

THE
CHRISTIAN
HOUSEHOLD

THE
CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD

AND

The Relative Duties.

BY

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New Edition.

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20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON, E. C.

PREFATORY.



THE reader will find in this little volume a simple exposition of the Scriptural teaching concerning the connection between the believer and his household, and also concerning what are termed the relative duties. The importance of the exhibition of Christian life in the home is generally admitted ; but, as a matter of fact, public ministry seldom deals directly with the subject. And yet, by far the larger portion of the lives of many believers is engaged in household duties. The writer therefore was led to think that a consideration of the responsibilities of the various members of the household might be both timely and profitable. May the Lord Himself condescend to use what has been written, whatever its imperfections, for His own glory in the edification and blessing of His saints.

BLACKHEATH, *April*, 1877.

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CHAPTER I.

The Christian and Natural Relationships.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”—GALATIANS ii. 20.

“For to me to live is Christ.”—PHILIPPIANS i. 21.

“He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”—1 JOHN ii. 6.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN AND NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS.

BEFORE considering, somewhat in detail, the subject of family relationships and their responsibilities, it may be profitable to call direct attention to the way in which they are dealt with by the Spirit of God. Together with the full revelation of the grace of God in redemption, there might have existed a tendency in some minds to slight the ties formed in nature. Owing indeed to partial ignorance, and consequent misapprehension of some parts of Scripture, this tendency has, during the history of the church, sometimes found expression in objectionable forms ; and even at the present time, it is often remarked that there are many who are subject to the same snare. It is therefore of the first importance to note that the very epistle—the Ephesians—which brings out the fullest truth as to the believer's place before God in Christ, and as to the church, as the body of Christ, enters also most fully into the responsibilities attaching to our natural relation-

ships. Thereby we have, in a most marked way, their obligatory character maintained, and that by divine sanction and injunction; and, at the same time, a warning that, in all the joy of our Christian privileges, we must never forget the claims that have been established upon us on earth. It is quite true that our standing before God is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in us (Rom. viii. 9), because we have been brought, through the death and resurrection of Christ, out of this scene into a new; but God sends us back, as it were, to take up on fresh ground—on the ground of grace instead of that of mere nature—every obligation which was incumbent upon us as His creatures in our old condition.

This will be evident if we turn to Ephesians iv. From the seventeenth verse we have practical exhortations, as flowing out from the truth communicated in the previous part of the epistle. And at the very outset of these, in contrast with the Gentiles, who walk in the vanity of their mind, etc. (*vv.* 17–19), the apostle says, “But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by (in—ἐν) Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that

ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (*vv.* 20–25.) Then, farther on, we are told, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (*v.* 30.) We have therefore two immense facts, that the believer has put on (for the exhortation is founded upon what is true of us in Christ) the new man; and that he is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Hence the next chapter (*v.*) begins with, "Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children." Thus "created after God, and God dwelling in us, God is the pattern of our walk, Christ being the expression of God in human walk, and thus in respect of the two words which alone give God's essence—love and light. We are to walk in love, as Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us a sacrifice to God. '*For us*' was divine love; '*to God*' is perfection of object and motive. . . . But we are light in the Lord. (*v.* 8.) This is the second essential name of God; and as partakers of the divine nature, we are light in the Lord. Here again Christ is the pattern: '*Christ shall give thee light.*'" (*v.* 14.) The same writer also observes: "The reproduction of God in man is the object that God proposed to Himself in the new man; and this the new man proposes to

himself, as he is himself the reproduction of the nature and character of God. There are two principles in the Christian path, according to the light in which he views himself, running his race as man towards the object of his heavenly calling, in which he follows after Christ ascended on high. . . . This is not the Ephesian aspect. In Ephesians he is sitting in heavenly places in Christ, *and he has to come out as from heaven, as Christ really did, and manifest God's character upon earth, of which, as we have seen, Christ is the pattern. We are called, as in the position of dear children, to show our Father's ways.*"

Such then is the truth as to our position and responsibility. We are made partakers of the divine nature; we have put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies; and hence we have to come out from that blessed place, and, according to the new man (not according to the old), take up on earth, in the power of the Spirit, every responsibility devolving upon us, by virtue of our natural ties and relationships. It is therefore as heavenly men that we have to fill our respective places in the family and household. Thus every relationship we sustain should be simply a sphere for the unfolding of Christ, for the display of what He is and what He was when down here upon

the earth; for "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.) To remember this would remove many difficulties out of our path. Thus in the maintenance of natural ties—where believers find themselves in subjection to unbelievers—the only question is as to the expression of Christ. He is the measure of every responsibility, and hence He cannot sanction a single claim which comes into conflict with His own supreme authority. It should never therefore be, May I do this? or, Ought I to do that? but simply, Can I do it according to the new man, walking in the power of the Spirit? That is, the flesh and mere nature must be disallowed; hence, in family relationships also, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) And thus, whatever the special relationship sustained by the Christian—whether that of husband or wife, father or mother, children or servants—the one object, in every case, will be the expression of Christ. This, in every case, will be the measure and limit of our responsibility.

CHAPTER II.

The Household as a Circle of Grace.

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.”—GENESIS vii. 1.

“Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”—ACTS xi. 13, 14.

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”—ACTS xvi. 31.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSEHOLD AS A CIRCLE OF GRACE.



HERE is always a tendency in our hearts to limit the grace of God, an unwillingness to believe both in its sovereignty and in its fulness ; and this tendency is sometimes intensified even in those who most strongly insist upon the great truths of redemption. There is therefore continual need to examine anew even what we conceive to be the undoubted teachings of Scripture ; not with the view of unsettling ourselves, or of fostering uncertainty, but with the simple desire to be found on every point in entire subjection to the word of God. For example, there are many beloved saints who have overlooked the meaning and force of the words which the apostle used in reply to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" (Acts xvi. 31.)* The necessity for individual

* See an admirable tractate on this subject, entitled *Thou and Thy House*, by C. H. M. The writer cannot too earnestly recommend it to all Christian heads of households. It is full of most weighty instruction and solemn warning. It should be read by all.

faith is seen, and the connected promise of individual salvation; but for all practical purposes the additional promise is often forgotten. In like manner, when the question is now put, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer is almost universally given as, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" omitting the words, "and thy house." It is so both in preaching and in writing; and there is consequently an unintentional narrowing of the circle of the grace of God.

We propose, then, to trace the Scriptural teaching on this subject—on the connection of the household with the believer; and I think we shall see that the principle obtains both in the past and present dispensations.

Let us turn first of all to Genesis vii. 1: "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." This passage is exceedingly important, because it is so worded that no doubt whatever can be entertained as to its express significance. The ground on which the Lord commands Noah to enter *with his house* into the ark is, "For *thee* have I seen righteous before me in this generation." And if it should be objected, that probably all the members of the household were also "righteous" before God, the after-history of one of the number—Ham (Gen. ix. 22—

25)—forbids the thought. The force of the statement therefore cannot in any way be diminished, that the family of Noah was delivered from the judgment of the flood because of the faith of its head. True that it was not salvation; but it was typically so (1 Peter iii. 20, 21); and surely it was no small blessing to be carried in the ark through that mighty flood which in judgment overwhelmed and desolated the whole earth. “Every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: *and Noah only remained [alive], and they that were with him in the ark.*” (vii. 23.) Thus the whole household was brought, in the grace of God, out from under the judgment, and placed upon the new earth, because of the faith of Noah. Not only so, but the circle of God’s grace was still enlarged; for we find that the sons’ wives were also included in the merciful purposes of God; thus making up the eight persons of which the apostle Peter speaks as having been “saved by water.” (1 Peter iii. 20.)

We pass now to another instance recorded in Gen. xii.: “So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him. . . . And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls

that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." (*vv.* 4, 5.) We do not remark further upon this case now (as we shall have to recur to it when dealing with another part of the subject) than to point out the fact, that the household of Abram was brought with himself out of Chaldea and Haran into Canaan; and this was done on the same principle, as in the instance of Noah, the household being linked before God with its head.

We take, in the next place, the remarkable case of Lot; and it is the more striking because he had declined from the path of faith, forsaken the character of a pilgrim, and become a citizen of Sodom. The facts of his history are familiar to all: would that its warnings and lessons were more observed! The long-suffering of God was now about to pass over into righteous judgment, because the sin of "the cities of the plain" was very grievous. But when God destroyed these cities, He "remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." (*Gen.* xix. 29.) It is not however Lot's connection with Abraham that we dwell upon, significant as it is for our subject, nor for the fact that he was delivered from destruction through the intercession of his uncle, but we call attention here

to the family of Lot himself. And we find that the same principle obtains, that it was not only Lot, but that also his family were spared, or had the opportunity of being spared, in that day of destructive judgment. "And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, *and whatsoever thou hast in the city*, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." (Gen. xix. 12, 13.) It must ever be remembered that Lot, notwithstanding his grievous position, was a "righteous man" (2 Peter ii. 8); and we accordingly see, as in the other instances, that God linked the family of His servant with himself, that His mercy and grace went out and embraced all that were connected with the "righteous man," offering to them salvation from the judgment that was about to fall upon that doomed scene, though his sons-in-law in unbelief (and who shall tell how much this had been begotten in their hearts by the conduct of Lot?) chose death rather than life. "And Lot went out, and spake to his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. *But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.*" (v. 14.)

The passover may be next considered as indeed

a typical exemplification of the principle. The Lord commanded Moses, "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, *a lamb for an house.*" (Exod. xii. 3.) Again, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon *the houses* where ye are." (v. 13.) It is evident therefore that the passover was kept by Israel, family by family, that it was on the principle of a lamb for each household; and that they were sheltered, family by family, through the blood sprinkled upon their respective dwellings. Consequently, it was the father's act—his obedience of faith—that secured to his household immunity from the stroke of judgment that fell upon the land of Egypt. Just, indeed, as it was Noah's faith that led to his building the ark, in which his whole family were sheltered from the flood, so it was the faith of the parent at the passover in Egypt which led to the sprinkling of the blood upon the two side-posts, and on the upper door-post of his house, according to the commandment of the Lord, whereby he, his firstborn, and his household were infallibly protected from the judgment of the destroyer. The state of the household did not come into the question. The essential point was the sprinkling of the blood. Had the head of the house obeyed the divine directions?

Had he killed the lamb, and sprinkled the blood? If so, nothing could harm them. "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." (v. 23.) It is true that only the first-born, as far as we know, would have fallen, if unsheltered by the blood, under the judgment-stroke; but the significance of the blood, figure as it was of the blood of the Lamb of God, went much further, protecting, in virtue of its typical value, family by family, the whole of Israel. For we find Moses saying, when he directed the perpetual observance of the pass-over, "It shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, *and delivered our houses.*" (Ex. xii. 26, 27.) Hence, too, Moses, when Pharaoh demanded of him, "Who are they that shall go?" replied, "We will go with our young and with our old, *with our sons and our daughters,*" etc. (Exod. x. 8, 9); for it was the sprinkled blood, as we have seen, that secured them from destruction.

Illustrations of the same truth may be found throughout the Pentateuch. See, for example,

Lev. xvi. 17; xxii. 12, 13; Num. xviii. 11; Deut. xii. 7; xiv. 26, etc.*

Before we proceed to the New Testament, we may allude to the case of Rahab, one of the most remarkable instances of grace recorded in the Scriptures, as well as one of the most distinct foreshadowings of the call of the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit has even given her a special place among the saints distinguished for faith in Heb. xi. Examining then the narrative (Josh. ii.), what do we find? That she was the solitary exception in the destruction of Jericho and its inhabitants? That her faith availed only for herself? By no means. But the spies said unto her, "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: *and whosoever shall be with thee in the house*, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him." (vv. 18, 19.) And when they captured the city, Joshua said unto the two men that spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and bring

* For further scriptures, see the pamphlet referred to, *Thou and Thy House*.

out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred [*margin*, families], and left them without the camp of Israel. . . . And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." (Joshua vi. 22, 23, 25.)

There is this difference between Rahab and the other cases which we have considered, that she is not the head of a family. It is on this very account that the family principle, or what may be termed *the unity of the household before God*, is more remarkably exemplified. It would almost seem that those who have a family connection with an individual believer receive a special place, become objects of tender interest with God. As indeed we find it in the epistle to the Corinthians: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." (1 Cor. vii. 14.)

All these examples have been taken from the Old Testament; and the question now arises, Have we any reproduction of the principle in the

dispensation of grace? If we have not, though our souls may find profit from meditation upon these singularly interesting ways of God in the days of old, these revelations of His character and tender love, we could not infer anything as to the relation of the believer now to his household. If we have, then a flood of light is poured upon our family relationships before God, and also upon the solemn responsibilities (and, we may add, upon the blessed privileges) of the heads of families or households.

Let us look first of all, then, at Acts xi. The apostle Peter had been to Cornelius, and had seen the Holy Ghost poured out upon the Gentiles, and had, in virtue of the commission entrusted to him, admitted them into the church of God on earth. When he and his companions of the circumcision heard the Gentiles "speak with tongues, and magnify God, then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts x. 44-48.) But when he returned to Jerusalem, "they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." (xi. 2, 3.) In reply to this complaint, Peter rehearsed the whole of the circumstances which led to his visit, declared his vision,

and explained that he went at the express direction of the Spirit of God. Furthermore, he told them how that Cornelius had been commanded by an angel to send for him in these words: "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, *whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*" (xi. 4-14.)*

Here, then, at the very outset of Christianity, we have the re-appearance of the connection of the house with its head; and passing on to chap. xvi. we find exactly the same thing declared by the apostle Paul in answer to the jailor. "Believe," says he, "on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" (v. 31.) The concurrence is the more remarkable from the exact agreement of the words employed. This will be more distinctly seen if the Greek is quoted. Peter (repeating the words of the angel) says, "Who shall tell thee words whereby (*σωθήσῃσὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἶκός σου*) thou shalt be saved, and all thy house." Paul, speaking to the jailor, says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and (*σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκος σου*) thou shalt be saved, and thy house." It will be thus seen, that Paul uses exactly the same words (with the single exception of "all") as Peter, and in the same order. We conclude from this fact, inasmuch as it is impossible to

* Compare Acts ii. 38, 39.

suppose that the agreement is fortuitous, that they compose a formula expressing a well-known truth. Secondly, the significance of the agreement is heightened in that they were used in the one case by the apostle of the circumcision, and in the other by the apostle of the uncircumcision, though in both cases concerning Gentiles.

Thus we have the principle which, as we have seen, obtains throughout past dispensations, declared in the present by the two foremost representatives of Christianity. Peter, on the one hand, "a witness of the sufferings of Christ," and, on the other hand, Paul, who received his apostleship from the Lord in the glory, unite in proclaiming that there is a connection in the grace of God between the believer and his household. Unbelief may seek to wrest the meaning or to diminish the force of the words, but there they stand, the ineffaceable declaration of the ways of God, the revelation also to us of His heart, proclaiming as they do the sacredness of the family relationship, *the unity of the household, indeed, in His sight.*

We must be very careful, however, not to go beyond the divine intention; and hence we must now seek to ascertain the significance of the connection.

In the first place, then, let it be very distinctly observed that *it does not mean that the faith of the head of the household ensures the salvation of its*

members. No truth is more evident from the Scriptures than that there can be no salvation apart from individual faith. The examples of Ham, Esau, the sons of Eli and of Samuel, Absalom, etc., are solemn warnings that the faith of the parent cannot save his child. This should ever be repeated in most emphatic notes; for while, on the one hand, we dare not contract the circle of God's grace, on the other hand, we may not, must not, expand it. While earnestly contending for the unity of the household before God, we must as earnestly contend that every member of the household must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to salvation. Let there be no misconception or mistake on this point; for error here would be of the most fatal kind.

But, secondly, while it is not a question of individual salvation, the household of the believer has a special place of privilege, in the view of God, upon the earth. The children are linked with the believing parent, and are thus looked upon as in external connection with God's people—as separated unto Him on the earth, and in the sphere of the immediate action of the Holy Ghost. Such is the force, we judge, of the scripture already cited, "Now are they [the children of a believing parent] holy." For holiness means separation unto God; and as it cannot be in this case intrinsic holiness (nor the holiness which

the believer has in Christ), it can only signify external separation; *i.e.* that they are detached, as it were, from the world, and connected with that which bears the name of Christ upon the earth, and which is the habitation of God through the Spirit. Hence, in Ephesians and Colossians, the households of believers — wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters — are included in the exhortations given, each class being separately addressed. And in this fact lies the foundation of the believer's responsibility to govern his household for the Lord.

If therefore we admire, on the one hand, the abounding grace of our God, in thus flowing out and embracing our households, we must not forget, on the other, the responsibilities that are thereby entailed; for privilege and responsibility are ever connected. The Lord enable us each to learn our respective responsibilities in His own presence, and give us grace so to meet them that His name may be glorified in us, and in every member of our households!



CHAPTER III.

Wives.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

EPH. v. 22-24.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”—COL. iii. 18.

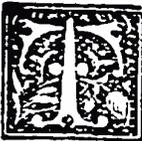
“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”—TITUS ii. 4, 5.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”—1 PETER iii. 1-4.

“Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”—GEN. iii. 16.

CHAPTER III.

WIVES.

HE first relationship brought before us, both in Ephesians and Colossians, is that of the wife. All these exhortations, indeed, commence with those from whom submission is due. As one has said, "This is the genius of Christianity in our evil world, in which man's will is the source of all the evil, expressing his departure from God, to whom all submission is due. The principle of submission and of obedience is the healing principle of humanity; only God must be brought into it in order that the will of man be not the guide after all. But the principle that governs the heart of man in good is always and everywhere obedience. I may have to say that God must be obeyed rather than man; but to depart from obedience is to enter into sin. A man may have, as a father, to command and direct; but he does it ill if he do it not in obedience to God and to His word. This was the essence of the life of Christ: 'I come to do thy will, O my God.'"

Accordingly the apostle begins his exhortations, with regard to relationships, by giving the general precept: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."* (Eph. v. 21.) Hence it is according to a divine order that the subject relationships in each case should come first; and consequently the wives are addressed before the husbands.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in everything." (Eph. v. 22-24.) It will be seen from this Scripture that the position of the wife is one of subjection. We say "position," because, as the careful reader will perceive, the exhortation is based upon the character of the relationship. The wife is indeed enjoined to obedience, but it is on the ground of the place she occupies. This has been somewhat obscured by the insertion of a word or two in the translation. We read, "As the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives be," etc.; but omit the word "let," which, as the italics indicate, has been introduced, and we have then a simple statement of fact: "As the church

* It should be remarked that the true reading is "the fear of Christ."

is subject unto Christ, so also the wives to their own husbands in everything." It is important to notice this, because the obedience, which is here enjoined upon the wife, is then seen to be that which should flow out of the position in which she is set—the natural fruit of the relationship. In other words, obedience to her husband is not left to the choice of the wife, but is to be rendered because of her relative place. It is this fact the Spirit of God brings before our notice.

(1.) The law, then, of the wife is her husband's will; or rather she is put in the place of subjection to his authority. There would seem to be one limitation to this statement, indicated by the words which are found in Colossians, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as it is fit in the Lord.*" (iii. 18.) If therefore the will of the husband should interfere with the wife's individual responsibility to the Lord—come into conflict with the Lord's will as expressed in His word—if the alternative be forced upon her of obedience to her husband or disobedience to the Lord, then the Lord must have the supreme claim. With this solitary exception her submission to her husband must be complete. "As the church is subject unto Christ, so also the wives to their own husbands *in everything.*" There cannot thus be any allowed exception apart from the one named.

The ground of this lies in the nature of the

relationship: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." The comparison is thus drawn—the one being a type or figure of the other—between the union of man and wife and the union of Christ and the church; and consequently between the position of the wife on the one hand, and on the other the position of the church. And if we turn for a moment to, what may be termed in one aspect, the primal institution of marriage, we may see how remarkably the mystery of the church was foreshadowed. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made (margin, "builded") He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. ii. 21–24.) Who can fail to see that in this picture Christ, the last Adam, and the church were before the mind of the Spirit of God? so plainly does it speak to us of that deeper sleep, the death of Christ, and the formation of the church, as it were, out of His side. It goes on indeed to the time spoken of in Ephesians v. 27,

when the church "shall be brought unto the man," and when He, in the complacency of His perfect love for the bride which has been "buildded" for His own joy, shall acknowledge her as "bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh."* (Gen. ii. 23; Eph. v. 30.)

The wife therefore occupies the same place relatively to her husband as the church to Christ; and hence her position, as before said, is one of subjection. And it may be needful to remark that her place is in no way affected by the character of the husband. It is quite true that her position may in many cases be rendered extremely difficult. For example, a Christian wife, converted after her marriage, may have an ungodly husband, and one who renders her life as wretched as it is possible for his evil heart to make it; still her place remains untouched by this or any other circumstance; and the more difficult it may be rendered, even by absence of affection on the part of the husband, or of features of character which would command her respect, the more careful she must be to occupy her place in faithfulness to the Lord. Just indeed as our duties to kings, etc., "the powers that be," are altogether irrespective of their personal character, so the duty of a wife to her husband is never altered by his character.

* As to the different readings of the expression in Eph. v. 30, see *Textual Criticism for English Students*, by C. E. Stuart.

It may seem to some as if the duty of the wife, as so explained, were one of the hard sayings difficult to receive. And to nature, no doubt, it would be often impossible. But mark the provision made for this in the Word: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord.*" Thus the Lord Himself is brought before the mind of the wife; and we all know that things which in themselves are irksome and indeed intolerable are rendered light and joyous when done unto the Lord. So in the case supposed, if the wife keep the Lord before her—sees the Lord as it were behind her husband—she will find obedience easy to his most unreasonable commands, because she will then receive all from the Lord.

If, however, "a husband were to command that which would be positively sinful, then at once I learn that I am not bound, because I am told to submit to my husband as unto the Lord. The Lord would never sanction what is sinful. He may put me through the sieve, and I may not at first understand the goodness or the need of it; but faith constantly finds its strength and guidance in the Lord's wisdom—in trusting Him, and not my wisdom in understanding Him. . . . But we have most carefully to watch ourselves in this matter. Wherever there is the smallest tendency to slip out of the path of submission, we have to search and see, if we are wise according to God.

Nature never likes to be subject. And wherever there is a danger of pleading the truth of God for any act that might seem to be a want of submission to the authority of another, I have need to watch myself with greater jealousy than in any other thing.*

(2.) The Scriptures also point out the manner in which the wife should comport herself towards her husband. "Let the wife see that she *reverence* her husband." (Eph. v. 33.) Peter, in like manner, speaks of the wife's "chaste conversation, coupled with *fear*." (1 Peter iii. 2.) The word "fear" is the same as that rendered "reverence" in Ephesians, and teaches that there should be a recognition, manifested in the deportment, of the position which the husband occupies in the order and appointment of God. There is no thought of slavish dread, but simply the loving reverence which seeks to please, and fears to offend. This indeed will naturally spring from her giving her husband his true place—his place as her head; and hence, in yielding him reverence, she magnifies also the appointment of God.

It is in such a wife that "the heart of her husband will safely trust. . . . She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life;" and he will thus be drawn to confess that "in finding a wife,

* *Lectures on the Ephesians*, by W. K., page 253.

he found a good thing, and obtained favour of the Lord." (Prov. xxxi. 11 ; xviii. 22.)

(3.) Nor are the Scriptures silent as to the blessing connected with the faithful acceptance of the wife's true position. The apostle Peter, when writing on this subject, specifies the most difficult case of all—that of a Christian wife who has an unbelieving husband. It must not be supposed that he sanctions the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. That is prohibited, both expressly and by implication (see 1 Cor. vii. 39 ; 2 Cor. vi. 14–18, etc.) ; but in the early church it must have continually happened that converted wives—*i.e.* wives converted after marriage—found themselves linked with unbelieving and idolatrous husbands. (See 1 Cor. vii. 10–16.) It is of this class the apostle speaks when he says, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands ; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives ; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." (1 Peter iii. 1, 2.) This amounts almost to a promise that loving obedience, and consistent Christian walk and purity of life, shall be blessed to the conversion of ungodly husbands ; or, if not so much as this, it is at least an assertion that such is God's appointed means to bring the truth before their minds and consciences. And what indeed

could be more effectual than the constant silent presentation of Christ in walk and life to an unbeliever? It is worthy of distinct remark that the apostle does not urge upon the wife *to exhort* her husband to receive the truth. It is "without the word" that the husband is to be won—by the conversation (walk, deportment, demeanour, whole manner of life) of the wife. The reason is obvious. Exhortation would be the assumption of a superior position, in forgetfulness that the husband is head of the wife, and therefore incompatible with the wife's position. But the calm beauty of a life reflecting in the power of the Spirit the gentleness, meekness, and humility of Christ, would constitute, in the order and blessing of God, a far mightier appeal than her words, and prove the efficacious means, it might be, of his being brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

(4.) There are other directions to which it is necessary to advert in order to have a complete view of the subject; for we cannot safely neglect a single word which God in His tender mercy has been pleased to vouchsafe for our guidance, during the little while that we are waiting for the return of our Lord.

(a) The first of these is as to dress. The apostle thus proceeds: "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of

wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter iii. 3, 4.) In entire accordance with this, for it is the mind of the same Spirit, St. Paul writes : "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.) In both places the temptation is recognised which so often presents itself to the mind of a wife—of appearing as beautiful as possible in the eyes of her husband, and at the same time of stimulating and feeding personal vanity by outward adornments and costly array.

Now, it is sometimes said that these matters of ornaments and dress are left to individual consciences ; but it is difficult to understand such language in the light of these precise directions. It is quite true that where the heart is satisfied with Christ, there may be no need for their application ; but if this be the case, the slightest acquaintance with God's assemblies reveals the humbling fact that they are composed of immense numbers whose hearts are not thus satisfied. Nothing can be more sad than the scene which is

oftentimes presented at the table of the Lord. When we are thus gathered by the Spirit of God, it is to show the Lord's death until He come. (1 Cor. xi. 26.) And surely, as we remember Him in death, we are reminded also that by His cross the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world. (Gal. vi. 14.) What a contradiction therefore, if any, forgetful of the judged character of the scene through which we are passing, appear there with evident traces of Egypt upon them. And how grieving to the Lord Himself to see those who are professedly outside the camp bearing His reproach, with so many outward signs of worldliness in dress and ornaments—evidences of being practically "alive in the world," whatever may be true for them before God.

Neglect of dress, or even of adornment, is not directed; on the other hand, attention is to be paid to it, but according to the word of God. Thus St. Paul says that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel; *i.e.* as the word might otherwise be given, "moderate," "well-ordered" dress. It is to be of the kind befitting the "meek and quiet spirit," so that there may be congruity between the dress and the character. Ornaments likewise are permitted; but they are to be made, not of gold or pearls, but of good works, "as becometh women professing godliness." All the Scriptures bearing upon this subject demand the

prayerful consideration of all Christian wives ; and the results would surely be to the Lord's glory in a more distinct outward testimony to the place of rejection (in fellowship with the sufferings of Christ), and of separation into which we have been called by the grace of our God.

(β) Another direction, especially to young wives, is that they should be "keepers at home" (Titus ii. 5), or, according to another reading, "workers at home." The meaning in either case is much the same ; for wives are reminded that their sphere of service is home, and that no work or pleasure should be suffered to interfere with their domestic position. It is God who has given them the home as their field of labour ; and hence it is a matter of faithfulness to Him that they diligently occupy it.

Other special directions need not be enlarged upon ; but combined with the foregoing Scriptures, they present the divine standard for the wife ; hence every Christian woman who occupies this position will use these special Scriptures as her mirror, and into it she cannot look too often. It is a wondrous sphere she is called upon to fill ; and her occupation of it, in obedience to the word "as unto the Lord," is the one thing given her to do. Solomon thus speaks of such a wife :

"Strength and honour are her clothing ;
And she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom ;
And in her tongue is the law of kindness.
She looketh well to the ways of her household,
And eateth not the bread of idleness.
Her children arise up, and call her blessed ;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her—
' Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all.' "

PROV. xxxi. 25-29.



CHAPTER IV.

Husbands.

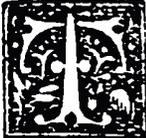
“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself.”—EPH. v. 25-33.

“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”—COL. iii. 19.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”—1 PETER iii. 7.

CHAPTER IV.

HUSBANDS.

HE duty of the husband is quite as simple as that of the wife. As hers is comprised in the word "obedience," his is contained in that of "love." The wife, if a direction sent to a special class be excepted (Titus ii. 4), is never commanded to love her husband. It is taken for granted that she will do so; and, as a matter of fact, she seldom fails in this direction. Even though she may be unequally yoked—be united to one who has not the least sympathy with her holiest feelings, and receive little but unkindness, her love will survive the harshest treatment. Crushed and trodden under foot, it will spring up and greet the first display of kindness with a forgiving embrace. It is a perennial fountain. But with the husband it is often otherwise. With fewer of the tender emotions, engrossed by his daily occupations, and exposed, it may be, to severer temptations, his danger is to forget his responsibility to love—or at least to manifest his

love to—his chosen wife. Hence the Spirit of God recalls his responsibility to mind, and gives this injunction, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” etc. (Eph. v. 25–33.)

(1.) Let us consider what is to be the character of the husband’s love as here enjoined. “Husbands love your wives, *even as Christ loved the church.*” It is a most wonderful standard; and no doubt here introduced because of the typical character of true marriage, because the primal marriage between Adam and Eve displayed, in figure, the union between Christ and the church. This should ever teach us the sanctity and real character of marriage before God. What then, we may enquire, was the character of Christ’s love to the church? The answer is here given. First, He proved it by giving Himself for it (v. 25); and He gave Himself to death for it, and thereby in fact purchased His bride. “He gives *Himself*; it is not only His life, true as that is, but Himself. All that Christ was has been given, and given by Himself; it is the entire devotedness and giving of Himself. And now all that is in Him—His grace, His righteousness, His acceptancy with the Father, His wisdom, the excellent glory of His person, the energy of divine love that can give

itself—all is consecrated to the welfare of the assembly. There are no qualities, no excellencies in Christ, which are not ours in their exercise consequent on the gift of Himself. He has already given them, and consecrated them to the blessing of the assembly which He has given Himself to have. Not only are they given, but *He* has given them; His love has accomplished it.” And this gift of Himself is greatly enhanced when we remember that it was upon the cross that this gift was consummated. Secondly, His love is displayed in His sanctifying and cleansing the church with the washing of water by the word. (v. 26.) This exhibition of love is a present thing, that which goes on now, and by which He suits it to Himself. “It is important to remark that Christ does not here sanctify the assembly to make it His own, but makes it His own to sanctify it. It is first His, then He suits it to Himself.” The means is the word, the washing of water by the word, the truth taught in John xiii. by the washing of the disciples’ feet by the Lord. And there, it will be remembered, it is in connection with His love. “Having loved His own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” The sanctifying and cleansing of the church is thus the expression of His abiding and unchanging love—love that finds its delight in making it morally suitable to Himself, and hence never

wearies in watching over, tending, and preparing it for Himself. Thirdly, the fruit of His love is seen in the object He has before Him—"that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish." This refers to the time when the Lord shall have returned to receive His church to Himself, or more exactly, to the period indicated when it is said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. xix. 7), when the church as the bride is perfected in glory, "having the glory of God: and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Rev. xxi. 11.) And never until then will the measure and extent of Christ's love for the church be apprehended, because then its effect and consummation will be displayed.

And wherefore have we this wondrous description of the love of Christ for the church? To show what should be the character of the husband's love for His wife. "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church.*" Not to press too closely the comparison in all its parts, we yet cannot fail to observe, that as Christ's love preceded His giving Himself for the church, so there cannot be a true union in the sight of God unless it has sprung from love. Love, and love only, should be the motive of the choice; and love must cement and beautify the union when

formed. The whole element of the married life should be love; and not only so, but if the husband looks upon the standard here given, he will see that the one and constant demand the wife will make upon him is for love. His love must endure—survive all trials, unweariedly seeking to draw his wife closer and closer to himself, and ever keeping before him (as to earth) the object of a union which, as it has sprung from, can only be cemented by, an unchanging and indefatigable love. Nothing less can be intended by this divine model. A special application may perhaps not be out of place. Many a Christian husband finds himself united to an unbeliever; but his duty remains the same. And as the love of Christ seeks the eternal blessedness of the church, so the love of the husband will not be satisfied with seeking to secure the present comfort and happiness of his wife; but it will be exhibited in watchful and tender ministry of that word which brings the knowledge of salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus. Every husband indeed will feel the obligation of caring for the spiritual welfare of his wife; for it is in this direction that his love will more nearly partake of the same character as that of Christ for the church. Truly therefore marriage, according to God, is no unimportant thing; and the more deeply this is felt, the greater will the husband feel the need of con-

stant dependence, in order in any way to meet his responsibility. And, it may be added, the more constantly he is himself abiding in the sense of Christ's love, the more freely will his love flow out towards his wife.

2. But again it is added, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the church*: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself." (Eph. v. 28-33.) Here we are carried back, as has been remarked, to the garden of Eden, to the creation and presentation of Eve to Adam, which in itself is a manifest figure of the union between Christ and the church; and this fact accounts for the way in which the apostle weaves the two things in these exhortations. (See Gen. ii. 21-25.) The union is thus looked upon as so complete—as Adam said of Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" and again, "They shall be one flesh"—that it is said, so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. In this aspect, self-love is to be the measure of a

man's love to his wife; and as this is one of the instincts of our nature—and naturally its governing principle—it is impossible to conceive of a more definite and comprehensive direction. Let therefore the oneness of the union—they two shall be one flesh—be apprehended, and love will follow; for the husband will then no more consider his wife as distinct from, but as a part of himself. Thus whatever touches her, will touch him; and his self-love, moving now in a wider circle, includes her, and all that affects and concerns her, within its embrace. All that he desires for himself he will also desire for his wife; all the care he exercises for himself he will exercise for her; and all that he receives he will receive for her as well as for himself. In a word, all the good he seeks, and all the evil he deprecates, he will also seek and deprecate for his wife, as for himself; for together they are "one flesh," and therefore he that loveth his wife loveth himself. The word of God provides in this way a perfect antidote against selfishness, and leads out the husband in self-sacrifice, which is the fruit of all true love, and which finds its highest exemplification in Christ, who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.

We have said that self-love is to be the measure, in the aspect considered, of the husband's love for his wife; but it is remarkable

how this also is connected with Christ, teaching us that in no human self-love, but only in the love of Christ for the church, can its true pattern and example be found. For, giving the other side, the apostle proceeds: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord* the church.*" The wife therefore being "one flesh" with him, he must nourish and cherish her, even as Christ the church. What heights and depths are contained in this comparison! showing indeed that the debt of love is never paid, but always owed. And yet that love delights to recognise it, and to be ever paying it, in lavishing care and tenderness upon her who has thus become one with him in the view of God.

It should again be added, if we would have a full sense of the responsibility, that this obligation of love is also irrespective of the character of the wife. No amount of unworthiness in the wife, short of the one sin specified by our Lord, can excuse the husband from the duty of love; for Christ loves the church unceasingly, and spite of all faults and failures, and even worse; yea, He is even seeking to wean her from her faults, and to cleanse her from her defilements by His perfect charity; and His love, be it ever remembered, is the model of that of the husband. It may be

* "Christ" is the true reading.

that he will fail to copy it in its infinite perfection; but notwithstanding, it is His love which the husband must ever have before his eyes. Behold in this the wisdom of God; for here is the provision to direct the gaze of the husband to Christ, to keep Him before his soul, and thereby he will surely be drawn into imitation of His love; for no one ever failed while his eye and heart were fixed upon Christ.

(3.) The apostle Peter confines himself to certain aspects of the husband's responsibility. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter iii. 7.)

To dwell with the wife "according to knowledge," is to have the relationship, and the affections proper to it, ordered by the truth, by the knowledge which the Christian has of the relationship in the sight of God. And this is exceedingly important; for herein lies the difference between the believer and the unbeliever in these relative positions; and it behoves the Christian to act in all these according to the new place in which he has been brought by the death and resurrection of Christ. The Christian husband will therefore dwell with his wife according to the truth of his union with his wife, as revealed in the Scriptures.

Moreover, he is to give honour to his wife, and

on two grounds. First, on the natural ground, that she is the weaker vessel. There is little doubt that this reference is to the more delicate frame and organization of the woman, requiring and deserving more gentle and more tender treatment. So that just as weakness constitutes a claim upon strength for consideration and support, so the wife as "the weaker vessel" has a claim upon her husband for thoughtful, loving watchfulness and care. He is to give her honour by rendering her all the attention which her more delicate nature requires. It is possible, however, that there may be a reference to the fact that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14), that she thus showed herself to be "the weaker vessel," by being the first to fall through the subtlety of the devil. More easily acted on, especially through the affections, she thus needs and demands from her husband vigilant and tender care to shield her from the peculiar temptations to which, with her weaker nature, she is constantly exposed. But, secondly, this exhortation is grounded in grace as well as in nature, "as being heirs together of the grace of life." In Christ there is neither male nor female. (Gal. iii. 28.) All natural distinctions therefore, as constituting any relative superiority in Christ, are abolished. While therefore the husband claims the natural obedience of his wife, he must never

forget that, if they are both children of God, they are together "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) And as such he is to give honour unto his wife; for these natural ties, and these relative connections, are only for earth; and when the Lord comes to receive His people unto Himself, husbands and wives will alike be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and then both will be like unto Christ, and be for ever with Him.

Attention to this injunction is the more needful for the reason given, "that your prayers be not hindered." It is pre-supposed that husband and wife will habitually unite in prayer; and hence the warning is, that any failure in the husband to give honour unto his wife will tend to disturb harmony of feeling, and thus to hinder prayer. It were well if all Christian husbands and wives would often ponder these words. For in the activities of this present time there is great danger of neglecting this united prayer; and the slightest disturbance of concord will ever tempt them to neglect it the more. Satan knows this, and hence he ever seeks to cloud over the peace of these relationships; for he does not forget that it is impossible for husband and wife to go together to the throne of grace when there is the smallest discord in their hearts. The husband must watch against this snare, remembering the importance of

their prayers not being hindered. For how many things are there constantly occurring in every family which need to be spread out before God! And how blessed it is when husband and wife can go together, with one heart, concerning every difficulty and perplexity, to the throne of grace!

(4.) There is one thing the husband is taught to avoid: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Col. iii. 19.) It might be thought that if the 'love' were secured there would be no place left for the 'bitterness.' But is it so in the actual experience of life? Many a husband who truly loves his wife drops, in moments of unwatchfulness, when out of the presence of God, hasty words, which are as bitter as gall to a tender heart. The object of the warning seems thus to be to secure the constant exercise of a spirit of self-judgment, so that the husband may avoid everything that might fret or irritate the spirit of his wife. Bitterness—whatever the provocation—is to be carefully eschewed; and it will be done the more easily if he but remember his responsibility to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

Such, then, are the divine requirements from the husband. We might perhaps shrink from them, if we did not remember that He who enjoins them is ever at hand to supply the needed grace, and to enable us to walk according to His

word. The power for such a walk is found in the Holy Spirit who dwells within us ; and inasmuch as He ever leads us to Christ, we shall find that the path thus indicated is one of peace and blessing, leading us into the enjoyment of a fellowship which adumbrates, by no means dimly, that between Christ and the church. As Christ to the church, so is the husband to the wife. To fulfil therefore the duties of a husband needs that Christ in His love to the church should ever be before the soul ; and then, if the eye be but upon Christ, there will be transformation into His likeness (2 Cor. iii. 18), and the consequent expression of Christ in the relationship which the husband sustains towards his wife.



CHAPTER V.

Children.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”—EPH. vi. 1-3.

“Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”—COL. iii. 20.

“Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.”
DEUT. xxvii. 16.

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother : bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp ; and the law is light ; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”—PROV. vi. 20-23.

“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”—PROV. xxiii. 22.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDREN.

HILDREN occupy a large and very blessed place in the word of God ; and both in the Old and New Testaments are found those whose names are enshrined in our hearts, from our earliest years, as examples of early piety and devotedness to God. Joseph, Samuel, and Timothy—to say nothing now of the Child of Nazareth, who surpasses all—are connected with our first recollections of parental instructions from the Scriptures. Mainly, however, it is the children of the people of God who are thus brought before us, and it is very evident that they are the objects of His special care. We find, for example, in the book of Deuteronomy very minute directions for their instruction (vi. 6, 7 ; see also iv. 9 ; and xi. 19) ; and on the eighth day after their birth they were to be formally introduced into the covenanted privileges of the chosen people. (Gen. xvii. 10-13.) In the New Testament likewise, and, as has been remarked in a previous chapter, in those portions (Ephesians

and Colossians) which deal with the fullest truth of the believer's portion in Christ, as well as with the highest church truth, we have not only injunctions concerning, but also addressed to, children. The heart of God, flowing out towards His saints, includes their children also within the circle of His affections. And what parent—and, it may be added, what child who has received scriptural instruction—is there who has not frequently turned with thankful joy to that scene in the gospels where the Lord Jesus, in His infinite grace and tenderness, takes the children into His arms, and blesses them, and says, thereby rebuking His disciples, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark x. 14–16); or to that other, where, in order to teach the twelve a needed lesson, “He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: *and when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me*”? (Mark ix. 36, 37.) Precious Saviour! Happy child!

But it is rather to children themselves—the children of believers—that this chapter will be addressed; and surely they will be encouraged to consider the words which God has caused to be written for their guidance, by the evidences of His

love and care which have just been cited. As, indeed, when the Lord came by night, and "called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I;" and finally said, after Eli had taught him who it was that had called him, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. iii. 3-9); so may every child who may read these pages desire to take the same attitude of simple subjection to the word of God.

The directions given are very brief and very simple; albeit they comprehend the whole circle of children's lives. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. vi. 1-3.) "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto" (*in*, the same word as in Ephesians) "the Lord." (Col. iii. 20.)

It is of the first importance to observe that children—the children of whom we speak—are thus set in direct personal responsibility to the Lord. Placed under parental authority, they are at the same time recognized as being under responsibility to Christ, and hence their obedience is to be rendered "in the Lord." This at once defines the character and the limit of their duty; for the commands of the parent, when rightly given, have a divine sanction, so that the child not only obeys the parent, but also the Lord. On

the other hand, no command could be binding to which obedience in the Lord could not be rendered. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is *right*." (Eph. vi. 1.) It could not be *right* for the child to do anything which would be sin against the Lord. The harmony between the two—the duty and the limit—is beautifully (because perfectly) exemplified in the case of the Lord Jesus when a child. When He was twelve years of age, Joseph, His reputed father, and His mother took Him up to Jerusalem to the feast. On their return He remained behind in Jerusalem. On discovering His absence, Joseph and Mary "turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart." (Luke ii. 42-51.) In this

lovely incident we have the two things—responsibility of obedience, and its limit before God—in perfect adjustment. The Lord in grace having become a child, takes the place of a child, and as such owns His responsibility of obedience to Joseph and Mary, while, at the same time, He acknowledges and affirms that He *must* be about His Father's business. "Son," said Mary, "why hast thou thus dealt with us?" etc.; words which, whatever their tenderness, implied a reproach. But the answer given silenced all complaint: "Wist ye not, did ye not know, as ye ought to have done, that my Father had the first claim upon me, and that therefore in absenting myself from you, I was acting in obedience to Him?" Thus the Lord Jesus is also the child's perfect example; and it is added, in order to emphasize this truth, "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, *and was subject unto them.*"

We may now examine a little more closely the nature of children's responsibility.

(1.) "Children, obey your parents"—obey your parents in all things. The position of children therefore is one of complete subjection, and springs naturally out of the relationship which exists between them and their parents. But beyond all natural relationships, what is insisted upon here is the will of the Lord; for it is He who has given each their respective places, and

who thus requires children to be obedient to their parents; and this fact at once lifts the responsibility of a child up into the light of His presence, and at the same time shows that the obedience must be rendered *in* the Lord.

But wherein, it may be inquired, does true obedience lie? or, What are the characteristics of obedience? *That which distinguishes it beyond everything else is the acceptance of the authority which is entitled to command*; for when I acknowledge that my own will has no place, that it is the will of another that has to direct and control my actions, I accept and maintain the *attitude* of obedience. And this is essential, because I am then freed from the temptation of sitting in judgment upon the commands I may receive. It is often said that the main requisite of a good soldier is *unreasoning obedience*. So with a child. Its obedience, within the limits defined by the words "in the Lord," should be unreasoning; and it can only be this when the position of subjection to parents is faithfully and fully accepted.

True obedience will also be *prompt*. Postponed obedience is often disobedience in one of its worst forms, and certainly argues both insubjection and self-will; for as soon as the command is given the obligation is binding, and every moment of delay (unless permitted by the parent) is the assertion and prolongation of opposition to his authority.

The Lord has given us an incidental illustration of this, and its danger, in one of His parables. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. . . . He answered and said, I go, sir: and went not." (Matt. xxi. 28-31.) Now in this case it is more than likely that the son meant to obey, when he replied, "I go, sir;" but putting off the execution of the command he received, and being thus disobedient, he still delayed, and in the end did not obey his father at all. As our Lord here shows, the son who said at first, "I will not," but afterward repented and went, was more obedient than he who said "I go," but went not. This danger is very subtle. Thus a child will often reason, It will do just as well in an hour hence; and as far as that one matter may be concerned it might be so. But it should be remembered, not only as pointed out, that the obligation to obedience is immediate, but also that the habit may soon be formed of neglecting to obey; and then the next step may soon be a disinclination to obey. Too much stress therefore cannot be laid upon the importance of a prompt response to every command received.

Obedience should be cheerful as well as prompt, or as the Scriptures teach in the case of servants, it should be "doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. vi. 6.) Everyone indeed will perceive that a mere external obedience—an obedience

which is rendered reluctantly, which would not be rendered unless compelled—is no obedience at all. True obedience can only spring from love; as two lines of a hymn have it—

“Love makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move;”

or again, as our Lord teaches His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John xiv. 15.) St. Paul alludes to the same thing when he says, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” (2 Cor. v. 14.) In like manner, obedience to parents can only spring from love; for love both delights to please and fears to offend; yea, even more, love will deem it an honour to be employed. It is so with the angels in heaven. Their happiness consists in doing God’s will; and the temporal happiness of children who love their parents will largely consist in obedience to their will.

That there may be no mistake, we may ask in a definite form, Is there any limit to the obedience which a parent may require from his children? We have already alluded to this; but the subject is so important that it seems advisable to enter upon it more fully. The words, then, “in the Lord,” and “well pleasing in the Lord,” define, as we judge, both the nature and the limit of children’s obedience to their parents; that is, in the first place, *obedience never acquires its proper*

character unless the Lord Himself is the object before the mind. It must be done as unto Him—unto Him who gives both the parents and the children their relative positions. In the second place, unless the action required can be done in the Lord, it is not binding. If a command be given by a parent to a child which cannot be obeyed with a good conscience before the Lord, then it is not of force in His presence. This principle is constantly affirmed in the Scriptures. Thus we are enjoined to “be subject unto the powers that be;” but when Nebuchadnezzar commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to fall down and worship the golden image which he had set up in the plain of Dura, they replied, “We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Dan. iii. 14–18.) Peter and John also, when forbidden to speak at all, or teach in the name of Jesus, answered, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” (Acts iv. 18, 19.) While therefore God confers authority upon men in the different relationships of life, He never abdicates His own, or suffers any human claim to limit His own supremacy. The Lord Jesus thus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matt. x. 37 ; see also Luke xiv. 26.)

Children, then, are to be in complete subjection

to their parents, except in the single case of their commands coming into conflict with the authority and claims of the Lord. Making this exception—and even emphasizing it—children must be very careful not to plead it in any doubtful cases: they should be very sure that there is opposition to the Lord's claims in the parental command before they venture to refuse obedience; *i.e.* they must be assured that the reason for so grave and solemn a step springs from no fancies of their own, but from the conviction of what is due to the Lord. For it is He who has given their parents the place of supreme authority in the family, and hence it is only when it would be for His own glory that this authority may be disregarded. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." It is not supposed in this injunction, inasmuch as the epistle is addressed to believers, that any command given by the parent could conflict with the Lord's authority; and the addition of the words, "for this is well pleasing unto the Lord," defines the circle of the extent and supremacy of parental authority, as we have just explained. We thus see that parents are absolute in their own circle—the circle described by God; but this circle is included within the larger one, over which the Lord Himself is supreme.

Obedience is urged on two grounds. First, "For

this is *right*." (Eph. vi. 1.) That is, God declares that obedience is a righteous thing to be rendered by children to their parents; that it is suited to the place of a parent to command, and to the place of a child to obey. Secondly, it is said, "For this is *well pleasing* in the Lord." Here children are reminded of their responsibility, and encouraged by the assurance of the Lord's approbation in their subject path. And the value God sets upon filial obedience may be gathered from His estimate of disobedience. Thus in the law we read, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother." (Deut. xxvii. 16; see also Exodus xxi. 17; Deut. xxi. 18-21; Proverbs xxx. 11, 17.) The apostle also stigmatises disobedience to parents as one of the characteristic signs of the perilous times of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 1, 2), and of great moral corruption. (Rom. i. 30.) And the slightest acquaintance with the facts of life will abundantly show that the first step in a downward career has often commenced with disobedience to parents. Write the histories of all the poor prodigal sons and daughters who, at the present moment, are seeking to satisfy their hunger with the "husks that the swine do eat," and it will be found that the root of all their temporal wretchedness may be traced back to self-will and insubjection in their paternal home.

Both therefore by encouragements and warnings

are children reminded of the value God sets upon their obedience to their parents. Let every child then shun the temptation to disobedience, as one of Satan's most dangerous snares, and be encouraged ever to keep the place of subjection to the parent's will, knowing that it is well-pleasing in the Lord.

(2.) We have another word in Ephesians—cited, it is true, from the law, but here reaffirmed as to its moral force—to express what is due from children to their parents. That word is “honour.” “Honour thy father and mother.” If obedience describes the responsibility of children as to conduct and action, “honour” expresses rather what should be their habitual feeling towards their parents. It is a peculiarly solemn word; for it is the same as that used by our blessed Lord when He says “that all men should *honour* the Son, even as they *honour* the Father. He that *honoureth* not the Son, *honoureth* not the Father which hath sent Him.” (John v. 23.) In fact, it is a term descriptive of true filial piety; for to honour their parents children must not only acknowledge their position, and their right of parental control, but they must esteem and reverence them, as set in their place of authority by the Lord. Hence the child that honours his parents will love to pay them the outward expressions of homage and respect, will prize their counsels and instructions,

obey them in their absence as in their presence, avoid everything that could give them pain or sorrow, rejoice to defer to their feelings and desires, and will in every possible way, by word, manner, and action, rejoice to accord to them that filial respect and attention which belong to the place to which they have been divinely appointed.

We desire to commend this subject to the attention of the children of believers. Let them ponder frequently upon their responsibilities towards their parents—responsibilities which the Lord Himself has enjoined upon them—because He has brought them, as the children of His people, into immediate relationship with Himself upon the earth. It is to Him therefore that they are responsible; and if this thought does but beget, even in the feeblest way, a sense of weakness and helplessness, and a cry to Him for aid, He who has set them in this position of responsibility will surely hold them up, and being brought up, by the care of their parents, “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” they will be led onward to a personal knowledge of Him as their Saviour as well as their Lord; and then it will be their joy to be numbered, together with their parents, amongst His redeemed.

CHAPTER VI.

Fathers.

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

EPH. vi. 4.

“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”—COL. iii. 21.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”—DEUT. vi. 6, 7. See also iv. 9, and xi. 19.

“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children,” etc.

PSALM lxxviii. 5-8.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHERS.

EVERY parent knows something of—feels in measure—the solemn responsibility connected with the government and training of his children. A more difficult field of duty can scarcely be imagined; and yet, from its very nature, there are few departments of life which, when occupied in simple and single-eyed dependence upon the Lord, yield such blessed results. How many of the saints of God have traced their conversion instrumentally to pious and faithful parents! When therefore we consider the vast influence for good, or for evil, which parents must exert—the solemn issues of their responsibility—it must ever be an important question, What is the nature of the parent's duty to his children? As in all the practical duties of the believer, the Scriptures abound with instruction on this point. They teach both by example and by precept; they present for our consideration children, such as Samuel, who are devoted to the Lord at the earliest period of life; they pourtray

the evil consequences of parental misrule; and they give precept upon precept, both in the Old and New Testaments, for the guidance of those who desire to be instructed in the wisdom of God. It may perhaps be profitable to cite at the outset a few of these scriptures, in order to collect the directions thus afforded.

We may, first of all, point out the fact that a special blessing rested on Abraham, because of his fidelity to God, in the government of his family. "For," said the Lord, "I know him, *that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 19. See the context.) We may also allude to the disorders in the family of Jacob, and their obvious cause. And then, passing on to the book of Deuteronomy, we have direct exhortations: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. vi. 6, 7. Compare iv. 9, and xi. 19.) The warning example of Eli enforces the same lesson: "For I have told him," said God to Samuel, respecting the aged priest, "that I will judge his house for

ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not," or, as it is in the margin, "he frowned not upon them," *i.e.* did not enforce his parental authority. (1 Sam. iii. 13.) David affords another conspicuous example of family misrule. A few direct instructions may be added: "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." (Ps. lxxviii. 5-8.) In the Proverbs of Solomon are also many admonitions as to the treatment of children: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (Prov. xix. 18.) "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (xxiii. 13, 14.) One more: "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (xxix. 17.) We pass

now to the New Testament: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. vi. 4.) "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." (Col. iii. 21.)

We have freely cited from the Old Testament as well as from the New; for while it is to the latter we must look for the full character and measure of the believer's responsibility in earthly relationships, yet it cannot but be observed that there is a striking agreement in the instructions given as to children in every part of the word of God. In all alike, the believer is charged to govern and to train his children for God—to instruct them from the Scriptures.

This fact shows the importance of understanding the relationship into which the children are brought with God through their believing parents. This relationship, as has been shown when treating of the "household," is, so to speak, an external one, but still involving responsibilities both for the parent and his children. It corresponds somewhat with the position of Jewish children. Although not saved because of their descent, yet they were reckoned amongst God's earthly people, and as such had to be instructed as to God's requirements and their responsibilities. (See Deut. vi. 6, 7, etc.) As God had separated them from

the rest of the nations, they were to be taught and trained as His people on the earth. In like manner fathers are now exhorted to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. vi. 4.)

(1.) It is somewhat remarkable that the first exhortation is, "But, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." So also in Colossians: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger." (iii. 21.) It is not exactly the same word, though the meaning is not very different. This will be at once understood when it is perceived that this exhortation follows upon the call to children to obey their parents. Fathers are placed in almost absolute authority; and hence the first thing the Spirit of God does in turning to parents is to admonish them as to the manner in which they should exercise their authority. Knowing what the flesh is, even in a Christian, and how apt we are to be tyrannical and despotic in the place in which God has set us, He, in tender consideration for those who are put in the subject position, says, "Provoke not your children to wrath." Parents have almost unlimited control (limited only by the words added to the injunction, "in the Lord") over their children, but they are hereby warned that they must be careful before God as to the method of their government. They must consider the feelings of their children, and while

they must never abate one jot or tittle of what is due to the Lord, they must remember their weakness; not lay upon them more than they can bear lest they might be discouraged. A more striking illustration of God's tenderness for children could scarcely be conceived—a tenderness which was exemplified again and again by our blessed Lord while down here upon the earth—than is expressed in this special injunction to parents. And we all know, how apt we are to be capricious or harsh in our rule; and hence our need of this reminder. Let every parent therefore remember, that if, on the one hand, God has given him the rule over his family, on the other He has carefully defined the character of its exercise; and that he is as responsible for the latter as for the former.

“Lest they should be discouraged.” How easy to discourage children, and especially from the right ways of the Lord. With keen and tender susceptibilities, of quick observation and rapid detection of inconsistencies, harsh government might very soon undo years of patient teaching, and speedily mar the most industrious efforts to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents therefore cannot be too careful on this point; and it will aid them to be so if they remember that they derive their own position from divine appointment, and that their children are to be governed and trained for God.

(2.) "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The words employed are most significant. More exactly, it is *discipline* and *admonition*. Discipline will apply rather to the whole course of training or education; admonition implies constant watchfulness in order to warn against dangers, forgetfulness, or departure from the path into which they are being led. Nor should the exact meaning of "bring them up" pass unnoticed. It is to rear; and hence goes back, in regard to children, to earliest infancy. It is important to notice this, because many parents fall into the mistake of supposing that they must wait for their children's conversion before they seek to carry out this injunction; and hence the sad spectacle is often presented of Christian parents permitting their children all kinds of worldly ways, dress, and amusements, under the plea that they are not yet the Lord's. This is to miss the whole point of the teaching of these scriptures, as well as to forget the special place into which the children of believers are brought. The Spirit of God does not say, Wait and pray for your children's conversion; but He says, *Rear them* in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You are thus to take God at His word, counting upon Him for the blessing contained in the promise, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.)

(*α*) They are to be brought up in the *nurture* (discipline) of the Lord. This word points to education, and teaches how the believer should educate his children. The first obligation of the believer is thus to teach his children that they are under the Lord's government, that they are to be reared and trained in His discipline, and thus to be shown their direct and individual responsibility.*

And this fact is to determine the character of their education—in the nurture of the Lord. In a word, the Christian parent is to train his children in accordance with the place into which, by the grace of God, they have been brought.

* It is not forgotten that it is contended by some that this scripture refers to converted children. There are, however, two reasons which render it impossible to accept this view. First, the term "bring them up" plainly points back to the commencement, to earliest infancy. Secondly, if this view were admitted, there would be in the New Testament no directions given for the training of unconverted children, and even no ground indicated on which the obedience of unconverted children could be claimed by believers. The passage in Colossians, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing *unto* the Lord," should read "*in* the Lord;" and is thus entirely in accordance with Eph. vi. 1. J. N. D. says: "All the children of Christians are viewed as subjects of the exhortations in the Lord, which belong to those that are within, who are no longer in this world, of which Satan is the prince. Sweet and precious comfort to the parent, that he may look upon them as having a right to this position and a part in those tender cares which the Holy Ghost lavishes upon all who are in the house of God."—*Synopsis in loco*. See also *Thou and Thy House*, by C. H. M., pages 13-15.)

But the question may be anxiously put, How is this to be done? First and foremost, by assiduous instruction from the Scriptures. Thus in the passage already cited from Deuteronomy it is said to the Jewish parent, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," etc.; and St. Paul, writing to Timothy, reminds him that "from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. iii. 15); and it may be inferred, from the mention of Timothy's mother and grandmother, that it was by these godly women that he had been so instructed. It should be a solemn consideration with all Christian parents how far they are doing the same thing. There are many families where the Bible has a place, but not the chief place, in the instruction of the children. But surely "the nurture of the Lord" can only be derived from the word of God; and hence, whoever would be faithful in this matter, must be diligent in its systematic explanation. And what an advantage to the children who are thus taught! The truth of God is brought to bear upon them from the very outset, and used by the Holy Spirit, according to promise, to quicken, form, and direct; they are, under His gracious power, *reared* in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. There may not, in such cases, be any signs of distinct conversion (as is often ob-

served in the case of children of faithful, believing parents), because the Spirit of God uses the Word at the very commencement of life for their blessing in regeneration.

Secondly, while the Scriptures will be the primary source of instruction, they will also guide as to the character of the education to be imparted in other directions. This is often a most perplexing question with Christian parents; but if it be ever remembered that they have to train their children for the Lord, the difficulty will to a large extent be removed. They will then see, that all the instruction imparted must keep this one object in view; and they will carefully guard them from being taught anything which may not be necessary in their path through the world, and which would be inconsistent with their being the Lord's servants. This is a principle of easy application. Is the thing proposed to be taught to fit my child for the Lord, or for the world? So also in the selection of books for their reading. The object of their education, as laid down in the Word, being kept in view, it is easily determined whether a book would contribute to or hinder that object. As in many other things, it is simply a question of a single eye; and to maintain this, we need to be constantly in the presence of God, judging ourselves and our ways.

(b) *Admonition* implies, as explained, the main-

tenance of careful supervision, so as to warn of dangers and to urge forward in the right way. And it is the admonition, as well as the nurture, of the Lord. Christian parents are therefore to speak in the name of the Lord; indeed their admonitions will be attended with more weight if the children are made to understand that their parents are acting for the Lord; that they are warned against this evil habit or that amusement, not from any parental caprice, but solely because in either case it would be displeasing to the Lord. Divine sanction would be thus stamped upon the parent's warning words, and the children themselves thus brought into the divine presence. And parents must take no lower ground; and taking this, they are at once preserved from either harshness of feeling, or the weakness of affection. The word of God being their guide, and the foundation of their government of their children, their mutual relationships will be strengthened, affections increased, and their authority conserved and respected. It is therefore of the last importance that the admonition should be conjoined with the nurture of the Lord. Eli, Samuel, David, and many others are examples of failure in this direction; the sad consequences of which pursued them to the end of their days.

(3.) In conclusion, a few dangers may be indicated, dangers into which many Christian parents

fall in forgetfulness of the exhortations that have been considered.

(*a*) The first we mention is the character of the schools to which oftentimes the children of Christians are sent. For the sake of a few educational advantages, or even on the ground of convenience, believers will sometimes place their children under the care of unbelievers, or under the care of those who, professedly Christians, teach positive error. In other cases, children are allowed to read at school classical works full of impurity and immorality. It is claimed that the Bible must not be used too largely, lest the consciences of unbelievers should be wounded; but have Christians no conscience as to Horace and Ovid, as to Homer and Sophocles, as to Shakespeare and Byron, as to many of the French and German books that find most favour with the teachers of those languages? It is high time that Christian parents took higher ground in this respect, remembering their responsibility to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

(*b*) The danger is also very common of delegating to others the responsibility of training children for the Lord. However devoted and consistent the persons may be who are instructing their children, nothing can relieve parents from their individual responsibility. That there are difficulties in the way of its discharge in many

situations in life cannot be denied. But if the exhortations, more than once alluded to, in Deuteronomy, be recalled, it will be seen that there are very few indeed who could not undertake it. "Thou shalt teach them (God's words) diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Every opportunity must be seized, because it is the one responsibility that God has laid upon the Christian parent. No one else has the same place or the same claim upon his children as the parent; and if they are ever so well instructed by others, the parent has failed if he has not himself brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

(c) The danger is great too in many Christian homes of the allowance of worldly amusements and associations. The Lord's control must be enforced throughout the whole circle of the children's lives. Separated from the world by their connection with their parents, not a single link must be permitted to be re-established. Even their dress should proclaim that they are under the government of the Lord through their parents. And the parents' example, their houses, all the surroundings of their children, must confirm, support, and illustrate the instruction given as to these things; and then, in the full assurance of faith, God can be

reckoned upon to remember His own word, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, *he will not depart from it.*" (Prov. xxii. 6.)

These things remembered, and every believing parent seeking, in dependence upon the Lord, to be faithful in his responsibility, what a testimony for God would the Christian household be! In a scene of darkness, confusion, and evil, the believer's home would be as an oasis in the desert—a bright anticipation of the time when everything shall be brought under the rule and sway of the Lord Jesus Christ.



CHAPTER VII.

Servants.

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”—EPH. vi. 5-8.

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh,” &c.—COL. iii. 22-25.

“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”—1 TIM. vi. 1, 2.

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”—TITUS ii. 9, 10.

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” &c.—1 PETER ii. 18-20.

CHAPTER VII.

SERVANTS.

HERE are more instructions given in the Scriptures for the direction and welfare of servants than for any other class. This is no small honour, and is an evidence of God's love and tender care for all who occupy this position. The reason may perhaps be also found in the fact that in every age of the church, from the days of the apostles until the present time, large numbers of servants have ever been, by the grace of God, numbered among His children. And since from the situation they fill they must be exceedingly influential for good or for evil—in commending the gospel to those with whom they live, or in dishonouring the name of Christ—these counsels and admonitions are doubtless given, that they might see the stress which is divinely laid upon their adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The term servant, as employed in St. Paul's epistles, is somewhat wider than as used among

ourselves. "Slave" or "bondsmen," is the exact equivalent in language, though servant is the best interpretation of its meaning; for the slaves of the East were in no way like the slaves of the West. They were, to speak generally, the household servants, whether male or female; differing from our servants in this, that they belonged to their masters, who acquired them by purchase or by war. But though slaves, they were for the most part kindly treated; indeed they often became members of the family, occupying posts of trust and influence, as in the cases of Eliezer the steward of Abraham, and Joseph in the house of Potiphar. They were really domestics; that is, members of the household; and hence, whatever the actual differences between their position and that of servants now, we shall be most in harmony with the spirit of the injunctions given if we understand them to apply to household servants. St. Peter, indeed, uses a different word—one that really means a "domestic." This is, no doubt, because he was writing to Jewish believers, in whose houses fewer slaves than "domestics" would be found. All classes of servants therefore are really included; and hence servants of all stations and in every degree will find much in this chapter to apply to their needs and position; for whoever is under an earthly master will find God's will as to his service, in the directions given in this

portion of His word. Nor should it be forgotten that all believers are, in one aspect, *the Lord's* servants; and hence, that while these scriptures have their primary application to the special class to whom they are addressed, there is instruction and edification for all. Even He who has left us an example that we should follow in His steps took upon Him "the form of a servant" (Phil. ii.), and thereby has taught us that the true place of every believer is in subjection to the will of another. "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? *but I am among you as he that serveth.*" (Luke xxii. 27.)

(1.) As might be expected from the very name, the primary duty of the servant is obedience. In five different epistles (Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Titus ii. 9; 1 Peter ii. 18) is this duty enjoined; and, as in the case of children, the obedience demanded is almost unlimited. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh." (Col. iii. 22.) The only limitation is found in their higher obligations to the Lord; for though this is not directly stated, it is clearly implied when it is said, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 24.) Up to this point—so long as the command given does not trench upon what the servant owes to the Lord as His servant—entire obedience is to be given to the master or

mistress. We say master or mistress; though every one will observe that mistresses are not mentioned in these Scriptures. This is either because the term master, in God's sight, includes that of mistress, just as men and women are often comprehended under the term man, or, more probably, because the authority of the mistress is delegated to her from her husband—he being the head of the household, and responsible for its rule before God, but entrusting its domestic arrangements to the wife as mistress. It must therefore be understood that masters and mistresses are both included in the former term, and that the obedience to be rendered is due to either or both, according to the position of the servant.

It is possible, that there may be a little hesitation in accepting such a description of the duty of servants as this almost unlimited obedience. But the words of Scripture will not admit of any narrower interpretation. Examine them as closely as you may, the meaning is simple and distinct. Obedience, indeed, is necessitated by the relative position. The master governs and the servant must obey, or the household would be a scene of continual distraction and strife. This will be more plainly seen when it is remembered that every Christian household should be a presentation of the rule or government of God. As the

servant to the master, so is the believer to the Lord. It is really therefore the Lord's rule in the household, exercised through the master whom He holds responsible for its conduct and order. Hence the apostle can say, "Ye serve the Lord Christ;" you receive the commands through your earthly masters, but in obeying them you are serving the Lord, because He has placed you where you are, and enjoins obedience upon you in that position. Service would be much easier—a 'means of grace' indeed—if this truth were more fully and heartily recognised, if the servant, in receiving the master's command, heard always the voice of the Lord. For then the temptation to debate the order given, to question its reasonableness, to condemn its unkindness, would be avoided, and the spring of cheerful obedience be always present in the soul. That there may be hardships, injustices, or even cruelties, is possible; but the sting of such trials will be gone when received, as it is the believer's privilege to do, directly from the Lord, when His will is recognised and submissively accepted.

Nor is the obligation to obedience weakened by the character of the master. "Servants," writes the apostle Peter, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, *but also to the froward.*" (1 Peter ii. 18.) The service—obedience—in such a case will be far more

difficult. There are masters who so win the hearts of their servants that these esteem their most self-sacrificing, even exacting, demands a pleasure. There are, on the other hand, masters who are habitually so inconsiderate that their slightest requirements are deemed a hardship. The temptation of the servant is to fly to obey the former; and to lag, sometimes even to refusal, to obey the latter. But, as this scripture shows, the duty of obedience is entirely irrespective of the master's character. To forget this would be both to forget that you serve the Lord Christ, and also to fall into the sin of eye-service, as men-pleasers, instead of as "the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." (Eph. vi. 6, 7; see also Col. iii. 22, 23.)

If we now point out the characteristics of obedience, as here given, the duty will be lightened by being directly connected with the Lord.

(a) "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers." The eye is not to be upon the countenance of the master. If it be, the temptation will of necessity be to please him, and thus to be a man-pleaser. The slightest duty is robbed of its value before God, if done to men instead of to Himself. That were to walk by sight, and not by faith.

(b) "But as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing

service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Eph. vi. 5-8; see also Col. iii. 22-24.)

Thus the servants are put down in the presence of the Lord. They are the servants of Christ, and they are to do the will of God from the heart, and their eye is to be fixed on the Lord alone. And in the recollection of this lies the secret of all happy, cheerful service, of all true obedience, and also of being altogether independent of the character of their masters. Christian servants would avoid many a snare, if this were kept before their minds; and thus exalting Christ in their service would, indeed, adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

(2.) The next direction of the Scriptures is as to *demeanour*. This, in fact, is connected with the duty already described; for where there is cheerful, willing obedience there will certainly be a correspondent demeanour. But it may serve to show its importance, as well as place the subject in a distincter light, if attention is directed to the specific statements of the word of God.

(a) Servants are to "*count their own masters worthy of all honour.*" (1 Tim. vi. 1.) They are to pay them all the respect befitting their position; and this requirement also is altogether irrespective

of the personal character of the master. Just, indeed, as God requires us to render honour to kings, and to all in authority because of the office they hold, so He commands servants to reverence their masters because of their position. The wisdom and propriety of this injunction is evident; for nothing is more becoming on the part of the servant, and nothing so much adorns and commends his service, as the respectful homage which is here enjoined; and nothing will be easier to render if it be borne in mind that it is to be given, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but with goodwill as to the Lord, and not unto men.

(b) *Humility* is also to be exhibited. Servants are to obey "with fear and trembling," and "with all fear." (Eph. vi. 5; 1 Peter ii. 18.) That is, they should cherish that humility of mind which fears to offend, and seeks "to please their masters well in all things." (Titus ii. 9.) They must thus studiously avoid giving cause of offence, and within the limits already defined ever seek to please.

(c) "*Not answering again.*" (Titus ii. 9.) Forbearance in word has to be exercised; the tongue kept under control so as to shun quick and hasty words. Every servant knows how many are the temptations in this direction. Sharp and even unjust things may be uttered by masters in a moment of irritation, and the tendency is to reply with words of the same temper; and then, when

the fire of dispute is once enkindled, it is not so easily extinguished. And what is more natural? But God in His word shows us a better way; and hence directed His servant to write, "Not answering again." The apostle Peter, enforcing the same thing, points to the example of Christ: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously," etc. (1 Peter ii. 20-23.) The Lord thus endured in patience before God, and hence looking away from the faces of men, "answered not again," committing Himself and His cause to Him that judgeth righteously. So with servants. Dealt with unkindly, and even unjustly, they are to submit to such harsh treatment in patience before God, and look to Him for redress. A path impossible to nature, but when trodden in dependence on the Lord, with the eye fixed upon Him, will yield unspeakable fruits of peace and blessing. The blessed Lord has trodden it Himself; and thus knowing what it is, He is able to

succour, and will succour, those that follow Him in it. It is to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings; and "if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together." (Rom. viii. 17.)

(3.) *Fidelity* is also enjoined: "Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." (Titus ii. 10.) In this injunction, servants are regarded rather in the aspect of stewards: they are to deal faithfully in all that is entrusted to their care. The goods of the household are constantly under the hand of servants, and hence it is said, "not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." They are not to abstract or use for themselves anything that belongs to their masters. This may be better understood if the exact meaning be given of purloining. We are told of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) who sinned against God by *keeping back* part of the price of the possession which they had sold, and the proceeds of which they professed to have devoted to the Lord. This shows the meaning of purloining; for the word there translated "keeping back" is the same as that which is given in Titus as purloining. Purloining is therefore not exactly what is *called* theft, but it is the appropriation by the servant, for his or her own uses, of that which belongs to the master or mistress. Much property—food, clothing, and other things—must pass through the hands, and be under the care of every household servant. God requires of all

servants that they should be faithful in this particular, and not allow themselves to take the smallest article without permission. Everything in the house belongs to the master or mistress, and must be held by the servant as a sacred trust. Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, and Joseph, in the house of Potiphar, are given us as examples of faithful servants, who did not purloin; while the Saviour describes one who even wasted his master's goods, in the parable of the "unjust steward." (Luke xvi. 1.) Every servant would do well to take heed to these examples; for also, in this matter, the temptation is often strong, and if once yielded to, will increase in power, and may prove the cause of total ruin. Let this divine word, "not purloining," be the light of the servant's path, and the snare will be escaped.

(4.) One special direction is given to meet a special case. "They," says the apostle, "that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." (1 Tim. vi. 2.) Christianity teaches that One is our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we all are brethren; and that there is no respect of persons with God. It might easily be, especially in the primitive church, that those "under the yoke," miscon-

ceiving the new truth, might assert their equality with their masters, and, on the ground of oneness in Christ, be tempted to claim exemption from required service. This exhortation was intended to meet the temptation, teaching, as it does, that earthly distinctions remain untouched by the fact of equality of standing in Christ. It is true that the master and the servant, if believers, are brethren; but it is also true that, as far as this world is concerned, they are still master and servant. Social arrangements and distinctions, so far from being changed or obliterated, are preserved and consolidated by Christianity. "They that have, therefore, believing masters must not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." The very fact of their oneness in Christ, and of the brotherly tie which consequently unites them, should be a new motive to diligent and willing service; for, while in different temporal positions, they can now rejoice in knowing that it is but a temporal difference, which will for ever fade away in the light of eternity; and thus masters and servants alike will recognize in the stations they occupy the will of their Lord. Attention to this direction will save servants from much disappointment. Even now, those who are Christians are led to expect too much from their masters and mistresses

on the ground of a common Christianity. The master or mistress may not, indeed, remember this sufficiently; but if so, the believing servants should be careful to show that the only effect produced upon them, by being one in the faith, is to make them both better and more willing in service. For, however exacting the demands that such a service may sometimes make, the service is rendered not unto men, but unto Him whom they delight to call their Lord, and He will give the recompense.

(5.) Sufficient has been written to show the minute character of the directions which are given. The question may be asked, What is their object? The answer is twofold. It is, first, that servants "may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10); and secondly, "that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed." (1 Tim. vi. 1.) It is, then, that the lives of servants should not prove a stumbling-block by bringing dishonour upon, but that they should be of such a character as to commend, the name of their Lord. A large number of servants, as has been already observed, are Christians; and hence it is so much insisted upon that they should walk worthy of their Christian name; for their position is often very difficult. Their faults are often magnified, and their virtues so overlooked, that nothing short of perfection will con-

vince many masters and mistresses that their servants are really believers. On the other hand, it must likewise be admitted that Christian servants are sometimes very lax; and when this is the case the name of God and His doctrine on their account is blasphemed. But God is faithful, and whatever the difficulties of their position, if there be but dependence on Himself, He will sustain them; and if by their behaviour they adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, He will cause the savour of the name of Christ to spread, by their means, as a sweet fragrance throughout the household in which they dwell.

(6.) In the next place there are both *encouragements* and *warning*.

(a) Encouragement. "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Eph. vi. 7, 8.) "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 24.) All service, whatever its character, is thus done in responsibility to the Lord; and herein lies the encouragement. His eye is upon the faithful servant, marking all his discouragements, trials, and sorrows, and sustaining him by His present approbation, and by the prospect of "the reward of the inheritance" which he shall finally receive

from the hands of his Lord. For the time is not far distant when He will reckon with all His servants; and when, at His own judgment-seat (2 Cor. v. 10), we shall every one receive the things done in our body according to that we have done, whether good or bad.

. There is also the encouragement—and how blessed it is!—arising out of the example of Christ. This is the special force of the teaching of St. Peter; for no sooner does he commence his exhortations to servants than he connects all with the path and sufferings of the Lord Jesus. The reason is that He was the Perfect Servant—the One who never did His own will, but was always in subjection to another. As He Himself says, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me” (John vi. 38); and though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. If the eye therefore be but fixed on Him, difficulties will fade, and strength will be received for the most arduous path; yea, and thus there may be fellowship with Christ in His sufferings for righteousness’ sake. “Looking unto Jesus” will be thus an antidote for sorrows, and an encouragement to persevering fidelity in the servant’s path.

(b) There is one *warning*. “He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.” (Col.

iii. 25.) Here also responsibility is brought in to deter from evil. With what care therefore has the Lord provided for the servants' need! And how tenderly does He bring them and their duties into the light of His own presence, so that everything may be done as unto Him! If the encouragements and the warnings alike have the effect of making every servant live alone for His approbation, then the heaviest burden will become light, and the most difficult situation be occupied with joy.

(7.) Last of all, we cannot but remind the servants of their opportunity for blessing to the household in which they are placed. There are many families that will have to praise God throughout eternity for Christian servants. What honour has the Spirit of God put upon the little captive maid of Israel, who was thus instrumental for blessing to Naaman (2 Kings v.); and from that time down to the present day it has pleased God to use many a servant for the conversion of members of the household in which they have served. A captain in the army, well known to the writer, was returning from India in ignorance and unbelief. He had a black believing servant. On board the troopship there was much leisure, and the servant seized the opportunity of commending to his master the gospel of the grace of God. His testimony was blessed, and his master

landed in England as a soldier of the cross of Christ. He forthwith abandoned the profession of arms, and devoted himself to the ministry of the gospel; and many a time has the writer seen the people to whom he was preaching bowed before his words, which were in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, as the trees of the wood are bowed before the wind. Thousands of such instances have their record on high; and the light of eternity alone will reveal how many masters and mistresses, or their children, have been saved through the humble testimony, commended by their walk and conversation, of believing servants.

May He grant that every Christian servant who reads these words may realize and fulfil, by the grace of God, the responsibility of his or her position.



CHAPTER VIII.

Masters.

“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.”—Eph. vi. 9.

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

Col. iv. 1.

“If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?”—Job xxxi. 13, 14.

CHAPTER VIII.

MASTERS.

“**M**ASTERS,” as explained in the previous chapter, is used as a term to include mistresses, and may therefore be understood to apply to all heads of households; at least to all households in which servants are found. A far less space is given to them in the Scriptures than to servants; but while the directions are fewer, they are exceedingly comprehensive and significant. Besides this, many examples of good masters are exhibited, and consequently there is a large amount of indirect instruction. This must be combined with the special commands, by all who would understand the will of God concerning those whom He has set in the place of authority over others.

(1.) It is to be especially noted that both in Ephesians and Colossians masters are reminded that their Master is in heaven. The true reading in the former epistle makes a slight addition, which however is of weighty import. It is, “Knowing

that both their and your Master is in heaven." This is to remind masters that their place of authority is only temporal; that while in this life they may have a position of command, others being subject to them, before God and in relation to Him, both they and those under them are alike servants. Two or three distinct things are hereby indicated.

First, that in their government of others they are acting simply as the Lord's delegates. In other words, they must fill their position of masters as serving the Lord. This at once brings masters face to face with their responsibility to God, and it is not too much to say that no one can fill the place of master aright unless he has the Lord before him; for then it will never be a question of his own will, or inclination, but what the Lord would have him do. He will feel the solemnity of his place, of his responsibility of governing his household for God. The recognition of this responsibility will influence every detail of his administration of the affairs of his household, and give the key for the adjustment of every difficulty that may arise, and for the settlement of every dispute. It is doubtful if Christian masters are sufficiently alive to the fact that they have to serve *their* Master in the government of their servants. That those who teach and preach, all indeed who serve the Lord in connection with the

church, or the gospel, can only meet their responsibility by abiding in Christ, by being constantly in God's presence, is generally acknowledged; but it is no less true that Christian masters and mistresses can only serve in the governance of their households when before the Lord, with Himself before their souls, with the consciousness of their need and helplessness, so that in dependence upon Him they may receive the needed wisdom and strength. Just as it was with Solomon, so should it be with every Christian master. When the Lord appeared to him, on his succeeding to the throne of his father, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee," he replied, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" (2 Chron. i. 7-12.) In like manner, masters, appointed to their post by the Lord Himself, should look to Him to enable them to govern as in His sight and for His glory.

Secondly, they are reminded that their servants are, even as they, the Lord's servants—"knowing that both their and your Master is in heaven." This will of necessity affect the whole character of their government of their servants; for while they will govern, and govern firmly, as they should because their authority has been entrusted to them by God—they will remember that those in subjection to them are themselves under direct

responsibility to their Master in heaven; that, together with themselves, they are the Lord's servants; and that therefore there is in this aspect equality, notwithstanding the difference in their relative positions on the earth. This of itself would prevent all harshness, and secure that tender consideration which, mingling with the firm exercise of authority, should ever characterise all Christian rule.

Again, recollecting their common relationship to the Lord, masters could never demand from their servants anything which could compromise or intrench upon their personal responsibility. They would use them as the Lord's servants; and knowing that while they were in a position of subjection to masters in earthly things, they must yet be in all things faithful to the Lord. If therefore masters should command them to do anything inconsistent with their character as the Lord's servants, they would have to reply as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did to their master, Nebuchadnezzar, when they refused to worship the image which he had set up in the plains of Dura. (Dan. iii.) For it is clear from the principle contained in the words, "knowing that both their and your Master is in heaven," that the authority of masters is limited by, and, indeed, in subjection to, the authority of the Lord. While therefore masters are supreme in their own domain,

and hence may require obedience thus far, if they seek to penetrate into the wider circle in which the Lord alone is supreme, then their servants are released from their obligations. Faithfulness to the Lord must be the guide of both; and wherever this principle is constantly recognized all difficulties will cease, because in that case it is the desire of masters and servants alike to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.

(2.) Such is the foundation—the fundamental principle in the maintenance of government over servants, and we may now consider the special directions.

“And, ye masters, *do the same things unto them,*” etc. (Eph. vi. 9.) Again, “Masters, give unto your servants *that which is just and equal.*” (Col. iv. 1.) They are thus exhorted to treat their servants with a spirit of equity, doing to them as they would have them do to themselves; and doing nothing by partiality or favour, but maintaining their rule in justice and fairness towards all—an injunction much to be remembered in households where disputes often occur between children and servants, or between the servants themselves. Then it is that masters especially have to remember their responsibility to give that which is just and equal, acting as before God, and dealing patiently and fairly with all under their charge; for masters

have to govern, and no amount of kindness will compensate for the absence of even-handed justice where rule is concerned. Indeed, the relationships of the different members of the household will soon be utterly disorganized, if this exhortation be forgotten. To carry it out will make many a demand for patience; but remembering that it is the Lord who enjoins it, and that it is His rule which has to be maintained, will keep the master in that spirit of dependence which is the necessary condition for the discharge of his responsibility.

The word is, "*Give* unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." That is, servants have a claim upon their masters for this; and that which is just and equal will include both treatment and wages. They are shut up to and are especially dependent upon their masters, having no appeal from their treatment, excepting, of course—owing to the altered circumstances of modern times—in the unwelcome method of leaving their service. Their very position thus constitutes a claim upon their masters for that which is just and equal; so that they may safely and with confidence leave themselves in their masters' hands, in the full assurance that their interests will be considered and guarded. And the masters are exhorted to this, as knowing that they have a Master in heaven—One who marks all their conduct, and

holds them responsible for their faithful dealing with their servants. There is no respect of persons with Him ; and every one of us, as His servants, will receive at the judgment-seat of Christ for the things done in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. v. 10.)

“*Forbearing threatening.*” This prohibition points to sins of the tongue in the government of servants—a temptation which is common at all times, but must have been more common still in cases where the servants were slaves, and thus the property of their masters. All know how strongly they are tempted, when displeased by wilful neglect or culpable carelessness, to speak harshly, and even to threaten punishment. How many valuable servants have been dismissed in this way! The feelings were aroused and the words uttered ; and pride, it may be, refused to recall them, and the servant has left. The Scriptures show a better way—*forbearing threatening*. Let the feelings, the temper, be under control—yea, the believer is to reckon himself dead to sin, is to allow self absolutely no place—and then, if called upon to act, even under the greatest provocation, it will be as in the sight of God. Much more influence will thus be exerted upon the minds of servants ; for evil is rebuked by a holy calm of soul, and very much sin will be prevented ; for “*threatenings*” chafe and irritate, and thus

provoking angry feelings, if not words, kindle a fire which is not soon extinguished.

(3.) It must not be forgotten that masters have a special responsibility for the whole of their households; for they govern, as already indicated, for the Lord. Hence nothing is to be allowed, whether in servants or in the children, inconsistent with the place they thus occupy. Christian masters are scarcely alive to this. For how often that is suffered in servants—in worldly ways and dress, and, in some cases, in the introduction of pernicious books, which would not for one moment be tolerated in their children. But the whole circle of the household has to be subjected to the Lord's authority. This principle is exemplified both in the Old and New Testaments. Thus we find Jacob saying to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you," &c. (Gen. xxxv. 2, 3.) Joshua and Daniel in like manner speak of their households before God; and in the Acts of the Apostles we find frequent mention, as has been shown in a previous chapter, of households being the Lord's. Hence too there is the responsibility of caring for the spiritual welfare of servants. For why have they been brought into this special relationship? Not surely that they may simply render temporal service to their masters; but also that the masters might watch over and care for the souls of their servants. This responsibility was much

more largely felt in past years than now, when the ties between masters and servants have been very much loosened by an excessive freedom of contract. Then it was no uncommon case for servants to be really members of the family. They were cared for in sickness as such ; they found in their masters and mistresses their truest friends ; and they seldom left except it were to change their condition in life. But now this is almost everywhere altered. In many cases servants remain but a short time in one place, and the consequence is that mutual interest between masters and servants is very feeble. Still this in no way lessens the responsibility of those who have servants. The difficulties may have increased ; but notwithstanding, every Christian master who remembers that he has a Master in heaven, will diligently and faithfully watch over the spiritual interests of his servants.

Admitting the responsibility, the question may be asked, How is it to be discharged ? Such a question can only be fully answered by each one for himself ; or rather by each one looking to the Lord for wisdom to meet it, and then He will soon show the way, and at the same time give strength to walk therein. A hint or two in dependence on the Lord may however be given. In the first place, in the view of such a solemn responsibility, it is necessary that masters should not retain servants

in their household who refuse to be subject; for it is impossible to occupy the place of a master or mistress for the Lord if obedience be not rendered by all under their care. To carry out this principle will involve the sacrifice of ease and comfort; but, as the believer knows, self is never to be his object. In this matter, as in all else, faith and not sight must govern the walk; and making the Lord the first consideration, exalting Him in our households, He will provide all that is needful, even servants, for them that thus seek His glory. Having, then, a household governed by the Lord's authority, family reading may be made a most useful means of spiritual instruction; for then all alike are in the presence of God, and are prepared to hear what He may speak to them through His word. In addition to family reading, the Christian master or mistress will seek other opportunities of direct instruction from the Scriptures; and in this way, reading or conversing together, much would be learnt of the servant's special needs and trials, and much guidance and edification might be ministered. Both sitting together at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word, would learn more of their respective responsibilities to Him as Lord, and of their duties, as alike His servants, in their respective relative positions; and thereby each would be led to desire to make His word the light to their feet, and the lamp to their path in all their

domestic life. Moreover, the master or mistress might be thus made to the household the minister of blessing, so that its members would be led, while respecting and honouring them as their earthly heads, to love them still more as caring for their spiritual needs.

The right government of a household is thus a most onerous task, requiring no small amount of wisdom, diligence, patience, and grace. It is indeed a solemn trust from the Lord. And if all who occupy the responsible position of masters or mistresses do but receive this trust from His own hands, they will then be acquainted with the secret of fidelity in its administration, as well as with the source whence only the needed grace and strength can be received. Then, too, they will not look for their recompense in the gratitude and fidelity of their servants (though these mercies may be graciously vouchsafed); but their one desire will be, in all things to seek alone the approbation of their Lord.



CHAPTER IX.

Conclusion.

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”—PSALM lxxii. 8.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”—MATT. xxviii. 18.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

E have now passed under review the Scripture teaching concerning family relationships, and the relative position of each member of the believer's household; and we have seen how that God has been pleased in His grace to appoint to each their place, and to enjoin the conduct befitting to each, according to His will. His own authority is supreme; and each severally owning it, the household would present a picture of divine rule. His glory would thereby be promoted, and the peace and blessing of the household be secured. In the millennium, the whole world will be brought under the sway of Christ. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." (Psalm lxxii. 7-11.) But it is the privilege of the believer to anticipate

this time, as far as his own house is concerned, exalting in his household the authority of Christ, and owning Him as Lord. If this were more faithfully done, this scene through which we are passing, already under judgment because it has rejected Christ, would be interspersed here and there with bright testimonies to the authority and lordship of Christ. Like some vast arid wilderness, which is relieved here and there by scattered oases—green spots of refreshing verdure, rendered all the brighter by their contrast with the desolation around, so this scene of darkness and confusion would be relieved by the spots of light and ordered rule presented by the homes of the saints. It is not enough therefore to testify, during the little while we are waiting for the return of our Lord, to the grace of God ; we should also bear witness to the authority of a rejected, but now glorified and absent Christ. It should be a solemn question with each one occupying the position of head of a household, how far this is being done. The days are becoming darker, and the moment of the apostacy draws on apace : everything betokens that very soon the Lord will arise from His seat, at the right hand of God, to return to fetch His own. It is high time therefore that we should awake to the importance of a brighter testimony during the little moment that remains.

May the Lord give us grace to be more faithful

in self-judgment, and enable us each one to begin with ourselves and our households, so that, bringing everything under the application of the cross, the Lord Himself may be thus more fully owned and glorified in the face of a hostile world.



OH, HAPPY HOUSE.



H, happy house ! where Thou art loved the best,
 O Lord, so full of love and grace ;
 Where never comes such welcome, honoured Guest ;
 Where none can ever fill thy place ;
 Where every heart goes forth to meet Thee,
 Where every ear attends Thy word,
 Where every lip with blessing greets Thee,
 Where all are waiting on their Lord.

Oh, happy house ! where man and wife in heart,
 In faith, and hope are one ;
 That neither life nor death can part
 The holy union here begun ;*
 Where both are sharing one salvation,
 And live before Thee, Lord, always,
 In gladness or in tribulation,
 In happy or in evil days.

Oh, happy house ! whose little ones are given
 Early to Thee in faith and prayer—
 To Thee, their Lord, who from the heights of heaven
 Guards them with more than mother's care.
 Oh, happy house ! where little voices
 Their glad thanksgivings love to raise,
 And childhood's lisping tongue rejoices
 To bring new songs of love and praise.

* This is only true of union with Christ: marriage is of course dissolved by death.

Oh, happy house ! and happy servitude !
 Where all alike one Master own ;
 Where daily duty, in Thy strength pursued,
 Is never hard nor toilsome known ;
 Where each one serves Thee, meek and lowly,
 Whatever Thine appointment be,
 Till common tasks seem great and holy,
 When they are done as unto Thee.

Oh, happy house ! where Thou art not forgot
 When joy is flowing full and free ;
 Oh, happy house ! where every wound is brought—
 Physician, Comforter—to Thee.
 Until at last, earth's day's work ended,
 All meet Thee in that home above,
 From whence Thou comest, where Thou hast ascended,
 Thy heaven of glory and of love.*

SPITTA.

* This poem, by a well-known German writer, has been altered here and there to bring it into more complete accordance with the truth. It is still defective, though without positive error ; but it is given as being a striking and beautiful description of a household in subjection to Christ as Lord. It is founded upon the scripture, "This day is salvation come to this house." (Luke xix. 9.)



The Mayflower Press, Plymouth, England.
William Brendon & Son, Ltd.