

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED.

By STUART E. McNAIR.

SURELY we may learn something from the study of the things which are linked together in Scripture, and shall find profit in keeping them together in our thoughts and practice.

Especially instructive is it to note the divine grouping of *persons*, and to observe how significantly different God's classification is to man's.

Men of the world will classify their fellows according to social status, or wealth, or education. Religious leaders will group them according to their assent to divers doctrines or disciplines, or their pronouncement of a party shibboleth. How does God classify? What has he joined together?

To the cave of Adullam God drew all who were in distress, debt, or discontentment around His anointed; and so also to the Saviour He calls each one who is burdened with spiritual need and repentant of spiritual failure.

No association devised by man's wisdom or preference ever proposed such a grouping as that, and it is not impossible that a merely human judgment will declare that the resulting combinations are often incongruous and even undesirable. Yet God has *joined together* the repentant by the bond of a common need; and the union that He has created, it is our highest wisdom to respect.

We learn that in Malachi's day, *those that feared the Lord* were sufficiently "together" to speak often one to another. The statement has before now attracted our attention and commanded our approval. But have we really owned it as a divine principle of classification as exactly applicable to our day and condition as it was to Malachi's? Perhaps, as we think over it we realise that any such grouping would have a very revolutionary effect upon the various religious parties and associations, all of which have been modelled on entirely different principles. But how far do the boundary lines which we each severally adopt coincide with this divine limit?

Are we not too often ready to say, I like to speak with those who fear the Lord *and who agree with my views as to certain matters?*

Malachi registers no command. He merely states a circumstance and records Jehovah's approval of it. Yet the true heart will hold that sufficient ; for what his Lord loves, is *law* to the one who lives in communion with Him.

But a more explicit charge is not far to seek. As surely as Timothy was taught to flee youthful lusts, was he told to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace "*with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*"

What a scope and breadth there is in the divine plan ; and yet how wonderfully it safeguards everything that is essential to God's glory ! What a crumbling of party walls would follow a simple obedience to this charge, on the part of Christians generally ! What unexpected blessing and enlargement results when even one endeavours to be true to it !

But how sadly our poor narrow hearts tend to modify and qualify and neutralise the vastness of God's glorious plan ! What ! are we indeed enjoined to follow righteousness and love with all who are really right at heart ? Has not every sect from time immemorial applied its test to the *head* ? How then can we admit a heart-test as the sole and sufficient clue to a right classification of our brethren ?

We read in Acts ii. 44 that "*All that believed were together.*" We are not told anything about their views upon abstruse questions. It is not improbable that they differed widely in spiritual attainment. It is even possible that they by no means saw eye to eye on matters of some moment, but they all *believed*. They had all found Christ precious to their hearts, and their every hope for here and hereafter was linked up with Him.

It would seem almost revolutionary to suggest that all that believe should be together now. Any ardent partisan could at once give a dozen excellent reasons why it is desirable that all that believe should be parcelled into diverse and sundry groups—classified according to some system that cannot possibly embrace anything so divinely comprehensive as "*all that believe.*"

As we read between the lines in Ephesians ii., how we see the triumph of God's grace over the proud isolation of the Jew's ingrained religious superiority. We trace the words "*we*" and "*ye*" and then the "*together*" that links them, and as we meditate

on all they mean, we begin to realise the mighty power of a living, loving, faith in Christ that could break down "the middle wall of partition" that separated Jew and Gentile, and could build them *together* for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

May the deep significance of "what God hath joined" speak to each of our hearts and lead us to search our ways, lest after all we may discover that we have forsaken "the assembling of *ourselves* together," wishing to associate only with the select few instead of with the whole elect company.

COLOSSIANS III., 1—4.

"For ye are dead,"
The Lord hath said.
His word is true
Of me and you—
Oh! murmur not
'Tis good our lot,
If He declares
That from all snares
Of sinful ways
And evil days
We'er free by death,
For so He saith!

"Your life is hid,"
For Christ He did
In safety place,
Until His face
In glory see,
Both you and me—
Blest be our lot,
Nor care one jot
Need you or I
Whilst He is nigh.
A hidden life
Is saved from strife!

"With Christ in God,"
His staff and rod
Shall comfort me
And also thee,
Till days on earth
Give place to birth
In happier spheres,
Where even tears
Are lost for aye
In timeless day
With Christ above,
Where all is love.

But that's not all,
Our Lord shall call,
When we get home
No more to roam,
Both you and me,
That all may see
How with Him there,
In regions fair
He'll have us to
Appear in view
And share His joy
Without alloy.

Until He come
Don't let's be dumb,
But boldly say
'Tis now Christ's day
To save your soul
And make you whole,
Good news to all,
Both great and small,
He makes you glad,
And never sad;
Then come to-day,
Don't stay away.

As risen indeed
There's one great need
For you and me
To clearly see,
It is to let
Our mind be set
On heavenly things,
Which always brings
Our Saviour near,
And casts out fear,
And glory gives
To Him who lives.

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