

# The Riches of Christ

ADDRESSES TO YOUNG BELIEVERS  
GIVEN IN LONDON

BY  
JOHN RITCHIE

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"Ye may count the cost, ye may count the cost,  
Of all Egyptia's treasure;  
But THE RICHES OF CHRIST ye cannot count,  
His love ye cannot measure."

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— and —

Tidings of the Work of the Lord

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*Edited by* **JOHN RITCHIE**

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# Preface

THE following pages contain the substance of Five Addresses given to large companies—chiefly composed of Young Believers—in various parts of London, while on a brief week-end visit there. There was no thought of their publication at the time they were given, but at the urgent request of a number of elder brethren who feed and tend the lambs and sheep of the Lord's blood-bought flock, they are now issued in this permanent form. May the Lord be pleased to use them as a word of help and cheer to many of those setting out on the heavenly road.

It was a real joy to meet so many hearty young Christians, in the brightness and dew of their spiritual youth, and to observe their deep and reverent interest in the Word of God. The Gospel that wins the heart for Christ, that makes heavenly things a present blessed reality to the soul, that breaks the cords of earth and sets the feet on the heavenly road, there to walk in newness of life, with new companions, having new pursuits, has not lost its ancient power. It is known by its fruits. Its brightest witness is the transfigured lives of those who have believed it, who now through grace are seeking to own Jesus Christ as their Lord, and the Sacred Word as their daily guide and counsellor in every path of life. To all who thus begin with and cleave to Christ and the Word, there is assured a good start, a straight course, and a triumphant end!

J. R.

# Contents

## THE WORD OF GOD:

Its Place in the Christian's Life

Gospel Hall, Archel Road, Fulham

*Friday Evening, June 19th*

## THE CROWNED CHRIST:

His People's Representative in Heaven

Beresford Chapel, Walworth Road

*Saturday Evening, June 20th*

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS WORK

Gospel Hall, New Cut, Lambeth, S.E.

*Sunday Afternoon, June 21st*

## THE SALVATION OF GOD:

In Possession, Progress, and Prospect

Gospel Hall, New Cut, Lambeth, S.E.

*Sunday Evening, June 21st*

## THE CHRISTIAN'S PATH

Amid the Perils of the Last Days

Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, E.C.

*Monday Evening, June 22nd*

# The Word of God:

## Its Place in the Christian's Life.

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THERE probably never was a time in which the Bible was more assailed than it is at present. Its Divine origin, its absolute perfection, and its supreme authority are all called in question or set at nought, not only by avowed infidels, but by many who bear the Christian name and claim to be acknowledged as ministers of Christ. By means of their false criticisms and human reasonings, very many who confide in them as guides in spiritual things, have been wholly led astray. And not only so, but among true children of God full confidence in the veracity of the Book of God is apt to be shaken, and deep reverence for its integrity lessened by means of these devices of the enemy. All this would be a dark outlook indeed, if the Scripture itself had not forewarned us to expect such things. This it has done, most fully and minutely, and God has graciously provided us also with the means of preservation in the midst of such conditions. With an earnest desire to help those who are young in the faith, and to strengthen others who may need a word of encouragement in this line of things, I would seek very simply to trace along the pages of the sacred Word, some of the Divine characteristics of the Book of God, then seek to gather from the same source some of the uses it has been given to us for, and finally to look at some of the devices made use of by the enemy to corrupt and render the Scriptures of none effect. May the Comforter, the Holy

Spirit, whose work it is to guide God's people "into all the truth" (John xvi. 13, R.V.), be our helper in this.

There are some wonderful words in 2 Tim. iii. 14-17, which may suitably introduce to us this subject. Timothy was Paul's child in the faith (1 Tim. i. 2); he had been converted through his instrumentality, and led on in the truth and ways of God under his teaching and godly example (Phil. ii. 21; 2 Cor. iv. 17). He had known his doctrine, seen his manner of life, shared his service and his sufferings (2 Tim. iii. 10-11). Previous to his conversion, in his very earliest years, he had been made familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, and had the godly care of a pious mother and grandmother (2 Tim. i. 5). Now the aged apostle was in prison, and Timothy was serving Christ in preaching the Gospel to sinners in the world, and in ministering the Word to saints in the church (2 Tim. i. 8; iv. 2) in the midst of outward persecution and inward decay, with many forms of error arising, all evidently gaining adherents and leading away disciples after them. To strengthen Timothy, and to guide believers in all time future amid such conditions, the apostle wrote these two epistles to this individual servant of Christ, which are of inestimable value to us. After exhorting Timothy to "continue in the things" he had learned, and "been assured of," and entrusted with (chap. ii. 2), he casts him upon the all-sufficiency of the God-breathed words of "Holy Scripture," which he says are able to make "a child" wise unto salvation, and to completely furnish "the man of God unto every good work." Such is the value and the use of the Book of God. To convict the sinner, to bring life to the believer, to feed and sustain Divine life and to exercise its functions; to sanctify the saint, to cleanse his ways, to enlighten his path, and become his counsellor in everything, in all spheres and departments of life, personal, social, in the family, the business, the church, and the world. The Book of God was not given to be an ornament in the house, much less a tenant of the pew, but as a daily guide

book, an "Enquire-within-for-everything" among the people of God. It was given to be read (1 Tim. iv. 13), searched (Acts xvii. 11), meditated on (Psa. i. 3), and loved (Psa. cxix. 17, 140). Its words were to be treasured by God's ancient people in the heart, taught to the children, spoken of in the home, used first thing in the morning and last thing at night, made the subjects of conversation walking by the way, and inscribed on the door posts and gates of their houses (Deut. vi. 6-9).

### THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The words "given by inspiration of God" in 2 Tim. iii. 15, represent one word in the original language—*Theopneustos*—God-breathed. Here we have the Author of the Scriptures. The writers were "holy men of God," moved or "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter i. 21). The accuracy, purity, and completeness of these Scriptures have been miraculously preserved, and with the utmost confidence we can say that the book we know as the Bible, not only contains but is "The Word of God." It was so regarded and named by the Lord Jesus, when He was on earth (Mark vii. 17). He read it (Luke iv. 17), preached from it (Luke xvii. 26; xxiv. 27), and used it as His only weapon in His conflict with the devil (Matt. iv. 6). This is sufficient for faith. The Book that was used by the Master is surely good for the servant.

### THE PURITY OF THE WORD.

So pure, so perfect, so all-sufficient is the Word of God, that it must not be added to (Prov. xxx. 5), nor diminished by a word (Deut. iv. 2). At the close of each section of it this warning is repeated, and God's people cast upon "all the commandments of the Lord," upon which time works no change (see Deut. xii. 32; Prov. xxx. 5; Mal. iv. 4; Matt. xxviii. 20; Jude 17; Rev. xxii. 18, 19). May our souls heed these weighty words, and our faith stand in the whole

revelation of God. Where the Word is lightly esteemed or neglected by the individual believer or the church, spiritual life declines; where the Word is loved, revered, and obeyed, God gives His approval and His blessing. All spiritual revivals have been associated with a return to God and His Word, and if in these last days there is found to be a living and godly seed in the midst of empty profession and corrupt Christianity, they will be a people seeking in all humility of mind to walk with God in the paths of His holy Word.

There is an inseparable connection between Christ and the Scriptures, between the Word Incarnate and the Word inspired. Christ owned and used the Scriptures, and put His imprimatur on them (John v. 34; x. 25). The Scriptures testify of Christ (Luke xxiv. 27-44). To asperse the written Word is to dishonour its Author, who "spake all these words" (Exod. xx. 1), and no vital godliness or spirituality can co-exist with loose ideas of the Holy Scriptures. Let us now look at some of the uses of the Word of God.

### THE WORD IN CONVICTION.

The Word preached is the instrument used by the Spirit in producing conviction in sinners. Preachers who make a free use of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. vi. 17), are, when clean and spiritual, those whom God uses in bringing sinners to Christ. Look at the model discourses given in the Acts! How they abound in Scripture! The Spirit's record of the labours of Gospellers of that time is, that they "went everywhere preaching the WORD" (Acts viii. 4; xi. 19); that "the WORD of the Lord was published throughout the region" (Acts xiii. 49). They preached Christ "out of the Scriptures" (Acts xvii. 2), as He Himself had given them an example (Luke xxiv. 27). They had confidence in their weapon and used it freely. It needed no embellishment to make it attractive. When the Word takes



a grip, it brings the people to hear it. "The whole city came together to hear the Word of God" (Acts xiii. 44): just the Word. They had no "accompaniment." But they had and they owned the Spirit of God, who never fails to use the Word when rightly divided and wisely spoken. Let us honour and make a free use of the Word. Flash the light of the Word, sow the seed of the Word, preach the Word fully, and God will use it. There can be no deep, abiding work, no solid foundation laid either in conversion, or in a healthy church, where the ministry of the Word in its fulness is lacking. The root cause of so much shallow and shoddy profession in present-day popular evangelistic work is the lack of the Word thus preached and honoured. Therefore let all who evangelise, use the Word. Plough deeply and scatter freely the good seed broadcast, orally and printed.

#### THE WORD IN REGENERATION.

It is through the Word that believing sinners receive life. "HEAR and your soul shall live" (Isa. lv. 3). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet. ii. 21). As the seed falls into the ploughed-up soil, to produce life and cause fruit (Matt. xiii. 8), so the Word received into a heart prepared by conviction of sin, and repentance toward God (Acts xx. 21), and thus made "honest" and "good," as Luke viii. 15 has it, is used by the Spirit to convey spiritual life to the one who thus in faith welcomes it (James i. 21).

#### THE WORD IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

As it is through the Word that life is begotten, so by feeding on the Word the new life is sustained and strengthened, and thus it develops. "As new-born babes desire the sincere [pure] milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. ii. 2). The indwelling Word (Col. iii. 16), and the indwelling Spirit (Eph.

iii. 16), are the believer's sources of supply. To grieve the Spirit (Eph. iv. 30), and neglect the Word by which the believer lives (Luke iv. 4), is to deprive the regenerate soul of its means of subsistence. The "inner man" needs to be daily renewed (2 Cor. iv. 16), and for this God has given us our "daily bread," which, like the manna, must be freshly gathered each day throughout the whole of our wilderness journey. Thus, as the "restaurant" is to the body, the Bible is to the soul, but each must be used, and the food provided partaken of. The bustle of daily life, the cares of the household, the rush of business, must not be allowed to steal the time we should give to prayerful reading and meditation on the Word. If we do not get time, we should take it, securing a part of each day for personal dealing with God and His Word. It is just the lack of this, and the consequent feebleness of spiritual life in the most of God's people, that is the root-cause of the lack of godly life, diligent service, and Scriptural testimony among us. No remedy short of a return to the Word of God and its use in daily experience, esteeming the Word of God's mouth more than necessary food (Job xxiii. 12), finding them "sweeter than honey" (Psa. cxix. 103), esteeming them "more precious than gold" (Psa. xix. 10), will ever make "men of God" strong for the battle, furnished and fitted to stand for the truth at all costs, in the midst of the apostacy of these last days, in which new forms of Satanic errors and delusions are raised continuously, deceiving many who are ignorant alike of God's Word and its teachings, and of Satan's devices. It is the lack of personal acquaintance and experience in the Word, that makes so many an easy prey to error.

#### THE WORD IN SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE.

In Deut. vi. 6-9; xi. 18-21, there are some minute instructions as to the place the words of Jehovah were to have in the lives of His ancient people. First, they

were to be in the "heart." The Psalmist, appreciating the value of this, says, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psa. cxix. 11). The daily reading of and meditation on the Scriptures are necessary to the Word of Christ dwelling richly in His people (Col. iii. 16). The next circle in which the words of Jehovah were to have a place of daily honour and use was in the Home. "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way." The Word of God has not the place of honour in the home circle that once it had among Christians. Our fathers loved it, read it, and taught it to their children. Now a few verses hurriedly read, and in many cases not even that, do duty for daily instruction in the Scriptures. No home can long maintain a godly savour, where the Word of God and prayer are neglected. No service in the church or the world should be allowed to hinder the Christian parent and householder from the daily reading of God's Word in his home. His first responsibility is there, and nothing can relieve him of it. Then in the social circle, in daily intercourse, in leisure hours, God claims a place for His Word. There would be less room for light and frivolous talk, unhealthy gossip, and evil-speaking, if the Word of God and its grand, eternal truths were the subject of conversation around the fireside, at the tea-table, and when believers meet casually or by appointment in social intercourse. The tendency in our time is to exclude the sanctifying and edifying Word in social circles, and indulge in flippant, worldly talk, flavoured with a little religion. "Socials," where dress and music predominate, with no room for the healthy and godly use of God's Word, are a blight and a snare to young believers. In such an atmosphere, spiritual life is withered and companionships and friendships formed of a carnal and worldly character, which have disastrous results. Novels, tinctured with a religious "moral," are allowed and read in many homes, which ought to be excluded

from the Christian household by parents, whom God holds responsible for what their children read. Let the Book of God be honoured in the Christian home.

I would now trace a little further along the pages of the Word, its claims as our guide in all that relates to the corporate privileges and responsibilities of God's people in their church association, worship, service, and testimony. The Word in this, as in all else, must be the final appeal.

### THE WORD, IN EDIFICATION.

Jude, who warns of apostacy and departure from God, says, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (ver. 20), and Paul, when giving counsel to the elders of Ephesus, in view of evils arising in their midst, says, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up" (Acts xx. 32). Personal dealing with God and His Word in the individual, and a healthy, well-balanced ministry of the Word in the church, keeping nothing back, compromising nothing, but speaking the truth in love (Eph. iv. 15), ministering the Word faithfully, teaching the saints "all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded" (Matt. xxviii. 20), as they are able to bear (Mark iv. 33), leading them on in "the ways that be in Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 17), is the Divinely-appointed means of edification and growth, as it is God's way of preservation of His people in the midst of increasing error and advancing unbelief in many deceitful forms, some "corrupting" the Word for personal gain (2 Cor. ii. 17), others handling it deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2) to mislead the hearer. If God's people are not taught the truth, they will be swept along on the current. If separation to God from evil doctrine, and those who hold and teach it, is not set forth clearly and definitely as it is found in the Word (Prov. xix. 27; 1 Tim. vi. 3-6; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. ii. 14), ignorant and unwarned ones will be led away with "the error of the wicked" (2 Pet. iii. 17), as

many at present, alas! are, by Higher Criticism, New Theology, Christian Science, and other depravities and deceptions. It is a spurious charity that condones disobedience to the least of God's commandments, or trifles with error. Divine love is always "in the truth" (2 John 1), and the definition of love given in the Word is not high-sounding words of religious phraseology, but something more definite and tangible. "THIS is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John v. 3). And the test of true spirituality is, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD" (1 Cor. xiv. 37).

#### THE WORD, IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE.

We are to be guided in our worship, in our church association, and in all our service, by "Thus saith the Lord." Many are little exercised as to this. They seem to think that Christians are left very much to their own choice in regard to what church they join, with whom and how they worship, on what lines and in what manner they serve. The Word says otherwise. The bond of fellowship among saints (Matt. xviii. 20), the pattern of church constitution (1 Tim. iii. 15), the way of worship (Phil. iii. 3, R.V.), the path of service (2 Tim. ii. 5), and all else connected with what bears the name of the Lord, or is regarded as being "the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58), have all been the subjects of Divine counsel and legislation, and the Lord's abiding will concerning them is recorded in His Word for the obedience of His saints and servants all through the present age of grace "till He come." How simple, how safe, and how blessed it is for faith to receive and love to obey "all things whatsoever" He has commanded. And He will not fail to give His own the needed strength to keep His words even in the darkest hour, for He who claims to have "all authority," and gives the com-

mission to "observe all things" whatsoever He has commanded, has said, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20, R.V.). In the midst of many contrary voices, and much to perplex the young believer in matters connected with church association, there is one clear and definite path marked out by God for His people in the pages of His Word. To those who come with a willing mind, having no plan or way of their own to establish, but "willing to do His will" (John vii. 17, R.V.), they will find "a plain path" in which to walk with God cast up for them there. It will always be a path unpleasant to the flesh, and unpopular to the world, but it "drops fatness" (Psa. lxxv. 11) to the godly soul, and is ever a path of rich spiritual blessing to those who walk humbly yet firmly therein with God.

#### THE WORD, IN TIMES OF FAILURE.

"Thy Word is true from the beginning, and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psa. cxix. 160). "Therefore I esteem all Thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way" (Psa. cxix. 128). When the aged apostle wrote to his son Timothy giving counsel and guidance in the midst of departures from the truth, he did not suggest a compromise with error, or a lowering of the standard of the truth, or to keep silence on subjects which were not agreeable to all, or on which there existed "differences of judgment," as the phrase now is, among those who were prominent in the assemblies of that time. He cast him back on the entire truth as he had received it at the beginning. "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, THE SAME [the whole of it] commit thou to faithful men who shall be able [competent] to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2). Not a jot or tittle was to be altered, nothing left out, no part made to square with man's traditions or departures from the truth. "The faith once for all delivered to

the saints " (Jude 3) is a sacred trust, a noble deposit, which was to be held fast and guarded (2 Tim. i. 13, 14) with holy care, in its entirety. There is nothing unimportant or non-essential in the Word of God, not a precept obsolete, not a commandment incapable of being obeyed. We do not boast of what we have not, or aim at a restoration of the church as God's witness on earth in Pentecostal power and unity. This would be an empty pretension. But like those of Ezra and Nehemiah's day, who brought forth the long-neglected book of the Lord, and "found it written" that there ought to be a temple for Jehovah at Jerusalem, in which worship according to His Word could be restored, and the feasts and ministries of His ordering brought into the places which He had ordained for them. So they began in a feeble way, amid much outward opposition and inward discouragement, reading in the Book to learn the will of God, and seeking strength from Him to build according to the pattern, ordering all "as it is written." So there are some in our own time seeking back to the first foundations of the Church of God, as they remain in the Word, gathering for Christian worship, remembrance of the Lord in showing forth His death and Christian ministry according to the principles and pattern of 1 Cor. xi.-xiv., in dependence on the Spirit of God, who abides to give the needed power to carry these into practice, and in subjection to the Lord Jesus, who as centre and Lord is "in the midst" of even "two or three" gathered unto His Name (Matt. xviii. 20). The same Word that tells us the way of salvation, gives the pattern of how saints should be found together, and I have no more right to devise another way of assembly in the church, or another way of worship, than I have to invent a new way of salvation.

#### THE WORD AND TRADITION.

When the Lord was here, He found the Pharisees giving much attention to "the tradition of the elders "

(Mark vii. 3), and "rejecting the commandment of God, that they might keep their own tradition" (ver. 9). In the reckoning of the Lord they were thus "making the Word of God of none effect" (ver. 13). Man's tradition always has this effect. One of the canons of the Council of Trent of the 16th century was, that "Tradition is to be received and venerated with EQUAL pious reverence and affection as the Word of God," and that one God is the Author of both, the unwritten traditions being, as they assert, "dictated by the Holy Ghost and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession." Those who accept without investigation such a baseless assumption become an easy prey to Mariolatry, image worship, and all the deceits and deceptions which a crafty and covetous priesthood use to blind a people who are thus at their mercy. In the creeds and constitutions of others outside the pale of Romanism, tradition acts in the same way, nullifying the power of God's Word, preventing many true children of God from being led on in the ways of the Lord and of progress in spiritual life.

### CORRUPTING THE WORD.

The apostle wrote to the Corinthians—"We are not as many who corrupt the Word of God" (2 Cor. ii. 17): "not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2). In that early day there were those who corrupted the Word by mixing it with errors, as a huckster does his wares with imitations, and then palms them on unwary buyers as the real article. There is much of this in our day. Christadelphians, Annihilationists, and others claiming to have great reverence for the Scriptures, owning no other creed or rule of faith, yet co-mingling with the Word their most deadly "errors of destruction," opposed to all the fundamentals of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Error is never more virulent or dangerous than when it hides itself



under pretence of reverence for the Truth of God. Let young believers take heed what they hear, and be careful in what they read. Errors of all kinds leading away from God and the path of communion and holiness abound, often presented in most unexpected places, dished up in attractive form, and garnished with distorted Scripture to deceive. Let us cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and to that Word which, as unfolded by the Spirit, who as the Unction and Teacher of the children of God (1 John ii. 20, 27) keeps their spiritual scent fresh in them, enabling them to discern between truth and error. Amid the abounding errors on all sides, the increasing subtleties of the great adversary, the onward march of apostacy from God, His Christ, and His Truth, the believer can only be preserved by a godly, tenacious grasp of the truth, and a humble yet firm walk in all the ways of the Lord as marked out in His precious Word. To him it is the staff of life and the unfailing guide of his wilderness days, until the homeland is reached and the pilgrimage is ended in triumph and everlasting joy.

# The Crowned Christ:

## His People's Representative in Heaven.

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Read Heb. i. 1-3; ii. 7-9; iv. 14-16; ix. 24-28.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is peculiarly rich in its unfolding of the glories of the Person and perfections of the Work of Christ. He is set before us there in his proper Deity and perfect Manhood; in His glories as Son and Heir; in His excellencies as Sacrifice, High Priest, and Forerunner; and in the coming glory of His advent and His kingdom. The group of verses in chap. ix. 24-28 describe His past, present, and future work under the head of "Three Appearings," and these embrace His Atonement, completed on the Cross, His Advocacy being now carried on for the saints in heaven, and His Advent to the air, for which His people look, and watch, and wait—the proper hope of the Christian and the Church.

The Cross comes first in order. "He appeared to put away sin." Sin was the greatest blot in the universe. It had come in at the Fall in Eden, and not only brought death and condemnation upon the whole of Adam's race, but it had dishonoured God and caused a breach between Him and the creatures of His hand. Sin has various aspects, and is described in varied relationships in the Word of God. In one aspect it is *guilt*, viewed in relation to God's righteousness, and "all the world" has been brought in "guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19). It is *transgression* in relation to God's law, the wilful breaking of His commandments, and the transgressor is under the curse (Gal.

iii. 13). It is *defilement* in relation to God's holiness, and nothing that defileth or is unclean can enter the holy heaven in which God dwelleth (Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 11). In its nature it is lawlessness (1 John iii. 4), rebellion against God, treason in the reckoning of the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible" (1 Tim. i. 17) on His high and lofty throne. His creature man, formed in His image, who owed allegiance to his Creator-God, has revolted, gone over to an enemy, and waged continuous warfare against his God all through the ages. Thus sin has separated between God and man and hid His face (Isa. lx. 2). This must first be removed, ere grace could deal with sinners, or salvation reach them in the way of righteousness. It was to remove this barrier, to "put away sin," that the Son of God appeared. For this, Incarnation and Atonement were necessary. Nowhere is the Divine glory and human perfection of Christ's Person so magnified as in those Scriptures which speak of His atoning work. It is His Person that gives value to His work. In chapter I. His Divine glory, His full and proper Deity, His pre-existence before all worlds, His pre-eminence above angels, are set forth. The sacrifice must be of infinite value, if God is to have his outraged honour restored, and the claims of His high and holy throne met. Nothing short of a Divine Redeemer could give God the satisfaction He required, or meet the desperate case of the revolted and alienated sinner, who had gone so far from God and fallen under a power from which he could not deliver himself. The Unitarian has no Divine Saviour, he denies the Godhead of the Son, and consistently ignores the need of atonement by blood. His "Jesus" is an exemplary man, a model to copy, but not a sacrifice for sin, and a redeemer from it, as Scripture sets Him forth. All Humanitarian gospels ignore the fall of man, the nature of sin, and the utter estrangement of the creature from the Creator. Ignoring this, they proceed to remedy the results, and to ameliorate the effects of sin, while ignoring the

root-cause of all the sorrow which has come upon the sinner. The Lord Jesus was "manifested to take away our sins" (1 John iii. 5) and to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). At His birth, the heavenly host sang in His advent song—"Glory to God in the highest," first; then, "peace and goodwill toward men," next (Luke ii. 14). God and His glory was the first great object in all that the Lord Jesus said and did, and His work on Calvary was to give back to God what sin had robbed Him of, and thus to procure salvation for sinners. By His death on the Cross He "put away sin"—put it away from before God, where it stood as a barrier, hindering Divine love from reaching man, and the sinner from drawing near to God. The expression does not and cannot mean that He put away sin from the world, for we see it and its bitter fruits around us every day. Nor can it mean that He put sin away from the natural heart, or that old nature which still remains and is felt to be within those who are the children of God. Sin is not eradicated from the saints, nor is it swept from the earth, in virtue of the Cross. But it is "put away" by an atonement having been made and a full satisfaction given in the one great sacrifice of Christ, which He offered once for all on the Cross. It was concerning this aspect of His work that He was able to say in the moment of His death, "It is finished" (John xix. 30). We know that it was accepted and all-sufficient by the signs that were given at the time of His death, and by the fact of His resurrection. The veil of the temple was rent within, and the graves of the saints were opened without—telling of sin put away, of free access to God procured, of Satan defeated, and Death disarmed. Resurrection was God's public seal on the work of the Cross, His witness to faith that He is satisfied and glorified in the putting away of sin. It is in virtue of this—the widest aspect of Christ's work—that there is a propitiation for the whole world (1 John ii. 3), a Gospel for every creature (Mark xvi. 15), and a proclamation of

forgiveness of sins to all mankind (Acts xiii. 38). Yet only those who believe are reconciled to God (Rom. v. 10) and justified (Acts xiii. 39). Others, who despise the reconciliation and disbelieve the Son of God, perish (Acts xiii. 40), abiding under the wrath of God (John iii. 36).

The Lord's resurrection was followed by His Exaltation to the right hand of God, The stages of the pathway along which He passed to the place which He now occupies, are clearly marked out in the pages of the Word. First, while in the act of blessing His disciples on the slope of Olivet, He was parted from them and "carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 15); "received up into heaven" (Mark xvi. 19) and "into glory" (I Tim. iii. 16). He "passed through the heavens" (Heb. iv. 14, R.V.), past and far above principalities and powers (Eph. i. 2), ascending up "far above all heavens" (Eph. iv. 10), until He reached the throne of God, where in triumph and honour He was set at the right hand of God (Heb. xii. 2). There as the Purger of sin He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3), where God greeted Him as High Priest (Heb. v. 10), and proclaimed Him as Lord (Phil. ii. 10), crowning Him with a Victor's crown of glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9), while He awaits the hour of His kingdom and of the "many crowns," or Kingly diadems, which He shall yet worthily wear (Rev. xi. 15 ; xix. 12), and rule for God in righteousness, according to His will, as once He obeyed in perfect submission to that will. O wondrous sight! The Lamb of Calvary is on the throne of God!

"But we see not yet all things put under Him." The hour of His Kingly rule is not yet. For the present, He is hid within the heavens, as the high priest of Israel was for a season on the day of atonement, while the people waited without for his return to bless them (see Lev. xvi.). This brings us to consider the present place and work of the Crowned Christ in heaven. The Scripture says that He has gone in there "Now to APPEAR in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24).

He is there "before the face of God"—as the word literally is, "for us"—as our Representative during the period of our absence there. For while it is true that all believers are already "in Christ," and in Him "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph. i. 3), as a matter of fact, we are in mortal flesh on the earth, "at home in the body and absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). Thus we need, and have, a Representative in heaven, One who in unwearied love and faithfulness attends to our interests and serves us continually where He appears "before the face of God for us." I would briefly trace along the pages of the Word some aspects of His presence and service there, exercised on behalf of His redeemed people.

1. He is there as the SECURITY of His people. Turn to Romans v. 10, R.V.: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved IN His life." Reconciliation is by the Cross, preservation is in the living Lord in heaven. "Kept safe in His life," is the thought. The weakest believer is joined to the living Lord, and the life that the Head has, is in all the members. For a member of the living Christ to perish is impossible (John x. 28). "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3), and "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19), is the double security of the saints of God.

2. He is there as our GREAT HIGH PRIEST. Although saved and set on the way to heaven, believers are subject to infirmity. They have *within* them an evil nature, and a heart of unbelief, ever ready to lead them away from God (Heb. iii. 12). *Around* them is the world with its many allurements, all appealing to that which is within (1 John ii. 16, 17). *Against* them is the devil, their great and cunning adversary, ever seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. v. 8). They are in the place of danger, passing through the wilderness with its enemies (Deut. viii. 15), and because of this they need a high priest who can sympathise and suc-

cour. This the Lord Jesus is. He took "flesh and blood," and passed through all the stages of human life—infancy, boyhood, manhood; was hungry, thirsty, homeless; felt the lack of sympathy and the coldness of neglect. He was tempted in all points on which His people are (sin excepted), in order that He might be qualified for the office of their Great High Priest, to feel for them in their sorrows, and to sympathise with them in full measure while they endure them. Blessed be God, there is One on the throne of God who knows what it is to be rejected by the world, betrayed by His professed disciple, denied, forsaken, and left alone by His friends; and when His people are placed in such circumstances, He sympathises with them and communicates His sympathy and succour in the hour of need, direct from the heavenly sanctuary, where He appears before the face of God for them. How precious is such sympathy! We know it and value it from those we love. How real it is from one who has passed through the same trial or sorrow! Not far from Balmoral Castle, the Highland home of the late Queen Victoria, there lived an aged widow whose only son was in feeble health. Her Majesty used to visit that lowly cot, and it was by means of her influence that the sickly youth was sent out to a warmer shore in the hope of his health being restored. For a time it was, but one sad morning a letter came in a stranger's handwriting, telling the widowed mother of his death in the distant land. When the Queen heard of it, she hastened to the widow's side. The neighbours saw the royal carriage drive up to the lowly dwelling and the Queen enter that house of mourning, where she remained for a time. Then they saw her leave the cottage, with the tears on her cheeks, and re-enter the royal carriage. Curious to know what her Majesty had said and done, they asked the widow: "What did the Queen say to you?" She replied, "She didna say a word. She just sat down by my side, and taking my hand in hers, gripped it. And the Queen grat [wept], and I grat, but neither of us

was able to speak a word." That grip of the Royal hand and the Sovereign's silent tears, spoke louder than words. They were tokens of the deep, heartfelt sympathy of one who was herself a widow and a bereaved mother, and was thus able to truly sympathise with the sorrowing one. The Christ of Bethany, who wept at Lazarus' grave, the Man who stopped the funeral at the gate of Nain to give the widow back her only son, is on the throne of God to-day, with all the tender sympathy of His perfect Manhood and all the might of His Deity—"Jesus, the Son of God." We need His SUCCOUR as well as His sympathy. Encompassed with that infirmity, which remains in the believer, he needs the daily aid of One who is strong to save. Infirmity is not in itself sin, but that condition which remains in the believer, owing to the fall, which very easily yields to sin, and causes the saved but consciously weak one to hang on the Lord in dependence. Paul gloried in his infirmities (he could not, had they been sins), because they kept him dependent and humble, with the power of Christ resting upon him (2 Cor. xii. 9).

3. The crowned Christ is also our "ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER" (1 John ii. 2). When, through unwatchfulness, the believer falls, and sins, his communion with the Father is interrupted, while his relationship remains. The Advocate *above* appears on his behalf up there, and the Spirit of God, who is his Paraclete or Advocate *within* (the word is the same in John xiv. 26 and 1 John ii. 2), brings the Word to bear on his conscience (Heb. iv. 12, R.V.), discerning, searching, and convicting of the sin under which he has fallen, and the causes that led to such a fall, leading to humiliation for, confession, and forsaking thereof, with cleansing therefrom (Prov. xxviii. 13; John i. 9), restoring the soul to communion. It is a great matter for the young believer to acquire the habit of keeping short accounts with his Father in regard to sin. Whenever he is conscious of a cloud between him and the face of God, its cause should be



found, the particular sin—or sins—traced, dragged into the light, confessed in full and in detail, and the forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration which the advocacy of the living Lord and the indwelling Spirit give, enjoyed. A young believer who knew in experience such a life, sings:—

“And if, unwatchful, I do aught  
 Displeasing in His sight,  
 At once the shadow I discern,  
 So clearly shines the light.  
 ‘Lord Jesus! I have grieved Thee,’  
 Then sorrowing I say:  
 The sunshine of His love breaks forth,  
 And the shadow flees away.”

Thus from day to day, in every path in life, it is the privilege of the redeemed of the Lord to walk with Him, taking God into their confidence in everything, telling Him their every care, consulting Him in every detail of their lives, and confiding to Him the burdens of their hearts. There is nothing too small, nothing too common for Him to care for. The crowned Christ in the highest heaven is the ever-girded Servant of His wilderness people, able to save them “to the uttermost”—all the way, until they reach the house of the Lord, their everlasting rest and home. To lead them there in triumph, “He SHALL APPEAR the second time” (Heb. ix. 28), bringing full and final salvation from the presence of sin. Then all infirmity, and every result of the fall shall be done away in the saints of God. They “shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is” (1 John iii. 2).

# The Holy Spirit:

His Work in the World, in the Believer,  
and in the Church.

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Read John xiv. 25; xv. 26; xvi. 7-11; Acts i. 8; ii. 1-4.

THE exaltation of the Son of God to the throne in the heavens, and the descent and abiding presence of the Spirit of God on the earth, characterise the present dispensation of God's dealings with men.

In another place last evening, we gave ourselves to the consideration of the former of these two cardinal subjects, and this afternoon we will confine ourselves to the latter, namely, the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

I would seek to trace in the pages of the Sacred Word, especially for the help of younger ones in Christ—in the hope that they may thereby be led to inquire and search more deeply in the subject themselves—some of the teachings on this great and blessed theme.

In the upper room discourses of our Lord, while around the paschal table with his disciples, and probably while on the way to Gethsemane, there is much connected with the personality, the designation, the abiding presence, and the work of the blessed Spirit. There we meet for the first time the new designation given to the Spirit—"The Comforter." The same word is rendered "Advocate" in 1 John ii. 2. It means "One called to our aid," to be our Paraclete, our Helper; One to stand by us, to undertake

for us, and to carry us through. The coming of the Comforter, consequent on the Lord's exaltation to the Father, His ascension gift to the Son (Acts ii. 33), sent conjointly from the Father and the Son (John xiv. 26; xv. 26), was to mark a distinct era in the spiritual history of the Lord's disciples, as it was to develop a fuller work of God's grace among the sons of men, and inaugurate a new work, hitherto a mystery, even the formation of the Church, the body of Christ, called into existence out from Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 16; iii. 6), and formed "one new man" by the baptism of the Spirit (I Cor. xii. 13).

#### THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE SPIRIT.

From Genesis i. 2, throughout the Old Testament, the personality of the Spirit is assumed. In the New Testament it is fully revealed and proved. His Name is linked with the Father and the Son in the baptismal commission of Matthew xviii. 19, and in the apostolic benediction of 2 Corinthians xiii. 14, expressing His proper Deity and equality. His Godhead is announced in the solemn fact that He can be sinned against (Mark iii. 29), and that to lie "to the Spirit" is to lie "to God" (Acts v. 34). This needs to be remembered and held fast among God's people in our day, when Spiritualism, Christadelphianism, and other destructive errors are boldly denying the Deity, Eternity, and Personality of God the Spirit.

#### THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT.

In the ages that are past, the Spirit is seen working on the ruined earth (Gen. i. 2), before its reconstruction to be man's abode; in garnishing the heavens (Job xxvi. 13); in the fitting of man for the service of God (Exod. xxx. 2; in the prophets' testimony (2 Sam. xxiii. 2), in the inspiration of their words (I Pet. i. 10), and in their preservation in writing (2 Tim. iii. 16).

Wherever sinners were saved and saints helped in work for God, this was of the Spirit (Hag. ii. 2), but when He as the Comforter came down on the Pentecostal day to take up His age-abiding mission on the earth, His work became more clearly revealed and defined.

#### THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE WORLD.

To reprove or convict "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xiv. 16), is the character of His work in the world. In Sovereign grace He is always thus engaged, sometimes using means, often, so far as man is concerned, acting apart from any human instrumentality, bringing sinners into the presence of God (Job xli. 4; xlii. 5, 6), searching out their sins, cutting them to the heart by the spoken Word (Acts ii. 37), and apart from it (Acts xvi. 29, 30). True conviction, leading to "repentance toward God" in some measure, ever precedes "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xxvi. 18), and where this is lacking, a shallow work having "no root" (Luke viii. 13) is sure to follow. The popular evangelism of our time is sadly marred by such light and unreal profession, ending in apostacy from and unbelief of everything. There is little of the deep ploughing, the searching preaching, the solemn warning of former years, with the result that very many who profess the Christian name have no right sense of sin, or of God's relation to it, hence they become an easy prey to those who deny its punishment, and are easily led away with the false gospels of the times. No Spirit-convicted sinner will ever trust in any merit of his own, or in any slipshod profession, or find rest for his sin-burdened soul until he comes to Christ, to be received by Him (John vi. 37). Let all who deal with souls be careful not to heal their wounds slightly. Let them ever remember that it is the work of the Spirit to convict, expose, strip of self and lead to self-renunciation; that while it is the privilege of the evangelist

and the soul-winner to preach the Word, to point the sinner to the Saviour (Acts viii. 35), to lead him to the gate of the kingdom, none but the Eternal Spirit can cause him to enter, or bring him to Christ.

### THE SPIRIT AND THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel as it is preached throughout this age of Grace, is said to be "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. i. 12). The Gospel becomes effective in conversion when it is spoken, not in word only, but "in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. i. 5). Clear, accurate statements are not enough. The Gospel needs the power of the Spirit to give it effect, not from any defect in the message (see Romans i. 16), but because of what man is—a fallen, ruined sinner, "without strength" or desire after God. And this "power," which operates through the preacher, as well as with the Word he speaks, is connected always with his spiritual condition (1 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 10). The honoured soul-winner is always a holy man. He may not always be highly gifted, but to be a channel through which the Spirit may flow (John viii. 38, 39), he must be clean. "Barnabas was a *good* man, and *full* of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Immediately after this description it is added: "And much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts xi. 24). Let young preachers learn and remember that it is of the first importance, in going forth on the service of the Lord, to have the soul right, to be in a fit spiritual condition, to be clean, a vessel meet for the Master's use. Slipshod preaching, with little sense of the responsibility of standing as God's messenger, between the living and the dead, going forth to men before going in to see the face of God and hear His voice, is ruinous to the preacher and detrimental to the work. Let us examine ourselves, search our ways before the Lord, judge, confess, and cleanse ourselves from all that would unfit us from being used as channels through which the living stream may flow to others.

## THE SPIRIT IN REGENERATION.

The new and heavenly birth experienced by the believing sinner (1 John v. 1) is the direct operation of the Spirit of God. He is born of the Spirit (John iii. 5), through the Word (1 Pet. i. 22, 23). The new life is Spirit-begotten (John iii. 6), and the one who is born of God is no longer a "natural man" (1 Cor. ii. 14), unable to see and receive spiritual things, but born of God (John i. 12, 13), possessed of a new nature (2 Pet. ii. 14). And having received the Spirit (1 Cor. xi. 12; 1 John ii. 20, 27), he perceives and enjoys the "things of the Spirit," and is able to eschew and resist error. To him who is thus begotten of God, the Spirit comes as the Spirit of sonship (Gal. iv. 5), witnessing with his own spirit that he is God's child, and making good to him, in fact and experience, the new relationship into which at the new birth he was brought. There are doubtless many who are not in the enjoyment of this, owing to a partial Gospel being presented to them, or because of defective and traditional teaching before and after their conversion. Nevertheless, all who believe are born of God, they are His children, they have His Spirit, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ," the Word declares plainly, "he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). This leaves no place for the unscriptural theory that one may be a believer, yet not have eternal life, or the Spirit of sonship in possession. What those believers who are in uncertainty and in bondage need, is a fuller knowledge of the Gospel and of the truth. As it is written, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32).

## THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE BELIEVER.

The various aspects of the operations of the Comforter, in the individual believer, is a subject of deep interest, and should form the theme of prayerful study and meditation among the people of God. I can only

briefly indicate some of them, and offer a word on each.

He is the "SEAL" (Eph. i. 13). Of the blessed Lord it is said, "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27). When He stood in Jordan, at His baptism, the heavens were opened, the Father's voice audibly owned Him as the "beloved Son," and the Spirit descended and abode upon Him. In "the power of the Spirit" (Luke iv. 14) He went forth to do His life work (Acts x. 38); all His works of power were by "the Spirit of God" (Matt. xii. 28), and on the Cross He through the Eternal Spirit "offered Himself" to God (Heb. ix. 14). The seal which is put on the believer marks him as God's property, and sets him apart as "God's own possession" (Tit. ii. 14, R.V.), still IN the world, but not of it. It is the sign of his security, for he is "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30)—that is full, final redemption, including that of the body (Rom. viii. 23), when God will claim by power all that He has acquired by the blood of His Son.

The EARNEST of the Spirit (Eph. i. 14) is said to be in the hearts of all believers (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). That is the present enjoyment, the first taste of heaven and its holy joys experienced by the believer on earth—"the days of heaven upon earth" (Deut. xi. 21). As the cluster of grapes was borne from Canaan to the wilderness side of Jordan, and eaten there by the pilgrim people, a sort of foretaste of Canaan before they had reached Canaan, so the communion, the heavenly bliss which the Spirit, who fully knows it, brings into and sheds abroad (Rom. v. 5) in the heart of the saint is, in kind, that which, in fulness and untainted by sin within and around, he will enjoy in full, unbounded measure in his own land of promise, the place of his inheritance above. It is this present enjoyment of God, of Christ, and of heavenly things, that enables the believer to count earthly things as loss, and to cast from him, as "refuse," that which as a worldling he loved and cherished.

The STRENGTH of the Spirit (Eph. iii. 16) is also

his. The new man is no match for the old, with its habits and lusts cherished and practised for years, but in order to strengthen the "inner man," and not allow the flesh to do the things that it would (Gal. v. 17, R.V.), the Spirit takes up the warfare, and by empowering the believer to resist the desires of the flesh and mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. viii. 13), to walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil fleshly lusts (Gal. v. 16), thus he gains the victory. The flesh remains in its natural character, never changed, never absorbed, never eradicated; ever needing to be watched, starved (Rom. xiii. 14), and mistrusted (Phil. iii. 3), yet in virtue of the Spirit's strength, so brought into subjection, until, as one has aptly said, "It ought to trouble no one else but the man whose it is." Were this so in practice, how different Christian life in the family, the church, and the world would be!

Time fails to explore these goodly fields, in which is found the *inflow* (I Cor. xii. 13) and continuous supply (Phil. i. 10) of the Spirit as daily experience; His *indwelling* (John xiv. 14) as a well, causing "the fruit of the Spirit" to appear, in all its nine-fold loveliness (Gal. v. 22), in the lives of the saints; His *outflowing* (John vii. 39) as a river of blessing to others, carrying life and healing to sinners (see Ezekiel xlvii., Isaiah lv. 1), and ministering the Spirit (Gal. iii. 5) to saints. The *leading* of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 14), which is the mark, as it is the privilege, of all God's sons; *prayer* in the Spirit (Eph. vi. 18), and *intercession* for ourselves and others, of which the Spirit is Cause and Helper (Rom. viii. 26). The body of the believer is His *temple* (I Cor. vi. 19), and should be preserved holy and its members yielded to God (Rom. vi. 13). One solemn word in this connection must not be omitted. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. iv. 30). The sinner may "resist" (Acts vii. 31), but the saint may give grief to the Spirit. Sin indulged, the heart departing from God, the Word neglected, the world loved: all grieve the indwelling Spirit. Then His revelation of Christ, His taking of Divine things and



showing them to the believer ceases, communion is lost, peace departs, darkness ensues, and backsliding follows, until confession and forsaking of the sin, and cleansing from it with forgiveness and restoration to God are known; or, failing this, Divine chastisement because of it (I Cor. xi. 32; I John v. 16). May the Lord teach us to walk humbly and softly, so that we may not grieve the Holy One who indwells us, but know in blessed experience "the fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil. ii. 1) from day to day.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH.

Very briefly I will look at some Scriptures bearing on this deeply important yet much neglected aspect of the subject. The *Formation* of the Church is the work of the Spirit. In the aspect of "one *body*," it is formed by baptism in the one Spirit (I Cor. xii. 13; Eph. iv. 3, 4). As a "temple" (Eph. ii. 22), composed of living stones (I Pet. ii. 4), the Spirit is the Inhabitant (I Cor. iii. 16). He resides in the local assembly of saints, formed and gathered according to the pattern set forth in the Word, and is the Administrator of all the functions of the Christian assembly—worship, ministry, work, testimony, and rule. Strange as it may appear, He is denied this place by many who own His presence and operations in the world and in the Christian. Long continuance in religious systems in which the Directorship and Administration of the Spirit has been superseded by the traditions, arrangements, and appointments of men, has lulled many to sleep in regard to such truths: the Divine principles of Scripture, which ought to govern their actions in all that concerns the Church, have ceased to exercise the mind and conscience. Christians go to "the church of their fathers," or where they "get the most good," irrespective of whether the Lord gets His place of honour, the Spirit His sphere of administration, and the Word and its principles are obeyed or not. We may rest assured that nothing is to be regarded as

unimportant that puts the Spirit of God, the Comforter, from His appointed place and substitutes a worship of ritual, or a ministry of human appointments, instead. The Lord's order of things alone is that which, when carried out in humble dependence on Him, by spiritual men, keeps the channels open, along which the leading, the worship, and the ministry which are of the Spirit and for the edification and blessing of the saints, can flow. The gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4) are such as He sets for the edification and increase of the saints. A *ministry*, in the grace and power of the Spirit, is easily known by its results. *Rulers*, who are made so by the act of the Spirit (Acts xx. 28), feed and guide the flock, and are known (1 Thess. v. 12) by their works, rather than by clerical titles and sacerdotal attire. The Spirit divides to every man as He will, and the Church's wisdom is, to receive and hold itself free to use all the gifts, all the variety of ministries, which in Sovereign wisdom and grace "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18) sees fit to appoint and to use. To reject His administration and to displace the ministries of His appointment, either by selecting one man to do the whole, or throwing open the door for every man to do as he likes, or leaving certain functionaries to select, appoint, and control the ministry, whether of the Gospel or the Word, is to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19) and to turn aside the stream that would fertilize and cause to bud and bring forth abundant fruit the trees of the Lord's planting, in His Church. Much of the barrenness, spiritual poverty, and lack of blessing in assemblies of believers, is due to the quenching of the Spirit and His operations, by the interference of men. It is still by "the comfort of the Holy Ghost"—that is, all the gracious ministries of the unhindered Spirit, through every channel being open and clean and at His disposal—that the Church is "edified," and likewise "multiplied" (Acts ix. 31). The last mention that we have of the Spirit in connection with the Church is a very lovely one. In Revelation xxii. 17, the Spirit in

conjunction with the Church as the Bride is seen looking for the Bridegroom, and heard saying "Come." Such is the attitude and condition in which the Spirit would preserve the saints individually and collectively, until the hour when—like Eliezer of old, who went forth from the mystic tent in Hebron, to win the bride of his father's choice for his "only begotten" and typically dead and risen son, who came forth at eventide to meet and receive Rebekah from the faithful servant's care—"the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." Then the dead in Christ shall rise incorruptible, and the living shall in a moment be "changed," and together perfected into the full image of their Lord, under the hand of the Spirit, whose work is then complete, they will be received by the Lord unto Himself, and then presented to the Father "the Church glorious," "faultless in the presence of His glory" (Jude 24). May we through grace set a proper value upon and make room for the full exercise of all the gracious ministry of the blessed Paraclete, Who, in spite of all human guilt, remains in the world, continuing His appointed work among the sons of men; Who, notwithstanding failure, indwells the believer as the Source of his strength; Who abides in the Church to glorify Christ, and to give increase and edification to the saints of God.

# Salvation :

In Possession, in Progress, and in Prospect.

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Read Acts xvi. 30, 31; Rom. v. 10; Titus ii. 11;  
Heb. vii. 25; ix. 28.

**S**ALVATION is presented in the Word in a three-fold aspect. The believing sinner can say that he *has been* saved, that he is *being* saved, and that he *shall* yet be saved. The *first* of these aspects of salvation is connected with and flows from the work of Christ on the Cross, His finished work. The *second* is being accomplished by the Lord Jesus where He now is on the throne, His unfinished work. The *third* will be effected by Him at His coming again, and is not yet begun. It is important to distinguish these; from whence they come; when and how they become ours.

It may be asked—What is salvation, who is it for, and why do men need it? The answer given in the Word of God, which is the only reliable guide in all such matters, is: That man is a sinner (Rom. iii. 10-21), that he has fallen from his first estate (Rom. v. 12-16), wandered from his God (Isa. liii. 6), brought upon himself condemnation, and is without strength (Rom. v. 6) to redeem or recover himself from the penalty of sin, under which as a guilty sinner he lies, or to extricate himself from the power of sin, under which as a bondsman he has fallen. The chief reason why so few give any heed to the Gospel, and to the great salvation which it proclaims, is, that so few know their need and realise their danger as sinners under condemnation and ready to perish. When a man

discerns his true state before God and in relation to His holy courts, indifference ceases, and the cry of his awakened soul is, "What must I do to be saved?" The Psalmist tells us, "Salvation belongs unto the Lord" (Psa. iii. 8), and the apostle gives to the Lord Jesus the title of "The Author of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 9). Neither man himself, nor the Church, can provide salvation. If it comes to the sinner, it must come from God, not because of merit, but of sovereign grace alone. Here, and in these conditions, the Gospel meets the lost and helpless sinner. The Gospel is not a demand, "Give your heart to Christ." It is the good news that God has set His heart upon us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16); "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John iv. 10). And the Son thus given became the Saviour. "Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). To accomplish this, He had to die, to give Himself a sacrifice and a ransom for all (1 Tim. ii. 6). Blessed be God, this has been done. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). God has raised Him in token of His satisfaction, and now the Grace of God brings salvation to all men (Titus ii. 11). The Gospel proclaims salvation for all (Eph. i. 12), and all who confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in the heart that God raised Him from the dead, are saved (Rom. x. 9). They at once become possessors of God's salvation, are spoken of as being already saved (1 Cor. xv. 2; 2 Tim. i. 9) and of having a salvation in them which they can call their "own salvation" (Phil. ii. 12).

This aspect of salvation in possession is little heard of in much of the preaching of our time. A vague "hope," a hazy notion that somehow, in virtue of God's mercy in the day of judgment, they will be saved at last, is the prevalent faith, even among those who are regarded as sound and evangelical. But "the Gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 12), as presented in the Word and proclaimed in its fulness, brings all

who receive it into the present possession and enjoyment of the salvation of God. They are able to sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psa. xxvii. 1); "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa. xii. 2). Thus saved by grace and set on the way to glory, they need a Saviour, a Preserver, from day to day. This they have in Christ raised from the dead, alive at God's right hand. They are "saved by [or, in] His life" (Rom. v. 16). None can sever them from Him (John x. 28). Because He lives, they live also. As the Great High Priest of His people, He is able to save them "to the uttermost" (Heb. vii. 25), evermore, all along the way, right up to the glory. This is the Divine side of daily progressive salvation. The human side, that for which the believer is himself responsible, is that he "work out" his own salvation (Phil. ii. 12), that he take heed to himself and to the doctrine of the Lord, continuing therein (1 Tim. iv. 16), thus saving himself from departures from the faith and errors of the wicked. Day by day, trusting in the Lord, keeping His Word, walking in His ways, the believer is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 5).

The *third* and final aspect of salvation is future, "nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11), yet not known by any. It includes the redemption of the body, and its conformity to the body of Christ's glory (Phil. iii. 21), to be like Him (1 John iii. 2), when we see Him as He is. This will be ours when He, who once appeared to put away sin, on the Cross, who now appears before the face of God for us, shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Thus it is, that "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus" (Phil. iii. 20), and "both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. iii. 26). To any who are yet unsaved, the Word is, "To you is the Word of this salvation sent (Acts xiii. 26). Salvation procured at the Cross, proclaimed in the Gospel, you may possess and enjoy now, as you are, and where you

are. There are no impossible conditions. It is for sinners, ruined sinners, helpless sinners. It is without merit, without price. The only open question is, Will you as a sinner, without merit or plea, accept salvation as the gift of God, as it is set before you, in the Gospel, in this the day of God's grace. There is no time to lose, none to trifle. "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2), but it will not last for ever. Grace will give place to justice, and the mercyseat to the judgment throne. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3).

# The Christian's Path

## Amid the Perils of the Last Days.

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Read Heb. xii. 1; Phil. iii. 7-12; 2 Tim. iv. 8-12.

**A**S was said elsewhere on a former evening, our object in these meetings is to help young believers, by speaking some elementary and practical truths, with the earnest desire to cheer them on in the Christian life. It is a joy to see so many present, young in years, in the freshness of spiritual youth, on the first stages of the right road which saints of all ages have trod, which leads to glory and to God.

Christian life is compared in the Scriptures to a race. Conversion is its start; continuance in the faith, growth in grace, and progress in the ways of the Lord, its course; the coming of the Lord or departure to be with Him, its goal; the judgment seat its "crowning day."

**THE START.**--The beginning of all true Christian life is the New Birth (John iii. 5). Apart from this, none can see or enter God's kingdom. This, in a day of lifeless profession, needs to be emphasised. There may be religion, there may be knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, there may be assent to all the teachings of evangelic faith, but there must be personal acceptance of Christ (John i. 12), individual confession of His Name (Rom. x. 9), and quickening by the Spirit (Eph. ii. 1) from death in sin, before there can be Christianity according to God. This Divine and inward work in the soul becomes manifest



in the *conversion* of the person to God. "Ye turned *to* God from idols" (I Thess. i. 9), "Ye are now returned *unto* the Shepherd" (I Pet. ii. 25), are words which describe this change, in its double aspect. It is always *to* God and *from* sin. As the flower to the sun, so the quickened soul turns to God and to Christ. There is attachment, and there is detachment. The new life, the new nature, and the indwelling Spirit, bring to the regenerate man a new motive power. He is "joined to the Lord," "one spirit" with Him (I Cor. vi. 17). Divine love is shed abroad in his heart (Rom. v. 5). The new life asserts its presence; old things pass away, old habits drop off. As the withered leaves of winter, which adhere to the branch through winter's stormy blast, fall off as the bursting buds of spring appear, so do evil ways, companionships and habits, under the "expulsive power" of this "new affection." The Spirit-born one, in the enjoyment of Christ and heavenly things, confesses, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have seen Him, and observed Him" (Hosea xiv. 8). Things once idolised, the world once loved, lose their power over the heart, because of the glory that excelleth. It is not the demand of law, but the power of love; not the tearing away of what is cherished, but the yielding up or casting off, of that which has ceased to captivate, since Christ has won the heart. As one has sung—

"Not the crushing of these idols,  
With its bitterness and smart,  
But the beaming of His beauty,  
The unveiling of His heart."

Thus it was that Saul of Tarsus was converted. A sight of Christ in glory, the shining in of "a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun" (Acts xxvi. 13), for ever won his heart and caused him to esteem all in which he has boasted, both in personal and worldly honours, as "refuse"—something only got to cast away. It is the full-orbed Gospel of

Christ on the Cross a sacrifice for sin, Christ on the throne a portion for the heart, Christ to save and Christ to satisfy, that is the chief need of our time. The manifest conversion, unworldly lives, devoted service, and unwavering testimony of godly men and women, whose names are held in honour among us, was due to the clean cut and the clear start they had at the beginning, under the unction of these glorious Gospel truths, brought in power to their hearts. I remember one who knew and lived in the enjoyment of them saying, "I was convicted of sin and led to trust in Christ during the stirring Revival days of 1859, but when the late Mr. Denham Smith came some years later, preaching a full death and resurrection Gospel, and the believer's union with Christ in heaven, the result was like a second conversion to me. I had life before, but, like Lazarus, I was still in my graveclothes; but I got light and liberty, was severed from the world, and set at liberty to serve the Lord then." "There is nothing like the Cross" to sever the heart from earth; no attraction like Christ in glory to keep it set on things above. Such is the Divine side, the secret springs of conversion and separation from the world. But, as in all God's truth, there is a Divine and a human side, that which is wrought by God and that which we work ourselves, so in this. As the first passage we read together tells us, we are called to strip ourselves, to "lay aside every weight," before a good start can be made on the heavenly race. There are certain sins which, from their character, are never to be trifled with. In dealing with them, decision and definite separation is absolutely necessary. Although they may be as a right hand or a right eye, they must be cut off and cast away, in order to "enter into life" (Mark iii. 44-47) in this aspect of it. Some before their conversion were slaves to strong drink, impurity, unholy associations, dishonesty. There must be no parley with these. A single cord uncut, may at any hour be used by the enemy to drag you back to the environ-

ment of former days of unregeneracy, and bring you under the power of former sins. There is no promise of God's keeping power to those who wilfully put themselves in the way of temptation, and in forbidden paths play on the hole of the asp. Daniel was safe in the lions' den, when cast there in the way of faithfulness to God (Dan. vi. 16-22), but a single lion in the way devoured the young disobedient prophet who allowed himself to be led away from the path which God had marked out for him to tread (1 Kings xiii. 24). Many who seemed to have received the Gospel, and for a time promised well, but who never severed their companionship with the unconverted, or came out from unequal yokes and unhallowed associations, have gone back and turned aside. Whether they may ultimately be found among those who "are not condemned with the world," we cannot tell, but this much is clear: they never made a clear start on the Christian race, or were stripped of the weights, or severed from the bonds that all who desire to make progress and go "from strength to strength" must give up. God grant that all the dear young believers who are with us here, and thousands more, who are setting forth on the heavenly path, may have a clean, clear, and decided start, stripped of every besetting sin, severed from every worldly bond, and thus set on the rough but right road, to "run with endurance" straight to the glorious goal.

THE COURSE.—Although the standing of the saints of God is alike, all being "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1) equally "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6), and all alike "beloved in God the Father" (Jude 1, R.V.), they differ in spiritual state. Some, like the Thessalonians, are progressing, growing in faith and love (2 Thess. ii. 3); many, like the Galatians, running well for a time, then hindered and become halting (Gal. v. 7); and others, like the Corinthians, stunted in growth (1 Cor. iii. 1), retrograding into all the ways of the world. Such differences may be clearly traced among the saints of God all along the

ages. We have Abraham and Lot among the Patriarchs, one maintaining the pilgrim path, the other pitching his tent Sodomwards; Caleb, who followed fully, in the midst of unbelieving men who in their hearts turned back to Egypt; Daniel and his three companions, true to God while others hid their colours. Some among the Lord's disciples "went back and walked no more with Him" (John vi. 66), others followed on, sharing His rejection, standing by His Cross, and cleaving to Him and His Word to the end. There are three conditions possible among the children of God, which may be thus described—(1) Pressing on; (2) Standing still; (3) Going back. The first of these is the pattern set forth in the Word: it is the normal condition of the healthy saint. As in nature there is first the blade, then the ear, then the grain (Mark iv. 26-28), so is the Kingdom of God. In the family of faith there are babes, little children, young men, and fathers (1 John ii. 13-18). The new life is capable of development. It grows by feeding on Christ, by exercise in godly walk and diligent service. Prayer and meditation on the Word of God are the chief means of its health and sustenance. No believer will ever make much spiritual progress who habitually neglects secret prayer and personal daily dealing with God and His Word. The inner life must be cared for, the soul must be fed, in order to true spiritual progress, godly walk and acceptable service. In these busy times there is a great temptation to be occupied with the outward things of the kingdom, service, meetings, arrangements—all proper in their place—but God must be first, the inward condition cared for before the outward service is entered on. It is just because of the lack of this, that so few are being raised up to fill the vacant places of aged and honoured servants of Christ being called to their rest, and that there is little interest in the things of God and the work of the Lord manifested by those who are numbered among the people of God. The lovely picture presented to us in Philippians iii. 7-13, is

that of a racer on the course, with his eye fixed on the goal, forgetting all that lies behind, all that he has already attained, reaching forth like the racer with his neck thrown forward toward the end and the prize. There was no slackening of the pace, no turning aside, no wearying of the road, with Paul: he had "purpose" as well as "faith" (2 Tim. iii. 10), and although Barnabas left him, Demas forsook him, and "all they in Asia" turned away from him, he pursued the course with firm and steady step, counting all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. The Lord hath need of such young men and young women of purposed heart, who, like Moses, will count the cost and make their life choice in view of the coming reward; who, like Ruth, will part company with companions whose hearts are in the land of Moab, and boldly say, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth i. 16). Men of the world say regarding success in mundane affairs: "There is plenty of room at the top," so in the Christian race "There is plenty of room at the front," in the advance line of the Lord's warriors, who "seek first the kingdom of God," making Christ and heavenly things their object, passing through the great world with its allurements as "strangers and pilgrims," content with a stranger's place and a pilgrim's fare. Alas! how many who began well have been turned aside like Demas by love of the present world, lured by its fair promises of wealth, caught in its snares of pleasure, crippled by unequal yokes and unhallowed unions with the unconverted, and hindered by alliances with worldly men and things. The only safe, the only happy path, the way of progress and spiritual prosperity is, to "gird up the loins," and with steadfast purpose and unfaltering step "press on."

"Fold not thy hands:

What has the pilgrims of the Cross and Crown

To do with luxury or couch of down?

On, pilgrim, on!"

(2) *Standing Still* (Zech xi. 16) is a precarious condition, which with godly pastoral care and feeding may be recovered from, the soul restored, and the race renewed, but when neglected, usually developes into being "overtaken" (Gal. vi. 1), "turned aside" (Jer. xiv. 8; 1 Tim. i. 6), or "turned back from following the Lord" (Zeph. i. 6). Backsliding in heart (Prov. xiv. 14), if not arrested, is always followed by open departure from God. O how important it is, therefore, to watch the beginnings of such a course, to confess its causes to God, to be cleansed from them, and to be restored in soul to follow on in "the paths of righteousness" (Psa. xxiii. 2, 3).

(3) *Going Back* is the result of indulged sin, neglected self-judgment, and broken communion. When the believer gets away from God, and his feet are on the downward path, he becomes an easy prey to the enemy (1 Pet. v. 8). Some are ensnared by evil doctrine (Eph. iv. 15), "carried away with the error of the wicked" (2 Pet. iii. 17); New Theology, Christadelphianism, Christian Science, and other deceivings of men leading them captive. Others because of their low spiritual condition tire of the path of separation, and go back to the world and its religion, speaking evil of "the way" (Acts xix. 9), and causing others to stumble. Some who have thus turned back have pierced themselves with many sorrows, and brought the chastening hand of the Lord heavily upon them, awaking at the premature close of an unhappy life, to find out the bitterness of their evil course. Such are saved as by fire: a soul saved, but a life wasted and a crown lost.

A TRIUMPHANT END (2 Tim. iv. 8-12).—Here we have the *starter* of Acts ix., and the *runner* of Philipians iii., the man whose expressed desire in the midst of the race was, "that I may finish my course with joy" (Acts xx. 24), at the end of the race, able through grace to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The early days of stripping (Phil. iii. 8) and training (1 Cor. ix.

24-27) are long past, the fierce yet "good contest," with its struggles and sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 26-28), is over. The straight "course," first entered that day on the Damascus road, now ends in a Roman prison, awaiting a martyr's death, forsaken by many of his friends, forgotten by most of those to whom in earlier years he had been the bearer of the Word of life. All alone, to appear for the last time in the Roman Forum, before the Emperor Nero, to receive the death sentence and be carried bound to a felon's doom. Viewed according to man's reckoning, it was the last stage of a mistaken course, the closing scene in a life which, had it been given to the world, would have undoubtedly ranked among the great ones of earth. In faith's reckoning it was the runner home to the goal, the wrestler triumphant in the final contest, the keeper of a sacred trust handing his charge back unsullied to his Master's hand, his toils and conflicts over. "Henceforth" only waiting to receive the victor's crown, which, although already won, is yet "laid up," and will be publicly awarded to him and all others who "love" their Lord's appearing and count all human favours dross, to win His smile and hear His well done, "in that day." The imagery is borrowed from the ancient Olympian games, which are being revived in your great city at the present hour. The winner was awarded a circlet of fading leaves—"a corruptible crown," and with that victor's crown upon his brow, he was led in triumph to his city, which opened a new gate in its walls to welcome him with greatest honour. Who is there among us who does not long to end the Christian course in such a manner, to finish well, and to gain "the victor's crown," which the "Lord, the Righteous Judge," will, in the day of His judgment seat, bestow upon all who have begun, continued, and ended "the course" marked out in the pages of the Word (2 Tim. ii. 5), "continuing steadfastly" (Acts ii. 42) in the truth, "contending earnestly" for the faith (Jude 3), "following fully" in the ways of God, cleaving to

the Lord with purpose of heart (Acts xi. 23), and "always abounding" in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 58), right on to the end. The "grace" which was so "exceeding abundant" in preserving the Lord's honoured witness who thus in triumph reached the goal, he commends to Timothy, the Lord's young disciple and servant. In that "grace that is in Christ Jesus," he was to "be strengthened" (2 Tim. ii. 1, R.V.); in the truth he was to "continue" (iii. 14); with the godly he was to follow on (ii. 22), and thus amid the perils of the last days, and the ever-increasing evils through which he must pass, he also would be "*delivered* from every evil work," and "*preserved* unto the heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 18). That thus it may be, through grace, with all the young believers to whom I speak, is my heart's desire and prayer to God.



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