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“ONE THING.”

MARK x. 17-27; PSALM xxvii. 4-6.

THE connection of these two scriptures is exceedingly interesting, because of the occurrence of the same words in them: “One thing.” Whilst in the young man in Mark x. there was one thing that was lacking, with the saint, as in the Psalmist, there was, on the other hand, one thing that was commanding his whole moral being. It is of these two

things that it is impressed upon my heart to say a word to you this morning.

In Mark the scripture is important to us, in that it comes in in that part of the Lord's instructions in which He upholds that which God had set up at the beginning, and which the Lord Himself therefore always maintains. The Lord always vindicated everything which God originally formed—all that which we sometimes say "belongs to the old creation," whereas we ought to say, I think, more properly, the *former* creation. Everything that was instituted by God then, was always upheld and honoured by the Lord Jesus Christ, as we find it here in respect of the marriage tie and of children. It is beautiful the way in which He, as God's servant upon earth, upholds all that is of God.

But then comes in what is exceedingly solemn for us: the cross is brought in as a test for the heart.

Three things are distinctly grouped together in this chapter. First, natural relationships; second, the law; and third, the word of Christ. This young man wants to do some good thing—his natural heart desires it; and this desire is met, first, by the law, and then by the cross of Christ. It is striking to see the effect of these things on this young man.

Now we must notice that the law never tested this young man's heart at all. *As far as man could see*, and before man he had kept it. No doubt it was merely an outward, exterior obedience, but still he had rendered this outside obedience; and as a creature of God it was beautiful, and it was appreciated

by the Lord Jesus Christ as such. He had rendered obedience to the law in an outward way; he could truly say, “All these have I observed from my youth;” and this entitled him to the credit of having walked in its precepts. The Lord does not bring him in as not having done it. He beheld him and loved him. There was that which God could love.

But then the probe comes in: *the cross*. It is, “Come, take up the cross, and follow me.” He had that which in nature is in itself beautiful; it was not bad things; it was all that was attractive. But—and I do not know anything more solemn—it will not go at all with Christ. The best side of man counts for nothing here. Have we all accepted this? The thing that is beautiful, the thing that is excellent, the thing which

the Lord did love, which He could fully own and recognise, that thing in its creature excellence, *will not go with Christ.*

And the instant the cross is brought in, the man is manifested in his true light and colours. “One thing thou lackest,” says the Lord; “go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved.” He was priding himself upon keeping the law; but when the Lord says to him, “Go, sell what thou hast, and come and share my path of shame and scorn and despicability on the earth, and follow me,” he departs sorrowful and disappointed.

The highest way to see the truth is to see

it as a revelation from God. To see it in the lives of people on earth is not the same thing. When it comes direct from God, His word carries all its authority and weight to our souls. I may then see the *effect* of it coming out in different instances, and in the lives of men upon earth, but I have learnt it from God Himself. Still, if you have to do much with souls, you will find often this very same thing. You will find that, whilst there are many who accept Christ's work as securing them from coming judgment, yet, if you press upon them the cross of Christ, they shrink from it in great dread. This is what marks professing Christianity in the present day, and I think we are all in danger of being ensnared by it. God has opened out to us an immense amount of truth, but the more we know of truth, and

the more truth we *have*, the more the devil seeks to draw us from it. It is not to be wondered at when a person who does not know the truth presents inconsistencies in life and walk, but it is a serious thing when such are found in one who does. Of such it can be said, as it was of Israel long ago, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.”

In marvellous ways I believe God, in the present day, is calling His people back to Christ's path through this world. It is now a question of abnegating ourselves in every direction. It is, “One thing thou lackest; sell that thou hast; take up the cross, and follow me.” “Oh, I know that scripture very well,” people say; “but what does it *mean*?” Well, to my mind, it is the most solemn utterance that can be.

In Luke xii. we find a similar passage. He first brings in God's care for His people : "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." And, when He has thus secured the allegiance of the heart for God, He says, "Sell that ye have," for only now they can afford to do so.

This young man came to ask the Lord what good thing he could do. He believed man was capable of doing a good thing. He saw in Christ all that was excellent, all that was good in a creature ; for he did not go beyond the fact of what He saw in Him outwardly ; he did not see that He was the Christ of God. He saw the superlative degree of what goodness in man was in Christ ; his thought was, Good Master, you are the best specimen of it that I can find upon earth. He was not like the Philippian

jailer: he did not want to be *saved*, he wanted to do some good thing; he had not got to the end of himself; it was creature excellence that was filling his mind, and he thought he possessed that himself. So the Lord takes him on his own ground, and says, "*One thing thou lackest.*" But to lack that *one thing* was to lack *everything*—it was to lack all that can be conceived.

And this is not a question that touches merely one or another of us, I believe it relates to every one of us. That which the Lord states here should be the moving principle in every one of our souls, based on the knowledge of having found treasure in a new region altogether, so that we can afford to let all here go. I do not know anything more wonderful than to see a person who can afford to turn his back entirely on the

world. Our hands and our feet may be called to do certain work here, but I say, Is your *heart* in it? Your hands may be, and your feet may be, but where is your *heart*? Never was a more solemn instance of it than the one we find here. He *could not* break with it. If it be a question of getting rid of all this in order to be a follower of Christ, then he could not be one.

I have thought lately that we limit that word "covetousness" in a way that scripture does not. What is covetousness? It is the *love of possession*, from the smallest desire that can be conceived to the greatest possible thing. I believe covetousness is a very common thing amongst us. And why? I will tell you. It is because we want something *here*. It is not necessarily money. If I want a place here, a portion here, of any kind, it is

covetousness. So this young man. “ He had great *possessions*,” and they clogged his heart.

We are, most of us, little aware of the moral state of the age in which we live, and perhaps it is well for us that so many of us do not know. I may now say it will be found that the whole drift of what is pressed in the popular books of the present time, and in an attractive way too, is the utter break-down, the practical failure of Christianity in representing the walk of Christ upon earth. And the principle is worked out too in a way that is exceedingly insidious to hearts. The false thing is built up and established by the break-down of the saints of God in walking in Christ’s path upon earth.

As to ourselves, I fear that there has not been a maintenance of the practical thing as a whole, and that is the reason the truth has

such a slight hold of our hearts. We have not *practised* it. How can I go into the battle, said David, with armour that I have not proved? I do feel that the Lord has a special voice to His people on this point; for, if principle and faith do not characterise us, we are the most contemptible people on the earth. With all the truth we have, the more condemned are we if devotedness to Christ is not there. What a path is *Christ's path*! "Follow *me*." I repeat it, What a path! Take up your cross, and follow *Me*. Whom? An outcast! One who was scorned, who was hated, who was despised; who had but a manger at His birth; a cross between two thieves at His death; and a borrowed grave. Followers of *Him*? And then we say, so readily, we love Him. *Love Him*? I shrink from saying it.

Natural respectability, natural amiability, natural loveliness, will not do for Christ. So the disciples are astonished out of measure, and ask, “Who, then, can be saved?” And He Himself answers, “With men it is impossible.” Man would never be in heaven by-and-by, nor follow Christ now, if he were left to himself. Here is presented to us the very best sample that could be found of nature. He ran to Him, he kneeled to Him he called Him “Good Master;” he shewed Him the most perfect respect and appreciation. Surely he was a wonderful specimen of man at his best. But he lacked this “one thing,” and his heart was in his possessions and riches.

Now let us turn for a moment to the other scripture that we have read.

Here we find another “One thing;” and

this is the bright side of it. Thank God there is a bright side to every picture, as well as a dark one. In this Psalm we find in picture the longing desire of a heart that is set free by having tasted in some measure the blessedness of that spot where Christ is.

It is a great thing if any of us can say we have only *one* desire, *one* wish. You know Jacob had only one wish: that he might see Joseph's face, and then he could die. It is a wonderful thing what the power of only one thing in a person's soul is. It is marvellous what a path of light it leads the saint along in this world. I see the beauty of this scripture more and more every day.

But there is a kind of desire that never comes to anything: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." I have known people who had great desires, but who still

never came to anything. There was no bottom, as it were, to the soul, no foundation so to say. There was no saying, I will make this the one simple purpose of my life. I think the reason that we know so little of the Lord is because there is so little purpose to know Him. If a man of the world purposes to have a future here, do you think he dreams his life away? In proportion to the earnestness of his desire to attain his object, is the earnestness of his pursuit of it. Why, it is wonderful what a man of the world will do and suffer to attain the object of his heart. And yet the saint, who has a far higher object set before him, an object passing anything that the natural mind can conceive, is too often found lazy, idle, purposeless in his soul. “*Seek the Lord while he may be found,*” we often say to sinners, but I

believe we ought rather to say it to ourselves. I long to have deeper acquaintance with Him—to *seek* Him. As the Psalmist says, "One thing have I *desired* of the Lord; that will I *seek* after."

Oh, you say, but that is the Old Testament! Well, do we not get anything like it in the New? In one passage which does not take us as high as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, it says, "Seek those things which are above." You are brought into risen blessedness; now seek out the treasures that are your own there.

But you will make souls legal, if you press this, it is said! I can only reply that I do not believe it. And if you call *that* legality, I must say it would do people great good to have a little more of it. I feel that there has been so much of a dreamy kind of

speculation in God's things, so much unreality, so much of what one cannot grasp. But when you come to the plain, practical thing, to the every-day carrying out of the truth, where is it?

Let us look a little at the details of this Psalm.

Of course it is cast in a Jewish mould, as we find in the words, “That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” To “*dwell in the house of the Lord*” is the desire of the soul. Some are quite satisfied with the thought that they shall be in heaven by-and-by. But do I not want to be there *now*! The subjective side, too, is what the apostle prays the Ephesian saints might have; “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;” and here we get

the same thing in picture as it were. I want to dwell in the house of God all the days of my life. I want to dwell there *now*, and to have that as the spot from whence I can come out *now*—that spot on high where I am privileged to dwell with Christ.

And for what, is this desire to dwell there? "*That I may behold the beauty of the Lord.*" Oh, how blessed, to desire to be in heaven for the sake of being *with Christ*! People often say, "How I wish I was delivered out of this scene of trial and difficulty, out of this world of sin and sorrow!" But if you were at home up there now, you would be able to go calmly through all the storms here. You will never know how to live on earth until you have been up there to learn how. I go there to *see* Him, to behold His beauty.

What a charm it is to get even a little sense of this in our souls ! There is such a fearful amount of selfishness in every one of our hearts. We say, “He has paid our debt ; He has made our peace with God.” Yes, truly, but that is not all. It is far more than that—it is boundless riches. When the two disciples of John followed him, asking, “Where dwellest thou ?” He answered, “Come and see.” There was not a word said as to the place. There is not a doubt it was a humble spot, but there is not a word said about it one way or the other. It was *Himself* ; alone with Him, they wanted nothing else. It is wonderful what the company of an intimate friend is amid paths of sorrow ; and that is what we have. We have *His company* as we go through this world. He said, “I will not leave you

orphans; *I will come to you.*" I do not believe that is by the Holy Ghost; nor do I believe that it is only on the first day of the week. I believe it is the special manifestation of Himself that He gives to His people. He is with them, as in Psalm xxiii. It is His company, His presence; this alone can light up everything. I want to behold His *beauty*. That will be our occupation through all eternity. *How* do you think we shall spend eternity? By being for ever with and beholding the matchless beauty of the Christ. Oh, to begin it now! and thus to find all below distanced to us.

But there is more than this; "And to inquire in his temple." I believe the force of these words is given to us in the word *meditation*. One reason why things have such little hold over our hearts is, that we

meditate on them so little. If there is to be any real appropriation of truth, there must be the sitting down quietly in private, and meditating on it. I am sure God does meet His people wonderfully in a little passing verse or line of scripture ; but this is not like meditation ; neither will *study* make up for meditation. It is meditation that forms the affections of the heart.

And now look at what follows. In the next verse there is a touch of the most exceeding blessedness. “ For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.” Now tell me anything comparable to this ! You desire to dwell in the house of God ; trouble comes, and He hides you where you have dwelt ! There is not a word about *me*, or what *I* do ; but *He* hides me. Where ? Where my heart dwelt before !

In some little measure we have witnessed this. We have seen saints going on with God, desiring to learn more of Him, desiring to dwell with Him. Then a stroke of trouble comes, and God hides them, so that they positively pass through, not unfeeling, yet unruffled. There is all the spiritual desire to seek, but when trouble comes there is nothing but quiet repose; then God interferes for us. How many have long had this as the comfort of their soul, that, when their heart makes Christ its object, He makes the trials and difficulties of their life His concern. He does not say you shall not have trouble; but He does say, When it comes I will hide you.

Now these are the two things that were in my heart on which to say a word, for I do feel that we need more to be people of one

object. There is a simplicity, an evenness, an unhindered moving on, in the person who has one object. Do you think it would unfit you for things here? I do not believe it. On the contrary, I believe it would fit you marvellously to be for Christ in everything; for instead of doing it for yourselves, you would do it for Christ. I was shocked the other day by hearing it said of a Christian that he did his business for himself, but his religion had to do with Christ; that he did his business as a man of the world, and his religion as a Christian. But I say there is no Christianity in such a thought or statement as this at all. Once a Christian, always a Christian, and never anything else. Once a follower of Christ, always a follower of Christ, and in everything a follower of Christ.

The Lord, in His grace, give our hearts the simple one desire of the Psalmist: "To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple;" to find a home there of unspeakable blessedness, in glory with Himself, the firstborn amongst many brethren; while, as to the earth and all that is below, that may be true of us which is expressed in the lines—

"We are but strangers here, we do not crave
A home on earth which gave Thee but a grave;
Thy cross has sever'd ties which bound us here,
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere."

This is the real truth. Christ our *treasure* in heaven, and only His cross on earth. The more deeply you search into the subject, the more full you will find it in every way. The glory is the place of our treasure, and

the cross defines our path on earth. May our hearts be encouraged to press on; it is only for a little while; the darkest moment is that immediately preceding the dawning of the day. We have, through His grace, two blessed realities to sustain us here: as a present reality we are the objects of the Father's love even as it rested on Christ; He Himself is the witness to it: “Hast loved them *as* thou hast loved me.” And then, as to the future, we have the bright and blessed hope of being *perfectly like Him*: “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”



“HIS HEART AND HIS HAND.”

NUMBERS XIII. ; JOSHUA XIV.

It is most important to understand the moral condition of Israel at this time; otherwise great difficulty must be experienced in seeking to apprehend why Jehovah permitted Moses to send out spies to search the land of Canaan. A careful study of Deuteronomy will very clearly demonstrate the fact that unbelief on the part of Israel was the *origin* of the mission of the spies, though *allowed* of God, who can work His sovereign will in spite of all; just as the demand for a king afterwards, though Jehovah acceded to it and allowed it, was a

virtual denial of His regal titles and claims over the rebellious nation. There is one important fact which appears to me to place the question of the searching of the land beyond all dispute. In the third chapter of Exodus, where the earliest intimation of His purpose is recorded, there is likewise a description of the character of the land as it existed to His eye—its exceeding goodness, fertility, and beauty are all there delineated and traced. How, then, could it have been possible for God, having cast Israel on the fidelity of His word and promise, to originate that which virtually was a slur upon His veracity and the certainty of His word? No; Jehovah *permitted* it, but never *originated* it.

There is a principle of weighty import in the circumstances which attended the search-

ing of the land. First, observe how the testimony of the spies was but confirmatory of Jehovah's word: “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. . . . And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.” But then, *immediately*, other principles began to work. The goodness of the land was not denied—

how could it, in the presence of the *earnest* before their eyes? But between them where they were and the possession of this goodly land there were difficulties, and these are all mapped out with the accuracy of unbelief: “Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.” And these obstacles and impediments, by occupation with them, obtained such a hold over their hearts, that they were, in their own sight, as well as in the sight of their enemies, but grasshoppers.

Now it is very important to observe how *a sight of the land* tests them ; and, in truth, nothing tests like it. This principle stands true in regard to all God's ways with His people at all times. As soon as ever He discloses His purpose regarding us, His mind and thoughts for the time present, then it is that all the difficulties standing in our way are presented in full array ; and hence it is, at this present time, that those who see what God's great thought is concerning His beloved Son, have difficulties and opposition that all others are strangers to. If any doubt the application of this principle, they have only to study the history of God's testimony on the earth, in order to be certified as to its truth. Who, may I ask, are beset with every kind of opposition at this present time ? Are they

not those who seek to keep the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”? Only give up the truth of Christ’s body on the earth as a *practical* one, and you will be promoted to great honour; stand out as a unit, and you will be let pass. But connect yourself *practically* with the great truth—“There is one body, and one Spirit,” and you are at once subjected to all the opposition of men, and the most malignant hatred of Satan. You are surrounded with difficulties on every side; and if you allow such between you and God, instead of having Him between you and them, your heart will lose confidence, as Israel’s did, and the test will become to you an occasion which Satan will use to turn you away from God, instead of being an opportunity to turn to God. Now observe the consequence of

failing before this test. First, there is *weeping*, next *murmuring*, then *hard thoughts* of God; and lastly, they propose crowning self-will—“Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” Observe how gradual the nature of their declensions—of every declension—is. They had forgotten the living God, and His interest in them as His people; they had preferred the estimate which their foolish hearts had formed of God’s land in the light of the difficulties between them where they were and it; and now the issue is complete—a captain of their own choosing is their resource. This gradual character of all decline is very solemn, and has a special voice, because of the spurious notion that our falls are immediate, or all at once. Not so, beloved reader; like everything else, they have

their beginnings, and hence the solemnity of the words—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

But now let us turn for a moment and look at a bright side of this dark picture. The dismal dreariness of unbelief serves ends we should little fancy. The crisis not only brings out the man of unbelief, it likewise calls to the front the man of faith; and this scene is no exception. Joshua and Caleb, men for a crisis, are equal to the emergency; and their united testimony at this moment is very beautiful—“We are well able to overcome,” is the language of the one, and “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us,” is the testimony of both. That is to say, the *hand* and *heart* of God are the

resources of men of faith in a crisis. Is it not blessed to see a man like Caleb hiding himself behind the power of Jehovah, the arm of God?—so that forgetting the weakness of Israel, and the strength of both giants and walled cities, he rallies, as it were, the broken ranks of his people with these words—"Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are all well able to overcome it," because the right hand of Jehovah's power, which was celebrated on the shores of the Red Sea, as having dashed in pieces the enemy (Ex. xv. 6), was before Caleb's heart and thoughts; he goes back to that wondrous scene in his testimony, and seeks to connect his people thereby with that same Jehovah who always triumphs gloriously.

And their united testimony in chapter

xiv. is not less beautiful. The delight of Jehovah in His Israel—that is, His affections, His heart—is a sufficient plea that He would surely bring them in, thus in the light of this love, this delight of God, they can say, “the Lord is with us.” Oh, what rich resources of faith a *crisis* calls forth! It is very striking to see how it is all that is in God they testify unto. The springs of delight in God’s own heart, motives there entirely apart from the objects of His favour, are wondrous topics for faith to rest on. And hence it is that even the acknowledged difficulties become tributary to His own, “the people of the land are bread for us.” Our God delights in difficulties, to shew how entirely above and beyond them He is. The faith of God’s elect, these crisis men, look upon them as bread! There is

another point of great beauty here. These men of faith are exposed in this crisis to be turned upon by their own—"The congregation bade stone them with stones;" then it is the glory of Jehovah appears, to vindicate the witnesses to the power of His hand and His heart: "The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." Now, ere we pass from this part of our subject to pursue the history of the land possessed, let me point out the immense advantage a saint now has over any of God's people at any previous period, but only to take shame to ourselves that so few of us are crisis men in purpose and heart at this present time.

Most blessed as this testimony of Caleb and Joshua was, as far as they could wit-

ness to the *ability* and *delight* of God to bring His people into possession of what His heart had in store for them, yet what is it if compared with the witness which a saint now can bear to power and love? Who, for instance, in olden times, knew the power of His right hand, in taking the beloved Son out of death, and seating Him in highest glory? How blessed by faith to be spectators of the glory of the Father visiting the grave of Jesus, raising Him up and claiming Him as His own! How blessed to-day to be witnesses, in the power of the indwelling Spirit, to such glory! Truly we are they who are privileged to know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the

heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : And hath put all things under his feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Blessed and wondrous vision this is to occupy faith, the Christ of God, the glorious Man, constituting as His point of departure all those things which are termini with us. Principality, power, dominion, names, are the *extent* to which poor things like us can reach in comprehension ; but when we look at Jesus raised and exalted by the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, we behold Him *departing* only from that which *bounds* our ken. So much for the

power of His hand. If again we think of His heart, His affections, when were they proclaimed or known until the beloved Son, ever in His bosom, disclosed them? Joshua could say, “*If* the Lord delight in us, he will bring us in.” I hesitate not to say that an “*if*” now, in the light of the *cross*, and the *glory*, of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the position of the saint by virtue of union with the beloved Son as man, would be the unbelief which casts a slur on the love which has disclosed itself in such a manner as to secure confidence in itself. “All the Father’s heart made known”—marks the wondrous place into which we have, through His sovereign grace, been introduced.

How it speaks to the heart and moves the affections, the thought that this mar-

vellous love of God (His own peculiar love) has been made known in the sorrows of His own Son, His Lamb! The agonies and the blood of Jesus not only measured the distance of ruined creatures from God. they also measured the affections of God. Is it too much to say so? When you and I, beloved, by faith visit that wondrous scene of sorrow and love, when by faith we see His travail and sorrow, do we not also see the heart of God therein expressed as never before; and we, by virtue of the same agony and blood standing, not only to witness such love, but to adore the source and the channel through which it flowed forth so blessedly to us?

It was a wonderful day for the earth and for Moses, when, in response to the desire of his heart to see His glory, Jehovah

replied—“Thou canst not see my face ; for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock : And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by : And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts : but my face shall not be seen.” Wonderful sight *that* for Moses, hid in a cleft of the rock, and covered by Jehovah’s hand ; but, let me ask, is that the sight He gives His saints now ? Oh, beloved, if the eternal Son of the Father *emptied* Himself to become a man, and as a man *humbled* himself down to those depths of agony and grief, expressing *therein* God in His nature, as well as glorifying Him in meeting every

one of His righteous claims, what could suit either that Son or the Father's heart, save the exaltation of the One in the highest place in heaven, and the manifestation of the other to poor things like us? It was in keeping with Moses that he should but see His back parts; and it was consonant with Jehovah's manifestation of Himself at that time to disclose no more, but *now* His righteousness as well as His love requires the full manifestation of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. I have referred to these facts simply to point out the immense contrast between the testimony of a Caleb or a Joshua, blessed, faithful men though they were, and the witness expected from a saint now.

Let us now look a little at the history of the land *possessed* by the same Caleb whose

testimony is recorded in Joshua xiv. Forty-five years of endurance and faith had intervened between this scripture and the one we have already considered, and Caleb is now an old man of eighty-five years, yet with no mark of decay as regards the energy that characterised him at Kadesh. He had turned about and wandered with his nation for forty years in the wilderness, and that for no fault of his. If Israel were the people of God, let them be ever so bad in themselves, that is sufficient to connect them with the affections of the man of faith. But during those forty years of wilderness toil and trouble, he carried in his heart the beauty of that goodly land which his eyes had for a moment beheld. No protracted period of trial or provocation had prevailed to obliterate from his thoughts or affections

Jehovah's land. It is not difficult to conceive how its richness and beauty lived in his heart, and comforted him many a weary day. How blessed to hear him trace up everything to its source in these words—"And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said these forty and five years." The sense of who He was to whom this aged warrior owed his steadfastness as well as his life, is not absent from his soul. Years only bring out with greater distinctness how completely cast he was upon Jehovah, and how his soul rejoiced in this blessed fact—the Lord was as good as His word.

Again, observe here the unfading nature of *faith*, it never wears a grey hair. Though Caleb was now an old man of eighty-five years, he was as fresh and vigorous, as young and as strong, as at forty. "As yet

I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.” Then he receives his inheritance and his blessing—“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became an inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.” How blessed to think of the spot which the faith of this crisis man

claims and receives! Hebron was the place where David was anointed king (2 Sam. ii. 4). It was a place signalled in many ways. Here it was that Sarah died (Gen. xxiii. 2); here likewise Abner was buried (2 Sam. iii. 32); but in no respect was it so remarkable as in the first-named instance. In this is there not the sweet and blessed picture of that spot where faith alone can fold her wings? The place that faith gets as its inheritance is where God's beloved one is crowned; *there* and there alone it rests, its repose and enchantment are there.

There is one other fact of great beauty in connection with this faithful servant of Jehovah, which I must not pass without notice; it serves to shew how faith's *surroundings* and *associations* are ever of a like nature with itself. We are told in Joshua

xv. how Caleb's walk at home was no exception to his testimony abroad; observe how he seeks to surround himself with associations of a like nature with himself. He will give his daughter to one who is not only worthy of Caleb's daughter, but who is distinguished by the same confidence and faith which made Caleb a crisis man. All this has its voice surely for us, beloved, in these days, when so much of the world, in one way or another, is sought after by those who, by profession at least, declare that they have been crucified to it and it to them.

We have thus examined a little of the history of the searching and possessing of the land of Canaan by these faithful true-hearted witnesses for Jehovah in their day. The Lord grant it may have been with

profit, instruction, and encouragement, too, according to the power of His own Spirit, who loves to communicate the things of God to the children of His love, the heirs of glory.



THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

WE are passing through a period which is very distinctly delineated in Scripture as "perilous times" of "the last days," and for which special instruction is vouchsafed. The rocks and shoals, with which the troubled waters of our time abound, are all divinely marked out for us in that epistle which faith recognises as its special chart in days like these. The fulness and explicit nature of that revelation is most blessed; nothing is overlooked; the difficulties are neither magnified nor diminished; and the power and presence of God are held out to faith as its sufficiency when the darkness is at its height.

We find, in the Second Epistle of Timothy, most full and minute directions as to how the saints are to carry themselves. The path of the true-hearted is through persecution, pressure, and trial; evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. One principle of immense importance is found in chapter ii. 19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having the seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Another is, that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works." (Chap. iii. 16.)

Thus, while there is nothing but failure around, and confusion and evil are on the increase, the resources and provisional care of God are unfolded with a divine precision and accuracy not to be found outside the book of God.

Now it is plain that the servant of the Lord stands in need of peculiar qualities at all times ; indeed nothing that has ever been written or conceived by man could over-rate, or magnify beyond its importance, the servant's place and path. And there never were times in which it was more needful to press that than the present, surrounded as we are by a double fallacy : on the one hand, men taking upon themselves, without any divine right or authority, to make others servants, thereby constituting them servants of men instead of ministers of God.

On the other hand, those who in mercy have escaped this delusion, are themselves as ready to fall into another, and to suppose that every one who is a saint is *ipso facto* a gifted servant or minister of Jesus Christ.

Now it cannot be denied that, if saints are walking with God, He will give them something to do for Him, whereby, in communion with Himself, and by the power of His Spirit, they can serve Him; and in this sense all saints are servants of the Lord, but this in no wise interferes with, or sets aside, the fact, that Christ, ascended on high into glory, gave *distinct* and *special gifts* to His church, enumerated in Ephesians iv. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Now it is the qualities of the one who is called to be a servant of this kind that I am occupied with at this time. I suppose the nature of the day will very greatly indicate the needed graces ; and hence it is, I conclude, that, after the Spirit of God had foretold the storm that was then raging, and would rage with greater fury after the apostle's departure, He also specifies in *detail* certain qualities which would be indispensable in the servant of the Lord, who would in respect to these be tested to the uttermost.

Now this world has been the scene and platform of the perfect service of One who was *the* perfect Servant ; the gospels, and especially that of Mark, record it. There we follow Him, and track His *patient* blessed footprints, passing through the earth a stranger, unnoticed and unknown ; but,

more than that, despised and rejected by Israel, whose Messiah He was, and scorned and hated by poor man whom He came to serve. If we look at Him as Jehovah's servant, how the heart bows down and adores Him: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him; he shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." (Matt. xii. 18, 19.) Oh, what unobtrusive lowliness and meek retirement thus mark Him!

Again, when we consider Him amid the scenes of sorrow, scorn, and hatred, through which His love led Him; His patience, His meekness, His gentleness, silent when accused, and unchanged even when denied by His own, breaking the heart of Peter by the tender look He cast upon him; do you

not wonder and adore in the presence of such qualities, with such demands made upon them by foes and friends? and is it not a satisfaction to your heart to retire from all else, and allow such a Servant as Jesus to fill the vision of your soul?

There is nothing that more marks every one else but Himself, than *unevenness*; He, and He alone, was a stranger to such, not only in His manhood, but in that which is specially before us, His *service*. Who was *faithful* as He? and yet withal *tender* and *patient*. The combination of these qualities in Christ is most blessed; the fine flour mingled with oil shewed itself in His service, as in His nature. With us, alas! observe the contrast. Some are faithful and others are tender. But what God is looking for in these last times is a servant in his measure

after the pattern of His own Son; and hence note that the qualities, or graces, by which the servant of the Lord is to be characterised, according to 2 Timothy ii., are those exactly which shone in perfection in Him who was the perfect Servant as the perfect Man; God, God over all, blessed for ever.

Now observe the qualities which are needed by the servant of the Lord. First of all, full and unhesitating courage and faithfulness. He was to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." If everything has gone, and all have turned away, Christ remains unchanged. What a resource He is at all times, blessed be His name! And what force and power there is in an exhortation of this nature from one who himself could speak of how the Lord stood with

him, and strengthened him, when he was abandoned and forsaken by all.

Also he was to “endure *hardness*,” and not to “*entangle* himself with the affairs of this life.” That is to say, on the one hand he was to accept, in all its parts, the path through the storm and tempest; and, not only that, but he was to be inured to it.

On the other hand, he was to shun and avoid everything of the nature of entanglement. So that we have these three things expected from the servant of the Lord and the minister of Jesus Christ.

First: patient endurance. Second: distinct separation from all that would be incompatible with his service. Third: an ardent desire to answer to the wishes of his Master.

Again : “ If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” That is, he cannot obtain the prize unless he complies with the regulations. Now these regulations insisted upon systematic discipline and training as indispensable qualifications for entering upon the lists; history furnishes us with the particulars of the training which the competitors in the Greek athletic sports underwent; the diet, exercise, fixed hours, and hard life which were endured in order to obtain a corruptible crown. So the servant of the Lord in these days of ease, affluence, and self indulgence, is to practise the very contrary on himself, in order that, according to the will of his Lord, he may exercise his ministry and service.

He was also to be as the husbandman,

“labouring first,” that he might have the first claim to the profits of the produce of his farm.

Then the first part of the exhortation is closed by that magnificent eighth verse : “Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David, raised from among the dead, according to my glad tidings.” How blessed this is to have the heart and thoughts, by the Holy Ghost, thus fixed on that blessed One, that perfect Servant, who, from the manger to the cross, served through suffering, sorrow, shame, contempt, and is now presented to the adoring gaze of faith as “raised from among the dead !”

“ By Thine empty grave we worship,
By Thy cross our hearts we bow ;
All the memories which pursue us
Waken our affections now.

Lord we follow—Thou constrainest,
Step by step, and hour by hour ;
Object of our hearts in glory ;
On the way, our strength and power.”

So far we have looked at the qualities—the indispensable requirements—of the servant of the Lord in perilous times. As yet we have not touched upon the spirit in which these qualities are to be exercised, the tone and the temper in which the faithful servant is to address himself to his work. But it will be readily granted, that, in proportion to a man's courage and faithfulness in a time of general declension and spiritual decay, will be the pressure brought to bear upon his spirit. *Endurance, tenderness, meekness*, will have large demands made upon them ; and standing faithful will expose the servant to those rude blasts

which will only elicit, if they be there, the qualities I have spoken of.

It is not enough to be faithful in dealing with souls; the manner and method of its display surely has its place. The *tone* and *temper* of the servant in the faithful exercise of his gift, surely are important. Very touching are the words of the apostle on this head. "Now I Paul myself, beseech you by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of Christ." Again: "But we were *gentle* among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

No doubt, in days of declension and faithfulness, the true servant must pass through many a sore exercise respecting those whom he seeks to serve, and many a trial and many an anxiety will his heart endure in connection with such; but, while that is fully admitted and felt to the utmost,

it cannot but be felt, that a little more of the tone and temper of 2 Timothy ii. would secure the absence of many a pang which true and faithful hearts have inflicted upon themselves; and some we may have thought to drive, instead of leading and instructing, might have been *won*, when they could not be *coerced*. Alas! there are too many instances of hearts sad and broken amid the corruptions of the age, retarded on their way, whilst they groped about to find a clean path for their weary feet, as well as grieved and stumbled as they sought to walk therein, by the ungracious and unwise methods adopted towards them. “*Feed my lambs;*” “*Shepherd my sheep;*” “*Feed my sheep;*” are the terms of the blessed Lord’s commission to restored Peter. The *shepherd* and the *nurse* are the similitudes

employed by the Holy Ghost, when he would set forth the manner of a servant's fulfilment of his work. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."

If any who read this paper turn away in their mind from what they most likely will regard as common-place truisms, I can only plead as my excuse for introducing the subject here, the great danger of its being *overlooked*.

No doubt the peculiar character of these days makes large demands on the servant; but be the trials ever so many, and disappointments ever so great, nothing can compensate for the absence of such a spirit as is implied in these words: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves."

I might have urged the patient, gracious dealings of the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls Himself, as the type and pattern for those whom He has gifted with a view to the leading and helping of His sheep. Or I might have urged the same blessed tender care of Him who is Head of the church, His body, towards His poor members here. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but *nourisheth* it, and *cherisheth* it, even as the Lord the church"—but I forbear.

One other scripture only will I refer to, namely, Ezekiel xxxiv. 2-6. "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed ;

but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every hill: Yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

And now, beloved reader, ere we part company, may I ask you what place have the church of God and the servants of Christ in your thoughts? in what light do you

regard them? Do you think of them in reference to Christ or to yourself? Do you pray for them? The Lord make His beloved saints and servants more wise, more gracious, more patient in all things, more self-denying and devoted, more uncompromising and whole-hearted in these last evil days.



“DELIVERED UNTO DEATH.”

GEN. xxxii. 24-31 ; 2 COR. xii. 7-10.

THERE appear to me to be in the history of Jacob remarkable instances of the two distinct times that the blessed God consciously conducts a soul into the solitude of His presence. The first is in chapter xviii., when, as a poor wanderer from his father's house, without so much as anything in his possession, he gets the greatest communications from God ; indeed, the only communications that God made to him are in this chapter. God draws near to him. It struck me this morning what a remarkable illustration chapter xxviii. is of the

solitude of which we have been hearing; whilst in chapter xxxii. he is in the second solitude—the one of which so few know anything. In the last the blessed God comes to make good in him what He had communicated to him in the first.

There is surely not one but must feel, that there is in us all too much a cultivation of that principle which thwarts the dearest purpose of God. And, what is more grievous still, when God comes in to help us, we resist Him just as Jacob did. It is a wonderful thing that He *does* come in to help us. I believe that is the meaning of the apostle's words: “We which live always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” In this outward way He gives us help. If there be in

any of our hearts ever so little desire—if it be but *genuine* desire—which has been begotten in us by Himself, He says, I will help you to carry that out. It is a wonderful thing that we can say, Now God is helping me to carry out what I know to be His mind. If you can get that into your thoughts as to things around you—your circumstances—if you can look past them and get the sense of this in your heart: God is helping you practically to get rid of all the things that hinder the bringing out the life of Jesus in you, would it not make much that now seems difficult far plainer to you? As has been just said, we *have* the communications, but how far have they gone down deep into our souls?

Well, it is a blessed thing to know that God has His eye on us for this. There is a

moment when God comes near to the soul. It was night; and Jacob had arranged everything for the morrow with all the skill and ingenuity that characterised him. It was the terrible efficiency of stratagem and plan of which he was the master that characterised Peniel on Jacob's part. God allows him to run to the farthest extreme of what he could do in that way; and then what was most solemn, One whom, with all his planning, he had never reckoned on—One who, so to speak, was out of his thoughts—met him and wrestled with him. As has been often said, this One was the blessed God drawing near to him in his solitude and loneliness, there to bring to an end that principle in him which was hindering the blessing of His servant.

Now let each of us look at our own his-

tory and see where the deficiency lies. It is our *state*—our *condition* individually—we have to look at, because it is our condition individually which makes up our corporate condition. Here, then, the blessed God, the only One who could take interest in and care for such an one as Jacob, draws near that He may wither up in His poor servant all that was hindering His own purpose respecting him. What sight more interesting than this? “There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” It was not Jacob wrestling, but God wrestling with Jacob, and at the same time, with the most exceeding tenderness, sustaining him while He withers up what opposed Him. The proof that this wrestling was effective in accomplishing its object; the proof that Jacob’s soul bowed to the sense that the

One who touched the hollow of his thigh was his Friend; the proof that Jacob's heart entered into the consciousness that the One who was crippling him was the only One who could bless him, is shewn out in this, that he would not let him go. What a sight! this broken man clinging to the One who was withering everything up in him—when the trial was at its height still clinging to Him as the only One who could help him.

If in trial I get my mind filled with the instrument that God is using to thus wither me, I lose the sense, not only of the One who is doing it, but also of the thing that He is doing, and the knowledge that He is really my Friend, because He is putting down the thing in me that hindered, and bringing me into blessing according to His

own heart. But at the same time that there is this severity on that which opposes, there is tenderness unspeakable in the way that He sustains. The Lord give our hearts—for I doubt not there are many here to-day whom He is dealing with in this way, we being all more or less Jacobs—the Lord, I say, give our hearts the sense of this, for it would be a wonderful encouragement to us. He helps us; but when He comes in to help, He must reduce to the silence of death the thing that lifts up itself against Him.

He can do it in many ways; He can do it by those connected with us; He can do it by sorrow; He can do it by bereavement; He can do it by sickness; but He *will* do it. And in this second solitude Jacob is blessed as the Israel of God—as a crippled man.

It is the hollow of his thigh that is touched, and that shrinks. Oh, the hollow of that thigh! It is the energy of the man, it is the strength of the man that hinders; and when that is gone, He gives him the blessing as the Israel of God.

And is not what follows an interesting thing? He adds, “Thou hast power with God and with men.” You can have no power—divine power—but as you get it from God; natural power—what is the good of that? It is a feeble, worthless thing. But you have no divine power with man unless you have power with God. And this is just the point with us. Look at the difficulties that trouble us on every hand. Why cannot we meet them? It is because we have no power with God. And how do I get power with God? It is when I am a

poor crippled thing lying at His feet. When I am there He can bless me, and not leave upon me even so much as the very name by which I was known as skilled in the energy of the man.

Another very interesting point we may notice. When the sun rises Jacob still halts upon this thigh; that is, when the night is past, when the darkness is over, when the wrestling is ended, it is most important, he not only halted whilst the wrestling was going on, but when all was over, and the day was at its height, Jacob was conscious that he was a crippled man.

This halting of his is the only instance of his faith that is spoken of in Hebrews. The feebleness of the man it is that is recorded. “He worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff.” I know that Jacob

passed through further exercises after this, to which Hebrews alludes; yet this was the beginning of all that which eventually reduced him to the state of a cripple before God. He had to cling to God. It is wonderful to see such a man thus clinging to, thus detained by, the One who overcame him. A worshipper is one who is outside everything of himself, and who is engrossed by the One who has cleared the scene to fill it Himself.

I do not refer to Corinthians in the way of connection, but rather in the way of contrast. Another thing that has been spoken of we find here, God not only comes in to help us to reduce to the silence of death that in us which hinders His working after His own heart, *but He keeps it up*. And this is the difficulty to

many of us. I confess honestly that it is not long since I saw it myself; and that is the reason why I speak of it, hoping that it may help others. People say, I understand God coming in, reducing me to nothing, crippling me; but I do not understand His keeping me in this condition. Now Paul is an instance to us of God's thus dealing with us. God dealt with Jacob so that He might lead him, poor planner that he was, into the blessing of His own heart for him. But with Paul the thorn was sent to keep up dependence, and bring out the power of Christ. Every saint, of course, is “a man in Christ;” but every man in Christ is not caught up into the third heaven. It is *that* man who gets the thorn; and he gets it to be a help from God—practically to keep the flesh in death.

It is not merely that God comes in to reduce to the silence of death that active thing in me that hinders His working, but He lets the storm continue to keep up dependence on Himself in my heart. Paul wanted to have it taken away. He besought the Lord Jesus thrice to remove it, but the Lord Jesus answered him, Do you wish me to place you in circumstances where you will not need me? I will place you where I myself will keep you. Paul says, *I accept it*; "*most gladly* will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." That is not, I am resigned, but, I am satisfied.

It is wonderful thus to see how God not only takes away the hindrance, but keeps up dependence, and how our weakness is the very sphere in which He is able to

work. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” I do not know how to speak of it. It is the most wonderful thing you can conceive, the power of that Christ come down and tabernacling in a poor feeble thing that has been crippled by the hand of God. Death has been brought in all its efficacy, and now the power of Christ comes down and tabernacles in me. And I accept it. It is not only that I say there is no need for the storm, for the difficulty. No, I accept the difficulty, I accept the thorn, because it gives Him an opportunity to come down and shew out His strength in my weakness.

Alas, the generality of us are like Jacob. There is the cultivation of that which hinders; and can you wonder, if you cultivate and keep up and minister to the thing

that is in you, that it produces and brings forth the fruit that it does?

And it is no use letting things go, saying nothing about it. If you do not disallow it, you minister to it. He superseded it 1800 years ago. My old man was put out of God's sight in the cross of Christ, and God must subject to death *practically* in me that which He has *judicially* got rid of before Him. He says, I must keep the storm up in order that what is in you may be kept down for my glory and your blessing. We think naturally that everything is against us, but He for us; *God is for us.*

The Lord give us distinctly to see it, for His name's sake. Amen.

“MY EARNEST EXPECTATION.”

PHILIPPIANS i. 23-25 ; iii. 17-21.

MAY I say just one word about this question of the body, in reference to the place that it was intended of God to fill, as the vessel for the display of Christ's power at this present moment.

I would inquire, How far are we intelligently with God in the actings of His grace through our bodies now, and the place that they will have in the day when they shall be changed and made like unto His glorious body? He will shew us, in that day, how He can change and fashion them; but in this day, I think we do not give sufficient

weight to the fact that it is in our body God intends that Christ should now be magnified. We constantly are prone to think that it is only in our minds, our souls, our affections, or what does not shew outside, that Christ's power is to be seen; but that is not at all what we have here.

There is only one other place in the New Testament, as far as I know, where the word here used occurs, and that is in Romans viii. 19. "Earnest expectation." It means, literally, that the thing longed for keeps up expectation until the time is exhausted. The thought is, that one distinct thing is before the soul, and after that I eagerly stretch out my neck. And what is that? That Christ—all that He is in His excellency, fulness, blessedness—should come out in my body: not that it should

come out in my spirit, but that this body, and all that relates to it, and in connection with it, and every circumstance and scene that it belongs to, should be the platform on which Christ should be expressed, in life or death. As has been said, Stephen was the expression of the one, and Paul of the other, because Paul lived on here in this world after he had seen that blessed One in glory; and everything here was distanced by that sight.

The body is that in which all the malignity of Satan has been displayed; it bears the marks of it. Where does all the sickness and weariness around us come from? It came in consequence of sin, and it is expressed in the body. In Mark v. the Lord meets a man possessed of the devil: all the malignity of Satan was expressed in

his condition; but he is made an instance of the delivering power of Christ, and his body becomes the vessel for its display; wonderful Deliverer! The result, then, of this deliverance on him was, that the One who had cleared everything out of the way now filled the whole scene with Himself, and therefore the effect on the man was that he wanted to be with Him. This desire is the simplest and first principle in a soul that has found distinct deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be with the One to whom I owe everything. The apostle says, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.” There was not a single thing now detaining him here. There is no doubt that he was once detained. Jerusalem detained him at one time, but it was not so now. If even the

interests of Christ, and the things of Christ, come in to take the place that Christ Himself should have in the heart, we are not clear to go to Him. I believe many a saint is detained here by the things of Christ, rather than attracted to Himself.

I do not think the coming of the Lord tests us in the same way as this : Am I ready to go to Him now at this moment ? Of course it is a blessed hope, the looking forward to our being all called up together ; but it is an immensely testing thing whether or not I am able to say, There is not a single thing that keeps me back here ; I do desire to depart and be with Christ. We are really only qualified to stay when we are ready to depart. Then Christ is before me, and I am *possessed* by Christ.

It is a wonderful thought that just as

that man had been possessed by Satan—the scene of his mischief and confusion being his poor body—so now he was possessed by Christ. All that Christ's comes out in my body, whether I live or die. There was the intelligent communion of the man's heart in it. I see he is a man who has got intelligence with the mind and thought of God in that which was once the vessel in which Satan displayed his malignity and dislike to Christ.

Ought not I to be exercised as to what my body is witnessing to? I do not think the saints are exercised enough as to this. Just as an illustration, before I pass on, I would mention what may be seen—a poor, weak, feeble creature, tossing to and fro on a bed of pain; and such an one saying, “What use am I? a trial to myself, a

tax to others, no good to anybody." Why, that poor sufferer, with a body full of pain, with everything that would go to make him just the contrary of this by nature, may, by the power of Christ, be so in communion with Him, that his body, instead of being full of murmurings and discontent, displays how the soul is filled with joy and peace, controlled by His presence, and satisfied with Himself. And as you look at this you do not say, What a wonderful creature is there; but, What a Christ is that which can be shewn out in such a poor, weak house of clay as this is!

Every break in the vessel only brings out in it the more, the preciousness of the treasure that is inside; every crack and chink only lets it shine out the more brightly. Paul was not expecting to see

the sun go down in ease and retirement; he was looking out for martyrdom.

The Lord give us to see the place that our bodies have. As I have said, it is not our hearts, or minds, or feelings, that are in question; it is the earthly tabernacle, or tent, this *body* in which He is to be magnified.

And now one word on the third chapter. It is a wonderful thing, and a most sanctifying thing, too, the thought that God has got, in His own presence in glory, the pattern of what He is going to have all His people like. God is working with us morally in different ways, that no one but Christ should be seen in us even now. It is Christ that is filling His eyes and affections always. There is a day coming when He will take these very bodies—which have

been the witnesses of Him in their humiliation in this scene of the terrible hatred of Satan against Christ, and the witnesses, too, of the ruin of the first man—He will take them and transform them into the likeness of His own. Not only will He do that by-and-by, but meanwhile He desires to have you and me intelligently entering into His thought about it—our necks eagerly stretched out after one object—that we might be magnifying Him.



DIVINE AFFECTIONS AND THEIR OBJECT.

THERE are many true and earnest souls at the present time sorely perplexed and tried because of the absence in them of those qualities which they really long for, as suitable to Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. In proportion to their reality, and uprightness of conscience, is their sorrow and perplexity. They have tasted what earth and the things around cannot impart to them, yet it has been but a taste; the longings and yearnings are there unsatisfied, and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. They see a brightness which they do not

possess, a portion which is not theirs. They are like Mary at the tomb; affection unmet is in them; this world is but a grave to them at best; they can tell you with broken heart and weeping eyes, "I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not;" and often they say, "Oh, that I knew where I could find him!"

Now all this imparts to the soul in such a state a perturbation, a disquietude, an unrest, which is very marked;—like the bee in quest of honey, which will inflict its bitterest sting on all who seek to oppose it in its pursuit.

These satisfied affections so longed for, heavenly tastes so very earnestly desired, Christ living (domiciled) in the heart, eternal life exhibited here below—all these, and much more akin to them, are *results, conse-*

quences, effects, not the producing power. I will state presently what that power is.

I need not delay to demonstrate the truth, that produced effects or consequences cannot either create themselves or exist even apart from that which alone can create them. You will generally find that if the mind or thought dwell much on the absence or possession of these things, the soul is correspondingly depressed or elated. It is surely good to be convicted, but dwelling much on our shortness of stature in divine fellowship, or on our leanness in realisation, leads to self-occupation of a very insidious nature; and what comfort can there be in seeing certain qualities and joys which we know we ought to possess, but which we have not? This is to us really what Pisgah was to Moses—sight without possession;

and hence in a manner we are tantalised and chafed in spirit.

Let me try to state simply, as far as I know it myself, that which alone can awaken, sustain, and satisfy divine affections in the soul.

1. There must be an *object*, as the spring or source, sustainment, and satisfaction of them; hence these affections which rise, live, and set in this object must be of the same nature with it. Christ is the object, and the affections He alone awakens, sustains, and satisfies must be divine.

2. There must be, through faith, conscious union by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to Christ our object, the glorified Man at the right hand of God. Wonderful, blessed fact; we are united to Him in glory! It is accepted in faith; and in

the measure of our faith is our realisation, communion, and joy.

3. He to whom we are united is in glory; and the whole glory of God, that is God's satisfaction according to His attributes, shines in His blessed face! It is from thence every ray of light that has reached us has shone. It is there we by faith *see* Him, *know* Him, *have intercourse* with Him.

In having to do with the Lord Jesus, it must be where He is; then, as it is so, as He Himself in glory engages and engrosses the soul, the affections, tastes, desires so ardently *longed* for are produced in us, and satisfied too.

This is all most important to bear in mind, because there is often a great deal of beholding afar off, a great deal of mere admi-

ration without its being untrue ; the view from Pisgah captivating the heart, the land that Jehovah our God cares for, and on which His eyes continually rest, viewed but not entered or dwelt in ; seen in such a way as to spoil all else, but to give nothing better in actual possession. Such display dissatisfaction and disappointment at every turn of their path ; they have no moral superiority or power.

Nor would this, in any way, exclude that diligence and purpose of heart which there must ever be on our part most surely, yet not in any wise in the direction of what is produced in us, as if we could secure these, but that diligence and purpose of heart which is expressed in the words “looked up steadfastly into heaven ;” for it is as we are detained by Christ Himself in glory,

that those fruits are imparted to us which are seen and observed by men. Again I repeat it, nothing can produce results corresponding to heaven, but occupation with Christ who is there. We are transformed into His image, I mean in our measure *here*, as we are impressed by Him *there*. Oh, the glory of His grace that shines into us, as Himself, the beloved of the Father, fills the entire vision of the soul, thus shaping and forming us in moral assimilation to Himself.

Thus, too, it is that the heart is secured against the danger of valuing the occupation because of the effect and consequences seen in others as resulting from it, rather than for the joy and satisfaction of being in the company of Christ. Not that any true saint would desire to allow the thought, yet we

know ourselves but little if we have but little fear in this direction ; and be assured of it, when the *effects* of having to do with Christ are prominent in the soul, Christ is valued rather in relation to these than for what He is in Himself, and His company is not sought or kept because of the simple satisfaction of being with Him.

With us it ought to be Canaan *first* and then the lessons of the wilderness. These have a very different character when this is the order. Yet I am assured it is the divine order for us. Working to heaven, and living *from heaven*, are two very different conditions of soul. It is true we are going on to heaven through the wilderness, and yet it is also true that we have started from it ; and this does not make the wilderness of this world less the wilderness than it is ; but

if we traversing it as from glory, all about it would be gilded, the clear and blessed light of heaven would soften the hardness and cheer the dreariness of its wilds.

It was after Moses had been in the mount with God that his face shone; the effects were witnessed by Israel when he descended from the mount. Stephen, we are told, being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven. He saw Jesus in the glory of God; he saw that which no man before him was competent to look at—the glory of God; and he saw in that glory Him who was scorned, hated, and rejected by man on this earth. Wonderful sight to faith! It had been no new thing for the heavens to open on the earth when there was One there who was worthy; but He had died out of it, and the heavens were

closed as it were ; they did not open to look down upon the earth, nor did they open for any one on earth to look into them. But now the heavens open to Stephen, and he, by the Holy Ghost, looks up, and sees Jesus in the glory of God ; and in the power of that sight which was food and strength to his soul, he bears his testimony, seals it with his blood, and follows Christ even to death.

If we look at Paul, it is the same heavenly story. (Phil. iii.) The Man in glory had formed in the vessel the affections and tastes suited to Himself, but He had also satisfied those affections. Thirty years of continuous trial and unceasing labour had passed between the day that Jesus in glory met him on the road to Damascus and the time the Epistle to the Philippians was

written; the dungeon of Nero might exclude the natural sun, but the light from heaven, above its brightness, shone as brightly as ever, and the only change in Paul is that *now* he counts all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Even in the things of time and sense, it would not be possible to overrate the power of an object; how much more when that object is the eternal Son of the Father, the glorified One!

Do we really know that we are one with Him in glory? Do we seek His company for the simple satisfaction of being with Him? Remember, you can never be for Christ in any little measure, save as you know, possess, and dwell with Him in heaven.

There cannot be too much purpose of heart, too great fixedness of gaze as we look up stedfastly into heaven; yet these are neither the object of the heart, nor do they produce or promote likeness to Him. Christ, and Christ alone, is the object. The Holy Ghost, by whom we are one with Him, occupies the soul with Him, and the effect is seen by those around in the quiet restful superiority with which all our path here is trodden. We see it in Paul; we see the race of a heavenly man—goal, prize and mark before him: he presses on; he stands fast when no one stood by him, but all forsook him; amid general weakness and abounding declension, he pursues his onward upward advance. He can “rejoice in the Lord greatly” amid sorrow upon sorrow; he can be careful for nothing amid

ceaseless anxieties and disquietudes, casting them on Him who can bear them, and not feel their weight, and receiving instead the peace of God which passeth every understanding; he can let things go here because he possesses an eternal portion in Christ in that place where He is, who "is at hand;" he can occupy his heart with what is good amid abounding evil, and find the God of peace with him; he can be abased and yet not disheartened, can abound and yet be not elated; because Christ is his sufficiency in the dark day, and better than the best in the bright day. Nothing is able to stand before the heavenly man all the days of his life; nothing daunts him; seated on the power of Christ, he can do all things; though he has nothing, yet he possesses all; though empty, yet he is full; he has a

source, supply, measure, and channel equal to the heart of God, hence he can say, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Such, then, are the sources, maintenance, and satisfaction of those divine affections and yearnings which never can exist apart from their object, Christ, the glorified One at God's right hand. May the Lord, by His Spirit, so turn and keep the faith of His beloved saints fixed there, that in them may be witnessed at this present time a more quiet, restful, and satisfied course through this present evil world, for His own name's sake.



THE ENSNARING EFFECTS OF THE VISIBLE.

It is solemn to reflect, in this day, on how the *visible* and the *human* are being used to supplant the *invisible* and the *spiritual*. Every art of the enemy, his profound skill and dexterity, his many-sided and deeply laid plots, are all in requisition at this moment to destroy, if it were possible, and in any case, alas! to deteriorate and tarnish, every testimony to the reality and power of things not seen.

It is very instructive to note how, even in days when "sight" and "nature" were the ground on which man walked before God, as tested and proved by Him, God

had His own independent witnesses to the only path suited to Himself in a world where everything is in revolt, and manifesting the consequences of departure from God. *Faith* not sight, is that great principle, as we find from Hebrews xi. ; and this line of life and power was maintained by these worthies amid trials and sorrows of no ordinary kind.

The earliest departure from this divine path of faith is recorded in Genesis xii., in the very same scripture which tells us of the call of Abram “*out*” from country, kindred, and father’s house. Set free by “death” (see Acts vii. 2–4), “glory” had its full weight with Abram; and very blessedly did he rise and go forth from every visible thing as expressed by country, kindred, and father’s house, “into a place

which he should afterward receive for an inheritance not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise : for he looketh for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. xi. 8-10.)

As thus brought forward by glory and death, to walk the invisible path of faith, the visible for a time ensnares him. The famine, that was seen, took a firmer hold upon him than the "God of glory," who appeared to him in Mesopotamia, and afterwards when he was in the land of Canaan. Being thus deceived he sought for help in Egypt, and *found Hagar* ! which "answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bon-

dage with her children." (Gal. iv. 25.) Note well, in this scripture, the contrast between "*Jerusalem which now is,*" and "*Jerusalem which is above.*"

Another instance of the seductive power of the visible, is recorded in Genesis xlviii. Most blessed is it to see faith, the invisible power, triumphing in Jacob over all that marked his previous checkered history, as we behold him rising superior to nature and its claims, when he laid his hands on the head of Ephraim, the younger of Joseph's two sons "*guiding his hands wittingly;*" yet equally distinct is the snare of the visible, seen in Joseph's displeasure and dissatisfaction thus expressed: "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head."

There is likewise a very solemn coincid-

ence between this break-down of faith in Joseph, when being invested with the forfeited portion of Reuben (1 Chron. v.), and the actings of the same Reuben afterwards in Israel's history, when, in conjunction with Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, he erected "a great altar *to see to.*" (Joshua xxii. 10.) But of this more further on.

How blessed and encouraging to see in the last moments of the patriarch on which we are dwelling, the fruit of the patient, gracious ways of God with him! How cheering to see a man whose *sight* and *sense* controlled in no ordinary degree, now in faith the witness for God, intelligent, subdued, and elevated: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." And equally comfort-

ing is it to hear one who was continually contravening the ways of God by the visible and natural, thus accept death for himself upon it all: "*Behold I die; but God shall be with you.*"

Another striking instance of the perverting power of the visible is presented in Moses, when called of God to be the deliverer of Israel. Solemn it is to reflect on what little stay his soul derived from the promised "*Certainly I will be with thee,*" of the "*I am that I am.*" (Ex. iii.) Observe how the absence of the visible and the human, "*I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue,*" are his pleading to be excused; and this in the presence of the most marked display of the *superhuman*. (See chap. iv.

2-7.) This was not that faith which characterised him at the first, when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Then the visible was of no account to him; but he has drooped in soul, as it were, since then, and now, as Abraham went into Egypt for help and got Hagar there, so Moses turns to the same quarter and gets Aaron, his trial and affliction afterwards. Very solemn it is to contemplate how this same Aaron, given to Moses in the day when he craved for the outward and the visible, as we have seen, was the very man who ministered to the people in their idolatrous craving after the visible, when they "*saw* that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount" (Ex. xxxii. 1); and the same Aaron of whom it is said, with respect to the molten calf which he himself had made,

“and when Aaron *saw* it, he built an altar before it.”

In the same manner afterwards, in their history in the wilderness, did they crave for “a captain” (Num. xiv. 4), in order that they might return into Egypt, where Abraham went in the famine, and where alas! many a child of God now turns in like circumstances, in order to find some visible countenance or support. Both “calf” and “captain,” the one made and the other desired, are but the ensnaring meshes of the visible and human. We know that “these things were our examples,” that is, types (τύποι). (1 Cor. x. 6.) The Lord give us to study them, and take it to heart, as to how far we, as His saints to-day, have not dropped down a thousand-fold more than they, into the perverting line of sight and nature.

It is very solemn to note the *moral* order in which the apostle in the above scripture, refers to the circumstances in Israel's history, on some of which we have been dwelling. The spring of all was the insufficiency of the unseen, the craving for the visible; then, having obtained the lusted-after object, it becomes their idol; next follows unholy alliance with Moab (fornication); and lastly, the captain is desired, as the calf had been made. This moral, not historical, order is very solemn, as setting forth the course of the professing church of God up to Laodicea, which is the great boaster of the visible (Rev. iii. 17), and which, when full blown, will be spued out, and then carried by the beast—Satan's great visible power on earth. (Rev. xvii. 7.)

But we must turn to Israel's history in

the land for a little, to see how this terrible principle ensnared them in all their course. Alas, even when they were in *type* a dead and risen people (across Jordan), and in the land of Canaan, their first failure was from this very principle we are considering. First, observe what a testimony Jehovah gave to His thoughts and ways, in the manner in which Jericho was surrounded and captured. There was the entire absence of any visible display in power, but there was to be that which is the invariable concomitant of real power, namely noiseless equanimity. (Joshua vi. 10.)

Has not all this its own special voice for His saints of this day, who professedly occupy the ground on which Israel stood typically when in Canaan? Has it not a double voice as well? Does it not distinctly

tell us what the mind and thoughts of the Lord are, as to the real power of that which is *invisible* and *supernatural*? But does it not also very clearly indicate our true place as across Jordan, namely, *that we are dead men*, and helpless in every human point of view? The Lord give us to ponder the weighty instruction which is here conveyed to faith.

Now the very next chapter is the record of how the visible ensnares, for we read of Achan making confession of his sin in these words: "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and *took* them." (Joshua vii. 21.) How solemn the rise, progress, and issue of the bewitching effects of the visible!

We will turn now to another striking exemplification of our subject: it is supplied to us in the history of Reuben's great altar, "TO SEE TO." (Joshua xxii. 10.) This act of the two and a half tribes was in perfect moral accord with the position they had taken. That position is thus sorrowfully expressed, "*Bring us not over Jordan.*" (Num. xxxii. 5.) They were under the power of the visible, they possessed "a very great multitude of cattle." What could be more *natural* than that they should seek the spot most suitable to their circumstances? And if in that day there were to be found men of such narrow and extreme thoughts as to press the fact that the other side of Jordan was the true possession of God's Israel, and that taking it this side, or looking for it this side, is abandoning the call

and purpose of God, how would not Reuben and his associates resent all such visionary and transcendental notions as these? And is it not Satan's great object in this day as in that day, to hinder the people of God, and keep them out of their true and rich blessing, by despising and scorning the unseen land beyond the river, and presenting some visible Jazer and Gilead instead? May the Lord give to His saints in this time of sifting, the wing of faith to rise beyond the snares and nets abounding in the land of sight!

But mark the beginning of this great altar. We read: "When THEY SAW the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that behold, the place was a place for cattle." It was the same principle exactly that operated in Lot, who "lifted up his eyes,

and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." (Gen. xiii. 10.) The sight-principle confounds the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt. Just think of these two put together: "Egypt," and "the garden of the Lord!" What a contrast! The one is *above* and *unseen*; the other is *below* and *visible*. Jordan separates them. And alas! there are not a few to-day who have lifted up their eyes like Lot, and like Reuben, and *seen* well-watered plains and places for cattle, and are settling down, or are settled down, on *this side of Jordan*. It is thus evident that there can be no security whatever from the ensnaring effects of the

things seen, save as the soul is consciously kept in the light of what is unseen; and that cannot be, if *the other side of Jordan* is abandoned, as the only sphere for faith to rest in.

Thus to return to this history of the two and a half tribes, we find that their "*great altar to see to*" was in perfect keeping with their choice of what they had seen *this side Jordan*; it was a craving after the visible. It was a subtle wile too. They did not mean or intend to abandon the worship of the God of Israel; but having made a false choice in settling down in Jazer and Gilead, their human expedient is the erection of the great altar to see to, something *visibly* great, somewhat that appealed to the eye; an attempt in reality to bring God to man's ground, instead of man to God's. How

solemn! It is not necessary to pursue the history further, or to point out how the other tribes resented this act of Reuben. My one object in dwelling on it so far, has been to point out the principle involved, and how deceiving and ensnaring the visible is.

It is very instructive also to observe how, in the close of Joshua (chap. xxiii.), the people are warned in the most solemn way against the inevitable consequences of being ensnared by *visible worship* (ver. 7), and *association in a natural way* (that is, yielding to *what is seen*) with the people of the world (ver. 12); and this is precisely what came to pass. How solemn! They were in the *true standing*, yet incompetent to maintain it. Then in chapter xxiv.; it is the same line of the most solemn prophetic exhorta-

tions. They had been worshippers of the visible (idolaters), and the snare would be to return to it. All being finished, Joshua "took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; *for it hath heard* all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us."

I shall now turn to one more instance of the power of the visible and its consequences upon Israel, and that is, the way in which it acted upon them so as to hinder the observance of the Sabbatical year. In this instance it is all the more remarkable and solemn how the visible turned them aside, inasmuch as there was a special provision made by Jehovah to meet the case.

(See Lev. xxv. 20, 21.) The desire of His heart was that the land should keep a sabbath unto the Lord: "The seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord." Nothing could be more distinct, or beautiful in its import and typical bearings. Did Israel observe and cleave to the mind of Jehovah as to this? Observe the solemn warning of chapter xxvi. 43: "The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them;" as well as verses 33, 34: "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and

enjoy her sabbaths." Such were the prophetic warnings which follow immediately the ordinance of Jehovah as to the sabbatical year, yet how lost upon the nation, ruled by the visible, as it is clear they were, in refusing to keep it! In vain, as far as they were concerned, did Jehovah promise, "I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth *fruit for three years*. (Chap. xxv. 21.) The visible work of man's hands, their *sowing* and *reaping*, was greater and better to them than His blessing. Thus they lost their highest favour, and 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 20, 21 records the execution of the predicted sentence in those solemn words: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him [the king of the Chal-

dees] and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths*; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." How solemn all this; yet how blessed to see that when they were in Babylon and all visible means of help gone from them, and entirely in the hands of their oppressors, then those, who were really faithful to the Lord, found out where alone their real resources were—even in God Himself.

May His saints to-day have grace to ponder and weigh in His presence, the weighty lessons which the history affords, that, amid the increasing tendency to turn away from the line of life and faith, grace may either

preserve or recover a true remnant for the Lord, broken-hearted ones who, amid sorrow and pressure, cleave to Himself, whom, having *not seen*, they still love.

