs of speech as members of a man’s body. Now these organs of speech begin to function: you can say something now. Paul assumes that we all have something to say, this is what he says: “Who shall bring an accusation against God’s elect?” This is a challenge to the whole universe, for Paul’s outlook is not

limited to men—he takes in angels, principalities, powers, height, and depth—the whole range of God’s universe, and he issues his challenge as though he would extend it to the powers of hell and the angels in heaven—“*Who shall bring an accusation against God’s elect?*” Who is there? No accusers, no accusations. God is the justifier. The accuser would have to disturb God from His throne of might and majesty in order to bring an accusation against God’s elect! God is the justifier—my part was the sins and the guilt, but God is the justifier!

And then Paul goes on: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” (verse 35). He looks round on all the possible things that may happen to the saints while they are on the earth. These are earthly possibilities—there will be no tribulation, distress, persecution, or famine in heaven—these are things that are found on the earth. They are not pleasing things; tribulation can separate on earth, famine, danger, and sword can separate most things. The sword can scatter; it has scattered nations and families, separated them, committing some to death while others are preserved in life. The sword is a great separating power in the hands of men. And famine separates: people must go afield and look for

relief from famine ; distress has caused them to move and wander about, and so on with all these items. But he says : “ I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What security ! We are going up to heaven one day—that is height. Is there anything there to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ? There are powers and principalities in heaven, and there are powers on earth, and there are future things which many dread. The future may bring peril, famine, persecution, or death, but Paul says : “ I am persuaded ” that none of these things “ shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That is security ! If you value the love of Christ, and the love of God, you will be greatly comforted by this persuasion of Paul’s. Is that your persuasion ? Paul is speaking for himself, and although he speaks for himself and his own persuasion, what he is persuaded about is true for all the saints. He is not only persuaded that nothing will separate *him*, but that nothing shall

be able to separate *us* from the love of God. This is a fine persuasion! People sometimes talk of the persuasion to which they belong. This is Paul's persuasion; it is Christianity in its positive aspect. In its negative aspect it brings deliverance from certain things, but by the Spirit we are introduced into certain things, and here are two things—the love of Christ and the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We cannot have the love of God apart from Christ Jesus our Lord. He is a divine Person, but He is a Man. He is not hidden from His saints. He can always be found by His people, and that is why everything for His people is in Him. The love of God is in Him, and the fact that He is a Man is most precious and comforting. The love of God, whom we could never see directly, for God dwells in unapproachable light—the love of this God who has foreknown us, predestinated us, and justified us, is brought to us “in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I leave these thoughts with you. The thought of power lying in the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, entering into each detail of our lives, in view of our having power to go through; and then the precious thought of security that is connected with the love of divine Persons, and all in a blessed Man, “Christ Jesus our Lord.”

THE ASSEMBLY POSITION AND RELATIONS OF THE SAINTS

I Cor. i. 1-2, 9, 26-29 ; ii. 3-13, 16.

ON previous occasions I have sought to show from the Scriptures that the work of Christ and the pleasure of God have secured an eternity of blessing for the believer ; and that the grace of God has taken the form of present help, in view of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—in the midst of an unrighteous and ungodly world, in a scene where men are under the dominion of Satan and the bondage of sin—living in the joy of Christian liberty, knowing the secret of Christian power and happiness, as their bodies are yielded to God as a living sacrifice. We read in the epistle to the Romans that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” That has in view the way that God would use our circumstances. It speaks about things *working* for good, meaning that certain things are being worked out in our lives in the midst of changing circumstances. What is before me now is to direct your attention out of the region of circumstances, where we do not know from one

day to another what changes may occur, into a region of prepared things—"things which God hath prepared for them that love him." In both of these passages we have the thought of "them that love God" not those that God loves, but those that love God. God has to work in us, and with us, in order to bring this about; but the proper Christian state is that we love God. God loves all His people surely, but to be happy and in the enjoyment of God's love for us, there must be a response in our hearts to God. God is not only making all things work for good to them that love Him in the sphere of responsibility, where the circumstances are constantly changing, but He has spiritual things "prepared for them that love him." I want you to notice that word "prepared"; it conveys the sense of something well thought out, not something suddenly undertaken. God prepared these things beforehand—things that were planned in eternity; they express His own thoughts and desires towards us then.

We should bear in mind that the epistle to the Romans views us as responsible persons, and one feature of our responsibility is to live righteously before God and men. We have responsibilities in our families, in our business relations, and

we are in a world that is governed by authority—the authority of kings, magistrates, and rulers. In all these spheres believers in Christ are viewed in their individual responsible lives. The epistle to the Corinthians, on which we now enter, views the people of God, not in their individual pathway but in their collective setting. I hope you understand the words “their collective setting.” I mean that you are one of a large number of persons each one of whom is as much in the heart of Christ as you are, and in each one of whom the Lord has worked to bring about a living link with Himself, and has then put all together as one whole—a unit. In other words, when you come to this epistle it becomes a very searching question as to what your assembly links are, with what fellowship are you linked? You may say: “I know the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, and I look forward to spending eternity with Him.” Have you thought that when you go to spend eternity with the Lord Jesus there will be a vast number of persons for whom He died and whom He loves who will also be in eternity with Him, united together as one? That is to say, they form what Scripture calls the church—the assembly. The assembly is one idea, one thought, and it is composed of every

believer who has the Holy Spirit; they form one body known as "the assembly of the firstborn" ones (Heb. xii. 23). When the Lord turned your heart to Himself and gave you a sense of eternal blessing and peace towards God, when He gave you to realise the power of the Spirit shedding the love of God abroad in your heart, He did not mean you to fill out the rest of your life according to your thoughts. He did not leave to our choice the matter of what we should do with the rest of our lives; for He not only claims our affections, but He claims our lives. The Lord will do something with our lives, He has a purpose in leaving us on this earth after we are converted. He could take us straight to heaven, but He does not do that with most of us. Most of us are left here for some years, and these years are most valuable years. You may think that as long as heaven is secured for you, and you are assured of not coming under judgment, the present does not matter, but I assure you that the teaching of Scripture is, the present time is most valuable. You will notice how much the Old Testament, and Scripture generally, tells us about the lives of the people of God. It does not tell us much about what comes after death, it only speaks of one

or two, such as Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration, but, in the main, Scripture is taken up with a record of lives down here. How interested God is in our lives, and how much He means to work out in them. What a marvellous change was brought about in persons with whom He was concerned! Take Jacob for an example. He would have made a first-class business man, as we speak, a diplomat and a schemer. There was much crookedness about him, but when he had been passed through discipline in the ways of God, when he had been exposed and helped, he was perfectly transparent. He comes to his finishing moments worshipping "on the top of his staff"; although a feeble and dependent old man, he is marked by spiritual intelligence and power, showing that he has come under the hand of God, and is now delivered from himself. Jacob is a formed vessel in the end.

One of the great features that the Lord has in view in the lives of His people down here is that they should be bound together by the Holy Spirit in a corporate and collective way. As converted we come under the hand of the Lord, and in due course receive the Holy Spirit. The next thing is that we should find others that the Lord has in the place where we live, those that He loves even as He loves us.

He has certain thoughts about us, and we are to be found together with other believers in the same city, to form what the Corinthian epistle speaks of as the church, the assembly of God, in that place. That is what I mean by assembly relations. You will notice, dear brethren, that Paul, the writer of this epistle, addresses these Corinthian believers as a unit—a unit in a place: “The assembly of God which is in Corinth.” The Christians, the believers in a place, form one unit according to the thought of God. If you go back in your thoughts to the days of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God came down and took up His dwelling in the company that Christ had brought together, you will remember that all the believers were together, one whole. They met together, they took the Lord’s Supper together, and, in the beginning, had all things in common—they were one unit on the earth. Now Paul is speaking here especially to the believers in one place. I want you to notice the idea of a place, he says: “All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.” What he is about to unfold in this epistle is what is connected with a place—like Bridgetown, or any other place. God recognises the names and the boundaries that men give to their cities: He

does not give names to men's cities, but He establishes His people as His assembly in these cities and places. They are there as the "assembly of God" and the "body of Christ" in those places. Paul speaks about them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints." They are set apart in Christ Jesus, they are divided off in God's mind from the rest of the people in the place, and from all that is in the place except what is of God, and they are joined together by the great fact that they are baptised by one Spirit into one body and that the Spirit of God dwells among them. You will see at once, dear brethren, what a sanctified company it is—a company of persons living in a certain city in this world, but separated from all other persons, because they have the Spirit of God and because they are saints by calling. It is not a question of waiting until a person has been dead for a hundred years before he is called a saint. *God* calls His people saints; they are saints by divine calling, that is the dignity that He has put upon them. In His mind, and by reason of His work in them, they are holy people, and they are to be rendered practically so by the Holy Spirit which they have received.

Paul speaks of these persons as those that "call on the name of our *Lord* Jesus

Christ.” As a believer you call on that name ; you have confessed it, I hope in public, the name of the One who died for you. In speaking about Christ you do not speak about Him only by the names of Jesus, or Jesus Christ, but you speak of Him as *Lord*—“ our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is most important that you should know Him and confess Him as Lord. There are persons who speak about *Christ*, and *Jesus Christ*, and about walking like Him, but they do not refer to Him as the *Lord Jesus Christ*. This is an indication that even if they know Him as Saviour, He has not His proper place of authority in their thoughts. You may think about Him as One who died for you and is going to take you to glory, but have you thought about Him as having absolute authority over your life ? It is the most absolute authority in God’s universe ! No authority is so absolute as the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the right of complete control over you ; the right to dictate where you are to go, what company you are to keep, how you shall behave, what manners are to mark you, what dress and ornaments you wear, how you speak, how you pray, and in all else He has absolute authority over those for whom He died, and who call upon His

name. He will exercise His authority in a future day over the whole realm of creation, and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord ; but He would have now the most absolute and implicit obedience from His people to every one of His commandments. Do you think about the Lord's commandments? Perhaps you thought He only gave one, as in John xv. 12 : " That ye love one another, as I have loved you " ; but there are many more than that. I would ask you to notice that, at the conclusion of this epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says that the things which he writes are " the commandments of the Lord " (1 Cor. xiv. 37). Paul was chosen by God especially to minister the truth about the assembly ; he begins this epistle by saying he is a " called apostle," and he speaks to " called saints." He is a called apostle " by God's will " ; no man put him into that apostleship, and he conveys to us with authority the commandments of the Lord. I am pressing this because public Christian religion to-day, with its sects and missions, is a complete setting aside of the commandments of the Lord. People say : " I have a right to go where I like," implying that they have the right to do as they like. In this world of religious confusion I

press upon you "the commandments of the Lord," and that the Lord Jesus Christ asserts His right, not only to a place in your individual life, but He asserts His rights that you should be in the company of those who answer to His mind as of the assembly, and who obey His commandments.

You will remember how Paul refers to himself as a master builder, an architect. You know what an architect is. He draws the plans of the building, and he can show you what that building is to be like—he knows every detail of it; before a builder starts to work, the architect does his work. The building does not grow up in a haphazard way. "God's building," the assembly (1 Cor. iii. 9) originated with Himself; every feature came from Him. Think of anybody saying: "We will start a new sect, a new denomination, we will have this and that as we like"; such persons ignore that God has His own plans and that these were conveyed by Him to Paul "as a wise architect"; he was given the plans of God's building. Yet Paul's teaching is discredited and set aside to-day by religious men. When you see a woman praying aloud in public, or preaching, you recognise that Paul's teaching is ignored (1 Cor. xiv. 34;

1 Tim. ii. 11-12). So also a woman with hair cut short is a violation of Paul's teaching (1 Cor. xi. 5-16). Clericalism, the system that provides that only one person must speak in an assembly, means that Paul's teaching is set aside (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 26, 29-33). Nor could women pray in private with heads uncovered if Paul's teaching is obeyed (1 Cor. xi. 5). These things now accredited in the religious world set aside the Lord's teaching through Paul, but that is how the religious denominations and sects have come about. God's thoughts have been set aside, and persons have grouped themselves together according to their own ideas. That accounts for the confusion that exists in the public body. There is not much for the Lord in one that calls upon His name and yet sets aside the truth given through Paul. You will find the history of these things recorded in the addresses to the seven churches in Rev. ii. and iii., and the last state, figured under Laodicea, is to be spued out of the mouth of the Lord. It is so obnoxious and so distasteful to Him that He spues it out of His mouth. I would not like to be connected with that !

Another word of explanation. Paul as a wise architect sets out in this epistle to the Corinthians what is public, what can

be seen of the assembly by men. The Lord's Supper is the great external feature of the assembly of God, and the body of Christ which is to be seen in every place where there are saints who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That precious privilege, like everything precious, is surrounded by safeguards. The more precious and holy a privilege is in the mind of God, the more definitely is it safeguarded; and the Lord's Supper is safeguarded by "the commandments of the Lord."

What Paul established in a public way is still in existence. We talk about the ruin of the church, the failure and the breakdown of what is public, but we must be careful not to convey the thought that what is *vital* has broken down. God set up something in this world, and the devil operated and set up an imitation of it; and the imitation broke down. But while error and failure have been found among the people of God, every divine principle governing the assembly, externally and internally, can operate practically to-day in spite of the weakness. What men have had in their hands has failed, and men have failed, and the enemy has introduced what is mere profession and unreality in order to discredit what is true, but in presence of all the failures

of false profession, with its variations, there is still what is real, and what is true, and according to "the commandments of the Lord."

I would like every true believer to challenge himself, or herself, as to whether their assembly links are according to the commandments of the Lord? I am perfectly sure that if Paul were here he would challenge every one of us. He would challenge the whole of Christendom as to whether these religious bodies are according to the mind of Christ, for he says: "*We have the mind of Christ*" (1 Cor. ii. 16).

I want now to go on with what comes before us in chapter i. 9, where we are told that "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." I love that word "God is faithful." What a word to take home to our hearts after all the history of so-called Christian religion, a history which culminates to-day in the people of God being split up into hundreds of sects, each with its own dogmas and practices. What a comfort to remember that God is faithful! Are *we* set to be faithful? God is not going on with any departure: how could He go on with what is being substituted for divine principles? He is faithful, and values highly any faithfulness in us. We are

saints by divine calling, and by the same blessed calling we are brought into "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." It is often said that the word "fellowship" means a "partnership." You may be very poor in this world's goods, of no value in this world, but if you are a believer in Christ, God has called you to this great dignity, this great wealth and happiness that centres in His own blessed Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Have you heard that call, my fellow-Christian? Do you know that God calls you to the greatest possible happiness and wealth in His own blessed Son, our Lord Jesus? He is a faithful God; He has not allowed any of His thoughts to lapse; no precious feature of this fellowship can be destroyed. I would ask those who have never committed themselves to the fellowship, "Have you never given heed to His call?" The Lord Jesus in putting His hand upon you, would spoil you for this world, and claim you for God's world. He would put the dignity of that world upon you, and give you to know the wealth that He has. God stands faithful to all that, and surrounds all these precious privileges with the safeguard of the "commandments of the Lord."

I would call your attention to two verses in chapter i. The first is verse 21:

“ For after that . . . the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Then verses 26–28 “ Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise ; things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not.”

Those verses would encourage all of us, as indicating the lines on which God is gathering a people for Himself, to set them up in a place as of the assembly of God. He has not chosen the mighty, and the powerful, and the strong. We are not to look for what is of God to be accredited by the great of this world. God has chosen the weak things, the despised and ignoble things, and the things that are not as regards this world. This is the material of which the assembly is composed ; but every one in it is “ chosen.” God could have chosen the great, and the mighty, and the rich, but it was His choice to take up the foolish, and the weak, and the despised of this world ; such are the people of God, and this is what we must look for in Christianity. The material for the building of which Paul is the architect is chosen of God—the weak things, the ignoble

things, the despised things, and the things that are not. That is our status in the eyes of this world. It is the marvel of divine power that God should choose such, in order to confound the wisdom of the wise, and set at naught the strong, so "that no flesh should glory in His presence." He chooses the "things which are not." What a God we have! His power does not stop at what is, but He chooses things that are not just as though they were. That is how God is moving. That is the kind of material that He takes up for His assembly, and this material is formed and fitted together by the Spirit, so that the Lord should have His place in every city and place (Luke x. 1); that wherever the saints call upon His name, there should be conditions agreeable to Him. No invention in the world, nothing that the wisdom of men has brought to light, could be added to improve the wisdom of God as evidenced in His assembly. In the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle shows the superiority of this wisdom by saying that the assembly is here according to his own ministry by the effectual working of God's power, "to the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephes. iii. 10).

COLLECTIVE PRIVILEGES

1 Cor. ii. 9-10 ; iii. 10-13 ; xi. 23-31.

WE have previously considered our place in the sphere of responsibility, covering our walk as individuals in the world, and then in the sphere of the assembly, or, in other words, our place as set together with other believers. Before I proceed I should like to raise a question as to how far we are prepared to go on in the things of God? There are believers who are conscious of obstacles in their pathway; the road that leads Godward is not easy at times, and the Lord's people are hindered in their spiritual progress. The Lord does not make everything easy. His way is to give us something in the way of spiritual blessing, and then bring about some test, some crisis in our circumstances, something which calls for the energy of faith. Perhaps it is a movement that will revolutionise the whole trend of our lives, or perhaps He calls upon us for some sacrifice, and we fail in the answer. The result is that there is an obstacle in the road and we are not making spiritual progress. Now if we are faithful with ourselves, we

always know if there is something in the way and we are not truly moving on spiritually. I raise this question at this point, for the things of the assembly about which I desire to speak cannot be taken up lightly or formally. To know "the things that God hath prepared for them that love him" involves reality on our part, and it will cost us something. Are we prepared for sacrifice? Prepared to give up that which is of little account, in order to enter into that which is eternal, the choicest and best that God has for men? If you think for a moment, dear brethren, of the suggestion of God preparing something, how choice that is! If you think of God with all His mighty power, with all His wealth, with all the resources that are at His disposal—resources that are "in Christ Jesus," and then think of God setting Himself to make preparation—what a precious idea it is! It is not something done in a moment; it suggests that divine forethought and love have entered into the matter, and that the resources of God in Christ Jesus have been called upon, so that what is prepared should be worthy of God. I think I could say, and I judge that you would agree, that what God has put in the assembly for our present enjoyment is worthy of Himself and that

in which He can have part. It is of such a character that there is nothing better. I like to think that God had us in mind when He took up the preparation of things which the "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Some of us know a little about assembly relations and the privileges that belong to that company, but this Scripture would challenge us as to whether we are really in the enjoyment of the assembly's portion? The precious things that God has prepared for them that love Him are to be known by us. In Romans it says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28), but here in *Corinthians* it is the prepared things, the things which divine forethought and love prepared, so that we should have the choicest and best. In these corporate relationships with one another of which I am speaking we can find the best things spiritually, and if we have not found them there is something wrong. There are those, alas! who though brought up in the meetings and in the families of God's people, who are accustomed to the privileges of Christianity, who have not yet put out their hands in committal to the Lord Jesus in the

Supper, and who are not concerned to do so. I would say to such: "You have not really touched these holy things; you are only an onlooker." An onlooker sees nothing of the secret spiritual joys. He knows all the peculiarities of the persons maybe, and their despicableness before the world, but behind the outward humiliation, ignominy, and obscurity which mark the weak things of the world—persons such as those whom God has taken up—behind all that, there are things which "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard." Your eye may have seen that which provides you with matter for reproach, and an excuse not to move further, but though these things are hidden behind an exterior that may be naturally somewhat unlovely and unattractive, they are there. So this challenge, which I linger over, desirous to lay it on every heart, is, as to whether we have found these precious things that are in Christ Jesus, and which are known fully in connection with our assembly relationship, as set together in a place.

I would say a brief word in passing as to the way Paul sought to communicate these things, for there are many who seek to help the Lord's people, and pass on to others the precious things they are enjoying. Now, although Paul was an

apostle by the will of God, and although he had a rod which he speaks of as being loth to use, he comes amongst these saints in fear and trembling. That is the mark of a spiritual man : he is found in fear and trembling, he is not counting on human wisdom. Doubtless Paul had passed through the universities of that day, and had the knowledge that was then current, but he discredits the whole thing. He comes amongst these saints "with weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling . . . not with enticing words of man's wisdom," but with the sense that spiritual things are to be communicated by spiritual means. Everyone who serves Christ, who speaks for the Lord, should see that he employs only spiritual means. I emphasise this point, because one notices how easily believers are moved in their *natural* emotions, even by things which are spiritual in character, because the things are presented in a natural way, and by human means. The moment you speak on that line, you lose spiritual power. It is easy to employ human cloquence if you have it, or to use expressions in word or manner that would arouse the emotions of those who listen, but spiritual things are to be communicated by spiritual means. The Lord would help us to keep on spiritual lines.

so that the result may be the effectual communication of spiritual things to edification.

I would now turn to chapter xi., and I want to refer to two other well-known passages: the first in Luke xiv. and the second in Psalm cxvi. I want to bring both these passages to bear on the verses I read in the eleventh chapter. You will remember that in Luke xiv. we read about a certain man who made a supper (Luke xiv. 16–20). I want to draw from this Scripture that which will illustrate what I have to say relative to the Lord's Supper. It is not the Lord's Supper, but I refer to it by way of illustration. The Lord Jesus before He left this earth established here a certain privilege—the Lord's Supper—which was to be the central point of all assembly blessing and privilege here on earth. Give up the Lord's Supper, and you have only an empty framework; there is nothing to take its place. This man in Luke xiv. prepared a supper, and invited many. Now the Lord Jesus has made a supper; it is His Supper, and He has invited many. If you are a Christian, if you have the forgiveness of sins and have received the Holy Spirit, I think I can say that you are amongst those who are invited. Now in Luke xiv. those invited

made excuses. One man was filled with earthliness, the land attracted him; the love of what is earthly and being engrossed with it, will keep you from what is heavenly; it will hinder you from becoming spiritual. This man excused himself on the ground that he would rather enjoy what was connected with his piece of land than the joys of that great supper. That may describe some believers to-day. If you put out your hand and commit yourself to the Lord in the Supper, it is in view of spiritual gain. It will lead you into spiritual things, and spiritual things necessitate leaving earthly things.

The second man also had an excuse. He had bought five yoke of oxen—he had, so to speak, gone into business. The third man had married a wife, and he wanted to live in his family circle. This illustrates what I would present to you at this time, that the Lord's Supper, with its call to the affection of those that acknowledge and call on His name, is not in the realm of earthliness, nor the realm of business, nor in the realm of natural relationships. You will understand that along with its holy privileges the Lord's Supper makes demands upon us. Those invited in the parable were not prepared for the demand, and they

chose to be excused. What a solemn exposure. Are you seeking to be excused from the obligations of the fellowship into which God has called you? Are you choosing rather to live in the things of men, and of this world? Death will separate you from these things for ever, but that to which we are called by God is connected with divine preparation and is eternal. God's best is there, and you are invited to it. Have you responded?

All those invited in Luke xiv. made excuses; but then there began another kind of movement, a most blessed movement for some of us. For this Master said: "Bring here the poor, and crippled, and lame, and blind" (verse 21). That is what most of us are—poor, crippled, lame, and blind. How does all this come about? The discipline of God may permit it. God can make us poor; He may do it by allowing us to lose everything that keeps us away from Him, and which causes us to ignore the claims of Christ. He may cripple us if we use the strength that He has given us for ourselves and our own pleasure, even as He crippled Jacob. He can make us lame and blind, so that we cannot enjoy the things of this world in which we might choose to live rather than answer to Christ. I have seen a Christian who

reached a crisis in his history, and instead of choosing that which would please the Lord, he has gone off into a path of self-will. The Lord may need to break us down, but He will have us, for His heart is set on us. He would have us, even if it means compelling us to come in. Most of us are compelled to come in. It is no credit to us ; we have been compelled to answer the call. And “yet there is room” ; this is a word we often use in the gospel, but it is a word I have no hesitation in applying, in a limited way, to the precious privileges of the Lord’s Supper. There is room for *you*, fellow-believer. The Lord knows what is holding you back. He would like you to leave it and give it up, and if you will not He may have to take it from you. He may have to lame you and perhaps allow you to bear the marks of lameness all your life, because you did not move in relation to the love that wanted you, and claimed you, so that the Lord had to use His mighty power to break you down.

I will now refer to Psalm cxvi. I hope you love the Lord. The Psalmist said : “I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications.” We have good cause to love Christ, for He is the One who died for us. Now look at verse 13: “I will take the cup of salvation,

and call on the name of the Lord"—that is just like a soul committing himself to the fellowship. It is of no use committing ourselves if we do not take the cup of salvation. We want salvation, and deliverance from enemies, who would hold us back and keep us from Christ, who would hinder us answering to His heart and touching these prepared things. Salvation is within our reach, "I will take it," says the Psalmist, "and call upon the name of the Lord." Calling upon the name of the Lord means that we are prepared to take up the obligations of the fellowship to which God has called us, "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." As you call on that Name, and move in that fellowship, you begin to taste and enjoy these precious prepared things, these choice things that have been hidden throughout the ages in God, held in reserve for those that love Him. They are a mystery to the natural man, but are known by the Spirit of God and given to us, that *we* might know them—"the deep things of God."

Verse 17 says: "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." This involves speaking—thanksgiving. This is like a young brother opening out in the fellowship. He has taken the cup of salvation, and

has called on the name of the Lord, and now he is going to call upon the name of the Lord again. He is moving happily, and is going to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay his vows in the presence of all God's people (verse 18). Have you ever paid these vows? Have you ever spoken to God in the presence of His people? It is a good thing to make a vow by the Holy Spirit, not rashly in the flesh. The Lord in Luke xiv. spoke about a king making war against another king and sitting down to count the cost; and also about a man that began to build and was not able to finish. The Lord would have us soberly count the cost. He does not want us to make rash vows. He wants what is deliberate. Souls that are *indefinite never come out distinctively*, so they lose the enjoyment of divine things. It is a good thing to be known as one that is committed to the fellowship in the presence of the Lord's people; it will be a tremendous help to you, as affected by divine movements if your own heart is moved, so that under the power of that you make a holy resolve, trusting the Holy Spirit to enable you to be true to it.

Just a word as to verse 19 of this psalm: it reads, "In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O

Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord!" This psalm gives us the journey in soul history, from the point of realisation that we love the Lord because He has heard our voice, to our coming to Jerusalem, the centre of ordered praise. It corresponds to what Paul says in I Cor. x. : " I speak as to intelligent persons, judge ye what I say." You have come in soul history to the assembly as an intelligent person. God wants every one of us to be marked by intelligence—men and women and young people alike. I do not mean mere natural intelligence or ability, but in a spiritual way to come to what Jerusalem stands for ; to be conscious that you are part of a great system established for the service of God, that you are part of an ordered company—not a mob or crowd, but a company in which everyone fills an intelligent part, and where the service of God proceeds according to His ordering, and in the place where He has put His name.

To put it into other language : it is the taking up of Christian privileges according to Paul's teaching. He says : " Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid." The foundation was laid, that is, Jesus Christ. Now you have a known centre, a sure foundation, which goes back to the very beginning of Christianity.

Much has come in that is a departure from what was established ; Paul was used to lay the foundation, but on that foundation many others have built. Some build gold, silver, and precious stones ; that is the right kind of material to build. You labour with the brethren that you may see the evidences of gold, silver, and precious stones. The public adornment of the assembly is much contributed to by sisters—the women. The gold and silver speak of what is produced of God in us, so that He is rightly represented before men, in righteousness and truth and in His service. The precious stones are to radiate the light of the knowledge of God. How much the behaviour of godly women enters into this, the adornment, the beauty of the subjection in godly women—holy women. God would adorn His house with such. “ The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit ” is a greater ornament in the sight of God than the finest string of pearls ever seen ! Alas ! there is plenty of building going on that is rubbish. Look at what has come into the professing church since the days of Paul ! What would he say if he walked down the street to-day ? What would he say of all the wealth that is accumulated in the professing churches ? Or of present-day religious activity, the

church joined to the world, and seeking to have part in it? He would tell you that all that will be burnt up, the fire will carry it all away; the fire will consume everything of man, and what is not of God. Now he says as it were, There is a "foundation"—what a comfort! Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since then, and the world would tell you it has made great progress and has found out many things, but in spite of this there is still the same foundation; there it is, just as good to-day as it was in Paul's day. Believers in Christ can therefore turn aside from all the spurious profession around, and they need not look very far before they find a solid foundation—the work of Paul, the wise architect, the master-builder, who could say with those with him: "We are God's fellow-labourers." Everything that Paul brought in for the church is workable, and everything that is not workable according to Paul's teaching is spurious material and will be consumed.

Now we come to chapter xi. 23, and I wish to show before concluding that this verse comes before us as the central point of all public Christianity. It is linked up with the collective setting of the saints. There is a way in which Scripture speaks of us as set together, and

there is another way in which we are spoken of as individuals. We all have to do with God as individuals, but there are other portions of the word that speak of the saints in a collective setting as an assembly. Chapter xi. 23 brings before us the great public feature of the collective relations of the saints. It is something that persons can see and take account of. Scripture supposes that there are on-lookers at the Lord's Supper. I would press the thought of the Lord's Supper as a centre, because it has been given up in that which professes to be here for Christ, and the Lord's Supper has been changed and altered and relegated to the background.

We have to come back to Paul, and what he built; whatever you build on this foundation of "Jesus Christ" can never be lost or destroyed, and those that come back to Paul's teaching must acknowledge that the Lord's Supper is the public centre, and the test of our love to Christ. You say you love Christ, how do you express it? You call upon His name in the world. That is right and a good thing to do, but you are to express it also by calling on His name "before all his people," and "in the midst of Jerusalem," the representation of God's centre on earth, known now in the

assembly, a company divinely ordered ; it is *there* you express your love for Christ. You praise Him with thanksgiving in the midst of all His people, and it is there that you can say " Hallelujah ! " It is not a cry to be heard in the streets to-day ; it belongs to Jerusalem. It must be linked up with a divine centre ; there you will find that which moves your whole being to the end that all that is within you should bless His holy Name. Every time you come to the Supper rightly, and take it rightly, you will find that your whole moral being is divinely touched and moved, and there it is that you can cry " Hallelujah ! "

WITHDRAWING FROM INIQUITY

2 Tim. ii. 19-21 ; 1 Cor. iv. 17-21 ; xi. 23-31 ;
xii. 13-18, 28 ; xiv. 37-38.

WE have had before us the thought of the Lord's Supper as the central feature of what is public in Christianity ; but in speaking of what is public, I do not wish to give the impression that this embodies the highest and greatest features of the dispensation, for the greatest features are spiritual, and are hidden from the eyes of men, as it is written, " he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned " ; but the spiritual discerns " all things." The spiritual realm can only be entered upon and enjoyed by spiritual persons, but what I have brought before you will, I believe, lead to spirituality.

In a day of public departure from the truth, we cannot insist too strongly on the external features of it ; it is useless saying that the Lord will help us into the spiritual realm, if we disregard the public side, for the public features stand related to the Lord's commandments. What God has that is precious in this

world is protected by His commandments. In giving a commandment He is asserting His proper right as God, and in obeying His commandment we are doing what is proper to us.

I begin with a reference to the second epistle to Timothy, connecting it with the verses I read in 1 Cor. iv. 17, where you will remember Paul says : " I have sent to you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord." Paul was desirous of going to Corinth, and that quickly ; but in the meantime he sent Timothy, who was not only his beloved and faithful child, but who was also able to show them Paul's ways in Christ, and what he had taught in every assembly. I want you to notice that particularly, for it carries great meaning for those who have understanding. We might say that in the public setting of the testimony of the Lord, the present position is that Timothy has come to us. Paul has not yet come. It would be a dreadful day for the false profession if, so to speak, Paul came with his rod, for he has been given apostolic authority to deal with what he finds. He could deliver to Satan—he had that authority from the Lord ; and while I am not suggesting that Paul personally will come again I do say that his coming suggests the Lord coming in authority, and I do not

hesitate to say that when the Lord Jesus comes He will challenge everything that has been done in His name, and will measure the departure and failure by the standards He gave to Paul. There are persons who band themselves together and call themselves by this name and that name, and formulate doctrines so called as they choose, but the Lord will not allow it to go unchallenged. The day is coming, at the judgment seat of Christ, for those that are real believers, and at the great white throne for the mere lifeless professors, when the conduct and behaviour of those who publicly called upon His name will be tested. Paul says: "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37).

During this interval when Paul could not come, he sent Timothy. Timothy was just like Paul in his ways, but he does not bring in apostolic authority. It was a serious matter for anyone to withstand Paul, but Timothy brought in all that Paul was, his ways in Christ and his teaching in the assemblies, and presents it, not with apostolic authority, but as a brother, a fellow-labourer, as a child of Paul. Timothy would tell you just what Paul told you, but he would plead with you, and appeal to your affection. He had no rod, but he had Paul's ways in Christ,

and the teaching he had given in every assembly.

The Timothy position is continued to-day, and with that in view I want to speak to you about coming into fellowship, about those who should come into fellowship, and of the help you would get as a result, and which you do not get until you publicly commit yourself to the Lord. I turn to the second epistle to Timothy, because in that epistle you find a situation that is exactly like the situation to-day. There was a great deal of confusion then, just as there is to-day, publicly, and Paul talks about "withdrawing from iniquity." You reach what Paul set out in his doctrine, the foundation that Paul laid as a wise architect, and the blessed results of keeping the commandments of the Lord, by acting upon the instructions in this epistle. You will find these blessed things still unimpaired and still workable, as you reach Paul through Timothy. 2 Timothy viewed thus, represents the Lord's mind in a day of public departure, when the teaching of Paul is set aside on every hand; and the call comes now, not simply to commit yourself to the Lord in His Supper, but, first, to depart from iniquity. In arriving at the present privilege of the Lord's Supper in the right company, and at the place where the Lord is found—where there is obedience

to the teaching of Paul, you must travel the road indicated here in 2 Timothy ii. 22, and there must be a withdrawing from iniquity. This word "iniquity" covers more than we generally understand by sin. The Gentile nations, referred to in the Old Testament, had sins, but Israel is charged by God with having "sins and iniquities," for they had departed from the teaching of Moses and David, and had brought into the service of God that which God abhorred. In like manner iniquity to-day, consists in departing from the teaching of Paul and substituting for it what is of man and man's mind. You may have persons who are in all respects morally upright, so that you could lay no charge of evil in the general sense against them, but yet they might be guilty of this terrible thing—iniquity. The commandments of the Lord concerning the order and service of the assembly of God on earth, as given to us through Paul, have been deliberately set aside by persons professing Christianity.

Fellow Christians, I will ask you to consider the public profession of to-day, with its different sects and denominations, and I will ask you, how do they stand in the light of Paul's teaching? Do they agree with the commandments of the Lord? If they do not stand that test, what about

the future day when the Lord will go into every matter connected with the position of all His own on earth, and what they were connected with religiously, and the doctrines held there? He will use His own standards, His own measuring line that He gave to the church through Paul, what Paul speaks of as "the commandments of the Lord."

I would be concerned that those about to put out their hand to commit themselves, in remembering the Lord in the Supper, should come there as withdrawing from iniquity. Some of you may say, I have never been to any other place! Withdrawing from iniquity is not necessarily a geographical movement involving the leaving of one company and going over to another. It is the deep exercise that the soul passes through in seeking to reach the spot on this earth where the Lord is, and where He can be known, and where everything that is real and vital can still be found. The soul passes through an exercise of deliberate withdrawal and turning away from everything that sets aside the commandments of the Lord as they came through Paul. You can go through that exercise, you who have been brought up in Christian households ; your parents are watching for this movement on your part. You look at public religion

around you, clericalism, women preaching, conditions where every commandment is set aside, and without going into these places at all you can say as it were, I withdraw from it all, for you know in principle what is there.

I want to raise a question as to the character of those who should take the Lord's Supper. I find, especially amongst simple and young persons, that often a sense of their own unworthiness or unfitness holds them back. I am not going to discourage feelings like that, for it is a good thing not to take up this public, lifelong commitment to Christ and to the brethren without deep thought, meditation, and prayer. It is not a matter to be taken up lightly, but at the same time many are held back by the enemy, who knows where we hesitate, where we falter in our spiritual progress, and we may foster thoughts of our own unworthiness to such an extent that we will not put out our hand. You may wait, hope, and even pray that you may be better, but it has to be learnt that there is something in us called the flesh which never gets any better: "that which is born of flesh, is flesh." One may be a believer for forty or fifty or more years, yet the flesh is absolutely unchanged, as Paul said: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no

good thing.” All the favour of God and all that Christ has secured does not alter the flesh ; it is unalterable. In your thoughts of unworthiness and unfitness remember that God will never make the flesh fit and worthy : “ It is not subject to the law of God ; for neither indeed can it be.” God has made a *new* beginning in your heart. You love Christ ? Yes. Well, that is a proof that God has made a new beginning in your heart, for you do not love Christ according to nature. Natural affection cannot love Christ : flesh does not love Him. Love for Christ is wholly the product of the work of God, and is absolutely apart from the flesh. Now the Lord wants you for these holy privileges.

The Lord has His eye on His people and on their conduct. He specially has His eye on those who have committed themselves to Him in the Supper. It is a solemn yet blessed thing to know that we are under the eye of the Lord in this peculiar way. The Lord takes note of our course, it may be one of rebellion, self-will, treachery, carelessness : the Lord takes note of everything that goes on. We are told that at Corinth many were weak and sickly and many slept, because of the Lord’s dealings with them. The Lord’s Supper is the doorway into the greatest joys that can be known on this earth, but

it is protected by the commandments and discipline of the Lord.

I would say to young people, what the Lord looks for is that in committing yourself to Him and to the brethren, you should be ready to take up a lifelong commitment. That is one feature. Are you prepared for that? That is to say, you cannot carry in your mind any such thought as this: "I can always go out again if the path is too narrow." The person that comes in with any such thought as that has not come in at all. If you come in rightly you see no door out. That is one thing the Lord requires, and the second thing I would suggest to you is that you are prepared to walk with the saints and to be adjusted continually by divine light. I would put these two things as necessities; something about which you have to soberly count the cost, and to weigh over, and if you are prepared to accept those two conditions, I should give you every encouragement to go forward. Nothing encourages souls to move forward like a sense that there is help to meet the situation. I am free to admit that what I have indicated, and what I believe, is set out in the Scriptures, is a way that no flesh could tread. Such a situation would be intolerable to anyone who wants the world and his own way.

Let us now look at the marvellous help that is to be found when in faith you have taken the step. I will ask you to notice that what is called in Scripture "the body of Christ" comes in after verse 23 in chapter xi. That verse, as I have said, is the central point of everything that is public in Christianity to-day, and it supposes that you have heard the commandment of the Lord: "Do this in remembrance of me." Some like to describe that as only a request; without any question it is a request in the gospel of Luke; but I have doubts as to whether it is only a request in I Cor. xi. The *whole* epistle is put under this commandment of the Lord: "Let him recognise . . . that *it* is the Lord's commandment" (chapter xiv. 37). Assuming that you feel the obligation as well as the privilege of taking up this public committal to the Lord in His Supper, you now come under some of the most beneficial and blessed influences that are to be found on this earth, you come into a sphere where the Spirit of God is active all the time, active in blessing. That is a wonderful sphere! You get the gain of that, a gain that accrues to believers. What sphere can be like that? It stands alone and is unique. You appreciate that in a peculiar way when you have committed yourself to Christ and to His people.

Now to refer to “the body” in chapter xii. 13. The Spirit of God here is not presented in connection with our individual life and responsibility, but in connection with our corporate and collective relations one with another; what the people of God are as a unit, an assembly in one place, any place where God has a local expression of what is called “the body.” You will notice a human illustration is used by the Spirit of God. It is not like Col. i. 18, where Christ is said to be “head of the body.” In this chapter you have a complete thought, a complete organism; the human body used as an illustration to show how wonderfully the saints in one locality are bound together through the baptism of the Spirit, and as all drinking into one Spirit; bound together just like the members of a human body. It is a marvellous thought. As one member—perhaps a weak member, not one in high honour or carrying features of prominence—I come into all the gain of what is in the place, having other members joined to me just as the members of a human body.

Three senses are spoken about, as connected with the body—a most interesting subject in itself—the sense of smelling, of hearing, and of seeing. It supposes as always that Christ is our theme. He is the theme for our occupation, and we need

these precious sensibilities in order to get gain from that occupation. Look at the value of the sense of smell in a spiritual way! Perhaps some of you may never have noticed there are things to be smelled. In the book of Leviticus we learn of many things that are to be smelled; there is the fragrance that God smells in the savour of the burnt-offering. God has been smelling these most precious odours, these fragrant odours, that speak of the offering of Christ; His preciousness is to be known by the sense of smell. You come thus into a company of believers among whom is the sense of smell; there are those members that have learned to discern the fragrance that comes from Christ; they have smelled His garments of "myrrh and aloes and cassia"—the precious fragrance that God delighted in when Christ was down here. This same fragrance is to be found in the circle of those who love Christ, and we become fragrant to God and to one another. It is there we come into the functioning of the body, and get the gain of these blessed sensibilities in the members as they give place to the Holy Spirit.

Then we have the sense of seeing. I come amongst the saints, perhaps knowing little, but I come under all the helpful influence and gain of those who have eyes to see. They can speak of the beauty of

Christ ; and as I come to the Bible readings and hear the saints interchange the thoughts given by the Holy Spirit, each one seeing something different, I am tested as to what *I* see ; and so one gets the gain of what it is to be a member of the "one body." It is a large matter ; not a question of what I know by smelling, seeing or hearing, but what does the company smell, and see, and hear ? I come at once into the sphere of all these helpful, encouraging influences. I am sure if you come to a meeting, and a little of the fragrance of Christ is brought out there, it would help you as you go out again into the world ; it would protect you at school, in the office, and in the workshop from all the vile influences and corrupt odours that are in the world. A sense of the fragrance and beauty of Christ tests everything. That is the gain of being found fully committed to Christ in the midst of His people. You will not get that gain if you hold yourself aloof, refraining from identifying yourself with the Lord's people, smelling nothing, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. These things are preserved and protected *inside*, they are not out on the street for any passer-by, but they are protected for those that are fully committed to Christ in a permanent way.

We read also in verse 28, that God has

“set certain in the assembly,” certain gifts. It is worth noticing that “gifts” are not in the body; it is not so put—but in the body there are “members.” Paul would be a member just like any obscure person, but in the assembly the same persons are viewed in a different way, as representing God and as capable of acting for Him in the assembly. God has set certain gifts *there*. What are they for? They are set there for the help, the edification, and the encouragement of all who stand committed to Christ. It is a great thing to come under the beneficence of all these gifts. They began with the apostles. You may say: “We have no apostles to-day.” But then we still have the ministry of Paul and Peter and John, in the Scriptures; it all remains livingly in the Spirit of truth; we are not to suppose that we have only a bit of it. The declaration of God through the Lord Jesus has been confirmed to us through the apostles, and it is here to-day, unaltered, unimpaired, in the presence of the Spirit who is the Truth (1 John v. 6). It is a wonderful thing to come under the gain of the apostles’ doctrine—to learn what they knew of Christ. What precious things they can tell you about Christ! Some who were not apostles, such as Luke, can tell the most beautiful things about Christ! How many times in the company

of the saints one hears some simple person, illiterate and faltering according to man, speak of things that he knows about Christ in such a way that he moves our hearts deeply.

It says God has "set certain in the assembly"; it is not the idea of persons only, but these "gifts" are set in the assembly. Persons may pass away, but the gifts remain—that is, the spiritual value of the gift remains; they are set in the assembly. The apostles and prophets give the foundation of the assembly, the Lord's authority is in the ministry of the apostles; the prophets continue to voice what the Lord would say to-day; and the teachers help to adjust our thoughts, and show how the truth fits together, and they give the scope of it. There are other kinds of help, some that were peculiarly necessary for a certain crisis in the history of the church. If there were any need for public miracles to-day, there would be persons who could work miracles. The power is not lost, but the Lord brings out what is needed for the moment.

In conclusion I would say that if your heart is responding in any measure to Christ, and you have a desire to please Him, then let the truth sink into your soul that it may move you *now* to take up these things in earnest. May God grant it!

RESURRECTION

1 Cor. xv. 1-9, 20-23, 34-44, 47-58 ; xvi. 22.

It would seem fitting, to conclude this series of addresses by a reference to the resurrection. The last bit of assembly history connected with the earth is seen when the resurrection is consummated. I do not mean that it is seen by men, but that the resurrection will conclude the history of the assembly on earth. That is an important point, which I hope to get help from the Lord to make clear. If we have no understanding as to the way in which assembly history is to close we shall have no sense of victory, and we cannot continue under present conditions apart from a sense of victory. Everyone knows how difficult it is to continue with anything that seems to be getting weaker and weaker, and which must eventually cease. To use a military term, nothing is more difficult than to fight a losing battle. One loves to think that the conclusion of the history of the assembly of God on this earth will be a magnificent God-given victory ! When we consider the public position of Christendom to-day with Christians separated from one another ;

and of the evil doctrine that is held in the systems which profess to be the church ; when we think of all the iniquity that is tolerated and even accredited—we may well wonder how the end can be victory ; but the last stage of the assembly's history is that “ death has been swallowed up in victory.” I want to speak later of the resurrection in relation to our present circumstances, that is, in connection with the position of the assembly on earth, and our being found in localities as God's assembly, and as the body of Christ, but before I do that I wish to say a few words about the early part of this chapter.

Paul speaks of his own ministry, which had resulted in the formation of an assembly at Corinth. He refers to the gospel which he had received and which he had delivered to them. What he had “ received ” he passed on unaltered and unimpaired, a matter of great moment in Christianity and in our service. That men can receive divine communications and light, and pass them on without deterioration, is a tribute to the presence of the Spirit of God. We need to pray and wait on God for the ability by the Spirit to receive a thing, and to deliver it as it has been received ; for that is the principle by which the Lord would maintain amongst

His saints that which He gave at the beginning. I commend this thought to those who preach the gospel, that Paul only delivered what he received. He did not add to it, he did not, so to speak, put a fleshly mark on the work. That is the proof of good work ; the work is God's work, and there are marks that we must look for, and those of us who labour should see that they are not wanting in our service.

I would ask you to note the kind of gospel that Paul preached, and to consider why, in this church epistle, we have in this chapter xv. what appears at first to be a departure from the subject. Why do you think Paul explained the kind of preaching he had given them ? and why does he raise the question of resurrection *at this point* ? I believe that Paul had in view that the grace of God as preached by him should be known in its proper setting in the assembly. If one preaches according to Paul's gospel one will not count the converts until they are established and happily breaking bread. Then you see something for *God*. You can preach the gospel simply from the side of giving men relief from the workings of a guilty conscience (I am not despising that feature of grace) ; but if the dignity and grandeur of the gospel is presented, it would secure men and women for the assembly ; it

would secure them for Christ, and not make man's relief the primary object. The preaching of the gospel is to bring to light, attract and attach souls to Christ in view of the assembly.

Now look at the gospel that Paul preached. He says : " Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." I commend that sentence to you. We have to see to it that we present this matter of Christ dying for our sins, " according to the scriptures." The whole marvellous and extensive detail of what is seen in the death of Christ is to be presented according to the Scriptures, involving for us the understanding of the offerings as set out in Exodus and Leviticus. Then it says : " He was buried." It does not say He was buried according to the Scriptures, but simply that He was buried. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus buried Him ; but that He was buried is a most vital fact ; the vicarious burial of Christ is a witness to the full bearing by Christ of the judgment of God against sin. Then He was raised again the third day, and here we have the expression once more " according to the scriptures," for the resurrection of Christ is plainly attested in the Scriptures, particularly in the Old Testament (see Acts ii. 31). How few they are who, in preaching, refer to His

death, burial, resurrection, and appearing. I am not speaking of what is presented so much as what is in the mind of those who preach in view of bringing to light material for God's assembly. It is necessary that we should have larger and greater thoughts of these important facts.

Paul goes on to show in detail how the Lord appeared first to Cephas, then to the twelve, then to above 500 at once, then to James, and then, last of all, to himself. That was the conclusion of the matter; and we have in these references a setting out of the activities of the Lord Jesus in resurrection. What a sense these men would thus gather that Christ was a living Person! We should preach a *living* Christ: a Christ who died, and was buried, and was raised again—a living Man, for no one will ever be brought properly into the enjoyment of a place in the assembly until the Lord Jesus is truly known as a living Man beyond death.

In resurrection, the Lord moves without any hindrance from enemies. What activity is seen in those forty days of resurrection! Doors do not keep Him out; wherever His people are He is found, eating with them and talking with them in unfettered liberty. No demon comes forward to challenge His way; no enemy interferes with Him. There can be no

enemy in resurrection ; that is why the great victory of God is seen in resurrection. Not an enemy is left, it is a complete victory ; death itself has been “swallowed up in victory,” a remarkable expression !

As I understand the truth, this moment of actual resurrection will find all the saints of this dispensation and of previous dispensations together on the earth. It will be the greatest assembly meeting ever known ; not one will be missing, and not one will bear the marks of defeat—not one ! That will be a wonderful moment, dear brethren. What a triumph ! What a vast company of persons ! They are not yet in heaven, for resurrection is connected with the earth, but they are on the other side of death. Translation—the Rapture—necessitates a change of position : we are to be taken from earth to heaven ; but resurrection brings the saints out of death, and out of their graves—in the very place where corruption and dishonour and mortality have been ; they will be raised with the blessed features of incorruptibility, honour, immortality, and glory. As you study this chapter you get a sense of the glory connected with resurrection ! How much there is in the chapter about glory, and the variety and character of it ; and if you think of that magnificent moment, when all the saints are raised from the

dead, without a vestige of defeat about them, yet still linked for a brief moment in a certain way with the very place in which they have died—you can but feel what a triumph it will be for God! That is how the history of the assembly is to close on this earth. Honour is going to displace dishonour, immortality will clothe mortality, corruptibility will give place to incorruptibility—glory of every kind will be seen, for Paul speaks of differing glories—heavenly glory, and earthly glory—it will all be seen there. The earthly saints will have their part; those who lived in a dispensation when God was working to secure something for Himself from the earth for earth. In our dispensation God is working on the earth, but it is for heaven. The apostle then sums up the whole matter—all that he has said as to glory—in these words, “thus also is the resurrection of the dead” (verse 42). The apostle is seeking by these references to bring into Corinth, into the gatherings of the saints there, a sense of victory. We cannot go on without it. We are not fighting in a losing cause; we have before us this glorious termination to the path of testimony on earth—God’s people standing forth in resurrection, and all the glory connected with it. Now up to verse 48 the apostle is contrasting the character of the

condition, but in verse 49 he turns to the thought of the "image," which has in view the feature of representation.

There had been an image of a certain kind in Adam. He was made in the image and likeness of God, but his was not manhood of a heavenly order, his body was made of dust. Dust is not material for permanency. God has power to take dust as He did at the beginning, and out of it to form man, breathing into his nostrils the breath of life ; but as you look at this product you marvel at the creatorial power that can hold dust together and vitalise it by the breath of God. The material is dust of the ground, and we are told that the dust returns "to the earth as it was" (Eccles. xii. 7). That is what the body is made of ; whatever beauty of face or form or grace it may have naturally, it is all connected with dust ; there is no permanence there, except by the power of God. How we should marvel at the power of God presented in this image of a *heavenly* order and character. Sown in corruption and mortality and dishonour, a natural body, but raised in honour, in immortality, in incorruptibility, a spiritual body. God will impart to each of His saints "the image of the heavenly one." Every feature of the beauty of Christ will be seen in the myriads

of those who are raised from the dead, and as raised from the dead they are of His order, of His likeness, men of His kind. What a glorious conclusion!

You look at the faces of the brethren; perhaps they are very ordinary looking; there is not much beauty. If you went into a worldly company you would find much more beauty and charm as men estimate it; but it is only for a time, God will put all the parts of His workmanship together, and will leave behind every feature of mortality and corruptibility. God is said to be "the incorruptible God," and He will have His saints like Him; they are to be immune from the working of evil and sin even as to their bodily condition, so that they are incorruptible. We are to be exercised now in our spirits and intelligence as to what will be done then. Are we intelligent in this? Do we understand these great designs? Are we ready spiritually for such a change? Are our present ways marked by spiritual features that are themselves incorruptible? (Rom. ii. 7; Eph. vi. 24; 2 Tim. i. 10; Titus ii. 7; 1 Pet. i. 23, and iii. 4). It would have a marked effect if it were so.

Poverty, humiliation, and plain garments are only the external "working clothes," so to speak. Let us in faith view one another in the beauty that Christ will

put upon us. Think of the saints in their spiritual bodies and the mighty power of God in reproducing the beauty and variety of the features of Christ in them.

It might help to point out how carefully the Spirit of God in this chapter refers to resurrection. At the termination of the assembly's history on earth some will be alive and some will be in their graves ; as the Scripture says : " We shall not all sleep, but we shall *all* be changed " (verse 51). Our external features, our bodies, with which are connected mortality and corruptibility and dishonour, have all to be changed ; and we are to be clothed with a body suitable for heavenly conditions, and endowed with the power to sustain the continuous service of God ; an unbroken service, not pursued intermittently, as now, owing to human weakness, but sustained eternally.

Resurrection, as Scripture takes account of it, is more connected with persons than with bodies. *Persons* are raised, and though bodies are raised too the primary thought in resurrection is that *persons* are raised, and this shows the link of identification with the body. It is said that " devout men carried Stephen to his burial " ; Stephen is also with Christ, but it is just as true that he is in his grave, and will come out of his grave. The Scripture

tells us that God has power to quicken after death : “ That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die ” (1 Cor. xv. 36). When it dies, you depend absolutely upon the power of God. What has died has no power in itself to come up, but the power of God is brought to bear upon it, and it will be raised. God is the God who raises the dead. Those of us who have loved ones that have died, and those who are nearing the moment when, if the Lord tarries, they will have to be laid in their graves, find comfort in knowing that God raises the dead. Someone at Corinth said : “ How are the dead raised ? ” But Paul says : “ Thou fool.” Who can see or tell how the natural can be sown and the spiritual reaped ? Who can tell how that which was connected with dishonour, mortality, and corruptibility should be found through the power of God in immortality and incorruptibility ? God alone can do it. We reach a point where we have to say : “ God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him,” and there we rest in faith. God will bring everything to an issue exactly as He has revealed it to us, but we may have to die and face the actual parting from every seen thing, waiting in unclothed condition for the resurrection. Nevertheless, death is an occasion of marvellous triumph for the

saint who goes that way in faith. Christ died, and went that way, and the great majority of saints have been called upon to go that way. The number of those who compose the assembly who will not die at all will perhaps be few, compared with the vast number who have died in faith. Paul speaks of differing glories : every star differing from another in glory—and “ so also is the resurrection of the dead.”

In verse 58 there is a summing up of the teaching of this epistle. Paul calls on the saints, his beloved brethren, to be firm : “ Be ye steadfast, unmovable,” he says. Firmness marks the assembly. If we are going to take up our privileges and responsibilities in a place, we shall find that firmness is absolutely essential, for there are all kinds of people around who would turn you aside in one way or another. There are those who say : “ You have only a small company ; you had better add your strength to ours.” Such will try to instil principles that are not according to Paul’s doctrines. You have to be firm. We are to be firm and yet dependent on God for power ; that is the idea. A man dependent on God is immovable as holding the light of Paul’s doctrine and the commandments of the Lord. These things centre in the Lord’s

Supper, and are sustained by the power of this glorious victory of resurrection entering our souls by the Holy Spirit. Paul calls upon his beloved brethren to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." What a lot of labour there is connected with a company of Christians gathered in the light of God's assembly! A company in which there is nobody labouring will furnish little for God. Every gathering where the saints are found in vitality and freshness is marked by great labour. Who is to labour? Everybody is to labour, "the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar"; all are to labour. The responsibility of the work falls upon all. Anyone who does no work becomes a burden. The young people and the sisters can all contribute. Not all can teach or preach, but all are called upon to labour and to abound in the work of the Lord. It is in the small services that you find the cementing power of love operating. The small services—I commend them to the brethren. It is thus that the saints are maintained unmovable, and none of this work is in vain in the Lord.

Now one more thought as to chapter xvi. 22. There is a divine reason why this remarkable verse is found in this

epistle, and I would suggest what I believe to be the reason.

I have spoken of love for Christ finding a public expression ; you may say you love the Lord, and the Lord well knows if it is so ; but this epistle is not so much concerned with what the Lord knows, but with what *you* express in a public way. The apostle says : “ If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maran-atha ”—that is, accursed at His coming. The apostle has set out the privileges and obligations of the most remarkable sphere of holy affection that is on the earth, a sphere that is open to every believer having the Holy Spirit. There is nothing else like it ; divine Persons are there, manifestations are there, appearings, the mighty power of God, divine affections and absolute triumph are there, it is the place for every lover of Christ. But now having indicated the public position of blessing, he has shown the holy links that join the saints to each other in relation to God, he has spoken of the blessed influences connected with the body of Christ, and drawn the curtain aside to show the public victory in which the assembly will complete its history on earth ; now he looks around, as it were, and sees that sphere as the proper place where every lover of Christ should be

happily set, partaking of the Lord's Supper and enjoying all the grace from heaven. To the apostle it is unthinkable that there should be those unmoved by these things! Unthinkable that there should be those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, by whose death all this has been made possible ; so he says : " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." Love has been shown, so that we may follow after love. But Paul looks outside this circle of blessing and divine affections, to the sphere where there are persons with no love for Christ, and his soul resents such indifference. We need this holy sentiment, we ought to be able to take account of what glorifies Christ and makes Him great, and we should recoil with holy feelings and resentment from the sphere where there is no love for Christ. I would leave it on the consciences and in the hearts of those who have not yet committed themselves publicly to the Lord in His love. The Lord has shown us an intelligent way in which love can be expressed before men, and to those who love Christ he says : " The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

He would leave with them a sense of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, meaning simply that if you set yourself for

these great things the Lord will help you. There is grace for you—grace for any step that you may be called upon to take, grace for the whole journey. May this grace rest upon our spirits so that we may be found firm, unmovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord.

THE END