

TO BELIEVERS.

Some Considerations

as to our

Part with Christ
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THERE is not a believer who will not rejoice in having his part with Christ when He appears in His glory ; but in order to rejoice in our part with Him now, involving as it does suffering and loss as the world estimates such, we need to know *God's riches* in Him. Only thus can we gladly refuse the temptations of Satan in the world, which appeal to our lusts by the promise of satisfaction and gain ; and whose power we only escape by giving ear to the many and precious promises of God, which tell us of His coming glory. The way of peace and joy to the believer, then, is simple. We know God's treasures in His Son, and there is not a believer who would not own that if they were fully known by him, the world with all its wealth, glory, and pleasure would have no attraction at all. Well, the day is quickly coming when the brightness of the glory of God will fill every saved soul with worship and praise, while the heart will be kept by knowing that He, of whose worthiness every ray will speak, is Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This is what we *wait* for—it is a hope, and we do not yet see anything of this glory ; what we see is a world filled with every attraction that six thousand years have developed, in answer to the demands of the lusts of the flesh ; but, thank God, this is not all that we now have with us in the world : we have the precious Word of God, which comes to us as His own voice, to declare the excellence of His Son, for we need a divine record as well as a divine estimate of His glory. We

listen and are delighted, for we hear what was never from our hearts, but is from Himself. And the weapon of the Spirit is the Word of God, even as His ministry is according to it. God, since the gift of His Son to man and his ignorance of Him has been fully manifested, has always sought "listeners" rather than "doers": "he that hath an ear" is the one who is blessed.

Thus and thus only does the joy of the truly rich man desire to testify to his wealth, by refusing all *fellowship* with the principles of lawlessness towards God and of association with man, which govern the world, straining every nerve to appear rich without God.

Let us consider but for a moment the blessed free result to us of the grace that led to the Lord's suffering when He took upon Himself the terrible consequences of what we had done, and our hearts must be stirred within us at the greatness, richness, and fulness of all that God has wrought for us and in all that He has laid up for us in heaven, where Christ is.

We are no longer poor, but rich, for God's own treasure-house has been opened to show what *He* had for the wretched and undone sinner. In Christ every need has been met and God's own glory revealed. We may judge of the poverty of the world when we see that all its riches together cannot supply the soul's need of even one man; while every man in it shows himself in a state of beggary by his appeal to the world for satisfaction. Such is the world around us, and what, we may ask, is the state of the Christian who is in it? Ah! he knows the grace of the Lord Jesus—that though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. Let him consider the past, and he knows that his history of sins and misdeeds have for ever been blotted out at God's own cost; or the present, and he can declare that Jesus Himself sits at God's right hand in glory, whom God has made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and as to his future, it is fraught

only with the brightest hope, in striking contrast to the dark and awful doom that surely awaits every unbeliever. Yet, it is in this hollow and worthless world that *God's riches* have been displayed in His Son, His love which gave His Son has found expression, and His own glory and fulness have had their completest triumph. Let the world boast of itself until its end—everlasting shame; but let the Christian boast in his God and Saviour Jesus Christ and wait for His appearing.

Thus, the riches of God in Christ have become the portion of every believer, but never can he forget that the cost was the poverty of the Lord Jesus. He was rich (words which cannot be said of the world or of any creature in itself), yet He suffered Himself to be stripped of every right that was His due, or glory that He could claim as His title, and at last for our sake He laid down even His own life as a ransom for us and was numbered with the dead. But His joy was to make known the riches of God in a world which knew nothing of them, and, having purchased us by His blood, to bring us, too, to share His joy.

Our hearts are kept rejoicing as we ponder what God has made Him to us, and go on to learn the wealth that is ours through Him, and they are kept steady and close to the Lord Jesus as we remember we owe it all to His poverty.

Thus the Apostle could say, "My God shall abundantly supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus," and again, as to the purpose of our salvation, that "He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Jesus Christ."

Would that all we who are Christians, being rich, refused to live as poor men, allowing the selfish motives which alone actuate the world to govern us also. Are we not, if so doing, denying before the world the riches of Christ? For the Scripture says: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world." And the principle which prompts the forming of every

company and organisation in the world is lust or desire. Man desires because he has not, and strenuously seeks to become the possessor of riches ; and hence the rapid and marvellous development of civilisation. At the root of all lies the wretched poverty of man, and so he is ever desiring greater things *for himself*. But God *loves*, and thus gave His only begotten Son to a thankless world. For love seeks not its own, but only the perfect good of its happy objects upon which it expends itself. This love is our present portion, and the full fruit of it will be seen when we are with Jesus in His glory.

And we, as *beloved* children, are called to walk in love and be imitators of God, so that we should be known as rich in Christ, not poor like the world, as giving (blessed privilege) rather than seeking to acquire ; for “the love of money is the root of all evil.”

Of course, it is no sin to be rich, but it is sin to seek to be, and it will bring upon such many temptations and snares. I Tim., vi, 6-21, is a solemn but precious word to guide us as to this. Those to whom God has given riches can use them so as to lay up for themselves joy at the coming of the Lord. But by joining in the schemes of this world to become rich, or, what is worse, originating such and seeking its help and co-operation, we not only appear to the world to be in the same condition of poverty, dissatisfaction, and self-interest as it itself is in, but also express *fellowship with* the world rather than with Christ.

For not only has God made us rich *in Christ*, He has also blessed us *with Him*.

The Lord Jesus has given us to know the desire of His own heart. He prayed that we might be where He is, and God has called us into the fellowship of His Son. Jesus ever had a title to glory : to reign over the earth was His due, but neither glory nor wealth nor power could satisfy His love—He must Himself become our title to the same place and position as He had. So in order that we might reign with Him, He accepts the

crown of thorns as His diadem and the cross as His place of exaltation. When here in this world He was alone in His glory, and that glory, from the manger to the cross, which shone in all its varied and divine perfections, was the glory of His Person, the only begotten of the Father. In this glory He is alone and ever will be, and the manifestation of it fills our souls with worship before Him.

He could, moreover, at any time have received the kingdom and reigned, but He would have been alone also in that glory, and man, as His enemy, would have perished. Of the world there was not one who desired to be with Him, and the disciples whom He chose from it showed themselves unable to be. Man thus, by his will or his weakness, left Him, so He took that place where He would alone, by Himself, establish, for eternity, God's glory in the face of the full power of evil, and solve for ever the issue between good and evil brought into the world by the entrance of sin. Then, not only must He be lifted up from the earth, but drink the awful cup of God's anger against sin, and, in the hour of need and agony, be denied that joy and strength of communion with God which had been His portion while walking in the world. His suffering, if man is to be saved by God's grace and power, must not only be infinitely precious (that they ever were), but of atoning value, the answer to God's rod when dealing with Him, in our place as sin and about the question of our sins. On the cross Jesus is seen in all the moral *glory* and essential *power* of His Blessed Person. He sustains all the glory of God alone, unaided, in the darkness of God's face hidden from Him because of sin, and when the power of evil had reached its climax for this final issue. Nowhere can the glory of Jesus appear vaster or grander than at the cross; and it is this which gives it for ever a special place in the remembrance of every believer. The glory of God in which He will appear before the world does but declare the glory God received from Him on the cross, where His name was revealed and upheld by His Son when, as our substitute, God's judgment of sin was upon Him. For it was on the cross that

God's character of perfect light and love was revealed to and for the sinner, yea, even for His very enemies ; His righteousness sustained and manifested so that the simplest believer, though the recipient of *undeserved* grace, becomes the righteousness of God in Him ; His power shown—not only to gain complete and eternal triumph over sin, but—to accomplish, in spite of all, that work whereby God could bless (the joy of His heart) in the place where sin had prevailed over all ; and His glory, as the living and true God, to whom alone belongs goodness with power manifested where the power of evil was unrestrained.

The glory found at the cross is that in which He is *alone*, and hence, as I have said, is peculiarly precious to every saint ; but the glory to be seen when He appears, He shares with us. And thus is His love satisfied, which desired for its object no less than blessing with Himself. As J. N. D. has written—

Yet it must be Thy love had not its rest
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest,
That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

And at that time at least will every saint know that fellowship with Him is the fruit of sovereign grace and is unalloyed blessing, though purchased at the cost of His deep sufferings of unmingled woe. But we have not to wait till then to be in fellowship with Him. Every saint of God is as truly united to Christ now as he ever will be, though the character and sphere in which this blessed union finds expression differ. Then shall we be seen with Him in His power and glory ; but now we testify, in patience and suffering, that our portion is not with the world, but with Him.

The world seeks its glory now, and is now eager in its pursuit after wealth. The worldling's possessions are only in and of this world, whose end is to be burnt up with all its works, while he cannot, dare not, look into the future, for he knows he has nothing for that. He is without hope, without Christ, and without God in the world.

But the saint of God can wait and endure, for he *knows* that the glory of God is to be revealed and God's riches in Christ will be

displayed, and rejoices (or rather, as it should be, boasts)—not like the world, in an ephemeral gain, but—in the hope of the glory of God, and can thus boast also in tribulations, for he has the privilege now of refusing the glory and wealth of the world, whose pride God will soon bring down and display it in its true state of poverty and nakedness (*see* Is., xxiv) because of being without God. This is a privilege of the Christian which belongs only to this day of faith; for there will be no desire with any saint to be associated with it in the day of its ruin: his joy and triumph will be that he is associated with Christ. Temptation will not then be known, but now the saint is beset by the wiles of Satan, who ever seeks to dishonour the precious name of Christ (with which he is called) through him. May the Lord stir up our hearts to remember His love, which desired to have us associated with Himself, so that by our words and walk our delight may be to own our lot is now with Him, and not to link ourselves in any way whatever *with the world*, as if we had a common portion with unbelievers (II Cor., vi).

This brings me to my last consideration as to fellowship with the world in any of its various associations. The object of man's unions is to derive strength to carry out *his* will independently of God; and in the present day, seeing that we are in a world where a project to its advantage is no sooner mooted than a society is formed to carry it out, we may almost ask whether it is possible to walk in this world in separation from evil. Certainly not, if left to ourselves or our resources even an instant; the world will love its own, its schemes are for its own, and its own can live happily by them for the passing day. The worldling finds no difficulty in living in the world; but divine intervention alone can maintain the Christian in a path for God in this world, otherwise he would be devoured instantly, as a sheep amongst wolves. Yet God does keep His people, as long as He wills, against all His enemies: they are kept by the power of God through faith. If we saw clearly the power of evil in the world, and the strengthlessness of the saint against it, would not our faith know more simple

confidence in God and find Him open a path for us through the trackless waste, in which relentless enemies oppose and subtle snares abound ?

The history of man is simple and consistent. He refused God's will at the beginning, in order to try whether he could not find greater happiness and glory for himself in some other way, and thus, becoming alienated from God, he comes face to face with all the various needs which belong to a creature, together with those deeper and more extensive ones of a sinner; but instead of owning his inability to escape the ruin he has brought upon himself, and giving God His place as God—One whose resources of grace are infinite,—he sets about to mend his own case as best he can. But here, again, individually, he perceives his own insufficiency and weakness, and therefore seeks the co-operation of his fellow-man, in order the more successfully, as he thinks, to do without God and ignore His will.

Sin is lawlessness, or independence, Scripture says, and every organisation in the world is formed for the purpose of self-aggrandisement, or of supplying some want of which it has been made conscious.

The co-operation of man takes the place which God should have in the confidence of his heart. His trust is in man and not in God. It is hardly necessary to remark here that business carried on in the world in responsibility to the Lord is not the same thing as fellowship with the world in its schemes for the acquisition of wealth, without the least regard to the dues of Christ. Moreover, relationships existing because of God's order in creation are all honoured by the Word of God. All authority is of God, as well as every tie of nature as ordered by Him : the king and subject, the ruler and people, the father and child, the master and servant are all enumerated amongst those recognised by God. The Lord over all is God, and each is responsible to Him in his place as that which has been assigned to him by God. The one in authority may be unfaithful and abuse the power and position given to him to be a

terror to evil doers, but man has no right to seek to correct him. The matter of injustice must be left in the hands of God and is a test to faith (1 Peter, ii, 20-24). God has given such their position and will call each to give an account of himself to Him, and the Christian is assured that nothing passes unnoticed by Him, and, while waiting for the day in which God's righteous judgment will be made manifest, is not troubled, for he knows that the lawlessness of man cannot proceed further than God permits; but to "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities" is the sign of a rapidly approaching apostate state, as being "without natural affection" is a sign of the last days. The effort of man to gain his fellow-man's strength, in order to carry out *his* will, has always called down God's final judgment, from the time of Babel, and will continue to do so till the last moment of the world's existence, when the nations as the sand of the sea shall be gathered by Satan to fight against the beloved city.

Moreover, the many unions in this world not only declare the attempts of man to meet his own needs without reference to God, but also his total ignorance of Him. The Lord said to the reasoners of His day, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." And vainly may we look throughout this world for that confidence in God which can leave matters of vital importance to us quietly in His hands and await His action. Profession, pious phrases, religious expressions, and the like, there may be in abundance; but faith, which, when *all* is at stake, can wait upon God, there is not. Man, like Saul, unable to await the coming of God's prophet, will quickly betray that his confidence is in man, and turn back to resources that are apparently at hand. The reason is simple—the aid of man is a tangible object to him, but God is unknown, and, therefore, *cannot* be trusted.

Let us turn for a little from the scene of dark dishonour to God's name which this world presents by its ignorance and independence of Him, and consider Jesus, the object of His delight.

He was the author and finisher of faith. In Him we see the path of faith initiated as it was also completed, while from the Word we know that Jesus sits crowned with glory and honour in the heavens, and see in Him the sure and blessed result of trust in God and not man ; for faith *is* the “substantiating of things hoped for and the conviction of things unseen,” and hence does not *seek* one or the other. Man is ever looking about for some argument upon which he may build his hopes and satisfy the many questions which must arise as to the unseen. Faith has no need of such, for the Word of God, which is believed, gives the assurance. The believer, as the word signifies, is one who believes God and the testimony He gives, while the unbeliever, on the contrary, will not. The assurance the believer has is gained from the certainty that what God says is true ; but that of the unbeliever, from his own estimate and judgment of what he sees, and from which he makes deductions as to what he cannot see. He may be sure enough in his deductions ; but what if the phenomena change ? Assurance is from the Word of God. Faith, it is evident, does not exist in man : credulity does, with which we must not confound it. With faith is connected the desire for foundation (ὑπόστασις) as to the things hoped for, and also conviction (ἐλεγχος) of the truth. With credulity, which blindly accepts whatever tradition may teach, there is neither. But when there is faith, both are possessed, and therefore, as I have said, are not sought after.

The coming of the Son of God into the world brought the perfect test as to what was in man, and proved that not only was there no good thing for God, but also no faith in Him. His words bring the test, when Jesus says (Mark, xi, 22), “ Have faith in God (πιστὶν Θεῷ). Verily I say to you that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou taken away and cast into the sea, and *shall not doubt in his heart*, but believe that what he says takes place, whatever he shall say shall come to pass for him.” God requires faith before He can bless, because faith gives to Him His due ; for how can God bless when He Himself is dishonoured, by His divine attribute of

grace and power being the object of *doubt*. Thus the Lord Jesus lays down the conditions on which God will act. But they are fulfilled only in Himself. The more man tries not to doubt, the stronger his doubts become, until he is dragged by them into distraction and darkness that completely overpower him. Faith is not in man, and his inability to give God His true place becomes the plainest evidence of his total ruin. For could any *doubt* God who know Him? No difficulty is found in trusting one whose grace and power are well known; and this gives the special character to the path of faith in God in which the Lord Jesus walked. He knew God, and came to reveal Him, but, precious grace, took the place of a servant to do so. He trusted God at all times to supply what was needed as He passed through the scene of His creation, though with Him there was no need of an object to produce and uphold His faith, as there is with us. With Him the words of prophecy are fulfilled : "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast: I was cast upon Thee from the womb : Thou art my God, from my mother's belly." With us it is the *gift* of God, because we have it not by nature, and produced by the Word of God (Eph., xi, 8 ; Rom., x, 17). But the Son of God having become the Dependent One, and turning to God with the prayer "Preserve me, O God," the Word becomes His delight, accepting it as that which was sufficient to guide man in the path that God would have him walk in. Well may we ponder in our soul the import of those words in Phil. ii, "He emptied Himself." He who personally was without need takes the place where He is dependent upon God for all, and receives all from His hand, and in that path never once uses aught that was His or that He could at any time have rightfully claimed to supply the needs which He found in His path, but His delight was that He learnt God to be sufficient for Him in *this* world. It was this that made *His* faith and dependence upon God of infinite worth; He in it was the object of heaven's wonder and of God's delight, while through it He has Himself become the object which sustains us in our path. But not only do we see His confidence in God exercised in life, it was also

in death. Not only did He know and prove in the face of this unbelieving and self-trusting world that we need God, and nothing else, to make our path blessed, but He also showed that God's power and resources sufficed for the one who trusted Him in the place where the consequences of alienation from God render a testimony to man's strengthlessness and resourcelessness in himself.

In the world we see an existing state of things in which man is apparently self-sufficient, or nearly so. True, it is only through the utilisation of what *exists*, but the result is that the world takes its course without God. In death there is a testimony to the consequences of it that man cannot alter, and so he vainly seeks to hide them under a marble tomb. And as man has never once believed God's power to act for him in his lifetime, so does he go into death without a hope of God ever keeping his body from seeing corruption. Again we turn to the Lord Jesus, and just listen to the simple, clear, and repeated testimony of the disciples that His flesh never saw corruption, and they were witnesses of it (Acts, ii, 30-33; iv, 33; xiii, 36, 57, *et al.*); and then turn to the precious prophetic words of David, which speak of this intervention of God's power in a manner *contrary to every law that was ever known in creation, now defiled by sin*, as an answer to faith in God. Thus we cannot find a revelation of God in the laws of nature, neither can we see an adequate display of His government and justice in the course of the world. A full revelation of God has been brought to us in the person of His Son, accredited by *divine* power, even in the place of death. The very words of Scripture express to us clearer than can anything else the confidence of the Lord Jesus in God and God's righteous answer to His faith:

I have set Jehovah always before me
Because He is at my right hand
I shall not be moved :
Therefore my heart is glad,
And my glory rejoiceth,
My flesh also shall rest in hope,
For THOU wilt not leave my soul in Hades
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One
To see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life,
 In Thy presence is fulness of joy,
 At Thy right hand there are pleasures
 For evermore.—Ps. xvi.

The blessed testimony of the twelve disciples, who had been in the company of Jesus "from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from them," and who had, moreover, been told that He was in like manner coming again, was completed by that of the apostle Paul, who found a MAN in glory now—the *Man* Christ Jesus,—he, too, receiving a special revelation that He was coming to take up His people to be for ever with Himself (I Thes., iv), when death will be swallowed up in victory, and the triumph of *God* over sin and its consequences—death and *corruption*,—which are now brought to light through the Gospel, will then be manifest in glory.

In this boastful and arrogant age may each saint of God find a joy in owning, in his words and ways, that his faith is in God, who alone is his strength, even though the persistent and rapid development of the attempts of man at independence may render his path increasingly difficult—though this will but lead him to know that it is God Himself who maintains his lot in the world, and keeps him from the evil which fills it, and that the Lord Jesus, at the right hand of God, is an object sufficient to sustain his faith in any circumstance. For it has only been through Him who gave Himself a ransom for us, who has been manifested at the end of the times, that we now believe in God, who has raised Him from among the dead and given him glory, that our faith and hope should be *in God*.

H. G. B.

In the above there has been reference mainly to fellowship with the unions and companies in the world, but the references are also applicable, in most respects, to membership of a Church or of any religious society or league; though by the latter the truths that "there *is* one body" on earth, and that the Holy Ghost personally is in the Church, are practically denied.

NOTE.—The quotations from Scripture in this paper are taken from "A New Translation," by J. N. D.

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