

THE
SOLACE OF SHADOWLAND

R. D. JOHNSTON, M.A.



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By the same Author :

THE MAN WHO MOVED MULTITUDES

THE RESURRECTION : MYTH OR MIRACLE

THE ARITHMETIC OF HEAVEN

SOUND SPEECH

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FOREWORD

WRITING some time ago to a sick friend, I quoted the assuring words of Isaiah 49. 2: "In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me." Then, toying with the thought, I added to the letter the following lines. May the comfort found in them, and in the subsequent pages of this book (the message of which they indicate), be the portion of every tried reader.

*When I enter shadowland, the body weak with pain,
Brain too dull for thinking, feels 'twill never think again;
When it seems all midnight that will never turn to day,
And the busy world recedes so very far away;
When my hopes lie shattered just as though they'd never mend,
And the road before me drags as though 'twould never end,
When all life's a puzzle that I cannot understand,
How sweet to know the darkness is the shadow of God's hand.*

*Never falls a shadow but denotes a substance near,
So the shadow of His hand is proof that He is here,
He, Whose lovingkindness is as measureless as space,
Standing close beside me, just as friends do, face to face;
Knowing all my weakness, giving me His boundless strength,
Till the doubts all vanish, and the sunrise comes at length;
Then, as I have never known, I come to understand
The fulness of that blessing only found in shadowland.*

R.D.J.

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OUR light affliction, which is but for
a moment, worketh for us a far
more exceeding and eternal weight
of glory—2 Cor. 4. 17

The momentary lightness of our tribulation—in a surpassing manner, still surpassing—is working out for us an everlasting weight of glory.—*Rotherham*

Our light and transitory affliction is achieving for us, beyond all proportion, an eternal weight of glory.—*Weymouth*

Sweet are the uses of adversity.
—*Shakespeare*

I feel, but by God's grace I do not fret.
—*John Wesley*

Let us be patient; these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.—*Longfellow*

Did you tackle that trouble that came your
way,
With a resolute heart and cheerful?
Or hide your face from the light of day
With a craven heart and fearful?
Oh, a trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an
ounce,
Or a trouble is what you make it!
And it isn't whether you're hurt that
counts,
But only—how did you take it?

When God afflicts thee, think He hews a
rugged stone,
Which must be shaped, or else aside as
useless thrown.—*Trench*

Chapter. One

THE SOLACE OF SHADOWLAND

THE Second Epistle to the Corinthians is essentially a letter of comfort. On that note it begins, saying: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we might be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (1. 3, 4). And on such a note it closes, with these words of the Apostle: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort" (13. 11); while the keynote of the Epistle is this: "Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us" (7. 6).

Moreover, what Paul here writes was first inscribed upon his heart. He expounds what he has previously experienced; preaches what he has proved. In this letter we read of him in the deepest sorrow, and then in the greatest joy; in the lowest humiliation and in the highest exaltation. Sick nigh unto death, he is healed; his apostleship assailed, he is raptured to the third heaven, and shown unutterable glories. He is vilified by men, and vindicated by God. He is harassed by a thorn in his flesh, and helped by divine grace. Having been thus comforted, Paul in turn comforts others. Taking a sweeping survey and pondering things in all their aspects, he proceeds to set down, in a three-fold antithesis, this balance-sheet of the believer's life.

THE DEBIT SIDE

Wisely he begins with the things in life that oppose and thwart us, with the debit side.

I

On it he puts down first this ominous word—*affliction*. Nor could he choose a more fitting, for surely this is the universal lot of humanity—"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5. 7). From it none is exempt.

Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

But, you reply, I am now, through faith in Christ, a child of God. Should I not thereby be immune from this affliction that comes to the generality of mankind? The Lord Himself has answered that. Said He to His disciples as He anticipated a special phase of it: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." And again in a repeated injunction: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord: if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Once more before His departure He reminded them of this, saying: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But was this Paul's experience? See him as with Barnabas he passes through Iconium to Lystra, where the natives first regard him as a *deity*, and then proceed to treat him like a *dog*—or worse—stoning and leaving him for dead. Raised again in providential mercy, he continues on his way to Derbe. And then—? Back he goes to Lystra, the place of stoning, and to Iconium and Antioch and the spiteful Jews, "confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God." Hence he can write: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed" (2 Cor. 4. 8), or, as Weymouth pertly phrases it—"Hard pressed yet not hemmed in." And how much of this affliction is utterly outwith our comprehension and leaves us baffled! Truly writes one—

Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas, and explain the reason why
The dark threads were as needful, in the Master-Weaver's hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He had planned.

II

But now, on that same debit page, the Apostle writes another word—*light*—saying: "Our *light* affliction." And immediately our spirits rebel. His first word we readily accepted; this we as readily reject. For surely ours has been no *light* affliction, but burdensome and grievous. Yet to our questioning the writer would answer, in the language of another—"What I have written I have written." Moreover, in using this word *light*, he employs a word normally applied to loads that are not too oppressive, uses the very word of that familiar phrase of the Lord Himself when He says: "My burden is *light*." It is as though, in the word of His servant, He throws out a challenge to us, asking: "How have you found My service? Has My yoke been grievous, My burden heavy?" To which our hearts at once respond, saying: "Of a truth, Lord, Thy yoke has been easy, Thy burden *light*." For he Apostle links *His service* with *our suffering* when he writes: "Our *light* affliction." Besides, that trial of yesterday, did not we magnify it beyond all proportion, and add to it by needless fretting? As one has it—

There's many a trouble
Would burst like a bubble,
And into the waters of Lethe depart,
Did we not rehearse it,
And tenderly nurse it,
And give it a permanent place in the heart.

There's many a sorrow
Would vanish to-morrow
Were we not unwilling to furnish the wings,
So, sadly intruding,
And quietly brooding,
It hatches out all sorts of terrible things.

III

Once more Paul writes, setting down this third expression—*But for a moment*. And in this phrase he offers

another solution to the enigma of suffering which he terms *light*. It is so, he says, by comparison. The biggest sorrow of the longest life, in view of the joy that lies ahead, is *light* because it is *but for a moment*. The word so rendered, of which this is the sole use in the New Testament, means *instantaneously* or *immediately*. Doddridge calls it *momentary*; while Weymouth gives it as *transitory*. For how brief it all is even at the longest! The heaviest trial—ay, and the most prolonged—is but *in an instant*. Three times in our Authorised Version of the New Testament occur the words—*in a moment*. Our Lord Jesus Christ was shown by Satan all the kingdoms of the world “in a moment of time” (Luke 4. 5) at His temptation. Again, here we endure the sorrows of life “but for a moment” (2 Cor. 4. 17). Soon, at His Coming, we shall be changed “in a moment” (1 Cor. 15. 52). And at this *last*, the triumph of the *first* shall transform the trial of the *second* into glory.

Through waves and clouds and storms
He gently clears thy way;
Wait thou His time, so shall this night
Soon end in joyous day.

THE CREDIT SIDE

Now the Apostle turns from the darker to the brighter side of the picture, from the debit to the credit side of the balance-sheet. Having mentioned the things that are *against* us, he comes to those that are *for* us.

I

First of all, in apposition to that grim word *affliction*, he sets down this alluring word *glory*, saying: “Affliction . . . glory.” Here it is the sorrow, the trial, and the tears; there it is only *glory* transcending human conception. For “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God

hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." *Glory!* Who can define the full content of such a word? Approach it from any side and its grandeur overwhelms us; view it from any angle and its splendour dazzles us. Have we here tasted that the Lord is gracious? There His grace will be our food and drink! Have we here known His love even amid the trials? There we shall bask in its unclouded blaze, where trials cannot come! "Now we see through a glass darkly"—that is *grace*; "but then, face to face"—that will be *glory*. "Now I know in part"—that is *grace*; then shall I know even as also I am known"—that will be *glory*. "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be"—that is *grace*; "but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"—that will be *glory*. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"—that is *grace*; "and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"—and that will be *glory*. For here it is grace upon the pilgrim journey; there it will be the glory of home.

In the picture-gallery of a German city hung a picture bearing the title *Cloudland*. Seen from the far end of the corridor, it presented a forbidding mass of gloomy clouds. But as the visitor approached the canvas, one by one those clouds were, by a trick of the artist's brush, changed into cherub faces. It is a parable of the believer's life. Here we stand at the far end of the corridor of time, and the clouds seem dark; there we shall be in His blessed Presence, where glory shall have transfigured them into ministering spirits.

Tell who will the story
Of our now distress;
O the future glory!
O the loveliness!

II

Again, Paul writes a second word qualifying *glory*. Says he—"a *weight* of glory," in marked contrast to the *light affliction*. Therefore, in describing the *glory*, he resorts to the very word which men are wont to apply to their afflictions. We speak of a *weight* of sorrow, of a *heavy* trial. But it is all reversed by the Apostle; the affliction is *light*, the glory *weighty*. To indicate something of that glory, he is driven to the antithesis of language, and what we predicate of our present burdens he predicts of our future glory. But still the idea is not forceful enough. While one epithet sufficed to measure the affliction, one alone fails to compute the glory. So he adds another phrase, saying—"a *far more exceeding* weight of glory." This is compound of two others he uses elsewhere—one rendered *out of measure* (2 Cor. 1. 8) and *more excellent* (12. 31); the other translated as *excellence* (4. 7)—which give us the word *hyperbole*, literally, "a throwing beyond." There is not merely "a weight of glory"; there is a "*more excellent excellence* of weight," an "*unmeasured excellence* of weight." But is not that redundancy of language? True, for there is abundance of glory! Its very immensity defies expression and beggars speech. It is being prepared "more and more exceedingly" (R.V.), "beyond all proportion" (Weymouth), "past all comparison" (Moffatt).

III

But now we reach another word—*eternal*. Concerning the affliction, the writer has declared that it is *but for a moment*. Bounds are set to the trial, limits appointed to what we are called to endure. Then are we to suppose the glory to be similarly limited? We rejoice that the affliction will end; we fear lest the glory ever should. But this new word is reassuring, for says Paul—"an *eternal* weight of glory." Ages will never exhaust it, enjoyment never wither it. It is boundless, inexhaustible, co-

extensive with Him Who declares: "I am the Lord; I change not." And that was what set J. H. Brown asinging when she wrote—

One little hour for watching with the Master,
Eternal years to walk with Him in white;
One little hour to bravely meet disaster,
Eternal years to reign with Him in light.

One little hour to suffer scorn and losses,
Eternal years beyond earth's cruel frowns;
One little hour to carry heavy crosses,
Eternal years to wear unfading crowns.

One little hour for weary toils and trials,
Eternal years for calm and peaceful rest;
One little hour for patient self-denials,
Eternal years of life where life is blest.

THE CONNECTION

Is there, then, any relation between the present trial and the future blessedness? The query is answered in these words—*worketh for us*. Here is the link between the two. The affliction *worketh for us*, or, as Weymouth has it, *is achieving for us* the glory. Far from being purposeless is that sorrow of to-day; it is writing down to our account an eternity of joy. Life for you has meant much of pain, of heartache, of disappointment. What then? Here is the answer—in the language of L. S. Soole—

Disappointment—His appointment!
Change the letter, then, dear friend;
Take in cheerful acquiescence
All a Father's love may send.
Soon will faith be lost in vision,
Then, in glory, thou wilt see
His appointment, and that only,
Was the right way home for thee.

From mediæval times comes a tale of one imprisoned for political reasons. Shut up in a foul dungeon, his ankles fettered by heavy chains and iron balls, he dragged

his painful way up and down his narrow cell through weary years. One day his innocence was clearly established. The king, just though severe, caused him to be brought into the royal presence. "Remove these fetters," he commanded, and they were taken off. "Now weigh them," was his next order, and they were duly weighed. "Measure out to the prisoner a corresponding weight of gold," said the king, to the listener's intense joy. How many times, pacing with difficulty that dungeon floor, had he longed that the cruel impediments were gone, or at least made lighter? But now as he hears the royal command, his sole regret is that they had not been heavier; for the day of recompense had come! The application is plain. In experience we are now in the cell, so often chafing under circumstances, feeling hedged in—"cribbed, cabin'd and confined." How much better could we walk, and work, for God, were that hindering load removed, were that sad burden lightened! So we wish and so we pray. And Divine Omnipotence leaves that prayer unanswered, because Divine Omniscience visualizes the Day of Rewards. When that Day has dawned, and the God Whose Name is Love and Who measures our sorrows, metes out the recompense, were regret then possible, it will be that these had not been heavier, for *affliction . . . worketh for us . . . glory*.

How then, you ask, can I appropriate the comfort and live in the strength of it in my present distresses? Says Paul in reply: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Our powers of sight are faulty and our perspective false; thus our conclusions are so often wrong. We see things as they seem; God sees them as they are. We must, therefore, adjust our vision to God's viewpoint, and read the affliction in the kindly light of His Holy Word, and Will and Way. So

will it be borne in upon us, bringing a strange comfort, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And that *moment* is fleeting, that *eternal* hurries on apace. That is the message of Anne R. Cousin's sweet paraphrase of the words of the saintly Samuel Rutherford—

Soon will the cup of blessing
 Wash down earth's bitterest woes;
 Soon will the desert briar
 Burst into Eden's rose.
 The curse will change to blessing,
 The Name on earth that's banned
 Be graven on the white stone
 In Immanuel's Land.

The King in all His beauty
 Will then by us be seen;
 It were a well-spent journey
 Though seven deaths lay between.
 The Lamb with His fair army
 Doth on Mount Zion stand,
 And glory, glory dwelleth
 In Immanuel's Land.

THE trial of your faith . . . much
more precious than of gold that
perisheth—*1 Peter 1. 7*

You will rejoice, then, though for the passing moment you may need to suffer various trials; that is only to prove your faith is sterling (far more precious than gold which is perishable and yet is tested by fire), and it redounds to your praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.—*Moffatt*

I thank Thee more that all our joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain;
So that Earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.—*Procter*

Call up in your darkest moments the
memory of the brightest.—*Richter*

For things can never go badly wrong,
If the heart be true, and the love be strong;
For the mist, if it comes, and the weeping rain,
Will be changed by love into sunshine again.
—*George MacDonald*

From vintages of sorrow are deepest joys
distilled,
And the cup outstretched for healing is oft
at Marah filled;
God leads to joy through weeping, to
quietness through strife,
Through yielding unto conquest, through
death to endless life.
Be still! He hath enrolled thee for the
Kingdom and the Crown.
Be silent! Let Him mould thee, Who hath
called thee for His own.

Chapter Two

REJOICING IN SORROW

IT is impossible to read the First Epistle of Peter without observing the recurring use of the word *precious*. In the opening chapter we read: "Not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ," and reading, we feel the heart strangely warmed. We know why Peter wrote that word *precious* here, and we freely endorse its use, for was not that blood the means of our emancipation? Entering the second chapter, we meet these words: "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." Again we respond, and in measure understand the use of the word in this connection. For is not He the climax of God's purposes, and the centre of our hopes, binding all into one unfailing unity? Then in the succeeding verse we find this expression: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." Surely our renewed spirits react to the application of the word in this place! To us He is indeed "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys," to us "the chiefest among ten thousand." Both for the beauties of His person, and the blessedness of His work, He is precious, or as it is, He is *the preciousness*; being the very acme of worth, the sum and substance of that which is *full of price*. With glowing hearts we can sing—

He is not a disappointment.
Jesus is far more to me
Than in all my glowing day-dreams
I had fancied He could be.

But there is another word Peter employs frequently, which is less attractive, but none the less real. It is this

word *trial*. Sometimes it appears as *heaviness*, or *suffering*; some sixteen times over it is this latter. But we are hardly prepared for the arresting paradox in which Peter calmly asserts that our tried faith is *precious*. For the trial oppresses, and the suffering is irksome. How much better we would be and serve lacking it, we tell ourselves; and how earnestly we wish and pray to be rid of it. But the Apostle goes further. He thinks of it in terms of the world's standard of values, and contrasts it with that which men seek most and longest—gold. What human efforts are expended in its gaining and retaining! Tom Hood's description of it is at least expressive—

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered, and rolled;
Heavy to get and light to hold;
Hoarded, bartered, squandered, doled:
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould.

And Peter daringly affirms that this tried faith is more precious than that gold. Indeed the statement is even bolder, for Peter says "*much* more precious." Wherein, then, consists the beneficent value of that trial we resent and resist?

To begin with, shall we remind our hearts that trial is but

GOD'S PLAN IN THE MAKING?

It is His purpose in process. Those sorrows which constitute so real a portion of life were not specifically sent by God as part of this world's original equipment. Whence came they then? Says Paul in answer: "By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." In sin's fell train came every sorrow that oppresses the human heart. But our Lord Jesus Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," fully meeting the righteous

claims of an offended law. Then should not all that came through sin be removed from the lives of those who by faith in Him have become partakers of His redemption? Ultimately, this will become gloriously true, and the fruits of His perfect work upon the Cross be enjoyed in fullest maturity. In that day, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Meantime, while the God of infinite wisdom does not exempt His children from these, He does something far greater; for, allowing to come upon His people the trial, the heaviness, and the suffering, yet on these He superimposes His perfect will, and causes them to effect His eternal purposes of love and grace. And those weapons, which the common enemy would use to foil us, become God's tools to fashion us. That is the truth conveyed by these lines—

Disappointment—His appointment!
 Change one letter, then I see
 That the thwarting of my purpose
 Is God's better choice for me.
 His appointment must be blessing,
 Though it may come in disguise,
 For the end from the beginning
 Open to His wisdom lies.

What, then, are the functions filled in these lives of ours by those graving-tools of God?

I. RENDERS US SERVICEABLE

First, that trial renders us serviceable.

Says Peter: "*But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God*" (2. 20). It is God's desire that we, having been *accepted* in His Son, should now be *acceptable* to Him; that, having *tasted* of His salvation, we should be *tested* in His service. And how

can the trials conduce to this purpose? For answer, consider those implements of the stone age which are periodically unearthed. How crude they are, how rough and ready, you say! True, but they were adequate for those early conditions, and answered to those primitive demands, when men lived in caves or burrows of the earth. When little was expected, the rough, old-world tools produced that little. Now creature comforts have been developed, and household utensils perfected in the highest degree. But the more perfect utensils are the product of the more perfect tool, and this means the furnace, the rolling mill, the grinding, the buffing at the lathe. Had the steel power to feel, and to give expression to its feelings, would it not rebel against these processes? Yet each contributes to the complete tool, keen of edge and apt in action. To the metal personified, the heating and the sudden immersion in cold water, we can imagine would be an unpleasant thing; yet it tempers the steel, and produces the Damascus blade of a Cœur-de-Lion, quick to sever the gossamer as the iron shaft. So is it with the believer. God's eternal projects, perfect beyond all comprehension, demand prepared instruments for their accomplishment; and redeemed sinners are these instruments, by which the God of all grace shapes His purposes of glory. But the tool must be strong and the blade sharp. Hence there come the days when affliction's fires scorch, the seasons when we lie crushed between the upper and the nether millstones, the circumstances that grind us so cruelly. From the altitudes of some blessed experience there is the quick transition to the icy depths of an unexpected sorrow. We wince, and wonder. Questionings arise within. What can it all mean? The heavens seem silent. Is there no answer? Yes, sorely-tried child of God, there is an answer, and it is that God's perfect plans need prepared tools. It is that He requires strong Damascus blades, swift and beautiful

in service for the King of kings. It is ever thus. The more beautiful the roses desired, the harsher must be the pruning. The circlet of iron precedes the collar of gold, and Joseph must needs be prisoner before he could be governor; Egypt's saviour was first of all Egypt's slave. It is the apprehension of this truth that fills even the life of suffering with usefulness.

Miss Frances Ridley Havergal, after a life of acute pain, went home at the age of forty-two, yet from that bed of agony came those words—

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

And far from losing herself in self-pity and vain regrets, here in her own words was the thought that prevailed in her mind—

The fulness of His blessing encompasseth our way;
The fulness of His presence crowns every brightening ray;
The fulness of His glory is beaming from above,
While more and more we realize the fulness of His love.

Again, it was the pen of Isaac Watts, invalided for thirty-six long years, that gave to the Church five hundred of her choicest songs, including the immortal

When I survey the wondrous Cross.

And from that same sick chamber radiated the cheering warmth of these words—

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

Moreover, these fiery trials are but His beacon lights gleaming over the path that leads to home. Thus regarded, the trial becomes the gracious preparation for, and divine

urge in, more effective service for our God. For to bless we must bleed; and the Gospel of the Broken Heart asks for the ministry of breaking hearts.

II. REALIZES CHRIST'S PRESENCE

There is a second sweet reason for the trial of our faith, which is that it realizes Christ's presence.

Think of these words: "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps*" (2. 21). The abiding presence of our Lord with His people is a blessed truth. Yet there are seasons when it takes on a new aspect, and glows in colours more vivid than before. Then from being a doctrine *we hold*, it becomes a doctrine which *holds us*. Before, it was true *mentally*; now it is true *experimentally*. A bank cheque is in itself of little value. In the act, however, of passing it, under given conditions, over the bank counter, we *realize* its value; that is, its value *becomes real* to us. So in the hour of grief, the soul is compelled to cash the promises of God concerning His Son, and that Presence becomes a reality. In His suffering, Peter reminds us, we find our great example. Of this word, this is the sole instance in the New Testament. The word refers to a *writing-copy*. As in the schooldays we sat, headline before us, and patiently followed its every curve, so closely beside it; so our Example is ever before us, and we follow Him, yet so near that it never ceases to be true that He is with us always. The way of suffering is the only royal road to intimate acquaintance with the Man of Sorrows. Paul believed that. Says he: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." But how is that knowledge attainable? It will be only in measure as we know "the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable to His death," Paul instructs us. This was the process of knowledge with the Psalmist.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death"—this speaks of the trial; "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me"—that was the Presence realized. So the severe trial comes, and our fondest hopes are smashed, that we may learn to know Him as the foundation of new hopes that are eternal. So the cruel bereavement comes, and we lose that friend, that we may find in a new way the Friend we can never lose. When Salmasius taunted the Puritan Poet with his blindness, pointing to it as an evidence of the divine displeasure, the noble-souled Milton replied that his blindness was but the shadow cast by the sheltering wings of God. Thus back of the trial, and brought by it into stronger relief, is His changeless Self, and compassion and might.

God hath not promised skies ever blue,
Flower-strewn pathways always for you;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.
But He *hath* promised strength from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

III. REASSURES OUR FAITH

Again, that trouble is helpful because the very trial of our faith reassures our faith.

When the dull days come, how quick we are to doubt, how prone to question. Perplexity clouds the mind, sorrow blunts for a time the spiritual perceptions. Am I really a Christian? Does God care at all? Am I indeed His child? Such are the questionings conceived often in sorrow, and born in despair. Yet considered in the light of God's Word, that very trial gives the lie direct to these questions, and is in itself the refutation of these doubts. First, it is the evidence that we do indeed stand before God upon righteous grounds as justified sinners, for says the Psalmist: "The Lord trieth *the righteous*." Of this

truth surely the perpetual witness is the man "whose name was Job," who was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Again, it is the proof that God *does* love us, for says He: "As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten." Moreover, it is the sign that there is a new and spiritual relationship between us and God, that we *are* His children, "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." For He says: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every *son* whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with *sons*." Hence the trial is given, not to shake, but to strengthen our faith; to weaken self-dependence that our sufficiency might be of God. After that fateful day on Mount Moriah when God tried Abraham, other trials must have faced Abraham ere he was gathered to his fathers. But if ever he was tempted to doubt, there was an effective remedy; for, gazing upon Isaac, he beheld the living monument to the faithfulness of his God. And chief among the conflicting emotions roused by the memory of that Moriah experience was surely an unassailable assurance that God is indeed Jehovah-Jireh. For *trial intensifies trust*. Out of it we emerge in a new-found strength, henceforth determined, with Cowper, to

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;

and more certain than ever before that

Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

So Peter writes: "*If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*" (3. 14). And doing so, the trial of your faith will have reassured that faith.

IV. REVEALS GOD'S POWER

Once more, the trial is useful because it reveals God's power.

Again Peter writes: "*Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*" (4. 19). Doing so, we learn that "God is able to make all grace abound towards you." For it is when we are at an impasse, and there seems no way out, that He makes "*the way of escape*" (R.v.). David found it so. Upon the sunny hillside all was well, but when he found himself in the gloom of the valley, how greatly he needed the allaying of his fears! Yet how greatly that need was met, for says he: "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me!" And the path through the valley always shows the *power* of the rod and the staff. The sisters at Bethany found it so. Their only brother, breadwinner and protector, lay still in death, and themselves left to the mercies of a cold world. A tragedy, you say? Yes, if there were no tender, yet triumphant Christ! Death is an unspeakable tragedy, where there is no Christ to say: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." So He is brought. Before that tomb on the fourth day He stands. And then Omnipotence speaks: "Lazarus, come forth!" and at His bidding death quickens into life. Their sorrow had revealed His strength; their trial, His triumphant power. Paul, too, found it so. Harassed by some thorn in his flesh, thrice he cries to God to remove it. God answers that prayer, not by taking the trial away, but in a greater fashion, by giving to His servant grace to help him bear it to His glory. Paul's weakness had called forth God's might. And Christian friend, fatigued by the burden and heat of the day, feeling the stress and strain of life, and well-nigh at breaking-point, you, too, may find it so.

Are you standing at Wits'-end Corner?
 Then you're just at the very spot
 To learn the wondrous resources
 Of Him who faileth not.
 No doubt to a brighter pathway
 Thy footsteps will soon be removed;
 But only at Wits'-end Corner
 Is the God who is able, proved!

V. REFINES OUR CHARACTER

Finally, the trial of our faith is valuable, since it refines our character.

The commencement of salvation is an act, when the sinner comes into living contact with God, through the acceptance of Christ; the continuance of salvation is a life, characterised in increasing measure by holiness, through the appropriation of Christ. And our God, with this end ever in view, allows chastening, "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." He alone knows how much about us there is that is crude, ignoble, mean; yet He is going to change the Jacobs into Israels. His desire is, says Paul, "that Christ may be formed in you." So we read of Him: "He is like a refiner's fire . . . and He shall sit as a refiner of silver" (Mal. 3. 2, 3). Nor will He leave off till He has perfected His purpose, so He declares: "I will turn My hand upon thee, and surely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isa. 1. 25). But how encouraging the figure! Yonder is the fire, and over it the crucible of molten silver. Hard by is the refiner, not standing *idly waiting*, but sitting *intently watching*, in attitude of concentration, devoting all his attention to the care of his charge. He knows there is a precise moment, beyond which to heat will spell ruin for the precious metal. So he sits, fingers on the tap, gazing earnestly, ready to run off the silver, pure and beautiful. And that precise moment has come when he can see, reflected upon its surface, his own face!

So sits our gracious Refiner, anxiously watching over His children in the furnace of His affliction, so careful not to allow more than we can bear, longing to see His blessed image reproduced in us. And this glorious culmination will be reached when we "shall see Him as He is," for then "we shall be like Him," the days of the furnace for ever past. Yet how we fretted in that last trial! How we chafe under the present burden! In 1665, the Great Plague scourged the city of London, while in the following year there swept over it the Great Fire. Catastrophe upon catastrophe, say you. Yet the latter was greater boon than bane, licking up the last, terrible dregs of the Plague. Thus affliction's fires have cleansing merit. Watch that painter as he produces those beautifully embellished letters, but observe that the letters gain in clearness only as the gold leaf is rubbed away. And by the process of attrition, as the circumstances of life press hard, slowly appears His Name upon our foreheads. Between the quarry and the finished statue all resplendent with beauty, lie the mallet and chisel. But there is more. There is the heart of the Great Sculptor.

'Tis the Master who holds the chisel.
He knows just where
Its edge should be planted keenest.
To fashion there
The semblance that He is carving;
Nor will He let
One delicate stroke too many
Or few be set.

One other word. If trial is God's plan in the *making*, triumph is that plan in *maturity*. After the suffering comes the glory to follow. Here it is "the trial of your faith"; there it will be "praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday
and to-day—yea and for ever
—*Hebrews 13. 8 (Revised Version)*

Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day, is the
same, and into the ages.

—*Rotherham's Translation*

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's
shadows fly.—*Shelley*

O Lord, my heart is sick,
Sick of this everlasting change;
And life runs tediously quick
Through its unresting race and varied range;
Change finds no likeness to itself in Thee,
And makes no echo in Thy mute eternity.

—*Faber*

The dawn is not distant
Nor is the night starless—
Love is eternal!
God is still God, and
His faith shall not fail us!
Christ is eternal!—*Longfellow*

The stars look up to God: the stars look
down on me,
The stars look over the earth; the stars
look over the sea.
The stars will live for a million years, for a
million years and a day;
But Christ and I will live and love when
the stars have passed away.

Chapter Three

THE CHANGELESS CHRIST

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is the book of the High Priesthood of the Son of God. It readily divides itself into two portions; the first, comprising chapters one to ten, being doctrinal in character, and the second, consisting of the three closing chapters, practical. In the first, the believer is associated with Jesus Christ in His acceptance with God, while in the second, he is identified with Him in His rejection by men. Again, in the first, He is *up there* for us; but in the second we are *down here* for Him.

Across that first section might be inscribed these words: "Inside the veil;" and over that second, these, "Outside the camp."

The book, moreover, is one of contrasts. Alongside the messengers of God, both heavenly and earthly, of the old dispensation, and the institutions with which they were connected, the writer uplifts the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, emphasising His immeasurable superiority. First, He is contrasted with angels, in chapter 1, as to His deity, and in the succeeding chapter as to His humanity; and is declared to be "so much better than the angels." In the third chapter, we are told that He was "counted worthy of more glory than Moses," as a "Son over His own house"; while in the fourth He is better than Joshua as a giver of a more perfect rest. In chapters 5 to 7, He is contrasted with Aaron, and is found to be a better High Priest, who "continueth ever," and has "an unchangeable priesthood." In chapter 8, the old covenant is considered, with this conclusion, that He is "the mediator of a better covenant," while in the next

chapter the first tabernacle is superseded by "a greater and more perfect tabernacle." In the tenth chapter, a long continuity of sacrifices is surveyed, all infinitely short of the "one offering" by which "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In chapter 11, He is faith's better choice, while in chapter 12, His blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." And entering the final chapter we are reminded that this One who, enshrining within Himself every grace and excellency, thus transcends all others, is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Fairer than the fairest,
Better than the best,
Flower of perfume rarest,
Giver of God's rest!

As befits an Epistle fragrant with the glories of the work of our Lord, and the graces of His person, He is here described, in His several offices, under different majestic titles. In the opening chapter, we see Him as the "Heir of all things" (v. 2). The following chapter reveals Him to His people as the "Captain of their salvation" (v. 10). In chapter 3, we are invited to consider the "Apostle of our confession" (v. 1). The fifth chapter reminds us that He became the "Author of salvation" (v. 9). In chapter 6, He appears as the "Fore-runner entered within the veil" (v. 20). Chapter 10 portrays Him as "High Priest" (v. 21); while in chapter 12 we learn that He is the "Author and Finisher of faith" (v. 2). Then having scaled these several heights of divine revelation, we stand upon the eminence of the closing chapter, and wonderingly learn that, though His offices vary, His personality and ability are constant, for He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." But this is more than a description; it is an assertion. Says the Revised Version: "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, yea, and for

ever." And the emphatic *yea* is pregnant with comfort. We turn, therefore, to the Epistle, to contemplate some of the aspects in which our glorious Lord is unchanging.

I. HIS UNDIMINISHED POWER

In the introductory chapter we see the might of the Son of God in His "upholding all things by the word of His power" (v. 3). Then follows a seven-fold group of quotations, all save one being from the Psalms. "It is probable," says Dr. Griffith Thomas, "that these seven passages are descriptive of Christ as 'Son,' from His Incarnation to His Glory. The first two refer to His Sonship; the third to His Coming; the fourth and fifth to His Exaltation and Rule; the sixth to His Millennial Reign, and the seventh to the Culmination of all things." Such is the One to whom all power has been committed, the Creator of all things, the Filler of all things, the Reconciler of all things, the Heir of all things, and the Upholder of all things. It was His strong arm that hurled the far-flung planets into space; it is His power that keeps them ever circling in their orbits in perfect, mathematical precision. The law of gravity, say men. Nay, but that is a mere human description of the law of God. For the laws of the universe are but the expressions of His will and power.

Then (verse 8), we hear God address His well-beloved Son in these words: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Verse 10 again declares His power, saying: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." It was His hands that created, and it is these same hands that control. The power of men lessens, becoming feebler with the passing years. But His is the power of the Godhead, and He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." That might knows no declining or dimin-

ishing, neither weakens nor wanes. And the power that grips the stars, guards the believer. Theresa, a saint of the Middle Ages, desired to build an orphanage, but her resources were only three shillings. And they laughed at her. Said she in reply: "With three shillings Theresa can do nothing; but with three shillings and God there is nothing that Theresa cannot do." Take courage, then, care-worn Christian; lift up your head, wearied toiler in His vineyard. That labour fails not, in spite of seeming, for behind it is the Christ of the undiminished power. And still you can say—

Thine everlasting arms
Will never let me go,
The arms of Him, who fainteth not,
Can never weary grow.

II. HIS UNSULLIED PURITY

Says verse 11 of the first chapter, concerning the heavens and the earth: "They shall perish." Before that triumphant Cross each trace of sin must disappear, all sign of the curse be utterly obliterated. Hence the very groaning creation must be renewed. So of things material the Word declares: "They all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed" (v. 11, 12). In such a cataclysm shall our hearts fail us for fear? For answer, the writer directs us to the Christ who knows no change, saying: "But Thou remainest" (v. 11). He, who never knew sin's blight, can never know sin's decay. Aptly He called Himself *the Light of the World*. "Light is pure," wrote Henry Law. "In it there neither is, nor can be, mixture or pollution. Its property repels defilement. It traverses unstained each medium of uncleanness. Snow is brilliant—no whiteness can surpass it; but man's steps mars it. Water sparkles brightly from its spring. Man's hand can soil it. But none can make light's purity less pure. Such is

Christ. When Man on earth, He was pure as God in Heaven. He passed through a world of sin as a sunbeam through a hovel. He took indeed sin's form, that He might bear sin's due: but He never knew sin's stain." As at His birth He was the Holy Child Jesus; as in His life He was the Holy One of God; as in His death He was declared to have done "nothing amiss"; so in the glory of His resurrection and ascension He continues "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Yet such a One stoops to be the very Friend of sinners, He who alone is unchangeable in the midst of ceaseless change. Hence that oft-murmured prayer:

Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me

III. HIS UNERRING PROMISE

Men promise, but do not always perform. They fain would do, yet fail to do. But what Jesus Christ declares He always does. In chapter 4, we learn that the Word of God is quick and powerful (v. 4); "quick" in this expression being an old English word signifying "living," as in quicksilver, a descriptive term for mercury, which falling upon the floor, breaks into a thousand globules, and dances in every direction, as though verily alive. And Jesus was God manifest in flesh; hence His words were the words of God, His promises the promises of God. He could truly say: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." Whether in the solitudes of suffering, or in the swift-moving spheres of service, His every promise stands. Should one appear to fail of fulfilment, it is grace that has interposed, for our God knows that the best answer to many of our prayers is to leave them unanswered. The unchanging Christ neither outruns nor outstays His purposes enshrined in the promises of His Word. So with Toplady we sing—

The work, that His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is "yea and amen,"
And never was forfeited yet.

IV. HIS UNLIMITED PROVISION

What mind can ever exhaust the depths of Redemption's work; what pen describe the glories of Calvary's Sacrifice? As Israel's Joseph, by his wisdom, provided amply for Egypt's famine, "and gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much until he left numbering; for it was without number"; so our heavenly Joseph, by His work, provides a superabundance of grace for the needs of His people. Accordingly, this Epistle instructs us that He has become "the Author of eternal salvation" (5. 9), for He has "obtained eternal redemption for us" (9. 12). Fully has He made us meet for service and for glory, for "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (10. 14). Now at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, He offers unceasing intercession on our behalf, since He "continueth ever," and has an "unchangeable priesthood" (7. 24). For this reason He is "able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him" (7. 25). And the very blood that purchased us, and accomplished our salvation, is "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (13. 20). In the middle of last century there lived in London, John Camden Nield. Left, in early manhood, a fortune of a quarter-million of pounds, he became one of the worst of misers. With a mansion at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, he was a kenspeckle figure, in his faded blue coat with its tarnished buttons, ragged trousers, and shoes conspicuously lacking in heel. Frequently he was to be seen salving crusts from the roadside, or gathering pieces of coal that fell from the carts as they rattled over the cobbled streets. Periodically, he went to visit his estates in the Midlands, generally going on foot. When

he did travel by stage-coach, he invariably rode on top for cheapness, and even in winter was never known to wear an overcoat. But by and by his beggarly life neared its close. He advertised in the Manchester papers for heirs to his money which had now doubled itself, but finding none, bequeathed his vast fortune to Queen Victoria, who used it to build Balmoral Castle. What a miserable soul! you comment. Yet, alas for so many of us who profess Christ's Name, that with the unlimited provisions of grace freely at our disposal, we should be content with such spiritually poverty-stricken lives! Yet the immensity of the supply procured for us by His loving sacrifice never changes, never grows less. And how far-reaching it is we shall realize only when we revel one day in all its fulness. Thus Murray McCheyne writes—

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon radiant sun,
When the pearly gate I gain,
Never to go out again,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

V. HIS UNENDING PATHOS

When we reach the eleventh chapter of this Epistle, we look down the long pathway of faith, and see the old-world heroes who trod it. But this road is ever rough-strewn with trials. They "stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered

about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (vv. 32-38). The form of tribulation may alter with altered times, but the fact of tribulation never. Then is there no cheer? We leave this chapter, and entering the next, meet those paradoxical words: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (12. 6). Here, just after the catalogue of sorrows and sufferings, comes the first mention in this Epistle of His love. How dreadful would these trials be were His love not at the back of them; but there, just behind the dark clouds, is the sun. For these are *His* chastenings, and are but the display of His *love* for us, and the evidence of our *link* with Him, for then "God dealeth with you as with sons" (v. 7). Never a sorrow comes our way but is for our profit, that we might be "partakers of His holiness." "Why waste the marble, father?" cried the sculptor's little son, as he saw the chips fall under the rapid blows of mallet and chisel.

The sculptor said in accents mild,
Still raining heavy blows:
"Tis as the marble wastes, my child,
The more the statue grows."

And through it all His deep love never varies, but is steady as it is soundless, unchanging as it is unending. Thus in the night experiences, though lips be silenced, yet hearts may sing—

While all things change, Thou changest not;
Forgetting-ne'er, though oft forgot;
Thy love, immutably the same,
Displays the glory of Thy Name.

VI. HIS UNFAILING PRESENCE

If in the eleventh chapter we view faith's pathway of tribulation; if in the twelfth we find His love; in the

thirteenth we have Himself. For we read these words: "He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'" (v. 5). What a strong negation is here! Literally the words are: "I will not not leave thee, neither will I *not not* forsake thee." The Revised Version has it thus: "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." Says Weymouth: "I will never let you go; I will never forsake you." He will not merely *see* us through; He will *accompany* us through. For the Christ who exhorts His servants, saying: "Go," encourages them, saying, "Lo, I am with you alway." This promise, moreover, is for *all ways*. When our way is rosy, and life is a sweet thing, He joyfully says: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And when our way is gloomy, and life has lost its zest, then into the topsy-turvy of our troubled hearts He comes, and sweetly whispers: "Thee forsake, nor thee leave, never will I." A bright boy, who had often heard his father use these words, lay dying. By his bed knelt a sorrowful parent, and prayed: "Lord, in Thy great mercy, make good now to our laddie Thine own promise, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'" Quickly from the sick-bed that prayer was interrupted by these words, in gasping tones: "Never will I." "What is it, my boy?" gently asked the father. "Never will I," repeated the lad, with great effort. Then, understanding, the boy's father said: "Thee forsake nor thee leave never will I." And from the pale, parched lips came this: "That's it, daddy." For in those hushed moments when two worlds were meeting, the heart of that boy was realizing the fact of Christ's unfailing presence. His assertion is our assurance, His statement our security; and since He has said: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," therefore we may say: "I will not fear."

In the high attic of a tenement in a northern Scottish city, lay for many years a Christian woman. A well-known evangelist, on a mission in that town, hearing of

her, called to see her. Climbing those stairs, and knocking, he was bidden by a tired voice to lift the latch and enter. He did so. Addressing the sufferer, he said in typically dignified fashion: "They tell me, madam, that the King visits here sometimes." The woman looked up, and with a wan smile, replied in her Scottish accents: "Na, na; you're makin' a mistake, sir." "Oh, no, madam," said he, and repeated the words: "They tell me the King visits here sometimes." Then his meaning broke in upon that mind enfeebled by long pain. "Sir," said she, "you're still makin' a mistake. The King doesna visit here; He bides here." For it never ceases to be true that

The soul, that on Jesus has leaned for
repose,
He'll never, no never, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour
to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake.

VII. HIS UNSWERVING PURPOSE

This blessed Saviour, who laid down His life expressly that He might take it again, left His people, that He might return to them. "If I go, I will come again," said He, giving to His return the certainty of His departure. And no event can ever change, nor time dim, the truth of His coming. Hence we are reminded in chapter 10: "For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (v. 37). That *little while* has seemed long to the pilgrim Church down the ages, may seem long to some weary saint to-day; but it continues to be, in the unalterable purposes of God, but a *little while*. Child of God, disappointed, disheartened, almost defeated in the struggle, Jesus Christ is the same in this supreme, unswerving purpose. To the puzzled disciples at Olivet's Mount, as they gazed after their ascending Lord, the heavenly messenger brought the cheering promise of His

return, saying: "This same Jesus." And to His ransomed saints, in time or in eternity, He will never cease to be "this same Jesus."

In 1864, during the American Civil War, the important station at Altoona Pass was held by General Corse, with fifteen hundred men, against General French at the head of an army of six thousand. Little by little the defenders were driven into a small fort on the crest of the hill. Many had fallen, and defeat seemed inevitable. Suddenly, on the hill-top just across the valley, fluttered a signal. Anxiously gazing, the besieged garrison spelt out this message: "Hold the fort, I am coming—W. T. Sherman." It was General Sherman to the rescue! Nerved to further endeavour, they continued to fight, till the speedy arrival of Sherman brought them relief. Then his victory became their victory, his glory their glory. So, in the present turmoil and strife, as we lift our eyes from the valley of time to the hill-tops of Eternity, we read anew that message of the unchanging One: "Occupy till I come—Hold the Fort, I am coming." For that blessed purpose lies next to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below or above
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love.

FEAR thou not; for I am with thee;
be not dismayed; for I am thy
God; I will strengthen thee; yea,
I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee
with the right hand of My righteous-
ness—*Isaiah 41. 10*

I can do all things through Christ Who
strengtheneth me.—*Philippians 4. 13*

I have strength for all things in Him Who
keeps on pouring power into me.

Dr. A. T. Robertson's Translation

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the
Most High shall pass the night under the
shadow of the All-Sufficient God.

—*Psalms 91.1*

Sure you can be of His love,
Sure you can be of His care;
Sure all other things above,
Sure of Him every-where.

Shutting out fear with all the strength of
hope.—*Browning*

He holds no parley with unmanly fears;
Where duty bids he confidently steers;
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them
all.—*Wordsworth*

Give to the winds thy fears,
Hope and be undismayed!
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head.—*Gerhardt*

Chapter Four

THE ASSURANCES OF THE ALMIGHTY

THE book of Isaiah has been aptly called the Song of Christ, for it epitomises His life and work from the cradle to the crown. Consisting of two parts, the first, comprising chapters 1 to 39, is chiefly historical; and the second, chapters 40 to 66, wholly prophetic. In the latter portion, God in arresting language calls to us: "Behold My Servant," and presents to our wondering view the characteristics and activities of the Messiah. As we gaze, entranced by His glories, we see Him "despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; and rapture gives place to awe. But when we learn that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed," then awe passes into adoration.

THE SERVANT

When, therefore, we read these words: "Thou art My servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away" (41. 9), we have no difficulty in recognizing the One so described. Says verse 11: "Behold, all that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing: and they that strive with thee shall perish." These statements can only find their fullest realization in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah.

But the words of this chapter have a secondary reference, and we are reminded that God made choice of a people, the children of Israel, to be, in a peculiar sense, His servants among the nations. And of that people, now scattered to the four corners of the earth, He has said;

"Thou art My servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away." But does not their present disintegrated condition confute that promise? To this suggestion Paul replies in that interesting eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, declaring that, in God's unerring wisdom and unfathomable mercy, they are temporarily set aside, that "salvation may come to the Gentiles," their fall being "the riches of the world." and their diminishing, "the riches of the Gentiles." Yet unshaken the promise stands, for "the Lord will not cast off His people."

There is a third application of the chapter. God has called the sinful sons of men, through faith in Christ, to be His sons, which sonship implies service. In virtue of His perfect Sacrifice, the Lord Jesus has commanded the enemy who held us captive: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me." And of every one rejoicing in the Blood of Redemption, God has said: "Thou art My servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." Moreover, the very choice magnifies the grace of God. What had we of worth that His choice should fall upon us; what to commend us that we should be called His servants? For we were, first, *homeless*, "taken from the ends of the earth," as verse 9 puts it, when we were poor wanderers seeking for joys which always seemed to elude us. Thus Paul describes us as "aliens . . . and strangers," adding, "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Then, the same verse tell us, we were *worthless*, called "from the chief men" of the earth; not that we were numbered with such, but that from amongst them, lost in our insignificance, God took us, "the poor in this world" to be "rich in faith." Again, we were *helpless*. Says verse 14: "Thou worm," comparing us in the weakness of our unregenerate state to the lowest of created things—invertebrate, crawling in dust, and powerless to lift itself. Marvel of grace, that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound

the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen!" Once more, we were, as verse 17 implies, *joyless*, "poor and needy." Searching for water, and finding none, our tongues were failing for thirst, until God said: "I will open rivers in high places" (v. 18), and there gushed forth "fountains in the midst of the valleys," waters from the Smitten Rock. Gratefully drinking, we found this new song awakened in our hearts, the song of Horatius Bonar—

I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

And of us, His servants, despite the unworthiness of our selves, and the unprofitableness of our service, this promise will ever hold, for the Lord Himself has confirmed it, saying: "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise—under no circumstances—cast out."

THE STIMULUS

Having chosen us, and honoured us with service, God seeks to encourage us in it. So He says: "Fear thou not." But He knows how easy of discouragement His servants are, and how prone to fear, therefore the words are repeated twice over (vv. 13, 14). First, then, by this three-fold "Fear not," He *silences our fears*. And thus He is ever encouraging His people, hence the expression occurs freely in the pages of His Word, from the first book to the final. Its initial use is to a man who has been through the bustle of the battlefield. Victory has crowned his efforts, yet the stress and strain are none the less. To him God speaks, saying: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15. 1). Its last occurrence is when the words fall from the lips of the glorified Son of Man, when He declares: "Fear not;

I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." So God cheers His warring pilgrims still, promising that in the warfare He will be our safe protection, as He will be our sure prize when fighting days are over. Yet silencing our fears is but the negative aspect of His encouragement, and quickly bringing us to the positive, He *stimulates our faith*, giving us a strong five-fold reason why we should not fear. For fear is ever a craven coward, finding no fords, and building no bridges. Fear is a virile poison, but faith is the certain antidote; so the believer says: "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee." But as faith increases, fear droops and dies; hence he strikes a triumphant chord, crying: "I will trust and not be afraid."

I. SOLACE IN DAYS OF DISAPPOINTMENT

First, He says to our souls: "I am with thee," and this is the divine pledge that He will give us solace in days of disappointment.

Isaac, leaving the presence of King Abimelech, arrives in the valley of Gerar, and there pitches his tent. But water is a prime necessity, so, prospecting about, he lights upon a place where once had been a well of Abraham his father, which the envious Philistines had filled in. He sets his men to work. After laborious digging, he reaches solid rock, and the collected waters spring up with refreshing coolness. But now when he should enjoy the reward of his efforts, only disappointment awaits him, for down swoop the herdmen of Gerar to claim the well as theirs. What he expected would bring him *contentment*, brought *contention* instead, therefore he named the well Esek—*strife*. Again Isaac gets to work, more prospecting and more digging are engaged in, and again the imprisoned waters are released. Surely now he will reap the fruits of his labours! But a further

disappointment is in store for him, for the same herdmen appear to make a similar claim. Here what was calculated to bring *health*, produced only *hatred*, so it was called Sitnah. Once more they renew the task, and a third well is cleared, But this time there is no interference on the part of their enemies, and Isaac names it Rehoboth—*room*. In all the disappointing experience, Isaac had refrained from quarrelling, but had meekly fallen back, and made room for God. And when a man makes room for God, God always makes room for him. Accordingly we read: "And he went up from thence to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said: 'I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed'" (Gen. 26. 23, 24). That promised Presence more than recompensed Isaac for the strayed hopes and the spoilt plans, the disappointments and the disillusionments. So when to us, as to Moses, is committed some hard task, in which we are so conscious of our inability, and from which we fain would shrink, God whispers to us: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." When around us rage life's storms, and the chill floods of sorrow seem to wash away so many cherished dreams, He draws near to say: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." And in that hour of the darkest of shadows, when every human prop falls weakly away, leaving us in utter helplessness, the God who declares: "I am with thee," fulfils that promise so that His child can say: "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me."

So the trusting pilgrim goes on his way with this song in his heart:

With me in life's sunshine,
 With me in its rain,
 With me in the days of health,
 And with me when in pain.

With me in life's tempest,
With me in its calm,
Jesus, Friend unfailing, changes
Sighing into psalm.

II. SUPPLY IN DAYS OF DESTITUTION

But again God speaks away these fears, saying: "I am thy God." Here is His guarantee to us of supply in days of destitution.

Out of the only home she knew wanders one day, with aimless feet, a maiden called Hagar. In her hand is a scanty supply of bread, on her shoulder a water-cruise, and by her side a boy. Homeless and friendless, with crushed spirit she wends her way into the wilds of the countryside, where inquisitive eyes may not see her despair. The bread is soon used up, and the last drop of water dries at the bottom of the cruse. Her resources exhausted, and her energy spent, she places her son in the shelter of a bush, and, withdrawing to a distance, sits down to weep her heart out, saying motherlike "Let me not see the death of the child" (Gen. 21. 16). But our extremity is ever God's opportunity. Suddenly she hears a message from the God who cares: "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. . . . For I will make him a great nation" (v. 18). What a comfort is here! The God of heaven, whose ear is open to the multitudinous sounds of a universe, pauses to distinguish not only the sob of a destitute woman, but the wail of a child under a bush. And when we are at the end of our meagre resources, and despondency lays hold upon us, He comes again to say to our perplexed hearts: "What aileth thee?" The replenishing of an empty water bottle is Hagar's immediate need, but God is the God of the infinite spaces and of superabounding grace. He abundantly pardons—*multiplies to*

pardon, and His grace and peace are *multiplied* to us. So for a puny bottle God gives her a springing well. But, says some carping critic, the well was there all the time. Then the miracle of grace is doubled, for the One who opened the well, "opened her eyes" to see it. And Hagar's God is ours; Who in the day when material and spiritual stores become low, promises supply, saying to His careworn child: "I am thy God." Lavishly He scatters wells of blessing around us, had we eyes to behold them. And the God who gives the wells, gives the vision. Therefore in the dreariest days the believer is enabled to sing: "Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: . . . Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of *the wells of salvation*."

III. STRENGTH IN DAYS OF DECLINE

But the encouragement continues. Says our verse next: "I will strengthen thee," and in these words God pledges Himself that His servant will have strength in days of decline.

Jacob is now stricken in years when an invitation comes from his boy, long lost and mourned as dead. It is for the old father to leave Canaan, and share Joseph's glory in Egypt. But the news is too good to be true; "and Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." But eagerly leading him to the door, they give him indisputable proof, in the richly-laden waggons from Egypt. Says the now convinced Jacob: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." Brave words these, and resolute the old man's spirit! But surely he reckons not with the physical weaknesses that advancing years bring. One hundred and thirty years have passed over his head, and the road to Egypt is long and rough. Yet he sets out. He reaches Beersheba,

and there God speaks to him in the "visions of the night." Here is the message: "I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt" (Gen. 46. 3, 4). And in the God who accompanied him, Jacob's weakness found inexhaustible might. Nor has *this* promise ever been revoked; and in the days when strength fails us, when our powers decline, and we are aware, as never before, of inherent weakness, we may still know its reality, and rejoice, saying: "God is our refuge and strength." As one puts it, in Him we find refuge from half of our troubles, and strength to bear the other half. But these trials, seen through the mist of our tears, loom so large till we are forced to use the two words of the Psalmist: "My trouble" (Psa. 86. 7). There are other two words, however, that he employs in this psalm—"My God" (v. 2). And the remedy lies just here. That we make the *my* of verse 2 as real and as large as the *my* of verse 7. To do so is to have a more intimate experience than before of the God who says: "Fear thou not . . . I will strengthen thee"; and to realize that of a truth "the Lord will give strength unto His people."

IV. SUCCOUR IN DAYS OF DANGER

But there is a further promise. Says our God: "I will help thee," which is God's assurance of succour in days of danger.

Israel has triumphed at Jericho, and now marches confidently upon Ai. Confident in themselves of victory, they meet with dire defeat. It is frequently so. In the presence of God, Joshua prostrates himself. But God speaks: "Wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" Then He instructs Joshua to rise and put away the evil from the midst of the people. How often we bemoan *failure*

before men, when we should mourn our *sin before God*. And how greatly is needed to-day a quickened consciousness of sin! "Rejoicing as I do in the manifold proofs of Christian life at this time," wrote Dr. Moule over half a century ago, "I must yet utter my deep conviction that we are not growing in the sense of the sinfulness of sin. Let us pray for an intuition into the sinfulness of sin, into the awful wrongness and rebellion of sin, into the condemnableness of sin, into sin as 'by the commandment becoming exceeding sinful.' Let us pray that, while we mourn it as calamity and disease, and loathe it as pollution, we may have some deep, some awful sense of it as guilt, as the thing which the holy Law of God, the holy, perceptive and prohibitive Law of God, must to all eternity abhor, and denounce and sentence." Speedily that evil is detected, and drastically is it judged. Then God speaks once more: "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: . . . arise and go up to Ai; see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city and his land" (Josh. 8. 1). They are to assail the same city, the scene of former dismay and the source of possible danger, but under different conditions. The victory that unjudged sin rendered impossible is now assured by the divine aid. So when danger threatens the servant of God, in communion with God he can expect the fulfilment of this promise: "I will help thee," and can reassure his heart saying: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" *His succour means our safety*. As David to Abiathar, so the Lord says to us: "Abide thou with Me, fear not: for he that seeketh thy life seeketh My life; but with Me shalt thou be in safeguard." So with Toplady we confidently say:

Yes, I to the end shall endure,
 As sure as the earnest is given—
 More happy, but not more secure,
 The souls of the blessed in Heaven.

V. SUSTENANCE IN DAYS OF DISTRESS

Finally, says this verse: "I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. And this is God's sure promise of sustenance in days of distress.

Paul is on shipboard, bound for Rome, and Cæsar. A violent hurricane bursts upon the ill-fated vessel. At first she drives before the wind, "exceedingly tossed." Every device of nautical skill is tried, but in vain. They jettison the cargo and the ship's tackle, and still the ship is outwith all control. For many days neither sun nor stars are seen. And now all hope is gone. From captain to cabin-boy the whole crew are persuaded that all are doomed. But there is one man who differs, and he is Paul. For in the midst of these distresses the angel of God had appeared to him in the night, with this comfort: "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." And in the face of the combined experience of those seamen, and in spite of all seeming, he maintains dignified composure, saying: "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me," and giving in the very utterance a perfect definition of faith. The *confidence* of Paul rested firmly on the *constancy* of God. While this one man remained on board, that vessel could never sink, for had not God declared: "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness?" For His servant, then or now, to go down, the promise of God must go down; and neither is possible, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." Hence, for the believer, the fiercest storms are reduced to *impotence* through faith in the God whose Name is *Omnipotence*.

One other word. There was another occasion when disciples were storm-tossed. It was on Galilee's lake. There the Lord calmed the storm. But here He let the storm rage, and calmed His child. There He delivered

them *in* the storm; here He delivered Paul *through* the storm. Sustain and deliver He will, but always *as* He will. We would have Him calm the storm, saying to our oppressive circumstances: "Peace, be still!" Yet oft-times He leaves the circumstances, and speaks peace to the troubled *heart*, saying: "Fear thou not; . . . I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." In either case this remains eternally true: "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Prov. 29. 25). Then fear thou not, O my soul; and fearful heart of mine, be not afraid!

Begone, unbelief; my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear:
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will
perform;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the
storm.

Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from His
Word,
Through much tribulation must follow
their Lord.

Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine food;
Though painful at present, 'twill cease
before long;
And then, O how pleasant the conqueror's
song!

HE saith unto them, "Let us pass over
unto the other side"—*Mark 4. 35*

Lord Jesus! make Thyself to me
A living, bright Reality;
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any other object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than e'en the closest earthly tie.

Do we know Him—not His doctrines,
Not His wisdom, love and power,
But Himself, the Friend unfailing
In affliction's darkest hour?
Is He with us as a Person;
Not a presence, vague, unreal,
But a living, loving Saviour,
Who our every need doth fill?
Is He with us now, abiding?
Is He chiefest and the best?
Would our home be sad without Him?
Have we each His perfect rest?
If we have, we know just dimly
What the life of Heaven will be,
But the joy will there be grander,
For our Lord we then shall see.

The easy path in the lowland hath little of
grand or new,
But a toilsome ascent leads on to a wide and
glorious view!
Peopled and warm is the valley, lonely and
chill the height,
But the peak that is nearer the storm-cloud
is nearer the stars of light.

—*F. R. Havergal*

Chapter Five

THROUGH CYCLONE TO CALM

THE circumstances of this miracle are these. It was the late summer of the second year of our Lord's ministry. The city of Capernaum, greatly privileged, had witnessed many of His labours, and listened to much of His teaching, but now He decides to leave it, and to visit the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It had been a typical day in His earthly sojourn, brimful of activity for the glory of God and the good of men. Early in that day, He had preached to crowds so thronging Him that He must needs board a nearby vessel, and push out a little from the shore, to continue His discourse. In that same day, He had expounded many parables to them; indeed, "without a parable spake He not unto them." Then they had brought to Him all that were sick, to find that His sympathy *embraced* them all, and His strength *empowered* them all. And now the sun had "sloped his westerling wheel," and as the evening shadows fell, there came to Him one expressing a desire to be His disciple. Said Jesus in reply: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Next came still another, with a similar request, but he must, said he, first bury his father. To him this answer was given: "Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead." Then, dismissing the multitude, the Master gathers round Him the chosen few. They had heard much that day on the subject of discipleship; now they are going to learn practically something of what discipleship means. So

He bids them enter into a ship, and when He should naturally be reposing Himself, proceeds to expose Himself to the rigours of the night air upon the waters. With the servant of God still, as with His perfect Servant aforetime, "the end of a toil may be but the beginning of a toss." Let us look, then, at the incident itself, that we may extract what encouragement it offers to disciples in these present days.

I. A DANGEROUS CROSSING

At the bidding of the Lord, His followers enter a boat. The Sea of Galilee, upon which they are venturing, is an inland lake lying below sea-level in a warm Eastern land. It is partially flanked, moreover, by mountain ranges, and as the hot air over its surface rises, to be replaced by the influx of colder currents, it is subject to storms as sudden as they are severe. Such is the dangerous sea over which they are to cross, and here in picture is the life of a Christian. Into that life has come the Son of God, bringing salvation with its new habits, its new hopes, and its new home, and saying: "Let us pass over to the other side." Across this sea that men call time we make for the eternal haven. As ceaselessly we sail on, never for a moment pausing, it might truly be said of us: "There go the ships." For, to change the figure: "Here we have no continuing city," but are only, in the beautiful words of Longfellow—

Ships that pass in the night, and speak each
other in passing;
Only a signal shown, and a distant voice in
the darkness;
So, on the ocean of life, we pass and speak
one another;
Only a look, and a voice, then darkness
again and a silence.

While these words are true from our limited human aspect, they are not ultimately so, for in the sure hope of the Gospel we can add the Apostle's words: "But we seek one to come"; and the darkness becomes radiant with the reflected light of that city. Yet, as with the disciples, so is our crossing fraught with dangers. Unexpected trials, sudden sorrows, crowd in upon us. To them it happened "when the even was come" (Mark 4. 35). And this is our eventide experience, when "clouds and darkness round us press." But there is present cheer. Though it be evening during this crossing, at the other side is everlasting day, "for there shall be no night there." And at the end of the voyage lies home. So the believer, even mid the distresses, can sing—

We're going home, no more to roam,
No more to sin and sorrow,
No more to wear the brow of care,
We're going home to-morrow.

II. A DIVINE COMPANION

As the disciples make for that boat, to commit themselves upon the treacherous waters, they have this great consolation, that they are not going alone upon the voyage. Did not the Master say: "Let us pass over?" Then whatever dangers may beset them, whatever difficulties oppose them, He will be there with them. So says Luke: "He went into a ship *with* His disciples" (8. 22). Matthew adds a fresh thought, saying: "When He was entered into a ship, His disciples *followed* Him" (8. 23). So on life's voyage, with its rocks, its shoals, and its gales, we are not left to our own devices; for He has identified Himself with us in the crossing, saying: "Let us pass over." Moreover, we have the added consolation Matthew gives—*He went in first*. This gracious Lord does not ask His disciples to go where He Himself refrains from going, but to go where He has gone in person before. Into the storms—

the afflictions, the heartaches, and the temptations—this sympathising Jesus has entered before us, has met them e'er we meet them; and while following Him means the pathway of suffering, it is the pathway of obedience and therefore of blessing. Besides, this *following* is so immediate, so close behind Him, that like those disciples, we are *with* Him. And what a Companion He is! Says Mark: "They took Him *even as He was* in the ship" (4. 36). And who was He? He was infinite Wisdom, He was inexhaustible Love, He was invincible Power; for He was God incarnate. Such is the great, divine Companion Whom we have taken into life's frail barque, "*even as He was*"; Who will without fail see us through, for He will accompany us through. And the trials His infinite wisdom does not remove, His inexhaustible love will share, and His invincible power will control.

When through the deep waters I cause thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow will not overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy trial to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

III. A DISTRESSING CONFLICT

Now the little vessel has cast off from the shore, and makes for the open lake. They have not gone far, however, when a storm breaks upon them, the more unwelcome because unlooked for. It is not the season of storms, and at their setting out, the sea stretches tranquil before them, while serene skies canopy them overhead. Besides, is not the Lord with them? Surely that will assure a calm voyage! But quickly the gale is on them with awful force; nor is it any common squall. Most of these disciples were familiar with that sea and its storms. As boys they had played by it, as youths had eagerly ventured out upon it, and as men had earned a hard living on its turbulent waters. Accustomed to storms they surely were, but not to such as this. Matthew calls it

“a great tempest,” or literally, an earthquake. Far below the bosom of the lake, the very foundations of the earth seemed to rock and reel, convulsing the waters above. Mark and Luke vary the expression, saying: “a storm of wind.” Here the word implies a storm of wind and rain, the wind lashing the waves into a fury that impeded their progress, and driving in their faces the rain that obstructed their vision. Little wonder Matthew tells us they were “covered with the waves,” as they sank into those deep troughs. Mark says: “The waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.” Luke confirms that “they were filled,” adding that they were “in jeopardy”—in danger of their very lives. What a picture of the present distresses of many true saints of God! Was not that sore trial that came quite unforeseen? Did not the sunshine of prosperity fill the life, when of a sudden came the black cloud of adversity, of sorrow, of bereavement? Perhaps some reader is even now in this distressing conflict, when all seems at a standstill, and the road ahead lies in obscurity. With storms without and within, the whole life seems to be filled with trouble. Doubts and questionings harass already-burdened hearts, and unbidden the thought arises, Has God forgotten? Has He quite forsaken me? Does He really care? Storm-tossed friend, He never forgets, nor forsakes, nor ceases to care! But following Him means cross-bearing—means the rain, and the wind, and the angry seas. Moreover, cloudless skies produce only Sahara’s arid wastes. It takes the rude, mingling elements, with the harshness of winter, to make the gardens of old England. So the conflicting forces are necessary that the life may be beautiful and fragrant for God. And God never placed His bow of promise in an unclouded sky! Even Christ’s presence with us in the ship does not guarantee a smooth passage, but it *does* a safe landing. Roughtossed that ship may be, but sink it never can! Hence we can say—

His love in time past forbids me to think
 He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
 While each Ebenezer I have in review
 Confirms His good pleasure to help me
 quite through.

IV. A DESPAIRING CRY

While these fishermen-disciples exhaust every art of seamanship to out-manceuvre the storm, in the stern of the vessel, His wearied head on the embossed seat of the helmsman, lies Jesus fast asleep, His very unconcern seeming to mock their danger. Had they only understood, it should have set their fears at rest. Here is perfect Humanity worn into sleep by the day's activities. Yet mysteriously combined with it is perfect Deity, with the ocean in the hollow of His hand. His is the sleep, not of idle security, but of holy serenity. Peace, says one, is the possession of adequate resources; and He is in perfect peace, for He has all power. On another occasion we read of one asleep amidst a storm. He was Jonah, the prophet who had lost his way. But the sleep of Jonah was that of a *dead* conscience; the sleep of Jesus that of a *pure* conscience. Jonah's presence on that ship was the *source* of the danger; Jesus' presence on the other was their *security* in the danger. At last, however, the storm becomes too great for their faith. Fear forces their lips, and they rouse Him. Matthew records a cry of urgent need: "Lord, save! we perish!" Mark's description is an appeal to the Lord's heart: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" While Luke doubles the note of affection, saying: "Master, Master, we perish!" If their faith is weak, at least their prayers are strong. Blessed troubles, when they drive us to Himself! With the believer, *wits' end is often faith's beginning*. Their urgency alone would impel Him to action; and how can He resist that appeal to His love? So rising, He reproves

them, as Matthew informs us, and then delivers them. At the climax of danger, His help is ever forthcoming. That is the message of these simple lines—

Are you standing at Wits'-end Corner,
 Christian, with troubled brow?
 Are you wond'ring at what is before you,
 At all you are bearing now?
 Does all the world seem against you,
 And you in the battle alone?
 Remember, at Wits'-end Corner
 Is just where God's power is shown.

V. A DEEP CALM

Now the Lord turns to the heaving billows. It was the God of Grace who had spoken reproof to His disciples; it is the God of Nature who speaks rebuke to the elements. With what commanding mien He does so! Says the Word: "He arose and rebuked the wind, and the sea" (Matt. 8. 26). Mark adds that, addressing the latter, He said: "Peace, be still!" or literally, "Be silent, be dumb!" While Luke informs us that "the raging of the water . . . ceased." The very elements had recognised the voice of their Creator. Nor was the subjection gradual, but immediate. Where had been "a great tempest" now was "a great calm," the greatness of the calm exceeding in its intensity the greatness of the tempest. Such is ever the divine principle of God's saving power, for "where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound." When Bartimæus, invoking the Lord's help, was rebuked by the disciples, Jesus turned, and rebuked, not the man, but his blindness, so that it fled; so here He rebukes, not the cry of the distressed, but the cause of their distress. And He, in whom change is unknown, abides in sympathy as in might, still speaking to the stormy circumstance the word that transforms it into His own unruffled peace. But alas for our groundless fears!

Said the robin to the sparrow,
"I should really like to know
Why those anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so."
Said the sparrow to the robin,
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

VI. A DESERVED CHIDING

Having thus firmly rebuked the elements, the Lord turns again to His beloved disciples, to administer a well-merited chiding. According to Matthew, He questions them: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Mark tells that He added: "How is it ye have no faith?" But are not these contradictory—*little faith* and *no faith*? At once Luke comes to our aid, recording that He said: "Where is your faith?" Faith indeed they had, as we have, else they, or we, could not be His. But it takes a storm to reveal how small that faith really is. Comes the hardship, the trial, the sorrow, and faith seems to sink so low, to be as nearly submerged as the disciples themselves, that it becomes well-nigh a negligible quantity. Then to the troubled heart He gently whispers: "Where is your faith?" And many a child of God, with breaking heart, can only raise tear-blinded eyes heavenward, and cry: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Observe, however, that He chides them, not for disturbing *Him* with their *prayers*, but for disturbing *themselves* with their *fears*! Overnight there had been an earthquake, and many in the village were terror-stricken. "Were you not afraid, Grannie?" they questioned an old saint in the morning. "No, indeed," was her reply. "I rather rejoiced that I have a God who can shake the world." For this Lord can both shake the world into a storm, and speak the storm into a calm,

VII. A DEVOTED COMPANY

What a transformation there is now in that hitherto terror-stricken company of disciples! A new conception of their blessed Master has been born, and a new attitude towards Him formed. "The men marvelled," says Matthew. Mark puts it: "They feared exceedingly." Says Luke: "They, being afraid, wondered." Their appreciation of His power had deepened from admiration into awe. They feared, not with a slavish fear that springs from unmanly dread, but with a fear compounded of love and reverence. Hence the expression of their hearts, as all three writers unite to record, was: "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Such an One is He that "man" alone can never describe Him. So says the Revised Version simply: "Who, then, is this?" Not man, surely, but very God of very God,

Whose love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.

Thus, when in our fiercest storms He comes, unfolding His love and unveiling His power, so that the great storm yields to His greater calm, we, too, bow before Him in holy awe, saying adoringly: "What manner of Being is this?" Then like those disciples of old, henceforth we fear the storms *less* and the Lord *more*. Our trust in Him becomes the deeper, until at last in His grace we reach the port that lies beyond all storms. Till then we sing—

We know Him as we could not know
Through Heaven's golden years;
We there shall see His glorious face,
But Mary saw His tears.

The touch that heals the broken heart
Is never felt above;
His angels know His blessedness,
His way-worn saints His love,

I THANK my God upon every remembrance of you—*Philippians. 1. 3*

Mankind divides itself into two classes—
Benefactors and Malefactors.—*Emerson*

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"
—*Shakespeare*

Art thou little? Do that little well,
And for thy conduct know
The biggest man can do his biggest work
No better than just so.—*J. S. Blackie*

The truth with tireless zeal they sought;
In joyless paths they trod;
Heedless of praise or blame they wrought,
And left the rest to God.
But though their names no poet wove
In deathless song or story;
Their record is inscribed above,
Their wreaths are crowns of glory.
—*Dewart*

Most at home among the angels,
Least at home upon this earth;
Pressing onwards, rising upwards,
Children of the second birth;
Children of the resurrection,
Children of the world to come,
Citizens of no mean city,
Heirs of a celestial home.—*H. Bonar*

Chapter Six

REMEMBRANCES WHICH REFRESH

WITH this note of joy the Apostle begins his letter to the Philippian believers. It is a common way with Paul. He writes to the Church at Rome, and is glad because their "faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (1. 8). In his Epistle to the Corinthians, he rejoices that in everything they are enriched "in all utterance, and in all knowledge" (1. 5). Again, he is joyful over the Ephesians because of their "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints" (1. 15). Here, writing to the Philippians, he finds joy in their "fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now" (1. 5). Then, in the Colossian Epistle, his thankfulness is once more for their "faith in Christ Jesus," and "love to all the saints" (1. 4). In the case of the Christians in Thessalonica, he rejoices over their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" (1 Thess. 1. 3). But the careful reader will have observed one significant omission, for the Epistle to the Galatians is marked by the absence of such happy note. Instead we have these words of rebuke: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel" (1. 6); and these: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?" (3. 1). Generalize it thus—believers in the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere, varied in characteristics as in country, alike caused the heart of the Apostle to abound with joy; the only exception being where they had erred in doctrine of fundamental import. There, joy yielded to sorrow. And if this was Paul's attitude,

surely ours should be no less—glad sympathy with the children of God anywhere who continue steadfast in the faith, and great sorrow over those in whom that faith has been departed from. To paraphrase slightly James G. Deck's words—

*"We would remember we are one,
With every saint who loves His Name;
United to Him on the throne,
Our life, our hope, our Lord the same."*

Yet while this phrase is commonly found early in Paul's Church Epistles, a peculiar significance attaches to its use here, which becomes evident when we recall his first meeting with the people of Philippi. Visualize that scene. He is some little time in that city when a mob, typically Eastern in its furious excitement, seizes him, and drags him before the magistrates in the market-place. At once he is bound to the whipping-post there, and the lictors are commanded to begin their cruel task. Then with bleeding back he is thrust into the innermost dungeon, where the air is foulest, and cheering light fails to penetrate. Then, to prevent movement that might alleviate pain, the jailers set his feet in the stocks, and leave him there. Such is his introduction to Philippi, yet to that same city he writes: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Not that he is grateful for that mob, that flogging, that prison; for elsewhere he says: "We were shamefully entreated . . . at Philippi." Whence, then, his thankful joy? The answer is that when the Gospel came to them in power, and many lives were changed by it, their final characteristics more than counterbalanced their former conduct. These Philippian believers, then, bore certain features, which contemplating and emulating, we too may profitably bear, so that of us others may say, as Paul of them: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

I. A SPECIAL DIGNITY

In the days when Roman power covered almost the earth, and men were either citizens or aliens—barbarians, said the Romans—the town of Philippi stood at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, near the head of the Ægean Sea. Its inhabitants were Greek peasants, rough, ignorant, and unknown. But one day came the army of Octavius Cæsar, there to achieve a momentous victory. The Emperor, desirous of signaling that victory, conferred upon Philippi the honour of Roman citizenship. And the aliens were turned into citizens; the nobodies into members of the world's mightiest empire. Immediately their names were inscribed upon the Roll of the Tribes at Rome, that posterity might identify them as part of the glory that was Rome. Than Roman citizenship could men bestow no greater honour, and various were the methods by which it might be obtained. It could be purchased, for said Captain Claudius Lysias to Paul: "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." Then it might come by birth, hence Paul's answer: "But I was free born." Sometimes, as with Philippi, it was conferred by the Emperor's sovereign decree. Naturally, such an honour would be a source of much pride to the people of Philippi, who would rejoice that their names were thus recorded. But now the Apostle reminds them of an honour infinitely greater, that has come to some of them. For the Gospel has been declared in their midst, and many have believed, of whom Paul declares: "*Whose names are in the Book of Life*" (4. 3). And the Roll of the Tribes has perished, but the Book of Life is everlasting. To us who have received Jesus Christ by faith, God has given this greater dignity. Moreover, it is ours, not upon one ground only, but upon all three at once. Was it bought? say you. Yes, but with "the precious blood of Christ." Did it come by birth? By birth indeed, but the new

birth, "born from above." Says the Word: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Then it was conferred by the sovereign decree of Heaven's King; for "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." And by it, the nonentities of earth have become the notables of heaven; the paupers of this world, the princes of the next. Alas that so frequently we should forget, and belittle, such a dignity! It is told of Alexander the Great that he was invited on one occasion to compete in the popular games. Said the Conqueror: "Were I as you, I would gladly strive with you. But I must ever remember that I am Alexander."

II. A SUITABLE CONDUCT

Now that these Philippians were no longer of the Greek State, but of the Roman, they began to act as Romans would. The Greek garb was discarded, and the Roman toga donned. The habits of Rome were imitated, their very idols worshipped, and by degrees their language spoken. Surrounding them were other tribes, who might never see far-off Rome; yet looking upon this Roman colony-city of Philippi, might see Rome reflected as in a mirror. True, these newly-made citizens lived in Philippi, but lived the life of Rome, the mother-city which had adopted them. Therefore, that the conception of Rome gained by these outlying peasants might be the highest, the behaviour of the Philippians must be the noblest. They must adorn this honour, if they are to be a credit to its giver. Their conduct must be commensurate with their dignity. Once more the Apostle plays upon the thought, and, with their heavenly dignity before his mind, enjoins upon them, as upon us, corresponding conduct, in these words: "*For our citizenship is in heaven*" (3. 20, R.V.), or, as Moffatt puts it, "*We are a colony of heaven.*" Our names recorded in the Book of

the Lamb, ourselves now brought under the sway of the laws of His present Kingdom, it is incumbent upon us that we give a good account of that Heavenly City to which we belong. Do you remember when the world which rejected this Saviour of ours last beheld Him? It was when, between the malefactors, He hung in agonies and blood. After His resurrection no unfriendly eye ever looked upon Him. But the world that last saw Him on the Cross, now looks to see Him in the Christian. Paul caught this thought. Says he: "God . . . called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1. 16); and again, "Till Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4. 19). Hence he writes to these Philippians, exhorting that their conduct might be "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1. 27). And his message to them, and through them to us, is that they might be "blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (2. 15, 16, R.V.). The reprobate son of Africanus was forbidden by the Roman Senate to wear his father's signet-ring. For, said they, it was unfitting that the ring of so good a father should be worn by so bad a son. His conduct failed to commend his dignity.

III. A SACRED SERVICE

Graced with the high honour of citizenship of Rome, the men of Philippi were called not only to wear a dignity, but to perform a service. For now theirs was a colony-city, an outpost of the Empire, one of the far-flung garrisons of Rome, and guardians of her fame. Sometimes it happened that rebellion broke out amongst the subjugated peoples, and at once they rallied to the Roman Eagle. Though normally engaged in the peaceful pursuits of life, no sooner were the dogs of war unleashed, than these citizens exchanged the implements of peace for the

instruments of war. As sharers of Rome's honour, they must be saviours of Rome's honour. Swiftly, therefore, they gathered in martial array to face the foe in open field, or mayhap to assail some walled city. How artful they were in approach and attack, for well they knew that those walls were manned with archers, slingers, and engines of war! Hence the Roman warriors adopted this strategy. Banding together in order, they raised their shields overhead, forming a complete covering, while the outside ranks crouched low to give that covering a downward slope. Under this protection—"tortoise-shell" they termed it—they neared the walls. Down rattled the stones and whistled the arrows, yet all fell harmlessly to the ground. But shall we suppose a soldier, who, vain of his own prowess, argues that he needs not the support of his fellows. Quitting the solid phalanx, he marches alone against the city, shield held high. Fool, you say. Assuredly, for his shield by itself affords but scanty shelter. Under it those hostile messengers may easily pass, bringing injury or death. Plainly, his dissension has exposed him to personal danger. But it has done a worse thing. It has broken the solidarity of the others, thereby endangering them; for their security depended upon their unity. Such a picture Paul takes, and applying it to a nobler warfare, says: "*That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel*" (1. 27). For in Christian service, dissension spells defeat. Yonder is a great concourse of people making towards a land that God has promised them. Suddenly they halt, and for seven days no progress is made. The reason is simple. There is amongst them a Miriam, who has spoken ill-advisedly against the God-appointed leader. But the sin of one is hindering the progress of many, as it has frequently done since in similar fashion. Later, that same multitude is badly repulsed in an attack upon a little city. Is it that they have all disobeyed God?

No, but with them is an Achan who has, and again the wrongdoing of one has hurt the whole company. And that gathering of Christians where you associate—call it by what name you please—is it progressive, is it achieving its ends? By no means, you reply, and so you have been standing aloof. But what if that very aloofness should be the cause of the stagnation? What if a little personal examination should discover a Miriam, or an Achan? At the entrance to a suspension bridge in Ohio is a notice, commanding processions to break step before crossing. The fear is that the vibration set up by concerted movement might damage the structure. So, if the hosts of the Lord were but marching against the citadels of sin in this united manner, might not such a heaven-born vibration be engendered as would rock them to their very foundation? And this, and nothing less than this, is the mind of our God for His people. Hence the Apostle writes: "That ye stand fast in one spirit, striving together"; or, as Weymouth has it: "fighting shoulder to shoulder for the faith of the good news."

IV. A STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT

Now the campaign is being waged. There has been toiling and fighting from early morn, and at long last

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night;
As a feather is wafted downward
From the eagle in its flight.

But as the night shadows gather round, might not their hearts droop and their spirits become dull? Not far off lies a cruel enemy, and it is a far cry to Rome, with her relieving legions. Then were they not typical Roman warriors! These, instead of desponding, would choose some upon whom they could rely implicitly, set them on guard, and lie down to rest. And their rest would be in

proportion to their trust! Here, then, is encouragement for soldiers of Christ to-day. The forces of evil seem great, the ground gained little. Clouds of trouble—of opposition, of criticism, of material distresses—thicken about us, and we are tempted to doubt. But why? Has not a trusty guard been set? Says the Apostle: "*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (4. 6, 7). This word *keep* is one of military usage; "keep as with a garrison," it implies. Our blessed Lord left His own peace to be our sentinel, saying: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you"; and that sentinel He has never recalled. God Himself is His people's guard, interposing between us and our foes. But *our* rest is proportionate to *our* trust. That is what Isaiah means when he says: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In the year 1874, the *Ville de Havre* sailed from America for France, but sank in mid-Atlantic. Amongst the survivors was a Mrs. Spafford, wife of a Chicago solicitor, herself rescued when her four children went down. She was brought to England, and in due course returned to her home. Two years went by, and in that sadly bereaved home, during a mission in Chicago, Ira D. Sankey was residing. About the time of the second anniversary of that tragedy of the sea, Mr. Spafford handed to the sweet singer of the Gospel a paper containing words which he had composed in commemoration of the loss of his children. They began thus:

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
 Though sorrows like sea-billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
 'It is well with my soul.'"

For *rest* grows with *trust*, and trusting greatly, he had great peace.

V. A SOLEMN WARNING

Yet while this garrison at Philippi was so far from Rome, its soldiers were in no sense free lances, following the bents of their own will. At stated periods, Cæsar's judgment-seat was set up in Rome, to which tributary peoples might come to lodge their complaints. If there had been undue oppression or extortion, there was consequent censure. Where no grievances were forthcoming, words of commendation were spoken. In view of this, the soldiers of that colony must act in prudence, in restraint, and in uprightness. And if they, how much more we, who serve a greater Potentate, to whom we must render account! For while to the believer there remains no judgment for *sin*, there is judgment for *service*. Of the present stewardship a return must be made; of the present warfare, a report given. Therefore writes the Apostle: "*That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ*" (1. 10). This word *approve* signifies *a testing of metals*, a distinguishing of the base from the valuable, the gold from the dross; and "things that are excellent," says the margin, are "things that differ." We need to adjust our sense of values, to correct our perspective, to differentiate between what is material to God's purposes and what is meaningless. Moreover, we are to be *sincere*, literally, says the English word, *without wax*. Suffer an illustration. A Roman potter is putting the final touches to a beautiful vase, when, slipping from his fingers, it is cracked upon the floor. But he is wily and unscrupulous. Taking some wax, he fills in and smooths over the flaw, allows it to harden, paints the vase, then sells it as a sound article, a "thing of beauty," but in this case *not* "a joy for ever." Along comes a purchaser, who, taking it home,

places it in some niche. But after a while, when the repeated rays of a powerful sun have beat upon it, the wax melts, and the vase falls to pieces—and with it the reputation of its maker. So the workmen of God may conceal the blemishes, and appear to be other than they are, before men. But at that Judgment-seat, when the piercing rays of His undimmed holiness shine upon us, the flaws will all be apparent. Better then, says Paul, that we be “sincere and without offence” in view of the “day of Christ.”

VI. A SATISFYING PRIZE

When Rome had reached the zenith of her power, effort ceased, all labour being performed by the slave population—and, incidentally, degeneration set in. But leisure days must be filled, and the popular gathering-place was the arena. And as the parent city, so the colony cities; each had its place of sport. There the gladiators fought with each other or with wild animals. There the charioteers swung round in their mad career. Sometimes it was the footrunner who displayed his powers before the admiring crowd. See him as he stands, eager for the start. Behind, and on either side is a sea of faces, yet he beholds none. For at the far end of the course stands a pillar, surmounted by a gilded ball, bright and glittering, upon which rests the victor's laurel wreath. And that sparkling ball fills his vision. With nerves strained, and every muscle taut, he reaches forward. All this, the Apostle translates into the spiritual, saying: “*This one thing I do, 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*” (3. 13, 14). For we, too, are in a race, of which the same writer says: “So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9. 24). In it are many obstacles to delay our feet, so that of many who started that race well it can now be

said: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?" (Gal. 5. 9). Atalanta was the fleetest of mortals, said the Greek myth. Many sought her hand in marriage, but failed in the test, which was to outstrip her in the race. Then one day came Milanion, and a new race began. But he had taken counsel of the gods, and came armed with apples of gold. As Atalanta was about to speed past him, he dropped an apple, which she stopped to gather while he forged ahead. Again she overtook him, and again he repeated the ruse, till at last he had won the race. But there is another side to the winning; there is the losing—and Atalanta had lost. So, too, the enemy of our souls knows full well how to obstruct, dropping here and there the apples of gold, so varied in form; sometimes in pleasures, or in ambitions, in opulence or in worldly preferment, but always possessing the same lure. And the safeguard lies in this—the eyes fixed upon the Goal. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith" (Heb. 12. 1,2). So shall earth's fairest charms lose their spell.

What has stript the seeming beauty
From the idols of the earth?
Not a sense of right or duty
But a sight of peerless worth.

'Tis that look that melted Peter,
'Tis that face that Stephen saw,
'Tis the heart that wept with Mary
Can alone from idols draw;

Draw, and win, and fill completely
Till the cup o'erflows its brim;
What have we to do with idols
Since we've companied with Him?

WHEN they had brought their ships
to land, they forsook all, and
followed Him—*Luke 5. 11*

Bringing into captivity every thought to
the obedience of Christ.

—*2 Corinthians 10. 8*

In the glad morning of my day,
My life to give, my vows to pay
With no reserve and no delay,
With all my heart I come.

—*Marianne Farningham*

Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it,
Whatever the tempest, His voice can still,
There is only joy as we seek His pleasure,
There is only rest as we choose His will.

It matters little where I was born,
Or if my parents were rich or poor;
Whether they shrank from the cold world's
scorn,
Or walked in the pride of wealth secure.
But whether I live a surrendered man,
And hold my integrity firm in my clutch,
I tell you, my brother, as plain as I can,
It matters much.

It matters little where be my grave,
Or on the land or on the sea,
By purling brook or 'neath storming wave,
It matters little or naught to me;
But whether the angel of death come down
And mark my brow with his loving touch
As one that shall wear the victor's crown,
It matters much.

Chapter Seven

SUCCESS THAT REVEALS FAILURE

IT was morning, and the Lord Jesus, having risen early, had gone down to the shores of Galilee, near to Capernaum. Seeking, in those wave-lapped solitudes, in the refreshing cool of morning, relief from the crowds which daily thronged Him, and communion with His Father God, He was even thus early interrupted. Quickly His presence there was noised abroad in the city, and constant streams of humanity began to converge on the lake-front. And soon there pressed around Him, beside the sparkling waters, a great crowd eager, we read, "to hear the word of God." Blessed anxiety this, that stole sleep from their eyelids, and quickened their feet towards the Wondrous Preacher, the Prophet of Galilee! And thrice-blessed famine this, that found them hungering for God and His Word! Surely such was never more needed than in these present days. "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" our hearts cry, "that Thy people may rejoice in Thee."

Revive Thy work, O Lord,
Create soul thirst for Thee;
And hungering for the Bread of Life,
O, may our spirits be.

Nearby, drawn out of the water upon the white beach, lay two fishing-boats. It had been a fruitless night for the owners, who had now quitted the vessels, Andrew and Peter from one, and James and John from the other. Yet disappointment had not produced despair and led to idleness. For, knee-deep in water, they were busy washing their nets. Despite lack of success, they were preparing for the next night's venture. Have our efforts

in service failed, and are we tempted to relinquish? Then let us learn from those fishermen that failure should but be the father of renewed attempts. Success is oft-times not far distant, and frequently comes sooner than expected. It was so with these four. For into Simon Peter's ship stepped Jesus, and prayed him—*gently asked him* is the word—to thrust out a little from the land. He begged the accommodation of Peter's boat, that He might the better hold the crowd. And through Peter's possessions Jesus is going to reach men, as He desires to do to-day through yours and mine. All Peter had, boat and equipment, were freely put at the Lord's disposal. Are we as willing to lend our property, our equipment, to Him? It proved no loss to Peter, nor will it to us. "And He sat down and taught the people," we read. Never was pulpit more dignified than when the Son of God sat, in the majesty of meekness, in the fisherman's boat, dispensing the bread of life to that hungry multitude. What condescension, too, that thus He should grace Peter's boat; that He, to whom belong the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, should crave the use of our puny possessions!

I. A GREAT COMMISSION

Now He has left speaking, and seeks to repay the service, pay the fee for the use of the vessel. The runaway prophet was honest enough to pay the fare to Tarshish, and shall the Lord of Glory do less? Turning to Simon and his partner Andrew, He says: "*Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*" For when He takes possession He also gives commission. He enters only to command, yet His commandments are not grievous. So into the frail barque of our life He enters, with this same two-fold injunction, "Launch out" and "Let down." If regretting your weakness, launch out into the deep of His wealth of power; if bewailing your worthlessness,

into the deep of His infinite worth; if bemoaning your unfitness, into the deep of His equipping grace. God's works are in the deep, and there His wonders are seen (Psa. 107. 24). Therefore, leaving the shallows of our feelings, let us launch out into the deep of His faithfulness; ceasing to flounder in the shallows of our petty plans, let us launch out into the deep of His perfect purposes. Let us leave the shallows of our meagre performings, and launch out into the deep of His mighty promises. Then says the Lord: "Let down your nets *for a draught*," and these last three words contain an unmistakable promise. Launch out, not in passive obedience, but in active expectation. Get ready for a great catch, an extraordinary blessing. "Launch out"—that is the path of faith; and "Let down"—that is the preparation for faith's reward. Do your utmost believing that God will do His.

II. A GOOD CONFESSION

At the command, however, Simon is prompt to cavil. Like ourselves, he has an answer on tongue-tip, and it generally takes the form of an excuse. "*Master*," says he, "*we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing*;" this being the first use in the New Testament of this particular word rendered *Master*, implying *Teacher* or *Guide*, which only Luke uses. Here is surely an honest confession at least—"we have taken nothing," not even a sprat to solace our labours. Nor was it that they were deficient in effort, for they had "toiled all night." How many of us can say with Peter—"we have taken nothing," who cannot preface it with the words—"we have toiled all night?" It is *trying* to toil and take nothing; it is *tragic* not to toil at all. Yet Peter's experience is frequently ours—much effort and little result. But even in the fruitless toil there is blessing, if it flings us back wearily on the bosom of God. Like the prophet we can say: "I have laboured in vain;" but with him we can add: "Yet surely my judg-

ment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Let us, therefore, confess to Him unreservedly our failures, and freely unburden our tired hearts in His sympathetic ear. For even in service our extremity is His opportunity.

Are you standing at Wits'-end Corner?
 Then you're just at the very spot
 To learn the wondrous resources
 Of Him who faileth not.
 No doubt to a brighter pathway
 Thy footsteps will soon be removed,
 But only at Wits'-end Corner
 Is the God who is able proved.

Moreover, Peter might have reasoned, as probably he implied, is not night the correct time for fishing? We have been out at the most likely time, as proved by the experience of generations of fishermen, and have had no success. Are we, then, likely to fare better now, when the time is less opportune? Thus Peter in effect argued, and thus we argue. Besides, there has been no improvement in the fishing-tackle, and can we expect it now to succeed where already it has failed? Yes, Peter; yes, fellow-labourer in the Lord, if we go *at His bidding*.

III. A GRACIOUS COMPULSION

But Simon does not stop there. He reasons no longer, but agrees, saying: "*Nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net.*" *Nevertheless!* What vitality indwells that word! For *nevertheless* discounts past failure, defies all future contingencies, and denies possibility of defeat. In spite of our previous lack of success, in the face of a lifetime of shortcomings, before a meagre record of feeble service, declares *nevertheless!* It asserts a new purpose, it bespeaks renewed hope. But it does more. *Nevertheless* brings my soul into harmony with the mind of God, bends my will to His. It is the language of faith, and

faith is the pathway of blessing. Peter's *feelings* say: "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing"; but Peter's *faith* says: *Nevertheless*. "Nevertheless, at Thy word I will." Here is the impetus, here the impelling force, here the source of momentum. He decides to act, his sufficient mandate being, "*At Thy Word*." So let us cease to judge the present by the past, and if our service has lacked fruit, let us try again; but this time at His Word, on His authority, in His promises. Let us lay bare the *failure*, and then lay hold on the *force*, saying: "Nevertheless, at Thy Word!" The sphere of labour has been difficult, the people so disinterested, the open-air work so disheartening—but "at Thy Word I will." The Sunday School is so trying, the children noisy and so seemingly inattentive, definite signs of conversion so scarce—but "at Thy Word I will." That little service we undertook for Him seems to be unappreciated, a thankless task, and apparently non-productive of blessing. We doubt if it is worth while to maintain it—but "at Thy Word I will." We have been through the night-seasons of trial and despondency, and have said, and said again, "All these things are against me." Life's toil has been heavy, its path mysterious and perplexing; "nevertheless, at Thy Word" I will press on, saying: "The will of the Lord be done."

IV. A GRAND CONSOLATION

Suiting the action to the word, Peter and Andrew pushed out, and proceeded to cast the net. Then we read: "*And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes.*" For that Lord, of Whom the Psalmist wrote: "Thou hast put all things under His feet . . . the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psa. 8. 6. 8), had been able, "by the secret yet mighty magic of His will, to guide and draw the unconscious creatures, and make them min-

ister to the higher interests of His kingdom." "And when they had done this!" *When?* At the wrong time, according to reason, and experience, and human knowledge. But man's *wrong* time may be Christ's *right* time. It is ever the right time when it is His time, for "His are the appointments of unerring rectitude." And here is the proof—"they enclosed a great multitude of fishes." The Word of the Lord had made all the difference to their efforts. Before they were altogether fruitless, now abundantly fruitful. Use and wont demanded that they fish by night, and obeying use and wont they had failed. And sometimes, like Peter and Andrew, we must break through use and wont, habit, tradition, convention, to see God's power in evidence. Alas for us, that, contending for the *method*, we so often miss the *manifestation*; striving for the *form*, we miss the *fish*! The will of God done, despite custom, is assured of the blessing of God. And what a blessing it was! "Their net brake"—"began to break," the word is; broke from the upper fastenings.

V. A GLORIOUS CO-OPERATION

Seeing the possibility of many good fish being lost, Peter and his partner sought the aid of their fellow-fishermen, James and John. "*They beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.*" How much would they have lost but for this wise co-operation! But what Peter and Andrew could not cope with by themselves, they invited James and John to undertake, *to their mutual gain*. And how much of blessing is lost to the Church by lack of Christian unity! For there, too, want of fellowship means diminished blessing, a smaller haul, fewer fish in the great net. It was the recognition of this truth that sent Barnabas hurrying to Tarsus to find Saul, when he had seen the work of grace in Syrian Antioch. What a chance for prominence he

had! Sent by the Church at Jerusalem to investigate rumours of mighty stirrings there, he saw, rejoiced and, true to his name, "exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Here was his opportunity. These believers needed help, and wasn't he on the spot? Hadn't success crowned his preaching, with "much people added unto the Lord"? But, instead, he wondered was there a man more fitted than he for this cosmopolitan city, remembered Paul, and sped in quest of him. And what a suggestive idea of help this is! They were to help *them*, but, in doing so, were to help *themselves*; to help them by sharing their blessing; help, not by *giving*, but by *getting*. Yet when someone beckoned to us to come and help, we declined—wavered at criticism and hesitated in face of tradition—declined, and *lost our share of the blessing*. Besides, this blessing was no self-contained, static affair. True, it began at Peter's boat; yet it did not stop there, but spread to the others. Would that companies of Christians were ready to share their blessing with others; that those others were swift to come and participate in the fruits of Gospel effort, and heaven-sent blessing.

VI. A GODLY CONVICTION

The miraculous happening had a strange result, for we read: "*When Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'*" With men, success often leads to a sense of self-sufficiency. Granted blessing in service, we tend to feel our importance, to imagine that we are indispensable. It was quite otherwise with Peter. As one quaintly has it: "Here the dumb fishes do clearly preach Christ to be the Son of God"; and Peter had a new insight into the glory of the person of Christ, seeing before him the very Lord of Creation. Like Jacob, he thought: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." "The finite felt himself in contact

with the Infinite"; and the Galilean fisherman was ready to say with the Israelites cowering beneath Sinai's blazing peaks: "Let not God speak with us, lest we die." For the realization of His greatness and glory always leads to humiliation of spirit. Indeed, we most realize our own sinfulness when we most recognize God's glory. If the saintly presence of Elijah could cause the widow to say: "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art Thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance?" how much more the holy presence of Jesus Christ! And it is an evidence of spiritual life when there is a cry of distress over sin. Said the godly Robert C. Chapman: "If in coming to God we complain against ourselves, let us thank Him that we have a heart to complain."

Like Job, before the revelation of Jehovah, crying: "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," so now was Peter. Yet what a happy contrast is presented when next we behold him at this same Saviour's feet; for then the cry of his heart is: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." For Peter, "while drawing the multitude of fishes into his net, has himself fallen into the net of Christ; taking a prey, he has himself also been taken a prey."

VII. A GLAD CONSECRATION

"Depart from me," Peter had cried to the Lord, in the language of true worship, for there is a *depart* that but draws Him the nearer. Hence says the Word: "Jesus said unto Simon, 'Fear not'"; speaking the same calming word which He employed when later, like oil on the stormy waters, He said: "Fear not, it is I, be not afraid." Then He made "the mute tenants of the lake that lay in dead and dying heaps in the net, a living parable and pledge

of far vaster successes." Addressing those awe-smitten fishermen He continued: "From henceforth thou shalt catch men"—using a beautiful word, *take them alive*; catch, not to kill and destroy, but to preserve and perpetuate life. Yet with the blessed experiences of that momentous day, Peter could not sit down satisfied. He must have, not merely the blessing, but the Blessor. Hence we read: "*When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him.*" They are not to live on a past experience of His *power*, but on a present enjoyment of His *Person*. As could Paul later, so could Peter and these others say then: "Forgetting those things which are behind . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." So is it with us. The manna of yesterday, sweet though it was, suffices not for the needs of to-day. The meeting with Him yesterday, precious though it was, satisfies not for each ensuing day. We must follow Him through every day. Ceasing, therefore, to sit by the boat mending the nets of broken resolutions, or even gloating over past successes, let us, too, forsake all and follow Him in glad consecration and loving service in His Name, singing the while—

Jesus, I my cross have taken
 All to leave and follow Thee,
 Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
 Thou from hence my all shalt be.

FROM henceforth let no man trouble
me: for I bear in my body the
marks of the Lord Jesus.

—*Galatians 6. 17*

I bear branded on my body the owner's
stamp of Jesus.—*Moffatt*

The landmarks of Jesus.—*Weymouth*

Death, numbing his lower nature, releases
him for the scarce-disturbed communion
of a Higher Life.—*Drummond*

Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was—a blameless life.

—*Cowper*

We are the only Bible
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's gospel,
We are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message,
Given in deed and word;
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?

I never can hide myself from me;
I see what others can never see;
I know what others can never know;
I have to live with myself, and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.

Chapter Eight

THE SATISFACTION OF A STIGMA

PAUL the Apostle had traversed the province of Galatia, declaring the Gospel with such evident power and attendant blessing that, making for other spheres, he left behind a newly-born church, rejoicing in the warm glow of its first faith. Upon revisiting it, however, after the lapse of three years, he found doctrines of legalism prevailing, his former instruction departed from, and his very apostleship challenged. On this account he wrote to them this little epistle of six chapters. In the opening two, his apostleship is vindicated, and salvation by grace alone asserted; in the next two, he depicts the bondage that ensues from the law; while in the two closing chapters he proclaims the liberty that grace brings. And then he brings this letter of correction and castigation to a fitting termination with these words: "Henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE

The concluding phrase of this verse finds its setting, and therefore its meaning, in the Roman period and practices. On the estate of some notable were domestic slaves whose task it was to perform the menial labour necessary. To obviate the possibility of loss by confusion or escape, upon them was branded the mark of their master. Then says Paul in effect: "I am become, by the work of redemption, the eternal possession of Jesus Christ my Saviour and my Lord. He is henceforth my gracious Owner, and I, a worker in that service from which no liberation is desired, bear on my body His marks of ownership." Frequently,

too, it happened that when a Roman general returned from the wars, bringing with him the spoils of battle, and a band of enslaved captives, he caused his insignia to be put upon these. Paul would have men know that he has been lawfully won upon the battleground by Heaven's mighty Conqueror, and now he is His willing slave, ready to speed at His bidding, bearing on his body the Victor's marks. Again, sometimes devotees of some god, attaching themselves to its temple, yielding themselves wholly to its vain worship, had their persons branded with the name of this god. Paul would tell us, his heart has been touched and won by the living and true God, and now, riven from all earth-ties, he is set apart to Him, wearing as a consecrated worshipper, the marks of Jesus, his Lord and his God. But there is another reference in the words. Commonly, soldiers marching proudly behind some general tested in many a fierce campaign, evinced their confidence and displayed their pride by branding themselves with the name of their leader. Then, Paul would inform us, he has enlisted in a mighty army, the army of the redeemed; is marching under a banner whose emblem is for evermore a Cross stained with blood; and is proud to follow the Christ, the Captain of his salvation. Under whatever figure, the implication of this phrase of Paul's is Christ's proprietorship over him; hence says the Moffatt translation: "I bear branded on my body the owner's stamp of Jesus."

This claim of our Lord Jesus Christ upon His redeemed people is so complete as to be beyond challenge, and embraces every validity of tenure that law recognizes. A person may own a possession on the ground that he made it, that it is the product of his own workmanship. Or, he may lay claim to it for the everyday reason that he has purchased it. The international laws of the world, moreover, admit ownership, in the case of lands, because of priority of discovery, as well as by right of conquest. Again, property may have been obtained by inheritance

at the death of its former owner, or by deed of gift during his lifetime. Any one of these constitutes a just cause of possession which the law respects. Then the confidence, and the responsibility, of the believer is intensified, for the Lord's ownership of His people is not upon only one of these grounds, but upon all of them at once. To Him we belong by *Production*, because "all things were made by Him" (John 1. 3); and by *Purchase*, for were we not redeemed "by the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1. 18)? Surely, too, we are His by *Priority of Finding*, for did not our Good Shepherd say of us: "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost" (Luke 15. 6)? In a very real sense, besides, we belong to Him by the assertion of His *Power*, when stooping to enter the domain of the strong man, He who was the Stronger overcame him, spoiling him of his goods (Matt. 12. 29). Then we are His by *Plea of Heritage*, for does not the Book speak of "His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1. 18)? Finally, we belong to Him by *Presentation*, as the Father's special gift to the Son. Hence He could say of us: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17. 6). So the ransomed Church, in its entirety and integrity, is its Redeemer's, by valid claim of earth or heaven. And each member of that Church, every blood-washed sinner, can say with joy: "My Beloved is mine"; and with more joy can add: "And I am His."

His for ever, only His;
 Who the Lord and me shall part?
 Ah! with what a rest of bliss
 Christ can fill the loving heart:
 Heaven and earth may fade and flee,
 First-born light in gloom decline;
 But, while God and I shall be,
 I am His and He is mine.

Therefore the Apostle, gratefully recognizing this relationship, and gladly responding to this claim, writes: "I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

II. THE SYMBOLS

Yet not always did we wear those sacred marks. In the unprofitable days, before Grace arrested those wandering feet, we bore the marks, rather, of *sin*. Moreover, those iniquities were fully known and recorded against us in the Divine Presence. Those words of the prophet were painfully true concerning us: "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God" (Jer. 2. 22). Such was our hopeless state in the past. Moreover, there is stored up, ahead of this old world, a day when men will carry the very mark of *Satan*, when, through his emissary, he will cause all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads" (Rev. 13. 16). But while the marks of sin were upon us formerly, the mark of Satan we shall never experience, for the grace and mercy of God intervening, there have been put upon us the marks of *salvation*. As the Psalmist says: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130. 3). Reconciled by His death, and forgiven for His Name's sake, we are sealed as His very own by "that Holy Spirit of promise"; and of the Lord's people in every age it is true that—

The blood was the sign, Lord,
That marked them as Thine, Lord,
And brightly they'll shine
At Thy coming again.

Cleansed, therefore, from the marks of sin in the past, and secured from that predicted mark of Satan in the future, we have been given the mark of the precious blood, the mark of salvation, that we might wear the marks of *service*, saying with Paul: "*I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*" What, then, were these marks to which

the Apostle alluded? Primarily they were without doubt the weals and scars that came upon that much-battered physical frame of his, because of his faith in the Lord Jesus, and his fearless proclamation of the Gospel. How could it be otherwise after the sufferings he so graphically describes in his second letter to the Corinthians? "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (1 I. 23-27). And so it continues, a long catalogue of cruelties inflicted and hardships endured. These were honourable scars, gained on the battlefield of a holy war. The credentials of the Cross they were, the "beautiful initials of Jesus." Yet they were but the outward expression of an inward experience, and before they could appear upon his body, they were first impressed upon his soul. There it is that the marks of the Lord Jesus must ever begin.

III. THE SAMPLE

Once there, however, they will reveal themselves, if not now in physical weals and bruises, assuredly in moral forces and traits of character. If in these present days it is not demanded of the servant of Christ that he carry the outward marks in the sense in which Paul did, it is still incumbent upon him to bear the inner, and in his life to display *the marks of the Lord Jesus*. And in this case the metaphorical is not one whit less valuable than the literal.

What, then, were His essential marks? *First* amongst these comes, surely, *His unsullied holiness*, for He was ever "without blemish and without spot." And in some small but increasing measure this should characterize those who are called after Him. It is His own eternal purpose that "we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Hence Peter exhorts: "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living." Nor was there ever an age when the injunction of these words was more imperative than it is in the bustle of to-day—

Take time to be holy,
The world rushes on.
Spend much time in secret
With Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus,
Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends, in thy conduct,
His likeness shall see.

For still, as down the centuries, God keeps saying to His Church, by the Eternal Spirit: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

But now we turn to a *second* outstanding feature in that perfect One—the *intensity of His love to God His Father*. From the beginning that was the prevailing passion of His earthly life, the guiding light that gleamed upon His path even as it climbed the slopes of the lone, grey hill. Upon it His very soul fed, for He could declare: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And when at the last the gloomy Golgotha with its menacing Cross flung an ominous shadow across the city and into that little upper room of holy communion, He brought to a close that ever-hallowed gathering with these words: "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." And as the Master, so the servants; else we bear not *the marks of the Lord Jesus*. True worship

begins when we are able to say: "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4. 19). But here commences real service also; and any motive in Christian activity other than this is insufficient and unworthy. This is the well-spring of every thought and act that pleases God. Esteem for others is a most excellent thing, and is enjoined in the Scriptures; but service founded even on that will be found to fall short. The service that counts, and that endures, is that which flows unbidden from hearts that whisper: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Says some Christian friend: "My heart is indeed marked by love to God. In that at least, in some degree, I follow the Lord's example." But pause, friend, while we remind ourselves that there was a *third* great characteristic of our blessed Lord, in that *He displayed His love to God in His love to men*. Hence we read, and read again, that, looking upon the multitudes, He was "moved with compassion"; and that, looking upon the rich, young ruler, He "loved him." Do we assert that grateful love is born within to the God of our salvation? Then here is its only possible evidence, in love radiating to fellow-believers everywhere, scattering in its course and by its force the petty differences born of pride; and then going out to a heart-sore world, dispelling the mean prejudices of colour, class and creed. "Love," wrote the mystical William Law, "like the Spirit of God, rideth upon the wings of the wind; and is in union and communion with all the saints that are in heaven and on earth. Love is quite pure; it has no by-ends; it seeks not its own; it has but one will, and that is to give itself into everything, and overcome all evil with good. It lives wholly to the will of Him of Whom it is born; its meat and drink is to do the will of God. It is the resurrection and life of every Divine virtue, a fruitful mother of true humility, boundless benevolence, unwearied patience, and bowels of compassion." "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can

he love God whom he hath not seen"? Nor is the time for this some distant one, but this present. Future resolutions frequently fail of realization.

We shall do so much in the years to come,
 But what have we done to-day?
 We shall give of our gold in a princely sum,
 But what did we give to-day?
 We shall lift the heart and dry the tear,
 We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,
 We shall speak with words of love and cheer,
 But what have we done to-day?

—Nixon Waterman

There was a *fourth* salient feature in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. *That was His consistent loyalty to the Scriptures.* Throughout those years of His public ministry He was ever referring to and quoting from these, as befitted this perfect Man whose delight was "in the Law of the Lord," and who meditated therein "day and night." His acceptance of them was unwavering and absolute. From them He comforted His friends; from them confuted His foes. They cheered Him in His lovely life, and consoled Him in His lonely death. "When one sees the Son of God as Son of Man, our example, quoting Scripture, bowing to it, submitting all His teaching to its test, it may surely satisfy you and me that the Scriptures are Divine. The question of their authority is settled. We want no further evidence. All the accumulated arguments of the wisest heads are weak in comparison with the example of Jesus; and, on the other hand, no wild speculations of those who would be wise above what is written need shake our faith. If any doubts assail your soul, turn to the Lord of lords. See Him submitting to the Word of God—hear Him saying: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (Reeve). And the Christian who enjoys, even in the feeblest fashion, real communion with a living Saviour will not be found wanting in this.

Then, *think of His prayerfulness*. As very God, He maintained unbroken contact with the Father, being ever, even in the midst of earthly circumstances, "in the bosom of the Father." All the functionings of His being were in the atmosphere of prayer; nay, His very life was prayer. Yet as real man, He sought the silent spaces, that, curtained in by the night shadows, and canopied by the starry skies, He might engage His soul in prolonged acts of prayer. So we read of Him: "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Here, too, is a typical eventide to one of His days with His disciples, so full of teaching right, and exemplifying righteousness. Says the Word: "And every man went unto his own house"; then adds, "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning, He came again into the temple." It happened frequently that He had no time to eat (Mark 6. 31), nor to rest (v. 34), nor even to sleep (v. 46); yet always He found time to pray. And we, who profess His Name, are to bear His *marks*.

But there were other traits that were found in Him. There was *His great humility of mind*. The sole description of the heart of the Lord Jesus was given by Himself when He said: "I am meek and lowly in heart." Nor does the word *meek* imply weakness, as the world, in its failure to sense relative values, is prone to think. This same word is found in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, used with regard to the training of horses. It conveys the idea of great strength held in by bit and bridle, of power under restraint. Surely this should be the desired ornament of every follower of His, "a meek and quiet spirit"; a meek spirit that takes no offence, and a quiet spirit that gives none.

Consider, finally, *His readiness to forgive*, when even in His moments of acutest agony, His thoughts were fragrant with mercy, and the great desire of His heart was the forgiveness of His murderers. Forgiveness, says one, is

the odour of the flower when it is crushed. It was from the gracious lips of the Holy One of God, crushed between the upper and the nether millstones, that there came those sweet words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And we ought to bear in our bodies—in our deportment with relation to one another—the marks of the Lord Jesus. What a transformation would come to many a gathering of Christians to-day were this *mark* borne just a little more plainly! Our measure of forgiveness for personal wrongs is too stunted, our standard too low. We gauge according to men, rather than according to Christ. We forgive, by our expectation of forgiveness from others, when we should, by our experience of forgiveness from God. Hence the Apostle writes: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

IV. THE SECRET

How, then, do the characteristics of Christ become reproduced in His children, the marks of the Lord Jesus become discernible? Paul lets us into the secret, saying: "*I bear branded in my body*" (R.V.). With the slaves under the Roman domain the marks were those of burning, for their bodies were seared with a hot iron. The procedure was painful, but the results were permanent. Their masters designed that the marks should remain. How grand, say you, to bear the marks of the Lord Jesus? Grand, indeed, but possible in one only way—the way of "branding"! And this is a harrowing ordeal, at which flesh and blood rebel. Yet we may not have the effect without the cause, the *marks* without the *branding*, the being *made perfect* without the *suffering*. Just here lies the explanation of the trials, the sufferings, and the

sorrows. Accepted in meekness of heart as from the hand of the God of infinite wisdom, they constitute the *means* to produce the blessed *marks*.

And the God of infinite wisdom is the God of infinite love. He never wields that branding-iron in meaningless fashion, but always with the end in fullest view even from the beginning.

V. THE SECURITY

But there is a present compensation. Says the Apostle: "*Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear branded in my body, the marks of the Lord Jesus.*" For the branding brings a recompense. As the marks grow, the troublings of earth fade. When these characteristics increase in us, we are less easily ruffled by time's happenings, and the ills of life make feebler impression. The greatness of the trials, and the grandeur of the transformation, both react to the exclusion of things *external*, that there may be devotion to things *eternal*. Though the branding be sore, it carries with it a blessed security, a sweet immunity, so that henceforth, upon life's troubled sea, we are made to rise upon the crest of the wave.

Then brand, O Lord, though it should cost
me dearly;
And humbling be;
Sufficient if men see Thy face more clearly
Impressed on me.

THAT I should preach among the
Gentiles the unsearchable riches
of Christ—*Ephesians 3. 8*

The glad message of the untraceable riches
of Christ.—*Rotherham*

The Gospel of the fathomless wealth of
Christ.—*Moffatt*

The kingdoms of this world are not to be
had by beggars, the kingdom of Heaven
may.—*Baxter*

My soul, rest happy in thy low estate,
Nor hope, nor wish, to be esteemed or
great;
To take the impress of a Will divine—
Be that thy glory and these riches thine!
—*Madame Guyon*

Still a treasure all uncounted—
Still a story half untold—
Unexhausted and unfathomed,
Fresh as in the days of old.—*T.P.*

If the world were mine and all its store,
And were it of crystal gold;
Could I reign on its throne for evermore
From the ancient days of old,
An empress noble and fair as day,
O gladly might it be,
That I might cast it all away;
Christ, only Christ for me.
—*Mechthild of Helfde, 1277*

Chapter Nine

A REGALITY OF RICHES

A NEWSPAPER having offered a prize for the best definition of wealth, the award was given to the following: "Wealth is the universal provider for everything except happiness, and the passport everywhere except to heaven." While material riches are the accepted medium of exchange among men, and have come to form the standard of values in this world, yet there is sound sense in the statement. In spite of the prevailing feverish rush to amass riches, nevertheless the Word of God has some things to say about these, which defy controversy. First, it reminds us, they are *unabiding*, for says the wise man: "Riches are not for ever" (Prov. 27. 24). The greatest fortune ever gathered dies, for him, with its owner. Again, the same writer tells us, they are *unreliable*: "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. 23. 5). When the clouds of the Great War burst in 1914, over Europe, an Englishman resident in Russia was the possessor of a fine mansion, a lovely yacht, and a tidy nest-egg of £25,000. Then came the exigencies of war, and he found himself back in England, penniless, and ultimately an inmate of the Croydon Workhouse. Swift as the eagle wings its flight upward till it is lost in the immensity of the blue, so riches had taken wings and flown.

Moreover, there are some things riches can never do. They can never *satisfy*, though men are loth to believe it. Solomon—the fact of whose colossal wealth our Lórd perpetuated in the expression "arrayed in all His glory"—from his experience reached this conclusion: "Neither

is his eye satisfied with riches" (Eccles. 4. 8). And assuredly, they are impotent to *save*. So the Psalmist writes: "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" (Psa. 49. 6, 7). It is impossible to bribe the God of heaven with the wealth of earth. Of a truth,

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

It was an Eastern emperor, cradled in the lap of luxury, who commanded that upon his tombstone should be sculptured a finger and thumb in the act of closing in a snap, with underneath these words: "All in this world is not worth that."

Can wealth give happiness? Look around and see!
What gay distress, what splendid misery!
I envy none their pageantry and show
I envy none the gilding of their woe.

REAL RICHES

With relief, therefore, we turn from the evanescent and illusory, to this great expression of the Apostle's Gospel—"the *unsearchable riches of Christ*." Before this statement of *infinitude*, the accumulated fortunes of the ages pale into beggarly insignificance. "The unsearchable riches of Christ!" To Paul, the Gospel was no meagre, anæmic emaciated business, crawling apologetically among the dust of outworn creeds; but something grand, robust, and full-blooded, striding majestically down the ages. It is *riches*—an abundance, an overflow, a river in spate. The word is a favourite of Paul's, and with one exception in the Epistle of James, is peculiar to the great Apostle's writings. And these riches are *unsearchable*. They are inscrutable, incomprehensible; literally, *they cannot be traced*. How speedily the track of the vessel across the ocean is obliterated behind it, as wave upon wave rolls in.

So as we attempt to trace out the power and blessings of this Gospel, we find ourselves in a limitless ocean. Billow after billow crowd in upon us, till we are lost in both their multitude and immensity. For the riches of Christ are unsearchable—*untrackable*. Only once elsewhere in the New Testament is the word found, and there it is rendered *past finding out* (Rom. 11. 33). This, says Paul, is his Gospel—an ocean, boundless and fathomless, on and on, more and yet more, *past finding out*. It was this conception of it that had gripped the heart of the old woman who, in the poverty of her wind-swept attic sat down to her frugal meal and, holding up her crust of bread and cup of water, exclaimed thankfully: "All this, and Christ!"

THE RECIPIENTS

Who, then, are those for whom such riches are available, who upon earth can be the recipients of the wealth of heaven? Were that question directed to the riches of men it were, in general, easy of answer. For this old world has a principal in these things, and were it asked to formulate it might do so, as it not infrequently does, by the false application of words of Holy Writ wrested from their context. Surely its answer would be: "Unto him that hath shall be given." For wealth begets wealth, and oftentimes they get, who have no lack. But the riches of Christ are governed by another principal. Says James: "Hath not God chosen the *poor* of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (2. 5)? Here, mark you, he is discussing material riches and poverty. Does this, then, exclude the rich from Gospel mercies? By no means, for God is no respecter of persons, and His Gospel was sent to "all the world," and "to every creature," its dominant note being *Whosoever will*. Lady Huntingdon was wont to declare that she was "going to heaven on the letter *m*,"

For, she said, if the Book had declared that "not any wise men after the flesh, not any mighty, not any noble are called," she would have been debarred; but the word is not *any* but *many*. And while the message of grace is to rich and poor, to gentle and simple, yet the heart of God pulsates, somehow, with special compassion for those who carry the burdens of life. Was not the Lord's own word: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them," and is it not written that "the common people heard Him gladly"? Moreover, it was Lazarus the beggar who, in his want, turned to God, while the rich man was lost in his opulence. It is told of a Persian king that, miserable in the midst of an Eastern profusion of wealth, he called his wise men and asked for the secret of happiness. After some thought, they replied that only when he was wearing the shirt of a truly happy man, would he know happiness. "Then scour the country," commanded the king. They searched, but in vain, and were about to desist when they espied a labourer returning from his toil in the fields, begrimed and weary, yet whistling cheerfully. "Are you happy?" said they. "Very happy," was the reply. "Then our quest is ended," they said. But they were as far from success as ever. The man had no shirt. For the poor, aye, the poorest of the poor, of this world can still be "rich in faith," and possessors of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Of what, then, do these riches consist? Define them, you say. Define the undefinable! For if their content could be fully stated, they would cease to be "unsearchable." In time we can never fully comprehend them, as in eternity we shall never exhaust them. Yet some expression is given to them in the Word of God.

I. THE RICHES OF HIS GOODNESS

Paul, writing to the Christians at Rome, says: "*Despise not the riches of His goodness and forbearance and*

longsuffering?" (Rom. 2. 4). These God has bestowed with lavish hand upon every son of Adam—the riches of His goodness, his goodness in abundance, in overflowing measure. Say you, my troubles have been many; few blessings have come my way? How feeble these memories of ours can be! For goodness and mercy have shadowed us all the days of our lives. The physical well-being and the health of mind, the solace of home and the comfort of friends, the pleasant sights we have seen and the happy memories we cherish, what are these but the manifestations of the goodness of God? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," writes James. Then surely the riches of His goodness have been shown, as the verse suggests, in His great forbearance and longsuffering? On the one hand He has heaped His choicest gifts upon us, and on the other has displayed, in the highest degree, restraint with our rebellion, and patience with our pride. But the Apostle adds the sequel to all this: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Here is His goodness in its most wonderful phase. When we had no semblance of merit, He persistently wooed us, and at length won us to Himself. It was the riches of His goodness that promoted within us godly *sorrow for sin*, turning our stubborn hearts Christ-ward, and our wayward feet heaven-ward.

II. THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

But there is more, for the Book speaks of the riches of His grace.

Says the Apostle: "*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Eph. 1. 7). Here is a marvellous expression of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." No sooner did the riches of His goodness awaken real sorrow for sin, bringing us to the pierced feet of the Saviour, than the sluice-gates

of heaven were opened upon us, and the riches of His grace poured forth, bearing the assurance of *sins forgiven*. For at that moment the saving efficacy of the blood of His Cross was made good to us, and in Him we were liberated from both the guilt and the grip of sin. And, crowning blessing, we have the certain knowledge that our sins, in all their horrible entirety, are freely forgiven. Nor is this a begrudged, half-hearted forgiveness. It is not that He estimates, as He alone can do, the enormity of our guilt, and then grants a corresponding measure of forgiveness. That would be forgiveness according to the measure of *our sins*, whereas He forgives according to the measure of *His grace*. So Paul writes: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Hence there is neither form nor extent of sinfulness but that the sinner, through faith in His Name, may be sure, beyond the shadow of a doubt, of His forgiveness, for it is "according to the riches of His grace." These are so infinite, that the Apostle must needs qualify even that expression, so in the succeeding chapter he says: "The exceeding riches of His grace" (2. 7). For a world of sin, God has a wealth of grace; nay, wealth upon wealth, a superabounding abundance of grace. Redundance of language, says one; but what other kind could fitly describe such grace? Rightly we sing—

Grace is flowing like a river,
Millions there have been supplied;
Still it flows as free as ever
From the Saviour's wounded side.
None need perish, none need perish,
All may live for Christ has died.

III. THE RICHES OF HIS MERCY

Once more the Apostle continues the unfolding of these "unsearchable riches of Christ," this time in the riches of His mercy.

Says he: "*But 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*" (Eph. 2. 4). Aforetime, as to our worthlessness and helplessness in the sight of a holy God, we were "dead in sins." But nothing could stifle the unmeasured love of God, so He sent His Son to die for us. In His death, God counts believing sinners dead, both to the claims of a broken law and to the habits of the old life. Moreover, in raising His Son, He reckons us as raised with Him into a new life; and, having taken Him up to the place of signal honour and supreme triumph at His right hand, sees us as seated there in Him, His victory our victory, and His interests our interests. And the assertion of all this is related to the fact that God is "rich in mercy." The riches of His mercy, therefore, are the assurance to the believer of eternal *safety in Christ*. A Scottish farmer, busy in the field, heard the shrill cries of a bird evidently in terror. Looking upward, he espied a lark darting hither and thither, with overhead a sparrow-hawk poised on the wing, ready to swoop upon its helpless prey. Suddenly the lark, instinctively recognizing a possible place of safety, made straight for the man, and nestled in his horny, toil-stained hand, while the hawk, balked of a meal, was speedily lost in the endless expanse of the heavens. Quivering with fear was that little bird, but none the less secure, for it was in the hand of one stronger than its natural foe. Yet sometimes we are assailed by doubts and wonderings, forgetting that it was the Christ of Calvary, our Stronger than the strong enemy, who declared: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." And the Apostle emphasizes this perfect security in these words;

"Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3), the God who abounds in mercy. Material things constitute the riches of men, and they delight in them; mercy is the wealth of God, and He delights in mercy. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy." Hence the prophet writes: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: *for in these things I delight,*' saith the Lord" (Jer. 9. 24).

As Samuel could say of Israel, so at the last will it be true of every child of God: "The Lord . . . delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe" (1 Sam. 12. 11). For our God is "rich in mercy." Sings Faber—

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
That is more than liberty.
For the love of God is broader
Then the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

IV. THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY

Still we are only at the vestibule of the heavenly palace, gazing in at the "riches of Christ," but never exhausting them. Once more the curtain is drawn back, revealing yet another splendour, the riches of His glory.

Paul, addressing the saints at Ephesus, voices this magnificent prayer: "*That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His*

Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3. 16). For while they are called saints, in virtue of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by one offering "hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," they were men of like passions with us, enduring the same conflict, vexed by the same problems. The Apostle knows their physical limitations, for always the outward man perishes. By the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, however, a new man has been born within—the inner man. And while, humanly, the destiny of the outer man is the dust, the goal of the new man is the Glory. The former gravitates towards the sod, the latter towards the sun. But, knowing their present need, Paul prays. His request is that that they might have an earnest of the coming glory even now; that God might withdraw the veil, and flood their inmost being with that glory, to the end that they might be nerved and strengthened on the homeward way. And the riches of His glory are the pledge to the warring pilgrim of *strength for the journey*. As thy days so shall thy strength be, because there is with our God an infinitude of glory. Therefore the poet could sing:

Grow old along with me;
The best is yet to be,
The last, for which the first was made.
My times are in Thy hand,
Perfect the whole as planned.
Trust God, see all, be not afraid.

To us it shall be even as He promised: "The path of the just is as the light of dawn (R.V. margin) that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4. 18).

But Paul pursues his theme, varying the expression, yet maintaining the import. Hence to the Colossians he writes: "*The riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles*" (1. 27). What, then, is this divine secret which was hidden down the ages, but is now unfolded? Says

Paul, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Here is assurance made doubly-sure, for not only is the believer "in Christ," but Christ is in the believer. That we are in Christ provides the *cause* of our security with God; that Christ is in us produces the *sense* of that security within, for "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8. 16). Again the Apostle changes the phrase, writing these words: "*The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*" (Eph. 1. 18). The theme of the chapter is that by redemption believers are Christ's property, deemed by Him of greatest value. So He indicates His claim by an act of sealing, the Holy Spirit becoming the present tenant of our mortal bodies as the guarantee that one day the Owner will without fail assert His claim. Yet once more Paul employs this expression, again slightly varied, saying: "*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4. 19). His material needs have been met by the liberality of the Philippian saints, so that he can write thankfully: "I have all and abound" (v. 18). But they, too, have needs, both spiritual and material, as varied as their personalities. So, writing acknowledgment, he makes this grand assertion, that knows neither restriction nor reservation, and that embraces every possible contingency and circumstance. Says he: "But my God shall supply all your need." On the one side is our poverty—*all your need*; on the other His plenty—*His riches in glory*; and these two are joined by this precious promise, *God shall supply*. His provision always exceeds our expectation; His givings put to shame our misgivings; for the supply is dictated by His love, and measured by "His riches in glory." In the Annual Report of the Muller Homes for 1906 is recorded this incident. It was the centenary of Founder's Day, and the director of the Orphanage, wending his way through the streets of Bristol towards Ashley Downs, was deep in

thought. He would like to signalize that day by giving to each inmate a banana to tea. But where would two thousand bananas come from? So the thought was dismissed. Arriving at the Homes, to his amazement a consignment of bananas awaited him. And that evening each child had *two* bananas to tea. For "my God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Nor can the passing years annul the promise. The "father" of an orphanage proved it true, so also did a hospital nurse.

It was a Sunday evening. The preacher at a service in a Bradford hospital told the story of the bananas, only to see a smile flicker across several faces. The meeting ended, an explanation was forthcoming. A nurse, her training completed, had been offered a post. But her shoes were worn out, as were her meagre savings; and without the shoes, the post could not be accepted. Believing the promise of God, she brought her need to the God of the promise—earnestly! A few days passed, and the post brought a parcel. Hurriedly opening it she found—two pairs of shoes! So the promise stands—"Shall supply . . . according to His riches!" That is the message of these lines:

He giveth more grace as the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as the labours increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed e'er the day is half done;
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

PETER said unto Him, "Lord, why
cannot I follow Thee now? I will
lay down my life for Thy sake"

John 13. 37

Words are the daughters of earth, but
deeds are the sons of Heaven.—*Dr. Johnson*

Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it
convert itself into conduct.—*Thomas Carlyle*

Lord, Who hast suffered all for me
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter Cross I bear for Thee,
Help me with patience to endure.—*Cowper*

For His sake those tears and prayers are offered,
Which you bear as flowers to His throne;
Better still would be the food and shelter,
Given for Him, and given to His own.
Praise with loving deeds is dear and holy,
Words of praise will never serve instead,
Lo! you offer music, hymn and incense,
When He has not where to lay His head.—*Procter*

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee!
All may of Thee partake,
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture (for Thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.
A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine!
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine.—*Herbert*

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."
He said, "Nay, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers—but a crown."
I said, "But the skies are black,
There is nothing but bustle and din."
And He wept as He sent me back,
"There is more," He said, "There is sin."

Chapter Ten

THE MEASUREMENT OF MOTIVE

IT has been often said, and truly, that to fathom the love of Christ we must plumb the depths of Calvary. His exaltation can be measured only by His humiliation, the grace in Himself gauged only by the gift of Himself. That is what Paul asserts when writing to the Corinthian saints he says: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). The believer is a person "pledged to impossibilities," faced with tasks of the greatest magnitude. He walks in a world of things material and evident, yet looks beyond all its glamour, as "seeing Him who is invisible." He prays to "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," so that knowing he may be "filled with all the fulness of God," his finitude embracing infinitude. And from his overflowing heart rise such words as these:

It passeth knowledge that dear love of Thine,
Lord Jesus, Saviour; yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength
Know more and more.

And here it is declared that he knows that unbounded thing, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," who, John reminds us, is "full of grace and truth." No sooner has he experienced the saving mercy of God through faith in Jesus Christ, than he commences, and in increasing measure continues, to realize this grace, this loving favour, wholly unmerited, entirely spontaneous, and utterly incomprehensible. What an expression it had;

into what an act it resolved itself! He was rich, rich in the plenitude of all the divine attributes and prerogatives. He became poor, with the poverty of a lowly birth, of a lonely life, of a loathesome death; so poor that creation failed to recognize its Creator. Hence it could be written of Him: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not"; while Peter could add: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3. 17). But there is a point of contact between His riches and His poverty, a reason for which unparalleled riches yielded to unprecedented poverty. It is found in these words—"for your sakes." This stoop, this sorrow, this suffering could not be for His personal aggrandisement who was rich beyond all conception. It was because of others, the sons of men who were poor in their estrangement from God through sin, poor in their waywardness, and helplessness and hopelessness. "Though He was rich yet . . . He became poor"—that points the rugged path that stretched before Him; "that ye through His poverty might be rich"—that speaks the regal purpose that impelled Him on. Who may define the wealth of those He has enriched with His own "unsearchable riches," with His life and His love, with His own hope and His own home? Listen to these words which He breathed in communion with His Father: "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them."

But action produces reaction: love provokes love; therefore "we love Him, because He first loved us." His Gift begets our giving, and the love that enthral us, energizes us. So much He has done for our sakes; what little can we do for His sake? Such was the thought that thrilled the heart of Peter. Learning that the Lord was going on a journey beset with dangers, and with death lurking in the shadows at the end of it, Peter was gripped by an intense desire to evince some response to his Master's lavish love. So he says: "Lord . . . I will lay down my

life *for Thy sake*." Nor judge that Peter was insincere in his protestation, but rather that He, like us, knew not his own heart, that it is "deceitful above all things." For ere cock-crow would herald the dawn of another day, Peter was to deny the Lord, and again, and yet again. Nevertheless, though He may not honour us in permitting us to endure physical death for Him, yet there are some experiences He does call us to, with these words as the motive-power and compelling force—"For His Sake."

I. SELF TO DIE

2 Cor. 4. 11: "*For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*" Here is the proposition set down thus paradoxically by the Apostle, that in the child of God, life must die, that dying it may live. Aforetime, as elsewhere he recalls, while we lived the self-life we were "dead in sins," dead even while we lived. By the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, a new life was begotten within us by the Eternal Spirit, enabling us to say—

Soon as my all I ventured
Upon th' atoning blood,
The Holy Spirit entered,
And I was born of God.

And now, "we which live," or as it might be, "we the living," truly live only as we die; to which death we are called, being given an all-inclusive cause, example, incentive, and empowerment in one—"for Jesus' sake." He is here given His humiliation Name, for the Son of God became the Son of Man, true Deity assuming true Humanity. No less real than we have, so He had an *ego*, a self, spotless and pure withal, which He subjected. Hence Paul could write: "For even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15. 3). He did not seek His own will, but so merged it in that of His Father God as to declare: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." So within

us is our *ego*, our self. Unregenerate, it reigns unchallenged, pursuing its own bents, and seeking its own desires. But having been born anew, from above, we have another factor, the Christ-life within constituting a vital opposition to the self-life. And He is to be our example, His self-abnegation to be ours. To us He comes and whispers: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself—his *self*—and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16. 24). And Luke adds one other significant word. He says: "Take up his cross *daily*." Plainly, to *say yes* to Him, we must *say no* to self—and that is denying self. As the Roman criminal was made to carry the cross upon which he was so soon to die, so are we to accept those circumstances which mean death to the self-life, and from which the self-life naturally shrinks. Nor is any Christian exempt, for this is a condition of discipleship. Said the Lord: "If *any* man," making the application universal. But our crosses are as varied as ourselves, and each has one that is peculiarly distinctive. Hence the Word is: "Let him take up *his* cross," for with all its universality, it is intensely individual. It admits of no escape, for it is to be "*daily*." It is a persistent attitude, this taking up the cross, for self dies hard. Yet these words, "*for Jesus' sake*," gild that very cross with glory. Borne grudgingly, it weighs heavy; willingly, it blooms like the rod of Aaron. We, therefore, "the living," are to be daily "exposed to death," not as a meaningless suffering, but that "the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Self-dying, for His sake, is the only way to the fulness of His risen life. That is what Paul affirms elsewhere, saying: "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And as the Amalekite, inveterate enemy of Israel, was yet of his kith and kin, so is this self within the believer his most relentless opponent. Rightly he prays, with the poetess—

God harden me against myself,
 This coward with pathetic voice
 Who craves for ease, and rest and joys;
 Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
 My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
 My clog whatever road I go. —Christina Rossetti

II. SUFFERING TO BE BORNE

Phil. 1. 29: "*For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake.*"

Faith links these feeble lives of ours with the full life of our Lord Jesus Christ. But His was characterized by suffering crowned with glory. And the faith that identifies us with Him in the latter, unites us with Him in the former. He was essentially *the* Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, being despised and rejected of men. The life, too, of the greatest of the Apostles was conformed to this pattern. This chosen vessel had a glorious task allotted to him. Yet, at its very inception, God emphasizes, not the greatness of what He will *do*, but of what He will *suffer*, saying to Ananias: "I will shew him how great things he must suffer *for My name's sake*" (Acts 9. 16). Doing, if not easy, would be at least congenial, for it entails activity, and that we love. But suffering is hard, for that may mean inaction, and that we loathe. We say, but do not readily believe that

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Yet believing and suffering are conjoined. For Joseph, believing in God meant the lonely exile, the cruel slander, and the cold dungeon. For Daniel it meant the royal displeasure, and the fearsome den of lions. To Jeremiah it meant the prison cell and the stocks, as years later it did for Paul and his companion in Philippi. But suffering, you say, is distasteful and repulsive. Nay, but couple with it this—"*for His sake*," and it becomes fraught with blessing and fragrant with glory. So the disciples regarded

it, for from the presence of the threatening Sanhedrim they went forth "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame *for His name*." So Paul regarded it, for when believing in Christ brought much suffering in its train, the nobility of his soul found expression in these words: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses *for Christ's sake*." Indeed, some of his best work was done from a prison cell; for were there not saints in Cæsar's household? and who can forget the jailor at Philippi? Moreover, seven of his epistles were penned while he was Nero's prisoner. For the ministry of suffering is ever rainbow-hued.

The Master's hand
Must sometimes touch life's saddest chords to reach
Its sweetest music, and His child to teach
To trust His love, till the long, weeping night
Is all forgotten in the morning light.
Trust, trust Him then, and thus shall good or ill
Your trusting soul with present blessing fill.
Each loss is truest gain, if day by day
He fills the place of all He takes away.

III. SCORN TO BE ENDURED

1 Cor. 4. 10: "*We are fools for Christ's sake*."

Persecution can come to a believer in a variety of forms, of which by no means the easiest to reckon with is scorn. To squirm under the biting tongue of sarcasm, or wince before the supercilious smile is an unpleasant but not infrequent experience. How these shafts cut home—the pointed jibe, the ironical laugh, the disdainful sneer! To be made the butt of keen—or dull—wit is no agreeable thing. The hot blood starts to the temples, and the hasty answer would speed to the lips. But with the Apostle the contempt becomes a compliment, the jeer causes joy; for "*we are fools for Christ's sake*." Fools! Says the dictionary—"Persons incapacitated mentally, for enjoying the pleasures and interests of the crowd." Yet is not that

an apt description of a person who has found new life in Christ? No longer do the vain pursuits of the world attract, nor its vacuous pleasures appeal. He is unfitted for the popular interests, not by the destruction of his mental powers but by their diversion to things infinitely greater—his affections are set “on things above.” Now the avowal of his heart is—

Take the world but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same.

Fools! Says the dictionary once more—Persons whose minds are occupied with some trivial thing. Are not the things of God trivial in the judgment of the worldly-wise? The preaching of the Cross—is it not foolishness “to them that perish?” And the things of the Spirit—are they not misunderstood and spurned by the natural man? Yet persists the Apostle: “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Cor. 1. 23); and pursues his theme, saying: “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2. 2). For with such a Message we can well afford to be fools—“*for Christ’s sake.*” Only bring this to the scorn and the insult, and the edge is blunted, the blow turned harmlessly aside.

IV. SERVICE TO BE GIVEN

2 Cor. 4. 5: “*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Christ’s sake.*”

Paul was a man of one subject. Never himself, but always his Saviour constituted his theme—“not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” And what is the Gospel but the declaration of His greatest Act of service to God and man in His perfectly effecting the divine will, becoming obedient unto death, the death of the Cross, for

our salvation? In that service the Son of God, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," took upon Him "the form of a servant"—*of a bonds slave*. Here is the perpetual Model for Christian service. The way up is down, and the greatest among His servants must be the least of all. Paul followed in this way, for he could write: "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." And believers are called to service of this character, that surveys all men everywhere, and says with the Apostle—"Ourselves your servants." Serve our fellows for their own sake, our motive their good, says the philosopher. But Paul's motive rises higher, his motive not merely *good*, but *God*. Says he: "*For Jesus' sake*"—thus putting *God* before *good*, since He is the source of all good. Such service would transform the Church of God upon earth, for rendered to the Head it would stimulate the whole Body. "*For Jesus' sake*" ennobles the simplest action, and makes the homeliest task to glow with the light of Heaven. It widens our too-circumscribed parish, and extends our limited horizon. To a cathedral in course of erection came some visitors. "What is your task?" said they to one workman. "I'm a bricklayer, sir," came the reply. "And yours?" to another. "I am a carpenter," was the answer. Said a third in response to the same query: "I am labouring for so much per hour." But from a fourth came this reply: "I am helping to build a cathedral." He had grasped the import of his little task, as fitting into the beauty of the finished fabric.

We cannot all be heroes,
 And thrill a hemisphere
 With some great daring venture,
 Some deed that mocks at fear;
 But we can fill a lifetime
 With kindly acts and true;
 There's always noble service
 For noble souls to do—(C. A. Mason).

V. SYMPATHY TO BE SHOWN

Eph. 4. 32: "*Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

The greatest thing in the world that can come to a human being is given because of Another. As David from his throne surveyed the land with compassionate eye, and said: "Is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness *for Jonathan's sake*"; so God regarded the earth in loving kindness, and scattered His Gospel of mercy and salvation over it—"for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." That forgiveness has some very marked features. It was *free*, with no merit on our part. It was *full*, without stint or reserve. It is *frequent*, as often as we acknowledge our sins. And the God who so acts towards us, regulates our relationship to one another as being of the same household of faith in these words—"forgiving one another, *even as.*" Yet we say scornfully of some offending fellow-believer: "He does not deserve my forgiveness"; or wearily, "He is always needing to apologize"; or grudgingly, "I will forgive this time, but —" And speaking thus, have we not forgotten the standard set up by the God of forgiveness, when He says—*even as*? For measured by His own, partaking somewhat of its character, our forgiveness of one another ought to be *complete*, and *cordial*, and *constant*.

The sandal-tree perfumes when riven
The axe that laid it low,
Let man, who hopes to be forgiven,
Forgive and bless his foe.

Alas for the scarcity of Christians after this sort: "kind, tenderhearted, forgiving . . . *even as!*" For this is the heart of the Father, and the example of the Son, and the injunction of the Holy Spirit. In his Epistle to the Colossians, Paul employs a peculiar expression. Says

he of certain fellow-labourers: "Which have been a comfort unto me" (4. 11). His word *comfort* here is unique in the New Testament. It is a *paragoric*; and this is a medical term, used to describe a medicine that alleviates pain. What a description of the function every Christian may fulfil—to be a comfort, a *paragoric*, one who makes earth's ills seem less hard to bear, and who takes the sting out of life's bitterness! Not more of Solomon's wisdom is needed, but *urgently* more of his "largeness of heart" (1 Kings 4. 29), radiating warm sympathy and kindly affection as becoming saints of God. Thus the poet's prayer will become ours—

Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the faults I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.

VI. SUPPLICATION TO BE OFFERED

Rom. 15. 30: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*"

The Apostle is on the eve of a journey to Jerusalem, fraught with hazard. Much conflict lies ahead of him, but in that his fellow-Christians may succour him, in the fellowship of prayer, striving *with* him in striving *for* him. This help he invokes, "*for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake*"—pleading His Name of glory and majesty; for the greatest of privileges demands the greatest of pleas. And what the believers at Rome were asked to do for Paul, believers still may and should do for all servants of God who faithfully proclaim a common Gospel. Nor is the task optional; rather is it obligatory and indispensable. For neither learning nor labour can ever take the place of prayer. Our Lord Himself prayed, and praying, conquered; and His command is that His children pray one for another—"striving together with me," says Paul. It is a holy

office and honourable responsibility, falling to every Christian, to contemplate "*all saints*" and to say with Samuel: "For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great Name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12. 22, 23). But this is living prayer, not formal. Says the Apostle: "That ye *strive*," using a word signifying intense agony and strong effort; "that ye *wrestle*," as did Jacob with the angel by the brook, to limp ever after. For to prevail like Jacob, we must wrestle like Jacob; to be princes with men, must first be princes with God. And in this habit of mutual intercession, countless petty differences vanish as mists before the morning sun. For a supplicating Church of God, before *one* throne of Grace, calling upon the *One* Mediator, and praying in the *One* Spirit, approximates to that unity which is the ultimate design of God. And all this is expected of us "*for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake*," who whispers

I gave My life for thee;
 My precious blood I shed
 That thou might'st ransomed be
 And quickened from the dead.
 I gave My life for thee;
 What hast thou giv'n for Me?

Oh, let thy life be given,
 Thy years for Me be spent;
 World-fetters all be riven,
 And joy with suffering blent.
 Give thou thyself to Me,
 And I will welcome thee—*F. R. Havergal*

WHICH hope we have as an anchor
of the soul, both sure and
stedfast, and which entereth into that
within the veil; whither the Fore-
runner is for us entered, even Jesus,
made an High Priest for ever after the
order of Melchisedek—*Hebrews 6. 19, 20*

“Hast thou hope?” they asked of John Knox
when he lay dying. He spoke nothing,
but raised his finger and pointed upwards,
and so he dies.—*Carlyle*

He, of old the Man of Sorrows,
Pleads before the Father’s face,
Knowing all the needed solace,
Claiming all the needed grace.
Girded with the golden girdle,
Shining as the mighty sun,
Still His pierced hands will finish
All His work of love begun.—*T.P.*

Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.

—*A. M. Toplady*

Our hope is not hung upon such untwisted
thread as “I imagine so,” or “It is likely”;
but the cable, the strong rope of our
fastened anchor, is the oath and promise
of Him who is eternal verity: our salvation
is fastened with God’s own hand and
Christ’s own strength to the strong stake
of God’s unchanging nature.—*Rutherford*

Chapter Eleven

A HOPE THAT HOLDS

THE Epistle to the Hebrews has been termed "the fifth Gospel," in that while the four Gospels proper describe the life of the Lord Jesus on *earth*, this tells of His life in *heaven*. Those former depict His *walk* among men, this latter speaks of His *seat* at the right hand of God; the first, His work of *substitution*; the second, His work of *intercession*. The key-word of the Epistle is the word *better*, which recurs in the Book some thirteen times, and the key-verse, chapter 11, verse 40: "God having provided some better thing for us." That *better thing* is termed a *hope*. Says the same Epistle: "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope" (7. 19). This speaks of propitiation effected. But says the writer in the previous chapter: "Which hope we have" (6. 19); and that speaks of possession enjoyed.

I. THE NEED FOR HOPE

Hope is an essential factor of life. What impels men to press on through the long lane of many a weary trial, but the hope that somewhere there is a turning? What nerves them to endure those night-experiences that come, if it be not the hope that the darkest hour just precedes the dawn? Thus the poet sings:

Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

Yet while hope is a universal necessity, between that of the Christless man and that of the Christian there is an immeasurable distance. The worldling's hope is like his *shadow*. The more he pursues it, the more it recedes; and when, at the close of life's day, his sun sets, his hope

vanishes for ever. So poor it is as to be unworthy even of the name, and hence the Apostle describes him as "having no hope, and without God in the world." "Hold on, John!" said an infidel to his dying companion in unbelief, referring to his sceptical opinions. "Yes, I am holding on," replied the dying man, "but what am I to hold on to?" But the hope of the believer is as the *sun*. The nearer it is approached, the larger it looms; and should it seem, amid the clouds of tribulation, to sink from sight, it is but to rise again in the morning, strong and sustaining as ever. And it is the will of our God that we should live in the enjoyment of such a hope, should have "the full assurance of (the) hope unto the end" (6. 11), that in it we might find "a strong consolation" (6. 18), or, as Weymouth renders it, "mighty encouragement." With this in mind, Paul writes these words: "Now the God of (the) hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in (the) hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

II. THE SUBJECTS OF HOPE

Who, then, are the people so highly favoured as to be the possessors of this hope? Of them, the closing verses of our chapter give a two-fold description, a past and a present one. As to the past, they are those "*who have fled for refuge*" (6. 18). This expression transports one's thoughts at once to Old Testament days, and conjures up a possible scene. A busy woodsman, swinging his axe, has by mischance smitten his fellow-workman, and hastily examining him, is appalled to find him dead. He turns to flee, but whither? Yet for such an emergency God has planned a remedy, and has commanded that six Cities of Refuge be built in the land. And how graciously disposed they are, three on each side of the Jordan, two in the north, two in the south, and two in the centre. Wherever man's need may arise God has made provision

for it, and that with the minimum of effort on man's part, with no long distance to run, and no waters to breast. See him as he runs. No goods and chattels, however valuable, does he bear; for these would but clog his feet, and the Avenger of Blood is on his track. But fleeing with nothing, thus untrammelled he gains the shelter of the refuge-city. And such were we. "Condemned already," because we had sinned, we, too, ran to find the Refuge of God's provision in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as bankrupt sinners we came, casting aside all claims to self-worth, and gladly acknowledging that it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

But there is another description, for these possessors of this hope are now "*heirs of promise*" (6. 17). But, you say, it is a far cry from bankruptcy to heritage. True, yet not farther than grace can span! For as sinners we came to Christ bringing *nothing*, but finding in Him *everything*. The old quatrain thus quaintly puts it—

'Run, John, and live,' the Law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands.
But better news the Gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

Aforetime under condemnation, we have now been made "heirs of salvation"; formerly in the shadow of death, are now "heirs together of the grace of life." What, then, is the extent of the believer's heritage? For answer, go measure the heritage of Christ Jesus the Lord; for we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ", co-heirs with the One who has been appointed heir of all things. What an immensity, therefore, is at our disposal, through grace! Once, it is related, an English army had laid siege to a Scottish castle built on a rock-bound coast. After some time, thinking the food supplies of the beleaguered garrison must be low, the

besiegers sent a summons of surrender. In answer there was suspended from the castle wall a string of newly-caught fish. For from that castle-yard to the sea ran a subterranean passage; so that, in contact with Nature's exhaustless store, they could never be starved into submission. Nor can the believer, though the legions of hell hammer at the gates of man's soul, the while he maintains unhindered the channel that links him with his soundless sea, the heritage of grace. "*For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*"

III. THE GROUND OF HOPE

But a hope derives its value largely from the foundation upon which it rests; and the Christian's hope stands securely upon a two-fold basis. First, it rests upon "*the immutability of His counsel*" (6. 17), on the unchangeable nature of His plans. For in eternity past the Divine mind had formulated its purposes of love, and these are like Himself, beyond the reach of change. "I am the Lord, I change not," says our God (Mal. 3. 6); and James, in his Epistle, reminds us that He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (1. 17). Of these purposes, no jot or tittle can fail; but to the dot of the i, and the stroke of the t, shall all be perfected. Has He designed to save His people on the ground of grace, and will He change, and demand works for our salvation? Nay, for His counsel is immutable! And having redeemed His own by Blood, and saved them by grace that He might bring them to glory, conformed to the image of His Son, nothing can cause Him to diverge by a hairsbreadth from His glorious objective.

But there is a second pillar of our hope, found in this expression—"confirmed it by an oath" (6. 17). Picture a court of justice. The witness is about to submit evidence.

But the law desires absolute truthfulness, and how is it to be satisfied? It is so when that witness has sworn "by Almighty God to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." This is the ultimate test of veracity the law can impose; so says the Word, concerning men and their mutual relationships, "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (6. 16). And God, knowing our proneness to doubt and discouragement, has stooped to our need. He has taken an oath, "*interposed Himself by an oath*," says the marginal reading. To the "immutability of His counsel" He has added this, His pledged word, of which He can say: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." And upon these two unshakable pillars, His *plan* and His *pledge*, the believer's hope is reared. The farmer knew something of this, of whom it is told that he had erected above his barn a new weather-vane, bearing this inscription; "God is love." Whimsically said a fellow-Christian: "Farmer friend, why this inscription? Do you mean that God's love is like the weather, often changing, sometimes clear, sometimes clouded?" "That is not my meaning," replied the farmer. "It is that God is love, no matter how the wind blows." And realizing the truth of this, the child of God can face all that life may hold, saying:

My future I can leave
Safe in Thy care,
I place it in Thy hand
And leave it there.

I know that Thou wilt choose
The best for me,
And I can be at rest
And trust in Thee.

IV. THE NATURE OF HOPE

Consider now the nature of this hope, as presented in our verse. It is vested in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that

in a two-fold capacity. First, He is "*made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek*" (6. 20). As the high priest of old was the representative of God with the people, and of the people with God, so the Son of God became ours, coming forth from the presence of God to declare Him to us. Then, on the Cross, taking our place of guilt, He was in a unique sense our Representative, bearing "our sins in His own body on the tree." And at length, in resurrection glory, He entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God *for us*," becoming in the fullest sense our Representative, our great High Priest. And His priesthood is perpetual; not as that of Aaron, which depended for its very existence upon lineage; but after that of Melchisedek, "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." So our High Priest "abideth a Priest continually." Therefore we can sing—

Yesterday He helped me;
To-day I'll praise His Name
Because I know to-morrow
He'll help me just the same.

As Perfect Man, He *knows* our need; as Very God, He *meets* that need. Seated at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, He will *represent* us there until the moment when He *presents* us there.

Yet He is more than our Representative; He is also our Fore-runner. For says verse 20: "*Whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus.*" That we have a representative anywhere, is no guarantee of our access there; as in Parliament sit members voted to seats which none of their electors can claim. But Jesus Christ is a Fore-runner, as well as a Representative. The title finds its setting in the days of the Roman Empire. A general has been to war, and achieved a victory. Choosing a trusted officer he commissions him to return to Rome, bearing to the Senate news of battle, the magnitude of the victory, and

the immensity of the spoils. The Senate, should they deem fit, then confer upon the victorious leader a triumph. On an appointed day, the Roman law commanding the disbanding of all its armies on the Campus Martius outwith the city wall, will be waived. The city, gay with bunting, will be given over to festivity; and amid the plaudits of the throng, the general, at the head of his army in battle array, will march through the streets. His chariots will be richly laden with the spoils of war, while the slaves taken in battle will "grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels." So, too, the Son of God has been to the battle-ground. And what a fight it was, when "dying, He death slew"—Himself going down into death that "He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Then, rising again in power, He committed to none the task of intimating to Heaven the news of that great Victory, but in Person conveyed the message. And there, in the council-chambers of Eternity, has been conferred upon the Son a triumph. For the day has been appointed when through the streets of the Heavenly City will march the Captain of our Salvation, followed by the mighty army of the redeemed. The trophies of war will be there—the souls of men snatched by the Stronger from the strong man when He spoiled him of his goods. Yes, and the slaves taken in battle will be there, fastened, as it were, to His very chariot-wheels—but their cords will be silken, and each one will be a bondslave of love. For "the Fore-runner is for us entered"; and His entering is the assurance of our following.

And this I shall find,
For such is His mind,
He'll not be in glory
And leave me behind.

V. THE RESULT OF HOPE

But this hope is not a thing merely to be *preached*; it is something to be *practised*. It is not just for *rumination*, but for *realization*. Says the writer: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." Coming into the life with its surging waves and its gales, it stabilizes and holds fast, and prevents us from drifting aimlessly. And, we are told, it "entereth into that within the veil." Once more the allusion is to an old-world scene. To some little Mediterranean port, a sailing-vessel has come. But it is low tide, and the bar of sand deposited by the river at its mouth impedes her entrance. Outside it must, therefore, remain, yet not at the mercy of wind and waves. For on board is the *anchorarius*, the anchor-bearer, whose duty it is to look after the anchor. Taking it ashore, he goes round behind the little harbour, and fastens it there. Now the ship, floating outside, is anchored within. So is it with the people of God. Had God so willed, He could have translated us, the very moment grace led us to Him through Jesus Christ, into the unruffled calm of His immediate Presence. Instead, in His all-wise purposes of love and grace, He left us "in the world," 'midst the raging of the elements; yet not at their mercy, for the anchor of our soul He has secured to His very throne. Hence there is a continual answer to that prayer of the Son to the Father, when He said: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

But an anchor may not always be reliable. There are two respects in which it might fail; *badly fixed*, it might drag, or *badly forged*, it may break. But to the storm-tossed believer, here is assurance, for our anchor is "both sure and stedfast," or, in the Weymouth rendering, "*it can neither break nor drag*." And what if the winds *do* blow in a fury? An anchor, like a fish-hook, is made to hold,

its flukes being so contrived that the stronger the pull upon them, the firmer becomes the grip! But at last to that little vessel comes high-tide, and with the rising of the waters comes a tautening of the rope that pulls her into the harbour. So there comes to the children of God, one here, another there, a rising of the tide, that men call death. The rope tightens, there is an "abundant entrance"—and home! But there is a greater hope. As periodically round these shores there is a Spring-tide, when the waters of our estuaries rise twenty, thirty, and sometimes forty feet; so in the Divine plan will come one day a wonderful Spring-tide. For when the day of Christ dawns, and He steps from His throne into mid-air, then will be a mighty rising of the waters in the purposes of God, with a consequent tautening of countless ropes. And then will sail into the ineffable calm of the Heavenly Harbour a vast array of barques, which "no man can number." Such is the hope of which the writer says—"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast."

There's a comfort that can cheer us
On the stormy seas of life;
That will never fail to hold us
'Mid the turmoil and the strife.
For the Christ who found us battered,
And who gently made us whole,
To th' eternal Throne has fastened
The sure anchor of our soul.

AND if I go and prepare a place for
you, I will come again, and
receive you unto Myself; that where
I am there ye may be also—*John 14. 3*

And will take you near unto Myself.—*Rotherham*

In My Father's house there are many
resting-places.—*Weymouth*

And what I saw was equal ecstasy;
One universal smile it seemed of all things;
Joy past compare; gladness unutterable;
Imperishable life of peace and love;
Exhaustless riches, and unmeasured bliss.—*Dante*

Out of earth's weariness, trial and sorrow,
Out of its cares, and its fears for the morrow;
Out of its restless, unsatisfied yearnings,
Out of the fever of human heart-burnings,
Out of the shadowland, over life's ocean,
Into the rapture and joy of the Lord,
Safe in the Father's home, welcomed by angels,
Ours the bright crown and eternal reward

On! dare and suffer all things!
Yet but a stretch of road,
Then wondrous words of welcome,
And then the Face of God.
The world, how small and empty!
Our eyes have looked on Him;
The mighty Sun has risen,
The taper burneth dim.
Led captive by His sweetness,
And dowered with His bliss,
For ever He is ours,
For ever we are His.—*Ter Steegen*

Chapter Twelve

A PROSPECT BEYOND PRICE

THE Gospels have been compared as to their nature to the Temple of old, that of Matthew corresponding to the Court of Israel, of Mark to the Court of the Priests, of Luke to the Court of the Gentiles, and of John to the Holy of Holies. For in John's Gospel the heart of the Son of God is frequently laid bare, and His most intimate thoughts unfolded; and in no place more than in chapters 13 to 16. There, in view of His soon-coming betrayal and crucifixion, our Lord Jesus Christ graciously strengthens the faith of His beloved followers, saying to them: "Believe in Me" (14. 1), and again, twice over, in verse 11, "Believe Me." Then in response to their declaration: "By this we believe" (16. 30), He asks: "Do ye now believe?" (16. 31). And committing them in that wonderful prayer of the seventeenth chapter to the keeping of God His Father, He is ready for the Garden and the Cross.

It was, then, on the betrayal night when the words of our text were spoken, giving this new promise, this crowning joy, to the disciples. And what words they are, compact in expression, and pregnant with purpose. Between the *ye* of verse 1, and that of verse 3, stand God and Christ, Death and Resurrection, His Ascension and His Return. In verse 1, they are troubled; but when verse 3 is fulfilled, they will be so never again. Moreover, these verses are intensely personal, the predominant words being *I* and *you*. Seven times over in them the Lord uses the pronouns *I*, *My*, or *Me* coupled with a seven-fold *you*, *ye*, or *your*, thus expressing His perfect association with His own. In all His gracious projects He views His people, and His heart says, *I . . . and . . . you*.

The circumstances are supremely interesting. *Trouble* was gathering round Him. Judas had gone out, and Gethsemane was near. Says the Record: "He was troubled in spirit" (John 13. 21). Yet, anxious for His beloved disciples, He says: "Let not *your* heart be troubled." And *treachery* was already in their midst. One of themselves, so esteemed as to be permitted to carry the common purse, so privileged as to be with the others when the blessed Master washed their dust-stained feet, was nevertheless a traitor. What then? Says the Lord: "Believe in God; believe also in Me." For though men are faithless, God is faithful. Soon, too, will come *turmoil*. Events move quickly. The Cross approaches, with the scattering of the little band. As there is neither room nor rest on earth for Him, so will it speedily be with them. But He cheers them, saying: "In My Father's house are many *abiding-places*," implying both room and rest there. Again, they had been beset by *trickery*, for had not Judas spoken the language of a disciple while planning the action of a devil? All this he had done secretly, concealing from the others his true thoughts. But the Lord could never deceive them. Says He: "I would have told you." And for them there is coming *trial*. Persecution will assail them. Yet under God it will be but the instrument preparing them for the home above; and meantime, He is going above to prepare that home for them. For says He: "I go to prepare a place for you." Then He bursts the gloom with the radiance of a glorious promise in these words: "If I go, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

I. THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

In the Word of God are many "exceeding great and precious promises"; some, like the grapes of Eshcol, clustering together; some spread apart, as the manna upon the ground. But this one stands alone, among the

shortest and sweetest of them all, pressed out from His very heart of Love from under the shadow of the Cross. "If I go," He says, "*I will come again*," linking His going away with His coming back; *for His departure is the assurance of His return*. He came that He might go, by "the blood-sprinkled way"; He went that He might come again. To His bewildered disciples this promise was surely throbbing with comfort. A new hope was born—the Church's greatest hope. Soon afterwards it became a prominent part of the message they preached. Hence Peter, apprehending, though doubtless in limited fashion, the *fact* of His Coming-again, could say when preaching Jesus after His Ascension: "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3. 21). It was left for Paul, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, not only to announce the *fact* of that Coming, but to reveal the *form* of it. Thus we find him writing of the believers at Corinth that they are "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1. 7). To the Philippians he writes that "our *citizenship* is in heaven; whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3. 20). Again, he rejoices that the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1. 9, 10). And it was to these same believers that he detailed the *form* of that Coming, setting it forth as the supreme solace in bereavement, saying: "For the Lord Himself 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." Moreover, to Titus he tells what should be the *character* of a Church which is "looking for that blessed hope, and

the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2. 12). Nor is mention of that grandest of events scanty; for in the New Testament Scriptures more than three hundred references to it are found. And since it has never been fulfilled, and never been revoked, the truth of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ the Lord remains the beacon light of cheer for the redeemed Church of God in the present darkness, and to its individual members in their personal distresses.

Impatient heart, be still!
 What though He tarries long,
 What though the triumph song
 Is still delayed?
 Thou hast His promise sure,
 And that is all secure.
 Be not afraid.

II. THE PERSONAL NATURE OF HIS COMING

"I will come again," says the Lord Jesus to them. In this expression the character of His Coming is simply stated. Strange it seems that men, stumbling at its very simplicity, should read into it such diverse and incongruous meanings. There are some things it *cannot* mean. It cannot refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit. That event, the Lord Jesus taught, was conditional upon His own departure; and He very plainly distinguished between these two Divine Personalities when He said: "If *I* go not away, the *Comforter* will not come unto you, but if *I* depart, *I* will send *Him* unto you." Nor can it signify the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when the legions of Titus enveloped the city. That brought, not joy, but the utmost misery, as the Lord had prophesied it would do, saying: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." Again, this promise does not describe the experience of a believing sinner at conversion; while it is true that, from that moment, Christ by the Holy Ghost does indwell such. With Paul

he can say: "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This became a glorious fact for Paul on the road to Damascus, *yet years afterwards* we find him still writing of Christ's coming as *still future*. Then, say some, it is merely a figurative promise of the progress of the Gospel, and the consequent growth of the Church. But that very Church was instructed that, in maintaining the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is declaring "the Lord's death *till He come*" (1 Cor. 11. 26). And the adding of these three words—"till He come"—clearly indicates that this Coming is something outwith, and apart from, the Church, while, of course, intimately connected with it. Moreover, the words cannot apply to the death of a believer; for then believers depart "to be *with Christ*" (Phil. 1. 23). Besides, death is always an enemy, the last of these to be destroyed; whereas the One who promises, "I will come again" is Life. And when in answer to Peter's question regarding John, the Lord said: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me," the disciples interpreted that to mean that he "*should not die*." Finally, this expression cannot have merely a spiritual application. Said the heavenly messengers to the upward-gazing disciples at Mount Olivet: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven." And that Ascension was *real* and *personal*; for had He not challenged His assembled disciples just before, saying: "Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have"? (Luke 24. 39). Besides, writing of His Coming, Paul is emphatic that it will be "the Lord Himself" (1 Thess. 4. 17), and his word *meet*, used of meeting the Lord in the air, is a word that signifies *a personal encounter*. "*I will come, again,*" were His own sweet words. And the One who

shall come will be neither angel nor spirit, but the Lord in person, the Man of the Cross, the Author and Finisher of faith, the focus of all the promises of God, the ravisher of our hearts, of whom we sing—

He will welcome all His people,
 He will diadem His own;
 He will show to them His glory,
 And will share with them His throne;
 Then for ever in His presence
 They shall see Him face to face,
 While they chant His matchless wisdom,
 And extol His wondrous grace.

III. THE PROXIMITY OF HIS COMING

"I *come* again" (R.V.), or "I *am coming* again" (Newberry), was His clear statement. Our Lord has never interposed anything between His *departure* and His *return*. His promise is: "If I go, I come again." Of His coming no signs are given, nor are any required. For His desire is that His people should live in perpetual expectancy, and constant preparedness, at every moment looking *to* Him and looking *for* Him. Hence His last message, in the final chapter of Holy Writ, is: "Behold I come quickly," and again, "Surely I come quickly." The possibility of that being within his own lifetime was ever with the Apostle Paul. "*We* which are alive and remain," he wrote, speaking of the Lord's return (1 Thess. 4. 17), while his incentive to the Philippians was that "the Lord is at hand" (4. 5). And if that nearness was a reality in the first century, how much more must it be to-day.

For see! the night is waning fast,
 The breaking morn is near;
 And Jesus comes with voice of love,
 Thy drooping heart to cheer.

He comes—for oh! His yearning heart
 No more can bear delay—
 To scenes of full unmingled joy
 To call His bride away.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

"And receive you unto Myself," declared He.

The Lord Jesus is coming for His redeemed, expressly that they may go with Him; for "the Lord's portion is His people." The Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood, was ever in His eternal counsels. As the gift of the Father to the Son, it is the *object* of His love, and the *subject* of His prayers and priestly care. Love can never be satisfied with distance, it desires the nearness of the object beloved. Accordingly we hear Him pray: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." That this may be accomplished, the Divine Lover is coming in person for them. No delegate can suffice to conduct them. He must personally *receive* them. And love's ultimate and infinite satisfaction is stated in two words—*unto Myself*. Then we shall fulfil His heart's desire, in that we shall behold His glory, and glory in beholding it. But shall our beloved, who died in faith, be losers in all this? is the natural question that arises. By no means, answers the Apostle; rather they shall have precedence, for "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Then will the present separation be further prolonged? No! for we shall "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15. 51); and nevermore shall there be separation between us and them. For then shall have dawned the great day of re-union, when "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" (1 Thess. 4. 17). Then the experience of Enoch and of Elijah will be repeated, but in an infinitely grander scale, when, in place of the translation of two, will be that of an innumerable company. And when this corruptible shall have assumed incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have been clothed with

immortality, then shall resound through the universe the triumphant shout of Christ and His redeemed: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" When to a number of deaf-mutes was propounded, in writing, this question, whether they felt very keenly their disability, one of them answered: "When the song of the angels shall burst upon our enraptured ears, we will scarce regret that these were never marred by earthly sounds."

O then what raptured greetings
 On Canaan's happy shore,
 What knitting severed friendships up
 Where partings are no more!
 Then eyes with joy shall sparkle
 That brimmed with tears of late;
 Orphans no longer fatherless,
 Nor widows desolate.

V. THE PROSPECT OF HIS COMING

These are His own gracious words: "*That where I am there ye may be also.*" Where, then, is He? He is at the right hand of God, seated "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." As on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with Him, and shared in His glory, so shall His ransomed people in that day. Where He is, and as He is, shall we be. How bright was Adam's prospect, when into the home so beautifully furnished by the munificent hand of God, he brought his bride! Yet sin marred it. But when the Heavenly Bridegroom brings home His chosen and ransomed Bride, no sin will ever enter there. As Dr. Taylor, the martyr of Hadley, Suffolk, was being marched across the fields to the stake, he was heard to murmur: "But two more stiles, and then my Father's house!" So to our troubled hearts the blessed Lord Jesus gently whispers: "*That there ye may be also.*" Yet of that home little is said of the *place*, much of the

Person. "That where *I* am," He says, "there ye may be also." "With Him in glory," writes the Apostle (Col. 3. 4); for heaven is just Himself.

With Him in glory! O, wonderful word!
 Eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard,
 Mind hath not fathomed the future in store
 Reserved for the children of God evermore.
 Suffering over, and failure, and sin;
 Like Him without, and like Him within;
 Bodies made perfect, and spirits set free,
 We'll share in His glory, whose glory we see.
 With Him in glory! Beholding His face!
 With Him in glory! O, marvellous grace!
 Holy, and happy, and reigning in bliss,
 Can there be anything greater than this?

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