

GOD'S SALVATION;

OR,

HELPS FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE TO GROW IN
GRACE AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS xviii. 26.

ELEVENTH THOUSAND.

LONDON :
W. H. BROOM, 25, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
JESUS MADE PEACE	1
OUR STANDING BEFORE GOD	10
PEACE THE FRUIT OF FAITH	26
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	80
SAVED	83
TRANSGRESSION FORGIVEN AND SIN COVERED	101
COMMUNION WITH GOD	161
THE LAND I LOVE	166
MARTHA AND MARY	167
DIVINE TEACHING	169
THY KINGDOM COME	195
OUR HEAVENLY CALLING	237
HOLY CONVERSATION AND GODLINESS	247
"LIFE'S SWEET PERIOD"	260
PRAISE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE	261
A SIGHT OF HEAVEN IN SICKNESS	264
REALMS OF GLORY	265
THE WELL OF SYCHAR	266

JESUS MADE PEACE.

“When I see the blood I will pass over you.”

Exodus xii. 13.

THE blood on the lintel secured Israel's peace. There was nothing more required in order to enjoy settled peace, in reference to the destroying angel, than the application of the blood of sprinkling. God did not add anything to the blood, because nothing more was necessary to obtain salvation from the sword of judgment. He did not say, “When I see the blood *and* the unleavened bread or bitter herbs, I will pass over.” By no means. These things had their proper place, and their proper value; but they never could be regarded as the ground of peace in the presence of God.

It is most needful to be simple and clear as to what it is which constitutes the groundwork of peace. So many things are mixed up with

the work of Christ, that souls are plunged in darkness and uncertainty as to their acceptance. They know that there is no other way of being saved than by the blood of Christ; but the devils know this, and it avails them nought. What is needed is to know that *we are saved*—absolutely—perfectly—eternally saved. There is no such thing as being partly saved and partly lost; partly justified and partly guilty; partly alive and partly dead; partly born of God and partly not. There are but the two states, and we must be in either the one or the other.

The Israelite was not partly sheltered by the blood, and partly exposed to the sword of the destroyer. He knew he was safe. He did not hope so. He was not praying to be so. He was perfectly safe. And why? Because God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." He simply rested upon God's testimony about the shed blood. He set to his seal that God was true. He believed that God meant what He said, and that gave him peace. He was able to take his place at the paschal feast in confidence, quietness, and assurance, knowing that the destroyer could not touch

him when a spotless victim had died in his stead.

If an Israelite had been asked as to his enjoyment of peace, what would he have said? Would he have said, "I know there is no other way of escape but the blood of the lamb; and I know that that is a divinely-perfect way; and moreover, I know that that blood has been shed and sprinkled on my door-post; but, somehow, I do not feel quite comfortable; I am not quite sure if I am safe; I fear I do not value the blood as I ought, nor love the God of my fathers as I ought?" Would such have been his answer? Assuredly not. And yet hundreds of professing Christians speak thus when asked if they have peace. They put their thoughts about the blood in place of the blood itself, and thus in result make salvation as much dependent upon themselves as if they were to be saved by works.

Now, the Israelite was saved by the blood *alone*, and not by his thoughts about it. His thoughts might be deep, or they might be shallow; but deep or shallow, they had nothing to do with his safety; He was not saved by his thoughts or feelings, but by the blood. God

did not say, "When *you* see the blood, I will pass over you." No; but "when *I* see." What gave an Israelite peace was the fact that Jehovah's eye rested on the blood. This tranquilized his heart. The blood was outside, and the Israelite inside, so that he could not possibly see it; but God saw it, and that was quite enough.

The application of this to the question of a sinner's peace is very plain. Christ having shed His blood as a perfect atonement for sin, has taken it into the presence of God, and sprinkled it there; and God's testimony assures the believer that everything is settled on his behalf. All the claims of justice have been fully answered; sin has been perfectly put away, so that the full tide of redeeming love may roll down from the heart of God, along the channel which the sacrifice of Christ has opened for it.

To this truth the Holy Ghost bears witness. He ever sets forth the fact of God's estimate of the blood of Christ. He points the sinner's eye to the accomplished work of the cross. He declares that all is done; that sin has been put far away, and righteousness brought nigh—so nigh, that it is "to all them that believe." Be-

lieve what? Believe what God says, because He says it, not because they feel it.

Now, we are constantly prone to look at something in ourselves as necessary to form the ground of peace. We are apt to regard the work of the Spirit *in* us, rather than the work of Christ *for* us, as the foundation of our peace. This is a mistake. We know that the operations of the Spirit of God have their proper place in Christianity; but His work is never set forth as that on which our peace depends. The Holy Ghost did not make peace; but Christ did. The Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace; but Christ is. God did not send "preaching peace" by the Holy Ghost, but "by Jesus Christ." (Comp. Acts x. 36; Eph. ii. 14, 17; Col. i. 20.)

The Holy Ghost reveals Christ; He makes us to know, enjoy, and feed upon Christ. He bears witness to Christ; takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He is the power of communion, the seal, the witness, the earnest, the unction. In short, His operations are essential. Without Him we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit aught of Christ. This is plain, and

is understood and admitted by every true and rightly instructed Christian.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace, though He enables us to enjoy the peace. He is not our title, though He reveals our title and enables us to enjoy it. The Holy Ghost is still carrying on His work in the soul of the believer. He "maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered." He labours to bring us into more entire conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. His aim is "to present every man perfect in Christ." He is the author of every right desire, every holy aspiration, every pure and heavenly affection, every divine experience; but His work in and with us will not be complete until we have left this present scene, and taken our place with Christ in the glory. Just as in the case of Abraham's servant, his work was not complete until he presented Rebecca to Isaac.

Not so the work of Christ *for* us. That is absolutely and eternally complete. He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii. 4.) And again, "It is finished." The blessed Spirit cannot yet

say He has finished the work. He has been patiently and faithfully working for the last eighteen hundred years as the true, the divine, Vicar of Christ on earth. He still works amid the various hostile influences which surround the sphere of His operations. He still works in the hearts of the people of God, in order to bring them up, practically and experimentally, to the divinely-appointed standard. But He never teaches a soul to lean on His work for peace in the presence of divine holiness. His office is to speak of Jesus. He does not speak of Himself. "He," says Christ, "shall take of mine and show it unto you." He can only present Christ's work as the solid basis on which the soul must rest for ever. Yea, it is on the ground of Christ's perfect atonement that He takes up His abode and carries on His operations in the believer. "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." No power or energy of the Holy Ghost could cancel sin. The blood has done that. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between the Spirit's work *in* us, and Christ's

work *for* us. Where they are confounded, one rarely finds settled peace as to the question of sin. The type of the passover illustrates the distinction very simply. The Israelite's peace was not founded upon the unleavened bread or the bitter herbs, but upon the blood. Nor was it by any means a question of what *he* thought about the blood, but what God thought about it. This gives immense relief and comfort to the heart. God has found a ransom, and He reveals that ransom to us sinners, in order that we might rest therein, on the authority of His word, and by the grace of His Spirit. And albeit our thoughts and feelings must ever fall far short of the infinite preciousness of that ransom, yet, inasmuch as God tells us that He is perfectly satisfied about our sins, we may be satisfied also. Our conscience may well find settled rest where God's holiness finds rest.

Beloved reader, if you have not as yet found peace in Jesus, we pray you to ponder this deeply. See the simplicity of the ground on which your peace is to rest. God is well pleased with the finished work of Christ—"well pleased for His righteousness' sake." That righteousness is not founded upon your feelings or ex-

perience, but upon the shed blood of the Lamb of God; and hence your peace is not dependent upon your feelings or experience, but upon the same precious blood, which is of changeless efficacy and changeless value in the judgment of God.

What, then, remains for the believer? To what is he called? To keep the feast of unleavened bread, by putting away everything contrary to the hallowed purity of his elevated position. It is his privilege to feed upon that precious Christ whose blood has cancelled all his guilt. Being assured that the sword of the destroyer cannot touch him, because it has fallen upon Christ instead, it is for him to feast in holy repose within the blood-stricken door, under the perfect shelter which God's own love has provided in the blood of the cross.

May God the Holy Ghost lead every doubting, wavering heart to find rest in the divine testimony contained in these words, "WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER YOU."

OUR STANDING BEFORE GOD.

HEB. x. 2.

THE grace in which we stand is, that we are sons of God, and priests to God. The true worshippers, as we are taught by our Lord in the fourth chapter of St. John, are those who in the spirit of sonship worship the Father. But there is another relation besides that of sons in which we stand to God—an official relation, as being His constituted worshippers; taking up the place which Israel once occupied as the only worshipping people in the whole earth, but after an entirely different order. We could not indeed be priests unto God unless we were sons. To be sons of God is our real, proper dignity, because we have thereby relationship with God in the highest sense; but this does not hinder our having an official standing before Him; and it is this which we would now consider. The common standing of

all saints is to be once purged worshippers before God.

The peculiar privilege of Israel was *nearness unto God*: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Exodus xix. 4.) This placed Israel, comparatively with all the nations around them, in a priestly standing before God. Hence it is said, "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentiles], and to them that were *nigh*." (Eph. ii. 17.) In the time of Israel's declension, when they had become as the nations around them, both in their government and their worship, instead of standing in their original separateness, the Lord says to them, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be *no priest* to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." (Hosea iv. 6.)

The *grace* of God had brought Israel unto Himself, having led them all the way from Egypt to Sinai. But there they undertook to stand on their own obedience; and, on condition of doing so, were to be unto God "*a kingdom*

of priests, and an holy nation." (Ex. xix. 5, 6.) They, however, failed immediately in obedience; and although relatively, as a nation, they still had nearness to God, yet immediately on their failure under the law a certain number are taken from among the nation to stand in peculiar nearness to God, and the people themselves were consequently thrown at a distance. Thus it was ordered of the Lord unto Moses: "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him *from among the children of Israel*, that He may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." (Ex. xxviii. 1.) They were to *come near unto the altar*, to minister in the holy place." (v. 43.) It was the privilege of one only to come nearer still, and that was the high priest, to go within the veil. But after the sin of Nadab and Abihu this privilege was curtailed, so far as the frequency of entering it was concerned. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died; and the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not *at all times* into the holy place within

the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark."

To Israel indeed pertained the service of God (worship), but it was a worship of relative nearness to God. The high priest the nearest, the priests next—these were inside worshippers: the Levites next to them—they were attendants on the priests, and employed about the tabernacle; and then the people, who were outside worshippers, as it is said, "The whole multitude of the people were praying *without* at the time of incense." (Luke i. 10.) But even there, even in the outer court, no Gentile could approach. (Acts xxi. 28.)

Sacrifice and priesthood are essential pre-requisites to worship. How fully was this taught to Jews under the law! They were habitually reminded that there was no acceptable worship but on the ground of the accepted sacrifice; and that they needed the intervention of the priest authoritatively to pronounce them cleansed for worship. Hence a Jew under the law rightly connected justification with worship. He could not worship, because guilt attached to him which needed the expiation, or uncleanness which needed the intervention of the

priest. The great act, however, which put Israel in the place of a worshipping people was the sacrifice of the great day of atonement. This was an annual solemnity. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. . . . This shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins *once a year.*" (Lev. xvi. 30, 34.) Israel then stood on that day as the worshipping people of the Lord. *But they stood not with a purged conscience.* That was what their sacrifices never could give; for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. It required other blood to do that, the blood of Him who is presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews as the SON.

But here comes in the great contrast between worship then and now. We need sacrifice and priesthood, in order to worship, as much as Israel of old; but though worshipping thus on the same ground as they, our worship is of an entirely different order. I say different in its order, as well as essentially different in the dignity both of the sacrifice and the priest.

Of this most important contrast between the worship of Israel under the law, and that of the Church now, we are not left to conjecture or inference. Blessed for us, we have the comment of the Holy Ghost in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, on the remarkable solemnity of the great day of atonement, given for the express purpose of showing that the standing of the true worshipper now is the very REVERSE of that of Israel under the law. Let us meditate awhile on it.

First, the sacrifices offered under the law never could put those who came to them in the place of *constant* worshippers (for so "perfect" clearly means in this passage); and this not only because of their intrinsic inefficiency, but also because of their repetition; for had they effected this, they need not be yearly offered, "because the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins." Now mark, to be perfected as a worshipper is to have no more conscience of sins. This is, according to the aspect in which we are now considering worship, to be a true worshipper. Surely this exalts worship very highly. Because thus it is not in any wise the means of our justification,

but that for which we are already justified. And how blessedly does the apostle show here, by way of contrast, that the comers unto Christ are made *perfect*: "By one offering He hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified." Israel was perfected for a moment on the day of atonement; but even then not "as pertaining to the conscience;" the blood of their sacrifice could not touch that. (Heb. ix. 9.) Their worship, therefore, must have been in "the spirit of bondage unto fear." (Rom. viii. 15.) There could have been no boldness (liberty), as we have by the blood of Jesus. (Heb. ix. 19.) The unceasing repetition of the sacrifice had only the effect of as unceasingly bringing sin to remembrance. But Christ, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God—not as one expecting to offer sacrifice again, but waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. And to this we have to add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the special promise of the New Covenant—"Their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more*." And therefore there needs no more sacrifice for sin.

The one finished and accepted sacrifice of

Christ is therefore of permanent efficacy. There is in it remission of sins to every one that believeth; and he that believeth has not to look for any further sacrifice for sin (*v.* 17); for if he had, it would bring sin to remembrance, and charge the conscience with guilt. And this is always the case where there is not simple repose of soul on the one finished sacrifice of Christ. Faith sees that the one thing has been done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." And hence, the moment a Jew believed in "the precious blood of Christ," he was in a condition to assert that these were his privileges; as it is written, "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*" (1 Peter ii. 9.) Thus praise, the highest part of worship, can now be entered on: "I will extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." (Ps. cxlv.)

While praise is *silent* for God in Zion, the mouth of the sinner, redeemed to God through the precious blood of the Lamb, is opened to show forth His praises. God Himself has created the fruit of the lips, speaking peace to him that is far off, and to him that is nigh.

But to return to our chapter. Liberty of conscience is the very essence of true worship. Not what men call liberty of conscience, but the ability to approach God without any sense of guilt upon the conscience. This, be it observed, is not presuming on innocence; neither is it the profession of unconsciousness of sin—for if “I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified”—but it is the fullest consciousness of and acknowledgment of sin, with the profession (let us hold it fast) that it has been for ever put away by the one sacrifice of Christ offered once for all.

All the gifts and sacrifices offered by a worshipper under the law “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” (Heb. ix. 9.) He might have approached God strictly according to the ritual prescribed, but it must have been a burdened conscience. No conscience can be at ease before

God where any thing depends on what the person himself is doing or has to do. Yea, I would say, not if it had now to depend on what Christ has to do, instead of resting on that which He has already done. The worshipper must be once and for ever purged, or he must have conscience of sin. But only let him by faith follow Christ through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, by which he hath entered into the holy place: only let him see that it is "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by *his own* blood, that he hath entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption;" and where can be the conscience of sin? Christ has not to enter in again; He has no more sacrifice for sin to offer—no other blood to carry in; for where could any be found of like preciousness? All is done once, and once for all; hence the worshipper once purged, and purged by such blood (Heb. ix. 14), has no more conscience of sin. He can serve the living God. Nothing now depends on what the worshipper has to do; all hangs on the accomplished sacrifice, the precious blood and permanent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ,

But again. When God had to do with Israel, even before He could speak to them to bring them under the covenant, the injunction to Moses was, "Go unto the people, and *sanctify* them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes: and Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and *sanctified* the people; and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to *meet God*." (Ex. xix.) The people must be *sanctified* in order to meet God, and sanctified in His own way; as God said when those came near to offer strange fire before Him, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." (Lev. x. 3.) Who, after that dread example, would dare to approach God, if he was not sanctified in the way of God's appointment, so that God might be sanctified in him?

What then do we learn concerning the true worshipper's sanctification now? What concerning God's appointment now for the once purged worshipper's approach to Him? "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast

thou prepared me; in burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, *I come* (in the volume of the book it is written of me) *to do thy will, O God.* *By the which will we are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Thus it is by God's own ordinance that we are sanctified. God's own will in this matter has been done; and therefore are we able to meet Him as once purged and sanctified worshippers, put in the place of the *holy nation*. Those alone who by faith rest in the one accepted, and never to be repeated, offering of the body of Jesus Christ, are constituted God's worshipping people. This unchangeable place of blessing is given them by the express will of God.

Once more to look at the priest. How busy was Aaron! He had not only the yearly sacrifices on the great day of atonement, but he had likewise much to do even daily, that the constituted worshippers might engage in worship. He had the morning and evening sacrifices, besides those which were occasional. He might be called on at any time to offer a trespass-offering, so that he never could have sat down

as one who had finished his work, and could look on it with satisfaction.

But what a blessed contrast is here. "Every priest *standeth daily* ministering and offering oftentimes *the same sacrifices*, which can *never* take away sins; but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down* on the right hand of God." This is the position of one who had finished His work, and could look on it with satisfaction, and could present it before God continually. Not like Aaron, expecting to be called on to offer another sacrifice; but, that having been done once for all, "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool: for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Lastly. The new covenant not only promises the same high privileges as the old, but it secures the attainment of them by the grace of God, when it had been proved they could not be attained by the obedience of the people. "If ye will *obey my voice indeed*, and *keep my covenant*, *then* ye shall be a *peculiar treasure unto me above all people*; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me *a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*." This was the tenor

of the old covenant—its promises being conditional on their obedience. But “the better covenant,” based upon “better promises,” speaks thus: “This is the covenant that *I will make with them* after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put* my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will *I write them.*” Here all is done by God Himself—and therefore the promises necessarily follow—they become a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. And there is added to that above, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Thus, therefore, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the truth, that “by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;” because, “where remission of sin is, there is *no more offering for sin.*”

What amazing knowledge immediately results from the recognition of the one completed sacrifice of Christ; the dignity of His person giving to it its amazing value. Our blessed standing is as a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, privileged in this, to the exclusion of all others, to be the worshipping people of God on the earth. The place in which God by His own will, Christ by His own work,

and the Holy Ghost by His distinct testimony, have set us, is that of *worshippers once and for ever purged*. Without any conscience of sin; able to approach the very God who can read our hearts without any suspicious fear, lest any thing of guilt should yet be found on us,—any charge of sin not thoroughly purged away. “Blessed indeed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Could an Israelite, coming to God according to the law, be without guile before Him? I judge not. Lurking suspicion that God saw in him deeper sin than *his* offering could atone for, or that he himself might have neglected some prescribed duty, would make him anything but guileless. One, indeed, who came to God *by faith*, not in the ordered place, but under a fig-tree, might be found in holy confidence with God—an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. Such was Nathanael under the divine teaching, immediately recognizing Jesus as Son of God and King of Israel. Surely He is a sample of Israel by and by, under the covenant, taking the place of nearness to God,

as a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, by their recognition of Jesus as the Son—the sacrifice and the priest.

The worshipper once purged is a guileless worshipper. Be it known as our portion *now*, as it will be in glory. Amen.

PEACE THE FRUIT OF FAITH.

PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Reflecting on our yesterday's conversation, it strikes me that some words you then dropped unfold, more clearly than I have before seen it, the nature of the difficulty under which you labour. You said you "could not have peace unless God spoke peace to your soul;" that you "could not without Him believe on Christ;" and you asked me, "Is God angry with me, seeing that He does not speak peace to my soul?" Will you endeavour to give me your attention while I seek to suggest certain things connected with these points?

It is most true that God *alone* can speak peace to the conscience. It is also true that such is the unwillingness of our hearts to believe God's testimony, that it is only by His power and grace that we are any of us induced or

enabled to believe. But do not suppose from this that God will speak to you in an audible voice, or by some new and distinct revelation, additional to what you have already in His word. Do not suppose that any such new revelation, or immediate impression on your feelings is needful to enable you to believe, or that this is God's way of enabling you to come to Christ. God has spoken already most fully *in His word*, that faith is by a report, and the report *by the word of God*. Fix, then, your attention *on what God says in His word*, and trust Him, while thus considering what He says, to enable you to understand and receive it.

In Acts x. 36, you read of God "preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Is not that "speaking peace" by His blessed word? When He *preaches* it—proclaims it openly—can there be any doubt of His *speaking* it? But what is meant by peace? I am not sure whether we understand each other as to this. When you speak of not having peace, of God's not having spoken peace to you, you mean *the feeling of peace within*, the inward sense or assurance of being forgiven, and reconciled to God, and at peace with Him.

Desirable and important, however, as this feeling is, it is only *an effect* of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and not that peace itself. Now what you need to understand is that which God has declared concerning that peace itself. The Lord enable me so to place it before you, that it may be cleared up to your soul, and that thus the effect may be produced which you so earnestly desire, the inward sense of peace and reconciliation with God.

You and I, my friend, have both sinned against God. By nature we *are* sinners; and for a number of years we have lived a life of sin and rebellion against God. To this you can agree now, as you could not have done some time ago. You would always, perhaps, have assented to it as true; but now you know and feel that it is true indeed. Well, God has had just occasion to be angry with us on account of our sins; and as matter of fact, *He is angry with sin*, and hates it with a perfect hatred. But though justly angry with *our sin*, He has loved *us*, and viewed *us* with infinite compassion. His heart yearned over *us* in mercy, and He was unwilling that *we* should suffer the just consequences of our sin against Him. But how

could these consequences be averted? How could He smile upon us, or receive us to His favour, while in our sins? And what could you or I do to get rid of sin, or to turn away God's righteous displeasure on account of it? Clearly nothing. Whatever we do is defiled by sin, and so makes matters worse. You have found this since you seriously began to seek the Lord. When you read His word, your thoughts wander; so they do when you try to pray; and you told me yesterday how difficult you find it to fix your mind on what God says in His word. Evidently we can do nothing fit to bring to God; and even if we could do right for the time to come, this could never stand against our past sins, and compensate for them. So far as we are concerned, the case is hopeless. But God so loved us, as to have us reconciled to Himself, brought back to His favour, and made happy under His smile. And though He could not let our sins go unpunished, and we could do nothing to get rid of them, *what He did was to send His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This having been accomplished, God is now at liberty, if I may so speak, to satisfy His own love in receiving

us to His bosom. What God sought was to have a just and holy ground on which to pardon and save us, and receive us to heaven, notwithstanding our sins, and this He has found in the death of Jesus, in the shedding of His blood for sin. It is thus that Jesus has "made peace through the blood of His cross." This is not something yet to be done; *it is done already*; and God tells us it is done in His holy word. "As God is true," the Lord Jesus Christ has "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20); and it is thus that God "preaches peace by Jesus Christ." Christ preaches it also. (See Eph. ii. 17.) "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." You have all your lifetime been outwardly nigher than many. Brought up by godly parents, reading the Bible, hearing the gospel, mixing with Christians, you have been *outwardly* nigh, while many openly wicked people have been *outwardly* far off. But you have now discovered that, whatever *outward* nearness there may have been, you have been *inwardly* and *really* far from God. To you, then, Christ preaches peace, the peace with God which He has made by the shedding of His all-

precious blood. God says that He is satisfied with the blood of Christ, that it justifies Him in receiving you and me to His favour. Why, then, should we be harder to satisfy than God Himself? What justifies God in justifying us may well satisfy our hearts, and set our consciences at rest before God. I know the soul wants solid ground on which to rest; but what so solid as the word of God? "As God is true," my friend, you and I are sinners. "As God is true," He hates sin and must punish it. "As God is true," He loves the sinner, He loves us, He loves you, and, that He might have *you* for His friend, His child, to dwell with Him for ever, He gave Christ to die on the cross, instead of your perishing in your sins for ever. "As God is true," He is satisfied with what Christ has done and suffered on your behalf; and He sends you word that He is, in order that you also may be satisfied, and throw yourself into His arms of mercy, and live for ever. Go to Him, then, in confidence, and tell Him that you cannot longer disbelieve His word, or call in question His love. Remind Him that, *undeserving* and *hell-deserving* as you are, *He tells you* that He is satisfied with the work of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, the

sacrifice of Jesus, and that you also can but be satisfied with the same blessed meeting-place between Him and you. Instead of any longer doubting, or fearing, or questioning, see how God is satisfied with what Christ has borne upon the cross on your behalf; and if you dare not say that it is *not* sufficient, if you feel that it would be awful to say this, why go, then, to God, and own to Him that it is sufficient! "Lord! it is enough! I am a sinner indeed, but Christ has died!"

And abide by this, my dear friend. If you feel no instant change, still keep to this ground. Remind God that He Himself tells you in His word, that the blood of Christ is all-sufficient, and has made peace with Him for sinners. Rest your whole soul on this foundation before God. He will never tell you that you do wrong to trust His own word, and the precious blood of Christ. "By Him *all who believe* are justified from all things;" and to rest thus on Jesus, to trust thus in Jesus, to be satisfied thus with the blood of Jesus, *is believing*.

With love to your whole circle, believe me,
Your sincere friend,

* * *

“LET GO THE TWIG.”

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter was very welcome, and I desire from my heart to bless God for any gleams of comfort which He has imparted to your burdened and troubled spirit. I think I know well what you mean both by “the hardness of heart,” of which you complain, and the sensations of which you say, “Sometimes I have felt as though my heart would break ; and only those who have gone through it can know how miserable it is to feel that there is a fountain open where you may freely partake, but that something is keeping you back.” Do not think me unkind when I advise you to remember that there is no merit in these unhappy feelings ; nay, more, that their continuance arises from unbelief ; and that, therefore, they are not only bitter and painful feelings, but really *sinful* in their nature. What God desires is, that we should believe He speaks the truth to us, when He declares that we have been the objects of His love ; that His love to us has been such that He spared not His own Son ; and that such is His delight in what Jesus has done and suffered, that through His blood

—the blood of Jesus—He now makes us welcome to free forgiveness, to eternal life, to the joy of calling Him “Father,” and of casting ourselves into His arms of eternal mercy and love. Your feelings are like those of a child who has grieved his father, and who knows that he has given his father good cause for being grieved. All that the father wishes is, that the child should own his fault, and be at once reconciled and forgiven, and there he waits to receive and caress the child. But the child’s heart is not yet brought down to this. He *weeps* and *sobs*, and becomes more and more excited and distracted; but still he lingers on the other side of the room, or somewhere at a distance from his father. Can it please the father’s heart to witness the sobs and struggles of his child? And how do they at last come to a close? By the child casting himself into his father’s arms, and sobbing out on his father’s bosom, “Father, I *have* done wrong, and been very much to blame indeed!” What a calm follows upon this! It is not that the reconciled and forgiven child is less sorry for having grieved his father, than he was when sobbing and struggling away from his father’s bosom. No, he is now more

deeply sorry than before ; but the struggle, the anguish, is past, and he only wonders that he could so long have kept away from his father's arms. My dear friend, God is that Father. He reveals Himself as such in Jesus. He tells you in His word, that as soon as the prodigal's face and steps were turned homewards, "when he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And was the father in the parable *kinder or more gracious* than "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? You know that the parable was spoken by Jesus Himself, on purpose to show us *what His Father is*, and with what a welcome He receives each returning sinner. Doubt, then, not a moment longer. Believe God's own account of Himself.

"Take the blessing from above,
And wonder at His boundless love."

I wish I could relate to you as it was once told to me an account of a lady in Scotland, and of the way in which her doubts and anguish were removed. It was during a revival, in which several known to this lady had been brought to Christ. Among the rest, a particular friend of

hers had been converted. Feeling some measure of concern herself, she went to a servant of Christ who was labouring in the place, and told him she was unhappy. He replied that he was glad to hear it. Astonished at this, and somewhat offended also, she told the minister what efforts she had made to obtain salvation, how she had read and prayed, but still seemed as far from peace as ever. He told her, that it was not by anything she could do, but by what Christ had long since done and finished on the cross, that she could be saved. All seemed dark and mysterious to her, and she left, resolving, however, to call on her friend who had recently been converted. She did so, and asked her what she had done to obtain the peace of which she spoke. "Done! I have done nothing! It is by what Christ has done that I have found peace with God." The lady replied, that this was what the minister had just been telling her, but that she could not understand it. She went home with her distress greatly increased; and, shutting herself in her room, she fell on her knees, resolving that she would never rise till her soul found rest and peace. How long her agony continued I could not say; but

nature became quite exhausted, and she sunk to slumber. While thus asleep, she dreamed that she was falling over a frightful precipice, but caught hold of a single twig, which overhung the abyss beneath. By this she hung crying aloud for help, when a voice from below, which she knew to be the voice of Jesus, bade her let go the twig, and He would receive and save her. "Lord, save me!" she cried; but the voice again answered, "Let go the twig." She felt as though she dare not leave hold, but continued crying, "Lord, save me!" At last, the One below, whose voice she heard, but whom she did not see, said in the most tender, solemn tones, "*I cannot save you, unless you let go the twig!*" Self-desperate, she let it go, fell into the arms of Jesus, and the joy of finding herself there awoke her. The lesson taught her by her dream was not lost upon her. She perceived that Jesus was worthy of all her trust, and that not only did she need no twig of self-dependence, but that it was holding to the twig that kept her away from Christ. She let all go, and found Jesus all-sufficient.

Hoping to hear from you soon, that you also have relinquished every other hope, and fallen

into the arms of Him whose arms were extended
on the cross for you,

I remain, yours prayerfully,

* * *

“ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE.”

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am much obliged by your kind letter of yesterday, and thankful to find that the Lord still keeps your attention awake to the all-important subject of your soul's salvation. I am sorry that you are still a stranger to the peace which the gospel brings; but it is a mercy to be kept from the false peace by which Satan, in a thousand ways, deludes poor souls, and draws them onwards to perdition. But beware of settling down, or even of remaining, in your present state. “Remember Lot's wife.” She set out with her husband from Sodom, to escape the awful judgment which God was bringing on that guilty city. But her heart was still there; her affections clung to Sodom, and that which it contained; and so, *looking behind her*, she was turned into a pillar of salt. She became thus an abiding memorial of the terrible consequences of relapsing from an awakened into a careless state. Oh, that God

Himself may impress upon your heart the warning addressed to Lot, and to each one in his family, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!" (Gen. xix. 17.)

You say, "I believe that I shall not die without the Lord." I also earnestly hope that you will not. But it is not safe to trust such hopes as this. You are at this moment, and, should you be spared to read this letter, you will at the moment of reading it be either a child of God or a child of wrath. There is no middle state, be assured. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 12.) Now, you either *have* or *have not* the Son of God. Which is it, my friend? If, by believing in Him, you have the Son of God, *you have life*. In that case, it is no longer a question of your hoping or trusting that you will not die without the Lord: you have the Son, and have life already. But if you have not the Son—if your heart clings not to Jesus as your only hope and refuge, *you have not life*; and, should you continue thus, there is no promise anywhere that before you die

you shall receive it. All the promises centre in Christ, and relate to the present moment. "*Now* is the accepted time ; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

How uncertain is human life ! When I left home a few weeks ago, a lady, a friend of ours, was confined to her room, though not to her bed, by indisposition. I heard of her repeatedly while I was away ; and on the day of my return her sister called here, and seemed quite cheerful about the invalid, judging her to be so much better than she had been. This was about four in the afternoon. At eight the same evening the invalid was sitting by the table, and her sister reading to her a chapter in the New Testament. At nine o'clock she was a corpse. What a sudden and solemn change ! We have every reason to believe that for years our departed friend had been a true believer in Christ, and that she is now happy with Him. But suppose she had not been, what possibility of fleeing to Him when thus struck with death ? Do not rest, my friend, a day, or an hour, without Christ. God makes you welcome to Him, and all the value of His precious, atoning blood.

You are welcome to Him *now*. "Him that cometh to me I will *in no wise* cast out." But then it is, "*Him that cometh.*" Come, then, to Christ, and come at once. Delay not another day or hour.

I would advise you to read over seriously all the passages of Scripture referring to the cross and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then ask yourself, "Do I believe this?" "Dare I rest my soul on this?" The Lord be with you in thus reading, and make it the means of enlightening you and leading you to Christ, that so, happy in Him and the assurance of God's love, you may joyfully devote yourself to Him, and serve and follow Him all the days of your life, and sing with joy—

"My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou did'st bear
When hanging on th' accursed tree;
For all my guilt was there."

It is always a pleasure to me to hear from you; but do not trust in any man, or in what any of your friends can say or do for you. Look only to the Lord Jesus, and to the blood He shed on Calvary. It is *that* which cleanseth us from all sin. All that any one

can do is to point you to Jesus and His blood, and to pray God to lead you by what is said, to look to Jesus, to rest on Jesus, to cling to Jesus, to rejoice in Jesus. The Lord grant this as to you, and that I may soon hear from you, that Jesus is precious to you indeed.

Yours, &c.

* * *

“CAN I OF MYSELF BELIEVE?”

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Time does indeed pass with rapid flight, and will soon have passed altogether. Of this I am reminded by your remark, as to its being above a month since you were first awakened, as well as by your mention of next Monday being your birthday. I have seen more than twice the number that you have; and I can give you no idea how much more rapidly the latter half seemed to succeed each other than the former. With a life in Christ which can never terminate, and the coming of Christ before one, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, the flight of time ceases to be a matter of regret. I do heartily wish and pray that your ensuing birthday may find you in the *conscious enjoyment* of this new

life. Then, I am sure, it will be the happiest you have ever spent.

I cannot, however, conceal from you the concern I feel at your continuance for so long a time in your present state of mind. Until Christ be really known, trusted in, enjoyed, and openly confessed, one never feels sure of what the issue may be of any amount of anxiety and distress. I have known instances of the most heart-rending anguish and alarm, which have terminated by a relapse into a careless and sinful course. It would be sad indeed were this to be the case with you. Do not then, my friend, think for a moment of resting in your present state. As in my last, so now I would earnestly address to you the angel's words to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

But you say you "have tried to throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, but seem as if you could not trust Him to receive you." You ask, moreover, "Can I possibly of myself believe and realize that I am at peace with God, and that my sins are forgiven?" You quote from

one of the tracts I sent you the statement, that "it is by divine power that the heart of any one is opened to receive the gospel," that "it is through the Spirit the truth is to be received." No doubt it is, or the reception of the truth would do us no good. The truth without the Spirit would impart no new life. We could not be "born again" by the truth without the Spirit, could we? And what would be the value of any change short of being "born again"?

You say, "Is it not useless of me trying to believe of myself?" No doubt if it be but your own trying to believe, it will be to little purpose. But consider, if it were a parent or a friend that was in question, you would not "try to believe" either of them. You *do* believe them; and if you had the confidence in God that you have in them, you would believe Him as simply as you believe them. For them to tell you anything is enough to ensure your belief of it. But, alas! God may tell you a thing time after time, and you say, "Is it not useless of me trying to believe?" What a state of mind ours must be, when we have *to try* to believe the God of truth, who cannot lie!

You say, "Ought I not rather to be asking God to open my heart to receive it, and trust Him who has shown me a *little* of my own sinfulness to bring His own word home with power and life to my soul?" Far be it from me to discourage your asking anything of God which you feel you need; and I am sure God's ways of mercy are so varied, that I could understand a soul being led onwards as you describe, until the light fully shone in, and made Christ seem so lovely, and His blood so precious, that the heart could no longer doubt. I was on my knees in my own room when my own soul received the truth, and was set free. But I could not *advise* any one to take the course you describe; and that for the following reasons.

First, I can find such advice nowhere in Scripture.

Secondly, a person might pray as you describe, and not receive salvation; and I should tremble to think of any one being able to say, "I did what you advised me to do, and am not saved."

Thirdly, the direction of Scripture is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, *and thou shalt be saved*;" and no one can say, "I have com-

plied with *this* direction and am still unsaved." You, my friend, cannot say that you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ without finding salvation. You have only been *trying to believe*, and that is not the direction given in Scripture at all. The true direction is given in many various forms; as, for instance, to look, to come, to flee for refuge, to eat Christ's flesh, and to drink His blood. But to look to Jesus *is* to believe on Him; to come to Christ *is* to believe on Him; to flee for refuge to Christ *is* to believe on Him; and in the chapter in which Christ says so much of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He shows what He means by saying, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger [that is, he eats]; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" [that is, he drinks]. (John vi. 35.) But then it is *Christ* that saves—not the coming, looking, or believing, in any sense in which these things can be considered apart from Him. It is the bread that nourishes a hungry man. He must eat it, of course, or it will not sustain him. But he might move his teeth as though eating for any length of time, and receive no nutriment, if there were no bread in his mouth. It is the bread that appeases his

hunger, indispensable as it may be for him to eat it. But a hungry man would not sit disputing as to whether he could or could not eat. If bread were set before him with a hearty welcome, and he were really hungry, how readily and how gladly would he eat! Do you thus, my friend, take Christ, the Bread of life, home to your soul as yours. God assures you that you are welcome. Believe His word; eat, and live for ever.

Do not think that I am overlooking your question, "Can I possibly of myself believe?" or your quotations from the tracts, as to its being by the Spirit that any one does receive the truth. But let me, in the first place, remind you that it is you and I who believe, however it may be the Spirit that inclines or leads us thereto. The Spirit does not believe *for* us, or *instead of* us. He leads *us* to believe by setting Christ before us in the glory of His person, the tenderness of His love, the value of His blood, the power of His resurrection. But it was for *us* He came from heaven, for *us* He lived, for *us* He died, for *us* He rose again; and it is *we* who have to receive Him, trust in Him, depend upon Him, though it be indeed most true that no one

does receive Him, trust in Him, depend upon Him, except by the Spirit of God. But let us look a little more closely at the whole matter.

1. The Bible is full of the most solemn assurances that God hinders the salvation of none, but is full of hearty good-will towards all. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. xlv. 22.) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (lv. 1.) John "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe." (John i. 7.) "God sent not His Son into *the world* to condemn the world; but that the *world* through Him *might be saved*." (iii. 17.) "These things I say, *that ye might be saved*." (v. 34.) "These are written, *that ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might

have life through His name." (xx. 31.) "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give *for the life of the world.*" (vi. 51.) "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel *to every creature.*" (Mark xvi. 15.) "God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto Himself." (2 Cor. v. 19.) "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved," that is, who is willing that all men should be saved,* "and come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.) The Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter iii. 9.) "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) Can any one read

* The word *will*, both in the original and in our translation, as well as in the every-day intercourse of mankind, is used, not only in the sense of determination or purpose, but also of willingness that such or such a thing should be done where no determination on the subject exists. I may be quite willing to entertain a number of persons in my house, provided they will accept my proffered hospitality; and yet I may not have determined to compel their acceptance of it, whether they will or not. So God is heartily willing that all men should be saved on the terms laid down in the gospel; but He has not determined, as to all men, to overcome their repugnance to these terms.

these passages, and a hundred others of like character, and retain a doubt that God is truly and heartily willing that all men should be saved? The hindrance to your coming to Christ, my friend, *is not with God*. If you come, He is sure to receive you; and He invites you to come to Christ and be saved.

2. But still you say, "It seems as if I could not trust Him to receive me." You ask, "Can I possibly of myself believe?" No, you cannot. The Bible says, Christ says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him." (John vi. 43.) By nature we are not only ungodly, but "*without strength*." (Rom. v. 6.) But let me ask you now, suppose it were of your father that you said, "I feel as though I *could not* trust him"—what would such language imply? It would mean that you had so bad an opinion of his character, that you could not place confidence in him. You would tremble at the thought of saying this of your father; and yet it is what your heart feels, and what mine felt, and what all feel naturally towards God. But instead of being any excuse, this is the very essence of our sin. We so dislike God that we cannot trust Him! It is not

that any force is used to prevent us. God does not hinder us from believing in Christ. Men could not hinder us, if we were really disposed to believe Him, nor even could Satan himself. "*Ye will not* come unto me that ye might have life." We might if we would, but *will not*. Here for above a month has the sense of guilt, and misery, and condemnation been pressing on your soul; and while still feeling it, and groaning under it, you say, "I have tried sometimes to throw myself into the arms of Jesus, but I feel as if I could not trust Him to receive me."

3. It is quite true that God only can overcome this repugnance and distrust; and He is under no manner of obligation to do it. He is ready to receive you through Christ, if you do but believe in Christ; but you hold back from Him, and will do so for ever, unless His almighty grace prevent. And you have no claim on that grace—otherwise, it would not be grace. *You are entirely in God's hands, to do with you what He sees best.* Should He leave you to yourself, you will stumble, and reason, and doubt, and question, instead of receiving Christ as He is presented to you; and by and by your impressions will wear off, and you will return

to the sort of life you used to lead. I do earnestly hope and trust that this will not be the case; but all my hope is, that God will not permit it—will not leave you to yourself—but will lead you so to consider Jesus, so to understand and discern how worthy He is of all your trust, that you will no longer be able to withhold it.

Do not expect, however, if God should thus lead you to Christ, that it will be by any new revelation—by any distinct and powerful impression—such as you may have pictured to yourself beforehand. Whenever you believe in Christ, it will be the same Christ of whom you have heard and read so much; the same Christ who is now waiting with open arms to receive you. Ungodly, and without strength, we are; but “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” (Rom. v. 6.) Dare you not believe this? Can you be worse than *ungodly*, or in a more hopeless state than *without strength*? CHRIST DIED FOR SUCH. Oh that you may be enabled from your heart to say, “Yes, for *me*! He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*! I am *ungodly*, and He died for *me*! I

am *without strength*, and He died for *me*!" You will never have a better title than this for depending upon Christ. But this is the very thing which brought Him from heaven, and on account of which He was nailed to the cross. It was not for the righteous, for those who feel as they ought to feel, for such as could of themselves believe that Christ came. No; it was for the lost, for sinners, for those who, if left to themselves, would reject Christ, and go on in sin for ever. It was for them He came, for them He suffered, for them He died. May you, as you read this, believe it! Believe it, not because I say it, or because it is said by any man, but because God says it in His word. If you are to find *in yourself*, as your title to rely on Christ, the faith which receives Him—if this be needed to warrant you in trusting to Him, you never will trust Him at all. Look away from self altogether, and look to Jesus! Look away from ungrateful, sinful, unbelieving self to Jesus, who came from heaven to earth, who wept, and groaned, and suffered, and bled for wretched, unbelieving sinners. Look to Jesus. God bids you look to Jesus. Jesus Himself invites you to look to Him. The

Spirit urges you to look to Jesus. Oh that you may look to Him indeed, and look to Him at once !

“All things that God or man could wish
In Jesus richly meet.”

Time fails. My paper is nearly full. Oh that you may not read it through without being led, by God's blessing on what you read, to be satisfied with Jesus ! God declares Himself satisfied ; and we may well be satisfied with what satisfies Him.

“Whom God had set forth, a propitiation through faith in His blood, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

“To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.”

Yours, for Christ's sake,

* * *

WHENCE COMES THE DESIRE TO BELIEVE IN
JESUS ?

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been re-perusing your letter of ——, and am not sure that I either understood or answered it aright. Not

that I have any doubt of the truth and certainty of what I did write to you. I only question whether it might prove suitable to your state; or whether those parts of your letter on which I remarked were the parts really affording a key to your state of mind. On a second perusal, some other passages have struck me in a light in which they did not appear when first read.

You say that you had hoped to be able to tell me that you had found peace through the blood of Christ; and you express yourself as quite concerned, and even alarmed, that more than a month had elapsed since your conscience was awakened without your finding peace. Now, whence comes such concern as this? Whence comes the desire to find peace "through the blood of Christ"? Whence comes the knowledge that it is in that blood alone peace can be found? May not all these things be tokens of the Spirit's work? Instead, therefore, of being discouraged by such a word as that quoted by you from one of the tracts, that "it is through the Spirit the truth is received," ought you not to be thankful for what the Spirit has already taught you, and encouraged

to look for further light? Still, I am far from desiring that you should rest in this. Only, if it be really Christ, and peace through the blood of Christ, your heart desires, this is no natural desire, but one which God Himself has produced, and which He will surely satisfy.

You refer to so many long years spent in sin, but allude, as though with a measure of comfort and hope, to the woman in the gospel who had an infirmity for eighteen years, but who at last was healed by Jesus. Having referred to this, you exclaim, "Oh, if I could but trust Him!" My dear friend, why not trust Him at once, and with all your heart? He is the same loving, tender-hearted Jesus, the same Almighty Saviour, as when He healed that poor woman, bowed down with her infirmity. He is hidden indeed from sight; but it was faith, not sight, which drew healing virtue from Him then; and faith can still trust Him, though unseen.

But do you not already trust Him? "Not as I ought, or as I wish," you will, no doubt, reply. But have you *no* confidence in His love? Do you not trust His precious blood *in any degree?* Why, then, the anxious desire to find peace *through that blood?* You must be persuaded

that there is some value, some efficacy, some peace-giving power in the blood of Christ, or you would not wish *through it* to find peace. Now this persuasion of there being virtue in Christ's blood *is a measure of trust in it*. It may be but a small measure; the trust may be very feeble; but it *is* trust; and Scripture connects salvation, not with some particular degree of trust or faith, but with any measure of it at all that has been produced by the Spirit of God. What said the poor woman in the gospel? "If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."

You say again, "Several times lately, when I have been reading or hearing the gospel, I have thought, 'Oh, I see it all clearly now; I must trust in Jesus;' then it seems all dark again, and I seem so bewildered afterwards." Now of what is it, my friend, that you are conscious but trust in Jesus at such times as these? I can understand your feeling all dark and bewildered afterwards; for you do not allow to yourself that this is faith in Jesus, and so sit down to learn from Scripture what your blessedness is, as having been led to trust in Him. Instead of this, you turn again to pore

into your own heart to find evidences there. Do look to Jesus. You are *so* welcome. He casts out none who come to Him. His blood was shed for the guiltiest, and cleanseth from all sin.

I enclose an extract from a letter received the other day from a beloved brother labouring in the gospel. I trust it may, through the Lord's blessing, be of service to you.

Yours, &c.

* * *

[*The Extract.*]

LIVING WATER AND ALL-CLEANSING BLOOD.

WE had a most lovely instance here of the grace of God within the last few days. It was in the case of a poor woman, who was dying of ———. She had been accustomed to drinking; and, till within the last few weeks, would suffer no one to go and see her.

About a month ago, however, I was suffered to visit her, and found that the Word had power to show her all that ever she had done. I have seen her frequently since, and found her softening, and latterly quite eager to hear about

the grace of Jesus; so I had hope. But not until about a week ago did the light break in, when forthwith the shadow of death was turned into the morning. Her sufferings were extreme; and between the paroxysms of pain I taught her the 14th and 15th verses of Rev. vii., having first read to her the latter part of the chapter, that she might be able to think of them during the wearisome night. She learnt them as a child would; and I quite hoped that the Lord would show her *wherefore it was* that the white-robed multitude were before "the throne of God." When next I saw her, I found that she too had been washed in that precious blood, and was clean. "Oh!" she kept repeating, "is it not beautiful? As white as snow! Through the blood of the Lamb!" I then sought to lead her to think of the love which had provided such a fountain, and hence read to her the 4th of John. She afterwards remarked that "she saw the Saviour come so near to her, that she could not but look Him in the face."

The next time I saw her, I was quite surprised at the change. A heavenly intelligence lighted up her poor worn face, and a softness, which told of intercourse with Christ, marked

her words and whole demeanour. From that time till her departure on Lord's-day afternoon one cry was in her mouth, and it was for more of the "living water." In her sleep, too, "living water, living water," was constantly on her lips. "Oh," she said to the nurse who kindly watched her, "I did so thirst last night for the living water! I could have drank so freely of it." The nurse, thinking that she spoke of common water, said, "You must not have water, my dear; the doctor has forbidden it." "Ah," she replied, "it is the water of life I want." The nurse had thought all religion to be hypocrisy, but said she saw now that the love of Christ was indeed a reality. Never had she witnessed anything like the last two nights of this poor woman's life. All night, when the extremity of pain would allow it, she continued talking to the Saviour, whom, she assured them, she saw before her; and when unable to speak, she kept beckoning Him to take her. Once she had her boy lifted up, that she might show him the glory which was filling the room. "Look—look—look!" she repeated, pointing to all she saw; but it was for herself, and not for another.

I was with her an hour just before she was taken, and the smile on her face was most heavenly. A niece who was present asked her if she was happy. "Yes, my dear, I am—very happy." These words, and her cry for "living water," were her last words. At least, I have not heard of any others. I had to leave, and she fell asleep about half an hour afterwards.

"WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL
THINGS?"

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You say in your last that "you cannot yet tell me that you are at peace with God, and that you often feel in a bewildered state of mind, all seeming to you confused." This, I can assure you, is no uncommon case. Until the love of God in Christ is clearly known, and the heart established in grace, the mind is apt to be thus bewildered and confused. Many an experienced Christian would tell you that even still, whenever the eye is off Jesus, the mind gets bewildered and distressed.

You say, "I cannot, I dare not, doubt the cleansing power, the virtue of the blood of Christ; but have I that blood sprinkled upon

my soul?" Any answer of mine to this question would never satisfy your conscience; but if you yourself can see the answer in God's word, it will give you perfect rest. Turn, then, to Acts xiii. 38, 39, and see God's answer. You cannot, dare not, doubt the cleansing power, the virtue of the blood of Christ. And what does God say in the passage referred to concerning those who believe? "By Him [Jesus] all that believe *are* justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." You say you desire to have peace and rest in Christ, and you know that you can find peace nowhere else. What, then, says God's blessed word? "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The rest and peace you can find nowhere besides is preached to you *through Jesus*. But who is it that has the peace, rest, forgiveness? "By Him all that believe are justified."

But you say, "I do not feel *my* interest in His precious blood." But then it is not by feeling that this solemn question can be decided. You say you do not, dare not, doubt the virtue of the blood. God *says*, whatever

your feelings may be, that *all who believe* have an interest in it, that they are justified. How do you know, my dear friend, that there is virtue in Christ's blood? On what ground do you believe this? Is it not because God declares it in His word? It cannot be because you feel it, for you say you do not; but, without any *feeling* on the subject, you *believe*, because God says it, *that there is virtue* in the blood of Christ. Is not His word, then, as worthy to be believed when it declares that believers are justified, as when it sets forth the Christ in whom, you assure me, you do believe? *You* say, "I believe, but want to feel my interest." *God* says, all who believe have the interest. That is His way of settling the question:

It seems to me that, like many others, you are trying to make a saviour of your faith. You are endeavouring to make out that you have the right sort of faith, true faith, as the ground of your confidence. Thus, you look away from Jesus, the blessed object of our trust, to see whether you have the right sort of trust or not. A friend of mine has just been passing through deep exercise of soul in this way, but has been

mercifully delivered. While in untold depths of anguish, I mentioned to this friend that you were suffering in a similar way. The result is a note, which now lies before me, containing the following message to you. "Will you tell your friend to let go everything, all the trying to believe, and leave all to Jesus? It must be safe with Him. Seeing Him, we *must* and *do* trust Him, and I am sure your friend does. It is Jesus in whom all the virtue lies, He who invites us to leave all with Him. How I wish I could see your friend, and explain what God has, in His infinite mercy, shown me, that all I can do is to leave all with Jesus, and *God says it is safe there*. My soul is safe in Christ's hands, and I do indeed trust myself to Him; but I cannot tell you with what trembling. The only thing I dare do is to trust to Jesus, and keep to Him. It seems as though one look away from Him would bring back all my distress, and if it were not just Him—Himself—I should be at sea again immediately."

And such would be the case beyond a doubt; but then any one else can see that the above is the language, not only of *confidence* in Jesus, but of *love* to Him, though the writer perceives

it not. So, as to yourself, you do not feel that you love Jesus ; but would this be any trouble to you if He had no place in your heart ? Still, as I said in my last, and as God, I trust, has taught my friend, whose words I have copied for you, I would not have you trust your love to Jesus, nor your faith in Jesus, but JESUS HIMSELF, who is altogether lovely, altogether worthy of our confidence and love.

You ask me, "Is there such a thing as a soul coming to Christ, trusting only in His blood for salvation, desiring to be fed with Him, the Bread of Life, and not being immediately satisfied?" My reply is : Suppose you were invited to a feast, and actually trusted the inviter and the invitation so far as to sit down at the table. But suppose that, instead of eating and drinking what was set before you, you sat questioning whether you had any good title to be there, or whether you had an appetite, or whether you had eaten at all of the feast ; clearly, all this would not refresh or satisfy you. If you did but eat a little, in that proportion your hunger would be appeased. So, in any measure in which you have ventured to look to Jesus, you have found a change,

so that you tell me, "It seemed as if God was leading me on ; for certainly I felt very differently a month or two ago from what I do now." The Lord graciously encourage you to leave all your doubts and questionings, and feast your eyes, ears, and heart, on Jesus—Himself—His love—His worthiness—His atoning blood—that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

As to the hungering and thirsting after righteousness in Matt. v. 6, I do not think that this means the righteousness in which we sinners can stand before God, but the *practical* righteousness, after which the saved soul hungers and thirsts, and with which all such shall, sooner or later, be filled.

I am deeply interested with what you tell me of your sister, and of the Sunday evening discourse with which she was so refreshed. Remember me to her, and to all the family.

Commending you once more to the blessed Jesus, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, whose love refuses none who look to Him, and whose blood cleanseth from all sin,

I am yours, &c.,

* * *

QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have great pleasure in forwarding you the accompanying letter, extract, and hymn, from the friend of whom I told you in my last. The Lord bless the perusal of them to the encouraging you to put full, unreserved confidence in that blessed Jesus, who has surely done and suffered enough to win the confidence of all our hearts.

I have two unanswered letters of yours—the first informing me of your sister's happiness; the second accompanying the letter in which she confirmed the good tidings by her own pen. I was thankful, on receiving hers, that I had not written: her spontaneous confession of the Lord Jesus was much more assuring and satisfactory, than if any questions from others had drawn it forth.

As to your own two letters, it seems to me that, in replying to the last, both will be answered. Let me, then, take your questions in the order in which they are proposed, and answer them as the Lord may graciously enable me. I shall desire, as far as possible, that my

answers be in the very words He has given us.

Question 1.—"Does God love us, whether we believe or not? or is it only when we believe that He loves us?"

Answer.—"Herein is love, *not that we loved God*, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.)

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even *when we were dead in sins*," &c. (Eph. ii. 4, 5.)

Question 2.—"Can I have faith in the blood of Jesus until I can say, I have been washed in it from all my sin?"

Answer.—Had not the dying malefactor faith in Jesus, and in His blood, which was then being shed, when he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"? But could he have said at that time, "I am washed in the blood of Christ"? Does not nature itself teach us that we have faith in a physician which leads us to apply to him, and to take his medicines, before we can say, "He hath

healed us of our maladies"? To say truly, "The blood of Christ has washed me from my sins," is *assurance*. To trust that blood as God's gracious and efficacious provision for the taking of them away is *faith*. The connection between the two is this, that God says, if we have the one, we are entitled to the other. If I really do cling to Jesus as my only hope and refuge, and trust His blood as of sufficient efficacy to take away my sin, *God says* that the blood *has taken it away*, and surely it is my blessed privilege to say so too.

Question 3.—"But it is not *believing* that saves us, is it? It is Jesus, and all we have to do is to accept Him."

Answer.—To be sure. Believing has in itself no efficacy. *If that were not true* which is believed, where would be the good of believing? And it is in that which is believed—in Him on whom we believe—in Jesus—that all the saving virtue resides. Believing is but accepting Him; and does it not seem strange that we should need so much to induce us to accept of Him? "This is a faithful saying, and *worthy of all acceptation*, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.)

Question 4.—"Is not Jesus always before the throne of God?"

Answer.—He has sat down there. "*When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" (Heb. i. 3.)

Question 5.—"Is His blood there as an offering for sin?"

Answer.—"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, *but by His own blood*, He entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" (Heb. ix. 12.)

"Whom God hath set forth a propitiation [literally, "*a mercy-seat*"] through faith in His blood." (Rom. iii. 25.)

Question 6.—"If, as a poor sinner, I come to Him through that offering, will God not accept me?"

Answer.—"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost *that come to God by Him*, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) "Will God not accept me?" you ask. It is God who has been, and still is, calling on you to believe His love, and accept Jesus as your Saviour, and be at perfect rest and peace. "Now then we are ambassadors

for Christ, *as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*" (2 Cor. v. 20.) Can there be a doubt as to His willingness, when He sends thus an embassy of peace *to pray for a reconciliation ?*

You say further, "I cannot plead a single merit of my own ; for the more I see of self, the worse it seems." Surely then, my friend, if you have not a single merit of your own, you will be glad of the infinite merit there is in Jesus, and in His atoning blood ; *to all which God makes you as freely welcome as to Jesus Himself*, that best and richest *gift and proof* of His love. Do cease from yourself altogether. Let good self and bad self be alike lost sight of in dwelling on the excellency of Jesus, in whom God is so well pleased that He smiles on the guiltiest and vilest who come pleading *His name, His blood, His merits.*

But I must close. Pray do not suppose that any number of questions on so vital and solemn a subject would "trouble or annoy" me. If only God be pleased to bless the answers to your soul's peace, I should deem it no trouble if they required far more time to answer than they do.

Remember me to your sister, with whom we unfeignedly rejoice. Ask her to excuse my short note, written yesterday evening amid ceaseless interruptions. I was unwilling to lose a post in assuring her of the joy with which her letter had inspired us. The Lord graciously keep her simply resting in Jesus, and constrained by His love earnestly and diligently to follow Him. And may you, from the day of your receipt of this, be a partaker of her joy.

Yours, &c.

* * *

P.S.—I have had the enclosed hymn copied for you. You may not have seen it. It contains a full answer to some of your questions. The Lord enable you to adopt it as your own language.

THE WAY OF ACCESS.

ONE glance of Thine, eternal Lord,
Pierces all nature through ;
Nor heaven, nor earth, nor hell afford
A shelter from Thy view !

The mighty whole, each smaller part,
At once before Thee lies ;
And every thought of every heart
Is open to Thine eyes.

Though greatly from myself concealed,
Thou seest my inward frame;
To Thee I always stand revealed,
Exactly as I am.

Since, therefore, I can hardly bear
What in myself I see,
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to Thee!

But since my Saviour stands between,
Who washed me in His blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen
When I approach to God.

Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads before the throne
As advocate on my behalf,
And calls my sins His own.

What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of God's law were His,
God's righteousness is mine.

CLINGING TO JESUS.*

DEAR MR. —, I know you will rejoice with me when I tell you that the one who has so long been dead in trespasses and sins has passed from death unto life in Jesus. God

* I have hesitated greatly as to publishing this and the following letters, or rather extracts from letters. The purely anonymous character of this little work obviates, however, some objections which might otherwise have been of weight;

has enabled me to leave my soul with Jesus, and to lay hold on Him as *my* Saviour, though I can scarcely tell you with what fear and trembling. Oh, the joy and blessedness of knowing Him as my Redeemer, and God as my Father !

I can scarcely tell you how the light first broke in upon my soul. I read your letter of —— with Mr. ——, and he said, “ Well, this is very clear, and you are still doubting. You are satisfied Christ only can save ; you believe in the virtue of His blood ; now is Jesus *willing* that you should be saved ? ” *I could not doubt it*, and so I left all with Him. But even then I was not quite happy ; but the Lord blessed your last letter, and especially that of your friend, to the clearing up of my doubts, and to the opening of my eyes to behold His rich, full, and free salvation.

I thought then that I had come to the end of all my doubts and fears, because I could in

while those of whom we read in Scripture certainly make no secret of the peace and joy resulting to them from God’s revelation of Himself and of Christ to their souls. Besides, it seems due to the anxious reader of these pages, that the triumph of God’s mercy in delivering and comforting the one to whom most of the letters were addressed should not be withheld. To His name be all the praise.

some measure trust Jesus; but oh! dear Mr. —, the whole of last week I was in such a state, tossed about, as it were, with doubts, fears, uncertainties, and sin, till I began to think I had been under a delusion about my acceptance. But I find that your friend, who so kindly wrote me, and whose letter was made so helpful to me, has been troubled in a similar way. With that friend I can now say, "It is only as I can, in spite of doubts, look to Jesus that I find rest." Even now I hardly *feel* safe; but when I look at Jesus, I *cannot* doubt. Pray for me, that I may rest on what God says, *because He says it*, and not because I feel it; that my eyes may be fixed unwaveringly on Jesus. My faith is very weak, and my unbelief very great.

"But since my Saviour stands between,
Who washed me in His blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen
When I approach to God."

I have enjoyed "The Way of Access" very much, and can now, with God's help, adopt it as my own language. Since my deliverance I have re-read your first letter, and several other things, and have almost wondered I did not see then as I do now.

My sister is still quite happy, and wishes to be remembered, with thanks for your letter. She seems to be troubled with no doubts.

Yours, &c.

* * *

STILL CLING.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—The Lord be praised that He enables you, however feebly and tremblingly, to cling to Jesus, to confide in His precious blood. I can understand all you say, of having been tossed and perplexed, even since you did first leave your case with Jesus. But none ever trusted Him and were deceived. It is not our "*feeling*" safe that contributes to our safety at all. The lifeboat is not the less seaworthy and secure for the doubts and misgivings of the shipwrecked ones picked up by it. The rock under your feet is not the less firm, because at times your head swims, and you feel as though it were moving under you. God's *perfect* appreciation of Christ's *perfect* sacrifice is what constitutes the *perfect* security of all who, be it ever so timidly and tremblingly, trust therein. "When I SEE the blood, I will pass over." (Ex. xii. 13.) At the same time, this is a *perfect*

ground of confidence for us, however *imperfectly* it may be estimated by us.

Thank you for all the particulars you communicate, each one of which was of deep and real interest to me. The Lord grant that, as it has been your lot to pass through so much perplexity, and to be harassed by so many doubts, you may be used of Him in helping others similarly distressed.

The Lord be praised for your sister's continued and unbroken peace and joy. She has good reason to rejoice, and so we all have, in Jesus, who has put away our sins, and in whom we are accepted as one with Him. But do not suffer the tempter to harass you by reminding you of your sister's uninterrupted enjoyment. Let it *encourage* you also to trust *unwaveringly* in Christ, instead of discouraging you by your dwelling on the contrast between your case and hers. There may be many reasons for the difference, but *in Christ* there is *always* ample reason for all His people to rejoice. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

Remember me to the whole circle of friends in your neighbourhood. The Lord grant that many of them may be brought in. Let us cry

to the Lord for this. He loves to be entreated by us for such displays of His saving power.

Yours &c.,

* * *

[The letter from which the following extract is taken was addressed to the friend whose letter had been made so helpful.]

“JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.”

DEAR —, I know not how to thank you enough for your letter, which, with God's blessing, has been such a help and comfort to me. I never saw the oneness of Christ and the believer so clearly before. I always used to think something in myself would make me rejoice; but how different it is! It is Jesus, only Jesus, who has made me glad. Truly, as you say, Christ's love to us is our joy. It is strange, and one can hardly understand now how we could have so long withheld our confidence from such a Saviour, who did not wait till we had done something ourselves, but when we were utterly undone, ruined, helpless, and without hope, stepped in to our rescue. Is it not amazing? And then what a Father we have, to view us as one in Christ, and to love us

with the same love! How I can rejoice in it now! Sometimes, when I can say nothing but "Father," it fills me with joy.

Should you see Mr. ——— to-morrow, tell him how graciously the Lord is leading me to dwell *on* and *in* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. I am forgetting my doubts and fears in looking to Jesus.

Pray for me, that nothing may take the place of Jesus in my heart, but that I may ever be filled with Him.

Yours &c.,

* * *

The Lord fulfil this wish to the uttermost. And may He deign to bless the perusal of these pages to many an anxious, burdened soul. May Christ be revealed to all such, and become what He alone can be—their perfect rest—their satisfying and eternal portion. Amen.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

PSALM xxiii. 1.

COMMIT thou all thy ways, and all thy grief and care,
To Him whom heaven obeys, whose love is everywhere;
For air, and clouds, and wind He findeth pathways meet;
Shall He not also find the pathway for thy feet?

Psalm xxxvii. 5.
Neh. ix. 6.
Psalm cxlviii. 8.
Prov. iii. 6.

Thy trust must be in Him, if thou wouldst be at peace:
If His work is thy theme, THY work shall have success.
With labour of thine own, with sorrowing and with care,
No blessing can be won; God giveth all to prayer.

Isa. xxvi. 3.
Matt. vi. 33.
Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2.
Heb. vii. 25.

Ways through all dark distress, all means to Him are
known;
He worketh but to bless; His path is light alone.
And none can stay His arm, nor bid His work be still,
When He will save from harm His people Israel.

Rom. viii. 28.
Dan. iv. 35.
Gal. vi. 16.

To thy most loving will, O Father, all is plain;
Thou knowest good from ill, Thou measurest both to men,
And all Thou hast decreed that wilt thou surely do,
By ways unknown wilt lead thy blessed purpose through.

Psalm xxxviii. 9.
Lam. iii. 32, 33.
Isa. xxxiv. 16.
Heb. vi. 16, 17.

The LORD will not retreat, or change His glorious plan,
Num. xxiii. 19.
 Should all the devils meet to aid rebellious man.

When once His word is past, when He hath said, 'I will,'
Deut. xxxi. 6.
1 Kings viii. 5, 6.
 That thing shall come at last; God keeps His promise
2 Cor. i. 20.
 still.

Trust, oh! thou sorrowing heart; hope on, be not afraid;
2 Tim. i. 7.
 God sees thee where thou art, in darkness and in dread.
Psalm xxxiii. 18.
 And He will lead thee on; trust God to lead thee right;
Psalm xxx. 5.
 Thou yet shalt see the sun arise in glorious light.
Titus ii. 13.

In His great strength arise, cast all thy cares away,
1 Peter v. 7.
 Leave fears, and griefs, and sighs to such as cannot pray.
Isa. xl. 31.
 If thou art not a king, Almighty to compel,
Gen. xviii. 14.
 Thy God rules everything, and He can rule them well.
Eccles. iii. 14.

Him do thou ever trust, the King who rules aright;
Gen. xviii. 25.
 His ways are true and just, though hidden from thy sight.
Psalm lxxvii. 19.
 How wilt thou wonder soon, when past are fears and
 doubt;
Rom. xi. 33.
 Thy darkness turned to noon, His purposes worked out!
Eph. i. 11.

And though His comfort stay, His help be slowly wrought,
2 Cor. i. 8, 9.
 As though He turned away, as though He loved thee not;
Hab. ii. 3.
 And though thou sink awhile in darkness and in pain,
Rom. viii. 18.
 As though He would not smile, nor show thee light again;
Isa. i. 10.

He will not always chide, but when the hope seems least,

1 Peter i. 5-7.

If still thy faith abide, then shalt thou be released.

Luke xxii. 32.

And when thy trust is proved, the grief that harmed thee
not,

1 Cor. x. 13.

Shall wholly be removed, thy full deliverance wrought.

1 Peter i. 13.

Will God forsake His own? His own—His child art thou;

1 John v. 1.

The glory and the crown by faith are given thee now.

Rev. i. 6.

Our God shall set the palm within thy hand at last:

Rom. viii. 37.

How sweet shall be thy psalm when all thy grief is past!

Psalms cxxvi. 5.

Act, word, and thought shall praise the Lord who goes
before,

John x. 4.

To guide us in our ways, our Shepherd evermore.

Heb. xiii. 20.

Oh, keep us faithful, God! still faithful to Thy love;

Jude 20, 21.

So earth's dark, rugged road shall lead to heaven above.

Heb. x. 36.

SAVED.

“ARE you saved?” “I hope I shall be.”

“Then am I to understand by that answer that you are *not* saved?”

“Well, I don’t think any one is justified in saying positively that which can only be known at the day of judgment.”

“Then what do you say to these Scriptures written by the apostle John to the children of God, and indited by the Holy Ghost?

‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life.’ (1 John v. 13.)

‘We *know* that we are of God.’ (1 John v. 19.)

‘We *know* that we have passed from death unto life.’” (1 John iii. 14.)

“I confess I am at a loss for an answer, and certainly if you make my salvation depend on

my *knowledge* of the absolute possession of eternal life, then I am *not* saved."

"I did not by any means intend that you should so understand it. Knowledge of a fact depends upon the previous existence of the fact, not the fact upon the knowledge. In other words, if you *are* saved, you may expect to know the certainty of it; but the most perfect knowledge would never save you; nothing but faith in the blood of Jesus Christ can do that."

"Then why did you quote those texts?"

"Because you implied that people could not know they were saved till the day of judgment, whereas the apostle affirmed it of people then living on the earth. As Scripture is written for *us* as well as for them, it follows that every child of God is open to know *now* the certainty of his salvation."

"I can see that this certainty is very desirable, and I am sure that it would make me very happy to have it; but tell me, why do you press me as to my having this certainty?"

"Because I know that until this point is settled, it is a proof that the precious work of Christ has neither been understood nor appropriated by you."

"But I believe in Christ."

"Oh, yes, so does everybody in Christendom, I suppose, except Unitarians."

"Well, but I mean, I believe that Christ died for sinners."

"Precisely; and does not Christendom keep Good Friday?"

"Yes, but of course the greater part of that is mere profession."

"Well, and what is yours?"

"You pain me. *I* am really sincere. I know I am a sinner, and need saving; and I know that none but Christ can save me. If I am saved at all it will be His work, not my own, I am quite sure of that."

"I did but wound to heal. If I did not believe you were a child of God, I should talk in a very different strain."

"Then do *you* think I am saved?"

"Would you believe me if I tell you?"

"Well, you are so very strict, and pull people's religion to pieces in such a way, and bring such unanswerable texts upon one, that I should attach some weight to what you say."

"I thought so, and therefore I will be very careful that your faith does not rest on my

word, but on the word of God. Now listen to the words of Jesus—

‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and *shall not* come into condemnation [judgment]; but *is* passed from death unto life.’ (John v. 24.) Can anything be plainer than that?”

“Well, it is so plain that I begin to be ashamed of myself.”

“That is a good sign; and since you have confessed this much, I will tell you a secret about yourself that you have not yet mentioned to me.”

“What is that?”

“Just this, that you find in yourself much failure, imperfection, inconsistency, and the like, and if you were to say boldly, ‘I am saved,’ all this would stare **you** in the face and condemn you.”

“Really—”

“And more, there is a mass of inconsistencies of greater or less degree that you do not quite see your way to get rid of.”

“But—”

“And if you did see your way to get rid of them, you would not mind keeping them a

little longer. Now, what have you to say to this?"

"Simply that you have just laid bare what I have hardly dared to admit to myself, much less to you; but now the secret is out, tell me what I ought to do. I confess that it has been hanging over me for months like a dark cloud. Sometimes I think I am saved; but when I look at my ways, even in spite of my wish to act right, then I get all in a tangle; and I am ashamed to say I have sometimes argued with you hoping to find you waver in that *certainly* which you have, but which I lack. This was wicked; but I may as well confess all while I am about it."

"Well, there is nothing like confession for lightening the conscience; only it should be to God rather than to man. He says, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"I feel sure all you are saying is right, because you keep throwing me back on God. I feel that He must care for me, or He would not have given His Son for me; but it is my wretched ways that hinder me. I feel as if I

should be acting the hypocrite if I were to go on my knees just after I had lost my temper, for instance."

"I should have thought that was just the time that you needed to go on your knees."

"Well, so it is, in one sense; but then, if I go on my knees and ask for forgiveness for my temper when I am conscious of having broken my last promise of amendment, and having, moreover, the consciousness that the promise I am making will probably be broken before the day is out (much as I may strive), does it not look like mocking if I do go? and yet, on the other hand, if I do not, can I say, with anything like honesty, I am saved?"

"My dear friend, I could even weep for you, because I know only too well what a bitter position it used to be; but, thank God, I can tell you the way of deliverance, not for a mere temporal relief, but for complete emancipation. Listen, with a subject heart, and I will show you from God's word what a wrong view you have had of Christ's work, and your position; and then I will set forth the truth about Christ—His work—and the effect of His work.

"First, as to the wrong thoughts you have

had of Christ's work, and your consequent position. You, a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, have supposed that Christ came and died upon the cross and became a Saviour that He might enable you, a sinner, to improve your condition, and to produce righteous acts instead of unrighteous ones. You have supposed that a corrupt tree was to be operated upon in such a way as to produce good fruits. Hence, you have overlooked the fact of the utter ruin of man as a child of the first Adam. You have forgotten that God has declared you must be born again. A *new* birth necessarily implies something quite distinct from that which is *old*. In effect, you have thought, as Nicodemus thought, 'How can a man be born again when he is *old*?' but if God says there must be new birth, it is manifest that improvement of old birth is not contemplated by Him. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It may be improved, cultivated, refined; it may be religious, moral, devoted; it may have adopted Christianity, been baptized, taken the Sacrament; each or all of these it may have believed in and supposed, according to its own view of things; but after all it has not advanced a step

beyond the flesh : and God says, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' "

"You alarm me. If this be true (and it really seems to be true), who, then, can be saved?"

"Why, those who are born again."

"But I thought I had been born again. I have believed on Jesus, the lifted up Son of man, and He says He was lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. Now I believe in Him; indeed I do; I have no other refuge, no other hope: may I not, then, say I am born again?"

"Indeed you may, and I bless God that this conversation is bringing out your faith so distinctly. I rejoice that I have divine ground in your soul to work upon; and if you will only lay aside your old thoughts, and just listen obediently to the word of God, you will soon get a clear view of your true position before God, and then everything else becomes plain and simple."

"I am all attention; what point will you start from?"

"From the throne of God."

“Dear ! I thought you would have said from the cross.”

“So I would, if Jesus were still hanging there ; but Jesus has done with the cross, blessed as are the effects which spring from it. He settled the question of sin there, a question that can never be re-opened to the believer. He there vindicated the holiness of God’s character (which might have appeared to have been sullied) by the fact that none less than the Son of God must become a victim to clear His creation from the loathsome pollution of sin. He there removed the barrier that stemmed the pent-up torrent of God’s love and grace, always ready to flow, but kept back because God, perfectly holy, could not thus display Himself without appearing to wink at sin, the exact opposite of all that God is. On the cross Jesus not only undid all that Satan had done, but He did that by which God positively *acquired* glory, and a glory, too, that can only be measured by the worth of the illustrious One by whom it was acquired. Throughout eternity the work of the cross will stand prominently forth as the marvel of all created intelligences—the crowning glory of Him who is the God of glory.

But my purpose now more especially is to press the Resurrection—a truth the lack of which has obscured the glory of the cross as a cloud obscures the blazing sun. It is in resurrection that all the precious efficacy of the work of Christ becomes available. ‘If Christ be not *raised*, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.’ (1 Cor. xv. 17.) The dying cry of Jesus on the cross (John xix. 30) was, ‘It is finished.’ Precious for us—still more precious to God. But in resurrection we see Him as the First-born, the Head of the new creation. (Col. i. 18.) Having passed through death, and completely settled for ever the question of sin, He took His place on the throne of God, and that is now the starting-place of every believer. Does this ignore the cross?”

“Oh, dear no! I never saw it put in its true place before. This is all new to me.”

“Of course it is: everything is new in the new creation. You have been accustomed to the old creation, and never got beyond the cross. The cross was the last transaction (if I may except the sepulchre) in the old creation; the end of volume one, if I may use a figurative expression.”

"I am getting light already—go on."

"God be praised! Volume two begins with Jesus risen from the dead on the first day of the week, and saying, 'Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'"

"Where is sin?"

"Gone—cancelled—only found in volume one."

"Where is flesh?"

"In volume one."

"Where is death?"

"In volume one."

"Where am I?"

"In volume two."

"Oh, this is precious, it is quite new to me! How is it that this is not generally known?"

"The adoption of human thoughts, instead of God's plain word, has led to false, imperfect and inadequate teaching. At the beginning it was not so."

"Why! did not the apostles preach the cross?"

"They did more. The cross being an accomplished fact, the resurrection was now their theme. 'They preached through Jesus the

resurrection from the dead.' (Acts iv. 2.) 'With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' (Acts iv. 33.) 'Paul seemed to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.' (Acts xvii. 18.) 'And when they heard of the resurrection, some mocked: others said, We will hear thee again.' (Acts xvii. 32.) So you see resurrection was the prominent truth they set forth, and so in many other passages."

"But they did also set forth the crucifixion."

"Yes, of course, and mark the contrast. Man had slain Him on earth, but God had exalted Him to His right hand in heaven to be a Prince and a Saviour."

"Pardon me, if I appear tenacious about the cross. I think you said it closed up the old creation."

"You cannot possibly be too tenacious about the cross. But for the unspeakably precious work accomplished there, you and I were still dead in trespasses and sins; still under the righteous wrath of God; still awaiting the damnation of hell. But for the cross God had remained dishonoured in His creation; but now

immeasurably glorified thereby, a thing of infinitely greater importance than our salvation, although, thanks to His wisdom and His grace, both go together, He having accomplished one by the other. But when I say the cross closed up the old creation, I speak of it as the place where man crucified his Saviour; but you must also bear in mind that the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God had provided against this wickedness; and while man, as man, sealed his own ruin when he nailed Jesus on the cross, God made the cross the basis on which He could set up the new creation; and the resurrection is the manifest proof and token of all this. A man cannot be risen, except he have first been dead."

"Oh! I see; then I was dead?"

"Surely; and by faith in Him whom God raised from the dead you are now risen; as it says, 'Ye are risen with Him through the faith (or belief) of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.'" (Col. ii. 12.)

"Is not this Scripture spoken of in connection with baptism?"

"Yes; baptism is a material symbol or picture of an act which is unseen, but quite as

real as that which is seen, yea, much more so. The process of sight illustrates the process of faith. The Lord Himself appointed this symbol ; therefore it must of course be perfect."

"Say a little more about this. I think I understand it."

"It is very simple; there is no mystery about it. Suppose I meet with a soul oppressed with a sense of its sins and desiring deliverance, I say, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Where is *He*? says the enquirer. At the right hand of God, I reply. But what about my sins? 'Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' I reply; and because He was an adequate sacrifice, God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, and offers Him there as the object of your faith. I believe, replies he, in my heart, and I confess with my mouth that God raised Him from the dead. Then I take him to the water, and as I plunge him under I remind him that thus he is buried with Christ; thus he takes leave of the old creation; thus are his sins washed away. And as he rises from the water do I remind him that thus he is risen with Christ; thus he is in the new creation;

thus he is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"How beautiful the figure becomes when one understands that which it figures!"

"Yes; and how the Lord has, in His tender, gracious care, remembered how feeble is our apprehension of divine things in thus giving us this shadow, that by it we might comprehend the substance!"

"Truly. But how I wish I could stand for ever in that resurrection moment!"

"And so you do. God looks at you in Christ, and never sees you otherwise than in that resurrection moment. Once there, you are there for ever. You are passed from death unto life."

"But what about sins committed after this?"

"They belong to the old creation, and become as hateful to you as they are to God."

"But will not God call me to account for them?"

"Certainly; but it makes all the difference whether He calls you to account as a saint or saved one, or whether He calls you to account as a sinner or lost one."

"Oh! I see; then I never come before God again in the character of a sinner."

"Never. He that is born of God sinneth not. You are always before God in the character of a saint—a member of Christ—a child of the new creation—pure, spotless, sinless, holy."

"Then I appear to have two existences: one that was born of the flesh, impure, defiled, sinful, and that belonged to earth; and one that is born of God, pure, spotless, holy, and that belongs to heaven." (1 John iii. 1-10.)

"Yes; the first belongs to the old creation, the last to the new. The first was spoiled by the devil, the last was the result of the work of Christ. The first was marred by disobedience, the last came about through perfect obedience."

"But how is the new creation nature sustained?"

"By the Holy Ghost, sent down for the express purpose, consequent upon the resurrection of Christ. He is the living link of connection between Christ at God's right hand and our new or risen nature down here. Every individual act that we undertake as spiritual people is guided and controlled by the Holy Ghost, who links us with Christ."

"But is not the old nature a great hindrance?"

I suppose Satan influences the old nature as the Holy Ghost does the new?"

"Precisely; I see you are understanding it all now."

"Yes, and I am so thankful; but please answer one or two questions more, and then I shall go on my way rejoicing. Tell me—when my new nature is disgusted with the acts of my old nature, and which (though I hear some people call it failure) I must call by its right name, Sin—tell me what I must do with this hateful sin?"

"Confess it to God. Hide nothing from Him. The blood of Christ that made you clean at first has eternal efficacy to keep you clean in your walk and ways. Not that the first work has to be repeated; *that* was done once and for ever on the cross; but upon the ground of that perfect work you shall be kept clean. 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' Confession keeps the soul in its proper, dependent condition before God, and justifies *God*, as to the failure or sin committed, instead of *self*. What God looks for from you is your judgment of the sin as sin, and that according to His own judgment

of what sin is, He having given you a nature to hate it as He hates it."

"Once more, and I have done. What you said about Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 has fixed itself on my mind. I am afraid I have hardly read more than the first page of Vol. 2."

"To him that hath shall be given. Ponder the truths here laid before you, and act upon them fearlessly. Never mind what Satan or Satan's instruments may say about presumption, self-sufficiency, and the like; but press on, forgetting that which is behind (Vol. 1), and reaching forth to that which is before (Vol. 2), press towards the mark (Christ Jesus the Lord) for the prize (Christ Jesus the Lord) of the high (or heavenly) calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"Thank you very much; you have made me so happy."

"Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

TRANSGRESSION FORGIVEN, AND SIN COVERED.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

PSALM xxxii. 1, 2.

I BELIEVE it will be found that the first and simplest truths of the gospel become of growing value to our souls, as we advance onward along the narrow road which leadeth unto life. Truths which are at first received authoritatively, on the evidence of Scripture, become commended to us by their own beauty, and what we receive at first, as it were, by force of our own necessity, becomes in our progress that which manifests the glory of Christ; so that we are able in measure to contemplate it apart from selfishness, and to see it in the light in which God Himself sees it. I think I discern this feature in apostolical teachings; while they unfold mysteries,

or develop practical truth, they also (designedly) connect all with the primary truths of the gospel—thus bringing them into constant prominence. And this marks the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is human to handle a particular truth as a subject; but the object of the Holy Ghost is to hold up prominently to view the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul becomes unsettled from its steadfastness, when the *mind* takes the lead in learning even the truth of God. The Spirit, who leads into all truth, connects everything in His teaching with those great primary truths, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mind may get hold of something new, and be interested in it, as if it were more wonderful than the truth already received. I do not wonder at the apostle saying, “So that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;” for in the gospel of the grace of God the apostle saw the deepest truth. Or in after-times saying to Timothy, “Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry; for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” It is an

unhealthy symptom when the simple gospel is not relished. It shows that the mind is at work, rather than the conscience exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. There are indeed wonderful discoveries made to us in the Scriptures of the grace and purpose of God to the Church; yet when all the counsels of God are manifested, and glory enjoyed without hindrance, then the primary truths of the gospel will be seen in all their brilliancy, even the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, the object of adoration, admiration, and praise throughout eternity. It is with these thoughts I now turn to the great fundamental truth of the gospel—"righteousness without works"—a doctrine which has not only been controverted by Christians, and condemned by the wisdom of this world, but on which even many of the children of God have only become settled after much bitter experience of themselves. It is indeed needful for all to learn it in this school of experience. We may also learn it by looking forward to that day when the righteousness of the one Man, as the fountain of all blessedness to the redeemed, shall be as illustriously displayed in heaven and in

earth, as the sin of the one man, as the source of all misery, has been sorrowfully displayed in the history of this world. But there is another light in which the doctrine of "righteousness without works" may be regarded, namely, as leading us into present intercourse with God, and enabling us to walk in His presence. It is the bearing of this great truth as a present influential principle, which the Spirit of God Himself has carried out in the thirty-second Psalm. And the blessedness predicted of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, is a blessedness not confined to the wondrous truths of "transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed;" but this blessedness is carried on into the exercises of soul, which result from being freely and fully justified. I would now turn to the Psalm itself.

First, the great oracular declaration—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." On this statement the Holy Ghost Himself, by the apostle Paul, has thus commented: "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom

the Lord imputeth righteousness without works." "The blessedness"—we almost need to have this English word translated to us, so slow of heart are we to believe His goodness, when God Himself proclaims it to us. Happiness, "our being's end and aim," is proclaimed by this oracle, and yet men are deaf to it. "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven!" This is happiness—the alone happiness of which man as a sinner is capable; because nothing but this can bring a sinner to God, in whose presence there is fulness of joy. There is indeed a happiness proclaimed in the first Psalm: "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful." But where is such a man to be found? This blessedness only attached to the Holy One of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous One—a righteousness because He is what He is. But as for us, it is not anything that we can do which can make us happy, but that which God does for us. It is man's impossibility to make himself happy; it is God's possibility to make a sinner happy. And this oracle is the declaration of a sinner's happiness, by means of the work of God Himself

The distinction between transgression and sin is made sufficiently clear by the statements of the apostle in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans: "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not *sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*" Adam sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God, and thereby incurred the penalty of death. Others were liable to the same penalty who had never sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God; therefore there may be sin where there is no transgression. And the Holy Ghost announces this oracle, according to the usual way in which conscience is awakened. In most cases it is awakened to a sense of positive acts of sin against the known commandments of God, and so the apostle, in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, adduces proof of the practical ungodliness and immorality of both Gentile and Jew, before he opens the source from whence it all proceeds—original and indwelling sin. Man may draw out a theory of Christian doctrine; but the Divine way is, not to teach a theory, but to grapple with the conscience, to make man sensible of

his wretched condition as in the presence of God, and show that nothing short of God's own provision of Christ can meet his necessity. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to me," says Christ. The oracle before us regards man as he is, "an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works." Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the name of Christ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. "Beginning at Jerusalem" shows the character of transgression which the Divine remedy can reach. In Jerusalem was acted out "the great transgression." The testimony against the Jews was, that they had denied the Holy and Just One, and had killed the Prince of life. Yet, in the name of Jesus, whom they had crucified, whom God had raised up, there was forgiveness even for this great transgression. Who need despair of finding forgiveness in the same name, in which alone there is salvation? If we turn to a different and more frequent character of transgression, we find it written, Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And *such were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. It is to man, therefore, as a proved and convicted transgressor before God, as already condemned by the righteous judgment of God, and, when awakened by the quickening power of God, condemned in his own conscience, that forgiveness of transgression in the name of Jesus is proclaimed by God Himself. And blessed, by God's own testimony, is the man who has an ear to hear it.

I much question if the bare idea of forgiveness of transgression, apart from the solid groundwork on which it rests, viz., the infinite atonement of Christ—"forgiveness in His name"—would ever satisfy the conscience. The grovelling thought of escape is indeed the careless thought of the unbelieving mass, without one just thought either of the character of God or of the evil of sin. But if such a manner of forgiveness were possible, it would leave the recipient of it in that state of uneasiness which a man feels who finds himself in the presence of one whom he had injured, yet who had forgiven him. He would be under the conscious

sense of degradation. Such a condition would be the very opposite of being "blessed." It is the mode of the forgiveness, bringing the person forgiven to stand at ease in the presence of God, who is declared to be just, while He is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, which constitutes the blessedness. The atonement of Christ is indeed the remedy, the only remedy, the Divine remedy, for the forgiveness of transgression; but it is more—it is the great medium of the display of the moral glory of God. "Angels look into these things," and learn the glory of their God by means of His dealing with sinners. And it is a wondrous thought, that man's necessity as a sinner, and the manifestation of the Divine glory, find their one and only meeting-point in the cross of Christ. Yea, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and so forgiven as that God is glorified. Oh, what riddance of anxiety to the soul, when its salvation is thus taken from off its own responsibility, and it is no longer the question, Shall I be saved? but, Shall God be glorified? Blessed peace indeed, surpassing all understanding, when God and the conscience are alike satisfied.

"Blessed is the man whose sin is covered.

It is not the manner of the Holy Ghost to use redundant expressions. We often use many words where few would suffice. But "the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times." And man "liveth by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Now, I believe as the conscience becomes alive to God, and exercised before God, it necessarily draws the distinction between transgression and sin. Outward reformation is seen by others; but the soul itself cannot rest on this. There is a very wide difference between reformation of character and conversion to God. Reformation of character will necessarily follow conversion to God; but for a soul "to believe and turn to the Lord" is something far more deep than outward reformation of character—it brings us to Him with whom we have to do, before whom all is open and naked. And there it is that we learn the difference between transgression and sin. In human thought sin is an act; in Divine judgment it is a principle. And this discovery is so appalling that transgressions appear thrown into the shade by the discovery of what sin really is—viz., a settled principle of

insubjection to God ; a desire to do what God has forbidden, *because* He has forbidden it, even when there is no positive act of disobedience ; a reluctance to do what God has commanded, *because* He has commanded it. Yes, we have a will contrary to the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God ; and this is very experimentally known after we are made willing, by the grace of God, to come to Christ ; so that to do the will of God is more or less connected with denying self.

“Whose sin is covered.” Who would not faint under the struggle, if it were not so ? God Himself has covered sin up out of His own sight, and this is what we need. How man tries to veil his heart from his fellow-man ; yet even human sagacity can often pierce through the hollow covering, and man himself is ill-satisfied with it. Witness his round of religious duties to try to cover it, and his natural proneness to superstition. But it is the atonement of Christ which covers sin before God. It is God Himself who has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood. Here, when we discover sin, we can yet meet God, not in anger, but in mercy ; for the sin which

we have discovered is covered up before Him. I do not believe that there can be settled peace in the soul till, taught of the Spirit, it knows the emphatic meaning of such texts as these: "Our old man has been crucified with Him;" "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The mighty moral necessity of the Son of God becoming the substitute for a sinner alone meets the case of the conscience alive to what *sin* is. And how do we see the wisdom of Divine teaching, as well as the infinite grace, that it is after showing sin in the shape of transgression, sin in connection with death, sin as dwelling in us, that the announcement follows—"There is therefore *now* no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jésus." Let the conscience be ever so alive to what sin is in its various phases, the moment Christ is regarded as the object held out by God Himself to faith, "No condemnation" is the answer.

This distinction between transgression and sin helps to solve a phenomenon not unfrequently

brought under the notice of those who are watching for souls. The deepest sense of sin is by no means always found where there has been the greatest amount of transgression. The transition from a state almost of remorse on account of transgression, to peace with God through faith in Christ, may well lead the soul to put its amen to the apostolic declaration—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Now, when such are led on in exercise of conscience before God to know sin as a principle, they find that the outward conduct has but too faithfully represented the inward principle. They find, too, the need of not trusting in the outward reformation, and that the heart, from whence all evil proceeds, has to be diligently watched. But when persons who have been happily kept free from gross vice—gentle, kind, and amiable—are awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of sin, the judgment they can form of sin is not so much by its injuriousness to themselves and others—which may, even apart from the quickening power of the Spirit of God, affect the conscience—but they measure

sin by its contrariety to God; and instead of being able to rest complacently in the blamelessness or innocence of their lives, or in the praise bestowed on them by others, their very lives appear to them as one act of hypocrisy, the motives of action and conduct being now judged in the light of God's presence. And the result often is such self-loathing as betokens deep and steadfast conviction of sin, and needs the fullest application of all that Christ is to the conscience. There may be a measure of loathing oneself on account of transgression committed even from a generous impulse of nature; but to loathe self because we have discovered what it is before God marks the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and will be found a deepening work as we go on.

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” How needed is this clause for the peace of an awakened soul! There is the consciousness of iniquity; and the announcement is, that although the Lord knows iniquity to be there, He does not impute it. And wherefore? Surely, because God hath imputed it to Jesus. “He hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” God hath seen sin

there, and He has judged it there. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Jesus, and by His stripes we are healed." It is the greater wonder, that God should have imputed iniquity where He only saw righteousness, than that He should not impute iniquity where He sees iniquity. And I repeat again, that nothing short of the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner gives full relief to an awakened conscience. The cross of Christ is to us the marked expression of the love of God towards sinners. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The cross, further, is the declaration to us of the righteousness of God. "Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness."

Again, it shows the infinite hatefulnes of sin in the judgment of God. The cup could not pass away from Jesus. He bowed His head, and drank it. And God hid His face from

Him, and made Him to know on the cross, in bitterest experience, what sin was—"God made Him to be sin for us."

The cross is both the way for God to come nigh to man as a sinner without destroying him by His presence—"And having made peace by the blood of the cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself;" and the cross is also the way for man as a sinner to come near to God—"You that were sometime far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

All these several aspects of the cross, deeply important and interesting as they are, would fail of giving settled peace to the soul, if the truth of the actual substitution of Christ for the sinner were kept out of sight. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Here we find solid ground on which to rest our souls. The wonder of the Holy One of God being made sin on the cross is far greater than the wonder that any measure of guilt should by it be answered to God.

But there is more than this. The idea of simple pardon is at the best negative; blessed indeed, even in that view, that iniquity, although committed, is not imputed. Speaking humanly,

we have the idea of a free pardon emanating from the grace of the sovereign; we have the idea also of an amnesty; but we cannot get the idea of justification. It is the idea which God alone can present, because He alone can justify the ungodly; and this is the new and blessed idea here presented. "David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Now in these words we have not the actual statement of the imputation of righteousness. It could not be clearly and fully announced (although it was the only principle on which God had acted from the beginning), because the great ground-work—The Cross—was not an accomplished fact. However it may have been anticipated by faith, still there was all the difference as to perception between a promise made and a promise accomplished. Everything was suspended on the death and resurrection of Christ. "We," says the apostle, speaking to the natural heirs of promise, and the natural children of the kingdom—"We declare unto you

glad tidings, how that the promise which was made to the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again." The proper person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection, is the key by which we are able to unlock all Scripture. The Holy Ghost, Himself the inditer of all Scripture, the Spirit which moved the prophets, "The Spirit of Truth," is especially known to us as the glorifier of Jesus. This great testimony of the Holy Ghost is to the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow. And as soon as the death and resurrection of Jesus became a matter of fact, the Holy Ghost brought it to bear on His own previous Scriptures; and in this light we clearly discern that iniquity not imputed is righteousness imputed. "God hath made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There is nothing simply negative in the gospel. It is not a prohibitory system. It is a gracious system of conferring positive blessing. To forgive sin may be negative; but to give righteousness is a positive and inalienable blessing. This marks the genius of the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in Him [Jesus] shall not perish"—it

stops not here—but “shall have everlasting life.” “That they may receive forgiveness of sins;” but it goes on, “and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me.” If we are “delivered from the power of darkness,” it is by translation “into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” Alas! our narrow minds and dull hearts deprive the gospel of its glory. “It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It represents God in the gracious place of the giver, and sets man in his only place of possible blessing, that of a simple recipient. “By faith we receive Christ” (John i 14); receiving Him, we receive from Him power to become the sons of God; we receive forgiveness of sins, abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness. We receive eternal life. Christian action follows on this reception of Christ. The teaching of the Holy Ghost unfolds to us what we have received in having received Christ. It is well to keep this principle constantly before the soul. It is not that which we *renounce*, any more than that which we *do*, which makes us Christians, but it is that which we *receive*. And this principle runs through the Christian life: it is a life which has its affections, its sensibilities, its

energies, and its activities. Our Christian life is not a system of negation any more than is our natural life. This marks it so forcibly from the common notion of religion. It is said, "Cease to do evil"—it is added, "Learn to do well." "Abhor that which is evil"—"Cleave to that which is good." "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him work with his own hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." Hence arises the danger to Christians from misusing even the good, holy, and righteous law of God, it "is not for the righteous." Their need is, to have the life already received nurtured by the ministry of Christ, the true and living Head, in order that the energies of that life may be called forth in its varied and appropriate activities. We have Christ Himself for our standard, and the righteousness which we have in Him, as our standing before God, presented to us as our highest but certain final attainment. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I

am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Hence it is that the one hope of our calling, which is so certain, because according to the purpose of God, becomes so formative of the Christian character. To be conformed to the image of God's Son, as the first-born among many brethren, is the blessed destiny of those whom God has already justified. It is upon the certainty of this that the Holy Ghost acts on our conscience and affections, not making what we shall be to depend on what we practically are, I mean, as Christians; but taking the Divine certainty of what we *shall be* as the mighty moral lever *now* to elevate our affections; and even now, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

This hope, grounded on Christ, is the great power of present purification. "Desiring to be

teachers of the law" was, in the apostle's judgment, the result of ignorance in those who undoubtedly thought to promote holiness thereby. And so there is even a way of pressing conduct and service, which, instead of strengthening the life of Christ in the saint, turns him back on the question of his own salvation. Such is not the way in which the Spirit leads. He glorifies Christ, and takes great care to establish the soul in Him when leading it into practical holiness. Such is the order of instruction for the most part in the Epistles. And I believe the wondrous truth of "righteousness without works" to be the very ground-work of righteousness and true holiness. It is the positive blessing received, recognized, and enjoyed—"God delivered Christ for our sins, and raised Him for our justification"—which calls the Christian life into activity.

Secondly, "And in whose spirit there is no guile." It is written of Jesus—"He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Of all others the description is but too true—"with their tongues they have used deceit." This is indeed a humbling condition of being—to dissemble what we are, to pretend to be what we

are not—to use the tongue, or to put on an outward demeanour, to conceal the thoughts of the heart—and at the same time, on every moment of serious reflection, to be conscious that we are not before God what we seem to be or profess to be before others; this is a condition which makes the thought of God insupportable. It is too much of restraint for man always to be acting a character, and “the idle,” off-hand word betrays the condition of the heart, which perhaps more studied speech had concealed. It was by the idle word—“this man casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils”—that He “who knew what was in man” made manifest from their very words what was in their hearts. Whence, then, the remedy for so evil a condition? whence the blessedness of having no guile in the spirit? It is alone the result, the first and blessed result, of the great truth of “righteousness without works.” It at once cuts off all effort at concealment, and all pretensions to be what we are not. The very ground-work of the doctrine is, that the very God before whom all things are naked and open, who knows us thoroughly, and has taught us to see ourselves in measure as He sees us,

is the one who has covered up our sin ; yea, He has covered up all the sin which His omniscience knoweth to be in us ; for He has not acted towards us on our estimate of sin, but on His own. None can condemn, since God Himself justifieth. God has not put us in the place of justifying ourselves ; He does that Himself. And He takes our part much more effectually than we could take our own. Hence there is no guile in the spirit ; so to speak, it is not needed. All anxiety about making out a case for ourselves is removed, since God Himself declares His righteousness in covering our sin, and making us righteous. If we search ever so deeply (and it is well to do so) as to what sin is, God knows it more deeply, and has dealt with it in judgment on the cross of Christ according to His own estimate of it. There is no guile in the spirit where there truly is faith, because the truthfulness of our own character, and the truthfulness of the character of God, are alike maintained by this mode of God's dealing with us in and through Christ.

There is no guile in the spirit of him who at one and the same time takes his place as the chief of sinners, and yet also as perfectly right-

eous in Christ. There is no guile in the spirit of him whose object is to glorify Christ and not himself. Hence it follows that, when self-vindication becomes needful for a saint (which is but rarely), he is placed in the most humiliating position, because he has to speak of himself instead of Christ. The apostle was thus compelled to speak "as a fool." But, as a general rule, confession and not self-vindication is the path of a saint. An over-sensitiveness about our character argues a state of soul little occupied with Christ. If our care be His glory, He will in due time vindicate us. And what is not cleared up now will be made clear in that day. (1 Cor. iv.) I do admire the grace of Christ in the apostle which could make him turn all the aspersions cast on his own character to establish the faithfulness of God (2 Cor. i.), and thus turn the thoughts of the Corinthians away from himself to a better object.

Thirdly, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me : my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

Where can a guilty conscience find relief?

The very effort at concealment only aggravates the burden. How many broken hearts are there, how many heavy spirits, who dare not tell their sorrow to another! How many who have found bitter disappointments in everything, and in themselves also, who are ignorant of the real cause, because they are ignorant of their real condition as lost, and think their own case peculiar! They know not that God has thought upon their case, and considered it, and provided the remedy. They think not of telling their case to God any more than to their fellows. God, they think, would spurn them for their unworthiness, and man would ridicule them for their singularity. They keep their sorrow to themselves; they keep silence, although it be only to aggravate the raging fever within by being thus thrown on themselves; they know not that they are only realizing what the constitution of man as a moral creature is. Man is insufficient for his own happiness, and the creature is insufficient to make him happy. This may not, in the ordinary acceptation, be felt as though it were sin, yet it is the deepest principle of sin, because it is, in fact, "worshipping and serving the creature more than the

Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." How many aching hearts are there, how many sensible of a void which refuses to be filled, where there is no conviction, properly speaking, of sin—nothing which makes manifest the need of an all-sufficient atonement ! They think not of the gospel as the all-sufficient remedy for them ; they know not that Jesus, heart-sick in a weary world, and rejected by the world, in the conscious possession of everything man needed either as a creature or a sinner, turned to such and said, " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How has the gospel been degraded in being regarded merely as a remedy for sin ! A remedy it assuredly is ; but it is far more—it is the manifestation of God Himself in such a way to man as a sinner as to make him happy in God ; whilst God is glorified in thus making him supremely happy. The state above described is that which knows not God as the blessed One, and knows not the blessedness announced by the oracle of God, " Blessed is he," etc. And herein is the crying evil of the professed Christianity of the world, which is a mere system of ordinances, nullifying the necessity

of the gospel. These poor broken-hearted ones are hindered from seeing there is a remedy of God's own providing for their misery. They want the gospel in its simplest form, but they hear it not. They attempt to act out Christian duties, or even to assume Christian privileges, without knowing its first principle—free intercourse with God on the ground of the propitiation of Christ.

There is no relief till the soul can tell out its sorrow to God. Even the very hand of God may be felt and acknowledged, and yet God Himself is regarded as inaccessible. The soul goes on bearing its own burden, because it dare not cast it upon God. The whole spirit is gone, just as the natural moisture is dried up under a raging fever. In such a case it is sometimes found that the hand of God (acknowledged and felt, because it has touched some idol or other in which the soul was seeking rest, or at least diversion, from its misery), instead of graciously subduing the soul, produces fretfulness against God. God is regarded as an enemy, as having gone forth against the sufferer, at the very time He may be only removing the obstacles in the way of the desired relief. He "waits to be

gracious." He "will be exalted to show mercy." Much of the controversy between God and man is, whether the remedy for man's misery is to be found in man or in God. The first thing under all circumstances of misery is the acknowledgment of God. Man finds out many ways of accounting for his misery, and applies his various remedies; but until he acknowledges God, he always accounts for it on wrong ground, and never discovers the real remedy. There are certain principles which apply with equal truth to man, whether in his natural state or when born of God. This is one—"When I kept silence," etc. It is a condition of exquisite misery to the natural man, because he is ignorant of the revealed character of God, and knows not the relief it would be to tell everything to God; and to the saint also, because, though knowing God in grace, he does not use the truth aright to deepen himself in self-knowledge. He has so far forgotten his standing as to have guile in his spirit, by not being open with God. The statements of the apostle are generally applicable. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, He is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." When God is really known as the One who imputeth righteousness without works, any concealment from Him must necessarily produce heaviness of spirit. We cannot come near Him by reason of the concealment; and then comes on coldness. And how often in such a state of uneasiness of soul do we find the fault laid anywhere, even on God Himself, rather than on ourselves for keeping silence! When we have been restless in spirit, downcast, and unhappy, have we not often been able to solve the difficulty? Frequently it arises from mortified pride; or self-esteem has been lowered on discovering some unsuspected sin, as if our blessedness consisted in our *character*; instead of our having righteousness imputed without works. God will not allow us to have confidence in our character, or in our faithfulness to Him, but in His own revealed character and His faithfulness to us. This tendency in the saint to self-righteousness accounts in very great measure for the misery so often found in Christians. If self-righteousness in any degree

or form, however subtle, be entertained, the Christian has departed from the real and only ground of his blessedness. If there be sin unconfessed, or made light of in confession, or only generally and not specially confessed, it must induce misery; if God has told out to us all His grace in forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, it is that, in the knowledge of this, we may have no concealment, or rather attempts at concealment, from Him. He would have us look at ourselves as we really are, and justify Him in so dealing with us as He has done in the gospel of His Son.

Fourthly, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

What relief is here—full, immediate relief; the sense of forgiveness accompanying the very act of confession! Silence was broken by confession; no longer is effort made at concealment. The very One whose hand was felt to be so heavy is the One to whom the heart is opened and poured out: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee." "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." There is no

“creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” It is a solemn thought that we have to do with God; and when once this truth gets fast hold on the conscience, the effort at concealment from Him produces the exquisite misery described in the two preceding verses. Confession gives relief, because it at once puts us in the actual place of having to do with God. It practically acknowledges that all things are naked and opened unto His eye; that He is the rightful and truthful Judge; that what His word says of the evil of our hearts is true. Then is God justified by confession. This is true if God were regarded only in the character of a judge; but how much more is God justified when confession is made under the sense of His love as known in the gospel of His grace? Then will it be deepest, and fullest, and most truthful; then the forgiveness of the iniquity of transgression will lead the same heart and lips which have confessed unto sin to make confession unto salvation. And in this we find the deepest elements of the character of the saint. He had before but one subject of thought

and study—that was himself: he has now another—the Christ of God. Has he to speak of the first? It is in the language of confession, ever deepening as he advances in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But is he in his proper and happier element? Has he to speak of Christ? It is to confess Him as all his salvation and all his desire. How happily do confession and praise unite—happily, because truthfully. No language is sufficient to express the real degradation of a sinner; no language is sufficient to tell out the grace and glories of the Saviour. And when confession and praise are so united, what fervency they give to prayer and intercession!

Now, I doubt not that a great deal of the trial of spirit to which saints are subject arises from their not exercising themselves in self-judgment and confession under shelter of the blessed truth of “righteousness without works.” It is the right apprehension of this blessed truth which puts us in the place of self-judgment—a place exceedingly high and wonderful. If God, the Judge of all, has become the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus, is it that they shall make light of sin? Far from it: it is

that they may judge themselves. The blood of Jesus gives us access into "The Holiest:" there we are in the light; there we are in the privileged place where Israel's high priest could only enter once in the year, but which is ever open to us by Jesus, our great High Priest. Entering into the very presence of God, with unshod feet consciously touching the sand of the desert, there it is we address ourselves to one part of our priestly ministry, self-judgment, separating between the precious and vile, judging between things which differ. We are then in the light, and the light in which we are detects that which is inconsistent with light; and we could not stand there, unless under the shelter of that very blood which introduces us there; and when there, we learn more of our need of that blood than we had ever before known. We have found in it remission of sins; it has washed us, and still keeps us clean. Now, I believe "the uprightness of heart" mentioned in the last verse of this Psalm to be very intimately connected with self-judgment; for self-judgment eventually turns us back on the blessedness announced in the Psalm, that the very evil which we have only now

detected God doth not impute to us—God has covered it. It is thus that the heart is kept humble, and the conscience tender and lively. I believe the uprightness and honesty of confession which may have been manifested at conversion is frequently impaired from neglect of self-judgment before God. A saint may become too solicitous about his own character in the eyes of his fellow-saints, or of the world, and thus unconsciously be led to act a part, instead of getting his life strengthened from the spring and source of life. There was a truthfulness in the exercise of heart which led first to Christ; but this is impaired when the maintenance of our character becomes our object instead of Christ. Now, by self-judgment, truthfulness is maintained, and our need of Christ in new and various ways becomes manifest. Let the exercise of soul be ever so personally humbling, yet, if it leads to Christ, it leads to larger apprehension of the blessedness declared in this Psalm: we really are strengthened. At times I marvel at the grace of God in permitting us to judge ourselves. He can never give up His title as “Judge of all.” We have come to Him as such; but so completely

has He, by His grace, justified us through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that He would have us arraign ourselves before the judgment-seat, and be the judges of our own selves. The right apprehension of standing in complete righteousness before God in Christ can alone qualify us for this. Self-judgment may have been carried on by us in our ignorance on a different principle—viz., seeking to find some ground in ourselves for acceptance with God; but now it is to search and see how just and holy is the way of God in dealing with us, so as to make us debtors alone to grace; and yet this very grace reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ, since redemption displays the holiness, justice, and truth of God in strict accordance with His mercy.

There are three characters of judgment with which the saint has to do—self-judgment, the judgment of the Church, the judgment of the Lord. These are very distinct in their character. Attention to the first necessarily precludes an individual from falling under the judgment of the Church, whose province it is to judge those within, while those who are without God judgeth. The failure of the Church

to exercise judgment, in its own proper province, on overt acts of evil—such as occurred at Corinth—brings on the judgment of the Lord in some outward and manifest form. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” It is equally the province of the Church to judge the doctrines of those within. The Lord had it against Thyatira, that Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, was suffered to teach her seducing doctrine. And the Lord must judge if the Church tolerates evil doctrine. But the judgment of the Lord is ever supreme, and we are always, individually and collectively, amenable to it. Self-judgment, indeed, would prevent us, as individuals, from falling under the Lord’s judgment in a marked and manifest manner. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord.” The rod for wilful disobedience will not be needed, because self-judgment would prevent such outbreaks, the principle of which had been secretly judged. But although the judgment of the Lord, in the shape of present punishment, would thus be avoided, this does not interfere with the general truth, that “whom the Lord

loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The difference of the Lord's dealing, even where there might be outward sorrow, would be very apprehensible to the conscience of those who came under it. To the soul exercised in self-judgment it would readily be interpreted as the interference of love, the wisdom of which would be discerned. To the careless saint it would be felt as punishment, and regarded as a warning to bring him to a sense of his actual condition. Nor must we forget how much the needed discipline of the Lord is preventive; and this, too, is learned in self-judgment in the holiest of all. The "thorn in the flesh" might have been interpreted by the apostle very differently from what the Lord intended, had his soul been unexercised before God about it: "*Lest* I should be exalted above measure." He had not been so exalted; but there was the unsuspected danger and tendency to be guarded against; and this the apostle discovered, not by revelation, but by exercise of soul before the Lord. And have we not all had occasion, not only to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God for something positively wrong in our ways, but also to

justify His love and wisdom in some special discipline, the preventive character of which has been taught by *Himself in the holiest of all*? I feel increasingly the importance of deep searching self-judgment under the shelter of the blessed oracle: "Transgression forgiven—sin covered—iniquity not imputed." I say, not that we are always able to interpret the Lord's dealings with us, but I believe self-judgment, as to the springs of evil, leading to confession before God, to be the means of attaining this interpretation. God is always right. A simple but deeply practical truth; and we own God to be right by confession; and thus we not only get relief, but we actually learn that God is right, and understand His ways. Oh! if saints did but know the toilsome process of self-vindication; if, instead of justifying themselves, they were to justify God, what sorrow would they avoid! And it betrays such want of confidence in God to be anxious to vindicate ourselves; as if, after all, it was our own character, and not His grace, which was the real power of blessing. I think we see the design of the apostle in using the word "discern," not simply judge. (See Greek, 1 Cor. vi. 31.) If we would

“discern” ourselves, we should not be judged. Self-discernment getting a positive insight into the real moving springs of the activity of the flesh. Who can bear to look too closely into the flesh, unless he knows the blessed truth that God has judged the flesh in the cross of Christ? “Our old man has been crucified with Him.” The evil which we are only beginning to discern in it God had seen from the beginning, and allows us now to see, that we may justify Him in His total judgment of it. The flesh cannot discern itself; it cannot stand before God. It is by the power of life, communicated directly from Christ, brought into this exercise by the Holy Ghost Himself, that we thus discern ourselves; and this in the immediate presence of God Himself. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But He that is spiritual judgeth all things.” It is a human aphorism that “the proper study of mankind is man,” but deeply fallacious. Man knows not himself by studying himself, but by studying God. “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ,

whom thou hast sent." It is by this Divine science that man really knows himself; not by measuring himself by himself, but measuring himself by God—by God as He is revealed in and through Christ. I have often thought that the annals of history, dark as they are, or the record of crime, black as it is, would not together present such a picture of the depravity of man as would the secret confessions of saints to God, if their confessions were laid open to us as they are to Him. Nothing but the consciousness of complete justification could ever embolden the saint to confess before God those secret springs of evil which he detects, when judging himself immediately in the presence of God. We wonder not at the most devoted saint speaking of himself as the chief of sinners.

"For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

It is indeed a blessed encouragement to the soul to be assured that there is nothing we may

not tell to God. He has done everything to win our confidence, even delivering His "Son for our offences, and raising Him again for our justification;" and it is by confession that we practically maintain our confidence in Him. It is because of the connection between confession and forgiveness that every one that is godly can pray unto God in a time when He may be found. If sin fresh discovered in ourselves need not bar access to God—if He does not hide Himself away from us, but is always to be found—what can hinder, and, practically, what does hinder, intercourse with God? It is not God Himself. It is not that either a sacrifice or a priest are to be sought—all is ready. But the unreadiness is in ourselves; there the real hindrance is to be found; we often try anything rather than the right thing. We may become more diligent in outward service—more regular in outward worship—more keen in judging the evil of others—when the one thing wanted is, *confession*. It is indeed a bad state of soul when things, most blessed in their place, are used by us to interrupt our intercourse with God. God requires truth in the inward parts; and if there be alienation of heart from God,

the restoration must be truthful. God must be justified; no blame must be laid on Him; all must be taken on ourselves; and this is just what confession does. He who is godly must regard God as the only Justifier, and must know Him as ever to be found, even when we have to go before Him with the confession of iniquity. And is it not in this way that we foil Satan as the accuser? If there be readiness of confession, is there not the consciousness that it is God who justifieth? Who, then, can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? That which the accuser would lay to their charge they have already laid to their own charge before God—and it is forgiven. It is thus, by experience, that the exercised soul knows God Himself as its hiding-place—"Thou art my hiding-place." There may be many ways in which the blessedness of faith in Jesus may be experienced; but I question if any way is more vivid than the difference between hiding ourselves away from God, as Adam did in the garden after he had sinned, and hiding ourselves in God. What a thought it is, that God should present Himself, as He does in the gospel of His grace, as the only refuge for a sinner; as the only One who

is able to take the sinner's part, and can effectually take his part! Is not this one blessed aspect of the glory of God? He makes all His goodness to pass before us, and proclaims His own name as just, yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—the only God—because He is a just God and a Saviour; and has thus given His challenge that there is no God beside Him, because He is a Saviour-God. There is a refuge from the accusations of Satan, from the frowns of the world, from that which is more bitter than either—self-condemnation; and this refuge is in God Himself. He has laid Himself out to us as the Depositary of our every woe, the Sympathizer with our every care, the One who pitieth every infirmity, the patient Listener to every complaint we have to make against ourselves. All this is learned under the knowledge of the blessedness of the truth of “righteousness without works;” yea, is comprised in that blessedness. It is confidence in this divine way of righteousness which emboldens us to say, “Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.” And is any trouble equal to soul-trouble? Very few Christians are able to take the honourable place of suffering, either for Jesus' sake, or for

righteousness' sake ! The Christian who thus suffers may rightfully rejoice. But spirit-broken, heart-sick, self-weary, whither can we go ? God is our hiding-place ; He comforteth those that are cast down ; He is the Father of mercies (pitifulnesses) and the God of all comfort ; He can make us rejoice out of our sorrow. And surely it is not right for the song of redemption to be sung once only on the shores of the Red Sea, and then the notes of praise to die away, and to be succeeded by murmurings. Alas ! so it is practically ; the joy of conversion is frequently followed by murmuring and complaining. The beginning of our confidence is not held fast. The truth of the blessedness of God in imputing righteousness without works is let slip, as though we no longer needed it. Saints have to learn to justify the wisdom of God in redemption in all its fulness, by learning, in the progress of their own experience, that nothing short of it would meet their need. We do not, as we might expect, find saints singing the "new song ;" a song new and ever varied, yet in substance the same. And wherefore ? Because grace alone can be the ground-work of our song ; and if the heart be not established

in grace, we have no heart for song. But when a saint goes on under the shelter of the blessedness of "righteousness without works," learning it as he goes on his way, how frequent the boast of thanksgiving—"Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance!" There is a "singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord;" not publicly, but privately in the closet. For great, unquestionably, as is the transition from darkness to light, by faith in Christ Jesus, at the outset, yet what is the experience of the saint afterwards? Is it not constant deliverances? "He that is our God is the God of salvation?" It is a happy school into which we are brought, to learn God in the character in which He has revealed Himself to us. The history of each individual saint will tell out the same truth—that "where sin abounded, grace has superabounded;" and the end of each saint individually will show forth the same truth as the church collectively—"to the praise of the glory of His grace." Oh, that we may be honest and upright in heart with God, and then the marking His ways will issue in frequent songs of deliverance!

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the

way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with a bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

Under the blessedness of transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed, comes in a new order of guidance, the guidance of the eye, even the eye of Him who has justified us freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

When it pleased Jehovah to redeem Israel out of Egypt, He Himself became their guide. Israel needed guidance; and Jehovah went before them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. He thus went before them to search out a resting-place for them in the wilderness. They pitched or struck their tents at the moving or setting of the pillar of the cloud. "The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." This surely was blessed guidance—in strict keeping with the character of redemption then manifested—a shadow of a far deeper reality—but it was not

intelligent guidance. There was no communion of soul with Jehovah needed to apprehend this guidance; "the cloud of the Lord was in the sight of Israel throughout all their journeys."

But now the very end of redemption is to bring us into communion with the thoughts and ways of God, and such a guidance could not be suitable to our standing. "The servant knoweth not what his master doeth." He goes and comes at his bidding; but he knows not the reason of either. Such a character of obedience would not suit those who know the blessedness of transgression forgiven, and are thereby admitted into the very thoughts and counsels of God. "We have the mind of Christ." The obedience now suitable to the saints is intelligent obedience, "understanding what the will of the Lord is"—"proving His good, perfect, and acceptable will." Now just in proportion as the guidance is of a higher order, so is it more difficult; and there is ever a readiness in us, from this very difficulty, to take the lower order of providential guidance, instead of the guidance of the *eye*. The "directorship" practised in the Romish Church may as readily be accounted for on the principle of relief from the exercise of

conscience before God, as on the principle of priestly domination. It is far more congenial to the natural heart to have the conscience kept by another, than to have it exercised before God. And the plea of infallibility has a charm in it, because it saves us the trouble of judging before God what is truth and what is error—what is right and what is wrong. If the real power against the fundamental doctrine of popery is found alone in the doctrine of “righteousness without works,” the practical use of this truth in leading our souls into habitual intercourse with God is the alone preservative from the principle of “directorship.” It is not the guidance of the eye of God to follow an individual Christian, or a congregation of Christians. The provision of God in the blessed truth of righteousness without works is, that the conscience of each individual should be in direct connection with *Himself*. And is there any instance on record where even Christian legislation for the Church has not trenched on God’s prerogative of having to do with the consciences of individuals? Apostolic authority dare not come in between God and the conscience. I utterly repudiate the idea of each man doing what is right

in his own eyes; but I do most strenuously assert the truth of God's right to have to do with the conscience, and of the believer's *privilege*—I say not duty—to have his conscience exercised before God. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” “Whatever is not of faith is sin.” And is it not the necessary fault of every Church Establishment, that it arrogates to itself the right to settle these things which God has left to be settled by the conscience exercised before Him, and thus the very obedience of saints is regulated, not by God, but by the convention of the religious society to which they belong? We are members of one body, and members one of another; but our healthful corporate action must be hindered, if we leave out the important addition that we are severally members of Christ. How needed is intercourse with God to guide the conduct of a saint! And it is for neglect of this intercourse that we bring much discipline on ourselves. God will have His way with us. But we are as the horse or mule, which have no understanding: we do not understand the will of God, because we study not the guidance of His eye; we are led by circumstances, and not by

the Spirit; wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; we walk in a large place when we walk before the Lord. How often do we turn each one his own way, and then God has His bit and bridle for us! This He is wont to use for *His enemies*. "*Because they rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest.*" Alas! how constantly do we as His saints—to our shame be it spoken—need the bit and bridle to turn us back by the way we have come! Who is there that has not to confess that the *right* path, which would have been readily found had heed been given to the guidance of the eye, has been reached after much painful and humbling discipline? Amidst the manifold proofs of present conscious weakness, this appears to me very prominent—the little confidence which the saints have of spiritual guidance in their several paths. They walk not as those consciously led of the Spirit. Among many indeed such guidance is not acknowledged even as a principle; providential guidance, if so it may be called (for providential control over circumstances, or

even our own waywardness, can hardly be called guidance), is alone regarded. But where the principle of intelligent spiritual guidance is not maintained as the privilege of the saint, how readily do we take hold of providential ordering as our ground of action! Hence we tread uncertainly; or we may follow the steps of others; but this is walking by sight and not by faith, and arises from the habit of only using our blessedness as a shelter, and not as that which introduces us into the presence of God. It is a beautiful description of the Thessalonians, that their "work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," was "in the sight of God and our Father."

To Israel God showed His *acts*; but He made His *way* known to Moses, the one with whom He conversed familiarly, as a man talketh with his friend. Surely God has by His grace introduced us into intimacy with Himself, that we too might know His ways.

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

Nothing can be more hollow than the mere conventional righteousness of men; it is based on human convenience or selfishness, without any regard to the holiness of God at all; it is simply character, as man estimates character, the most fatal hindrance to the reception of the truth. "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" And so strongly does this regard for character act, that even when the judgment is convinced of the truth of God, man is too cowardly to avow his conviction. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." There is one way in which we find the word of God frequently detecting this hollowness, and that is, by the remarkable contrasts which it draws. "Every one that *doeth evil* hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that *doeth truth* cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Here the human contrast to doing evil would be

doing good ; but that would be simply man's estimate of himself, by comparing himself with his fellow-men. But God contrasts man with Himself, and "he that doeth truth" forms his estimate of himself from God. This is the thing needed. The light lays man open to himself, as he is naked and open before God. So, again, God will send "strong delusion on many to believe a lie, because they *loved not the truth*, but had pleasure in *unrighteousness*." In the Psalm before us we find "the wicked" contrasted with him "that trusteth in the Lord." And surely the wicked is he who "submitteth not to the righteousness of God"—the one who will not submit to be saved as a sinner by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, but seeks for righteousness in some other way. To trust in the Lord—how simple, yet how sure ! How honouring to God, and yet how happy to ourselves, to give Him credit for having all in Himself which we find not in ourselves—to go out of ourselves for everything, and to find every craving answered in Christ ! God knows our need as sinners, and He has provided for that need in Christ. Yes, "we are the circumcision who worship God in the

spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Such have obtained mercy—such know their need of it. God is rich in mercy; He is able, not only to add mercy to mercy, but to multiply mercy; yea, to surround them with mercy; or, in the beautiful expression of the English Psalter, "mercy embraceth Him on every side." This is our truthful place. If we look back, "it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, *but according to His mercy* God hath saved us." And it is "according to His mercy" that He still deals with us. There will be discipline and correction by the way, because it is for our profit; but God's rule of dealing with us is according to that which is in Himself—"His mercy." And if we look forward, is the thought of glory connected with our faithfulness or service? And the thought does arise sometimes to dispirit and sometimes to set us on a wrong ground of service. How suitable the word, "Looking for the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!" We have earned no title to glory. Glory will come to us in the shape of mercy. God will make known "the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He hath afore prepared unto

glory." When Israel came into possession of houses built which they built not, vineyards planted which they planted not, wells digged which they digged not—then the danger was of their forgetting the Lord, and assuming that as their own right for which they were merely debtors to the grace of God.

This is too true a picture of our own hearts. We take as a right that for which we are debtors to mercy alone. We rejoice in the blessing which we have reached by trusting in the Lord, and then we trust in the blessing and forget the Lord. We only and always stand in grace ; we live by faith, we stand by faith ; we are constant debtors to mercy. In glory we shall know ourselves eternal debtors to mercy, and a great part of our most humbling discipline is designed to keep us in our right and no less blessed standing. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."

It is interesting to follow the line of thought of the Spirit of God, if the expression may be allowed, to see the connection between one part of His utterance and another. It is of great advantage to have a solid substratum of Christian doctrine, such as we frequently find

in the Protestant confessions of faith. But this, however valuable to detect error and to prevent headiness and high-mindedness, does not meet the need of the soul. The soul is not satisfied with an accurate theory ; it needs the truth to be applied in its wondrous variety. In this Psalm the Spirit of God is not treating a subject, but rather carrying out into its blessed results the oracle with which the Psalm commences. The "righteous" are not previously mentioned in the Psalm ; and if we were to take our own thought of "righteous" instead of the thought of the Spirit, we should sadly mistake. But the comment of the Holy Ghost Himself, by the mouth of His apostle in Romans iv., immediately leads us to connect the last verse of the Psalm with the first verse, and to identify "the righteous" here spoken of with those whose blessedness is declared in the oracle with which this Psalm commences. And thus, too, we see that the Holy Ghost throughout the Psalm is describing the blessedness of those to whom God imputes "righteousness without works ;" and closes all with calling on such to be glad in the Lord and rejoice, just as, by the apostle, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway ;

and again I say, Rejoice." There is a time coming when "all lands will be called upon to be joyful in the Lord," even after He shall have made known His salvation, and after His righteousness shall have been openly shown to the heathen. But we wait not for circumstances : knowing the Lord, we can and ought to rejoice. And wherefore is it that others judge through us of the gospel, as though it were a system of privation and renunciation, instead of one of the richest acquirement? Is it not that we try to be glad in ourselves, or in circumstances, instead of in the Lord, and thus are subject to much variableness instead of living by faith in the Son of God, learning what He is of God made unto us, and what we are and what we have in Him? In the most truthful confession before God of what we are we can still "rejoice in the Lord." Before He shows Himself publicly—before He manifests in glory to the eyes of all what the sons of God really are—believing, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And wherefore our deplorable lack of such joy? Is it not that we fail in discerning and carrying out the blessedness of "righteousness without works"? We do not

know it experimentally ; we do not see its moral beauty ; it does not shine with increasing lustre on our souls—because our souls are not exercised as they should be before God. We are, somehow or other, more occupied with that which displays us before men, than with that which displays God to us. Hence, we drink not at the spring-head of joy. Oh, that we could practically tell out to others that God Himself has made us happy, and that we are happy in God !

And the upright in heart are again connected with the blessedness declared in the first verses of this Psalm. We read of one whose “heart was not right with God.” He had the base thought “that the gift of God might be purchased with money.” Now, though no real Christian could entertain the thought that such a gift as Simon coveted is purchasable by money, yet the base thought is in our hearts to earn something from God, and this hinders uprightness of heart. Surely, uprightness of heart is to maintain our character before God as sinners saved by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and to carry with us that character before men. If we

forget what we are in ourselves, or what grace has made us to be in Christ, we are not upright in heart. It is blessed, indeed, not to have a part to act before God (for such is human religion); but to go before Him in the character which He has given to us, in the righteousness with which He Himself hath clothed us. To be upright in heart, is not to draw a line between religious and other duties, but to come to the light to learn ourselves, and learn the glory of God in His grace. There may be human sincerity and human uprightness, the very opposite, as man judges, to hypocrisy; but such natural uprightness may exist and *has existed* where God has not been known or revealed. But now light is come into the world; man may know his real character in the estimate of God; and the condemnation is, that "he cometh not to the light." Before God all will be found hypocrites—that is, acting a character—save those who, coming to the light, and learning what they are in God's judgment, have sheltered themselves under the blessedness of "righteousness without works." Such are upright in heart; in their spirit is no guile. They may shout for joy!

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

FIRST, then, as to our walking with God in secret. The direct result of receiving the precious truths which have come under review should be communion with God, flowing from complete harmony and agreement of heart and mind with Him. Prayer, strictly speaking, is not communion, though often included in it. Prayer is the telling out of our wants to God; and as those who from moment to moment depend on His sustaining bounty and grace, we should "continue instant in prayer." But communion is something more. It implies mutual communication between the Father and the child, brought near one to the other through that perfect work of Christ, which has put away all sin. Upon the realization of this privilege all else will hang. It is the main-spring of living Christianity. Weak in this respect, the whole man is weak, and failure is

the natural consequence. Strong here, we cannot fail in external behaviour. Oh, then, for a higher tone, and greater power, and deeper heart-energy, in our secret communings with God!

What, then, is the man who lives in fellowship with the Father and the Son? He is one who realizes that he is more nearly related to God than to any one on earth, and who, having "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," counts not that he has any existence except as "a man in Christ." He is one who believes in the perfection of communion hereafter with the highest and holiest of beings, and yet who, by faith, is able to enjoy this marvellous privilege here on earth now in the power of the Spirit. He is one who is content to let all other friendships cease, dear though they be, rather than let the slightest shade interrupt his fellowship with his God. He is one who, like Enoch and Noah, "walks with God;" one who holds intercourse with Him, like Abraham and Moses, "as a man speaketh with his friend;" one who, like David, can say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord: that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house

of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." He is one who "meditates in His law day and night;" one who can speak to Him with holy confidence while he stands in the market, hurries along the street, sits toiling at his desk, or mixes with his fellow-men; and yet one who often escapes from the buzz and hum of life to meditate, like Isaac, alone, or steals an hour from the night to converse with Him whose eye never slumbers, nor His eye-lids sleep. He is one who, though busily and intently occupied, in thought still realizes the presence of God; who does not merely bring his cares and burdens to Christ, but who dwells in Christ according to His word. He is one who opens his heart, not merely that Christ may pay a transient visit, but that He may dwell there at all times, and make it His abode and throne. He is one who lives on Christ as the support and joy of his soul, even as he eats and drinks for the support of his body. He would rather lose his "necessary food" than allow an interruption of his communion with Him. He is, therefore, a happier man than any of his fellows; for he is daily in

the enjoyment of the highest joy—the joy of loving and being loved most purely and intensely. He rejoices in the Lord always with exceeding joy; yea, “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” He is not morose, sour, or melancholy. He is never lonely; for he is never alone. Living in the pure atmosphere of the Holiest of Holies as his dwelling-place, he “sinneth not;” dwelling in the presence and company of Christ from morning till evening, his manners and behaviour, and the fashion of his face, become moulded like His, and he is “changed into the same image, from glory to glory,” even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 18), and his walk is a witness that he is “filled with the fruits of righteousness” —“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” He never thirsts, for he is always drinking from an unfailing fount. He pines not, nor pants for worldly society and pleasures; for he is always in the full enjoyment of unseen joys, and the delights of the highest companionship. Yet he goes out into the world as a bold, faithful, and loving witness for his Redeemer; and, by his graciousness to those around him,

seeks to win their ear to God's sweet message of forgiveness. He cannot shut himself in from the perishing world around : his burning love for Christ impels him forward into earth's darkest places to lift up the banner of the cross. He is not understood by those who are not in his secret ; he is little esteemed where his Master is not honoured ; sometimes he is persecuted like Him ; but his eye is on the smile that men cannot see, and his ear attentive only to the approval of the voice that men cannot hear. Thus he presses on—strong amid everything to weaken ; happy amid everything to depress ; and daily more than conqueror through Him that loves him.

THE LAND I LOVE.

My heart is onward bounding,
Home to the land I love ;
Its distant vales and fountains
My wishful passions move.
Fain would my thirsting spirit
Its living freshness breathe,
And wearied soul find resting
Its hallowed shades beneath.

No soil of nature's evil—
No touch of man's rude hand
Shall e'er disturb around us
That bright and blissful land.
The charms that woo the senses
Shall be as bright as fair ;
For all, while breathing round us,
Shall tell of JESUS there.

What light when all its beaming
Shall own HIM as the Sun !
What music when its breathing
Shall bear HIS name along !
No pause—no change of pleasure,
No cloud to dim our view ;
The draught that lulls our thirsting
Shall wake our thirst anew.

MARTHA AND MARY.

LUKE x. 38-42.

THEY were both dear to the Lord Jesus, and they both loved Him; but they were different. The eye of one saw His weariness, and would give to Him; the faith of the other apprehended His fulness, and would draw from Him.

Martha's *service* was acceptable to the Lord, and was acknowledged by Him; but He would not allow it to disturb Mary's *communion*. Mary knew His mind. She had deeper fellowship with Him. Her heart clung to Him. She sat at His feet, drinking in from the streams of grace and truth that flowed from His lips. Blessed it is to serve the Lord, but still more blessed to enjoy Him; and therefore the moment Martha would bring the outward services of the hand in competition, the Lord lets her know that Mary was refreshing Him with a

richer feast than the abundance of her house could supply.

This lovely narrative illustrates a great principle. It is the glory and delight of God to give. What He wants is the empty, longing, and believing heart, as a sphere in which He can allow His goodness to overflow. What He wants is to bring us into the enjoyment of His own blessedness. The highest place is properly His. *He* is the giver; and from Him we are to receive. The place of blesser is His: the place of debtorship is ours; for "without contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

Acceptable to the Lord as are the willing services of His people, nothing is more grateful to Him than that we should be continually receiving out of His treasury of grace. Nothing honours Him more than that we take our place of creature-dependence, and acknowledge His Godhead-glory; allowing Him to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth on thankful recipients from the inexhaustible fountain of His own fulness.

DIVINE TEACHING.

“He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”
PSA. cxliv. 1; 1 SAM. xvii.

THERE is one feature common to all those who have been trained of God for His own service—they have had to do with Him in secret before they have become prominent in the eyes of men. The contrast to this is that restlessness of the flesh which seeks to attract attention before the soul has had this needed discipline. They run without being sent, and have to learn themselves by their own painful failures. If Paul is a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear His name, his training is in the school of trial: “I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” Thus God has His secret ways of training for His service. It was so even with His perfect Servant, His beloved Son: “He shall grow up

before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

Just so was it with David. In the previous chapter we find David in perfect obscurity; nothing thought of among his brethren, or by his father; away from the family, keeping sheep; not thought worthy to be called unto the sacrifice. Yet he was the chosen of the Lord. And he had not been alone in the wilderness. He had been under God's teaching. He had been preparing for public service in the secret school of Him who looketh not on the outward appearance, and who seeth not as man seeth. Now so it must be with us. There must be a living before the Lord. Unless our souls are exercised before Him, He will not use us as instruments in His service. We may think He will; but it will not be so. God will always have to do in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. The excellent wisdom of our God in this may be seen in the history of many of His most eminent servants. They are found calm, wise, and enduring, when all around are perplexed and in fear. All they say and do tells us that they have been prepared for their work. Men

who have been living in secret before the Living God can move onward unhindered through the confusion and the strife of men. They have learnt how to stand in the breach before terrified Israel, or to meet face to face Goliath of Gath. And their preparation for this has been their living in secret before Him who is so infinitely greater than all, even before the Living God !

Thus is it here with David. In the desert he has learnt the resources which faith has in God ; and now he is to be the champion of God against the champion of the uncircumcised. The lion and the bear he has slain already, unseen by men : now he comes forth to triumph over Goliath, in the sight of the armies of Israel and of the Philistines.

How fearful a foe had Israel before them in Goliath ! Morning and evening he defied their armies, and his defiance was unanswered ; for they were dismayed, and sore afraid. Saul might set the army in array ; the hosts might go forth to the place of fight and shout for the battle (verses 19-21) ; but “ behold, there came up the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philis-

tines, and spake according to the same words ; and all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid." (Verses 23, 24.) This occurred just as David reached the camp. David heard the proud defiance of Goliath (ver. 23), and he saw the dismay and dishonour of Israel. Their loud shout for the battle was soon over, and all the people were in utter consternation. But David was calm and undismayed amidst all. The *stripling* David is the only one who feared not. He whom his brothers despised, and spoke lightly of in the naughtiness of their hearts ; he whom the Philistine disdained and cursed. Now there was nothing that any could see in David as a reason why he should put himself forward to meet the Philistine when none else dared to do so ; nothing that men, who judge by "the outward appearance," could discern as *power* ; but quite the contrary. The flesh would see power in "the host," in numbers, and in armour, or in the mighty Goliath ; but never in the *stripling* just come from his "few sheep in the wilderness !"

Beloved, mark this : David had had to do with the Living God ; and now he saw that the

name of the Living God was implicated. Israel looked to Israel's resources ; and what were the resources of Israel compared with those of the Philistines ? But here was one who had the mind of God—one who looked to the resources of the Living God. It was not that there was natural courage in David more than in Saul ; but there was faith in David. It is true that David had been in obscurity in the wilderness ; but there he had learnt communion with God. And now he came forth as one fresh from the Living God, and viewed all around him according to God ; and what he had learnt of God in secret he brought out into the circumstances before him. And this was the secret of his strength and of his victory. The circumstances were well considered, their difficulty and danger weighed ; but his faith brought God into them, and acted amidst them in His wisdom and in His power. Thus it is that David here looks on all around him. He views the army of Israel as the army of the Lord of Hosts. He looks at it in the light of Him from whose presence he had just come. (Ver. 26.)

And I ask whether our failures are not invariably here, that we have not been in secret

with the Living God? This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we value living with God even more than living before the saints and with the saints? I believe we prefer living before the saints, to living before God and with God. We may be comforted when surrounded by the saints; but our strength is in walking in fellowship with the Living God, knowing that we are to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The flesh itself may seek its own, and find a response too, among the saints; but the flesh withers—it is truly *grass*—in the presence of God. Hence it is our security, as well as our joy, to dwell by faith in “the secret place of the Most High,” and to come forth into service in strength gathered up there. Then shall we be able to look at every foe as David here looks at Goliath: “for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the Living God?”

But the language of faith instantly excites the flesh. So was it with Joseph, when telling his brethren his dreams. So it is here with David and his brethren. This we see in Eliab’s words: “I know thy pride, and the naughtiness

of thine heart." The moment the flesh sees a power greater than its own (as Eliab here sees in David), all it can do is to talk of it as pride. Now Eliab was the eldest brother, and he stands forth here in that prominence which the flesh always loves and seeks. He was a man distinguished for natural attractions; but however goodly his countenance or his stature, God "had refused him." (Chap. xvi. 6, 7.) The Lord's anointed was not he whom man esteemed. And how constantly are we taught this lesson in the Word, by God's rejection of the first-born, and His choice of the younger! Eliab stands like Ishmael or Esau, as the representative of the natural title of the flesh. In the exercise of this title, he thus scornfully rebukes David. But David was speaking according to a wisdom, moved by a power of which Eliab knew nothing. David was speaking the language of *faith*. The Living God, the Lord God of the armies of Israel, filled his eye; and by Him he measured the Philistines and their champion. Eliab had no such standard before him as this: he spoke and felt *as a man*; and therefore the language of *faith* was to him "pride and naughtiness of heart."

And the flesh always thus mistakes faith. The flesh angrily replies to us, "It is pride," as often as we speak of confidence in the Living God. That very confidence which is the deepest humility is always condemned by the flesh as pride. For there is no depth of humility so great as self-abandonment, in order to bring in the Living God. David, in the whole of this action, loses sight of himself, seeing only God and the armies of God. It is the power and the privilege of faith to have *self* cast entirely out of sight, and God alone filling its vision. "No flesh shall glory in His presence." "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." *This* is what David had learnt; *this* David is now displaying; and *this* it is which Eliab calls pride. Now the truth is, that the flesh is the proud thing. I trust that we know this, and that we know, also, that faith is a self-emptying thing, because faith receives everything from God; yea, beloved, more even than that—faith receives God Himself, as beyond every blessing which God can give.

"David said, What have I done? Is there not a cause?" Had David gloried in himself? No, indeed. And was there not a cause for

speaking as he did? If ever the name of the Living God is brought in question, there is always a cause. The very purpose for which we are left here in the world is, that we may confess the name of Jesus before men, and set aside our own name. Oh that the hearts of all God's saints were united in this one thing, the confession of the name of the Lord Jesus!

But let us follow David as he passes from Eliab to the presence of Saul. What conscious dignity, what entire self-possession, are now seen in David! "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (Ver. 32.) While the whole army of Israel trembles, one stripling stands before the king and says, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." Yes, there is in faith that self-possession which enables us, not only to feel, but also to minister comfort and confidence amidst the most trying circumstances. Faith draws from resources untouched by circumstances; and therefore, instead of being overcome of trial, is able, as the apostle says, "to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Cor. i. 4.) David had

already gone through trial, and had already, therefore, proved the God in whom he trusted. "He knew in whom He had believed." He had been in danger before, and had been victorious; therefore is he confident now. There had been dealings between his soul and God in the wilderness—dealings, it would seem, never brought out to public light until this moment. (Verses 34–37.) O beloved! where is it that the saints learn really to get the victory? I believe, where no eye sees us save God's. The heartily denying of self; the taking up the cross *in secret*; the knowing the way, in the retirements of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; *these are our mightiest achievements*. The closet is the great battle-field of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there, and then shall we be able to stand firm ourselves, and to comfort and build up others also, in the hour of outward conflict. He who had already slain the lion and the bear in the desert is the only one unterrified by Goliath in the valley of Elah.

How does this disclose to us the real secret of David's strength—the true strength of faith.

Now we can tell what the apostle Paul meant when he said, "I am a fool." He was obliged to speak of himself—*that* was his folly. His great strength in service, the reason why he was able to bear so much from the petulance of the saints, was because there had been exercise between Paul's soul and the Lord, which no one was party to save himself and his God. For the like reason David can now say to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him."

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him." Saul looks at David and then at Goliath; and, speaking *as a man*, Saul was right. But Saul knew not the secret of God which David had learnt. Saul never knew what David was now going to tell. If Eliab had done such exploits, he would not have kept it secret for a day; but David had learned in another school—a school in which he had been taught not to make much of David, but of the Living God. David, therefore, so far as the Scriptures inform us, had never boasted of, or even mentioned, his victory; but when the occasion demands it he can come forward and tell of the Lord's goodness unto him. So with the

apostle: "I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven." For fourteen years no one, it seems, knew he had been up to the third heaven; but when an occasion comes to bring it out for his Master's glory—not for his own glory—then he declares it. A great deal more was going on between the Lord and Paul than any one else knew. So it was with David. Who knew what this stripling had done? Who knew that he had triumphed already so wondrously? Who knew that he had delivered the lamb of his flock out of the mouth of the lion, and that both lion and bear had fallen by his hand? Eliab knew not this. Saul knew not this. It might possibly have been known to keen discernment of individual faith (1 Sam. xvi. 18); but it had gone no further. Beloved, be assured that if you would really be strong, it must be by secret living before God. I believe that the reason why we are all so weak is, that we care so little about secrecy before God. We are ready and eager to run into some service to be seen of men; but do we esteem unseen

communion and discipline before God beyond all? Depend on it, if there is not the slaying of the lion and the bear in secret, there will be no killing of Goliath in public, no power or wisdom in our public service.

This should lead us to understand that little word, "taking up the cross *daily*." People can take up the cross, they think, on some great occasion; but doing this on great occasions is nothing like taking up the cross *daily*, daily denying self, daily hating and losing one's life in this world. God's eye is *always* on us; it is our privilege to walk always before God, and thus we have hourly opportunity of taking up the cross before Him; confessing Jesus before Him, and denying self.

"David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." (Verse 37.) David knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God, we do not put difficulty by the side of difficulty: for what is difficulty to Him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes as the plain.

Too often, beloved, we think that in little things less than Omnipotence will do; and *then* it is that we fail. Have we not seen zealous and devoted saints fail in some trifling thing? The cause is that they have not thought of bringing God by faith into *all* their ways. Abraham could leave his family and his father's house, and go out at the command of God, not knowing whither he went; but the moment he meets a difficulty in his own wisdom, and gets down into Egypt, what does he do? Constantly fails in comparatively small things. Once in a wrong position, one which *we have chosen*, and how weak are we! Faith knows no little things. Faith discerns our own weakness so clearly, that it sees that nothing less than the power of God can enable us to overcome in anything. So that faith never makes light of danger, for it knows what we are; just as, on the other hand, faith never faints at the danger, because it knows what God is. This true estimate of our weakness and peril always gives a chastened tone to the confidence of faith. Measuring ourselves by our foes, what do we appear? "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but *against principalities, against*

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi.) And what are *we* compared with *such*? what our strength compared with theirs? "We were in our sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight!" "*Therefore*, put on the whole armour of *God*." Thus does faith discover the reality of our own weakness, while it rests secure in the might of the Lord. Thus faith knows what the flesh is, though the flesh knows not itself; and, consequently, he who is strongest in faith will least glory in self. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Thus it is here with David. He well knew that he was no match for Goliath. None need tell David that. David was not acting in pride of heart. Far from him was any thought of his own strength when he saw the terrible giant of Gath. He felt himself to be less than either Eliab, or Saul, or Goliath thought him to be. Nevertheless he could go forth in most perfect confidence. He knew that he should be delivered. Out of weakness he was made strong.

"And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." Having said this, Saul

clothes David in his own armour. "He put an helmet of brass on his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail." Saul could *say*, "The Lord be with thee;" but Saul knew not how to trust in the Lord as David knew. He sought to arm David as Goliath was armed: he brought forth these his own carnal weapons. But these will not suit the soldier of faith. The moment David had got Saul's armour on he could not move at all. All was constraint, all was effort. Now, beloved, there is no effort in faith. Whenever you and I are acting beyond our faith, we are conscious of effort, we are awkward. Wherever there is simple faith in the Living God, we see saints go on quietly, easily, unobtrusively, and (it seems to me) victoriously. There is a happy liberty in the service which faith renders unto God, which no skill or effort of the flesh can assume; and we must watch against mistaking effort for faith. There are *many* modes in which such effort is made to imitate the faith of others. For example, to make sacrifices because another has made them is *one* mode. I believe that all this is truly awful. Whenever there is real strength from the Lord, persons move on easily

and quietly, laying aside and relinquishing all other resources because of what they had learnt in the cross.

“And David said unto Saul, I cannot go *with these*, for I have not proved them.” David feared not to go, the *Lord being with him*, as Saul had said; but he could not go *with these also*. Faith never trusts in part to the Lord and in part to man. David had no helmet of brass, no coat of mail, when he slew the lion and the bear; *then* he went, the Lord alone being his strength. And, as he says, “the Lord delivered him.” Just as Paul said, “No man stood with me but the Lord stood with me and delivered me out of the mouth of the lion.” In like manner had David proved the faithful arm of the Lord, but Saul’s armour he had never proved.

But how often have we clothed ourselves, or allowed ourselves to be clothed, in such encumbrances, without detecting at once, as David did, their unfitness, and casting them from us! Have we not often worn them complacently; yea, gone forth to fight in them? Have we not often acted as though God’s work needed help by this or that form of human power, as though what

was begun in the Spirit could be made perfect by the flesh? and therefore we have had to learn our folly and unbelief in our discomfiture and loss. But it was not so with David here. He instantly detects that the wrought and polished armour of Saul befits not the soldier of faith. The word of Saul was good, but that word was belied by such arming as this. And I believe that those with whom God deals much in secret will be like David here. They will quickly, intuitively, as it were, discern and reject the advances of the flesh. They will thus distinguish between the precious and the vile. There will be an acuteness of spiritual *sense* (Phil. i. 9) in such, which is acquired nowhere but in direct communion with God. And hence, when out among the snares and wiles of the foe, if a film pass for a moment over the eye of their faith, and so a false object attract them, its falseness is *felt*, even when not *seen*. Thus it is here with David. He stands a moment, indeed, to put on the whole armour of Saul; but just when Saul must have thought him armed for the battle, David feels himself fettered and burdened! The world's most skilful aids are faith's surest hindrances.

“And David put them off him.” Thus does faith strip itself of all carnal weapons. For faith stands entirely in the power of God. Now our learning this is often the hardest part of our lesson; that which we most slowly learn, and soonest forget. But if we knew more of secret dealing with God, we should much more speedily rid ourselves of all carnal weapons. The soul which, like David, has been much exercised in secret before God knows the utter worthlessness of every thing but God’s own strength. And having thus learnt this blessed lesson, it readily casts off those things which the flesh so esteems as aids, and feels itself set free by their loss. How far more blessed this way of learning the flesh, and denying it, than any other! But, for want of such direct living before God, we have to learn this in painful discipline, and after many failures; and it is the hardest part of our discipline to be stripped of those things which by habit and education we have all thought necessary; to stand aloof from modes of action in which, after the manner of Saul, the name of the Lord and human authority, or human wisdom, are combined; such combinations, often called judicious and

useful, are most delusive and dangerous. How do we see the apostle rejoicing to count all those things esteemed by men loss for the sake of Christ! Why was not this a hard thing to him? How could he thus thoroughly renounce and put from him these things? He had learnt to "*rejoice in Christ Jesus;*" to be "*strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*"

Remember therefore, beloved, that he who has much to do with God in secret *cannot use these carnal weapons*. And surely this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the Living God into all our service, that we may be thus prepared to detect and to mortify all the pretensions and advances of the flesh. For it is sad indeed, through want of this, to see a saint trying to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armour. Thus the world obtains a place in the church. Its principles and its powers are recognized in the very place where God has written, "Love not the world;" "All that is in the world is not of the Father;" "The friendship of the world is enmity with God!"

This is often done in controversy. Argument

is met by argument, instead of the simple use of the word of the Lord; Saul's helmet of brass and coat of mail, instead of the sling and the stone, and the arm of faith, are opposed to Goliath's brass and mail. How often does the Lord vindicate His own word when used in faith, carrying it with divine power to the heart! And how often does He humble us by showing us how little our strong arguments avail, save it be to stir up heats and strife! The Lord in all this make us more simple.

But David goes not forth unarmed to the fight, though he casts from him the armour of Saul. He took his staff, the five smooth stones in his shepherd's scrip, and his sling; thus armed, he drew nigh to the Philistine. (Ver. 40.) Thus he strips himself of one sort of armour, only to array himself in another. But what simple armour is this? If David overcomes Goliath with this, surely the victory must be the Lord's. This armour was never wrought by art and man's device; the running brook had given these stones their smoothness. But faith is always thus armed. The armour of faith, therefore, is always weak and foolish in the eyes of men. God's mightiest victories have

been won by instrumentality which man has most despised. The foolishness of preaching (a foolish thing in itself, and a foolish subject, Christ crucified) man treats with disdain; yet it is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Preaching has ever been as foolish as David's sling. But what we want is much more of such simplicity, remembering that we have the truth of God to address to men's consciences. We have weapons "mighty through God," if we had only simple faith to trust to them alone, rejecting the armour of human energy, wisdom, and authority.

"And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David." (Ver. 41.) And disdaining David and his armour, Goliath says, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" Remember this, beloved, that the flesh always thinks itself insulted because our weapons are not such as itself uses.

The flesh likes to see sword opposed to sword, helmet against helmet; the flesh loves its own. But David said, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,

whom thou hast defied." Thus David put the question on its true basis. It is now simply a question between the Lord of Hosts and the Philistine. David puts David quite out of the question, and brings God Himself in as the antagonist of Goliath.

Thus should it always be with us. What are we? What is the foe? It matters not what we are, or what is the power of the foe; it signifies not, however mighty the one, or weak the other; will not God vindicate His own name? David came in the name of the Lord of Hosts; and will not God be jealous of His own name? Will He allow the Philistine to triumph over that? Never! Here, then, is the might of faith. Faith always brings in omnipotence. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is ever the word of faith.

Now David had never stood thus at this hour, if he had not learnt God as his God in secret. Therefore could he say, "Let no man's heart fail because of him;" and therefore could he thus meet Goliath. The name of the Lord must be our strength against every evil, whether without or within. Suppose the worst kind of evil, sin by a saint (and I trust that we

all know that sin in a saint is far worse than sin in another), and what is our refuge? "For thy *name's sake*, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." You have only to put God in remembrance of His own name, and He will be jealous for that name. Thus faith can always use the name of the Lord as its strength against every foe. So that instead of there being pride in David's heart here, he was shrinking himself into nothing, and making God everything. His most-confident words are his most humble ones. And is it not the name of Jesus that we have to set against everything—against every trial, every anxiety, every enemy? Is it not this which God is teaching many souls in secret now? Leading them into a sense of pollution and weakness they never knew before, into trial they never knew before, in order that they may know the value of what they have in the cross? Not as though they had got everything, but to *prove this in them, and unite them.*

Thus many are proving experimentally what redemption is, by being made to feel the necessity of such an Almighty friend as God. God is thus in secret now instructing many souls in

the value of the cross. And why? In order that they may be strong in the conflict.

And living before God in secret will ever make us act, if I may so speak, on the aggressive. This is remarkable in David. He says (verses 46, 48), "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel! And David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine." David tarried not, faltered not; but instantly used his simple arms, and smote his foe to the earth. (Ver. 49.) "*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him: but there was no sword in the hand of David.*"

It was not, then, that David merely waited to be attacked, but he hasted, and ran to meet the Philistine. The confession of the name of the Lord proceeds most powerfully from us, when we have learnt in secret the value of that name. Then grace and wisdom are often given, even to act aggressively against evil. But surely we have learnt how much grace, how much of Christ, it really requires to stand in testimony against evil! How do we fail in this for lack of

more cultivated communion with God ! Mark how calmly and deliberately, though instantly, David took the stone. There was no show of effort. It was done just as though he had been in the wilderness, with no eye upon him but God's. And the Lord directed that stone, just as He had enabled him to overcome both the lion and the bear !

Thus David prevailed ; and thus does faith ever prevail. I believe that at this present moment there is much opportunity for such service of faith ; but power for it must be sought by secret living before God. If a saint be greatly blessed of the Lord in public, we may be sure God has been dealing with him in secret in a way we had not supposed. But how often, after a Christian has been signally used in service, do we see him failing in some comparatively little matter ! Such failure, too, often comes from forgetfulness of that injunction : " Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

THY KINGDOM COME.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.”—2 PETER i. 19.

It is the opinion of many that the dispensation under which we live is the final one, and that at its close the purpose of God respecting this earth will be fully accomplished. They believe that the conversion of the world will be effected by the preaching of the gospel; that all nations will be brought under its blessed influence; that before the close of this dispensation the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That the kingdoms of this world *will* become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven, is fully admitted, because expressly

declared ; but that the preaching of the gospel in the present dispensation will effect this there does not appear to us the slightest ground for believing, taking God's word as our guide.

But there is another dispensation spoken of in Scripture, called "*The dispensation of the fulness of times*," which is to succeed the present, when He who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" shall "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 10) ; when the Son of man, who is gone "into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom," will return, having received from the Ancient of days "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) In endeavouring to point out what Scripture teaches as to this kingdom, I propose to show—

1. That a period of universal blessedness is to be expected in the latter day.

2. That the Lord Jesus will return, not at the close, but at the commencement of this period of blessedness.

3. That His ransomed Church will reign with Him during this period.

And, lastly, I shall consider the vast importance of the subject of the Lord's coming, showing it to be the proper hope of the Church, and productive of most blessed and practical effects to the children of God.

The two subjects which form the great theme of prophetic testimony (as must be evident to any attentive reader of Scripture) are the *sufferings* and the *reign* of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, we are informed of this by the Holy Ghost in 1 Peter i. 10, 11: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the *sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*" They prophesied of a suffering and reigning Messiah—of a Saviour born in Bethlehem, to be stricken for the transgression of His people, and coming in the clouds of heaven to "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously," (Isa. xxiv. 23.)

The Jews, by reason of the veil which was upon their minds, could not see the coming of the Messiah *to suffer*, but looked for the full

accomplishment at His first advent of those prophecies which spake of His glorious reign. Consequently, when He came in great humiliation, the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, He was in their eyes as "a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness; there was no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him;" and when He spake of being lifted up on the cross, their reply was, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever. . . . Who is this Son of man?"

Many in the present day have fallen into the opposite error. They see the suffering, but do not see *the reign*; and they would attempt to spiritualize and explain away those prophecies which speak of the reign of the Lord Jesus at His second advent, and tell us that they must be understood in a figurative sense; because, they say, it is not at all reasonable that our blessed Lord should leave the Father's right hand to reign on this earth. Surely such interpreters of Scripture, had they lived before the days of our Lord's first advent, would, upon the same hypothesis, have united with the Jews in understanding those prophecies also in a figurative sense which speak of the coming of the

Lord of glory to die an ignominious death between two malefactors ; for it appears far more reasonable that the Lord should come to be " King over all the earth," than that He should come to be crucified as a malefactor. (Zech. xiv. 9.)

I. Agreeably, then, to my first proposition, I shall proceed to show from Scripture that a period of glory and blessedness is to be expected in the latter day. The passages which I would adduce in proof of this are the following :—

Isaiah xi. 1–12. " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots : and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, . . . and righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ;

for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again *the second time to recover* the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Isaiah xxiv. 23. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously."

Isaiah lxxv. 17-25. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and

the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die an hundred years old ; but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them ; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit ; they shall not plant, and another eat : for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock : and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

Jer. xxiii. 5-8. " Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely : and this is His name whereby He shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The

Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them ; and they shall dwell in their own land."

Ezekiel xliii. 2, 7. "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east : and His voice was like a noise of many waters ; and the earth shined with His glory. . . . And He said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile."

Micah iv. 3, 7. "And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever."

Rev. xi. 15. "And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

Rev. xx. 1-4. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

These passages, with many others too numerous to notice, certainly predict a period of blessedness in the latter day, commonly called the Millennium; when the Jews, being restored to their own land and converted, shall enjoy all the earthly and spiritual blessings promised to them in Scripture, under the peaceful government and sway of the Prince of Peace, whose throne shall then be erected in Mount Zion, and His kingdom extend to the utmost bounds of the earth (Ps. ii. 8); when wars and commotions shall cease, and the whole world be blessed in Israel's restoration; for "living waters shall go out from

Jerusalem, and flow perpetually ; . . . in summer and in winter shall it be " * (Zech. xiv. 8) : the Jews shall be sent out to declare the Lord's glory among the heathen that have not heard His fame, neither have seen His glory (Isa. lxvi. 19) ; and ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, " We will go with you : for we have heard that God is with you " (Zech. viii. 23) ; and " Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.) The curse, too, shall be removed from the earth ; for " instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree." The ferocity of the animal creation shall be removed ; for the Lord in that day " will make a covenant for them [*i.e.* Israel] with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground : and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." (Hosea ii. 18.) And " He shall have dominion from sea to sea, . . . yea, all kings shall fall down before Him : all nations shall serve Him." (Ps. lxxii. 8, 11.)

* Ps. xlvi. 4 ; Ezek. xlvi. ; Joel iii. 18 ; Ps. lxxv. 6.

If we compare this glorious dispensation with the present, how very striking is the contrast ! I simply ask, Is the whole earth in the present day filled with the glory of the Lord ? Have the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ ? Is Satan, the deceiver, shut up and sealed in the bottomless pit ? No. But the whole world lieth in the wicked one (1 John v. 19) ; the course of this world is ruled by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. (Eph. ii. 2.) Satan is the prince or ruler of this world (John xiv. 30), the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4) ; the way is broad that leadeth to destruction ; the way narrow that leadeth to life ; the enemies of the cross many and mighty ; the cause of Jesus trampled under foot, and His worthy name blasphemed ; the faithful followers of the Lamb despised and persecuted, even as foretold by the apostle in 2 Tim. iii. 12 : “ All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” This is surely a time when every one who loves the Saviour, and has His glory at heart, should mourn over the evil ; yet how many do we see in the present day taking upon them the name of Christ, glory-

ing in that which should be their shame ; standing identified with a world, the friendship of which is enmity with God ; walking more as children of this world than as those who are “ dead and risen with Christ,” and “ made to sit with Him in heavenly places ;” and thus bringing disgrace and reproach upon that worthy name by which they are called ! Such, then, being the state of things in the present dispensation, it surely becomes every believer to pray earnestly that it would please God shortly to gather in all the members of the body of Christ, and hasten His kingdom.

The character of the present dispensation may be seen from the following passages of Scripture :—

Acts xv. 14. “ Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take *out of them* a people for His name.”

Matt. xxiv. 14. “ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations ; and then shall the end come.”

From the first of these passages it may be seen, that while the tabernacle of David is in
ins, *i.e.* while Jerusalem is trodden down of

the Gentiles, God is *taking out from the Gentiles* a people for His name. Here, then, is the character of this dispensation: it is elective—a dispensation of *taking out*, not one of universality; and those thus taken out are only a kind of *first fruits* of God's creatures. (See James i. 18.) But "*after this*," the Lord says, "I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David;" then will "the residue of men seek after the Lord." It is "the residue," observe, "the first fruits" having been already gathered.

The latter passage (Matt. xxiv. 14) shows that the conversion of the world is not to be effected by the preaching of the gospel in this dispensation; that it is preached for *a witness*, or for a testimony unto all nations, and then shall the end come, *i.e.* the end of the age. These points will be treated of more fully in the sequel.

II. Having thus shown from Scripture that a period of universal blessedness is to be expected in the latter day, I shall now proceed to show, agreeably to the second proposition, that the Lord Jesus will return, *not at the close, but at the commencement of this period of blessedness.*

It must be evident to any person who reads

the New Testament carefully, and with an impartial and unprejudiced mind, that *no* period of universal blessedness is to be expected *previous* to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn, in the first place, to Matt. xxiv., and observe the character of the days *preceding* the coming of the Son of man; read the 37th, 38th, and 39th verses: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Here we are told that the days before the flood are analogous to the days preceding the coming of the Son of man; and what was the character of the days before the flood? Was it a period of universal blessedness? Quite the contrary. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) We are not, then, to expect the millennial period of blessedness *before* the coming of the

Son of man ; but, on the contrary, man's wickedness will be "great in the earth;" and instead of that happy period when they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, *no more* to learn war, "there shall be upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke xxi. 25, 26 ; Joel iii. 10.)

Next turn to 2 Thess. ii. 2. There were some who said that the day of the Lord had set in (ἐνέστηκεν), and the Thessalonian saints were shaken in mind and troubled. The apostle writes to remove this idea, by showing that two things must necessarily precede that day : first, the Church is to be gathered to the Lord (verses 1), that is, "caught up" into heaven (1 Thess. iv. 17) ; and secondly, the Man of Sin is to be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming (ver. 8) ; neither of which had then taken place. Now, we certainly gather from this chapter that no millennium is to be expected before the coming of the Lord ; for the apostle speaks of an apostasy, and of the mani-

festation of the Man of Sin, as preceding His coming, and not of a period of blessedness. When could such a period take place? Not, surely, during the working of the mystery of iniquity, nor during the time of the apostasy and Man of Sin; and as no period of blessedness intervenes between the destruction of the Man of Sin and the Lord's personal coming (for he is destroyed by the brightness of that coming), the millennium must be subsequent. This may be seen also from Isaiah xi. 4: "He [the Messiah] shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the *breath of His lips* shall He slay the wicked" one. (Doubtless the same wicked one who is destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming in 2 Thess.) And *then*, it is said, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb," &c., and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." See also Rev. xix. 20 to xx. 3, where we find the account of the destruction of the beast and the false prophet, and of the binding of Satan "for a thousand years." There will be no millennium till then. But when Satan is bound, Jesus reigns, and earth enjoys her long looked-for period of millennial blessing.

The same truth may be deduced from the parable of the tares and the wheat. Universal blessing, we know, is not to be expected so long as the tares remain in the field, unless, indeed, the tares be turned into wheat; which the parable shows is not to take place. The tares remain until the harvest; the harvest is the end of the age, or coming of the Son of man; therefore universal blessing must be after His coming; and so we find the angels "*gather out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." He comes, not to destroy the earth, but to cleanse and purify it; and when it is thus cleansed by purifying judgments, "THEN," but not till then, it is said, "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (See Matt. xiii. 24-30, 40.)

The next passage which I would adduce in proof of this is the second chapter of the book of Daniel, where we read of the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's image by the falling of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands; after which this stone becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. We are then told that this image was ~~emblematic~~ emblematic of four king-

doms which were successively to arise, and which are generally understood to be the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman. The destruction of the image by the falling of the stone is emblematic of the destruction of these kingdoms, by the setting up of the kingdom of the God of heaven.

The stone undoubtedly is the Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by a reference to Matt. xxi. 44, where the Saviour (evidently in allusion to the falling of this stone) says, "Whosoever shall fall *on* this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever *it* shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Mark the distinction here between persons falling on the stone, and the stone falling on them. The stone is first on the ground, and while remaining in that state was the cause of stumbling to many. By this we understand the humiliation of Jesus, which we know was a stone of stumbling to the Jews, who were broken in consequence—not destroyed. But observe, this stone is afterwards elevated, as is clearly implied in the phrase, "on whomsoever it shall fall." Now, the elevation of the stone is the exaltation of Jesus, and the falling of the stone, which smashes the image, can be

none other than the second coming of Jesus in utterly-destroying judgment on His enemies; and it is after the stone falls that it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth, or the kingdom of the God of heaven is set up, which breaks in pieces and consumes all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever. See also Daniel vii. 13, 14, where the prophet has a vision of the Son of man coming *in the clouds of heaven*, which, if you compare with Matt. xxiv. 30, you will find to be the second coming. And what is the object of His coming? Not merely to be invested with judicial power, but to receive "*dominion, and glory, and a kingdom*, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed;" and this kingdom is only "*nigh at hand*" when the signs indicative of the Saviour's coming are seen (see Luke xxi. 31); but there is *no* sign for us. (1 Thess. i. 10.)

Again, from the passages of Scripture which I have brought forward to prove the period of blessedness, it may be seen that the Jews are to be restored and converted at its commencement;

and if we can show, then, that the conversion of Israel is effected by the personal coming of the Lord, we have another striking proof of His coming at the commencement of the millenium. If we turn to Zechariah xiv. 1-11, we find that, after the Jews return to their own land in the latter day, all nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle. "Then," we read, "shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations. . . . *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. . .* And the Lord my God shall come, and *all the saints* with thee. . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one. . . . And there shall be no more utter destruction; but *Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.*" Surely "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (see 1 Thess. iii. 13) can be none other than His second coming. And one object of this coming is to destroy the nations which come up against Jerusalem; and when these nations are destroyed, He "will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Him whom they

have pierced." And what is the effect produced when they thus behold the Saviour whom they pierced? All the tribes of the land mourn. (Zech. xii. 9-14.) It is the day of Israel's repentance and conversion. Now, in Matt. xxiv. 30, we are told that this mourning of the tribes of the land shall take place when the Saviour appears in His glory. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Let us, in the next place, examine for a moment the declaration of our Lord in Matt. xxiii. 38, 39, when He stood for the last time in the temple. A short time previous to this (xxi. 9) He had presented Himself to the Jews as the predicted King of Israel. The disciples shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" and the little children in the temple cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" But the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees were offended, saying, "Hearest thou what these say? Master, rebuke thy disciples." "I tell you," said the Saviour, "that if these should hold their

peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Having then been rejected by His own, we find Him, in the verses before us, predicting His departure from among them, and the utter desolation of their house as the consequence of that departure: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; *for* I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth;" but at the same time He tells them of His coming again, when they shall take up the language of Psalm cxviii. 26 (which they then refused to do), and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"—when they shall acknowledge their offence, and seek His face. See Hosea v. 15: "I will go and return to my place, *till they acknowledge their offence*, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." Precisely the same declaration as that in the passage before us, but in different words.

Another proof of the Lord's personal coming to establish His kingdom is contained in Luke xix. 11-15, where we are told that just before our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as He drew nigh to the city, the disciples thought that the *kingdom of God* should immediately appear (the restoration of the kingdom of Israel

doubtless, which they had then been expecting : see Acts i. 6, and Luke xxiv. 21) ; and in order to correct their mistaken ideas as to the time of the appearing of the kingdom, our Lord added and spake a parable, showing them that the kingdom was not, as they supposed, *immediately* to appear ; that He should first go to His Father to receive the kingdom, and having received it, would return again to take possession of it. “A certain nobleman,” said He, “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. . . . And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom.” In Daniel vii. 13, 14, we see the nobleman in the far country receiving the kingdom, that is, the Son of man brought before the Ancient of days to receive “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom ;” and having received it, He comes in the clouds of heaven to take possession of it.

III. Conceiving, then, that the various passages which have just been adduced clearly prove that the return of the Lord will be at the commencement of the millennium, I shall now pass on to the next point to be considered—viz., that His ransomed Church shall reign with Him during this period of universal blessedness.

We learn from 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, that at the coming of the Lord those who sleep in Jesus shall be raised, and the bodies of those saints then living shall be changed; and from 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, that both shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and they shall ever be with Him in glory, as the following passages show.

Col. iii. 4. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall *ye also* appear with Him in glory."

1 Thess. iii. 13. "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with *all His saints*."

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

Rev. xvii. 14. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and

they that are *with Him* are called, and chosen and faithful."

Rev. xix. 11-15. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And *the armies which were in heaven followed Him* upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean [the fine linen is the righteousness of saints, verse 8]. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

The last passage quoted sets forth the Lord Jesus as a mighty man of war, coming to take vengeance on His enemies, to rule the nations with a rod of iron, and to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And the saints are represented in verse 14 as

being associated with Him in this judgment (according to the promise in Rev. ii. 26, 27 : “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers ; even as I received of my Father”) ; and, after the execution of this judgment, they shall sit with Him upon His throne (according to the promise in Rev. iii. 21 : “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne”), and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 6.)

I would here remark, that it is never stated in Scripture that Jesus shall reign *over* the Church. The Church is the Bride—the Lamb’s wife—His destined partner and companion in glory ; and when He comes, He will present her to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; then shall she share with Him His glory and His throne. The Church is the body of Christ—bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. It was of Christ and the Church the apostle spake when he said, “They twain shall

be one flesh," which he calls "a great mystery." (Eph. v. 32.) This mystery was set forth "at sundry times" in types and shadows from the beginning. As an instance of this, we may bring forward Adam, who, we are told, was a "*figure of Him that was to come.*" (Rom. v. 14.) If we behold him as a lord of the creation, set over the works of God's hands, with all things put in subjection under his feet, do we not also see Eve at his right hand, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, his partner and companion in all this glory? (Gen. i. 27, 28.) Now, here we have typically brought before us Christ, the Second Adam—Lord of "the world to come"—"crowned with glory and honour," with all things put in subjection under His feet,* and His Bride, the Church, His *joint and fellow-heir*, set upon the throne with Him (Rev. iii. 21), perfectly conformed to His image (Phil. iii. 21), shining as the brightness of the firmament—as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. (Matt. xiii. 43.) And I would press the subject the more, as it is too much lost sight of by many of the Lord's people in the present day, who bring forward such passages as, "He shall reign over

* Psalm viii. 6, compared with Heb. ii. 5-9.

the house of Jacob for ever," and tell us the house of Jacob means the Church. If this be true, the Church are the *subjects* of the kingdom, not "joint-heirs" with the King. Observe, it is not said the house of Jacob shall reign with Him, as it is of the Church (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. xx. 6), but He shall reign *over* the house of Jacob, that is, over the *Jewish nation*, then restored and converted, as we have already seen.

Whatever be the measure of the happiness of the departed spirit of the saint previous to the resurrection, we know from Scripture that neither kingdom nor crown will be given until Jesus appears in glory. When the apostle Peter exhorts the elders to feed the flock of God which was among them, and puts them in remembrance of their reward, he says, "*And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*" (1 Peter v. 4.) Again, what was it that enabled the apostle Paul to rejoice in the prospect of martyrdom when the hour of his departure drew nigh? Knowing that there was laid up for him a *crown* of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him *at that day*. (2 Tim. iv. 8.) At what day? Not the

day of his death, but the day of Christ's appearing and kingdom. (See remainder of the verse, compared with verse 1.)

Further, it is *only* those who sleep in Jesus that are raised at His coming; the wicked rise not until the close of the millennium. In Scripture the resurrection of the just is spoken of as distinct from, and prior to, that of the wicked: thus, in Luke xiv. 14—"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the *just*." In Luke xx. 35 the resurrection is shown to be a privilege which some shall be accounted worthy to obtain, that is, the children of God. "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." In 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, we have the order of the resurrection laid down; viz., "Christ the firstfruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming: then (or next in order) cometh the end." Observe, the apostle does not say all men shall be raised at Christ's coming, but "they that are Christ's," and next in order "the end," when the rest shall be raised. As we read in Rev. xx. 5, "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were

finished" (or until the end); but "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first* resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." The last passage I would allude to in proof of this is 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, where it stated that, when the Lord descends from heaven, the "dead *in Christ* shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain," &c. Here we have the resurrection of the just exclusively, without any reference whatever to that of the wicked.

Before I pass on to the next point to be considered, I would just allude to a passage in John v. 28, 29, which at first sight seems to favour the idea of all being raised simultaneously, but will be found on examination not to militate against, but rather to favour the doctrine of the first resurrection. In verse 25 we find it stated, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." And then we read, "Marvel not at this: for *the hour* is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." Now, the word "hour" here surely does not mean

a period of sixty minutes; for the hour spoken of in verse 25, which then commenced, is not yet ended. "The hour is coming," said our Lord, "and *now is*, when the dead shall hear," &c., evidently referring to the quickening of those who are spiritually dead. Now, as this hour of quickening has been going on for the last eighteen hundred years, and is not yet ended, why may not the hour spoken of in the 28th verse be a period of a thousand years? But observe, at the close of the 29th verse *two* resurrections are mentioned—a resurrection *to life* of those that have done good, and a resurrection *to judgment* of those that have done evil; the one already shown to be at the commencement, the other at the close, of the thousand years.

IV. We have now, in the last place, to consider the vast importance of the subject of the Lord's coming, showing it to be the hope of the Church, and productive of most blessed and practical effects to the children of God.

That this is the proper hope of the Church is evident from the following passages of Scripture:—

Luke xii. 35, 36. "Let your loins be girded

about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that *wait for their Lord.*"

1 Cor. i. 7. "So that ye come behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Phil. iii. 20, 21. "For our conversation is in heaven; *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*"

1 Thess. i. 9, 10. "How ye 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.*"

Titus ii. 12, 13. "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

Hebrews x. 36, 37. "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. *For yet a*

little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

James v. 7, 8. "Be patient therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord*. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*."

1 Peter i. 13. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be *brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*."

1 John iii. 2, 3. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, *when He shall appear*, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath *this hope* in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

I could multiply passages to the same effect, for Scripture abounds with them; but those already advanced clearly set forth the second coming of the Lord Jesus as the one great and blessed hope of the Church.* Let us

* When we speak of the Lord's coming as the hope of

now, for a moment, consider its practical tendency.

A short time previous to our Lord's crucifixion, we find Him taking His disciples apart, and instructing them concerning His departure from among them. He tells them that He is about to go to His Father's house, to prepare mansions for them; but that after a *little while* He will *come again*, and receive them unto Himself; at the same time leaving them in ignorance as to the *precise period* of that coming, that they

the Church, we must not confound the *heavenly* hope of the *Church* with the *earthly* hope of the *Jews*. For instance, the *Jews* are taught in Scripture to look for His coming to Jerusalem to bless them (Zech. xiv.); but *the Church* is taught to look for His coming to receive it unto Himself, when He will take it up to heaven, to the Father's house—the *home* prepared for it, as the heavenly family. (John xiv.) It is in *heaven*, also, that the Church is presented to the Lamb as His Bride in the day of the marriage of the Lamb. (Rev. xix.) And after this, when the Lord comes to the earth to take to Him His great power and reign, the Church comes *with Him* as the sharer of His glory, the companion of His throne, still in heavenly glory manifest on earth. Accordingly we find, in some passages of Scripture, the Lord is spoken of as coming *for* His Church, as in 1 Thess. iv., and in others as coming *with* His Church, as Col. iii. 4, Jude 14. There are not two future advents, but two stages (so to speak) in the one journey.

may be as men "that wait for their Lord." This is the true position of the Church in the present dispensation : waiting for the Son from heaven, as not knowing what hour the Lord may come. Read attentively the passages last quoted, and you will at once perceive that this was the position in which the Church stood in the days of the apostles ; and so long as the second coming of Christ was kept in view as the one great object of hope, the Church retained this position. It stood as a witness for Christ in the midst of an evil world, with its loins girded about, its lights burning, like unto one who waits for his Lord ; thus declaring plainly that *here* it had no continuing city, that this was not its rest, because it was polluted ; but discerning with the eye of faith the things within the veil as its portion, even those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which are revealed unto it by that Spirit which searcheth all things, even the deep things of God : it minded not the things of earth, "but those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." At the time of the departure of Jesus, the Church

was set at the end of all things (see 1 Peter iv. 7; 1 Cor. x. 11), the Spirit continually testifying of the speedy return of its Lord: thus —“The coming of the Lord draweth nigh;” “The Lord is at hand;” “The Judge standeth before the door;” “Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry;” “The night is far spent, the day is at hand;” and so forth. To illustrate more fully this waiting position of the Church, we may bring forward that of the children of Israel during the night of the passover, to which our Lord evidently alludes in His exhortation in Luke xii. 35, 36. They stood within the blood-stricken doors of their houses, in the full consciousness of security through the blood, feasting upon the flesh of the lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, having their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hand; thus declaring plainly that they had done with Egypt, that it was not their rest, that they had another country in view, and that they stood in readiness for the summons to depart thither, not having a single tie to bind them to Egypt. Here, then, we have in type the Church’s proper position in the

present dispensation—redeemed from the world (the spiritual Egypt) by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood of the true Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. v. 7, 8), and, in the full consciousness of acceptance, keeping the feast—enjoying the blessedness of communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; cleansed from the leaven of malice and wickedness, eating the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth with the bitter herbs, *i.e.* having fellowship with Jesus in suffering; and standing, as I have already shown, at the end of all things, in readiness for the summons to depart to meet the Lord.

But soon, very soon indeed, after the departure of Jesus did the Church lose sight of this blessed hope. Soon did the servant begin to grow weary with watching and waiting, and to say in his heart, “My Lord *delayeth* His coming.” (Matt. xxiv. 48.) And what was the result? He lost his waiting position, and did eat and drink with the drunken, indulging himself with worldly and sensual gratifications during the absence of his master. Even so with the Church; hope deferred made it weary of watching and waiting; and it began to say,

“My Lord delayeth.” Observe, it is not, “My Lord will never come,” but, “He delayeth;” it is yet a long time, though the Spirit said, “Yet a little while;” and then came in the leaven of the Sadducees, of which the Saviour warned His disciples to beware (Matt. xvi. 6), that is, present enjoyment in the world, having lost sight of the resurrection hope. And we learn from the parable of the virgins (Matt. xxv.), that *that* which is to awaken the children of God, and bring them again into their proper waiting position, is the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!” We have in this parable, first, the Church’s calling—the virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom; secondly, the Church’s departure from its true position—they all slumbered and slept; and the cause of this departure—the tarrying of the Bridegroom. Observe, they *all* slumbered, *wise* as well as foolish, and continued to do so during the long period of the tarrying of the Bridegroom. Thirdly, the virgins are awakened by a cry, announcing the actual coming of the Bridegroom, and thus suddenly are brought again into their proper position. Observe, also, another of the effects of the cry—a separation

takes place between the wise and the foolish virgins; the foolish discover their want of oil, and go to buy: they find they have no grace to go on with the wise, and the wise go forth *alone*.

I ask then, dear friends, is not this a subject of vast practical importance to the children of God? That it is is manifest from the various exhortations to holiness, watchfulness, prayer, diligence, and heavenly-mindedness, which are constantly connected with it in the Scriptures. The power of this truth depends mainly on a right apprehension and hearty reception of it, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost. What an appeal to the hearts of those that love the Lord is that word, "Behold, I come quickly!" What a test of the state of our affections! Why is it that this subject is sometimes treated with cold indifference? Is it not because Christ is not the commanding object of the heart's affections? Has not Laodicean lukewarmness overtaken many of us?

Brethren, it is high time to awake. The coming of the Lord is near; it may be even at the doors. Let each one ask himself, "Am I prepared? Am I ready to meet Him, should

He come this night? Should I be ashamed before Him at His coming?"

May the Lord, by His Spirit, teach His people to know more fully "what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;" that, having their hope in Him, they may purify themselves, even as He is pure, and, "looking for such things, may be diligent, that they may be found of Him in peace, without spot or blemish." And may it be our portion, in this day of abounding evil, to be found among those that have not defiled their garments, and who shall walk with Jesus in white. May we be witnesses for Him, separated in spirit from all that is of the world and not of the Father; from all that which is highly esteemed among men, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; not setting our hearts upon that which, at the day of the Lord, will be found to be wood, hay, stubble; but upon that which is above. (Col. iii. 2.)

And now a word in conclusion to those who may read this, and who may still be in their sins. What will the coming of the Lord be to those who know not God, and that obey not

the gospel? It will be everlasting "destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

Hasten, then, to Jesus; for He has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.)

HOPE of our hearts, O Lord, appear,
 Thou glorious Star of day!
 Shine forth, and chase the dreary night,
 With all our tears, away.

Strangers on earth, we wait for Thee:
 Oh, leave the Father's throne!
 Come with a shout of vict'ry, Lord,
 And claim us as Thine own.

Oh, bid the bright archangel now
 The trump of God prepare,
 To call Thy saints—the quick, the dead—
 To meet Thee in the air!

No resting-place we seek on earth,
 No loveliness we see;
 Our eye is on the royal crown,
 Prepared for us and Thee.

But, dearest Lord, however bright
 That crown of joy above,
 What is it to the brighter hope
 Of dwelling in Thy love?

What to the joy, the deeper joy,
Unmingled, pure, and free,
Of union with our living Head,
Of fellowship with Thee ?

This joy e'en now on earth is ours ;
But only, Lord, above
Our hearts without a pang shall know
The fulness of Thy love.

There, near Thy heart, upon the throne,
Thy ransomed Bride shall see
What grace was in the bleeding Lamb,
Who died to make her free.

OUR HEAVENLY CALLING.

I TRUST that the following simple observations may be blessed, leading us seriously to consider whether much of our present conduct is not unworthy of believers in Christ Jesus, and below the walk of those who are partakers of the divine nature. (2 Peter i. 4.) There is a great difference between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; and the difference is not sufficiently marked. Therefore we are too often found greatly dishonouring our blessed Lord in walking more like *earthly* Jews, than saints raised up together, and made sit together *in heavenly places* in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 6.) I trust we may see the importance of distinguishing the JEWISH from the CHRISTIAN dispensation; and while learning blessed lessons from all Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 16), yet apply each part to what the Holy Spirit applied it.

As the Lord dealt with the Jews in flesh, so does He deal with us in spirit. He blessed the Jews with *earthly* blessings *in the land*. (Gen. xv. 18.) He "hath blessed us with all *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) The occasion of the great change in God's dealing was this—the Lord Jesus came to the earth as the Messiah of the Jews, but they rejected Him out of the earth, back to the heavens from which He came (Matt. xxi. 38, 39); and now, *while* the Lord is rejected by the Jews, He is gathering a Church out "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. vii. 9), to bear His reproach, and to follow Him to the heavenlies. But yet earthly blessing has not *for ever* failed, neither has the Jew been *for ever* cast away (Rom. xi. 15, 25, 26); for when the Jews shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," then they shall see Christ again. (Matt. xxiii. 39.) And He shall restore them to their own land (Isa. xi. 11–16), and make them "a praise among all people." (Zeph. iii. 20.) Until that time comes (in the interval between the rejection of Christ, and His reception again by the Jews) the Church (which was chosen in

Christ before the foundation of the world—Eph. i. 4) is called to stand, not in any JEWISH *earthly* connection, but as united with the rejected One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church; for as He was not received in the world, so neither will His Church be received (John xv. 18–20); and as He was received into the heavens, so He is gone to prepare a place for His Church, that He may come again and receive her unto Himself; that where He is, there she may be also (John xiv: 2, 3), as “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. xxi. 9), made in His own glorious likeness (Phil. iii. 21), and a joint-heir with Him, to share His throne. (Rom. viii. 17; Rev. iii. 21.) Therefore should the life of a believer in Jesus be very different from that of a Jew.

The things of the *earth* were given by the Lord to the Jews.* (Josh. i. 11.) But *heavenly* and not *earthly* blessings are given to us; therefore the direction is, “Set your affection on *things above*, NOT on things on the *earth*.” (Col. iii. 2.)

* It is important to know that much of the value of the earthly circumstances of the Jews lay in their being types and shadows of far more precious things that were to come after them. (See 1 Cor. x. 11; Heb. x. 1; Col. ii. 16, 17.)

The Jews minded *earthly* things; but they "who mind *earthly* things" now have their end, destruction (Phil. iii. 19), because they are not what God gives to fill the hearts of His people now. Let us consider some of the things which were right for the Jews, but not right for us.

The Jews were told to fight with the *sword* against an enemy that attacked them in their *land* (Num. x. 9); "BUT the weapons of OUR warfare are not carnal." (2 Cor. x. 4.) "For we wrestle against *spiritual wickedness*," using ONLY "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" (Eph. vi. 12-17.)

The Jews had a particular place in their land, and a dedicated building in it, where they worshipped God (1 Kings viii.), BUT *we* have no one place or building more than another (John iv. 20, 21, 24); but wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, *there* is He in the midst of them. (Matt. xviii. 20.)

The JEWISH *earthly* temple "was adorned with goodly stones and gifts" (Luke xxi. 5); BUT there should be no such building and no such adorning for the CHRISTIAN. The Church is a *spiritual* house composed of believers, as

lively stones, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. ii. 5.)

The Jews had persons among them on *earth* holding the special office of *priest*; BUT OUR only Priest, except as every believer is a priest (1 Peter ii. 9), is Jesus the great High Priest, "who is set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (Heb. viii. 1.)

In the JEWISH kingdom on *earth* riches were a mark of God's favour (1 Kings iii. 13); BUT, says Jesus, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of *heaven*." (Matt. xix. 23.) The unsearchable riches of Christ are alone of value in the *heavenly* kingdom.

Among the Jews *earthly* rank and kingly power were owned of God, as things with which He would honour His own people. (1 Kings ix. 5.)* "BUT," says Jesus, "ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be

* Little reference is made in this paper to resurrection-glory, as the object is to show that much of the practical conduct of Jews, in their dispensation, should not be an example for Christians in this dispensation.

great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark x. 42-45.)

Among the JEWS an injured person might take vengeance through the law (Num. xxxv. 19; Exodus xxi. 24); BUT the direction for BELIEVERS now standing not under law, but under grace, is, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." (Rom. xii. 19.) "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing." (1 Pet. iii. 9.)

And now, "holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling," "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Many a thing which was lawful in a JEW, would to US be the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and whosoever loves these, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John ii. 15, 16.) Christ's kingdom is not of this world *now* (John xviii. 36), "but the *whole* world lieth in wickedness." (1 John v. 19.) The devil is "the prince of this world," and "the god of this world" (John

xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4); and to be of the world now, is to be of the devil. An awful reflection! Oh, that it may be brought to the conscience of some poor worldling! The Lord deals not with the world now, or with any part of it, as He once dealt with the Jews. He bears with the world in longsuffering, not that all will be converted by the preaching of the Gospel now, for this is no where promised, but (the word is) to take *out of* the Gentiles "a people for His name" (Acts xv. 14); and this people to be only "*a kind of first-fruits* of His creatures." (James i. 18.) There is not one passage of Scripture that speaks of a universal knowledge of God in the earth during this dispensation; but, on the contrary, we are warned that iniquity will abound, until the Lord comes to destroy the Man of Sin, not by the preaching of His word, but by "*the brightness of His coming*" (2 Thess. ii. 8); for "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee;" "and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zech. xiv. 3, 4); and the Jew shall be restored to his own land again; and "at that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne

of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer. iii. 17); then living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, and the Lord shall be King over all the earth (Zech. xiv. 8), and Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6); and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9.) Then will the promises to Abraham and the ancient people of God be fulfilled in that land which was once promised to them, but in which Abraham spent his life as in a strange country. The earthly glory shall be heavenly in its character, because heaven shall be open, and "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." (John i. 51.) And therefore it shall be said, as in the vision of Jacob's ladder, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17); and the glory will be connected with the earth; for all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, shall be gathered together in Christ. (Eph. i. 10.)

This happy time is not yet come; but the children of God are called to look for the coming of the Lord from heaven to bring it about; and how should they now be found? They should be *very* separate from an evil world (2 Cor. vi. 17); not walking like Jews, but as *risen* with Christ, seeking the things *above*, where Christ sits *at the right hand of God* (Col. iii. 1); not laying up treasure on *earth*, but in *heaven*, with their hearts in *heaven*, where their treasure is. (Matt. vi. 19, 21.) "For our conversation is in *heaven*; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the *heavens*; for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from *heaven*." (2 Cor. v. 1, 2.) "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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 15-18.)

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." AMEN. (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.)

HOLY CONVERSATION AND GODLINESS.

1 COR. X. 31.

It is most needful, when about to offer a word of admonition, to set forth the proper ground on which such a word can be received. The New Testament abounds in admonition, warning, and exhortation ; but it clearly lays down the truth as to the position in which the believer is set before ever he is called to listen to such things ; and unless we understand, and practically enter into that position, an admonition or a precept may lead to a spirit of legalism or bondage.

Now, as to the position of the believer, as set forth in the Scriptures of the New Testament, it is one of the *most* complete—justification and acceptance. “Justified from *all* things,” “*complete* in Him who is the Head of all principality and power,” “accepted in the Beloved.”

These are some of the expressions used by

the Holy Spirit to set forth the believer's position before God—a position founded on the accomplished work of Christ, with which, it is needless to say, he has nothing whatever to do. God's grace has assigned it to him; the blood of Christ has fitted him to occupy it; and the operation of the Spirit has led him into the understanding and enjoyment of it. His being in it, therefore, is the fruit of the combined action of THE DIVINE THREE IN ONE; nor can aught in him ever interfere with that combined action. The believer's justification, completeness, and acceptance, are as independent of himself, and everything in him, as is the position of the sun in the heavens. There it is; but who set it there? God. There and thus the believer is; but who set him there? God. Hence one is as independent of him as the other; for both alike are founded on what God is.

It is well to see this—well to have a perfectly unclouded view of what we are, and where we are—well to be led to pause in view of the actings of divine grace on our behalf—well to allow God to do with us as He will, to make us what He will, and set us where He

will; assured, as we may well be, that all is to His infinite glory and praise. We may think it all too good to be true; and too good it would assuredly be, were its truth in any wise dependent upon us; but not when its truth depends entirely on God. It might be too good for us to get, but not too good for God to give. This makes all the difference. When God gives, He gives like Himself. The blessedness of the gift must depend upon the giver, and not upon the receiver. He GIVES perfect justification; He GIVES complete acceptance. To whom? To *sinners*. On what ground? On the ground of Christ's accomplished sacrifice. For what purpose? That they might be to the praise of His glory. (John xvii. 2; Acts xiii. 39; Rom. v. *passim*; vi. 23; Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10; Eph. i. 12.)

Hence, therefore, it is clear that no warning, admonition, precept, or exhortation, can, in the most remote manner, involve, affect, or interfere with the believer's position and relationship. So far from this, the very fact of our being addressed in such a way proves, in the clearest manner, God's gracious recognition of our relationship. If God gives me a command,

the fact of His doing so proves that He recognizes in me a principle of life and power, whereby I can both hear and obey. He would not call upon one "dead in trespasses and sins" to do anything. His command to such an one is to receive, as a free gift, eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ. But when one has gotten this, life, is born again, has entered into an eternal relationship, based upon redemption, then, and not until then, is he addressed in the language of warning and exhortation; and on his due observance of such language depends much of his present blessing, comfort, and usefulness.

We are prone to confound two things, which differ very materially; namely, our eternal relationship to God as His children, and our present responsibility to Christ as His servants and witnesses. The former is the result of the action of the divine will and power; as we read in James, "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." The latter, on the contrary, is a thing devolving upon us daily, and calling for much holy diligence in the prayerful study of the Word, and waiting

upon God. Many of us fail in answering our responsibility to Christ, in manifesting Him in our ways, and in our practical testimony for Him; but this, blessed be God, does not touch our eternal relationship with Him, though it may and does most seriously interfere with our perception and enjoyment as children of God; yea, to talk of one without the other, is to be "deceived by vain words."

This train of thought leads us naturally to the immediate subject of this little paper, namely, Christian Intercourse—a subject of much more importance than might, at first sight, appear. By Christian Intercourse, I do not mean that intercourse which we have on the benches of a meeting-room, or when gathered, on solemn occasions, for worship or edification. The intercourse to which I allude is of a much more common-place and familiar character; and, for that very reason, it needs much more solemn watchfulness, lest in it the enemy should betray us into anything unbecoming the solemnity, purity, and elevation which ought to mark the character and path of those who profess to be members of Christ's holy body, and temples of God's Holy Spirit.

It is frequently most painful, and deeply humbling, to observe the character of intercourse which prevails now-a-days amongst those whose professed principles would lead us to look for very different practical results. While marking the intercourse, and hearkening to the conversation which frequently obtains amongst professing Christians of the present day, one feels disposed to ask, Is it possible that these people really believe what they profess? Do they believe that they are 'dead and risen with Christ'—that their calling is a heavenly one—that they are part of Christ's body—that they are crucified with Christ—that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—that they are pilgrims and strangers—that they are waiting for God's Son from heaven? It may be that all these weighty principles are items in the creed to which they have given a nominal assent; but it is morally impossible that their hearts can be affected by them. How could a heart, really under the power of such stupendous truths, take pleasure, or even take part, in vain, frivolous, empty talk—talk about people and their circumstances, with whom, and with

which, they have nothing whatever to do—talk about every passing trifle of the day? Could a heart full of Christ be thus occupied? It is as impossible as that noon could intermingle with midnight. Yet professing Christians, when they meet in the drawing-room, at the dinner-table, and at their tea-parties, are, alas! too often found thus occupied.

Nor is it only in our intercourse with our fellow-Christians that we forget ourselves, or rather forget the Lord; but also in our intercourse with the world. How often, when we meet with unconverted people, do we slip into the current of their thoughts, and find a theme in common with them! Sometimes this is mourned over, sometimes it is defended, and the defence is founded upon an erroneous view of the apostle's expression, "I am made all things to all." This, surely, does not mean that he entered into the folly and nonsense of worldly men. By no means. This would be to assert entirely too much. What, then, does the expression mean? It means that *Paul denied himself amongst all classes of men, in order that he might "by all means save some."* His object was to bring sinners to Christ, and

not to please himself by entering into their vain and foolish habits of conversation.

Let us look at the Master Himself, our great Exemplar, and enquire how did He carry Himself toward the men of this world? Did He ever find an object in common with them? Never. He was always feeding upon and filled with one object, and of that object He spoke. He ever sought to lead the thoughts of men to God. This, my beloved reader, should be our object too. Whenever, or wherever we meet men, we should lead them to think of Christ; and if we do not find an open door for that, we should not certainly suffer ourselves to be carried into the current of their thoughts. If we have business to transact with men, we must transact it; but we should not have any fellowship with them in their habits of thought or conversation, because our Master never had; and if we diverge from His path as to this, we shall soon sink into a low and unsanctified tone of spirit. We shall be as "salt that has lost its saltiness," and thus be "good for nothing."

I cannot doubt but that much of that lack of deep, settled, habitual peace, of which so many complain, is very justly traceable to the light

and trifling habits of conversation in which they indulge; to their reading of newspapers and other light works. Such things must grieve the Holy Spirit; and if the Holy Spirit is grieved, Christ cannot be enjoyed; for it is the Spirit alone who, by the written word, ministers Christ to the soul.

I do not mean to deny that very many feel this lack of peace who do not engage in such things. By no means; but I say that these things must necessarily be productive of much serious injury to our spiritual health, and must superinduce a sickly condition of soul, which is most dishonouring to Christ.

It may be that many who have long been accustomed to high teaching will turn away from such plain, practical principles as these; but we must expect this. It will be pronounced legalism; and the writer may be accused of seeking to bring people into a sort of bondage, and of casting them upon themselves. I can only say, God forbid. I trust the opening statements of this paper will furnish a very decisive answer to such an accusation. If it be legalism to direct attention to the matter of conversation, then is it the legalism of the

Epistle to the Ephesians; for there we find that "foolish talking and jesting" are amongst the things which are not to be "once named among us, as becometh saints."* Again, we read, "Let your conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt." These are plain statements of Scripture—statements, moreover, found in immediate connection with some of the most elevated doctrines of inspiration; and it will be found that where those plain statements are not allowed their full weight on the conscience, the higher truths are not enjoyed. I can neither enjoy nor walk worthy of my "high vocation," if I am indulging in "foolish talking and jesting."

I quite admit the need of carefully avoiding all affected sanctimoniousness, or fleshly restraint. The sanctimoniousness of nature is fully as bad as its levity, if not worse. But why exhibit either the one or the other? The gospel gives us something far better. Instead

* The word which is rendered "jesting" takes in what is commonly called "wit," "humour," "punning," "*re-partee*," and such like. It is well to remember this. The word "jesting" would let a great deal pass which should come under the edge of the original word, which is a compound of two Greek words, signifying "to turn well."

of affected sanctimoniousness, the gospel gives us real sanctity ; and, instead of levity, it gives us holy cheerfulness. There is no need to *affect* anything ; for if I am feeding upon Christ, all is reality, without any effort. The moment there is effort, it is all perfect weakness. If I say I must talk about Christ, it becomes terrible bondage, and I exhibit my own weakness and folly ; but if my soul is in communion, all is natural and easy, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” It is said of a certain little insect, that it always exhibits the colour of the leaf on which it feeds. So is it exactly with the Christian. It is very easy to tell what he is feeding upon.

But it may be said by some, that “we cannot be always talking about Christ.” I reply, that just in proportion as we are led by an ungrieved Spirit, will all our thoughts and words be occupied about Christ. We, if we are children of God, will be occupied with Him throughout eternity ; and why not now ? We are as really separated from the world *now*, as we shall be *then* ; but we do not realize it, because we do not walk in the Spirit.

It is quite true that, in entering into the matter of a Christian's habit of conversation, one is taking low ground; but then it is needful ground. It would be much happier to keep on the high ground; but, alas! we fail in this; and it is a mercy that Scripture and the Spirit of God meet us in our failure. Scripture tells us we are "seated in heavenly places with Christ;" and it tells us also not "to steal." It may be said that it is low ground to talk to heavenly men about stealing; yet it is Scripture ground; and that is enough for us. The Spirit of God knew that it was not sufficient to tell us that we are seated *in heaven*; He also tells us how to conduct ourselves *on earth*; and our experience of the former will be evidenced by our exhibition of the latter. The walk *here* proves how I enter into my place *there*.

Hence I may find in the Christian's walk a very legitimate ground on which to deal with him about the actual condition of his soul before God. If his walk is low, carnal, and worldly, it must be evident that he is not realizing his high and holy position as a member of Christ's body, and a temple of God.

Wherefore, to all who are prone to indulge in

habits of light and trifling conversation, I would affectionately but solemnly say, look well to the general state of your spiritual health. Bad symptoms show themselves—certain evidences of a disease working within—a disease, it may be, more or less affecting the very springs of vitality. Beware how you allow this disease to make progress. Betake yourself at once to the Physician, and partake of His precious balm. Your whole spiritual constitution may be deranged, and nothing can restore its tone, save the healing virtues of what He has to give you.

A fresh view of the excellency, preciousness, and beauty of Christ is the only thing to lift the soul up out of a low condition. All our barrenness and poverty arises from our having let slip Christ. It is not that He has let us slip. No; blessed be His name, this cannot be. But, practically, we have let Him slip, and, as a consequence, our tone has become so low, that it is at times difficult to recognize anything of the Christian in us but the mere name. We have stopped short in our practical career. We have not entered, as we should, into the meaning of Christ's "cup and baptism;" we

have failed in seeking fellowship with Him in His sufferings, death, and resurrection. We have sought the result of all these, as wrought out in Him ; but we have not entered experimentally into them, and hence our melancholy decline, from which nothing can recover us, but getting more into the fulness of Christ.

"LIFE'S SWEET PERIOD."

"The past temptations
No more shall vex us ; every grief we feel
Shortens the destined number ; every pulse
Beats a sharp moment of the pain away,
And the last stroke will come. By swift degrees
Time sweeps us off, and we shall soon arrive
At life's sweet period. O celestial point !
That ends this mortal story."

Away despair ; my gracious Lord doth hear ;
Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it ; He doth steer,
E'en when the boat seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of His art :
Well may He close His eyes, but not His heart.

My joy, my life, my crown !
My heart was meaning all the day :
Somewhat it fain would say,
And still it runneth muttering up and down
With only this, MY JOY, MY LIFE, MY CROWN !

PRAISE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise ;
Rom. viii. 31.

When I call on CHRIST my Saviour, the host of evil flies.
Psa. xci. 10.

My Friend, the LORD ALMIGHTY, and He who loves me,
GOD ! Rom. viii. 39.

What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood ?
Isaiah lix. 19.

I know it—I believe it—I say it fearlessly,—Heb. xiii. 5, 6.
Eph. i. 4.

That GOD, the Highest, Mightiest, for ever loveth me.
Jer. xxxi. 3.

At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side ;
Phil. iv. 6.

He rules the battle fury, the tempest, and the tide.
Matt. viii. 26.

A Rock that stands for ever is Christ my Righteousness,
1 Cor. i. 30.

And there I stand unfearing in everlasting bliss ;
2 Thess. ii. 16.

No earthly thing is needful to this my life from Heaven,
Col. iii. 3, 4.

And nought of love is worthy, save that which Christ
has given— 1 Cor. xiii.

Christ, all my praise and glory, my light most sweet and
fair ; 1 Cor. i. 31.

The ship in which He saileth is scatheless everywhere ;
1 Cor. iii. 2, 23.

In Him I dare be joyful as a hero in the war,
Phil. iv. 4.

The judgment of the sinner affrighteth me no more.
Rom. viii. 1.

There is no condemnation—there is no hell for me ;
John v. 24.

The torment and the fire my eyes shall never see .
1 Thess. i. 10.

262 PRAISE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

For me there is no sentence—for me death has no sting,
1 Cor. xv. 55.

Because the Lord who loves me shall shield me with His
wing.
Psa. xxxvi. 7.

Above my soul's dark waters His Spirit hovers still ;
Eph. i. 13.

He guards me from all sorrows, from terror and from ill.
Psa. xci. 5.

In me He works, and blesses the life-seed He has sown ;
1 Peter i. 23.

From Him I learn the "ABBA," that prayer of faith alone.
Gal. iv. 6.

And if in lonely places, a fearful child, I shrink,
Psa. xxiii. 4

He prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think ;
Rom. viii. 26.

The deep unspoken language, known only to that love
John i. 48.

Who fathoms the heart's mystery from the throne of
light above.
Isaiah lxxv. 24.

His Spirit to my spirit sweet words of comfort saith,
John xiv. 23.

How God the weak one strengthens who leans on Him in
faith ;
Gal. ii. 20.

How He hath built a city of love, and light, and song,
Rev. xxi.

Where the eye at last beholdeth what the heart had
loved so long.
1 John iii. 2.

And there is mine inheritance—my kingly palace-home ;
John xiv. 2.

The leaf may fall and perish—not less the spring will come ;
Rom. viii. 18.

Like wind and rain of winter, our earthly sighs and tears,
Rev. xxi. 4.

Till the golden summer dawneth of the endless year of
years.
Rev. xxii. 5.

The world may pass and perish—Thou, God, wilt not remove,
Matt. xxiv. 35.

No hatred of all devils can part me from Thy love ;
John x. 29.

No hungering nor thirsting—no poverty nor care,
Rom. viii. 35.

No wrath of mighty princes can reach my shelter there.
Rom. viii. 37.

No angel and no devil, no throne, nor power, nor might ;
1 John iv. 4.

No love—no tribulation—no danger, fear, nor fight ;
Psa. cxxxviii. 7.

No height—no depth—no creature that has been, or can be,
1 John v. 11.

Can drive me from Thy bosom—can sever me from Thee.
Eph. ii. 6.

My heart in joy uleapeth, grief cannot linger there,
Isaiah xxvi. 3.

She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair :
Eph. i. 3.

The Sun that shines upon me is JESUS and His love ;
1 Peter i. 8.

The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above.
Psa. xvi. 11.

FRAGMENT.

As the tremulous needle, however easily affected by foreign influences, never ceases to vibrate till it finds its rest in the centre of attraction ; so, the sensitive soul of the Christian, oft too easily disturbed by external forces, finds no rest but in God. If, for a moment, the enemy is permitted to harass with accusations of guilt, in Him it finds pardon and peace. In weakness it turns to Him for strength ; in darkness, for light ; in trials, for support ; in difficulties, for direction. Under all circumstances, it never fails to find in God an all-sufficient and sustaining portion.

A SIGHT OF HEAVEN IN SICKNESS.

My cheerful soul now all the day
 Sits waiting here, and sings;
 Looks through the ruins of her clay,
 And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
 While from afar she spies
 Her fair inheritance in light,
 Above created skies.

Had but the prison walls been strong,
 And firm without a flaw,
 In darkness she had dwelt too long,
 And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
 Through every chink appear,
 And something of the joy she feels,
 While she's a prisoner here.

Some rays from heaven break sweetly in :
 At all the opening flaws
 Visions of endless bliss are seen,
 And native air she draws.

Oh, may these walls stand tottering still,
 The breaches never close,
 If I must here in darkness dwell,
 And all this glory lose !

Or rather let this flesh decay,
 The ruins wider grow,
 Till, glad to see the enlarged way,
 I stretch my pinions through.

REALMS OF GLORY.

FAR from these narrow scenes of night
 Unbounded glories rise,
 And regions of supreme delight
 Unseen by mortal eyes.

There pain and sorrow never come,
 Nor sickness there complains,
 Health triumphs in immortal bloom,
 And endless pleasure reigns.

No cloud these happy regions know,
 Realms ever bright and fair;
 For sin, the source of mortal woe,
 Can never enter there.

Nor needed is the radiant moon,
 Nor the sun's brighter ray;
 For glory from the eternal throne
 Spreads everlasting day.

There God Himself unveiled displays
 The glories of His grace,
 His happy subjects sing His praise,
 And bow before His face.

There all the millions of His saints
 Shall in one song unite,
 And each the bliss of all shall view
 With infinite delight.

Fair distant land, could mortal eyes
 But half its charms explore,
 How would our spirits long to rise,
 And dwell on earth no more!

THE WELL OF SYCHAR.

SWEET was the hour, O Lord, to Thee
 At Sychar's lonely well,
 When a poor outcast heard Thee there
 Thy great salvation tell.

Thither she came; but oh! her heart,
 All filled with earthly care,
 Dreamed not of Thee, nor thought to find
 The hope of Israel there.

Lord! 'twas Thy power unseen that drew
 The stray one to that place,
 In solitude to learn from Thee
 The secrets of Thy grace.

There Jacob's erring daughter found
 Those streams unknown before,
 The waterbrooks of life that make
 The weary thirst no more.

And, Lord, to us, as vile as she,
 Thy gracious lips have told
 That mystery of love revealed
 At Jacob's well of old.

In spirit, Lord, we've sat with Thee
 Beside the springing well
 Of life and peace, and heard Thee there
 Its healing virtues tell.

Dead to the world, we dream no more
 Of earthly pleasures now;
 Our deep, divine, unfailing spring
 Of grace and glory Thou!

No hope of rest in aught beside,
 No beauty, Lord, we see;
 And, like Samaria's daughter, seek
 And find our all in Thee.

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