

MEDITATIONS
ON
THE BOOK OF RUTH.

By C. McK

“Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy
sight O Lord.”—(PSALMS XIX. 14.)

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INTRODUCTION

DEAR READER,

I have not aimed at giving an interpretation, or anything in the nature of an exposition of the book of Ruth, in these Meditations, but simply to apply the principles that run through the narrative in a practical way, which I hope may be blessed by the Lord in attracting souls to Himself, and awakening us all to a sense of our responsibility before Him.

May the Lord in His grace be pleased by His Spirit to bless these meditations to those who read them, and may He also erase from their mind any expression which is not pleasing to Him.

C. McK.

MEDITATIONS ON RUTH.

CHAPTER I.

ELIMELECH AND HIS FAMILY ON THE DOWNWARD PATH.

IT is very blessed to know that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. iii. 16.) The entrance of its precious truths "giveth light" and maketh wise unto salvation (Ps. cxix. 130), while all through the sacred volume there are useful lessons for our practical walk down here.

In the book of Ruth, which we have chosen for our meditation, the Holy Ghost has brought to light rich mines of precious truths, gems which shine through the vista of time with comforting rays to our souls.

It brings before us bright gleams of the wonders of God's providence amid the civil and moral confusion of Israel, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges xxi. 25); gleams which found their way into the distant land of Moab, into the dwelling of Naomi, who years before had been led away by her husband, when he tried to escape the searching judgments of God in the land of Israel, and went to sojourn with his family in Moab, that they might have bread.

But far off, or near at hand, God deals with us in His own way, "and none can stay his hand." As an instance of this we have singled out the

history given by the Holy Ghost of this family choosing their own way, and suffering the distressing consequences of it.

Elimelech, the head of this family, purposed in his heart to leave God's people, and all the sweet associations connected with the place where God had set His name, that he might go forth to a strange land to dwell among strange people, who knew not God, nor thought upon His name. He did this rather than endure the chastening of the Lord in the land of promise. Led away by "the wandering of the desire" he found his anticipated joy become unmitigated sorrow, and nothing left but "vanity and vexation of spirit." (Eccles. vi. 9.)

God dealt with Elimelech in this way by death, and took him away. So let us be warned and seek not to avoid the chastening of the Lord, but rather let us be exercised thereby, that we may bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." (Heb. xii. 11.)

He tried to flee from the discipline of God, and he fell into Satan's snare; "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him." (Amos v. 19.)

Elimelech is unquestionably brought before us as a proof that all those who act wilfully must eventually reap that which they have sown. He had turned away from the fountain of life, and found the cup which he had mingled one of death, unhappy death. Beware then, for the desire of the Spirit is "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 10.)

Elimelech went not to sojourn in the land of Moab that his family might grow in the knowledge of God, neither has the backslider indulged in the ways and habits of the world to magnify the Lord, but to satisfy his own natural desires.

Elimelech thought he could improve his circumstances by leaving God's ground, and choosing for himself a place where he might sojourn. And too often, like him, we cannot see afar off, when the eye of faith gets dim, and we come down from God's place of blessing in spirit and practice to occupy our finite minds with that which concerns our earthly pilgrimage, forgetting that we cannot see one step before us, while God our Father sees the end from the beginning; and He is desirous that we should think first of those eternal realities which concern His glory, while He condescends to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 19.)

Oh! then may we learn of Christ to be "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29) that we may have that deep abiding rest which characterized Him, for He is our example that we should follow in His steps. (1 Peter ii. 21.) "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. xvi. 25.)

Many like Elimelech choose their own way, and like him they will prove the truth of that word: "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." (Ps. xvi. 4.)

So it was with Abram. (Gen. xii. 10.) A famine being in the Land of Promise, Abram thought it best to seek food in Egypt (type of the world), hence distrusts Jchovah, and goes down to that country. Like many others, he soon

finds out his mistake. God, however, interposes in grace and leads him back. (Gen. xiii. 1.)

So also with Jonah, who seeks (Jonah i. ii.) (vain hope!) to flee from the presence of God, takes ship to Tarshish. God meets him at every step, and eventually restores him to a sense of what is becoming a servant of God.

Little do we apprehend the danger of taking the first false step, and the consequences which are thereby involved, for we dishonour the Lord, and expose our loved ones to the snares and temptations of Satan ; as we read Elimelech's two sons took to themselves wives of the women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth by name, and Mahlon and Chilion died ; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. (Ruth i. 4, 5.)

The solemn warning given here is surely sufficient to hinder any believer taking a step for which there can be no excuse. We might pity the unhappy sons of Elimelech, led on by a parent's hand in the way of temptation until they were taken in the snare of the fowler, from which physical death only could deliver ; for they were forbidden by the word of the Lord to intermarry with those of the surrounding nations, and, true to His word, He cut them off suddenly. (Deut. vii. 3, 4.) As in the past, so in the present, God's word still warns the believer that alliance (2 Cor. vi. 14-18) with unbelievers will not go unpunished ; the certain judgment which follows such a step may not be executed in a moment, but the reaping time will come ; a harvest of thorns and briars will spring up, and transgressors will prove how grievous is the snare in which they are taken.

It is the height of folly to suppose that we can

walk in communion with God, and at the same time set at nought His counsel. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. vi. 7.)

But such is the marvellous grace of God manifested toward us, that the trials of others, and the painful experience which our wilfulness brings upon ourselves, are used by Him to restore us to communion with Himself; for the chastening of the Lord is for our profit, and by it we get the circumcised ear and heart, so that our conscience is reached, and we are led to cry out to Him who is "able to save to the uttermost." (Heb. vii. 23.) See as an illustration 1 Samuel xxx. 6.

We may be half dead, lying by the wayside, stripped of everything, but the Lord comes in by His word and Spirit. He binds up our wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and sets us on His own beast, and brings us to an inn, and leaves an all-sufficiency for us in His word till He comes again. Thus restored and refreshed we can say of Him, My Beloved is mine, and I am His, He is the chiefest among ten thousand. Yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend. (Solomon's Song v. 10, 16.)

What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits? We shall shew forth His virtues for He has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Peter ii. 9.) How can we do this? By learning of Him to be meek and lowly in heart, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope, the blessed hope of seeing Him as He is, and of being like Him for ever.



CHAPTER II.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY, OR THE RETURN
OF A BACKSLIDER.

WE have seen Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion cut down under the withering blast of God's displeasure, leaving Naomi a widow with both her daughters in law. Sad indeed must have been the thoughts of Naomi, as she awoke out of her long sleep of ten years among the dead, dead inasmuch as they had no knowledge of the true God, the source of eternal life, for they bowed down to Chemosh, the abomination of Moab; "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment." (Rom. i. 28.)

Such were the companions of Naomi as she found her sorrows multiplied, her husband cut off, the two sons of her youth taken away, and herself the only one left of that family who ten years before went out of their own country to a strange land, where "strangers devoured their strength, and they knew it not; and they did not return unto the Lord, nor seek him." (Hosea vii. 8, 10.) So God took them away and spared Naomi, and caused her to arise and return, "for she had heard in the country of Moab how the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." (Ruth i. 6.)

Backsliding soul, have you not heard the voice of the Son of God saying, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven"? (John vi. 32, 33.) And was it not by

eating of that bread that you found life in your soul? Have you not said of Him, as Peter did, "Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"? (John vi. 68, 69.) And yet you have turned away from Him, while God says the "backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." (Prov. xiv. 14.) And you shall find, like Naomi, that "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." (Jer. ii. 19.)

Oh! weary, wandering soul, will you bow to the authority of God's word? Will you allow the Lord in His wondrous grace to wash your feet? If you desire to be restored to the ineffable joy of communion with Him, then confess your backslidings to the Lord. He is waiting to be gracious, He is longing to have you by His side in conscious communion with Himself, and you shall know His faithfulness, "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. i. 8.) You have already lost much precious time, which we are to redeem "because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. v. 16, 17.) An exhortation which is specially suited to you, seeing you have by your backsliding "become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of

use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 12, 14.) As the Apostle Paul exhorted, admonished, and commended the saints at Troas: "To God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32); may the desire of our hearts ever be to "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. iv. 1, 2.)

As Naomi, aroused and awakened, "Went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah" (Ruth i. 7), so may every poor backsliding soul be led to arise and confess the sin and the shame of having turned away from the grace of God that draws our hearts out to His Son, whom He hath given, "That we might live through him." (1 John iv. 9); that we might in spirit and in truth "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 14.) So Naomi went forth in faith, believing the gracious message which she heard. And as she communicated the good news to her daughters in law they arose and went with her. How far they went is not important for us to know; but we have reason to think that as they journeyed Naomi thought of her own reputation as a mother in Israel in connection with her companions, her daughters in law, both women of Moab, who had dealt kindly with the dead, and with her in her backslidings; but they were those of whom the Lord had declared "A

Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." (Deut. xxiii. 3.)

"Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me." (Ver. 8.)

How many souls have been turned away falsely from the Lord, by the use of His precious name, under the guise of kindness, under the plea of truth, by the mistaken zeal of their friends for their worldly advancement and carnal enjoyment, so that good words and fair speeches deceived them! (Rom. xvi. 18.) It becomes us who are the Lord's, in a day of widespread profession, to be watchful, as our words and actions will either hinder or help those around us. Let us beware lest we allow the working of the flesh in ourselves or encourage it in our friends, knowing that if we serve Christ in these things we shall be acceptable to God, and approved of men. (Rom. xiv. 18.) For the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. xiv. 17.)

Naomi pleaded earnestly with her daughters in law to return, as she said: "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept." (Ver. 9.)

How many are blinded by the god of this world, so as to deceive themselves and others by asking the Lord to grant rest to their loved ones in the place where themselves only found death and darkness! Naomi urged them to return to the land which the Lord declared

should be a perpetual desolation, as it is to this day. (Zeph. ii. 9.) And we know that the same word declares, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And yet we encourage the love of the world, by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John ii. 15-17.) Then let us be persuaded by the word of God that the best way to serve our friends is to exhort them to love not the world nor the things of the world, but rather beseech them to flee to the refuge, that they may be waiting with us for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. i. 10.)

When those around us are desirous of coming out boldly on the Lord's side, let us not kiss and deceive them by intreating them to return and find rest in that which we know can never give them rest.

It is well to test them to prove their sincerity, to get them to count the cost, to see that their conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. 14), but do not discourage them with dark forebodings by the way. As you speak of the night of sorrow tell them of the morning of joy. As you speak of the reproach outside the camp, tell them of the glories inside the veil, for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and

our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Titus ii. 11-13.) Being thus instructed by the Spirit of God, they will be able to endure temptation, that when they are tried they may receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him. (James i. 12.)

They are saying to us, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." (Ver. 10.) Are you saying, like Naomi, "Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also to-night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." (Vers. 12, 13.)

Poor misguided Naomi, with her eye fixed upon herself, set before her daughters in law only the things of this life. It requires faith to see the bright and blessed prospect in the future, and not faith in ourselves or our circumstances, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim. vi. 17), for "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. xv. 19.)

Are you, like Naomi, saying that it grieves you much that the Lord has not prospered you in your worldly calling, instead of thanking Him that He has come in and delivered you from that which has proved a snare to so many.

Have we failed in this? Then let us acknowledge at once the goodness of God in dealing with us as He does in marvellous love, removing from our path those snares

and traps so artfully laid for our feet, and causing us to be watchful in the midst of evil that we, as His children, should humble ourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. (1 Peter v. 6.) For "God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." (James ii. 5.) Let us not be like Naomi, but let us rather imitate Moses, who said to Hobab: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." (Num. x. 29.) They may say, like Hobab, "I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred." (Num. x. 30.) If they do so, you are free, and their blood shall be on their own head.

"Yet thousands make the wretched choice,
They rather starve than come."

Of Naomi and Ruth we find, "And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her." (Ver. 14.) Orpah, without faith, counted the cost and went back. The testing-time of her life had come, and she had failed; the moment for decision had arrived and she passed through it, and, with the greatest profession of love, she turns back and is lost for ever.

Ah the bitter wail which will rise up from the heart of any who, like her, have despised the day of God's grace and long suffering towards them, when they shall find themselves

in that place of everlasting torment, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Matt. xxv. 41 ; Mark ix. 44, 48.)

Naomi said to Ruth, "Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law." (Ver. 15.) Such is the pleading of a perverted soul, or the type of a half-hearted believer. Oh, Lord, do Thou in thy marvellous love keep us from this spirit of backsliding, lest we also fall after the same manner of unbelief, and point to those who have gone back as a reason why others should follow, instead of acting in Thine own blessed Spirit, and saying to those connected with us, "Will ye also go away?" (John vi. 67.) For the unsaved to turn away from the only "Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12), is to mock God and despise His grace and to expose themselves to an eternal curse. Who can escape if they neglect so great salvation? (Heb. ii. 3.) For those who have turned away have done despite unto the Spirit of grace. (Heb. x. 29.) The saved as well as the unsaved shall acknowledge the righteous judgment of the Son of man when He shall say to the impenitent, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.)



CHAPTER III.

THE TESTING TIME OF RUTH SUSTAINED BY
FAITH IN GOD.

POOR ORPAH went back to her people, but they could not instruct her; to her gods, but they could not save her. You ask why did she act thus? Because she received not the grace of God into her heart, but acted on what Naomi said, and when she failed, Orpah had none to lean on; no unfailing One to trust, and she deliberately chooses her own country. May her choice be a warning to all those who would rest their faith on the stability of the most devoted servant of God, much less on the steadfastness of the unrestored backslider. Let us rest only on Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever (Heb. xiii. 8.); and we shall have no cause to be ashamed of Him or of His word, "Which liveth and abideth for ever." (I Peter i. 23.) But shame and confusion of face will be the portion of all who rest their faith on anyone short of Him, as we have an humbling example in the subject before us.

Orpah heard the good news as well as Ruth, but she received it as the word of Naomi, while Ruth heard it as a message from God, and she was able to act in faith.

May God in His grace so use the meditation thereon, as to warn the careless, and to encourage those who endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. (Heb. xi. 27.)

As servants of God we shall have to mourn over such heartless cases as Orpah's, but let us

be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. (2 Peter iii. 14, 15.) And so beseech our friends in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. v. 20.) Otherwise we act in the spirit of Naomi, and so exert our influence to turn them aside, to prevent them as sinners or backsliders coming to the Saviour.

Oh, let us pray to God and our Father for the needed grace to walk here before men, as becomes those that are His, bearing up our loved ones in earnest prayer before Him, lest through our unfaithfulness any of them should seem to come short.

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ver. 16.) We have here in type an earnest soul, one fully set upon following the Lord. And our hearts are refreshed as we see Ruth enduring the trial of her faith.

Happy follower, if you are as devoted to your Lord as Ruth was to Naomi, so taken up with Him where He is as to be determined not to know anything down here "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2); knowing no man after the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16), but "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (Rom. vi. 6-10.)

Ruth said, "Where thou diest, will I die, and

there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ver. 17.) And we may say, as those born of God and in the new creation, that we are not enjoying our privileges as the sons and daughters of the Almighty unless we see that our old man is crucified with Christ, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

Fellow believer, it is our privilege to rejoice now in that which God has declared as true of us: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) And He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 6.) "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) "Being dead [to that] wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. vii. 6.)

And Ruth said to Naomi, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." In this we see wonderful earnestness, true devotedness, the perfection of human love; but mark the contrast in the love where-with we are loved: death, which was to separate Ruth from Naomi, is the only thing which brings us into relationship with our Lord. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it

bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.) Our Lord's love was stronger than death. So "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." And we know "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 37-39.) Ruth's love to Naomi can but feebly express what our love to Christ should be. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John iii. 16.) "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13.) "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 35.)

When Naomi saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her, she left speaking unto her. Let us therefore "Stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. i. 27.) "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: . . . and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. ii. 6, 7.) And in this way, give all the glory to His blessed name.

"Lord Jesus, 'tis our joy to think
Our life is so bound up with Thine,
That nothing can divide the link,
Secured and fixed by love divine.

"By faith we see the Lord enthroned
At God's right hand of power on high;
And Thy redeem'd ones we are own'd,
As one with Thee and thus brought nigh."

CHAPTER IV.

NAOMI'S RECEPTION ; OR, THE BACKSLIDER
RESTORED.

WE have seen that the deep devotedness in the heart of Ruth caused Naomi to leave off persuading her to return. "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem." The grace of God received into the heart enables us to go through every trial and temptation from within and without. "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. . . . So he bringeth them unto their desired haven." (Ps. cvii. 20, 30.) And "when they reached Bethlehem, all the city was moved about them." And what rejoicing there is among believers when a backslider is restored to the Lord and to communion with the saints. We are all ready to say, This is Naomi, or pleasant.

We know that it is the advocacy and grace of Jesus that leads souls to return, and we are thankful to receive them for His name's sake, but it humbles us to hear them complaining, like Naomi, and charging God with their bitterness, when we know "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." (Lam. iii. 22.)

What a picture of the depravity of man's heart we get in Naomi's speech to the dwellers in Bethlehem: "Call me not Naomi [that is, pleasant], call me Mara [that is, bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought

me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" (Vers. 20, 21.) It is grace on the part of our great High Priest to give us to see our own wretched condition, that we may be filled with the fulness there is in Himself, "for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 6, 7.) "For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." (Lam. iii. 33.) What He does is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) And it is well pleasing to the Lord when He sees us learn the lesson, that in the new creation, where all things are of God, the flesh profiteth nothing, and therefore we are to have no confidence in it; but be thankful when we see that God has testified against it. Are you thus exercised before God? Then we can rejoice over you in the Lord, even while you are passing through this painful experience, for we know that you will soon learn that soul-emancipating truth—"That in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.)

And "so Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her: . . . and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest." (Ver. 22.)

What a deliverance it is for the soul that has slipped away from conscious communion with the Lord, when it gets back into His presence

again. No longer a world worshipper, but a true worshipper of the Father, in His presence in the holiest, where believers have boldness to enter, and abide, by the blood of Jesus. (Heb. x. 19.)

When we think of such backsliders, brought back to the place of blessing once more, to enjoy the exceeding riches of God's grace, must we not admit that to be an unspeakable manifestation of His condescending love? But God dealing in sovereign grace with us does not hinder the consequences of our short-comings here; for He is a God of truth, and has declared that if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. (Gal. vi. 8.) Oh that we might live in testimony and service for Him, because when we fail in this we grieve Him and lose much spiritual enjoyment, and the abundant entrance shall not be ministered to us, we shall be saved so as by fire. We cannot forfeit the gift of God, which is eternal life, now "hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); but that for which we sacrificed our spiritual enjoyments will be gone. Treasure laid up here may gratify the affections and lust of the old nature, but it will not avail in that day when every man shall receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. v. 10.)

Naomi was delivered by the wonderful grace and sparing mercy of God, but as far as her after life and testimony is given we can see that she never really recovered the evil effects of her ten years' sojourn in Moab. If Naomi is the type of a backslider restored, who does Ruth represent? The saved soul, delivered from

darkness and brought into the light in all the freshness of her first love, to go on in the enjoyment of fuller revelations of the kingdom and glory to which she is called.

The beginning of barley harvest in a dispensational sense is as when John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." (John i. 36, 37.) And one of them, named Andrew, found his own brother Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus. (John i. 41, 42.) The harvest advances, as we see in John vi. : "A great company came unto him." (Ver. 5.) And one of the two that first came to Jesus said, when He spoke of feeding the multitude, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes : but what are they among so many?" (Ver. 9.) Our blessed Lord "knew what he would do" (Ver. 6), and He took this opportunity of letting them know that although man naturally could not meet his own need or responsibility, He, the God-Man, in virtue of what He came to accomplish on the cross, would satisfy all God's claims against the sinners that believe in Him and accept Him as their Saviour, for man must have a Substitute to bear the penalty due to his sin, or perish for ever.

So He "took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled." (Matt. xiv. 19, 20.) This miracle of the loaves and fishes would prepare

the way for that fuller unfolding of the truth as brought out in the latter part of John vi., where He says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 51, 53, 54.)

"Lo, the feast is spread to-day;
Jesus summons, come away
From the vanity of life,
From the sounds of mirth or strife,
To the feast by Jesus given,
Come, and taste the bread of heaven.

"Blessed are the lips that taste
Our Redeemer's marriage feast;
Blessed, who on Him shall feed,
Bread of life and drink indeed;
Blessed, for their thirst is o'er,
They shall never hunger more."



CHAPTER V.

NAOMI'S KINSMAN, OR "THE MIGHTY MAN OF WEALTH."

"AND Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz." (Chap. ii. 1.) Elimelech, Naomi's husband and head, having passed away in death, Boaz, his kinsman (type of Christ risen) comes before us. "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter." (Ver. 2.)

It is a blessed desire on the part of the young disciple to go forth in the field to glean, and it should be encouraged by all those who have to deal with the young in Christ, for they cannot glean too much in the field of Boaz; but how few, when babes in Christ, are satisfied, like Ruth, to be simply gleaners. Do they not too often try to take the place of reapers, before they are able to discern between good and evil? (Heb. v. 14.) Are you a babe in Christ? Then be not discouraged, but go on gleaning, for when we are willing to be subject to His word and Spirit, God our God, "who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, (will) make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter v. 10.) The Lord has work for you to do, for "he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v.

15.) Go forth, therefore, willing to take the lowest place, until such time as the Lord of the field comes and brings you on among the reapers.

We find Ruth's desire of the previous verse gratified, as "she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." (Ver. 3.)

Let us also be satisfied to glean and gather after the reapers. Many ears of corn lie on the field, which those who are far advanced in the truth leave untouched, whereas plain simple truths will meet the need of those to whom they are sent. Glean in that part of the field where the Lordship of Jesus is acknowledged. Only a few of the reapers bow to His authority, and for the present He manifests Himself in that part, and among those who confess His Lordship over them, and are gathered into His name, as it is written, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) I have in a few words given you the Lord's mind from His own word for your guidance, as one that desires to offer up to God the sacrifice of praise acceptable.

If you have in the past pursued a course which you know cannot be of God, do so no longer, as there is a place of blessing whither the Lord by His Spirit would lead you, and that you might be a vessel unto honour sanctified, and meet for His use. You cannot take this step without deep exercise of heart. Misgivings within and trials without, but you will overcome if with fixed purpose of heart you desire to

please Him. Do not in your difficulty make any compromise with yourself or with those around, but, with the Lord and His glory before you, be steadfast, unmoveable, and you shall be "more than conqueror through him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 37.) And you will taste the blessedness of the "man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 12.)

Ruth would never have got into that part of the field which acknowledged Boaz if she had been persuaded to return to Moab, nor yet could she have enjoyed what she afterwards did if she had been satisfied to continue with Naomi in Bethlehem. Neither will you be able to enjoy this sense of nearness and blessing unless with full purpose of heart you turn to the Lord, who has said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John vii. 16, 17.)

As believers we are exhorted to follow after righteousness, and Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30); after faith, and "He is the author and finisher of faith;" after charity or divine love, and He is the manifestation of that love (1 John iv. 9); after peace, and "He is our peace (Eph. ii. 14), "having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. i. 20); and while we are occupied with Christ, and following these things, let us not isolate ourselves, but follow with all those "that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim. ii. 22.)

If there are none thus gathered to the Lord's name you must walk alone, and it will be more

blessed to go on alone in the path of obedience than to be associated with many apart from Him.

You ask, How am I to know the company of which you speak? Many answers might be given, but one plain, simple truth may suffice, by which you cannot be deceived. If you are in the right place, the presence of the Lord will be manifest to your soul, as true to His word He will be in the midst of those who are gathered to His name, to comfort and strengthen those that are His by His presence, and to accept their adoration and praise as they worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: Not because it is any particular place or people that we are gathered with, whether many or few, but our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.)

"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee." (Ver. 4.) If Boaz came thus among his reapers to bless and receive blessing, can we think that the great Antitype of Boaz is indifferent to us when we read "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." (John xx. 19, 20.)

Perhaps you say, I have not seen much power manifested among those that are thus

gathered. You are quite right in one sense, for the power is not of man but of God. Let us turn to God's word to illustrate this natural and spiritual power. In the first book of Kings and the xix. chapter, the Lord holds a controversy with Elijah the prophet as he stood alone in the cave at Mount Horeb, and He taught him the truth, that I am desirous He might teach you. And the word of the Lord, which came to Elijah in the cave, said to him, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" Man naturally, or if in a carnal state spiritually, would say when he heard the wind, and the earthquake, and saw the fire, How mighty, how terrible, how consuming is the power that can thus rule the elements at will. Yet the Lord was not in either of these phenomena. Man again, hearing the still, small voice, would naturally say, How weak, how contemptible. But God was in the voice, and it was the still, small voice that brought Elijah forth from the cave, that caused him to wrap his face in his mantle, that humbled him, and made him truly subject, that the Lord could instruct him as to his future path. "Not by

might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zec. iv. 6.)

The servants, who are sent forth in this way, go in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, and their speech and their preaching is not "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. ii. 3, 4, 5.) May God give us grace to be subject to Him in all things, and learn that we can only "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Eph. vi. 10.)

"Oh, what a lonely path were ours,
 Could we, O Father, see
 No home nor rest beyond it all—
 No guide, nor help in Thee!

"But Thou art near, and with us still,
 To keep us on the way
 That leads along this vale of tears
 To the bright world of day.

"There shall Thy glory, O our God!
 Break fully on our view;
 And we, Thy saints, rejoice to find
 That all Thy word was true.

"There Jesus, on His heavenly throne,
 Our wond'ring eyes shall see;
 While we, the blest associates there,
 Of all His joy shall be."



CHAPTER VI.

THE SERVANT SET OVER THE REAPERS, OR THE SOUL INTRODUCED TO CHRIST.

THE last chapter might be profitable to the soul desirous of knowing the place of blessing here, and the power that sustains the soul in that place ; but the chapter before us has been most precious to my own soul, as it seemed to unfold the ministry of the Spirit, and the Lord's present interest in His people. "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?" (Ver. 5.) And you can depend upon this, whoever you are, if in person and spirit you identify yourself with the Lord's people, as gathered together in His name, that same day you will know the joy of being in communion with the rightful owner of the field, and that He is interested in all that concerns you, and He communes with His servant the Spirit about you.

We have already looked upon Boaz, as a type of Christ risen and glorified, and seated at the right hand of God, having a name above every name now ; but when here in the flesh He taught His disciples many things, but more especially towards the close of His earthly course He spoke much of the promise of the Father, which would be fulfilled to them when He returned to His place in glory. I look upon the servant of Boaz as typically representing the Spirit of truth sent from the Father. "The Comforter" whom our blessed Lord said, "I will send unto you, he shall testify of me." (John xv. 26.) "He shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever

he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 13, 14.) Have you a single desire to glorify the Lord, who laid down His life for you?" Then know for a certainty that it is the work of the Spirit that produced that desire, and the more subject you are to Him the sooner you will find the place of meeting, where the Spirit can introduce you to the Lord.

"The servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." (Ver. 6.) We often grieve and hinder the working of the Holy Spirit in ourselves and others, but He is always faithful to the soul and to Christ. He knows the difficulties of the way, and because we are the Lord's, He ministers comfort and strength to us; and when we know not what we should pray for as we ought, He "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. viii. 26.)

See then that we do not hinder the Spirit of God as He leads us on to know the Lord, for He cannot rest satisfied with any of us until, like Ruth, we are brought into conscious communion with our Lord and Master.

See, too, the marvellous grace of the Holy Ghost as typically shewn forth in the servant set over the reapers. Not one word does he speak of himself, as he watched and cared, and spoke comfortably to her, and ministered so faithfully of the good things the master had provided.

What was true of the type is true of the antitype. The servant spoke to Ruth about

Boaz. The Holy Ghost speaks to us about Christ. The servant spoke to Boaz about Ruth. The Holy Ghost speaks to us about Christ, and the faintest desire of our hearts is repeated to Him with all the grace of the Spirit. O then let this word sink deep down into our hearts, "grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.) "She said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house." (Ver. 7.) Was it not the morning of life with us when we were made a new creation in Christ Jesus? And then we learned that we were quickened together with Him and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. (Eph. ii. 5, 6.)

The Spirit leads us to Christ, teaches us about Him, brings us into fellowship with Him, so that we hear His voice and know Him as our hope and portion for ever.

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens." (Ver. 8.) As Boaz spoke to Ruth, so our Lord speaks to us. "Go not to glean in another field." When He says this do you think that he means that we can go where we like, and please ourselves, and choose our place among the divisions which men have set up, which have destroyed the outward manifestation of the assembly of God, and in the midst of the ruin, dishonour the name of the Lord by their party contentions, one saying as at Corinth, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas;

and I of Christ? Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul." (1 Cor. i. 12, 13.) "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. i. 9.)

The blessed Lord wants to have us in conscious communion with Himself, and He knows that we cannot be that unless we are subject to His word and Spirit, and so follow with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. As Boaz said to Ruth, "Abide fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them." (Vers. 8, 9.)

And the apostle Paul, in the power of the Spirit, when exhorting the Philippian believers, said, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Phil. iii. 17.) And to the Corinthians he wrote: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. xi. 1.)

"Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?" What wonderful forethought on the part of Boaz, mingled with unbounded grace, thus to encourage the heart of poor Ruth among strangers, for we can look at her as typically representing a babe in Christ, and the young men as those that are strong, and the word of God abideth in them. (1 John ii. 14.) Boaz charged his young men not to deal harshly with Ruth. Our Lord charged His disciples, and us through them, not to deal roughly with any soul, but to deal with all in grace and truth. To illustrate this let me refer you to Matthew xv., where the disciples were inclined to deal unkindly with the poor Syrophœnician woman when they besought the Lord to send

her away, "For she crieth after us." (Matt. xv. 23.) And it happens sometimes that young men in Christ are so carried away with zeal in the service of the Lord as not to be conscious of the spirit in which it should be done, so the Lord has to rebuke them. (Luke ix. 55.) We find this spirit manifested when the mothers brought their children to Jesus. His disciples rebuked them. (Luke xviii. 15.) And instances might be multiplied of misguided zeal in the service of the Lord. It rejoices the heart to see the babe in Christ seek after and earnestly "desire the sincere milk of the word," and the aim of every believer should be to nourish and cherish such, as the Lord does the church, that they may grow up unto Him, and so pass from babes to young men and fathers in the family of God, remembering what the apostle said of himself, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Cor. xiii. 11.)

As young men, naturally or spiritually, we are too ready to forget that we were once children, and needed training like others. May we have more of the meekness and lowliness of Jesus our Lord, for "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." (2 Tim. ii. 24.)

"When thou art athirst go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn." That which characterised young men in Christ was strength, and the word of God abiding in them. They are set forth as conquerors in and through Him who loved them. In other words, they were "Strong in the Lord,

and in the power of his might." (Eph. vi. 10.) This constituted them fit vessels to draw water to quench the thirst of those who had not yet practically attained to the same blessed position—"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isa. xii. 3.) O, what a privilege is ours to be fellow labourers with God, and to be able, through Him, to draw water out of the wells of salvation, that the thirsty babe may drink freely and without restraint. May the expression of our hearts ever be: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Sol. Song v. 1.)

"Though our heritage be conflict,
God abides, our shield and guide;
And though sorrow be life's burden,
Yet the Lord is on our side;
What so blessèd as to serve Him!
Let our lives His love proclaim!
What so gracious as His favour!
Laud and magnify His name!

"May the love of God the Father,
And the grace of Christ the Son,
And communion of the Spirit,
Rest upon us every one;
Love upholding and sustaining,
Which no time or death shall sever;
Love and grace and fellowship,
Comforting our souls for ever."



CHAPTER VII.

BOAZ AND RUTH ; OR, GRACE ABOUNDING.

WE cannot but admire the gracious manner in which Boaz dealt with Ruth as she gleaned in his field, and how beautifully she acknowledged in a practical manner his kindness to her, and her own sense of unworthiness as "She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" (Ruth ii. 10.)

How many of the Lord's loved ones go on day by day, like Job, having a knowledge of God by the hearing of the ear ; but the moment the eye sees Him, they will abhor themselves in dust and ashes. How little we comprehend the grace of that blessed One until we see Him and know what it cost Him to obtain eternal redemption for those who believe in Him : ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Have you the consciousness of this ? if so, thank God, and go on to know more of what it is to be in His presence, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, dwelleth with us, and in us, as individual believers, according to His word. (John xiv. 16, 17.)

But, still further, He said when going away, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22) ; because "I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you. Yet a little

while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John xiv. 18-21.)

May it be our purpose of heart to walk here that we may be in constant communion with Him, and be able truly to say, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 3.)

Perhaps some one may say, I am a believer, but I am so often unhappy, so doubtful, so uncertain, so much afraid that I shall come short in the end. The cause of your trouble is self occupation. You have the blessing of eternal life, but not the company of the Eternal One, who secured it for you. But be not discouraged, hear His gracious voice : "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. iii. 20.) Then open the door of your heart, and receive your Lord who has waited long that your cup of joy might be full and running over in praise and thanksgiving to Him. You will then readily say with Ruth, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me?" (Ver. 10.) And it is grace, wondrous grace, to have the knowledge of salvation, and the privilege of sitting and supping in the company of Him who has saved us, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. i. 6), and made us co-heirs with Himself in glory.

“And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.” (Ver. 11.) This is exceedingly gracious of Boaz, and what an answer it is to the preceding verse. But how unspeakable is the grace of our Lord, who helps us in all our trials, and is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (Heb. iv. 15.) His life was one of trial and suffering, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. He went down to death that He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. (Heb. ii. 14.) He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom. iv. 25.) Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we need not be discouraged, knowing that He is there that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. iv. 14–16.) For He is a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. (Heb. ii. 17.) He is the One who will triumphantly bring us in to His kingdom and glory. For when Christ who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory. (Col. iii. 4.)

That blessed One is occupied with you every step of the journey, and He knows how to comfort and sustain you, for He heard every word that has been said to hinder you in following Him. He knows every obstacle that you have overcome, and the devotedness of your heart to Himself and those that are His, even when they

do not manifest the love of God to you ; be you faithful to them, and the Lord will reward you at His coming.

Are you called upon to leave the nearest and dearest relationship of life to become identified with a people which you knew not before? Then do so gladly for His sake ; He will be more to you than all else besides.

Naturally we were children of wrath, even as others ; but now we are a new creation in Christ Jesus, heaven is our home, and we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Col. i. 13.) Let us forsake all and follow Him, and as Boaz spake to Ruth, so we shall hear His voice : " The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Precious words for the heart of Ruth, and infinitely more precious is our portion in Christ now.

All believers are saved by grace through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. It is God that found the ransom, it is He that has delivered us from going down into the pit ; His own arm brought salvation.

Ponder well the truth of the closing scene yet to be enacted in the presence of the Lord of the harvest, who has declared, " Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. xxii. 12.) All those that believe in Him shall be saved, but there will be special privileges for the faithful. There are kingdoms and crowns to be won, which the Lord will dispense among those that are true to His name. (See Luke xxii. 29 ; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8 ; 1 Pet. v. 4.)

Yes, we are exhorted by the coming of the Lord to hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown. (Rev. iii. 11.) The Lord knows our work and will reward it according as it was done to Him. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it ; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (Rev. iii. 8.)

Boaz said to Ruth : "The Lord recompense thy work," and the Lord did it. His eye was on her, as she resisted the exhortation to return. He heard her earnest entreaty to pass through the open door, when Naomi, in her mistaken kindness, would have persuaded her to return. All this was counted as work done for Him, in her lonely desolate state the secret of her strength lay in her weakness, and her stay was the strength of Him under whose wings she had come to trust.

In reference to the future, the Apostle John wrote to the elect lady and her children : "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought." (2 John 8.) The servant of the Lord suffers loss when any of his children in the faith turn from the truth, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians : "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Gal. iv. 11.)

But in writing to the Philippians he said : "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Phil. ii. 16.)

"And now, little children, abide in him ; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

(1 John ii. 28.) Let me entreat you, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." (Col. ii. 23-25.) "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. xiii. 20, 21.)

"Fill up each hour with what will last ;
Buy up the moments as they go ;
The life above, when this is past,
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

"Sow truth, if thou the true wouldst reap ;
Who sows the false shall reap the vain :
Erect and sound thy conscience keep ;
From hollow words and deeds refrain.

"Sow love, and taste its fruitage pure,
Sow peace, and reap its harvest bright,
Sow sunbeams on the rock and moor,
And find a harvest home of light."



CHAPTER VIII.

RUTH AND BOAZ ; OR, "SPEAKING TO THE HEART."

WE see Ruth's heart was drawn forth to Boaz. May we be as ready to confess to our Lord the sense of His favour and our own unworthiness, as Ruth was to Boaz, and it will be a time of joy to His heart and a season of blessing to our own souls.

"Then she said, I find favour (marg.) in thy sight, my lord, that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart (marg.) of thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens." (Ruth ii. 13.)

Ruth was conscious of standing in favour with Boaz ; and why should we be uncertain as to the place of blessing whereunto we are brought, knowing that we are "justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we now stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" (Rom. v. 1, 2) for the Lord has spoken comfortably unto us, for He said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3) ; while we know that He is "able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." (Jude, ver. 24.) Has He not spoken to our hearts when He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you ; I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I

have made known unto you?" (John xv. 14, 15.) "I shall no more speak to you in parables (marg.) but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. . . . for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father: and am come into the world." (John xvi. 25, 27, 28.) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John xvii. 20.)

You may ask, what is the effect of God's speaking to the heart of an awakened soul? For an illustration of this turn to the second chapter of the Acts, and read there the real genuine work of the Holy Ghost speaking to the heart by the word of God brought to bear upon their hearts and consciences by Peter among the Jews, and all those that received the truth at Jerusalem. (Read Acts ii. 36 to end.)

Now turn to Acts xvi. and in the story of the Philippian jailor we have an illustration of the effect of the grace of God on the heart that received His gracious message. It breaks them down, and leads them to repentance, and if ever they thought of Him as a hard taskmaster, they are fully convinced of their error, and for ever after they become devoted followers of the Lord.

Being in communion with the source of all blessing they work out from Him in service and testimony, telling forth the riches of His grace, not only in word, but "in deed and in truth." (1 John iii. 18.) May we be more dependent on Him from henceforth and for ever, for Christ's sake, who thus speaks to our hearts by His Spirit.

"And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come

thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left." (Ver. 14.) To Ruth this was full, free, unlooked-for grace. And how full, how free, how unbounded the grace of our Lord and Master as unfolded by His Spirit to us, and illustrated by His word for our consolation, that our hope and joy might be in Him. How considerate He is with us. See how He cares for us, as shewn in His gracious words to the apostles as they told out their hearts to Him. He said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark vi. 31.) Was there ever grace like His? He was indeed a teacher sent from God, for He was God manifest in the flesh, and He knows how to deal with us, for we are so ready to think of our sayings and doings as if the power and the sufficiency was of ourselves and not of Him. Under such circumstances it becomes needful that we should come apart with Jesus that we may rest awhile.

For Ruth to be allowed to dip her morsel in the vinegar was a great privilege. It was having fellowship with Boaz, as he communed with the reapers. And to us who believe it typically represents fellowship with Christ, which implies complete separation from the world, as He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John xvii. 14, 16, 17.) Ruth eating the bread represents a saved soul feeding on Christ as the "true manna," the living bread which came down from heaven: as it is written,

“If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh.” (John vi. 51.)

Ruth was exhorted to dip her morsel in the vinegar, and we are exhorted to learn what the Spirit teaches when the Israelites passed over Jordan dryshod, as we find in John v. 24, that death and judgment are already passed for all those that have believed the record which God hath given of His Son. Or, in other words, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Gal. v. 24.)

Where do we find the Israelites after they passed through Jordan? Is it not at Gilgal, reaping that on which they had bestowed no labour? for “they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day.” (Josh. v. 11.) As Paul wrote to the Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. vi. 14.) As we are thus identified with Christ in resurrection life, we are to put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. iv. 22–24.)

And being in this place of blessing we get food suited to our need, that which satisfies our hearts; as we read, “He reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.” And as we see Jesus as our Head in glory, so we press on like Paul, “Forgetting those things

which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) Seeing our place in Christ we should be able to say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. . . . In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 5, 6, 11.) The Psalmist could say of us prophetically, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." (Ps. xxxvi. 8.) "After the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus iii. 4-6.) "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.)

The pleasures and vanities of this world can never satisfy you, but if you drink of the water that Christ shall give; you shall never thirst, but it shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John iv. 13, 14.) "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 13.)

CHAPTER IX

'BOAZ AND HIS YOUNG MEN ;' OR, "HANDFULS
LET FALL ON PURPOSE."

IN the last chapter we saw Ruth seated with the reapers, and Boaz handing her parched corn ; so she ate and was sufficed, and left. As she had a sufficient portion to satisfy her, so have we, like Ezekiel's river that could not be passed over. (Ezek. xlvii. 5.) "And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not." (Ruth ii. 15.) As Boaz instructed his young men in the absence of Ruth to let her have special privileges, even "to glean among the sheaves," so our Lord by His Spirit exhorts some in these words, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. xv. 1.) We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. vi. 2.) We are to "comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, and be patient toward all men." (1 Thess. v. 14.)

"Reproach her not," or, as the margin reads, "shame her not," were Boaz's words to his young men. And our Lord is even more careful than that, as He in grace gives Israel divine assurance in His word, "Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." (Isa. liv. 4.) But if you are called upon to suffer reproach, rejoice that you are

counted worthy to suffer for His name. (Acts v. 41.)

“Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.” (Ver. 16.) How this verse tells out the love of Boaz’s heart, and what a beautiful picture it is of our Lord and Master’s heart. How He instructs His own about the little ones; how careful He is of them. Hear His precious words, and take courage, ye gleaners in that part of the field where the Lord is acknowledged. “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. xviii. 10.) “For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.” (Isa. liv. 5, 6.)

Such are the portions typically represented by the handfuls of corn let fall by the young men of Boaz. That quoted from Matthew is specially for the comfort of God’s little ones in this day of grace. The text from Isaiah has special application to Israel in the last days, when they are restored, and the evil, or that which offends, is cast out. So the Lord’s young men, or, in other words, His prophets, evangelists, and teachers, servants who were moved by the Holy Ghost to write the scriptures, have been subject to the same teaching.

We cannot look at a page of God’s word but we find precious grain scattered all over it,

but there are places which may be compared to handfuls let fall on purpose for the special comfort of those who are only gleaners.

“Rebuke her not,” said Boaz to his young men, and our Lord said to His disciples and to us by His word, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me : for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. xix. 13, 14.)

“So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.” (Ver. 17.) The two disciples that went from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection were gleaners in the field until even : for they were talking together of all these things which had happened, and as they communed and reasoned together, Jesus drew near and went with them, and many handfuls did He spread out before them on that memorable journey. And if there is any soul exercised about the things which belong to God’s glory, they cannot help but talk to one another about it, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And as we speak or think of Him, we may feel assured that by His Spirit that Blessed One will be near us, to teach us of Himself, as we see how He suffered and bled and died for us, how He was raised up by the power of God, how He has entered into glory ; His path of sorrow and suffering over, and we redeemed and brought nigh by His blood, and accepted in the Beloved, and we shall see Him and be like Him in that day when we are all gathered by His Spirit and caught up to be with the Lord for ever. If the contemplation of the coming rapture gives joy to our hearts, what will the

blessed reality be but joy unspeakable and full of glory?

Oh, then, till that moment comes may our hearts be taken up with Thee, Thou blessed One, at God's right hand; may we, like the two privileged disciples on the way to Emmaus constrain Thee to abide with us.

Dear reader, it may be that you have not yet enjoyed the sweetness and blessedness of the Lord's presence, but if you would do so, open your heart for Him now: He will come in with you, and sup with you. Let your affections twine around Him, for He said, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John xvi. 27.)

Ruth knew at the close of her day's gleanings what she had got, for she had beaten it out, and she had an ephah of barley. (Ver. 17.) And the two disciples knew as they returned to Jerusalem that they had seen the Lord, for they rested not until they had returned to tell others the blessed news, and when they were assembled together the Lord stood in their midst, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." (Luke xxiv. 36.) May we all be conscious of this peace, which only the presence of our Lord can give; we may hear, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke xxiv. 25), but, as the Holy Ghost opens to us the scriptures and unfolds to us the glories of our Redeemer, we are no longer heard saying, "we trusted it would have been" this or that, but we gladly bow down in worship and adoration, by the Holy Ghost, offering up to Him the sacrifice of praise continually.

Oh, what a privilege is ours to have such a Teacher and such a portion in God's word, it makes our hearts overflow with praise; so we become constrained to communicate to others the blessings which we through grace have obtained by the Spirit. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (Ps. l. 23.) "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) Let it ever be our privilege thus to walk before Him, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

"I bless the Christ of God,
I rest on love divine;
And with unfaltering lip and heart,
I call this Saviour mine.

"His Cross dispels each doubt,
I bury in His tomb
Each thought of unbelief and fear,
Each lingering shade of gloom.

"I praise the God of grace,
I trust His truth and might,
He calls me His, I call Him mine,
My God, my joy, my light.

"'Tis He Who saveth me,
And freely pardon gives;
I love because He loveth me,
I live because He lives.

"My life with Him is hid,
My death has passed away,
My clouds have melted into light,
My midnight into day."

CHAPTER X.

NAOMI AND RUTH ; OR, "WHERE HAST THOU GLEANED TO-DAY?"

WE last saw Ruth with an ephah of barley before her, being the result of her day's gleaning among the sheaves. "And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed." (Ruth ii. 18.)

Ruth knew well what she gleaned, and she was not ashamed to take it with her, although there are souls in our day who fail in this respect: they are blessed, and they know it, but they are ashamed to go into the city and confess it, as Ruth did, so that their friends may be able to see what they have gleaned: so selfish are they, that nothing is kept in reserve for those not able to glean like themselves, but, like the men of Belial who went forth with David to overtake the Amalekites, when they returned with the spoil to the company that was too faint to follow them, they said, "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil. But David said, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand." (1 Sam. xxx. 22, 23.) And what does our Lord say to one whom He delivered from the company of demons that oppressed him? "Return to thine own house and shew how great things God hath done unto thee.

And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him." (Luke viii. 39.)

What encouragement it is for us, who enjoy the full light of gospel truth, to tell out to others what great things Jesus has done for us. God has often blessed such a simple testimony. If we fail now in witnessing for Him we may have cause to be ashamed at our Lord's return when He finds so little done for Him. As it is written, "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 13, 14, 16.) And in so doing "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 5, 6.)

Ruth brought forth and gave to her mother in law the special portion which she reserved of that which satisfied herself. And our portion is such as satisfies and silences every vaunted and vain-glorious expression of the human mind, for the Spirit says, "Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. i. 28, 29.)

Oh, then, may we be so taught by His Spirit as to have great joy in our own hearts, and may we be constrained by the love of Christ to communicate to others the good things which God has in grace given to us.

“And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz.” (Ver. 19.)

Ruth knew where she had gleaned, with whom she had gleaned, and how much she had gleaned. Now if we were asked the same question, could the inquirers say by what they see in us, “Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee.” Is the reflection of Jesus so manifest in our countenance that it is clearly seen that we have been with Him? or have we been taken up with the vain, frivolous things of this world instead of Him? How could you expect to be happy, away from Jesus, with nothing for your labours in the field; for you have laboured at “that which satisfieth not”? (Isa. lv. 2.) You have gained nothing, but you have lost much. See, then, that you continue, not in this spirit of worldly-mindedness, but at once confess your shortcomings and so be restored to the place of communion and blessing; or, in other words, “Set your mind (margin) on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Col. iii. 1.)

On the other hand, if the Lord has been your object all the day long, you will be able to rejoice in Him and declare His name to others, so that He may be praised of all. In such a case you need not tell with whom you have gleaned, for the eye of faith can see in your life and conversation the inspiring influence of the ennobling example drawn from the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

RUTH'S FAILURE ; OR, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS OF BOAZ.

"THE kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." (Rom. xiv. 17, 18.)

We find Naomi said to her daughter in law, "Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." (Ver. 20.)

Well might Naomi exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord," when she saw with her eyes and heard with her ears of the wonderful grace which Boaz manifested towards Ruth as she gleaned in the field, for she gave Naomi of the parched corn she had reserved as she ate at mealtime, and was sufficed and left.

To us this typically shews the wonderful love of Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, who now in resurrection life identifies us with Himself, the glorified Man in heaven ; and as Ruth ate of the parched corn and was satisfied, so we rejoice to tell forth the unbounded love of the One who has satisfied our hearts, that we are led to say of Him, "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." (Neh. ix. 5.) For God, when He raised Christ from the dead, "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." (Eph. i. 20-23.) And we can truly say, with Naomi, that this blessed One has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." (Prov. viii. 32-36.)

Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was near of kin unto them, "one of our next kinsmen;" and we know that unless the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem us, we could have no hope, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission; for we were under sentence of death, born in sin, and the wages of sin is death; but God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin condemned sin in the flesh. (Rom. viii. 3, margin.) Thus the Son of God, our Saviour, has in the body of His flesh, through death, become our kinsman, to present us to Himself. (Col. i. 22.)

"And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest." (Ver. 21.) How very important it is to keep to the word of God, and allow it to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. cxix. 105),

that we may be able to discern things that differ.

Boaz said to Ruth, when he met her first in the field, "Abide here fast by my maidens" (Ruth ii. 8); but, when they parted, he said, "Thou shalt keep fast by my young men." How long? till my harvest is ended. This was the advice of Boaz to Ruth, and it would have been far more blessed for Ruth if she acted on it, as he had charged his young men not to touch her, and he commanded them to grant her special privileges, even to glean among the sheaves by the reapers; and even more than this, for they were ordered to let handfuls fall on purpose for her. What a place of privilege and blessing Boaz had prepared for Ruth had she been subject to his will! She would have rejoiced the heart of Boaz and would have had special comforts herself, as she gleaned to the end of his harvest. And it would be far more blessed for us if we were more careful about hearing the Master's voice, and, when we know it, doing His will with all our heart, and not going to this one and the other to get counsel, for their advice always comes short of the counsel which we get direct from the Lord by His Spirit.

"Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." (Ver. 22.) Very good advice, truly, from Naomi's point of view, but it came far short of that place of privilege which Boaz wanted Ruth to enjoy. Boaz said, "Keep fast by my young men." Naomi said, "It is good that thou go out with his maidens," and Ruth was guided by Naomi. "So she kept fast by

the maidens of Boaz to glean until the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest, and dwelt with her mother in law." (Ver. 23.) She went by Naomi's advice, and continued to dwell with her, and she never got beyond the maidens of Boaz when she might have been next to the reapers, and have enjoyed the handfuls let fall on purpose for her.

You may say, What can be the difference between the young men and the maidens of Boaz? Are they not all his? Are they not all labouring in his field? Are they not all equally devoted to him? Yes, they are, with this important difference, that of the maidens it might be said, as of the virgins in Solomon's Song, They follow and love: "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" (Sol. Song i. 3, 7.) Such is the character of the maidens of Boaz. They love because of the savour of his good ointments, they are anxious to know where he makes his flocks to rest at noon, lest they should be like those that turn aside by the flocks of his companions. These are blessed motives when we have not attained to the higher heights of communion and fellowship with the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ. Such desires lead us to a higher and better state of things; but if our Lord and Master comes to either of us, and says, "Friend, go up higher" (Luke xiv. 10), is it courtesy on our part to sit still and keep fast by

those around us, instead of at once complying with the Lord's will, so as to enjoy communion with Him ?

Observe, however, that the preliminary and essential condition of the necessary exaltation from the Master, is the assumption of the seat of humility by ourselves. Our Lord cannot bid us to come higher unless we are actually seated in the lowest place of all.

Death separates us from everything here ; we have no connection whatever with the scene through which we are passing ; we should be in spirit and in truth "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13), having our citizenship in heaven. (Phil. iii. 20.)

But you say, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. xv. 50.) Then what are we to do ? Simply believe the truth of God, which teaches us that we are dead, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. (Col. iii. 3.) Such being the truth of God, have we bowed to it ? As the Spirit teaches, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11.) This is our privilege while we are passing through this scene of sorrow and suffering.

But you say you do not enjoy this ; so you are like Ruth and many more of God's children, satisfied to dwell with Naomi, and all through the harvest to go out and glean in the field with the maidens, and occasionally cry out, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Sol. Song i. 7), instead of taking the Lord's advice, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart, so as to find

rest unto your soul. (Matt. xi. 29.) You have been following afar off, you have not been holding the Head from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God ; you have not practically taken the lowest room, or the place of death ; you have not reckoned yourself to be dead to sin ; but you have been asking God to forgive and improve that which can never be improved, for sin is that evil nature in you which God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn in the flesh. (Rom. viii. 3.)

Ruth failed in not discerning the difference between the young men and the maidens of Boaz, for the maidens represent those who are following the Lord afar off, whose hearts are in a measure drawn forth towards Him, but their consciences have never been brought under the full force of God's word, and there is not that stability about them which characterises the young men, who are strong in the Lord, and in whom the word of God abideth, and they "have overcome the wicked one." (1 John ii. 14.) May we be warned by the failure of Ruth, and take heed how we hear, and search for ourselves His word, that we may know by His Spirit how we ought to walk and to please God. May we abound in this more and more. (1 Thes. iv. 1.)



CHAPTER XII.

GOD'S PROCESS OF TESTING; OR, WINNOWING BARLEY, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

WE are now entering on a deeply solemn part of our meditations, and it becomes us to be careful lest, with our finite minds, we might try to fathom the secret things of God; for His judgments are a great deep (Ps. xxxvi. 6), "His ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.) Let us not murmur or complain about the righteous judgments of God, for the Spirit of God has asked, "O man, Who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called." (Rom. ix. 20-24.) Remember, whoever you are, if you die the death of the wicked, it is because you despise "the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth you to repentance." (Rom. ii. 4.) For "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) Believe in Him and you are eternally saved, but go on in unbelief

and you are certainly lost, for they that go down to the pit cannot hope for His mercy, because the truth of God has fixed a great gulf which none can pass over. If you are unsaved, be not satisfied until you rest in Jesus, who, in wondrous grace, has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

Unsaved one, believe Him who has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) Oh, do not go on in rebellion, and through your "hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. ii. 5.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) May this be your portion now, lest you should know the full force of the Saviour's words, "I would and ye would not." (Luke xiii. 34.)

"Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor." (Chap. iii. 1, 2.)

Dear reader, do you know that there is a glorified Man in heaven? "When he by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) And He is winnowing barley to-night in the threshingfloor.

You ask, what are we to understand by the winnowing of barley? We may learn a solemn

lesson from it. Barley is nearly always used in scripture to signify man naturally. Then God comes in and winnows the barley. He then gives us to see that no flesh shall glory in His presence. It is only as God operates in us by His Spirit, and puts us to the test, that we can understand the lesson that He would teach us by the winnowing process that God causes men to pass through, that they might know what they are in His presence.

We get a practical illustration of how God winnowed barley in the past if we turn to Exodus ix. and read from verse 13 to the end.

God was in Egypt that night winnowing Pharaoh and his servants, and among them there were those who obeyed God and escaped the judgment, and some that despised Him and perished. "And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up." (Ex. ix. 31, 32.) The Lord has been pleased to foretell what the winnowing process will be in the future when He, the Son of man, comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." (Matt. xxv. 31, 32.)

But you ask, How does God deal with His people in this dispensation? He does so by His word and Spirit, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and

is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. iv. 12, 13.) These two verses clearly shew forth the character of God's winnowing process now, and we shall do well to take heed to it, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day star arise in our hearts. (2 Pet. i. 19.) "For the night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 12.) May we do so to the glory of His great name who condescends to winnow barley in the threshing floor.

Lest anyone should delude themselves with the thought that in themselves there might be some good quality remaining, which would in some way or other commend them to God, apart from Him who by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Heb. ii. 9), let such remember that the flax and the barley were smitten in Egypt when they were well grown. (Ex. ix. 31, 32.)

In accordance with the preceding thoughts on this subject the analogy will be fully carried out if we say that the flax and barley full grown shadowed forth the fair appearance of human nature, in which no one can stand before God and be justified. In other words, the flax and barley represent the outer man which shall perish, but the wheat and rye which were not smitten represent the inner man, which is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. iv. 16.)

Unless, therefore, you are linked with Christ in resurrection life, no matter how moral you may be, you will find out that the time will come when that blessed One will stand with His fan in

His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner ; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Matt. iii. 12.) God has declared His righteousness, that "He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) Christ Jesus is God's own way, and the only way in which you can escape the damnation of hell. (Matt. xxiii. 33.) He said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6); "Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.)

Have you believed in Jesus? If you have, you are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii. 24.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.)

Search the scriptures if you would be wise unto salvation, for it is written, "The entrance of thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Ps. cxix. 130.) "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x. 9, 10.)



CHAPTER XIII.

NAOMI'S ADVICE ; OR, "HE WILL TELL THEE
WHAT THOU SHALT DO."

NAOMI recommended Ruth to get back to the place of blessing in a way which would imply that it could be done by subtilty, as we read : "Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man until he shall have done eating and drinking." (Chap. iii. 3.) In this verse the mother and daughter in law remind us of many of God's children who would not knowingly do anything to grieve Him, but who through their ignorance of His word grieve Him every day, by allowing their own thoughts to come in and produce alienation and strife where there ought to be love and peace and goodwill. And if alien elements intrude themselves it is our duty to judge them in the light of the Divine presence, and to remove them by the application to our spirits of the water of the Word. If we are subject to the Lord He will by His Spirit purge our heart and conscience by His word, and He will say of His Spirit in its relation to us, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." (Pro. vi. 22.)

May we thus know what it is to be subject to His word, so as to have the joy of being in communion with Him, and be morally fit for the presence of God.

By the blood of Christ we are cleansed from all sin, and by the word of God we are kept clean as we pass through this world, according to the desire of that blessed One : " Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John xvii. 17.) " Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

" And anoint thee." How often have we heard prayer made to the Almighty God to anoint with the Holy Ghost, to pour out the Spirit, instead of praising God the Father for the fulfilment of His promise over 1800 years ago ; and God the Son who said, " It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send him unto you." (John xvi. 7.)

" I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever." (John xiv. 16.) " We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John iii. 24.) " All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God ; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i. 20-22.) Some one may say, Certainly these scriptures seem to establish this important truth, still I had always thought that if we grieve the Spirit of God we were likely to lose Him, and that we had need to pray to God, like David in Psalm li., " Take not thy holy spirit from me."

To this I answer, David needed to make this prayer, because in his day the Holy Ghost had

not been given as He was given to believers for ever at Pentecost, a proof that Jesus was then glorified. (John vii. 39.) But the prayer for to-day should be that we may not *grieve* the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. iv. 30.)

Let me bring one more scripture before you that you may be quite clear about this comforting truth, and no longer grieve the Holy Ghost by asking God to give His Holy Spirit to you as if He were not present with you, and in you, as a believer. Mark! how pointed the word of God is: "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John ii. 27.)

"And put thy raiment upon thee." This part of Naomi's advice brings before us much of what we have heard and seen in the religious circles of the day. How true the proverb, "As is the mother, so is her daughter." (Ez. xvi. 44.)

As Naomi acted herself so she would persuade Ruth to act, and Ruth is as much under her influence as if she had never seen or heard of Boaz. And why is it that dear, young, earnest, happy souls so soon lose their brightness? Because, instead of "looking off unto Jesus" (Heb. xii. 2), they begin to look at themselves and forget all about the exceeding great and precious promises which God has in grace given in His word, that we might know that, according to His divine power, "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called

us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter i. 3.) It is the knowledge of the Lord Himself that souls need. Not theology, the wisdom and learning of men, but Christ "the power and wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.)

Let us now turn to Ezekiel xvi., which will help us to understand how God deals with souls. In verse 6, as sinners, God comes and takes us up just as we are in our helpless and wretched condition and saves us, and then as saved souls He tells us in grace what He has provided for us.

"I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil : I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skins, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord." (Ez. xvi. 8-14.) We have got figurative language here, and such as was spoken by the prophet of the Lord to Jerusalem, and while we must be careful not to misapply the truth or spiritualise it so as to divert it from its original bearing, yet our souls may derive many profitable lessons from such scriptures, and we lose nothing by seeing their original application. And as we meditate on such scriptures let us remember that God is addressing His earthly people, and whilst we rejoice in the freeness of God's grace toward them, let us bear in mind that we are a heavenly people, and as the Lord of glory is, so we are destined to be, "For he shall change our body of

humiliation (see margin) that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory." (Phil. iii. 21.)

Naomi's advice to Ruth shews us that she forgot all the grace which Boaz had manifested toward her, and she went on as if she knew him not.

There is something truly humbling in our ways when we think of how we act when we get out of communion with the Lord, what efforts we make in our daily walk to hide from ourselves and others our real state. Is such your condition? Then let me tell you in love how you are to be restored to the joy of the Lord's presence. Sooner or later that which hinders communion with Him will become manifest, and until it is put away you cannot enjoy rest of soul. You know well that you do not read the word of God as you once did? Why not? Because all through its sacred pages the Spirit of God shews you the folly of your false position, that you might let the Lord wash you from the double sin of allowing that which keeps you out of communion, and then refusing to acknowledge it to Him; for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John i. 5-10.)

I have transcribed for you word for word from the Spirit's teaching as to when, and where,

and to Whom you are to confess your wanderings, with the desire that you may be led now to confess to God where you are. This is the only way in which you can know the joy of being restored to the sunshine of His presence, which is the normal state of true believers.

We are conscious, when out of communion, that it is not with us as it ought to be, and we shrink back from its searching light, and we think that we can slip in unperceived when our Lord comes to call His own, at the time when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; but do you really know what that implies for a soul in this dispensation? It means that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." (2 Cor. v. 10.) And when there, whatever we have failed to confess here, it will be made manifest then, not for our condemnation, but that we might be free and happy in His presence.

"And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me, I will do." (Vers. 4, 5.)

We may follow the advice of our friends, and try to make up to our Lord for proving false to Him in service and testimony; but nothing will satisfy His heart, or ours, but a full restoration. His very gentleness will break us down, and all our plans to get near Him unobserved will prove fruitless. Oh! hear His voice and follow Him.



CHAPTER XIV.

RUTH AT HIS FEET ; OR, "HIS HEART WAS MERRY."

IN the last chapter we saw Ruth preparing herself, according to Naomi's advice ; and in this chapter we shall find her acting up to it, as we read, "And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn : and she came softly and uncovered his feet, and laid her down." (Ruth iii. 6, 7.)

Let us remember that we have always to humble ourselves before we can be restored, because we leave the Lord through being puffed up by some supposed merits of our own, and the only way in which we can be delivered from our yoke of bondage, is by getting down to the feet of Jesus. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." (Prov. xi. 2.) "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom." (Prov. xiii. 10.) "A man's pride shall bring him low ; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." (Prov. xxix. 23.) "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Obad. 4.)

"She did according to all that her mother in law bade her." This shewed entire subjection to the creature, and clearly proved that whatever sense of communion Ruth might have had with

Boaz, she had lost all consciousness of it now. And how painful it is when we see before us a loved one wandering away from God, who might have run well, if we had only been faithful. How often it is that the wilfulness and waywardness of those committed to our care can be traced to some laxity of habit in us, almost unperceived by ourselves, and yet bearing evil fruit in the case of others.

There are two powers outside this scene altogether who watch our movements and know the way that we take : one, an enemy ; the other, a friend ; one hates us, the other loves us ; one would blind us to the evil, the other would open our eyes to behold that which is good ; one has ruined us, the other has saved us ; one has through deceit robbed us of our inheritance, the other laid aside His glory and came down and redeemed us by His blood. One would drag us down to perdition, the other has raised us up to heaven ; the one is Satan, the other is Christ Jesus our Lord. The Lord would wash us by His word from pride and every evil lust, that Satan might not have dominion over us. If we refuse the application of the word, He cannot wash us, and He will mournfully say of us, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." (John xiii. 8.) And this washing refers not to blood, as some suppose, but to the washing of water by the word. For when Peter said to the Lord, " Not my feet only but also my hands and my head," Jesus said unto him, " He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." (John xiii. 9, 10.)

How profoundly humbling is the fact that Satan has such power over us when God in love

sent His Son to deliver us from the power of darkness and translate us into the kingdom of the Son of *His love*. (Col. i. 13.) The cause of Satan's power over us arises from our failure to abide in communion with the Lord, and the wilfulness which prompts us to choose our own way. Thus it is, that we again and again subject ourselves by our failures to the power of darkness; but what a mercy it is that God rouses us up to see the evil effect of our pernicious ways, that, like Naomi, we are led to see the evil we have done, and to flee to Him who alone can put us right. And it should be a great cause of thankfulness to us if those we have trained up so carelessly are willing to obey us when we desire rest for them.

For some are so engrossed with their own pleasures that it is almost impossible to rouse them again from the state of self-complacency which they have been led to indulge in by our unfaithfulness, so nothing but the grace of God coming in can deliver them from this state of indifference.

We may say, then, that God gave Ruth a *submissive* mind which prompted her to act as she did, and to humble herself, and to go softly, and lie down, and uncover the feet of Boaz. She had thus voluntarily taken the place of humility. This is the only place of privilege and blessing, for we are told, he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke xiv. 11.)

She took the place where Naomi said that "He will tell thee what thou shalt do," but she did not approach until he had eaten and drunk.

We know that the great antitype of Boaz, our

Lord and Saviour, has done eating and drinking, as far as redemption is concerned. When here on earth He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John iv. 34.) "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John vi. 38.) He could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii. 4.) And on the cross He said, "It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.) "In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. xl. 7, 8.)

"And his heart was merry." This was the case with Boaz, and we find as we follow up the pathway of Jesus that there was a deep unspeakable joy in His heart as He thought of the Father in connection with us, for He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." (John x. 17.) It was necessary that the Lord should suffer in the flesh, as we read in that prophetic Psalm of our Lord's sufferings, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." (Ps. xxii. 14, 15.) "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." (Ps. xxii. 21.) Where was that? you say. On the cross He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." (Luke xxiii. 46.)

That was the final cry. The penalty due to sin was then paid. He gave up His life as the ransom. Was not that a joyful moment to the heart of our Lord when He was heard from the horns of the unicorns? "Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James v. 13); and in Psalm xxii. we find the Lord prophetically say, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." (Ps. xxii. 22.) "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 11.) "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." (Ps. xxi. 4-6.)

"Ours is strength that never faileth,
 Rough and dreary though the way;
 Ours is power that still prevai-leth.
 'Gainst the hostile foe's array.
 Ours is pardon—
 Peace that none can take away.

"Ours are flowers that know no fading,
 Everlasting is there bloom;
 Ours is light that knows no shading,
 Shining e'en 'mid Egypt's gloom.
 Ours is glory—
 Our is life beyond the tomb."



CHAPTER XV.

MIDNIGHT ; OR, THE HOUR OF THE POWER OF DARKNESS.

WE have been looking at the life of Boaz as shewing forth in type some of the most striking events in the life of our Lord, so this short passage before us is very significant. "He went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn : and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down." (Ruth iii. 7.)

We view this as a type of the end of the Lord's public ministry, or of the time when He was free to go out and in and teach in the temple, and no man laid hands on Him. As the antitype of Boaz, He was winnowing barley on the threshing floor. How truly the words of the prophet Isaiah expressed his experience : "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor : that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you." (Isa. xxi. 10.)

But darker and darker grew the world's history, greater and greater the evil of man's heart, as we shall see by man taking and slaying the Son of God, which is to be our leading thought in this chapter.

"And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself : and, behold, a woman lay at his feet." (Ver. 8.)

This important passage has a deeper meaning than any that has gone before, as it typifies the suffering of death, either as anticipated in Gethsemane, or as suffered on Calvary. "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he

should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 51.) For, He said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke xiii. 33.) And it was there He was lifted up on the cross. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." (John xii. 32, 33.) And "a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people," came and "laid hands on Jesus, and took him." (Matt. xxvi. 47, 50.)

David, inspired by the Spirit of God, foretold that "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." (Acts iv. 26, 27.) Such was the hatred and malice of man's heart against God's only begotten Son. Yet they could do nothing to that blessed One, but what the hand and the counsel of God determined before to be done. (Acts iv. 28.)

Wonderful testimony of the Spirit of truth to the loving, tender heart of God, and the willing obedience of His Son manifest in the flesh, as the Lord said when they laid hands on Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." It was indeed the midnight of this poor sin-stricken world when men, led on by the powers of darkness, were gathered together against the Lord and His Christ.

In the Psalms we find prophetic expressions of our Lord's anguish. "I am a worm, and no man : a reproach of men, and despised of the

people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Ps. xxii. 6-8.) And we know that this was literally the case, for they mocked and scoffed and wagged their heads, yet He answered them not a word, but in return for such treatment He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." (Luke xxiii. 34, 35.)

All this took place during the first three hours on the cross, when those gathered around it could witness the Lord's sufferings; but the verse before us indicates the occurrence of something special at midnight, for we read, "That the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet." (Ruth iii. 8.) Now we know that before our blessed Lord passed through the great and terrible anguish of the cross, just immediately before those three mysterious hours of darkness which at midday God sent to hide from the eyes of the scoffers the bitter agony of His Son, as He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24); as God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 6.)

"There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" (John xix. 25, 26.) And have we not read in the open-

ing pages of inspiration. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head? (Gen. iii. 15.) The sword of the Spirit had to pierce through the soul of Mary as Simeon warned her from God, when present at the circumcision of her Son on the eighth day. (Luke ii. 35.) She did not comprehend the mission of that Holy One which was born of her, and of which the angel testified before His birth, "He shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i. 35.)

Mary wanted to be identified with Him in incarnation, which was impossible, as those who are really united to Him are only so in resurrection. How needful then was that word from the cross to pierce that mother's heart, so that she might understand the true and blessed mission of that loved One! born of her, after the flesh according to the will of God, but whose life she so little understood. She did not understand even then that Christ ought to suffer these things and enter into His glory. (Luke xxiv. 26.)

In the first three hours of suffering on the cross He had to endure the reproach, and the hatred of man led on by Satan; but the last three hours He suffered from the hand of God. Never before those three memorable hours of darkness was there such anguish of soul, never after can there be such suffering, for He, the holy and the just One, was made sin on the cross, where "he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. ix. 26.)

Before Jesus entered into this darkness which ends in His bodily death, while still in conscious communion with God, He, the spotless, harmless One, who had done nothing amiss, commends His mother to one of His disciples, giving her to

see that it was no longer natural ties which were to bind her ; but that she was to enter into this new relationship of which He Himself was "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. iii. 14.)

Our relationship with Him is therefore as the risen One. For unless the corn of wheat die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John xii. 24.) Now it becomes us to walk in newness of life as identified with Christ in glory.

Ruth knew something of Boaz, and Boaz knew all about Ruth ; but he wanted her to see the ground of the relationship, so he said, "Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid : spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid ; for thou art a near kinsman." (Ver. 9.)

Had Ruth at first taken heed to the words of Boaz she would not have been asked the question, "Who art thou?" But Ruth's washing and anointing and putting on of raiment did not improve her in the eyes of Boaz, but she took the right place, and she learned what suited him, and claims the relationship of a near kinsman, for such he was in grace to her.

And it is through God's wondrous grace that we have got a kinsman, even Jesus, who has taken up our cause ; and to accomplish this He went down unto death for us, so that we are buried with Him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

(Rom. vi. 4, 5.) Our kinsman Christ Jesus has, without our asking, spread His skirt over us ; we are His, and no man shall pluck us out of His hand. (John x. 28.) He has in grace washed us, and anointed us, and clothed us, and shod us, and girded us, and covered us, and decked us with every ornament suited to Himself, and He has made us exceedingly beautiful, for we are made perfect through His comeliness which He hath put upon us.

But, like Ruth, we have turned away, and our beauty has become tarnished, and the fine gold become dim ; and we have been trying to improve ourselves, so He has to ask, "Who art thou?" It is most blessed for us when we are able, with her, to say, "I am thy handmaid Ruth" (that is beauty), however much that may be tarnished by contact with the world and its ways. For He has said of those that are His, "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Ps. lxxviii. 13.)

"Let nothing keep you back from Christ,
Nothing—without, within ;
But spread at once before the throne
Your sorrow and your sin.

"And think not many words you need
To make your meaning clear ;
A *look* will carry all to Him,
A *sigh* will reach His ear."



CHAPTER XVI.

“BLESSED BE THOU OF THE LORD;” OR,
“I WILL DO TO THEE ALL THAT THOU
REQUIREST.”

IN the last chapter we saw the grace and truth of God as manifested towards us in the gift of HIS Son who laid down His life for us. We also saw the extreme hatred of man's heart manifested against Him, as by wicked hands He was crucified and slain. In this chapter we shall see the precious seed bearing fruit to the glory of God the Father. “And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.” (Ruth iii. 10.)

Do we wish to delight the heart of the Lord, who laid aside His glory that we might be sharers with Him, through faith, of the glory which was given to Him by the Father, and which He has given to those who believe in Him? (John xvii. 22.) Then “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. x. 22), so that we may have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John i. 3.) Like David we can say, “Blessed be the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city” (Ps. xxxi. 21),

"For his merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever." (Ps. cxvii. 2.) "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 4-7.) For "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost: which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 4-7.)

If you are subject to His will, in accordance with His word, He calls it kindness. What wonderful condescending grace on the part of "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13) to speak thus to our souls, who "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." (Titus. iii 3.) This is love that passeth knowledge, and we know that it is so, and He, with us, rejoiced in it: for "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (Jer. ii. 2.)

Surely then the time past of our life may

suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, let us now be subject to the will of God. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind : for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Pet. iv. 1, 2.) This is the will of God, that we should be followers of Christ, as it is written, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.)

The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians said, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul ; and another, I am of Apollos ; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one : and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." (1 Cor. iii. 3-8.)

Does not this teach us that it gratifies the Lord's heart when we have Himself before us as our object, and not His planters or waterers, whether poor or rich?

"And now, my daughter, fear not ; I will do to thee all that thou requirest : for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." (Ver. 11.) Have you heard His loving voice say to you, Fear not, my daughter? You

have every reason to believe Him, for He said, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.” (Isa. xliii. 1.)

In what way have we been redeemed? Not with things corruptible, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) “Fear not: for I am with thee.” (Isa. xliii. 5.) Unbelief says He may leave me, but God said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. xiii. 5.) “I will do to thee all that thou requirest.” “For they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth, he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will save them.” (Ps. cxlv. 18, 19.) “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.” (Matt. vii. 7, 11.) “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” (John xiv. 13, 14.) “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John xv. 7.)

How full and gracious are the promises which God has scattered through His word for our edification and comfort. Such promises should encourage us to draw near to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace

to help in time of need. (Heb. iv. 16.) "For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." (Ver. 11.)

May our Lord be able to say of us, as Boaz said of Ruth, that all the children of God know that we are faithful to Him. "Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name." (Jer. xiv. 9.) O thou virtuous one, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord." (Deut. xxxiii. 23.) "In his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. xxx. 5.) O love the Lord, all ye His saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. i. 9.) "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. v. 24.) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.) May it be so with each one of us! "Blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." (Ps. lxxii. 19.)

"Christ has done the mighty work,
Nothing's left for us to do,
But to enter on His toil,
Enter on His triumph too.

"He has sowed the precious seed,
Nothing left for us unsown,
Ours it is to reap the fields,
Make the harvest joy our own."



CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEAR KINSMAN; OR, OUR SAVIOUR, OUR SANCTIFIER, AND OUR GLORIFIER.

DOES the Lord ever deny the relationship between Himself and believers? No! "He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. ii. 13.) "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) Boaz said, "And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I." (Ver. 11.)

It is a precious truth for us to know that the Second Man, the Lord in heaven, is now our near kinsman. It was not always so. We had no claim upon Him, yet He came and was made flesh, and He was put to death in the flesh. And as He rose from the dead, He said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and to your God." (John xx. 17.) "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." (2 Tim. ii. 11.)

But many are relying on the friendship of this nearer kinsman who has dominion over us as long as we live in the flesh, and until such time as we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. vi. 11.) We shall have to wait for *deliverance* until we can see clearly and are fully convinced that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, as it is written, "Tarry this night, and it shall be in

the morning that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth; lie down until the morning." (Ver. 13.)

Oh, the wonderful grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who so patiently waits on us. He has paid the redemption price, and by His own precious word and Spirit so fully unfolded this truth to us that He, and He only, could redeem us, that we can easily understand the Psalmist when He said, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave." (Ps. xlix. 6, 7, 15.) If we endeavour to save ourselves by the aid of the nearer kinsman, it proves a night of sorrow, and we have to cry out, like Job, "He putteth my feet in the stocks; He marketh all my paths." (Job xxxiii. 11.)

For these efforts of our own plainly declare that we have not submitted ourselves to the righteousness of God (Rom. x. 3) which is by faith in Jesus Christ. And God is dealing with us in love to win us to Himself. He keepeth back our soul from the pit, and our life from perishing by the sword. He chasteneth us upon our bed, and our bones He tries with strong pain, so that our life abhorreth bread, and our soul dainty meat. (Job xxxiii. 20.)

And we cry out in our anguish, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.) Then He

shews by His word and Spirit His uprightness, "That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) For He justifies freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. iii. 24.) As we read, "Deliver him from going down to the pit. I have found a ransom." (Job xxxiii. 24.)

If I believe in God's ransom shall I be free? Yes. Can I pray to God in His name? Yes. Will He be favourable to me? Yes. Shall I see His face with joy? Yes. Shall my flesh be fresher than a child's? Yes. You ask why is all this? Because He will render unto man His righteousness. "For he desires to justify you." (Job xxxiii. 25, 26, 32.)

"It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 12, 14.) "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." (Rom. iii. 20.) But the Lord of glory has pledged Himself by His precious word to those who believe in Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) And not only so, but when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. (Col. iii. 4.) "And she lay at his feet until the morning : and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be

known that a woman came into the floor." (Ver. 14.)

Ruth left Boaz in the morning before the fulness of the truth dawned upon her heart, as we read, "Ruth went away before one could see another," and the result was that she did not obtain that rest and peace which Naomi sent her forth to enjoy.

Ruth was not sent away, but she rose of her own accord, and he said, "Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor." You ask, Why this secrecy? Because it brought no glory to the kinsman, neither does our testimony to the merits of Christ bring any glory to His name if we do not enjoy the fulness of the blessing by His work secured for us on the cross, so that we can freely give Him all the glory as He gives us all the grace. "For the husbandman that laboureth must first be partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." (2 Tim. ii. 6, 7.)

It is necessary for us to know Him as our Saviour, our sanctifier, and our glorifier, before we can say that we know Him in all things. For He said to His disciples, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." (John xiv. 7.) So in John xvii. we find the Lord praying to the Father about those saved souls whom He was about to leave in the world. They were saved by the knowledge of the living and true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. (John xvii. 3.) They were sanctified by the word of God which He gave to them. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also

might be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 19.) They are glorified by Him inasmuch as He said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one." (John xvii. 22.)

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18.) "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee : but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it : that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John xvii. 25, 26.)

"To know the Christ of God,
The everlasting Son ;
To know what He on earth,
For guilty man has done :
This is the first and last
Of all that's true and wise ;
The circle that contains all light
Beneath, above, the skies.

"The Christ who took man's flesh,
Who lived man's life below ;
Who died man's death for man,
The death of shame and woe ;
The Christ who from the cross
Descended to man's grave,
Then rose to victory and joy,
Mighty to bless and save."



CHAPTER XVIII

SIX MEASURES OF BARLEY ; OR, ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.

RUTH returned to the city with good news and laden with an abundant proof of the good will of the near kinsman, but she was not clear as to her own personal enjoyment of that rest which she sought to obtain, and which Boaz was desirous she might stay to enjoy. (See Ruth iii. 13.) But she rose up to depart, and when she did this, he said, "Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city." (Ver. 15.)

So wonderfully is the Lord taken up with us that He loads us with benefits, even six measures of barley, as Boaz gave to Ruth that she might not go empty to her mother in law.

And does not the floor furnish the bread which sustains life? And has He not said, "I am that bread of life. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 48, 58)? Out of His wine-press we have fulness of joy, as Jesus said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John xv. 11.) "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." And to His Father He said, "Now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

(John xvii. 13.) So you see, much as the Lord delights to have us in His company to enjoy all the blessing there is in His own presence and home; yet until relationship is established, we cannot be *at home* with Him, though we may be much blessed.

Ruth went away loaded with six measures of barley, the seventh measure was the "one thing needful," as the Lord said to Martha, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her," as she sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His word. (Luke x. 38-42.)

Beloved reader, which portion do you choose? Ruth's, with her six measures of barley, or Mary's, with the one thing needful for the child of God? Mary's portion, you say, shall be mine, and so do I; but the choice implies suffering, not only the contradiction of sinners, but of saints. It means trials and difficulties and sorrows. It means that you must bear to be misunderstood by every one except Jesus; your sister, your brother, your fellow-labourer, may sometimes impute to you some sinister motive for your actions, when in your inmost soul you know they are for the glory of God and the honour of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. When such is the case, you may well bear it, for in it there is great recompence of reward (Heb. x. 35); bear it for His name and glory's sake: He was misunderstood, He was scoffed at, He was mocked by friend and foe, He suffered all that for you, He loved you and gave Himself for you. Be, then, like the Hebrew servant, who might have gone out furnished liberally with the good things which

his master had provided him with, but, like him, you choose to stay because you love your Master, and you enjoy fellowship with Him. You have given up everything for His sake, every thought, every desire, to be free. Is such your condition? is such your choice? Then know that you *are* free, for he whom the Son maketh free, is free indeed. (John viii. 36.)

Before you take this step be sure that you mean it, for there is the testing time to come: that is, the proving of your love before you become the servant for ever; there is the awl to be thrust through your ear. (Deut. xv. 17.)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abounds toward every one that believes in Him. But perpetual servitude means having the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead (2 Cor. i. 9), it means "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.) Paul said, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. ii. 10.) This is the wonderful testimony of one who could say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. vi. 17.) And when writing to his beloved son in the faith (Timothy) he could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept

the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6-8.)

Do not deceive yourself with the thought that you love His appearing if you are occupied with the passing things of time, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 18.) "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), so he that hath the hope of His coming before the eye of faith, purifieth himself even as He is pure. (1 John iii. 2, 3.) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

"O, love of God, how strong and true!
Eternal and yet ever new,
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

"O, love of God, how deep and great!
Far deeper than man's deepest hate;
Self-fed, self-kindled like the light,
Changeless, eternal, infinite.

"O, love of God, how precious still,
In days of weariness and ill!
In nights of pain and helplessness,
To heal, to comfort, and to bless."



CHAPTER XIX.

“WHO ART THOU, MY DAUGHTER?” OR, THE MARVELLOUS EFFECT OF COMMUNION.

SUCH is the marvellous effect of communion with Boaz (type of Christ risen and glorified), that Naomi has to say, “Who art thou?” as we read, “When she came to her mother in law she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done unto her.” (Ver. 16.) Her mother in law dwelt in the city, type of the organizations of men, surrounded by walls and gates and bars, but Boaz was outside it all, and you cannot be long in communion with the Lord before the effect becomes manifest to those “who love the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John xii. 43); who think that they worship God when they “teach for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. xv. 9.) Tell them all that the Man (Christ Jesus) has done for you, and they will not believe it; but be not discouraged, the Lord will give you the necessary boldness to declare His name, and although in their estimation you may be unlearned and ignorant, yet you may know for a certainty that those very people, when you are gone, will acknowledge that you have been with Jesus. (Acts iv. 13.)

They may even forbid you to speak or testify of this Man who is the delight of your heart, but be prepared in spirit and in truth to say “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts v. 29.)

When you get an open ear do not get weary of telling what the Man at God's right hand has done for you, but tell them also, like Ruth, what He has given you for them: "And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me: for he said to me, Go not empty to thy mother in law." (iii. ver. 17.) Those six measures of barley imply everything that the servant of God has to give. In these last evil days men are everywhere linking the name, and the praise, and the worship of Jesus Christ our Lord with that which ministers to our old Adam nature, which is opposed to God and the Comforter which He has sent to testify to us of Jesus, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." (Gal. v. 17.)

Instead of obeying the truth of God, and putting off the old man with his deeds, in their folly they choose rather to improve and encourage it, in its affections and lusts, and in this way corrupt or set aside "the word of God." (2 Cor. ii. 17.)

Oh may we, as servants of God, be faithful unto death, and make full proof of our ministry, displaying before the wondering soul what corresponds with Ruth's six measures of barley, or all the servant of God has to give. If we watch in all these things we shall have to endure affliction. "But our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) Continue faithful, and you may be encouraged by some signs of interest in your case, as Naomi said to Ruth, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." (Ver. 18.)

“Sit still” is good advice to those who have life, but not rest of soul to such as by their own vain endeavours are trying to obtain this rest, which can only be known as we abide in Him who is the antitype of Boaz. He is the good way which Jeremiah spoke of, which if we abide therein we shall find rest for our souls; but how many of the Lord’s loved ones are like those to whom Jeremiah spoke, who by their words and actions said, “We will not walk therein:” and when the trumpet sounds forth the good news, and the Lord says by His Spirit, “Hearken,” they by their very restlessness say, “We will not hearken.” (Jer. vi. 16, 17.)

When the word of the Lord says, “This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest” (Isa. xxviii. 12), it becomes us to take heed, for the Holy Ghost has declared these things for our edification, that we might have a full knowledge of what God in His grace is desirous that we should be conscious of in our wilderness journey; for this is not our rest. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. iv. 4, 5.)

Nothing that we can do procures us rest, that rest of soul which so many of the children of God are seeking, but cannot attain to, simply because they are endeavouring to work it out themselves, instead of by faith receiving into their hearts the truth of God, “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” For the work according to God’s mind “was finished from the foundation of the world.” (Heb. iv. 3.)

If you have in accordance with God’s word

believed the record which He has given of His Son, you have rest of conscience by the finished work of Christ, for “His blood cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John i. 7.) And you will have rest of soul if you have the Lord as the one object of your heart. As He said, “learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. xi. 29.) “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (Heb. iv. 10.)

But you spoke of this as “our wilderness journey,” and said that “this is not our rest.” This is quite true, for in this world we are but strangers and pilgrims, and we are fully persuaded that “there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (Heb. iv. 9.) And the apostle said, “Let us labour (or use all diligence) therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Heb. iv. 11.)

God has a rest, and we shall rest with Him at the end of our journey; but many of the Lord’s people seem to come short of God’s rest, for they settle down here, and in their prosperity they are saying, “I shall never be moved.” (Ps. xxx. 6.)

They have made a nest for themselves like Job, and thought to have “multiplied their days as the sand.” (Job. xxix. 18.) They have forgotten that the Lord’s portion is His people, and He rests not until they are enjoying the rest which He has provided for them. Oh, then, let us be mindful of the Rock which begat us, and the God that formed us. (Deut. xxxii. 18.) And while He is long-suffering let us confess the evil of our doings, and He will be gracious unto us for His name sake, and while he is leading,

instructing and keeping us in the right way as the apple of His eye, and as an eagle He stirreth up our nest that we might not seem to come short of the promised rest that remains for His people. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and therethe weary be atrest." (Job. iii. 17.) Think of the God of all grace so occupied with us, fluttering over us, so as to draw our attention to Himself, that we might have confidence. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi. 12.) See how He spreadeth abroad His wings, so that we might not fear but rejoice to know that the "Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. xxxiii. 27.) God in His sovereign grace taketh us up, He beareth us in His arms of love, He will rejoice over us with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over us with singing. (Zeph. iii. 17.) To His name be all the praise, the honour, and glory, for ever and ever.

"Precious Saviour! Thou hast linked us
In Thy deep, unchanging love;
There in spirit Thou wilt keep us,
Happy in Thyself above.
There remaining and confiding,
Love unbounded Thou dost prove."



CHAPTER XX.

THE CONTRAST ; OR, LAW AND GRACE EXEMPLIFIED.

BOAZ, as we have seen, loved Ruth, and took the whole responsibility of her case upon himself. So he went up to the gate and sat down. Now the gate is the place where all cases were to be settled, as God says in His word, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes : and they shall judge the people with just judgment." (Deut. xvi. 18.) We find also that cases similar to Ruth's were to be settled there. (See Deut. xxv. 5-10.) Boaz states the case to the nearer kinsman, for the right of redemption is to be fully and satisfactorily settled that day.

While they were consulting together, Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit ye down here. And they sat down." (Chap. iv. 2.) (Ten signifies man's responsibility Godward.) Boaz spoke to the kinsman and elders as one having authority. And we know that the blessed Antitype of Boaz spoke with authority, and not as the scribes. For God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that He was ordained of God to judge the quick and dead. To Him gave all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts x. 38-43.) It was He, the Christ of

God, that took our responsibility on Himself and met it fully on Calvary's cross. For He is a just God and a Saviour. (Isa. xlv. 21.) "The sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) And He was made sin for us. (2 Cor. v. 21.) "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) And He died for us. (Rom. v. 8.) "The strength of sin is the law." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) And He came to fulfil the law and the prophets. He is moreover the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Rom. x. 4.) "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 21.)

"And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it." (Vers. 3, 4.)

The "nearer kinsman" was typical of the law, and the law was that which revealed man's duty to God, as the Israelites said to Moses, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Ex. xxiv. 7.) "Did not Moses give you the law, and none of you keepeth the law." (John vii. 19.) This was the solemn testing of Him who came from above to reveal the Father's heart, and who could say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. xl. 8.) For He was the One whom God sent to declare His will, and to

speaking His words, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. (John iii. 34.)

“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.” (Vers. 5, 6.)

When Boaz explained to the nearer kinsman the real state of affairs, he at once confessed that he could not redeem it. You will see, then, the folly of expecting to be justified by the law, for the law was not intended by God for the justification of any, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Neither is it to be the rule of life of those that are redeemed by the Antitype of Boaz, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law [or nearer kinsman] could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. viii. 2-4.) And those who were under the law have become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that we should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Rom. vii. 4.) “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers

of the law ; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully ; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." (1 Tim. i. 5-9.) If you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26), the end of the commandment has been manifested towards you in divine love, for we deserved death. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) So that in the person of our substitute, the Christ of God, we have passed through death and judgment unto life eternal. "For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.)

Therefore as the children of God, and partakers of the divine nature, we should walk in newness of life and surpass all the claims of our fellowmen, as the Lord when commenting on the law, and bringing the legal mind and that governed by grace into contrast, said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 43-45.)

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (Eph. v. 1-2.) If then the ministration of death and condemnation was glorious, so

that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness exceed in glory. "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." (2 Cor. iii. 7-11.)

"Fill every part of me with praise,
Let all my being speak
Of Thee and of Thy love, O Lord,
Poor though I be, and weak,
So shalt Thou, Lord, from me—e'en me,
Receive the glory due ;
And so shall I begin on earth
The song for ever new.

"So shall each fear, each fret, each care,
Be turned into song ;
And every winding of the way
The echo shall prolong.
So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free,
But all my life, in every step,
Be fellowship with Thee."



CHAPTER XXI.

THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED ; OR, “ THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.”

“ NOW this was the manner in former time concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things ; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour : and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.” (Ruth iv. 7, 8.)

The nearer kinsman acknowledged here that he had no power to redeem, and by the ancient custom of taking off his shoe he confirmed it, and so gave up his right to the land and person of Ruth. The only power the law had was to condemn the guilty. For as many as are of the work of the law are under the curse. “ For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Gal. iii. 10.)

The sum and substance of the whole matter is this, “ When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Gal. iv. 4-7.)

“ And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all

the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place : ye are witnesses this day." (Vers. 9, 10.)

It is a moment of unspeakable joy when the truth of redemption for the first time dawns on any heart. As Boaz was the one that redeemed Ruth, so our Lord has redeemed us by His own blood, and brought us nigh unto God in and through Himself, and we have privileges which Old Testament saints had not, as they were not then given nor revealed. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, which is God's." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) Hear what the Lord said of us when our future destiny was a mystery to all but Himself and God, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls : who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. xiii. 45, 46.) The Lord Himself is represented by the merchant man, the pearl of great price is the church, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel :

unto me (Paul) is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. (Eph. iii. 5-9.)

Our Lord, as the merchant man, paid the great price for this goodly pearl. He gave all that He had, even His life was laid down that this pearl of great price might be His throughout the eternal ages. As it is written: "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25-27.)

We are therefore a unique people. He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus ii. 14.) "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. v. 29-32.)

Great and mighty men of God have gone on before, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb. xi. 39-40.) There is a great cloud of

witnesses waiting until the time comes when the last member of His body the church is gathered in and presented to the Lord. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) As we pass through this world indwelt by the Holy Ghost, who is taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us, we are to have our eye fixed upon the One who was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. (Rom. vi. 4.) Having our minds set upon things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. (Col. iii. 1.) If Ruth stood at the gate that morning, which was her place, her eye would not be fixed on the elders, nor yet on the nearer kinsman, but on Boaz. So may our eyes be fixed on Christ.

"O everlasting Strength,
Uphold us in the way ;
Bring us, in spite of foes, at length¹
To joy, and light, and day !

"O everlasting Love,
Wellspring of grace and peace,
Pour down Thy fulness from above,
Bid doubt and trouble cease !

"O everlasting Rest
Lift off life's load of care!
Relieve, revive each burdened breast,
And every sorrow bear."



CHAPTER XXII.

THE BRIDEGROOM ; OR, HOME AT LAST.

“AND all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem.” (Ruth iv. 11.)

The Holy Ghost is a witness to us that Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb. x. 14.)

Jesus said, “The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” (John xv. 26, 27.) “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts i. 8.) And this was the testimony which Peter and the other apostles gave of Jesus before the council in Jerusalem: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” (Acts v. 30-32.)

The people and the elders prayed for blessing

upon the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, that she might be like Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel, typical of the house now being built for our Lord. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; *whose house are we*, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. iii. 5, 6.)

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. ii. 19-22.)

"Get thee riches and power in Ephratah, and proclaim thy name in Beth-lehem." (Ver. 11, marg.)

We know from the word of God that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth. (Rom. i. 16.) For "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.) "In his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 7.) Oh may the eyes of our understanding be enlightened that we may know "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according

to the working of His mighty 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." (Eph. i. 18-21.)

Not only do the witnesses and others at the gate desire that Ruth should be as fruitful as Rachel and Leah who built up the house of Israel, but they said of Boaz, "And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman." (Ver. 12.) In this there is great encouragement for us to look to the Lord to bless our loved ones, as we find their prayers were answered. For what is it that rises high above everything in the house of Pharez? Is it not the wonderful grace of God that he above all others should be chosen as head of the house of Judah, of which our Lord came after the flesh? This shews us that our God is Sovereign, and can rise in grace above all the iniquity and unrighteousness of man, as we find in the case of Judah and Tamar. (Gen. xxxviii. 29.) And the God which connects their names together in the book of the generations of Jesus Christ as the parents of Phares (Matt. i. 3, 4), has in the same book connected the name of Boaz and Ruth as the parents of Obed who begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David. (Matt. i. 5, 6.) It is true, Ruth did not act in the same manner as Tamar; but she was a Moabitess, and of such it was written: "No Moabite shall enter into the congregation of the Lord," and the Lord said, Thou shall not seek

their peace nor their prosperity for ever. (Deut. xxiii. 3-6.)

This is the unbounded grace of our God who overrules all things for our good. Oh, then let us love the Lord and bless His holy name together.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.” (Ver. 13.)

Here we find an answer to the desire of the elders at the gate, when they said, The Lord make the woman fruitful, that is, like Rachel and Leah which built the house of Israel. And we know, beloved, that they looked to the right source for fruitfulness, as we read in that beautiful and expressive Psalm, the 127th: “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward.”

It is only as we are united to the antitype of Boaz that we can do anything, “For without me ye can do nothing.” (John xv. 5.) But He has said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” (John xv. 7, 8.) May it be the aim and object of our lives to live Christ, to manifest Him before men as He manifests us before God, so shall we be for His glory, who has said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you.” (John xv. 16.)



CHAPTER XXIII.

BLESSED BE THE LORD ; OR, " THINGS WHICH
MUST BE HEREAFTER."

" AND the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel." (Ver. 14.)

We know from scripture that the fulness of the Gentiles will soon come in. (Rom. xi. 25.) Then He, who has in grace done a kinsman's part for us, will again shew Himself to His people Israel. He said unto them, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. xxiii. 39.) In that day they shall say, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isa. ix. 6, 7.)

In that day His name shall be famous in Israel, for "it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not : and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save." (Zeph. iii. 16, 17.)

"And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age : for thy

daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him." (Ruth iv. 15.)

There is precious truth hidden in this verse, which will not be fully known until the type is fulfilled in the antitype; but the Spirit of truth whom God has given to lead us into all truth may teach us now that we may in some little measure comprehend in our own souls, by anticipation, that time of unspeakable blessedness for those whom the Spirit of God is baptising into one body (I Cor. xii. 12); for when the last living stone is built in, the last member added to the body of Christ, He will rise up from the Father's throne, where He is now seated, and "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (I Thess iv. 16, 17.)

Do you desire to know how things will appear in heaven after the saints are introduced there in their glorified bodies? Then God has been pleased to give us a revelation of those things which must be hereafter, and the revelation commences with a description of the very thing you desire to know, as we read: "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon as a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round

about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." (Rev. iv. 1-4.)

We read again in verses 10, 11: "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." We have the Lordship of Jesus in this chapter acknowledged by all the redeemed in heaven.

In the next chapter we have the question asked, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." (Rev. v. 2, 3.) This grieved the heart of the apostle, and he wept much, until one of the elders said unto him, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." And as John looked he beheld, "and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the living creatures, and the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty

elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints." And they sang a new song of praise and thanksgiving to the One who had redeemed the inheritance by His blood: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. v. 4-10.)

And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, in all a company which cannot be numbered, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 11-14.)

Thus in chapters iv. and v. of Revelation we are privileged to see our place in heaven after we are caught up to meet the Lord, in accordance with His promise to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, to whom He wrote, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.)

From the 6th to the 19th chapters inclusive, with few exceptions, we get the record of the terrible judgments God has stored up for that time when "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." (Isa. i. 27, 28.) When the seals, and trumpets, and vials of God's wrath are being poured out, it will be our happy privilege to be safe with Him who is our life in heaven, in whom we are eternally secure. Terrible things will come to pass on this earth, when men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and they shall call on the mountains and rocks to hide them "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi. 16.)

Farther on in the book of Revelation we read, "After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments And the four and twenty elders and the four creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia." (Rev. xix. 1, 2, and 4.) In verse 4 the history of the four and twenty elders close as such. Henceforth they are divided into two companies—that is the Bride, and the friends of the Bridegroom. The friends are composed of all those that died in faith before Jesus was glorified, and therefore before the Holy Ghost was given (see John vii. 39), and before any souls were baptised into one body on earth and united to Christ as Head in

heaven by the Spirit who is the gathering power that attracts us to Him. The friends of the Bridegroom are believers from Abel down to the last saint that died before the day of Pentecost, and the last of which we have any record was the thief on the cross ; and before him we have John the Baptist, who said, " He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John iii. 29.) The friends of the Bridegroom are those that say, " Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." (Rev. xix. 7-9.)

We see thus two companies of redeemed, that is, the Bride who hath made herself ready, and the friends of the Bridegroom who are called to the marriage supper.

The supper being over, we find heaven again opened, " And behold a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns ; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon

white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. xix. 11-16.)

To understand this truth more fully let us go back to the time when the Holy Ghost has gathered together all the members of the body of Christ, and we are all caught up, as already seen, to be for ever with the Lord. Then it is that the man of sin will be fully revealed, the son of perdition, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thes. ii. 3, 4)

This is the exact state of things on the earth when the faithful and true Witness comes forth in righteousness to judge and make war. For the man of sin or the lawless one being fully revealed, Christ, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, "shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." (2 Thes. ii. 8.)

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These

both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Rev. xix. 19-21.)

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14, 15.)

"Who shall condemn us now?
Since Christ has died, and risen, and gone above,
For us to plead at the right hand of love,—
Who shall condemn us now?"

"'Tis God that justifies!
Who shall recall His pardon or His grace?
Or who the broken chain of guilt replace?
'Tis God that justifies!"

"The victory is ours!
For us in might came forth the mighty One;
For us He fought the fight, the triumph won:
The victory is ours!"



CHAPTER XXIV.

“THE DELIVERER;” OR, “ALL ISRAEL SHALL
BE SAVED.”

IN scripture we read of three companies of redeemed which shall all be present with the Lord during the millennium, or His reign over the earth.

We may safely say that Naomi represents the first company, or the friends of the Bridegroom. That is, all those who died in faith, not having received the promise.

Ruth represents the second company, or the bride, the Lamb's wife, that is, all believers gathered together by the Holy Ghost, and baptised into one body, of which through grace we form part. “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Eph. v. 30.) In that day when He comes forth in glory, the world shall know that the Father loves us as He loves His Son. (John xvii. 23.)

Obed, Ruth's son, represents the third company, or the faithful remnant, as the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and the word of God, were seen by John at first, but afterwards their bodies were raised, and “they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. xx. 4.)

What is this, but raising up the name of the dead? “And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.” (Ruth iv. 16.) And so it shall be in the last days.

A few scriptures may illustrate this truth more

fully, such as Israel "stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. ix. 32, 33.) What shall I then say? "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world how much more their fulness?" (Rom. xi. 11, 12.) "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. xi. 15.)

In the scriptures already quoted there is enough to establish the inference drawn in connection with Naomi, Ruth, and Obed, but a few more may be useful, so we read: "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah v. 1, 2.)

It was at the close of sixty-nine weeks of years out of the seventy determined upon Daniel's people, and upon his holy city (see Dan. ix. 24-27), that their Messiah was cut off, as Caiaphas the high priest said to the Jews, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that

also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." (John xi. 49-53.) They refused Him as their Messiah because they did not see it necessary that He should redeem them by blood, as they did not understand the scriptures, for the law and the prophets had clearly revealed that He should suffer many things, and be put to death, and the third day rise again.

God has in grace suspended time in His dispensational dealings with His earthly people, that the last week of the seventy determined upon Daniel's people stands over, and has yet to be completed according to His own counsel. For He said, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hos. v. 15.) As He said: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John xvi. 28); for "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Matt. xxi. 42.)

When He spake of His death to them they answered Him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children

of light." (John xii. 34-36.) "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." (John xii. 46.) But they refused to believe in Him, "that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (John xii. 38.)

Therefore God has given them up, "until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel." (Mic. v. 3.) "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Rom. xi. 25-27.) In that day the Lord's anointed shall proclaim the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. Men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. (Isa. lxi. 2, 3, 6.) "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people:

all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed." (Isa. lxi. 8, 9.) "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." (Isa. lxii. 11.) "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isa. lxiii. 4.) "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies." (Isa. lxvi. 10-14.)

By the scriptures which we have looked at we can see that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29); and that He will indeed be a restorer of His people's life, "The valley of dry bones shall live." (See Ezek. xxxvii.) "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 2-3.)

CHAPTER XXV.

THE KINGDOM ; OR, "HE SHALL SIT ON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY."

"AND the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, there is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth iv. 17.) In reference to the time of blessing typically spoken of here God has said, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. xxxi. 31-34.) Again He said, "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do

them. My servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them ; it shall be an everlasting covenant. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 22, 24-26 and 28.) "Then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. xxiv. 30.) "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 27.) When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 41, 42.) "And before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 32-34.) For in ministering to the least of the Lord's brethren they ministered unto Him. (See Matt. xxv. 35-40.) "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

(Matt. xxv. 41.) For they had an opportunity of doing good, and they did it not. Therefore, they “shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (See Matt. xxv. 41-46.)

We have got here a wonderful revelation from the Lord Himself, as He informs us what shall take place when He comes in great power and glory to set up His kingdom on earth. “When the judgments of the LORD are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. xxvi. 9.) “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.” (Isa. xxvi. 10, 11.)

So we find those whom the Lord calls “My brethren,” and those that shewed them kindness are on His right hand, for when the judgments of God were poured forth on the earth they ministered to them that suffered persecution for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And they heard the gracious summons, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. xxv. 34.)

On the other hand we find all those that were opposed to the witness of Jesus and the word of God, who did not minister to them, but made “merry over their death, and sent gifts one to another” (Rev. xi. 10); who in the presence of God’s judgments acted unjustly, and in defiance of Him went on their own way, until, called to

account, they heard the just but solemn sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.)

This is the way in which all things that offend and them that do iniquity are dealt with when the Son of man comes in His glory to sit upon the throne of His glory, "For he shall put down all rule and all authority and all power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.) "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither *reprove after the hearing of his ears*: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the

LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. xi. 2-9.)

For this time of blessing the earnest expectation of the creature is waiting, and we know when the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, that they shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (Rom. viii. 19, 21 and 22.)

“ And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” (Isa. xxix. 18, 19.) “ Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” (Isa. xxxii. 16-18.)

It is truly blessed for us to read from God’s own word the future portion of this earth when Jesus Himself shall reign over it as King of kings and Lord of lords. But our joy and peace in Him far excel anything spoken of in reference to God’s earthly people, but can we read such portions of His precious word without having a deep sense of thankfulness to Him that the time shall come even in this earth when we shall reign with our Lord, the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall worship and adore Him?

We may learn from the scriptures brought before us how much the Lord appreciates every-

thing done for His people. For in the age of judgment which is coming on this earth to try all them that are in it, those who shew kindness to the Lord's brethren (that is, believing Jews) He acknowledges it as done for Himself, so the sheep on His right hand, in that day of separation, consist of those among the nations of the earth that shewed His people kindness in their great tribulation, and they are privileged to share with the Lord's brethren the inheritance, while we who believe now shall sit with Him and reign with Him. The Gentiles are exhorted to rejoice with His people (Deut. xxxii. 43), as the psalmist says: "Praise the Lord, all ye nations: and praise him, all ye people." (Ps. cxvii. 1.) And again, Isaiah said: "There shall be a root out of Jesse, and he shall rise to reign over the Gentiles: in him shall the Gentiles trust." (Rom. xv. 12.) If the Lord of glory values so much the kindness and love shewn to the least of His brethren in the day of His vengeance, how much more does he expect of us in this day of grace, in which His own love has been so fully displayed in going down unto death, that by His own precious blood we might be redeemed and brought nigh, so nigh that we are members of His body, and as such, members of one another. It becomes us to be subject to His word, as taught by His Spirit, that with one mind and one mouth we may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." (Rom. xv. 6, 7.)

"Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye

the seed of Israel. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.” (Ps. xxii. 23, 27, 28, 31.)

“Jesus! O name of power divine
To all of heavenly birth!
Jesus! the never failing mine
Of richest, sweetest worth!

“My freshest, purest, sweetest springs,
In His blest love I find:
While from that fount the Spirit brings
Sweet treasures to my mind.

“And is not this, O Lord, enough,
Thy perfect love to share,—
Till Thou shalt call Thy bride above,
To meet Thee in the air?

“It *is* enough: Thy tender smile
(Till I behold Thee there),
Shall cheer me through the ‘little while’
I’m waiting for Thee here.

“Then speak the word—that gladdening word
To bid us rise to Thee—
To bid creation own her Lord,
And all His glory see.”



CHAPTER XXVI.

“THE GENERATIONS OF PHAREZ;” OR, HOW
MUCH MAY BE LEARNED FROM A NAME.

“NOW these are the generations of Pharez : Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon.” (Ruth iv. 18-20.)

In reading the word of God we have no warrant to pass over a name without looking to the Lord to understand the truth which may lie hid in it, which otherwise we might pass by unnoticed. In the three verses before us we have got six names, and we can count upon the Lord, that His Spirit may give us to understand the true meaning of each name, that we may be edified thereby. That which characterised the house of Pharez was the special manifestation of God in grace, raising above man's sin where there could be no claim upon God : “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” (Rom. v. 20.) So in Pharez, which signifies “breach,” can we not see shadowed forth to those who feared God in that day “The rich mercy and great love of God in giving his Son” to stand in the breach? for He took our place in death, and became the firstborn from among the dead. He has opened up a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh : therefore believers have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of

Jesus. (Heb. x. 19, 20.) And those who may not have trusted Him yet may still hear His voice saying, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John x. 9.) "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.) There is a moment coming when the Lord will rise and shut to the door. Oh enter, while the door stands wide open. All who will may enter now. This, and this only, is salvation, for by grace ye are saved. (Eph. ii. 8.) Once in Christ you are eternally secure. For as Hezron signifies you are surrounded by a wall, and although Satan may desire to have you, as you pass through this world that blessed One that stood in the breach is now making intercession for you that your faith fail not; and as the apostle John, speaking of our life in Him, says: "That wicked one toucheth us not" (1 John v. 18); although day and night he accuses us before God, and in his malice he insinuates all manner of evil against us, an example of which we find in Job's case, when Satan said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" (Job i. 9, 10.) And has God not blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? (Eph. i. 3.) And is it not written, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"? (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. ii. 5.)

This leads us on to consider the third name in our list, which is "Ram," and signifies high;

for we are not only surrounded by a wall, but it is a high wall: "For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii.) Neither is there any separation from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. viii. 39.) When the angel talked with John he said, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal: and had a wall great and high. . . . And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. . . . And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." (See Rev. xxi. 9-17.)

In Revelation xxi. 17 the symbol sets forth the fulness of Christ, as He is the man spoken of, the perfect Man, the only Man who was measured by the divine rule (golden reed) and was found equal in every part.

This leads us to the fourth name, Amminadab, which signifies the power of the Prince. And can we not say, like one of old, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." (Sol. Song vi. 12.) This is the way we become acquainted with the exceeding greatness of His power by having the eyes of our understanding enlightened; that we "may

know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty 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." (Eph. i. 18-20.) God's object is to "make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (Eph. iii. 9-12.) So we are strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we may be rooted and grounded in love, that we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; so as to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. (Eph. iii. 16-19.) "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" so let us speak the truth in love, that we may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Eph. iv. 13, 15.) So shall we be, unawares, like the chariots of Amminadab, bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. For in this

was His power manifested, that He could lay down His life, and take it again. (John x. 17.)

This state leads us on to consider the fifth name, Nahshon, which signifies enchanter, or one who delights. And the great apostle to the Gentiles counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Phil. iii. 8, 9.)

And this leads us to the sixth name, Salmon, which signifies clothed, as the apostle said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. iii. 10, 11.)

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (2 Cor. v. 4.) "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) . . . wherefore we endeavour [marg.], that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable." (2 Cor. v. 6-9.)

CHAPTER XXVII.

“THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS;”
OR, “BLESSED ARE ALL THOSE THAT PUT
THEIR TRUST IN HIM.”

SIX of the names given of the generations of Pharez have already passed before us; the seventh (or perfect number) is Boaz, which signifies “in him is strength.” How beautifully this accords with that blessed One, whom all through we have looked upon as the great anti-type of Boaz, the Lord Jesus. As it is written, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. vi. 10.) “For the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Neh. viii. 10.)

The perfect, blessed, dependent Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, could say when here, with joy and thankfulness of heart, “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.” (Acts ii. 25-28.) “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thess. v. 16-18.) But this brings us on to the pleasant land, where “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great

love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 4-6.)

This brings us to the eighth name, Obed, which signifies "worshipping." Now who do you think are we likely to worship, when we know the place of blessing where we are brought unto? Will it be the person or the place? The person surely. For an illustration of this let us turn to Deuteronomy xxvi., and see the instruction given there for the godly Israelite. "When thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein ; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shall go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there." (Vers. 1, 2.) He confessed what he was in himself and how God came in and graciously delivered him and his. "And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God : and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee." (Deut. xxvi. 9-11.)

As the Israelite worshipped God in Canaan so we are to worship God in the holiest, where we have boldness to enter by the blood of Christ

(Heb. x. 19.) Not with material things such as a basket of firstfruits, but we worship God in spirit and in truth, as the Lord said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John iv. 23, 24.) Oh then, as purged worshippers, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb. x. 22.)

But we must now pass on to the ninth name, “Jesse,” which signifies “wealthy.” And the remnant shall yet say to the nations, “O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place..” (Ps. lxvi. 8-12.) Will we not then with all our hearts say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”? (Eph. i. 3-5.) “The lines are fallen unto me in

pleasant places : yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Ps. xvi. 6.)

This thought leads us to the tenth and last name given, which is David, and that signifies "beloved." "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him ; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." (Deut. xxxiii. 12.) "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark i. 11.) And we are kept "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.) Is not that blessed One worthy of all our heart's adoration and praise, who "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. v. 8, 9), when we look up and "see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"? (Heb. ii. 9.) God has said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." (Acts xiii. 22-23.)

In this book we have the history of Ruth and the origin of David's family, of whom our Lord came after the flesh. In it also we have a very important book of typical prophecy, as we have already seen. We have also the grace and truth of God exemplified in various ways, and it becomes us as the children of God to endeavour

in all things to shew forth the grace while we hold fast the truth of our God.

We have seen how Boaz satisfied the nearer kinsman's claims, and how the nearer kinsman acknowledged his utter inability to raise up the name of the dead, so he could not redeem the person and inheritance of Ruth the Moabitess. We saw how the witnesses and those that were with them rejoiced and desired the Lord to bless and prosper his house. As Rachel and Leah built up the servant's house, so might she build up the son's house, for we have always looked upon Boaz in our meditations as a type of our Lord Jesus, to His name be all the glory.

The question of redemption was fully settled apart from any pleading of Ruth or her mother in law between the two kinsmen. The right of redemption was clearly awarded to Boaz in the presence of all those at the gate, or the place of judgment.

In Ruth iv. 13 we find the happy union of Boaz and Ruth. The poor, weary, wandering Moabitess has at last become the bride of him who in grace had paid the redemption price unasked and unsought—"that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." (Rom. ix. 23-26.) We see how God becomes the restorer and

nourisher of His people Israel after the marriage of the Lamb. We have seen, too, how Naomi takes in her bosom the son of Ruth and becomes nurse to Obed, and so there shall be great joy for both Jew and Gentile that is subject to the great King, "For out of his kingdom shall he cast all things that offend, and those that work iniquity," when He shall sit on the throne of His glory. "His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever : and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ; Amen, and Amen." (Ps. lxxii. 17-19.)

"KING of glory, set on high,
Girt with strength and majesty,
We Thy holy name confess ;
Thee with adoration bless.

"Jesus, mighty Son of God !
Wondrous gift on man bestow'd ;
Many crowns are on Thy head,
Glorious First-born from the dead.

"Gladly, Lord, we bow the knee,
By the Father's just decree,
To His own Anointed One ;
To His well-beloved Son."

