"Handfuls of Purpose"

LET FALL FOR EAGER GLEANERS.

Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents

BY

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PREFACE.

THE title of this little volume has been suggested by the command which Boaz gave to his reapers at Bethlehem, in regard to that earnest young gleaner Ruth, "Let fall also some of the *handfuls of purpose* for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not' (Ruth ii. 16).

Of Ruth, it is then recorded, "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley." She was a wise gleaner; she carried nothing away but the golden grain; the straw she left in the field. I would ask my readers to do the same.

These addresses, given to companies of Christians under very various conditions, some a quarter of a century ago, others more recently, were briefly taken down by some hearer, and the notes have been revised.

That there is much straw in each "handful" the Author is well aware, but if there be enough of the golden grain of God's precious truth to help a troubled inquirer, recover an unhappy backslider, cheer a feeble believer, or stimulate a fellow-servant, his object will be gained.

To the loving care of the "Lord of the harvest" the volume is prayerfully commended.

W. T. P. W.

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PART I.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD; OR, FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.

Handfuls of Purpose.

CHAPTER I.

Slavery and Shelter.

(Exodus i.-xii.)

THE book of Exodus is practically what you might call the book of redemption, the book of escape. In Genesis you have creation, but in Exodus you have redemption—redemption from slavery by purchase and by power. If you think that Exodus illustrates the whole truth of the gospel, it is an immense mistake. It only takes you out of Egypt and into the wilderness, whatever these types may mean. Leviticus shows you how the souls that are on the ground of redemption can happily approach God, whose purpose was to bring them first to Himself, and then to a land which flows with milk and honey. In the book of Numbers you see the way in which they are cared for as they pass through the wilderness on the way to the promised land. Thus in type and figure we see that which God would bring us into now.

Possibly you may have just waked up to discover

the blessed truth of the gospel, and have learned that you are going to heaven. I should therefore like to tell you, before you take many steps of the heavenward journey, that you may know a good deal about heaven before you get there. All these incidents in Israel's history are but figures and types, or illustrative pictures that God has given us to show us the way in which He deals with our souls now, and even though we are yet in the world, we may get an ever-deepening knowledge of God.

If you look at the commencement of the book of Exodus you will find that the Israelites were in the world, and living in the flesh. Egypt is a figure of this world where Satan rules, where the flesh is ministered to, and where it has plenty to feed upon, and where as sinners we are found to be the servants of Satan. It perhaps may be some time before we find out what our case really is. In the second chapter the King of Egypt began to oppress the children of Israel. In the third chapter God has prepared a deliverer in the person of Moses. He was in the backside of the desert when "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." He could not understand how there could be a bush all aflame, and yet not burnt. Then God spoke to him. He had His eye upon His people, hitherto unconsumed amidst affliction, and He was going to bring them out; and though as an unholy people they were amenable to the wrath of a holy God, yet would He find a way by which He might dwell

among them and fulfil His purposes about them. It is a great thing to get in our hearts the thought of the purpose of God.

Chapter three explains a little what God's purpose is, viz., to bring us out of bondage and into that blessed holy scene of love and liberty where Christ now is, and to put our hearts into the enjoyment of all that is His there. Israel's groans had gone up to God, and so have yours and mine. What led God to me? How was it you were converted? What was at the back of all? God's purpose, and He had His eye upon us, and His ear was open to our cry of distress. "And the Lord said, I have surely *seen* the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have *heard* their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I *know* their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up *out* of that land *unto* a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (chap. iii. 7, 8). That was God's purpose, while at the same time Israel was learning that there was nothing to give their souls rest in Egypt. It is what we get in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, "and no man gave to him." What is that? You are in a scene that cannot give you one single thing that meets the soul. The will of the prodigal took him from his father. What brought him back? His misery.

Just so here, the Lord had seen all His people's misery, and to deliver them was His purpose. God had His eye upon the affliction, sorrow, and trial of His beloved people, and there were two things He proposed. To deliver them, and to bring them up *out* of that land (it was the land of the whip, as well as of the fleshpots and leeks, and rung with the

lash of the taskmaster), and to bring them into a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. Yes, heaven is a land that flows with milk and honey. This is the figure that God uses to describe the blessedness of association with Christ in heaven, and the unspeakable joy, gladness, and peace with which the Holy Ghost fills the heart of a believer.

Well now, that was God's purpose, but how long did they take to reach Canaan? They took forty years, and learned a great many lessons in those years. What was the purpose of God? To bring them *out*, and bring them *in*. The wilderness was no part of God's purpose, but it was part of the ways of God. They had to learn themselves. And that is what you have not learned yet, my dear young convert. I want to encourage you. What will you have to learn? You must learn, perhaps in a very practical, bitter way, the absolute good-for-nothingness of the flesh. You will then learn the goodness of the Lord, and the tenderness of the Lord, and the pity of the Lord, and the wonderful way the Lord will come in to meet and help your soul. That is what they learned (*see* Deut. viii.).

I want you to be quite clear as to the difference between the purpose of God and His ways. And what is the purpose of God? He is not going to judge me, you reply. But I would not call that the purpose of God. That is His mercy. His purpose is to have you and me in heavenly glory by-and-by in the absolute likeness of Christ. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he

did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30). And why? Because it was His purpose to conform us to the image of His Son. Wonderful tidings, indeed, beloved friends, that you and me, once slaves of sin and Satan, God is going to have for ever in the joy of His own presence, and in the likeness of His blessed Son. If you have the purpose of God unfolded to your soul by the Spirit, and apprehend it by faith, you will make a good start, and a good journey too.

In the fourth chapter Moses gets his commission: "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (vers. 22, 23). Now mark, there is relationship. If a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are no longer looked at by God as a poor sinner. You are no longer a slave. What is the message that Moses has to carry? "Israel is my son." It is a wonderful thing to wake up, in the very day of your conversion, to the truth of sonship. "Let my son go, that he may serve me." That is the point. God comes in, and He says, I must have My people all to Myself. If you have just been brought to know the Lord, what a wonderful thing to find that God's heart beats toward you as a son, and He looks for you to enjoy sonship. Do you?

Chapter five gives us an added privilege, as we hear the Lord say, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." What does the Lord want with you? A feast. You are called to a feast now, but you must get clean out of Egypt for

that. And just as Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (ver. 2), so will Satan hinder the young convert from making a clean break with the world if he can do so. The first thing you find out is that you are a sinner, and the next that you are to be a worshipper. You can never worship in the world, nor can the song of deliverance ever be sung truly in Egypt. Sinners can go through a form of worship. But spiritual worship is a question of the truth and enjoyment of the Father, and there must be disassociation from what is of the world and of the flesh, for that to be known. Hence we can understand Moses and Aaron's words, "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God" (ver. 3). Three days' journey in the wilderness. That is a good long distance; it leaves the world fairly behind. You will find three days abundantly in Scripture. But Pharaoh will not have this, and immediately increases their burdens and their work. It is very instructive. As long as we were going on easily doing the devil's work he left us alone, but the moment the chains were felt as it were, oh, how he put the pressure on (vers. 4-19).

This action of Pharaoh is just a figure of the way in which the devil, when he sees a soul seeking to get free, immediately binds the chains more tightly round him lest he should escape to Christ. Oh, thank God, if you have passed through this misery, and are free. Perhaps you are saying, I thought I believed the gospel, and yet now I am no better than I was, and I am far from happy. Do not faint, nor let Satan drive

you back. It is a good thing for us to learn, at the start, our utter good-for-nothingness, and powerlessness. That is what the soul must pass through. You have no power, and Satan has a great deal.

But God's purpose must be carried out, and "He that is for us is stronger than he that is against us," hence in the next chapter the Lord speaks again (chap. vi. 1-8). Pharaoh still keeps them in bondage, but to the children of Israel God sends a lovely message. Mark the seven "I wills." Seven in Scripture is always the number of spiritual completeness. (1) "I am the Lord, and *I will bring you out* from under the burdens of the Egyptians." That is good. They were feeling those burdens. (2) "And *I will rid you out of their bondage*, and (3) *I will redeem you* with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; and (4) *I will take you to me* for a people, and (5) *I will be to you a God.* . . . And (6) *I will bring you in unto the land* . . . and (7) *I will give it you for an heritage:* I am the Lord" (vers. 6-8). It begins with, "I am the Lord," and it closes with, "I am the Lord." His "I will" never fails, and faith always reposes on God's Word. I recommend you to take God's seven "I wills" to your heart. I think I hear you saying, "I have had a good many doubts." You will never have any more if you hug those "I wills." God will not fail of His word, and His purpose He always carries out. Your redemption and mine does not depend upon what we are, it depends upon God. We could not help ourselves, and we cannot do ought for ourselves. Leave all with God, and peace is the result.

How blessedly God spoke here to encourage His people. But did they hear Him? We read, "And

Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (ver. 9). The pressure of the enemy was so great that they became hopeless. If you have never yet learned what deliverance is, then let me encourage you to wait on God, and listen to Him. Do not struggle. Satan is too great a foe. Let God deliver you. In these chapters you will get the way in which you are delivered, from the righteous judgment of God on the one hand, and the power of the enemy on the other hand. Are they to go or not is the question? Of course Pharaoh says he will not let them go, and then God brings in His power to effect His purpose. The various plagues I do not touch on, but in the eighth chapter I want to show you the wiles of the devil. Pharaoh, conscious of weakness, begins to make compromises, hoping still to keep his slaves. The first compromise he proposes is very interesting. "Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*" (ver. 25). Where? "In the land." Do it in the land, says Pharaoh. Could they sacrifice to God in Egypt? Impossible.

What is their answer? "And Moses said, It is not meet so to do . . . for we shall sacrifice the abomination (the idol) of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" (ver. 26). No, we cannot worship, or be really for God in the midst of Egypt, *i.e.*, the world. "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us" (ver. 27), is the answer of faith. Now that is a very fine statement on Moses' part. It is a principle of immense value

for your soul and mine, that if I am going to have God, and be for Him, I must do without the world. You cannot have the enjoyment of His love, if you want to go on with the world.

This firm reply of Moses leads to compromise number two on Pharaoh's part, "I will let you go that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go *very far away*" (ver. 28). Ah, how wily Satan is. Don't you be too out and out, he says to a young convert: "Ye shall not go very far away." Ah, how many a young saint has the devil tripped up with this kind of word. Do not go very far. Do not be an enthusiast. Listen. The further you go from the world the better, and Satan will never put his hand upon you again if you once get fairly out of Egypt. If you once get fairly into the wilderness, thank God, he will never place his foul hand upon you again. Never, no, never.

But Pharaoh does not yet let them go. God again steps in with deeper judgments, and at length Pharaoh says, "Go, serve the Lord your God; but *who are they* that shall go?" (chap. x. 8). Moses is very clear about who shall go. "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go: for we must hold a feast to the Lord" (ver. 9). All they loved and all they possessed were to go. All for God—was Moses' motto. Christian mothers, converted fathers, do you see this? It is here as elsewhere in all Scripture, the divine principle of "*thou* and *thy house*." We are not going to be a divided family, says Moses, and, more than that, we shall take every sheep and every bullock we possess, for all belongs to God. Why? Because redemption puts you upon

the ground of belonging to God altogether. I do not think anything could be more plain. This plain reply suggests a third compromise to Pharaoh. First he says, "Let the Lord be with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you" (ver. 9). And then, as if he loved the children, and would save them from evil, he adds, "Not so: go now, *ye that are men*, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire" (ver. 10). He says, Leave the children. The devil says, Parents, you can be devoted to Christ, but let your children be in the world; and many a parent heeds that suggestion, and sows seed that bears fruit in the shape of worldly-minded and worldly-wayed sons and daughters, who break their parents' hearts in later days.

Irritated by the refusal to leave the children, Pharaoh refuses to liberate his slaves till further judgment wrings from him a fourth compromise, to wit, I will let you have the children, but you must leave the goods with me. "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let *your flocks and your herds be stayed* (*i.e.*, let your business be in the world, conducted on worldly principles); let your little ones also go with you" (ver. 24). But faith never wavers, and Moses' reply is splendid: "Our cattle *also* shall go with us: there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither" (ver. 26). Ah, how firm is this man, that God's people belong to God, spirit, soul, and body. It is very refreshing. My heart is quite refreshed as I see the way this man says, We must be entirely for God. Not a hoof can be left behind. We could not leave an ox behind.

Everything must be the Lord's. It is a principle of faith. What the Christian is, and what he has, is all the Lord's. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

When you come to the twelfth chapter you find Pharaoh admitting this principle, as he says, "Go, serve the Lord, *as ye have said*, also take your flocks and your herds, as *ye have said*, and be gone; and bless me also" (vers. 31, 32). The very devil himself has the sense that the Christian should serve the Lord devotedly. The enemy of Christ has the sense that the Christian belongs to Christ, and that all he has, and is, should be devoted to the Lord absolutely.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters bring us to another point. What is it? The utter impossibility of any soul having to do with God, save on the ground of death, because death is upon every man, as the judgment of sin. There could be no relationship between our souls and God, save upon that ground. In the eleventh chapter you find God saying, "All the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die" (ver. 5); and then "that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (ver. 7). What was the difference? Were not all equally sinners? Surely. The difference was this, that the blood of the lamb sheltered Israel but not the Egyptians—the world. The Egyptians were in opposition to God's mind, and were His foes opposing His work, while Israel is looked at here as being the people of God, standing in the full value of the blood, as God knows its efficacy.

In the twelfth chapter we have the well-known story of the blood of the lamb, the lamb slain instead of the

first-born, *i.e.*, substitution (ver. 6). They were to kill the lamb, and to put the blood, not *inside* where they could see it, but *outside* where God could see it. It is a striking figure of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find that there are four very striking types of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. There are many sacrifices pointing on to the work of Christ presented in various ways in the Old Testament, for it is the picture book of Christ. First of all there is this paschal lamb. That is the figure of the death of Christ in substitution and atonement, as bearing the wrath of God due to us. Then the next figure is the Red Sea. That is a type of the death and resurrection of Christ for us. The third is the brazen serpent, the judgment of sin in the flesh, attesting the necessity of new birth. You do not get this truth until the very end of the wilderness journey, when the utter badness, and incorrigible wickedness of the flesh had been proved, after full testing. The fourth is the passage through the Jordan. It is also a striking figure of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of our death and resurrection with Him. Each of the four teaches, therefore, a distinct and different aspect of the truth of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you are not quite clear as to this paschal lamb being a type of the Lord Jesus. If so, reference to New Testament Scripture should assure you, as you listen to four distinct witnesses. When the Lord Jesus appeared on the earth, John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). When He died on the cross, the apostle John wrote, "For these things were done, that the scripture should be *fulfilled*, A

bone of him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36). This is a direct quotation of Exodus xii. 46. Again the apostle Paul wrote, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). And lastly, the apostle Peter says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 18-21). Your sin and mine did not come in by accident, so that God had to meet an unforeseen difficulty. All was seen and provided for in the bygone ages of eternity. All God's purposes and ways circled round Christ, and the Old Testament is full of figurative truth which found its perfect answer in Him as a man here. When the blessed Lord died, the Roman soldiers "brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs, *that the scripture should be fulfilled*, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John xix. 32-37). Scripture must be fulfilled, and the manner of the fulfilment shows us how completely our chapter is a type of the Lord Jesus.

They were to kill the lamb, and then they were to take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood (vers. 7, 22). Further, God said, "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are;

and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (ver. 13). God was going to pass through the land as a judge, and the only thing that could save the soul from God's judgment was the sprinkled blood. There are a great many souls that miss this point. The hyssop must be used. It was to be dipped in the blood, and in this case the Israelite had to use it himself. If you are going to get any of the value of the blood of the lamb, you must use the hyssop as well. I have no doubt it means this, the soul in the sense of absolute good-for-nothingness availing itself of the death of Christ. People believe that Christ died, and rose, and that He finished the work of atonement, but they do not appropriate the value of His death to themselves. When one gets down in self-judgment, brokenness, and repentance before God, I believe then our souls use that bunch of hyssop. We flee, as sinners of the deepest dye, to Christ. The judgment due to us has fallen upon God's dear Son, and the Lord passes over us in righteousness. The blood upon the lintel keeps God as a judge out. He cannot twice judge—first the lamb, and then the first-born. Peace with Him is the result. Peace with God does not rest upon your feelings. It is the atoning blood of the Lamb, God's own Lamb, put down before God's eye, that is the basis of your peace. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is not "when *you see* the blood." No. It is God who sees it.

Possibly you say, I do not think I appreciate the blood of Christ sufficiently. I am quite sure you do not, but God does. And He says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Understand this, that the basis of the peace of your soul with God is that shed and sprinkled blood (ver. 8). But then all the

way along you and I are to keep in our hearts the memory of what it cost our Saviour to redeem us. This "the lamb roast with fire" brings before us. That describes the agonies of the soul of Christ on the cross. The 22nd, the 69th, the 88th, and the 102nd Psalms describe the inward experiences of the blessed Lord when He was bearing our sins. Oh, what it cost Him. They were to eat the lamb "roast with fire." "Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof" (ver. 9). You are called to feed not only on the death, but on the moral ways and the beautiful intelligence of Jesus. Knowing what lay before Him, He went steadily on to death. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth" (John xviii. 4). And then you feed upon the beautiful, and lovely walk of the Lord Jesus. You have thus material for your soul to feed on all your days. Feed on Christ. "Bitter herbs" carry the thought of self-judgment, because my sin cost Christ His life.

Redemption by blood is a wonderful truth, and the moment the people are under the shelter of the blood, and have fed on the roast lamb, they start on their journey, and we read: "It came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt" (vers. 41, 42).

The blood that shelters them from God as a judge, establishes their relationship with God on the ground of accomplished redemption, and from that moment they are regarded and called, for the first time, "the hosts of the Lord." How much better to be among His redeemed hosts than to be the slave of sin and

Satan! How do you stand, and what is your relationship towards Him? Have you yet made a spiritual start similar to that made by Israel? If so, you will follow with interest the succeeding chapters in their history.

We're a pilgrim band in a stranger land,
Who are marching from Calvary;
Where the wondrous cross, with its gain and loss,
Is the sum of our history.
There we *lost* our stand in a death-doomed land
As children of wrath by the fall;
There we *gained* a place as heirs of grace
At the feast in the heavenly hall.

So we sing, while we haste o'er the wide world's waste,
Of our home by the crystal sea,
Where the waving palm and the swelling psalm
Fill the air of eternity.

We read our guilt in the blood that was spilt,
And we weep o'er the crimson flow;
But we joy in the grace of the unveiled face
Of a Father-God here below.
And as sons of God, redeemed by blood,
We hasten from Egypt away;
We cross the sand to the pleasant land;
And the joys of an endless day.

We were children of night, kept far from the light,
Enslaved by a cruel foe;
But Jesus' pains broke the iron chains,
And redeemed our souls from woe.
Now, as children of light, we walk, and we fight
In a path of triumphant joy;
For our strength in the Lord, whose word is our sword,
While faith is the shield we employ.

Our home is with God, and our path has been trod
By the faithful of ages all,
And us He will bring, as on eagle's wing,
To our place in the marriage-hall.
Then, then we shall sing, as the bride of the King,
Of the blood that has brought us so nigh,
To bask in the blaze of the Ancient of days
At the throne far above the sky.

CHAPTER II.

SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD.

(EXODUS xii. 8-20, 34-39; NUMBERS xxviii.)

WE have seen already the truth connected with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt in the early part of Exodus xii., which relates to the taking of the life of the lamb, and the putting of the blood upon the lintel and the two side-posts of the door. The importance of all this, however, is so far-reaching that I venture to travel over the ground again a little more in detail. It is of the deepest possible moment for every soul to see that this is the basis of all God's dealings with Israel. The blood upon the lintel is what you may call the groundwork of Israel's relationship with God. Although we may get a great deal else that is instructive here, still it is of the last importance to see that there was but one basis of relationship with God, and that is the blood of the lamb offered in Egypt. In the very spot where they had been slaves, there the work of another was accomplished by which God was able, in righteousness, to bring His people out of Egypt, and bring them into the land.

Get clearly in your minds that the passover and the feast of unleavened bread are two distinct things. The passover is Christ's work. The unleavened bread is connected with your walk. And the two things are

as distinct as possible, though they are coupled and go together. "In the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of Jehovah. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten" (Num. xxviii. 16, 17). And in the New Testament we have "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). In both these scriptures they are distinct. There is no doubt that the lamb is a figure of Christ, and I am equally certain that the unleavened bread is Christ. Israel was under the shelter of the blood of the lamb, and the angel of Jehovah passed over them. This is the Passover; but then they had a journey to go, and they were to eat of the lamb roast with fire, and unleavened bread, to strengthen them for it.

For us this sets forth that as a guilty sinner I take shelter under the Blood of Christ, our Passover. And then I feed upon the lamb roast with fire, and the unleavened bread, and this brings me into a suited condition for the journey by connecting the heart's affections with all that Christ passed through. Nothing could more strikingly prefigure the sufferings of Christ on the cross, under the judgment of God, than this expression, "the lamb roast with fire!" He passed through the fire of God's judgment. They were to eat it with unleavened bread—setting forth the unleavened perfection of Christ—and with bitter herbs.

You cannot eat "the Lamb roast with fire" without entering into the wonderful truth of the sufferings and sorrows of Christ. God would always have us remember these. If your heart is not in the power of the Spirit of God, practically feeding thus on Christ, you will get cold and formal. Many, many times over in this old Book God put Israel in remembrance of the

passover. Year by year He brought it before them. They were to eat it on the fourteenth day of the first month every year. I quite admit they did not do it. They did it in Egypt, and then once in the wilderness, and then in the land. They were careless.

We too have the opportunity, as the seven days roll by, of having our souls afresh reminded of the sufferings of Christ every recurring first day of the week. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Then comes, "Therefore let us keep the feast." This is a week of holy blessed enjoyment of Christ, feeding on Christ. And what we are feeding on very soon tells upon us. If I am not feeding on Christ, it will be something else. It must be Christ. Unleavened bread, that is Christ. Bitter herbs speak of what we were, and had done. I do not doubt the Spirit of God brings to our souls the sense, it was our sins that brought Him down into death. People sometimes say, Oh, we are past all that. Past that? Ah, my dear friend, you can scarce mean what you say! It is not a question of a person always thinking of his sins. God forbid. What we have always brought before us is Christ as a sweet savour to God.

Numbers xxviii. shows us what filled up those seven days of unleavened bread. There was the presenting to God daily, every day in perfect number, that which was the sweet savour of Christ in the burnt offerings, although there was not lacking the sin offering on any one day. God never leaves that out. God would never let us forget it. He will always keep fresh in the soul what we were and where we were, and out of what we have been delivered. And although we are brought into the fellowship of the Father and the Son—that is the

delight that God has in His blessed Son—yet He will never let us forget where we were, and what it cost Him to deliver us out of it. It keeps the soul lowly and humble. Our hearts are naturally so full of levity and lightness that we are apt to forget what we were. Not that that is what is to occupy the soul. No. The Israelites were to eat the lamb roast with fire, with unleavened bread, and bitter herbs.

And then remark, "Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire." How careful God is to keep fresh in the soul the sense of the sufferings of Christ. The lamb roast with fire typifies these. If you read the New Testament carefully you will be struck by the frequency with which the Spirit of God speaks of the sufferings of Christ. He suffered. Christ must needs suffer. You search out how frequently, when speaking of the death of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost brings in "the sufferings of Christ." That is the word the Spirit of God presses on our souls. The 22nd, the 69th, the 88th, and the 102nd Psalm are all full of the deep inward experiences of the Lord, when He suffered on the cross. You get the *figures* in the Pentateuch, the *facts* in the gospels, Christ's *feelings* in the Psalms, and the lovely *fruits* in the epistles.

Let the figure of all this in the types speak to us. You eat the lamb roast with fire. Do not tamper with His death, but have in your soul the sense of what it cost Christ as He went through the fire of God's wrath. God tested Him. We are to eat "his head, with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." How beautiful. Eat the head. What does it mean? Oh, beloved friends, the head is all the intelligence of Christ. Look at the wonderful intelligence that

marked the ways of Christ. It says in the gospels, and "Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth." He knew all, and yet He went. Eat the head. And then the legs. Oh, feed upon His intelligent devotedness to God, as well as on the beautiful walk of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. The varied presentation of these details in the four gospels makes their diligent study a necessity as well as a delight, and the results of this attention are unspeakably precious, beloved friends, for the soul: we get not merely that which meets our need, but the heart delights to trace the ways of the Lord Jesus.

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover." That is a pilgrim character. "Shoes on your feet," ready to go. That is, there were certain moral features that were to mark them, and are to mark us. While thus eating the blood was outside, as a token that no judgment could ever touch them. And there they were inside the house feeding on "the lamb roast with fire." They recognised God's judgment was on the lamb.

But more. They must eat unleavened bread for seven days (ver. 15). Now you might ask me, What is the application of this. We must not allow any leaven in our hearts, our lives, our words, or our ways. Leaven is always the symbol of that which is evil. He who allows it, "That soul shall be cut off from Israel." Does that mean that he shall die? For an Israelite it did; for us it means that one is cut off from communion with God first, and next, if unrepentant, from the fellowship of the saints, and most surely from being in the

enjoyment of that which God would give our souls. Now let every young Christian be quite clear about this. You know that Christ has formed a link between your soul and God, that nothing can ever touch it. You have been born of God, and washed in the blood of His dear Son, and you are a child of God, and nothing, by His infinite grace, can break that link. But a foolish thought allowed will hinder communion. The very smallest bit of leaven breaks the link of communion, and I am out of the current of the working of the Spirit of God.

Now we know very well that the blessed normal work of the Spirit of God is to bring Christ before our hearts. If something has come in that has broken this tender link of communion between the Lord and our souls, the Spirit of God makes the soul conscious thereof. There comes in a cloud. I must get back and find what was the hindrance, judge it, and then all is right. Nothing can break the link that grace has formed, as a matter of eternal life. But a very small thing can snap the link of communion, and rob the soul of the joy and divine delight that God would give us by His Spirit. Therefore you see the immense importance of the unleavened bread—"the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." If I allow a little bit of bitterness about a saint to exist, or grant to my tongue the liberty of a little evil speaking, do not let me dream of communion. I am out of it.

Leaven during the seven days was intolerable to God, and therefore, there is no doubt, that when the passover came round, it was a most necessary and important thing that the master of every house should search it from top to bottom—from attic to cellar—

to be quite sure that there was not a crumb of leavened bread in the house. A few crumbs were quite enough to bring in the judgment of the Lord. I think it is very important to ponder this, and to clearly understand why the house was to be swept.

We should not be the worse of what I shall call a new broom. They are reputed to sweep clean. I think, beloved friends, it is a good thing when I get a new broom in to sweep out everything that is not of Christ. Because if you allow leaven to remain in your life and ways you are necessarily cut off from communion. It does not mean that you are not going to heaven, but that you will be out of the liberty and power of the Spirit. And what will be the result? There will be individual deadness and lifelessness, and our assemblies will be dead and lifeless also. We are not keeping the feast. If we were there would be nothing but Christ. It is easy to tell when a brother has been keeping the feast of unleavened bread. He has nothing but Christ for me. If I meet a Christian and he has only some tittle-tattle, I shall get spoiled, and *vice versâ*. You know, beloved friends, you cannot touch pitch without being defiled. Every time I meet you I shall either help you Christward, or I shall hinder you. On the other hand, you will either help or hinder me. The point is, what am I feeding on? God give us to keep this feast.

It is very interesting to see the way in which the Scripture presents it. I am just going to show you one or two verses. "And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever" (Exod. xii. 17). How emphatic

God is! Again, "Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land" (ver. 19). There was to be no leaven in their houses *at that time.* For us, you know, it means *the whole pathway.* I find myself occupied with the death of Christ, as on Lord's Day morning, I am feeding on the passover. Very well, the Lord says, go and keep the feast of unleavened bread for seven days: and then I find myself there again on the next Lord's Day morning, and so on, and on. It really means this, that the whole of the pathway of the Church down here is a time when there is nothing but the unleavened bread to be fed upon by those who compose that Church.

Now then, see the way in which the Spirit of God brings this truth out, because if you are really wanting to follow the Word of God, it is wonderful how God will help you. When we come down to the very fact of Israel's going out of Egypt that night, we see that they were hurried out with their bread unleavened. "And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders" (ver. 34). I think there was no opportunity of its being leavened. "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual" (ver. 39). There is a wonderful little side-light here. "It was not leavened because they were thrust out of Egypt. . . ." I think what God gives us here is this, that if they had not

been in such a hurry the leaven might have got in. I will help them to start right, says God. And therefore they were hurried out in such rapidity that they did not get any time to fail in obedience. I will help them, at least, to keep My word for once in their history, says God.

Oh, it is beautiful to see the tenderness of conscience in a young soul when first converted. I quite admit it is not established in grace, but it feels it has such a treasure, such a prize, and it trembles lest it should lose it. I remember hearing a Christian say once, "When I was first converted, I declare I was afraid of my own shadow, for fear that something should come in between my soul and Christ." Tenderness of conscience and exercise of soul really come with the feeding on the unleavened bread. It is the heart delighting in Christ, and feeding on Christ. There is a response to the little light that it has. It desires to follow the mind of the Lord.

I think it is interesting to see how God thus helped Israel to keep His command as regards the unleavened bread, a command immediately repeated in the thirteenth chapter, which speaks of their separation, and their being set apart to God: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten" (xiii. 3). In my relation to the Church, the family, or the world, is there anything that is not like Christ? It must go. It is very simple. I do not want to escape the edge of the truth. Do you? You see Christ is everything to God, and He should be everything to us. We are in this world to exhibit Christ.

Remember this. "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (vers. 7, 8). Look at the reason given for eating unleavened bread; it is the response of affection, "This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt." You are not keeping this feast of unleavened bread in order to get saved, no—that is all clear, and secured by the death of Christ—but you are keeping this feast that you might be in the enjoyment of that which is yours. Because, beloved friends, while grace gives me a good conscience by the blood of the Lamb, it is by a tender holy walk that I keep that good conscience.

Now pass on to Exodus xxiii. There we read: "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt; and *none shall appear before me empty*)" (vers. 14, 15). "And none shall appear before me empty." Is not that striking? How am I to appear? With my hands full of Christ, the detail of which, I believe, we shall find given us in Numbers xxviii., xxix. You will do well to ponder these chapters.

Now just look at the sixteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the

passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it: seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, *even the bread of affliction;* for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days; neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee: but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work therein" (vers. 1-8). Note particularly verse 2. Bear that in mind. It is not the place that I choose. There is only one spot, and God chooses it. Query, Am I worshipping in the spot of God's choice, or am I following my own will in this? Observe also verse 3. "The bread of affliction" is a new character given to the unleavened bread. It is a new point, not to be disregarded. It is affliction to nature, it is not a thing I like. It is not what pleases me. It is the bread of affliction, and I am to eat it all the days of my life. Let me never forget this.

Further, nothing of the passover was to remain till the morning. What is the meaning of that? Whatever they could not partake of must be burnt with fire. The death of Christ is infinitely precious to God, it all goes up as a sweet savour to Him. What I fail to apprehend God appreciates. The present moment of our soul's history with God is a most serious one, because our capacity becomes fixed here. Therefore we must go on, and grow by the truth. But mark, it must be Christ, in all His fulness, and all His grace, that our souls feed upon.

God is careful to say that Israel might sacrifice only "at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in." This is a very great principle, beloved friends, as true now as in Israel's day. The Name of the Lord Jesus is the only gathering centre to-day, and the saint who gathers not simply in that Name, will lack the profound enjoyment of Christ that our God would have our souls taste.

Now let us turn to the twenty-eighth chapter of Numbers, and we shall see what occupies the seven days. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season" (vers. 1, 2). And you may say, What is the meaning of that? These two chapters (xxviii. and xxix.) give us what God calls "My bread." They do not present what Christ is *for us*, or what Christ *did* for us, although it is quite true that in these two chapters the sin-offering comes in no less than thirteen times, but it only comes in by the way. The sin-offering is not the point here. It is what *Christ is to God.* It is Christ in all the sweet

savour and fragrance of His life, and in the devotedness of His death, going up to God. It is all Godward, and is, so to speak, Christ presented to God as His bread in the official sacrifices. They were to be careful to offer unto Jehovah in their appointed seasons that which formed His bread of the sacrifices.

And now we will look at the seasons. First of all you have the general arrangement of what was to be daily (xxviii. 3-8), weekly (vers. 9, 10), and monthly (vers. 11-15). And then come the seven annual feasts of which the passover was the first. It was on the fourteenth day of the first month; and on the fifteenth day we come to the feast of unleavened bread (vers. 17-25). This is what the apostle refers to, when he says, "Let us keep *the feast* . . ." (1 Cor. v. 8). What a wonderful thing to think that the Church is seen before God unleavened, as in Christ. Therefore evil was to be judged: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," was the command (1 Cor. v. 13). They could have no fellowship with one walking in sin. He was cut off from the privileges of the assembly. How long are we to keep the feast? Seven days. All those seven days you practically present Christ before God.

"In the first day shall be a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work" (ver. 18). Your soul is in liberty before God. That is the first thing. Nothing legal. There is no "*I must* be so and so." It is quite true that you are not what you ought to be, but Christ is *all* in this feast. "*I ought* to be holy, and devoted, and earnest, and fervent, and worshipful, and rejoicing." Quite true, you ought to be, but I will tell you something else, while you are *trying* to be all these, you are not happy. Why? Because

you are beginning your seven days with a bit of "servile work." No, no, that won't do. You must get first into the liberty of the grace of God. The apostle well says to the Galatians, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The yoke of bondage is what "*I ought to be*," and many a dear young convert is under that yoke, and in great bondage. You bring God His bread, and you will be what you should be. It is God feeding on all that Christ was in His life, and in His death, and in the springs of His being here.

In the nineteenth verse, "the burnt offering," gives you His death. In the twentieth verse, "the meat offering," gives you His life. It is, so to speak, our presenting before God all the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is delighting in Christ, keeping the company of Christ, waving Christ before God, every day of the seven. We must not come empty. What a difference between my coming up empty, to get something for myself, and my coming up full, to present Christ, and wave Christ before God. Anybody can see the difference.

In verse 22, "And *one* goat for a sin offering to make an atonement for you," God beautifully brings in that which connects itself with the death of Christ for us. He knows very well how our souls are prone to circle round ourselves, so He presents the one goat, but observe, *one* goat will do to meet the question of what we have been, while "two young bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year" present the fulness of Christ as the burnt offering.

The point here is not Christ meeting our case, but

it is God glorified, and Christ filling the heart of God with joy, and He is saying to you and me, That is what you have to bring to Me. You begin next Lord's day morning with Christ for God; go to work on Monday, but don't take off your first-day suit on Monday morning. In the history of your soul, you have every day to go over the same ground. It is to be Christ on the first day, and Christ all the week, and Christ on the seventh; for of it we again read, "And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation (the assembly): ye shall do no servile work" (ver. 25). How much do we bring of Christ to God in our closets and our homes, as well as in the assembly? That is the question. The week begins with the liberty of Christ, and it closes with the liberty of Christ. Really my heart is charmed with this week of unleavened bread. It is feeding on Christ, and nothing but Christ. And I am sure, beloved friends, if we do this it will give tone to the assembly. Oh, you say, The brothers are very dry. Are the sisters full of Christ? Come now. Is there much sap about the sisters? You may say, The brothers are very dry. Yes. Be it so, but how much do we help each other? That is the point. Do not let us forget it.

When we come to the assembly of the saints we are each like a person coming into a dark room, and every person brings in a candle. If the wick is well trimmed, it will give a big light, but if not, or has "a waster" in it, the light is dim, and others will say, He has a candle, but there is not much light about it. Each saint not walking with God comes into the meeting like this, and hinders rather than helps it. God give us to be like well-trimmed lights by His grace. And I am sure if we feed upon Christ, and our

hearts are occupied only with Christ, there will be for God that which the Spirit labours to produce, the fragrance, the perfumes, and the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has given us all His love, and now He gives us the opportunity of presenting to Him that which is His bread. May we know how to answer to such grace.

Jesus, of Thee we ne'er would tire :
  The new and living food
Can satisfy our heart's desire,
  And life is in Thy blood.

If such the happy midnight song
  Our prisoned spirits raise,
What are the joys that cause, ere long,
  Eternal bursts of praise.

To look within and see no stain—
  Abroad no curse to trace ;
To shed no tears, to feel no pain,
  But see Thee face to face.

To find each hope of glory gained,
  Fulfilled each precious word ;
And fully all to have attained
  The image of our Lord.

For this, we're pressing onward still,
  And in this hope would be
More subject to the Father's will—
  E'en now much more like Thee.

CHAPTER III.

SANCTIFICATION: ITS POSITIONAL ASPECT.

(EXODUS xiii. 1-22.)

THE lessons from this chapter are exceedingly simple, but most important. They are these. The moment God has a redeemed people, He would have that people understand that redemption puts them on a totally new footing before Himself; and secondly, that their walk and conversation is to be very different to what it was before they were His. The second verse gives you the keynote of the chapter, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine" (vers. 1, 2). The first point is that the believer is sanctified to God. Then you get, thereafter, practical instructions as to the walk. In plain language, if you are a young convert, there is a new walk, a new path altogether, opened up to you. God has saved you for heaven, but you are not there yet, although you can say, "I know perfectly well I am going there." You have a title to be there, it is the blood that secures and shelters you, only do not stop, but go steadily on the road. Because you know you are forgiven, you may think that means everything. It is not everything. It is only the beginning. You have to go on. And you

have possibly to go a rough road before you get into that of which Canaan is a type. You have a journey before you, and you will very surely have difficulties in it.

But the point is this, What is the character of the pathway to be, and how am I to get on in it? You separate them to me, says God (ver. 2). I shall then expect them to eat unleavened bread, *i.e.*, to keep "a feast to the Lord" (ver. 6). That is the walk of holiness. They will then judge what will not do for God (ver. 13). The next thing was this: "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea" (vers. 17, 18). The Lord was their leader. And then the next thing, They took the bones of Joseph with them (ver. 19). They took the bones of their saviour with them (*see* Gen. xli.-l.). It has a meaning, and you and I, as we are passing on through this scene, are never to forget the fact that we are delivered by the death of the Saviour. That is where the Lord's Supper comes in. So they carried with them all through their wilderness journey the bones of Joseph, who had saved them in the day of famine.

At the close of the chapter we find, "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light: to go by day and night" (ver. 21). They had always the blessed sense of the presence of God. It is a figure, I admit. The glory of the Lord, the pillar of fire gave them light by night,

and then, when everybody else was in the heat, they had the pillar of a cloud like a huge umbrella over them. Light by night, shade by day, and God for their guide. They were very well off. It is a picture of the way God leads out His people.

But I am going now to speak a little more on the important subject of sanctification. What is sanctification? Holiness. The primary presentation of it is in the scripture before us. It has two sides—the absolute side, and the progressive side. There is the positional side, and the practical side. On the positional side you have the truth of the soul being set apart for God. And then there is the practical change, and holy progress in the walk of the saint. He first learns that he is set apart for God, and then learns to shape his ways accordingly. Where would you begin if you were thinking of the subject of sanctification? I know where I began. I began with myself. I thought, dear me, what an immense amount of change and progress ought to go on inside me. But if I am going to talk of sanctification according to Scripture, I must begin with the positional aspect first, and hence I must begin with Christ. Oh, you say, do you think that the Lord Jesus can ever be altered? No, God forbid. Turn to Scripture and let us hear what it says.

When here upon earth the Lord said to the Jews, "Say ye of him, whom the Father *hath sanctified*, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God" (John x. 36). What a remarkable thing that the Father had *sanctified* Him. Could He ever be more holy than He was? God forbid the thought. It means simply this, the Father had set apart His blessed and only Son, and sent

Him into this world in order to bring God to man, to reveal God, and to make God known here. It was *a totally new position* for the Son of God to occupy. As become a man He is seen in this world. You find another aspect of sanctification in relation to Christ in John xvii.

There the Lord says: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes *I sanctify myself*, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (vers. 18, 19). Where does He sanctify Himself. Where He *now* is. He has set Himself apart in heavenly glory, and, *as Man*, taken an entirely new position, that He might unite us to Himself there. Where is Christ? In glory. He is out of the world. And what, beloved friends, will take the heart out of the world? Only the knowledge of a heavenly Christ. Oh, yes. That will take your heart out of this world. It will make you a pilgrim.

If you have seen Christ, a victorious, ascended Christ, outside this scene altogether, everything is spoiled for you in this world. He sets Himself apart in heavenly glory that His people might be sanctified through the truth. The Christian is a person who has his heart in another sphere altogether, while his feet are travelling through this world. He is clean outside this world, although, as a saint, he will fulfil the duties of life infinitely better than before. The primary thought of sanctification then is separation, and a new place occupied. In John x. I see the Lord Jesus taking a new place, as Man here, and in the seventeenth chapter I see Him again taking a new place as Man at the right hand of God, for Manhood has been carried into the very

glory of God in the person of Christ. The result is you have a new place, and a new life, because He is there. You belong to a new company.

Now let us come to the development of this subject in the New Testament. In Saul of Tarsus I find the Lord picking up a very wonderful vessel for the unfolding of His truth, and in the very hour of his conversion he gets his commission to the Gentiles—viz., "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 18). That is what the gospel does. You cannot convert people, but God can do it by the gospel. The apostle Paul got his commission, and the character of his service to the Lord here, and if you are just starting in the Christian life, I would like you, and urge you, to be out and out for Christ. Then He will use you in His service, and it is happy work indeed to be an instrument in His hands of turning sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," and leading them to "receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which *are sanctified*."

But who are the sanctified? All who have received light from God. It will come if you are set for it, and all who get a glimmer of the light never rest till they know they are among the sanctified. The moment Israel got under the shelter of the blood they belonged to God. They were not then quite clear of Pharaoh's land, and before God saved them they were sanctified. Every Christian is sanctified before he is saved. You have thought that sanctification came at the end of the road.

Quite a mistake, it is at the commencement. The twelfth chapter of Exodus is shelter, the thirteenth sanctification, the fourteenth salvation, and the fifteenth satisfaction. Shelter comes the moment you trust Jesus. Sanctification is the next thing you learn, and the soul must learn the truth according to the steps in which God puts it. That is a step, I am trying, if I can, to help you to take just now. When you believe in Jesus, and have faith in His blood, you receive forgiveness of sins. That act of God is good for ever. You never can lose it, and you never can forfeit it. It is the joy of God's heart to forgive you.

Long ago I thought that if my sins were forgiven I should be the happiest person under the sun, and that that was everything, but there is deeper blessing still in possessing "an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." But you say, How can I be sanctified? That is the whole question, and the answer simple. The fact is that the two things go together, forgiveness and sanctification. The man that is forgiven is a sanctified man. He does not perhaps know it. But when he knows it, it will give his soul the most wonderful joy and peace before God. Oh, you say, I find my heart so bad, I am sometimes afraid I am not forgiven. Well, my dear friend, when the Lord forgave you, He knew how bad you were, and He forgave you all when He knew all about you. The knowledge of this last truth will save you from a great deal of distress.

There is no such thought in Scripture as "sanctification by faith," as some speak of, *i.e.*, an act of faith by which the saved soul suddenly becomes sanctified. The sanctification spoken of here the soul receives

the moment it has faith in Jesus. Faith in Him places you among the saints. Are you a saint? Oh, I should not like to take that place. Why? Well, of course, saints are very holy persons. That is indeed what they should be, but they are saints first. Who are the saints? All those who are sanctified by the effectual work of the Spirit of God in them, and the work of Christ for them. "Them which are sanctified," include all the Lord's people. Do not let Satan trouble you about your experiences, and raise the question as to when you are sanctified. If you trust the Lord Jesus, and are under the shelter of His blood, you are separated to God, and that means a great deal, for He regards you as His from that moment.

It is a wonderful thing to be separated to God, because, do you not see, when Pharaoh a little later comes out saying, that he is going to overtake those people, God replies that the people are His, and means to deliver them. "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast: *it is mine*," are His words. So, by-and-by, when "the enemy" said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them" (Exod. xv. 9), God replied, "They are my people," and smiting His enemy and theirs at once, "the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters." Thank God, with all my feebleness and badness, I belong to Him.

If you learn that you have been thus set apart for God, it will have a great effect upon your soul.

In thus speaking, I am thinking of the lambs of

Christ's flock,—those who have just started. I wish the older ones would think a little about them. Suppose we were to try to help them—we old ones, I mean now. Go and give them what will help their souls. Not dry stuff, — advanced theological or ecclesiastical dogma — that they cannot swallow. Feed them on the milk of the Word. "Feed my lambs" is a sweet word of the Chief Shepherd, and to do so is lovely work. I want to get all you dear young people to see that you belong to the Lord, absolutely and irrevocably. You receive the forgiveness of your sins, and sanctification at the same time. In plain language, beloved young convert, you are among the saints—you are one of them. Do not go about talking of what you feel. Faith, not feelings, regulates your position. Having faith, you are in the family of God, and have not only your sins forgiven, but you have an "inheritance among them that are sanctified." Wonderful words. How are we sanctified? By faith that is in Jesus.

The first thing for you to learn is, that you are set apart to God in all the value of the work of Christ, and on this ground He addresses you in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. That letter is addressed to you as well as to the Corinthians. It is "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that *are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called saints, *with all* that in *every place* call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. i. 2). You have been set apart for God in Christ Jesus. Mark, it is not called *to be* saints, but "called saints," *i.e.*, saints by calling. Oh, you say, then I shall have to walk very carefully. Yes, that will come presently. You will observe that all believers are looked upon as a sanctified company.

We belong to God in virtue of that which the Lord Jesus has done for us. "For of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). He has set Himself apart before God now, and we are in Him. Who is my wisdom? Christ. Who my righteousness before God? Christ. Who is my sanctification? Christ, and He is my redemption also. If you have not a sanctification up to Christ's, you are not fit to belong to the family of God, but since He is your sanctification you possess what you need. You will have to learn this, that what you are is utterly valueless. You died with Christ, and all that you are, as a man in the flesh, disappears from God's eye. We are in Him. Will that do? I could not have anything better, and God will not let me have anything less, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 31). Now you can boast in the Lord.

In the sixth chapter of 1st Corinthians you get the kind of people God sanctifies: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). "And such were some of you." It does not say that they had all been this. But some of us are convicted. "And such were *some* of you: but ye are washed." Is not that

nice, after getting all this terrible list of sins? "But *ye are sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." You see, beloved friends, there are two sides to this positional aspect of the truth of sanctification. There is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ *for* us in death, and there is likewise the work of the Holy Ghost *in* our souls, and the order is striking here, viz., that sanctification precedes justification in the soul's history.

Now if you come to the epistle to the Colossians, you will not exactly find the word "sanctification," but you will find the thing expounded in the way the Spirit of God presents the actual state of the believing soul. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. i. 12-14). So what is the truth? You and I can give thanks to God that we are fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. You will never be more fit for the inheritance of the saints in light than you are at this moment. Your fitness is what the Lord Jesus is. He is your sanctification, and "giving thanks to the Father" is the outcome. Are you doing it? Does your soul go out in thanks to the Father for making you fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light? Fit for God. God is light. And you are fit for God. Not in yourself, of course, but through that which Christ is, and Christ has accomplished.

How is this brought about? We will look at the

work of the Lord first of all. Turn to Hebrews ii. You get the truth presented in rather a different way there. Yet it is very important. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. ii. 9-12). God is bringing many sons to glory, and in order to it makes the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. That is Christ. "He that sanctifieth" is Jesus, and "they who *are sanctified*," all that are Christ's, and they are "all of one." He does not say what. No one word could describe it. But they are all of the same order —of one Father, one character, one family. What a wonderful thing for the soul to get hold of. Of every believer in Jesus, is it true that they are "all of one."

Amazing grace! Get hold firmly of this, that you, as a believer in Jesus, form one of this sanctified company. Glorious truth, they "are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." I hope you would be ashamed to call him "Brother," even "Elder Brother." He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, but remember, He is our Lord. That is the point for us to take in. In chapter twentieth of John He said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and

to my God, and your God" (ver. 17). She went and told them, and they all came together. Then came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." Thomas was not there on the first Lord's day, but when the brethren told him about the meeting afterwards, he took good care to be there the next time, and when the Lord came in Thomas knew that it was Jesus, and he said, not "My Brother," but "My Lord and my God." That is it. Young convert, never forget that He is your Lord. He calls us His brethren by infinite grace, saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee" (Ps. xxii. 22). He gives us His own place before God, and then leads the praises of the sanctified company.

You will find the basis and groundwork of all this in Hebrews x., where the atoning work of Christ is unfolded: "By the which will *we are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (ver. 10). What is it that sanctifies us? It is the death of the Lord. On the altar has been offered this blessed, holy, spotless Victim. All the credit, the value, and the blessedness of that which Christ was in His perfectly acceptable and infinite holiness Godward, that is all yours and mine. He took our place in death, and bore our judgment, thus we get His place in life and glory. Oh, what rest for the soul to see this. I have not to look at, or expect anything from myself any longer. "For by one offering He hath *perfected* for ever them that are sanctified." So here I find that I am not only a sanctified person, but I am perfected. It is perfection as to the conscience before God. The conscience of the worshipper is to be the reflection of the value of the offering. If

the offering be not perfect, the conscience of the worshipper will not be easy, and *vice versa*. The offering was not perfect in the Old Testament, God was not pleased, and the worshipper's conscience was not purged. What is meant by "perfect as pertaining to the conscience," is that the full light of God is on me, and it cannot find a spot. The offering has been so perfect that it has put every sin for ever away from God's sight. This could not be till Jesus came, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," but one great truth of the gospel now is, that the condition of the conscience of the worshipper is the reflection of the infinite value of the sacrifice.

The blood of Jesus has infinitely glorified God about sin, hence your conscience is to be absolutely purged by that blood. By His offering you are sanctified, and more than that, you are perfect as pertaining to the conscience. You will find three beautiful things in this tenth of Hebrews: The will of God, the work of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Ghost. You have the Trinity active in our blessing. The will of God was to have us fit for his presence; Christ wrought the work of atonement for us on the cross, by which we are made fit; and the Holy Ghost came down to give us the witness that we are fit, saying, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (ver. 17). It is not only, beloved friend, that your sins are forgiven, but God says, My memory has been so affected by the blood of atonement, shed on Calvary's cross, that I have not only forgiven your sins, but I have forgotten them. If I offended you, you might forgive me, but you will never forget it. That is what man is. He does not forget. But look

at this, when God wants to give your soul deep solid eternal peace, He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I *remember* no more." Ah, what solid rest does that give.

Then there is the other side of positional sanctification, which I shall just touch on for a moment. That is the work of the Spirit of God. Paul says, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel" (2 Thess. ii. 13). It is not sanctification by the blood, but sanctification of the Spirit. Now there we get the Spirit's work, the separation to God which the Spirit produces in the soul, and there is no doubt that the sanctification of the Spirit is a most important truth. In 1 Peter i. 2 you get a somewhat similar expression. There believers are declared to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." You have there the effective work of the Spirit of God, the deep, real, inward work of the Spirit. If it had not been for the touch of the Spirit of God, we could never have been blessed. What was the first effect when you were touched by the Spirit? Was it happiness? No, the very reverse. See that man, convicted by the Spirit of his sins, he is very miserable. Never you mind, that man is sanctified, and next he will believe the truth. He goes to some preaching place, where he hears of the love of Jesus, and the death of Jesus, and that the blood of Jesus was shed for him. He exclaims, "Christ died for a poor, wicked sinner like me." He

believes the truth, and gets peace, and the knowledge of salvation. That is it, do you not see. He will very likely tell you that he was converted that night. But no, there had been a work of God going on in him for some time previously. That then is the work of the Spirit of God in us. We are brought to see ourselves. Then come the exercises and agonies of the new birth. And now that soul begins to learn. He finds himself accepted in the Beloved, and he gets peace.

This may suffice on what I call the positional side of sanctification. God be praised for the grace that gives us this side of the truth, because it puts the soul clear in its relationship to God. Another night we will look at the practical side of the subject.

Eternal ages shall declare
  The riches of Thy grace
To those who with Thy Son shall share
  A son's eternal place.

Absent as yet, we rest in hope,
  Treading the desert path,
Waiting for Him who takes us up
  Beyond the power of death.

We joy in Thee, Thy holy love
  Our endless portion is,
Like Thine own Son, with Him above,
  In brightest heavenly bliss.

O Holy Father, keep us here
  In that blest name of love,
Walking before Thee without fear
  Till all be joy above.

CHAPTER IV.

SANCTIFICATION: ITS PRACTICAL ASPECT.

(EXODUS xiii. 3-22.)

WE have considered the subject of sanctification on what I call the absolute, or the positional side of it. Now we will look at the practical or progressive side of it. It is very important to see that there is the positional side, and then the practical side is the logical sequence. But you will never get a saint to enter really into the practical side unless there be first the apprehension of the truth of the positional side. I have a new place before God upon the ground of redemption. And that place is Christ's place. No less. Christ, bearing the judgment of God on the cross, was the measure of your distance and mine from God, when He was made sin, and when God dealt with Him as sin on the cross. You will never learn the badness of your own heart by looking at it. We never get the measure of our distance from God, and the extent of our guilt by looking at ourselves. If I look at Christ in the place where He once was, bearing sins, and made sin, and judged by God, wholly given up by God and cast off by God, in the agonies connected with the work of atonement,—I get the measure of my distance as a guilty sinner from God. When I see Him now where He is at God's right hand, in all the favour

and love of God, I learn the measure of my nearness. I learn what I am in Him.

Get clearly hold of this, your sanctification—in the positive thought of it—before God, is not what goes on inside you, but Christ, as, and where He now is. The moment the soul sees that, it gets into liberty. But then if you have this new place, this new life, and relationship (I do not say that you are really in the full truth of it, but if this be your new place), we shall have a new walk.

Very naturally, the moment the truth of its separation to God breaks upon the soul, it will say, Then there will be a new kind of walk now. You have been set apart to God, and His word alone can be your guide for your path as a saint. Heed to it is at the bottom of all progress in sanctification, viewed from the practical side. I have more faith in Scripture than anything I can say about it. You will never get on in your soul if you do not diligently and carefully read the Word of God. Nothing can take its place; nor any amount of hearing what others say about it supply the lack of your own personal study thereof. Because, you see, if you come to a meeting, by the end of the week very much of what you have heard is gone from you, unless you study the Word thereafter to gain, in the Lord's presence, the truth for yourself. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious" (Prov. xii. 27). The first half of that verse illustrates the history of many a young convert. They have enough energy to turn out to a meeting and listen attentively to a teacher of the Word, but have not enough energy to turn again to the Scriptures in their own room, and

get the truth of God wrought into their souls by meditation and prayer. They caught the hare, but were too lazy to skin and roast it, just because it was not "precious" enough to them. You have to get God's truth into your own soul in His presence if it is to be really food to you by which you can grow. The secret of much of the lack of spiritual growth among young Christians—and perhaps older ones too—is that there is not enough dealing with God about the truths of Scripture in our own chambers.

We have to thank God for any help He affords us by His servants, who minister His Word, orally or by stroke of pen. God can help me from a hundred sides, and I think it is a great thing for us to be on the outlook for help to our souls. On the other hand, we must remember the Lord's words, "Take heed *what* ye hear" (Mark iv. 24), as well as "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear" (Luke viii. 18). My beloved young Christian, you must get every side of the truth. We want all the truth that God has given us, presented to us in every way in which He is pleased to give it. Why? Because of the varied necessity of our souls.

Now look at the practical side of the truth which we have, in figure, in this chapter. "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: *there shall no leavened bread be eaten*" (Exod. xiii. 3). Never forget that God has saved you. Start with this, that a wonderful event has happened in your life. God has taken you out of Egypt. Is not everything changed? Surely! The point is this, when you are brought to Christ and

know a heavenly Saviour, your sins are forgiven and you are clear of the world. I do not mean to say it will not seek to attract you. It will. You may be in precisely the same external circumstances after your conversion as before, but nevertheless all is changed, and there is a new life. What was true of Israel in three parts of their history, is true of you and me all at once. They are found in Scripture in three places. They were in Egypt, then in the wilderness, and then in Canaan. It took them forty years to get from Egypt to Canaan, but that was because of their unbelief. We are in the world till we are converted. But the moment I am a converted man, this scene becomes the wilderness to me. I am clear of the world in my soul if I apprehend the Lord's words, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 14-16). We are in the same circumstances, but the knowledge of God has changed all, and as we press on we find that we have to learn as we go through the wilderness, what we are ourselves, and what God is. You are set to get to heaven, but if you enter into the truth of Christianity, you will find that the Spirit of God will bring your soul there now, while your feet are treading this wilderness scene. He will bring your heart into the heavenly place, and give you now the apprehension and enjoyment of that which is yours for eternity. That is what the epistle to the Ephesians unfolds.

We are no longer of Egypt, because the blood of Christ has separated us from a world that is under judgment. We find this is a wilderness, where there are pitfalls and dangers, but at the same time the Spirit of God takes us into Canaan in our souls. There is a very wonderful sphere before you. Get

into it. "Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage," was Moses' word to Israel, and "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. v. 1), is the word to us. "For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten," was God's injunction. What is leaven? It is the symbol of evil. The moment you are upon the ground of redemption, God looks for a different walk. I would greatly desire to get into your soul, just to be what you are. That is it. You be what you are, and you will be a wonderful Christian. What am I? You are a delivered person, you are a child of God, you have the Holy Ghost, and you are in the knowledge of the love of God. These are wonderful things. Remember, you are out of Egypt—the world—and there must be no leaven (ver. 4).

Leaven, in Scripture, always means what is evil. I know that the term has been used in a very false way, as the gospel spreading, and leavening the world. If God uses a figure, He always gives it a definite meaning. The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy (Luke xii. 1). The leaven of Herod was worldliness (Mark viii. 15). Malice and wickedness are called leaven (1 Cor. v. 8). When the day of the Passover came, the head of the house took care to see that every bit of leaven was swept out. We must do the same. The leaven of malice and wickedness forms no part of a Christian's life. If you are occupied with what is of God, it will lead to a very lovely, holy, and practical Christian life. If I take the figure, I understand it means that when the day of the Pass-

over came round, the Israelite brought a light to bear upon every corner of his house. Every dark cupboard was carefully examined, and he swept out every single crumb of leaven. I really believe that if we let the light of God's Word fall on us, we should find it might sweep out from our hearts a good many little crumbs of leaven. The way to keep out evil is to be occupied with good. Paul said, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8); and a dear servant of God, now gone to the Lord, once said, "For a Christian the secret of peace within, and power without, is to be always and only occupied with good." Will you book that, young Christian? Will you write it out, and stick it up where you can see it every day? It will do you a world of good all the days of your life. God keep us ever occupied with that which is good. I am not to be occupied with, or to feed on what is leaven, *i.e.*, evil in any shape, but on Christ, nothing but Christ.

If you will take the trouble to read God's injunctions regarding the unleavened bread and leaven in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, you will be struck with how, again and again, there is exhortation on these points. If evil be allowed, I grieve the Holy Spirit, and all light and joy is gone. I lose the enjoyment of God's love, and I lose that which He wants my heart to be enjoying, communion with Himself.

Most important is what the apostle says to the Corinthians: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

therefore let us *keep the feast*, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). The feast spoken of there is the seven days of unleavened bread (Exod. xii. 15-20, xiii. 6-10). God never supposes that you and I will be occupied with anything but what is of Christ. That is practical sanctification. We are to begin, and to continue walking in holiness, because of that which the Lord did for us. The Israelite kept the feast, and said to his son: "This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth" (Exod. xiii. 8, 9). You show me a person who is walking on these lines, and I will show you a downright, practical, happy Christian. "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand." Beautiful, the hand that used to do what the owner liked, that hand belongs to Jesus now. So with the eyes and the mouth. When the priests were consecrated, and the leper was cleansed, the blood was put upon the tip of the right ear, and upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the foot (Exod. xxix. 20; Lev. xiv. 14). The moment you are redeemed, you are looked upon as altogether belonging to God; the eyes, the mouth, the ear, the hand, and the foot are all His servants.

But our chapter teaches another striking lesson, as to what to do with what God cannot use. "And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, that thou shalt set apart

unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem" (vers. 11-13). What is the meaning of that? It is very simple. Can you devote an ass to God? No. Break his neck. You have something that you were very good at before you were converted; can you use it for, and devote it to the Lord? No. Have you broken the ass's neck: have you judged and set the thing aside as unfit for the Lord? I do not know what the thing is in your history, but you know. The point is this, we used to belong to the world, but now we belong to Christ. What I have, and what I am, all belong to Him. You cannot use some acquirement for the Lord. What is the result? You break its neck, so to speak. Whatever would be a hindrance to you, judge: do not spare that ass. Break his neck. If you can redeem it, do so. If not, break its neck.

"And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children I redeem. And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought

us forth out of Egypt" (vers. 14-16). Whatever I have is the Lord's, and if I cannot devote it I judge it, and this others can see. If your ways are changed that is manifestly seen by those round about you. Many young Christians lose a great deal of blessing because they do not take a decided, outside stand for Christ when they are converted. If you confess Christ, out and out, it will save you an immense amount of trouble. If you do not, you will escape persecution, but you will not have the support of the Lord, nor the comfort which the Holy Ghost would like to give you. You are not in a state to have it. By our cowardice we may save ourselves a good deal of what we do not like, but at the same time we rob ourselves of the triumphs and victories God would lead us to, were we faithful.

Let us now glance at a few verses in the New Testament. Every epistle speaks of the practical side of holiness. Look first at Romans vi. What do I find? "In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (vers. 10, 11). Everything is connected with Christ, and you are in Christ, alive from the dead; hence "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (ver. 12). Sin is no longer to govern you. Sin was the will of your own mind, and governed you while living, but being dead you escape from its mastery. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (ver. 18). You are doing the right thing now. All your members, your eye, your tongue, your voice, your ears, your hands, your feet, your mind and

strength, all that marks you as a man here, are to be servants to righteousness, unto holiness. That is sanctification. Holiness and sanctification are the same word in Scripture. You begin to walk in a holy way. "For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (vers. 20-22). That is practical holiness. And what is the end? Everlasting life. That is beautiful fruit. It is worth while going in for this.

Suppose we go to the first epistle to the Corinthians. We saw that this epistle is addressed to saints by calling. We are told in chapter iii. 16, 17, that "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." You are a holy people, and God dwells in you. If God dwell among His people, what must be the next thing? Everything that is unholy has to go, no doubt about that. And therefore when you come to the sixth chapter, 19th verse, we read: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

Pass on to the second epistle to the Corinthians (chap. vi. 16, 17): "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." If I touch an unclean thing, it will soil me. Is there any harm in this?

Well, it is not a question of the harm, but it is a question of what will suit the Lord. The point is, How can I walk here to please Christ? I will give you another question to put at the back of yours. What would Jesus do? Would Jesus do this? Oh, He would not. Then I do not think you and I can. Note now the blessed promise to the separate ones: "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (vi. 18). You will get the sense of it. He is my Father, and I am His child. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (vii. 1). That is the practical side of the subject. "Perfecting holiness" is really walking in the footsteps of Christ.

In the Galatians and Ephesians you have injunctions which lead to sanctification, but the word does not exactly occur in either of them. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. v. 25). That is part of the practical holiness of the Christian. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). Holiness is the great mark of God's people, God's house, and God's Spirit. If you read the epistle to the Philippians you will find that it describes the man who is in the enjoyment of a most blessed, holy walk before God. In the epistle to the Colossians we get a most practical unfolding of the truth (chap. iii. 12): "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." Fancy God addressing you as a holy person. Is it not remarkable that the

Lord should address you and me as "holy and beloved." There is the thing in its practical outcome.

In the next epistle you have more about the practical use of the word sanctification than in any other. "To the end he may stablish your hearts *unblameable in holiness* before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess. iii. 13). What is the meaning of that? That you might so walk here that there should be nothing the Lord would have to change but your body. Paul desired them to be in such a state as the Lord could set them in for ever. Again: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification . . . that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour . . . For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (vers. 3-7). That is intensely practical, and the power for it is found in verse 8. There is the power for a holy walk. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Again: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is *good*. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 21-23).

Just one word as to the epistle to Hebrews. Very remarkable is the way in which they are addressed in chapter iii. 1, "Wherefore, *holy* brethren," &c. Is that the way God addresses us? It is, and as a consequence the heart is at once checked. It is not what I practically am that is the point there, but what I am in Christ. The sense of this will act on the soul. How it pulls us up. Look also at chapter xii. 12-14. That is a very remarkable piece of instruction: "Lift

up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." If I do not make straight paths, I shall make a crooked path, for myself and some one else. Then, "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*" Very simple, but nothing could be more plain or practical. I am to follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Of course I believe this is true as a matter of communion, and if I am not walking in the enjoyment and love of the Lord, and in holiness, I am not very happy. Do you know the secret of happiness? Happiness always follows holiness. If you are going to be a happy Christian, you will have to be a holy one. That is it. You cannot have happiness if you do not go in for holiness.

Why should you be holy? 1 Peter i. 14-16 tells us, and further enjoins us not to be living like when we were in Egypt, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." That is very simple, beloved friends. When I come to his second epistle, he says to us: "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pet. iii. 11).

The apostle John thus addresses us: "Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John iii. 2, 3). He makes Christ's life, walk and ways, the standard of our ways. That is practical sanctification. Similarly, I find in the Revelation that the blessed Lord, in giving encouragement to those in Philadelphia,

says, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true" (iii. 7). He says, do not forget that I am the Holy and the true One. There is also what is very beautiful when we look into eternity in chapter xxi., "And I saw the *holy* city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (ver. 2). It was not a great city. Men like what is great. Babylon is called "that great city," but God looks for what is holy, and finds it in the Church. We get a blessed picture of eternal purity in that chapter.

And now, as though God would press holiness upon our souls, we read lastly in chapter xxii. 11, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Holiness is always to mark the saint, and if you will trace out the scriptures which thus present sanctification in its practical and progressive aspect—for we ought to be more holy to-day than yesterday—you will find that they will help your soul in this direction.

As Thine, Thou didst foreknow us
From all eternity;
Thy chosen, loved ones ever,
Kept present to Thine eye;
And when was come the moment,—
Thou, calling by Thy grace,
Didst gently, firmly draw us
Each from his hiding-place.

Thy Word, Thyself reflecting,
Doth sanctify by truth,
Still leading on Thy children
With gentle heavenly growth.
Thus still the work proceedeth,
The work begun by grace,
For each is meet, and training,
Father, to see Thy face.

CHAPTER V.

SALVATION.

(EXODUS xiv.)

THERE is a very striking comment in the New Testament upon this passage in Israel's history. I will read it. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb. xi. 29). It is the striking contrast, beloved friends, between the pathway of faith, and the pathway of nature, the pathway of the man of the world, in plain language.

Now if you ponder this bit of Israel's history, you will see that there is beautiful evidence of the energy of faith, although it was mixed up with a great deal of fear and trembling. God's Word always describes things exactly as they are, even in a figure like this, and you will find in this 14th chapter what absolutely answers to your own experience. What we have in figure here just illustrates what you know in your own soul's history—what all of us have known, I believe.

We learn, through these figures and types, that which God has for the blessing of our souls now in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. You must understand that to-day everything is taken out of type, and all is found in a Person in Glory. Nevertheless the types are all designed by God to teach us precious and wondrous truths. As I said previously,

there are four outstanding types of the Lord Jesus in Israel's history. First, the slaying of the lamb; secondly, the passage through the Red Sea; thirdly, the brazen serpent; and lastly, the passage through the Jordan. They are four figures of Christ's death, and they all teach totally different truths.

God is holy, hates sin perfectly, and cannot put up with it in anybody, not even when it was laid on His own blessed Son, who bore it vicariously on the cross. It must be judged. But the lesson of the Red Sea differs greatly from that of the blood upon the lintel. In that case it does not go beyond the truth that God, as a judge, is kept out. If, through grace, you have been led to trust in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very holiness, and the righteousness of God, make it absolutely impossible for Him to judge you. I may be quite clear as to that, and know my sins are forgiven, but still encounter real soul-difficulties. What about Satan's power? Although Israel was perfectly safe as far as God was concerned, they were by no means assured as far as Pharaoh was concerned (chap. xiv.). It was a question as to whether those people really belonged to God or to Pharaoh. The Red Sea settled that point.

I was greatly struck lately with a remarkable scripture in Isaiah, where it speaks of Israel in a day to come, when God will again deliver them. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward" (Isa. lii. 12). That is what they did in Exodus xii. They were like a lot of timid frightened creatures, flying from an angry foe. Being "thrust out of Egypt" (xii. 39), they went out with haste, and "it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled"

(xiv. 5). They were not moving out at a stately pace. They went out for what I may call dear life. They fled for refuge, fearing the pursuing foe. By-and-by it will not be in haste, for they will have learned then, that it is not a question between themselves and Pharaoh, but a question between God and Pharaoh as to whom they belong.

Perhaps some one is saying:—I thought I was converted, but now I don't think I can be, for I get into a great state of fear and doubt at times. You will find great comfort in the way in which the truth is brought out in this chapter. The moment a believer is under the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is sheltered. And the same blood that shelters him sets him apart to God. Hence you belong to God, spirit, soul, and body. You are not your own, for you are bought with a price (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). You belong to the Lord, but you are still in the world, and God would lead you out, as He led Israel out of Egypt. "He led them forth by the right way" (Ps. cvii. 7). "It came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, *although that was near;* for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up by five in a rank out of the land of Egypt" (xiii. 17, 18).

They might have got up to the land in eleven days' journey or thereabout (Deut. i. 2). But why were they not led that way? They were not yet fit for war, and the Lord said, If they meet the Philistines on the road, and see war, they will return to Egypt, so He led

them round by the way of the wilderness. They had never seen war, nor did they see it till they had seen God's power. I will tell you what they did see. They saw "the salvation of the Lord." He loves to teach you first, what the triumph of Christ is, how completely and absolutely the enemy's power has been broken. You have to learn this, that you cannot deliver yourself. Weakness marks us, and weakness was confessed by them as "they went up by five in a rank" (xiii. 18, *margin*). Do you know how —forty years afterwards—they went into Canaan? It was "marshalled by five" there too (Josh. i. 14, iv. 12).

What is the meaning of five? In Scripture five is the numeral that is always connected with weakness, *e.g.*, "Five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John vi. 9). What good were five? I do not doubt that five is the expression of weakness. And what God has to teach us is, that in ourselves we are the expression of utter weakness. We have no strength either in the commencement or end of our journeyings, but we do not learn that all in a day. When they are going to get into the heavenly land, they got in by fives. You have no strength either to get out of Egypt or to go into Canaan. God must be our strength, and is so when we are consciously weak. "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10).

This statement as to the five comes up first when they were to go through the Red Sea, with crystal walls on either side—their lateral defence from the foe. When they come to Jordan, what do I find? The "five in a rank" is maintained, though, as you know, there was not a drop of water within thirty

miles of them (Josh. iii. 16). As they went through the Red Sea the waters were a wall on the right hand and on the left. Who could go in there? Nothing but faith. Nature might attempt it, and did, but only to meet judgment. It is a very serious thing to try, in the power of nature, the path of faith.

But we read that Pharaoh "made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them, . . . and he pursued after the children of Israel" (xiv. 6-8). The whole power of the enemy is in exercise to hinder their escape, but every single bit of that power was broken by God in the moment of the deliverance of His beloved people. God led them on, and "brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble among their tribes" (Ps. cv. 37). Look how secure they were. "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (xiii. 21, 22). Have you not too heard Him say, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). Oh, beloved, He led His people then, and He leads His people now, if only they will let Him.

God first brings them down to the edge of the sea (chap. xiv. 1, 2). He must teach us, as a practical thing, our own weakness. You ask, What is the meaning of the figure of the Red Sea? It is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and our sins. I never shall be clear of the enemy until I know a risen Christ. Many a believer

goes all his days saying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). You will never be delivered till you get your eye upon a risen Christ, and know that in His death and resurrection you are connected with Him. That is, that what is true of Christ is now true for you. By grace I am united to Christ. In figure I learn that the death and resurrection of Christ was for me. If He died, I died. If He is risen, I am risen. I must accept death, as the judgment of God upon man. But what liberty, what blessing for your soul, when you see all this true of yourself in Christ's death and resurrection.

We do not learn that all in a minute, but if we do learn it we can truly say, Oh, happy man that I am, for I have learned through grace, what the love of the Lord is, and what the victory which He has gained for me. Romans vii. is the experience of many a person, who is really a believer, and hence a child of God, but it is the experience of an undelivered soul. The delivered soul says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Who shall deliver me?" is the piteous query of the undelivered, and no doubt there is many a person who is going through that experience. I quite admit it is experimental. You must know it in your own soul. And you are not delivered till you are delivered. Do you understand that? When are you delivered? When you give up trying to deliver yourself. Take Jonah as an illustration. There he was in the belly of the great fish. When did he get delivered? When he had given up all hope of delivering himself, then deliverance came. Read Jonah ii. He was in great misery. He prays (ver. 1); he cries (ver. 2); he promises, "I will look again

toward thy holy temple" (ver. 4); he moralises (ver. 8); he sacrifices, he vows (ver. 9); but he is in the belly of the great fish still. At length he says, "Salvation is of the Lord," and immediately he is out on the dry land (ver. 10).

That is the way Israel went through the Red Sea, on dry land. Dry land is where Christ is. Christ in resurrection, Christ in acceptance, and life, and glory before God. Christ the Victor. That is dry land for a Christian to-day. I am in Christ. I am not in Adam. That is what I understand by "dry land." Every hindrance is gone, and all the power of the enemy is broken.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, and against Baal-Zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (xiv. 1-3). Pi-hahiroth is part of God's ways with us, to teach us the utter uselessness of the flesh. A young convert often says, "Now I am going to do good, and I shall be a different person, and I shall live a different life." There is a great deal of self-confidence about us until we learn we can do nothing, and that God must do everything. It is a very remarkable thing that the meaning of the word Pi-hahiroth is "The gate of liberty." When you have the sense, I have not one bit of strength to deliver myself, it will be all right with you. So was it here. Pharaoh's servants told him that the people fled; he thereupon made ready his chariots, and went after them with a high hand (vers. 5-8). So the devil is determined to follow and overtake you. He

is not going to let you be the devoted servant of the Lord Jesus, if he can help it.

We read in verse 9 that Pharaoh overtook them: "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid" (ver. 10). The condition of Israel much resembles the doubts and fears that have gone through our souls, and their next words show that their hearts and ours are exactly alike. Do you know that you have a heart that could actually take you back into the world, even supposing you are converted? "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (vers. 11, 12). When they were on the road to Canaan, what unbelieving language! Could we so speak? Did your heart never say in hours of pressure and temptation, After all it is a pity I professed Christ? If so, my friend, you will yet be sorry that you indulged in such unbelief.

I think God let Israel pass by Pi-hahiroth that they might learn how He can open "a gate of liberty," and that they might taste the triumph of His deliverance. God, and God only, could deliver them. That was the point (ver. 13). Moses' answer is splendid. He was a dear man, a character I love with all my heart. You go and read the history of that man. I hear that once he lost his temper, and only once. But still, as a servant, he was a beautiful

servant. He was the mouthpiece of God, and it is a wonderful thing if you can be the mouthpiece of God to poor trembling souls. Hear what he says: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (vers. 13, 14). They were to see God's salvation that day. This is the first time, save one, that you get the word "salvation" in Scripture. The first time you get it is in Genesis xlix. 18, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." There it is waited for, here it is sent. What is God's salvation? The blood of the Lamb has met all His claims, His power has crushed the power of the enemy absolutely, and His people are brought to Himself, just to enjoy Him.

"Stand still," was the word heard that day. "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." You get into your soul the wonderful fact that Christ has gone into death, and tasted death as the judgment of God upon man, on the cross. He has gone into death, and, beloved, He has come up out of it, and there He is alive before God, and by faith now walking in His footsteps, you go through on dry ground into resurrection scenes. There is no death or judgment for you. It was all exhausted by God's beloved Son.

But to know this you must "go forward" as Israel was bidden to do (ver. 15). They obey, the "pillar of fire" forming their rearguard, for "the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night" (vers. 19, 20). As they started the light was before them, and the light drew them on. But what is the next thing? They have a backward look for a moment, and they find that between themselves and the foe, God has put Himself. He seemed to say—Come on, Pharaoh, you may touch them if you can, you may put your hand upon them if you can. And were they safe? Indeed were they. They were safe under the shelter of the blood, but now they are to learn that they are *saved.* I am *safe* when under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb, I am *saved* when the power of the enemy is broken, and I learn that I am before God in all the value of the work of His beloved Son.

The angel going behind them was most gracious. If the light had been in the front the rear would have been in terror. Fancy six hundred thousand of them, and only five abreast. The first five would be saying, We are all right, but the last five are not very safe. But God comes in between the last five and the enemy, and oh, how safe were all, as the light of God beamed over their heads. The electric light of our day is dim to the light God's host had that night. Everybody saw the pathway perfectly plain. That is clear.

Young Christian, this is your God, the God that loves you. That is the kind of Saviour who has come to take up your case, and to carry you out of this world right into glory. Do you think there is any chance of Satan getting you? No, no! See what follows. "And Moses stretched out his hand

over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea *dry land*, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the *dry ground;* and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (vers. 21, 22). Their way is opened. What lay before them? I see them marching forward, and what is it to? Apparently to certain death. Another step, and they go into these black dark waters of death. They accept death, and find it to be life and liberty. You must accept death. The waters of the Red Sea, or Marah, or Jordan, all tell one truth. There is only one way for my soul getting to God, and that is through death. I have to accept the death of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ for me.

What a wonderful sight, as they step out now; they hear the word "Go forward," and lift their foot to put it down on what seemed impossible to bear them—water. It is the acceptance of the sentence of death. Now for us the wonderful truth is that Christ has gone into death, and utterly annulled it. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

And now you ask me, How can I apply this truth to myself? Well, they were to go in, every one of them. There was not one of them that had not got the sense, I will have to go into that sea. But when they came to the spot, what was it? "Dry ground." The step was taken in the energy of faith, for we read,

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned" (Heb. xi. 29). The latter clause of that verse is very striking. You will find there are people who seek to occupy the place of the children of God. We live in a day of great imitation. All unreal souls should remember that every Egyptian was drowned in that sea. It is only faith that can tread that path-way, and faith went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground. I doubt not Pharaoh thought, I shall now get at them. His great object was to overtake and to destroy, God's to deliver and save, and how safe they were as they went through these immense walls—crystal walls—reared by God. Just so we taste the wonderful love that let His Son pass through death and judgment for us. And now He is risen, and we are risen in Him.

I do not doubt that the truth unfolded in type in this chapter finds its New Testament answer in Romans vi. and vii. "Likewise reckon ye also your-selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (vi. 10). It is our privilege to reckon that which the Lord Jesus passed through as ours. It is all ours. His death and resurrection were ours, and His victory over every enemy was for us.

In our chapter the way God checks, and overcomes the enemy, is very interesting. Pharaoh gets a solemn warning as the lynch-pins of his wheels all fly out, and receives an unexpected check by the taking off of his chariot wheels. The effect is electric. "The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said,

Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (vers. 24, 25). The tables are completely turned. It is not God's people fleeing now, but their enemies who fly. The former are on resurrection ground really, while death and judgment overwhelm all their foes, for "the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and *all the host* of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained *not so much as one of them*" (vers. 26-28).

Some of our learned infidel friends would fain believe, and try and persuade us to think that Pharaoh was not there personally. The 136th Psalm clears away that fog of infidelity, for it says the Lord "*overthrew Pharaoh* and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever" (ver. 15). Let all doubters look at that lovely little commentary, or summary of God's ways in mercy with Israel. It is all God, you see. I believe that proud king came to his end there. I love to think how completely Satan has been overthrown, because Pharaoh is the type of Satan. God's thought is to bring His people out of this world. If you are a worldly Christian, do you think you will have the enjoyment of the Lord? No! you may have the sense that God will never judge you, but you are not clear of Satan, and you will have doubts and fears, because you have never cleared out of Satan's territory—the world.

What God wants is that you should give up the world. There were two men that gave up Egypt in this chapter, Moses and Pharaoh. Moses gave up Egypt voluntarily, "By faith he *forsook* Egypt" (Heb. xi. 24-27). Pharaoh gave it up because he could not

help it. He came under God's judgment, like many another sinner who has had to give up the world by death cutting him off from it, and having nothing for eternity, he has lost all—his own soul included. Where are you and I in this matter? Are our hearts clear of the world, and set on Christ, and on the things of Christ? That is where they ought to be.

The next thing we read here is, "Thus the Lord SAVED Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses" (vers. 30, 31). Salvation is a very big word in Scripture. When I am "*saved*" I am clear of the enemy, and I am out of this scene in spirit and heart. I am a delivered man, in resurrection surroundings. When Israel looked, and saw all their enemies dead, they doubtless said, There is no road back to Egypt. The road was closed in. And my dear fellow-Christian, if you fancy you have found a road back, you are a very wretched man. You are not really back, you can never belong to it again, and you must come under God's judgment—governmentally. You are a person to be pitied. Oh, learn what it is to be with Christ on the sunny banks of resurrection.

Of the Christian it is said, "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10). It is a fine thing for the Christian to see this, up far above the angels there sits a Man, and I am in Him, and He is the delight of the Father's heart. He is in a sphere of heavenly joy and blessedness, and I am complete in Him. It is only faith that touches that sphere. He has died, and He has

risen, but He has died and risen for me, and now He has taken, as Man, this new place before God, and that is my place.

Oh, how freely must Israel have breathed that morning! How prepared, too, were they to sing a song that morning, when they saw all their enemies dead on the sea-shore. God loves us to sing. A Christian is looked upon as a person who sings. And we may well sing. They saw that morning every enemy gone, and deep, rich, solid peace filled their souls. Now where were they? In the wilderness. What had they there? Two things. They had God, and the sand. There was not even water or bread. They were to learn God, in that wilderness. And that is what we have to do. We have to learn the grace, the love, and the sustaining help of the Lord, while withal we have to learn what we are ourselves. They began with God, and God was everything to them. So is He to us if we will only let Him be what He is.

Come sing, my soul, and praise the Lord,
Who hath redeemed thee by His blood;
Delivered thee from chains that bound,
And brought thee to redemption ground.

Redemption ground, the ground of peace!
Redemption ground, oh, wondrous grace!
Here let our praise to God abound,
Who saves us on redemption ground!

Oh, joyous hour when God to me
A vision gave of Calvary:
My bonds were loosed, my soul unbound;
I sang upon redemption ground.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SONG: SATISFACTION.

(EXODUS xv. 1-21.)

THERE are a good many songs given to us in Old Testament Scripture. This is the first, just as the Song of Solomon, I suppose, is the last. This is the song of redemption. The Song of Solomon is the song of reciprocal affection. Both are beautiful in their place. And I think we all should seek to sing each of those songs. It is our portion.

In this song, which is beautifully simple, and very refreshing to the spirit, God is everything, and SATISFACTION the result. Even though you and I may have been a good long time on the wilderness journey, yet we can turn back with joy and gladness to re-echo this song. There are many here who have just set out on the road, and I want to point out to such how suitable it is that you should sing. Observe, there was no song in Egypt. You must be out of Egypt before you can really sing to God. It is not a question of people having the vocal capacity, but the state of soul which warrants such a song, so you must not "join the choir" till you are saved. Then you will find yourself in it without joining.

I think it must have been a wonderful thing for God that day, when six hundred thousand men

opened their mouths and sang this beautiful song. Depend upon it heaven listened that morning. They were very happy that day. They had a right to be. Was it not a beautiful song. It was a lovely song. And what was there in the song? Well, there is a peculiar absence of a great deal that is found in what you and I are wont to sing. Nineteen-twentieths of our singing is about ourselves. This redemption song from first to last is all about the Lord.

But I hear a sorrowful voice saying, I cannot sing, for I am very miserable, and I fear that I am not converted. You would not be miserable, my dear friend, if you were not converted. If you were still dead in your sins you would be insensible. Why are you wretched now? Because there has been an action of God's Spirit in your soul, and you have had a glance at the value of the cross, but then, instead of keeping your eye resting on Christ, you have been looking into your wretched miserable self. If I were you, I would drop all that, and get into the spirit of this beautiful song.

Israel sighed, wept, and groaned in Egypt, but they could not sing. Even in the twelfth chapter they did not sing. Why? Because they were not in liberty, but the moment they were, out comes the song. So will it be with you, the moment you learn the fact that the cross, the death, and resurrection of Christ are for you, and that in His death and resurrection you are dead and risen, you will not then be able to help singing. The song will burst from your lips spontaneously without a bit of effort. This gives us the true thought of worship. A religious service will in all probability be a great deal about ourselves. But that is not worship. Worship is the

overflow of a full heart. No one can worship unless he be in the sense of the liberty of God.

Let us now briefly listen to this new song of redemption. It begins with, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (ver. 1). It celebrates His victory. How does it finish? "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (ver. 18). It proclaims His glory. This song begins with the sense of the grace and power that has delivered, but it closes with the glory. It takes us right into the glory. Faith enjoys the salvation that it has found in the Lord, and faith takes a flying leap right over all the difficulties of the way, saying, "Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" (ver. 13). There is faith's confidence, that what grace has commenced it will finish. Doubting friend, take up this language, and let your doubts go. They are the fruit of unbelief. It is Satan diverting the eye from Christ. You let the eye rest upon Christ, and all your doubts will go, and you will be occupied simply with God, and with what Christ is.

Note how this chapter opens. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song," &c. (ver. 1). Really the state of many a professing Christian to-day would find its expression, not in the word they "sang," but they "sighed." Oh, my dear friends, I believe our lack of joy is a great sin. It is a very serious matter, because it is a positive testimony against Christ, to His enemies. Instead of being a testimony for Him, oftentimes we are a testimony against Him, and a kind of encouragement to half-hearted sinners to go on with the world. The reason

of this poor state is because our souls are not in the joy of this song. Listen again to the words, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." It is the first outburst in Scripture of real worship, and is based on the fact that "He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." All the power of the enemy is broken. And if you look back for a moment and see what is connected with the cross, the death and resurrection of Christ, you will see that the power of the enemy has been absolutely crushed, and we stand in the victory, deliverance, and acceptance of Christ. Christ is all. What joy fills the heart when that is seen. What joy filled the heart of the prodigal when he got the sense of the Father's love (Luke xv.).

There is music and dancing in our chapter (ver. 20), and you have music and dancing in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. I want you to get into the spirit of the beginning of the chapter. In the end of the chapter we find that Israel murmured. It is true that the song of the fifteenth of Exodus did die away, but did you ever hear of the song of the fifteenth of Luke dying away? "They began to be merry," it says. And we never hear of it ceasing, and we must live in the spirit of our dispensation.

What is Christianity? It is the knowledge of the Father, and the Son, with the Holy Ghost dwelling in the body of the believer, and setting him up in this scene in the power and spirit of Christ, that he may live in this scene as the Lord lived. Christianity is the repetition of the life of Jesus, in the life of the Christian. I cannot therefore allow myself any comfort from this chapter if I am a bit dejected. No, no! That might be overlooked in that day, when

God was testing the flesh, as He was, but when I come to the full expression of the truth of the day we are in, you get Christ as the pattern. Did you ever hear Him murmuring? No, never! Even in the darkest day, we hear Him say, "Father, I thank thee" (Matt. xi. 25). Always subject, always obedient, always peaceful. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). Always joyful is also our normal state. "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John i. 4). Ah, beloved, we have a perfect pattern in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us follow Him.

Observe the way their soul's vision is filled that resurrection morn: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" (ver. 2). I think, beloved friends, that some of us will have to put it this way: "The Lord *was* my strength and song, but now I am so weak." Israel says here, "The Lord *is* my strength and song." Is there not refreshing vigour about that note of the song? Do you think that as you and I get older, we are to get colder? As we go on are we to become feebler? Away with such unbelief. Let me show you an old convert. Four years in a prison, cut off from everything, and all Asia turned away from him, listen to what he says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). It was Paul the saint. He writes as a saint, not an apostle there. What can keep a saint right? The company of Christ.

Brethren, let us get a little more into this element of joy. We want it. You usually see young Christians very bright. Should we older ones be the reverse? God forbid! If we see one joyful and bright, we should judge ourselves if we are not the

same. "The Lord is become my salvation" is a fine note to sing when we have learned our own absolute weakness and incompetence. His heart was filled with gladness as those voices rang from the borders of the Red Sea. Shall He not hear ours also? They saw that the road back to Egypt was blocked. They had heard the word, "Stand still." They had seen God come in and deliver them in that marvellous manner, and now they turned, and gave to God all the praise, and all the thanks. Further, they say, "He is my God." It is a nice thing when the soul is able to say that with distinctness and clearness. And more than that, "I will prepare him an habitation" (ver. 2). That to me is the most lovely bit of the whole chapter. The moment I am upon the ground of redemption I am fit for His company, and He loves to have my company. "I will prepare him an habitation" is faith's apprehension of God's ultimate purpose. They seized the thought that God was going to dwell with them (*see* also ver. 13). Mark, it is His strength that brings you out of a defiled world, and it is to a *holy* habitation He leads you (*see* also ver. 17). They seem to say, Lord, you will never be content till you have got us in your own company.

Ah, but you say, we have not got there yet. No, beloved, but is it not a wonderful thing, that while you and I are here, God can dwell with us. How few of God's people ever rise to this. The scripture says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). It is an immense thing for the soul to see that, and that it

is only upon the ground of redemption. God visited Abraham. He paid him a visit, and then retired. But when I come to this chapter, what is the first thought that comes into their hearts? They say, He will come and dwell with us. We shall have His company permanently.

Are we not going to dwell with the Lord by-and-by? Certainly, but here you have the thought of God now dwelling with us. God's people are now formed into a house, the body of Christ, by the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and that only upon the ground of redemption. The thought of this you have in this chapter, "I will prepare him an habitation." The way is clear for God to dwell in our midst. Before the moment of our going to dwell with Him, comes the wonderful truth of His dwelling with us (*see* John xiv. 16, 17). Our going to be with Him is all certain of course, but, before we go to dwell with Him, He comes and dwells with us. This is made good, and known only by the Spirit of truth, as the Lord said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth . . . he dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you" (John xiv. 17).

Further, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). This is not only in the assembly, mind. It is individual. It is a wondrous privilege which the soul has now, and I believe it to be conditional on our practical state of heart. You will see in a previous verse Jesus says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,

and will manifest myself to him" (ver. 21). What is the meaning of that? You keep His commandments, and He will pay you a visit. But He says also, "If a man love me he will keep my words." What is the difference, beloved friends, between keeping His commandments, and keeping His words? There is a very great difference. There are many things that come to you and me in the form of a command in Scripture, and there is also a great unfolding of God's thoughts, His wishes, His words, and what would please Him. You set yourself to keep what you are commanded to do, and you will get a visit from Him. But if you love Him, and treasure His words in your heart, you will do always that which pleases Him, and you will secure His company abidingly. How blessed is such a privilege. May we seek it fully!

It is of the last importance that Christians should be instructed as to the indwelling of the blessed Spirit of truth, both individually, and likewise in the assembly. The moment you are upon the ground of redemption, you will find that God has a people. We are saved to be part of a people, God's assembly. Do you observe that God had a people here? "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed" (Exod. xiv. 13). He has that which He can call His own. Now it is the Church of God. We are only a bit of it. God's Church in any place to-day is composed of every saint of God therein. We ought to be together, and we ought to be clean separate from the world. But we are not. To-day you see where the Church is, alas, all divided and separate. Scripture shows us what God's thought for her was—to walk together as His people. It is always good to get back to the beginnings of things.

You go and read the Scriptures. Get back to the Bible, and read what God has written. Whatever you may hear me say, or any other man say, do not believe one word of it till you go back to Scripture and test it. What we want is to get back more to what God has said, and to take our thoughts from what God has said.

Moreover, this song celebrates that it is not only a people that are redeemed and purchased, but a people brought right home to God. They rejoice that every enemy has melted away, and every opposer is "as still as a stone till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased" (ver. 16). Is not that beautiful? They are God's people. Wake up, fellow-believer in Christ, you are one of God's people. It is a wonderful thing when the soul gets the sense of this. What God has begun, you may depend upon it, He will carry on to the end, and by-and-by the top-stone will be laid in glory with great shouts and rejoicings.

The secret of much of the darkness among God's people to-day is, that they are reading the New Testament through the dimness of the Old Testament. What ought we to do? Read the Old Testament with the light that God has given us in the New. It is a profound mistake to read the New Testament through the Old Testament. Everything was in type, shadow, and figure in the Old Testament. But it is all out of type now. Everything is wrapped up in Christ, a living Man at God's right hand. And I am in Him, and you are in Him. As far as the practical ways of a saint down here are concerned, whether individually, in the assembly, for worship, or

whatever be connected with God's people here, what is the secret of power? Only the Holy Ghost. And therefore you can easily see the folly of the present day in going back to the Mosaic ritual. You are behind the times. You are all out of date. Everything now must be in the power of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps this is never more true than in song.

A redeemed, rejoicing people, with God in their midst, have the sense that they are a delivered people; they know they are God's people, and they know they are sure to get to the spot He is leading them to. But there is something more than that. They have this sense, holiness belongs to this company. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (ver. 11). They had a deep sense that "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5). Do not let us forget it. I hear some one say, I am not happy. May I ask you a question? Are you holy? Ah, that searches me. It ought to search us all. It is not that sin is not in us, but that does not give a bad conscience, if it be not working. Holiness is the soul walking in the light, and in separation from the flesh, the world, and from the things that do not suit God.

But supposing I am making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. If I am walking in the flesh, I shall not get the support of the Spirit, nor the comfort of the Spirit. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. xiii. 14), is the injunction. If I do not, my joy will go, and I shall inevitably lose my brightness. And what is the secret

of this? I have not been holy. Happiness walks just one foot, and one foot only, behind holiness. The secret of a happy life is a holy life. It is very simple. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 16). You walk with Christ, and you will become holy. Do not try to be holy. The moment you try to be anything, it is not of Christ. There is no effort in Christianity. Walk in holy fear, and your heart will be kept in the company of Christ. It is a beautiful thing when a soul walks in that kind of holy fear. You walk with Jesus, my friend. Tell everything to Jesus. Have no secrets with Him. If you are in weakness, go to Jesus, and tell Him about it. Count on the heart of Jesus, and the strength and love of Jesus. He has no reserves on His side, do not let us have any reserves on our side. You will be happy then.

But more than this, holiness leads to such confidence in God that the soul can triumphantly say, "The people shall hear, and be afraid" (ver. 14). Will you meet enemies? Plenty of them. What will happen? They will all go down before God. Every difficulty becomes a new opportunity for God to display His power. The Lord comes in to show Himself strong. My friend, is all the world against you? God and you are a match for them. God and I together are invincible. All the difficulties will disappear, because you will have the strength of the Lord. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

The song closes very beautifully: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the Sanctuary, O

Lord, which thy hands have established" (ver. 17). They are a holy people on the road, and they are going to the sanctuary. That is the spot where there is neither enemy nor evil occurrent. And, beloved friends, we are going to it, and what ought to mark us by the way is holiness.

"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (ver. 18), is the triumphant conclusion of faith's song, and the reason thereof is very blessed. His glory and their deliverance are based on the same thing—"For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea" (ver. 19).

They got back to the starting point. It is very interesting to notice that the end of the song is the beginning of it. The older a saint gets the more his soul enters into and enjoys the simplicity of the grace of God.

Miriam and her fellows ring out the chorus of this redemption song, "with timbrels and with dances," saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (ver. 21). The chorus is not on a level with the song itself, for Miriam is a type of a soul that never gets beyond the thought of escape. She has not a note about getting into the land. She rejoices in what had been done in destroying the foe, but breathes not a word about getting into the land. It is very striking; she never got in. She died in the wilderness (Num. xx. 1). In the history of her soul, she never got over Jordan.

It is our privilege now to pass in spirit to where

Christ now is. And God will sustain us, and keep us, and carry us on, a bright living witness for Himself. Oh, you be for Christ in this scene. Are you a young convert? Be out and out for the Lord. It is His purpose to carry you in. You may be a Caleb, or a Joshua. They fully followed the Lord. They were the only two that got into the land (Num. xiv. 26-30). Had I met these two men, forty years after, and said, Were not you among the men that stood on the shores of the Red Sea and sang that song? Yes, we sang that song, and are not we here, two witnesses to the truth of what we sang? Ah, it is beautiful to see this. And I believe there will be many a saint in glory by-and-by, whose history has been something after the pattern of a Caleb, and a Joshua. They had been kept and sustained by God the whole way along, and they had fully followed the Lord. May God give you to fully follow the Lord Jesus Christ, for His blessed name sake.

O patient, spotless One!
Our hearts in meekness train,
To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,
That we may rest obtain.

Jesus! Thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill;
Thy patient life—to calm the soul;
Thy love—its fear dispel.

O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That, with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSTENANCE: THE MANNA AND THE WATER.

(EXODUS xv. 22-27, xvi. 1-36, xvii. 1-16.)

IF we did not know the incorrigible evil and the deep unbelief of our own hearts, we might perhaps wonder a little at that which is recorded in these chapters. But the fact is, Israel were like us. They found it very difficult to trust God. And you and I, as saints, find it very difficult to trust God. In view of the difficulties of our pathway, God has told us all this for our comfort and encouragement. You will observe that what comes out is this, the murmuring of the people only brings out the grace of God. That is at this point of their history. You will have to notice that they are under pure grace, right up to Sinai. It is nothing but sovereign grace. They are on the ground of atonement, and nothing but grace comes out.

You will find it makes all the difference in the history of your soul, whether you are before God in the sense of what *His grace is*, or whether you are before Him in a legal condition, thinking of what you *ought to be*. Grace is the discovery to my soul of what God is in every possible circumstance. We saw how this multitude made the heavens ring with a song of praise to God, as they saw all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore. I wonder if you have ever

noticed this verse: "And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left" (Ps. cvi. 10, 11). Beautiful touch of God's Spirit, as to what God did then. And you would have thought as you read the next verse, "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (ver. 12), they will be sure to go on brightly, joyously, and happily. When you were converted you thought that. You dear young people, perhaps you thought you would never have a difficulty when you were converted. Is it not striking, the next thing you read? "They *soon forgat his works;* they waited not for his counsel" (ver. 13).

Let us now follow Israel's steps in the wilderness, the place where we, as well as they, are tested, and where we have to learn what we are, as well as what God is, revealed in Christ. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter, therefore the name of it is called Marah" (ver. 23). That is, I believe, practically speaking, if death has delivered us, we have to taste death. What has delivered us? The death of Christ, and we have to accept death. We do not like it. In our circumstances we often have to taste death, for death is rolled in on us. Here we often meet with that which we cannot drink. Perhaps you have such a cup just now. You say you cannot drink it. No, you cannot drink it bitter, but if you connect it with Christ, if you put the cross in, you will be able to drink it.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Christ always said, no matter

what was in the cup, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" How different these two queries! "And Moses cried unto the Lord: and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (ver. 25). It was another miraculous intervention of God. I have no doubt it typifies the cross. It was a tree, and we know that Jesus suffered on the tree. If sorrow meets us, cast the tree in; connect the cross with it, and God's love therein displayed, and that the bitterness of expiation was borne by Christ, and all will be sweet to you. When the tree was cast in, the waters were made sweet. And so we read, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 3-5). You connect the cross with the sorrow which perhaps just now is breaking your heart, and all will be changed and sweetened. What was the cross? It was the revelation of the love of God to me. Is He less loving to-day in His dealings with you and me than He was the day He gave His blessed Son to die for us? You have just to see that all His dealings are the acts of perfect love. It is sweet when love gets in, and you can then drink the water, no matter how bitter previously.

The next thing was, "They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (ver. 27). That is beautiful. They were tested, and they murmured, but God does not chasten them. No matter what you are passing through, if you take it

from God, it is accepted as from Him, and blessing is always the result. If you take the cup from the devil's hand, you will have to drink it with the devil. But if you take the cup from God you will have God's company, and God's support. Elim is a lovely picture of the tenderness of the ways of God with His people, in the very opening step of the wilderness pathway. When we are converted we are in the same circumstances outwardly perhaps, but all is changed in our souls, for we are no longer slaves of sin in Egypt, but saints of God rejoicing in the freedom wherewith Christ has set us free, and on our road to glory. Refreshment from God meets us at every step, just as He brought Israel to the twelve wells of water, and the seventy palm-trees. These are the very picture of what you would call grace in its fulness giving refreshment and shade. Twelve wells are the completeness of refreshment. Twelve in Scripture is the number expressing completeness in the way of human administration. Seventy palm-trees suggest the perfection of care, in giving shade. The Lord sent out twelve disciples, and then He sent out other seventy (Luke ix. 1, x. 1) to minister blessing, and one cannot but connect these numbers at Elim with the twelve and the seventy there. I think then that the twelve wells and the seventy palm-trees are the perfection of the love of the Lord in His desire to meet the need of His people.

Refreshment and shade, are wilderness mercies, and Israel found Elim a very beautiful place, doubtless, but they could not stop there, and you and I have to pass on. When we find an Elim, the very thing that suits our hearts, we would like to settle down, but that God will not permit, and we must again take the

road. In chapter xvi. they "came unto the wilderness of Sin." There is no mention here of a most pregnant fact, recorded in Numbers xxxiii. 10. "And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red Sea." Oh, you say, I thought they had done with the Red Sea for ever. Why were they there again? Just because they had lost, if I might so say, the sense of the mighty power of the hand that had opened the Red Sea for them. In three days they were murmuring, and wondering what they were to do. God turns the bitter water into sweet, brings them to the twelve wells and the seventy palm-trees, and then says, Go and have another look at the way by which I have brought you out of Egypt.

Ah, beloved, God would turn our hearts back, again and again, to the wonderful truth of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do well to turn back in the history of our souls to that moment, which the Spirit of God would never have us forget. Read the history of Israel, and note how often God says to them, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee" (Deut. xv. 15). He would always keep fresh in the soul the sense of what His grace is.

Led by God, they pass from the Red Sea into the wilderness of Sin. A very remarkable thing, that the name of the place indicated what came out—sin. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel *murmured* against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (xvi. 2). It is a very striking thing, how this word "*murmured*" comes in repeatedly in their history, yet God meets it in grace. "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God

we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord. And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord: for he hath heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud" (xvi. 3-10). What a contrast, man's murmuring and God's goodness. It is very often our circumstances which produce this growling at Him. It is the voice of unbelief!

We generally find out where we are, by a murmuring

spirit. Nothing is more easy than for a murmuring spirit to get into the heart of a saint, or an assembly. Oh, the mischief that is done by a murmuring saint! Hence the solemn injunction, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (1 Cŏr. x. 10). Where was the first outbreak of evil in the New Testament? Not long after the Church of God was set up, a man and a woman agreed to tell a lie. They wanted to appear more devoted than they really were. God would not have that in His assembly, and they were cut down (Acts v. 1-11). Then we read, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a *murmuring* of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts vi. 1). Grace cured that murmuring splendidly, as it appointed seven Grecians (not an equal number of Hebrews and Grecians) to look after the assembly's funds, and deal with the poor. The murmuring was really against God, and not against the servants of God. Every bit of murmuring, when we fairly examine it, is not against the circumstances, nor the saints, but is always the outcome of downright unbelief towards God. That is the point.

And that is the lesson we learn here, in the wilderness of Sin. It is met by the words, "Come near before the Lord: for he hath heard your murmurings" (ver. 10). Ah, He does not judge them. On the contrary, He lets His glory draw near, that the very light of His presence might shine in on this murmuring people. They had said, "Would to God we had died" (ver. 3). My dear friends, which was better? to toil at the brick-kilns of Pharaoh, or travel in the

desert with God? Who for a moment could have any difficulty as to that? They had forgotten their bondage. All they remembered was what they had fed upon. They were away from the flesh-pots of Egypt. But they had not yet learned the sufficiency of the fulness of the hand of God. How does the Lord treat them. Oh, look at His grace! "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat" (vers. 11-15).

What is the bread, beloved? Why, it is Jesus. This manna is Jesus. "Bread from heaven." The Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven" (John vi. 32). What a beautiful answer to murmuring is God's tender action. Here were those people all murmuring, and the Lord steps in and "rains bread from heaven" for them. I will ask you to read the sixth chapter of John, because you will find it is manna. There are only two things we find Israel fed on in the wilderness—quails and manna (Exod. xvi.

13-16). When they got to Canaan they had "the old corn of the land."

What is manna? Manna is Christ in this scene, come down from heaven, passing humbly through this scene, and living just exactly as man should live here for God. He tells us Himself what the manna is. But we do not understand it. We say as they did, "Manna," "What is it?" But then you and I cannot feed upon that manna unless we come to it through death. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). Manna, therefore, is Christ humbled, as He was in this scene. "The old corn of the land," is Christ glorified. You and I have to eat both. Because, although we are in the wilderness, we are going to heaven, we are on our road home to God, and the Spirit of God carries our souls into heavenly places now. You must eat both.

The person who only eats the manna never touches heavenly ground. And the person who is only occupied with what is heavenly, and neglects the study of the humbled Christ, and does not appropriate His death, will not walk in the fulness of the truth, nor the grace of Christ. For courage and power you must have your eye upon a glorified Christ. But to walk like Christ in this scene, in all the circumstances and difficulties that we have to walk in, we must keep our eye on Christ as a lowly, humble man in this scene. I find a perfect pattern in the pathway and life of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ as He went through this scene. A pilgrim feeds upon manna. A soldier feeds upon the old corn of the land. You will find that the person who only feeds on "the old corn of the land" may be rough, hard,

rude, and practically graceless in his ways. Then the one who only feeds upon the manna, the life of Jesus, you will find very lowly, gracious, and tender, but he does not know much about a heavenly Christ, and so lacks energy and boldness in the faith.

What we want, beloved friends, and, thank God, what He has given us, is *all* truth. We want Christ for our souls in every aspect in which God has presented Him. If you read in the Gospels, you get the unfolding of what the manna is. Read them over and over again. They are God's food for our souls as we pass through this wilderness scene. Was not He tempted? Yes, just as we are. How did He maintain Himself? By simple dependence on God. He is the food of our souls, for it is Christ alone that we have to feed upon down here.

There are many important principles in this chapter (Exod. xvi). Every man was to get the manna for himself. He was to get a full measure, and he was to get it early. If he did not get it early, he did not get it at all. And he was not to keep it till the morning. I must gather the manna, gather Christ, early in the day, to be suitably fed for the day. I can only gather Christ out of Scripture, so that is what makes the reading of the Scripture, and the study of the Scripture, so important. Feed on Scripture. That is the way to get on. Read the Word of God, because if you read the Word it will feed your soul.

You must not forget that you still have the flesh in you, and the flesh likes the onions and the leeks of Egypt as much as ever. You, however, by sovereign grace, are a new creature in Christ. You have a new nature, and that feeds on Christ, and nothing but Christ. Am I set to feed the old man, or to feed

the new? That is the point, do not you see? The only thing that will feed the new man is Scripture, or that which may help me to understand Scripture. Let me just say, be careful what you read, but read. Paul said to Timothy, "Give attendance to reading" (1 Tim. iv. 13). Wise counsel! He valued reading, hence to the same man he wrote, "When thou comest, bring with thee the books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim. iv. 13). Those who read nothing but the Bible are usually the most ignorant people I know. It seems pious to say, "I only read the Bible." In reality it is pride of heart, for we must remember that God has given many precious servants, who, by stroke of the pen, have unfolded His truth. Bear that in mind. It is very important to read, but I say again, be careful what you read. Books, you know, are great companions. But at the same time, it is important to bear in mind how the contents of a book will leave their mark on you. A book which the Spirit of God did not write will feed the flesh, but it will not feed the life of God in you. Scripture detects me, judges me, and feeds me. Read Psalm cxix., and note how 174 of its verses extol the value of the Word. Be careful to get the manna, and get plenty of it.

We read in Numbers xi. 9, that "when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." That, I take it, is the care the Spirit of God has for the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It never touches the ground, though on the ground. Christ was on the earth, but was not earthly. He was the heavenly upon earth. It is the beautiful care of God's Spirit with regard to the incarnation of God's own dear and blessed Son.

At the close of Exodus xvi. 33, we read, "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations." And we also read of "the golden pot that had manna" (Heb. ix. 4). This is Christ again, the eternal memento in glory of that divine vessel which contained a perfect, humbled, human life on earth. The Jesus who was down here, is the Jesus who is up there; and the Jesus whom the Holy Ghost would have you fix your eye upon, is the Jesus who walked down here, and said, "Follow thou me."

The sixteenth chapter of Exodus thus presents the food of God's people in the desert. This we must ever gather from the written Word. Hence, the more you have of the Word of God the better. By-and-by in the course of your life you will perhaps come to some difficulty, and you will say, I really do not know what to do. If you had the Scriptures pervading your mind, you would know what to do. "Then remembered I the word of the Lord" (Acts xi. 16), saved Peter from error. The Word of God teaches us our road for every bit of the pathway here. The book of Proverbs is immensely interesting, and of great value in this respect. I commend it to your careful study, while at the same time I would urge you to have no favourite portions of Scripture. Read it through, and study it carefully, and prayerfully. Because otherwise, you will not get into the breadth of the truth of God. Oh, how unspeakably valuable, then, is the Word of God. Well, that is the sixteenth chapter.

But you have the other side of the truth, which comes out in chapter xvii. Again they were murmur-

ing. "The people thirsted there for water; and murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (ver. 3). They were ready to stone him (ver. 4), but God's grace was permanent. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and *thy* rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel" (vers. 5, 6). What was that rock? Just turn over your Bible to Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, "They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ" (x. 3, 4). I do not know that you and I would have said that, "That Rock was Christ," but it was. What you have here, is another figure of the cross. It is the death of Christ, with most lovely consequences. "He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" (Ps. lxxviii. 20). This without doubt represents the Spirit of God. You have the manna, Christ, in the sixteenth chapter. And now in the seventeenth, the gushing waters are the figure of the Spirit of God, that came down from an ascended Christ in heaven. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that

believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John vii. 37-39).

Not only have I Christ to feed on, I have the Spirit of God. Therefore, my friends, see how fully God has furnished us for the pathway, yea, for the battle, and the conflict of the pathway, which immediately follows. Wherever they went, the overflowing streams followed them (1 Cor. x. 4). I do not think the rock moved, but that which came from the rock followed them. Behind, in their track, that shining river came right along. Morning by morning down came the bread, and day by day the water followed them. It was the care of God, exercised in a miraculous manner.

We too are the subject of miracles of grace all along the road. All we have to do is to be simple, childlike, and confiding. God keep us from murmuring. There is nothing so deadening to the soul. The Lord give us more sweet, simple confidence in Himself. The death of Christ has delivered us from the hand of the enemy, you have Christ to feed on, and you have the Holy Ghost dwelling in you. You are well off!

And now see what follows. The moment there has been refreshment from God, the enemy comes in like a flood. The enemy always tries to oppose your spiritual progress. It is not until you have received the Holy Ghost, that there is any real conflict going on. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (ver. 8). Amalek is a type of the flesh. You read the Epistle to the Galatians in connection with this incident here, and you will get help. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are

contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 16, 17). The flesh and the Spirit are contrary one to the other. You have now really two natures. You want to do right, and the flesh opposes. If you allow the flesh, you would do what would not please the Lord. But if you are in the power of the Spirit, you gain a victory. The gaining of the victory was dependent upon Moses.

"And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (vers. 9-13). When it was a question of Pharaoh, the word was, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. . . . The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. xiv. 13, 14). God does all the fighting if it be a question of delivering you from the power of Satan. But when it is a question of the flesh—and mark you, you have always the flesh in you—then there must be conflict, and, "Fight with Amalek" is the order. What is the power for the conflict? It is the Holy Ghost. The very fact of the conflict shows that the Holy Ghost is in me. It is not a question as to

whether I am saved or not, but it is a question as to whether the will of God is to be wrought out, or whether the flesh, which is always trying to hinder me, is to stop me in my course as a Christian.

Observe what follows. Moses prays, and Joshua fights. Here is the first time you read of Joshua. You get a great deal about him afterwards. I have no doubt that Moses' praying is figurative of our Lord's present intercession on high, and that Joshua is a type of the risen Christ in the energy of the Spirit of God. If you walk in the Spirit you are bound to get the victory. When I make provision for the flesh, then I am defeated. This may lead a young believer to doubt his conversion, or that he is really saved. This is a great mistake, for Israel never go back into Egypt, though they were carried to Babylon. You never can be anything but a child of God. You may go down to Babylon, *i.e.*, get into the world morally, but will come under God's hand there, but you are still His child. I may choose to take my own way, and He may have to send me a prisoner, so to speak, to Babylon, but I am always God's child.

The conflict between the flesh and the Spirit within us is a sign that we are converted. "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed" (ver. 11). We are dependent on the continual intercession of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Do you think His hands ever hang down? No! Do they ever get weary? Impossible! "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 50). He was seen to go

up into heaven with His hands uplifted in blessing, and so they are to this day. Oh, no! His hands never get weary. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). Again, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25).

Amalek was defeated that day (vers. 13-16), but God remembered his wickedness. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it" (Deut. xxv. 17-19). Saul was told later to exterminate him, but he did not do it fully (1 Sam. xv.). The point is this, the flesh must go. But what a blessed thing! You have the Spirit of God in you, and you have Christ on high for you. We are a well-cared-for people (vers. 15, 16).

"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi," *i.e.*, The Lord is my Banner (ver. 15). You will be a worshipper now. I think that is what leads the soul into worship. The Lord is my Banner! If the Lord is your Banner, victory is certain. Well, that is the way God opens up the history of His people. Clean out of Egypt, and tested in the wilderness. The more you are tested, the more you learn

what God's grace is. You have Christ to feed on, and the Spirit of God to sustain you, and carry you on to victory, coupled with the wonderful truth of the intercession of the blessed Lord Jesus, now at God's right hand. Happy people are all those who walk in these precious truths.

Thou art my bread, Lord Jesus,
  Evermore I live by Thee:
Thou art my wine, Lord Jesus,
  For Thy blood was shed for me.
    Ere my race, my course be run,
    Ere the crown of life be won,—
      Thou art my bread.
Thou art my wine, mine exultation,
Thou art the strength of my salvation.

Thou art my strength, Lord Jesus;
  Power and praise belong to Thee:
Thou art my song, Lord Jesus,
  For Thy grace sufficeth me.
    Till the tears of time be o'er,
    Till the tempter tempt no more,—
      Thou art my strength:
Thou art my song in tribulation,
Thou art the horn of my salvation.

Thou art my light, Lord Jesus,
  And I love to gaze on Thee;
Though art my life, Lord Jesus,—
  Thou did'st give Thyself for me.
    Though the lesser lights may pale,
    Though my flesh and heart may fail,—
      Thou art my life:
Thou art the sun of God's creation,
Thou art my light and my salvation.

Thou art my hope, Lord Jesus,—
  I am waiting here for Thee;
Thou art my gain, Lord Jesus,
  Thou art all in all to me.
    Thou my joy, my peace, my light,
    Thou my life, my hope, my might,—
      Thou art my praise;
Thou art my Lord, mine adoration,
Thou art the God of my salvation.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Serpent of Brass, and the Jordan.

(Numbers xxi. 1-18; Joshua v. 1-15.)

WE will now look at the truth connected with "the serpent of brass," and "the Jordan." They are two aspects of the death of Christ. Each presents the truth in an entirely different way, but still a way in which it is of the last importance for our souls to get hold of. I think in the serpent of brass we have the wonderful truth of how God gets rid of me, for Himself, and in the Jordan, we have the truth of how I can get rid of myself, in my own experience.

The purpose of God for Israel, as given in the book of Exodus, was, that He would bring them out from Egypt, and bring them into a good land and large, a land flowing with milk and honey. It is an immense thing for the soul to ever deepen in the apprehension of God's purpose, and that, no matter what comes in, God's purpose will not be frustrated. Spite of all the opposition of Pharaoh, and spite of the many compromises that Pharaoh suggested, God brought them out, and spite of Israel's failure in the wilderness, He brought them into Canaan.

First of all comes the truth of the blood on the lintel, redemption by blood. That is the aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ by which we are

secured from God's judgment, as sinners, and we feed on "the lamb roast with fire"—the sufferings and death of Christ—our souls entering into that which is expressed in His death.

Then we have the passage of the Red Sea. That we have seen is the truth of the death and resurrection of Christ for us and our sins, the power of the enemy absolutely broken, God's salvation manifested, and the people brought to rejoice in it. The Red Sea, I believe, is the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins, as for ourselves also. And it is a great thing for a young soul to see this, that I am clear of the enemy's land, that I am brought right out from that land by death and resurrection. You touch the same truth in a certain way when you come to the Jordan. It is a great thing for my soul to see that I am before God in connection with Christ, dead and risen. It is what you get in the epistle to the Romans. I believe, what the Red Sea teaches me, as well as the epistle to the Romans, is, that I am taken *into* death to escape all that was against me. By death—Christ's death viewed as mine—I escape everything that oppresses me as a man in the flesh. In Romans v. you escape from association with the first man—Adam—death breaks the link; in chapter vi. you escape from sin as a master; and in chapter vii. you escape the condemnation that is connected with an infringed law.

It is very striking to notice that you see Israel as a company *go into* the Red Sea, but you never see them come *out*. They did come out, but it does not say they did. I think the reason is this, that when you come to the Jordan, you do not read of them *going into* the Jordan, you see the ark going in, but you see

them *come out*. The fact is this, the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce. To bring them *out* of Egypt and to bring them *into* Canaan was God's purpose.

But, you say, the wilderness came in between. Yes, but that was not part of the purpose of God. It was in His ways, but His purpose was to bring them *out*, and bring them *in*. The forty years in between became the occasion of learning what they were, and gave occasion also to learn God's ways of grace. If you look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews you will be struck with this. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." That is, nature could not walk in the pathway of faith. And what is the next word? "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (vers. 29, 30). You have no mention of Jordan. Why? Because the journey through the wilderness, with Jordan at the end, was not the path of faith, it was the path of failure. When God recounts the history of the life of faith, you have the Red Sea and the fall of Jericho put together. They go side by side, and the forty years in the wilderness is not as much as mentioned.

Well, delivered by the sovereign grace of God, and brought out of Egypt as we have seen, it took them forty years to enter Canaan. Their journey was divided into four stages. The first, with which we are all pretty familiar, is from the banks of the Red Sea till they come to Sinai (Exod. xv.-xix. 1, 2). In that stage of their journey they were under pure sovereign grace. If they come to Marah, where the waters are bitter, God turns the bitter water into sweet. When hungry, He gives them bread from heaven. If they

say, We are dying of thirst, He smites the rock, and out comes water. If they have an enemy to meet, there is Moses interceding for them on high, and Joshua leading them on to certain victory in the valley below. There we have the energy of a risen Christ, by the Holy Ghost, leading God's people to victory.

The first stage takes you to the middle of the book of Exodus. The latter half of the book is occupied with the instructions connected with the setting up of the tabernacle, in which God was to dwell. Leviticus gives to us the manner of their approach to God. Christ is presented in all these types and figures as the basis of all worship. That is the great subject of the book of Leviticus.

When you come to Numbers you get the itinerary of the people of God through the wilderness. The chapter I have read is really in the last stage of their history. They are getting toward the close of their journey when the story of the serpent of brass comes in. To connect our subject I will glance briefly over the early part of the book.

The first ten chapters of the book are occupied with marshalling them, and getting them ready for the journey. The book of Numbers opens with, "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt" (Num. i. 1). The first thirteen months, the first stage of their journey, was occupied in getting from the Red Sea to Sinai, where you know, in fatal folly, they put themselves under law. They abandoned grace and took upon themselves the responsibility of walking before

God, consenting that their blessing should depend upon their own behaviour. We have all, however, to learn as we pass on that the only secret of blessing is the grace of God, in connection with His purpose.

Well now, in the first ten chapters of Numbers, I repeat, you learn the way in which God marshalled them, gathered them round about Him, and how He Himself was in their midst. When you come to chapter x. you read, "And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony" (ver. 11). That is, in twenty days they are all put in order. God was then in their very *midst*, but Moses, like the rest of us, wanting something down here for the eye to rest on, as a guide through the wilderness, turns to Hobab and says, You be eyes for us. "Come with us . . . leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be unto us instead of eyes" (vers. 29-32). The child of the desert refuses to be their guide, and in tender grace the Lord says, I shall go before you, and the ark of the Lord becomes their guide. The pillar of cloud had been their guide before, but the Lord, in His beautiful grace, now goes before them Himself.. "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them" (ver. 33). This was beautiful grace, beloved friends, in meeting failure.

And now you come to that which is a very sorrowful bit of their history. The second stage of their history was very short, but very eventful. It embraces chapters x. 11-36, xi., xii., xiii., xiv., and xv. They reached Kadesh very quickly (*see* xii. 16, xiii. 26).

It was only an eleven days' journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea (Deut. i. 2), but there was an immense amount of dreadful failure in those few days. In the eleventh chapter you find them saying, "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (ver. 6). That is, in plain language, they got tired of Christ. Ah, beloved, are any of us tired of Christ? Do I want something besides Christ? That is the first failure.

The end of the chapter shows that the Lord gave them quails, in answer to their murmuring, and then dealt with them in His government (vers. 31-34). "He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 29-31). You will all, I am sure, be struck with this comment of the Spirit of God, in the Psalms, upon this scene. I believe really what we want we get. If I want flesh, God will give it me, but discipline and leanness of soul with it. The hand of God in government was upon them here really. It was not like the first case, in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, where they asked, and God gave them quails. Then they were upon the ground of pure grace, but now, being on the ground of responsibility, He acts differently. There it was sin met by grace, here it is sin judged in government.

Then in the twelfth chapter of Numbers the priest, Aaron, and the prophetess, Miriam, rise up against Moses, who was king in Jeshurun—God's representative. When you come to the next chapter they send out spies to see what the pleasant land was

like, and to see by what way they should go (*see* Deut. i. 22-25). I quite admit God permitted the spies to go, for He did not thwart Israel in their unbelief. Hence He said, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel" (Num. xiii. 2). They sent up these spies, and as unbelief always brings trouble to the unbeliever, I daresay you have noticed that this mission was the way Arad knew that Israel were coming, and went out to fight against them (*see* Num. xxi. 1). Unbelief always brings sorrow. The next thing is that when the spies come back the congregation will not believe what is told them.

First of all the report is very good, and the bunch of grapes—taking two men to carry it—attested the goodness of the land, and then they said, "The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature" (ver. 32); that is, the land did not give plenty of provision. Caleb and Joshua stood up for the truth, and were nearly stoned (xiii. 30, xiv. 6-10). "They despised the pleasant land" (Ps. cvi. 24) is the next step. They did not want to go on. It is like a heart now that does not want to go to heaven.

The consequence is, they say, "Would God that we had died in Egypt, or would God that we had died in this wilderness. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" (chap. xiv. 1-4). Let us go back, they say. Oh, could you suppose it after all the grace shown to them? But, beloved, we know what our own hearts are. Have we never wished

to turn back? Ah, every heart in this hall knows how often there has been a turning back. God's answer was this: You say you wish you had died in the wilderness—you shall die in the wilderness. "As for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness" (xiv. 32, 33). Says God, You will have to die, only it will take you forty years to do it, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years" (ver. 34). They must know death.

Then the fifteenth chapter comes in. Did you ever study the fifteenth chapter of Numbers? It is a beautiful chapter. Why? Because God's purpose shines in it as clear as ever, spite of the sin of the people. It opens thus, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you*" (ver. 1). Ah, it is lovely! I get the Lord giving directions as to what shall be when they get into the land, as though there had never been a murmur, or any failure. It is a gem, that chapter. It comes in as the expression of how God's purpose is never upset. No matter what the people's sin is on the road, God carries out His purpose regarding them. A perusal of the chapter will let you see how beautifully the truth comes out in that way. That chapter takes you to the end of the second stage of Israel's journeyings.

And now in the third stage the Lord makes them wander for thirty-eight years in the wilderness, and when

you come to the twentieth chapter you will find that they have got back again to Kadesh. If you trace their journeyings you will find that they consist of aimless wanderings up and down the peninsula of Arabia, from Kadesh (xii. 16, xiii. 26) to Kadesh (chap. xx. 1), and no real progress made. What a picture of many a saint now, who has rebelled against God, and never really got on in his soul.

In this third stage you have the rebellion of Korah (chap. xvi.), which leads God in grace to manifest who is His priest (chap. xvii.). The only way in which a feeble people can be brought right through the wilderness to God's Sanctuary is by grace and priesthood. Oh, how much we, as Christians, owe to the priesthood of Christ! How we are maintained by that blessed One! In the eighteenth chapter you have instructions as to the maintenance of the priests, and in the nineteenth chapter you have the story of the red heifer, or how, in the wilderness, defilement can be met and cleansed.

And then, when you come to the twentieth chapter, again there is no water, and there it is that Moses and Aaron break down, because they did not glorify God. God bade Moses go and speak to the rock. He was told by God to "take *the* rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock" (ver. 8). He was to take the rod of priesthood. It was not judgment that was to be expressed, but grace through priesthood. It is priestly grace that puts a heart right, always. "And Moses took *the* rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the

congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with *his* rod he smote the rock twice" (vers. 10-12). That was not the rod the Lord bade him take. He smote it with the rod that he had smitten Egypt with, the rod of judgment. That is a figure of the death of Christ, undergoing the judgment of God. There can be no repetition, even in type, of that. God's answer was this: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (ver. 12). Thus, you see, Moses and Aaron break down on the road, and the latter dies (ver. 28). Then the next thing is that there is opposition on the part of Edom, and Israel, humbled at last, gives way.

And now in the twenty-second verse of chapter xx. they begin the fourth, and last stage of their journey, which occupied about one year or so. Then in the twenty-first chapter we have another outbreak of evil, and the story of the serpent of brass. It is very simple, but I do not think that we learn its truth at the beginning of our Christian pathway. Oh, you say, is it not about the new birth? Well, it is connected with it in John iii., but there is something deeper than merely meeting the need of a poor sinner. What comes out here is, that the flesh is incurable and incorrigible. They murmured, "and the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (ver. 6). But then as they turned to the Lord, and owned their sin, He bade Moses make a fiery serpent, and set it

upon a pole, and when a bitten man looked upon it he lived (vers. 5-9). There, in type, is the wonderful truth that Christ, who knew no sin, was *made sin*. It is the spring of a totally new life. Our Lord, in the third chapter of John's Gospel, connects it with eternal life, and I do not doubt that the things that are in figure in this chapter are brought out in the doctrine of John iii. and iv. The first man is incurably bad, cannot be mended, and must go from before God's eye. He must go in death, in judgment, that is the point. That is to say, there is nothing in you or me that will suit God. All that we are must go in death; and there is brought in that which is entirely and absolutely new. It is Christ, as Son of Man, lifted up, in John iii. 14, 15, and, as a consequence, through faith in Him, not only new birth, but eternal life, and in the fourth of John you have the water springing up to eternal life, *i.e.*, life in the power of the Holy Ghost rising to its source—the Father—in worship.

Look again for a moment at the serpent of brass. The thing that did the mischief was the fiery serpent, and what cured them was a look at a fiery serpent. Sin brought in death, and only by death is sin put away. Sin in the flesh is incorrigible, incurable, and ineradicable. What then can be done with it? God tells us: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom. viii. 3). That is the serpent of brass. What I am, as a man, has been utterly condemned in the cross of Christ, and absolutely set aside from before God in death. It has gone from God's eye in the death of His blessed Son, an im-

mense thing for the soul to see. Why? Because until this is learned, there is self-confidence, and an endeavour to improve the flesh. Hence, very often, we have to learn by very painful and prolonged practical experience and failure what a poor good-for-nothing thing man is. When I learn the truth of the serpent of brass I find that God has got rid of me, in the cross of His Son, and only Christ remains.

Next you get, "And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it" (xxi. 17, 18). That is in type what the Lord said to the woman at the well, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 10, 13, 14). What is that? Why, beloved friend, it is the Spirit of God in the bosom of the Christian, in the soul of the believer, now leading your soul up in the enjoyment of eternal life into that which is yours in heaven, although you are still in the wilderness. "Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it." That is the Spirit of God carrying the heart now into the enjoyment of heavenly things, that really are our own. It is the energy of the Holy Ghost in the Christian. It is not a bit of use for me to tell you to get rid of this thing and that. You will never do it. What we want to know is the unhindered energy of the Holy

Ghost. He will occupy us with Christ, He will bring Christ to us, and tell us of Christ. "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Oh, how God loves thus to set His people up in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost.

You do not get the serpent of brass until the close of Israel's wilderness history. It is a long time before we learn that God has set us aside, and aim to set ourselves aside. Oh, what battles and struggles have souls gone through in trying to get rid of the flesh. I see here, with deep relief and thankfulness, that aspect of the death of Christ in which all that I am, as a man in the flesh, is gone, and that I am replaced by the Man of God's heart, the Man out of heaven, the Lord from heaven. And it is He in the energy and power of the Spirit of God that leads the soul on.

The final effort of the devil to prevent them entering the land is given in the section (Num. xxii.-xxv.) which introduces Balaam. He is hired to curse them, but really he blesses them, and in his remarkable prophecies shows that they are God's people; *separated to Him* (xxiii. 9); *justified by Him* (xxiii. 21-23); *seen of Him in order and beauty only* (xxiv. 5-9), *and destined to victory and glory with Him* (xxiv. 17-19). He always wins who is on God's side.

Balaam was a wicked man, but he knew God would judge evil, specially in His people, so he "taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii. 14).

He tried to corrupt them by mixing with the world religiously and socially. Some fell into the snare, and came under God's judgment.

How many of God's people to-day are caught in the same way!

In chapter xxvii. the daughters of Zelophehad indicate that at length there is a *desire* for the pleasant land, instead of *despising* it. They claim their father's portion, and God honours the demand of faith. He ever loves to give. Hence "the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right; thou shalt surely give them a possession" (vers. 6, 7).

The spirit that moved these women did not animate the whole congregation, for in chapter xxxii. the children of Reuben and Gad ask that their families and flocks may not be carried over the Jordan, now in full sight.

They actually fell into Pharaoh's snare. They did not want to go over the Jordan. They saw that the land of Gilead was a nice place, and they said to Moses, If you will allow us, we will leave our wives and little ones and cattle here, and we will go over and help you to fight and then return to them. Ah, it was a very sad thing, beloved. They are like souls that do not go in now for heavenly things. It is important for the soul to see this. Hear what they say: "And bring us not over Jordan" (chap. xxxii. 5). Oh, beloved friends, God keep us from ever breathing a word like that. Put into plain language, it is, I do not want to enter now into heavenly things. Ah, they had dropped right down into that which Pharaoh proposed, and Moses refused. In very sight of Canaan they say, We will settle down where we are. They were not content with a tent, they wanted a house. Yet when the devil tried to hinder them through Balaam, he said one of the truest and loveliest things about them: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,

and thy tabernacles, O Israel." These tents had been forty years on the road, and the dwellers therein were going to get into the land, and Balaam felt that they would get in. But, alas, these two tribes were tired of the tent, and said, We will settle down. "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones" (xxxii. 16). God let them have their way, and they were the first to be carried into captivity (*see* 2 Kings xv. 29). Ah, beloved, what a lesson as to world-bordering and its results!

Now turn to Joshua, and you will see the way in which we are brought into the blessing that is ours. Joshua is the Old Testament equivalent for Ephesians, just as Ephesians is the New Testament Joshua. You will find in the opening chapter, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (chap. i. 3). It is no good for me, therefore, to say such and such things are mine. It is quite true they are mine in Christ, but they are not mine experimentally unless I put my foot on them. It is a great thing for the soul to see that it is heavenly. God has called us to heaven. To heaven we belong, and everything that is ours is in heaven.. We are pilgrims passing through this scene, but are viewed as belonging to heaven.

To enter into Canaan Israel must cross the Jordan, and they were simply to follow the ark. "Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Josh. iii. 4). Of course I need not say, the ark is Christ. It is Christ who has gone into death, as passing through the judgment of God, really ending man's history, and overcoming

the power of death. In verse 14 they struck their tents in the wilderness for the last time. They had the pilgrim character about them to that moment.

It must have been a wonderful moment when they came to Jordan. It was a wonderful time when they came to the Red Sea, as we have seen. That was a very little strait, and they went in by fives, so also here. When it was a case of going into the Red Sea, it was a narrow path. The waters stood up as crystal walls. But when they came to Jordan there was not a drop of water within thirty miles. Jordan is death. So with us, all that I shrunk from is gone if I see that death is annulled by Christ. Jordan is death, not my death, but Christ's, and mine with Him. It is not only death, but it is my getting the sense that Christ has gone into death, and annulled it, and overcome it. If you take your map and look for Zaretan (ver. 16), you will see it was some thirty miles up the river, and there God kept back the waters. There was nothing but dry land in sight, and we read, "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites *passed over on dry ground*, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan" (iii. 17).

The lesson from this for us is simple. If the heart is set for heaven, it is easy to get in. It is wonderfully easy to get into the land if you are only set for heavenly things, for God takes every hindrance away, and He loves to get His people's hearts to dwell in the enjoyment of what He has now made theirs in Christ.

"And it came to pass, when all the people were *clean passed* over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the

people, out of every tribe a man; and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place, where ye shall lodge this night" (iv. 1-3). It was the testimony of where the ark had been. I do not doubt that the twelve stones are the memorial. It is like what the Lord's Supper is to us.

But further, "And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and there they are to this day" (ver. 9). The putting in of these twelve stones expressed the whole of the company. What we were, so to speak, is all under the waters of death. I learn that in the death of Christ I am free to say good-bye to myself. I am a person dead and risen, and I have life in a risen Christ, but God would always keep alive in my memory the way in which I have been brought into blessing and association with His Son. To this end I think we are greatly helped in the Lord's Supper. "And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal" (ver. 20). They remained as the eternal witness of a finished work, just as the Lord's Supper speaks to us.

And now the next thing is they are *consciously clean over Jordan.* And, beloved, it is an immense thing for the soul to be *consciously* sure of this. It is a person who can truly say, *I know I am dead and risen.* Experimentally? Yes, certainly. The point is, I have deep in my soul the sense that I am in association with Him who is risen. Through grace we are occupied with a risen Christ all the week

round, and then, at the Lord's Supper, for an hour our hearts are afresh touched with the sense of His death and all that it involved for Him and us.

When Israel reached Gilgal a new lesson was learned. Gilgal was the place of self-judgment. There they were circumcised (chap. v. 2-9). You cannot cut off the flesh in the energy of the flesh. They were a dead and risen people in figure, ere they were circumcised. And you will never find a Christian able to walk practically in the power of what this brings out, until he knows that he is before God in the life of Another. Where do we get this truth? I think you have it in Colossians.

Now, young Christian, look at the third chapter of Colossians. The second chapter says, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (ver. 11). I accept for myself the circumcision of Christ. I am set aside. I accept it. You are in newness of life now. What is the next thing? "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (chap. iii.). How definite! Where Christ is. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Note, it is *earth* here, not exactly the *world*, that is Egypt. If my affections are on the things of earth, clearly, I am not heavenly. That is the point. I can find *worldly* Christians, and *earthly* Christians, and again I can find souls that are *heavenly*. Ah, what a cheer it is to come alongside of a heavenly person.

And now the next word is, "*Ye are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 3-6).

That is, that I am to practically keep all that is of the first man in the place of death. That is our Gilgal. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (*i.e.*, rolling) unto this day." They set aside that which is the mark of a man who is living for this world. For a heavenly man to be worldly is his reproach. He needs to go again to Gilgal. And you will observe afterwards that Israel always had to return to Gilgal. So must we. After victory or defeat, Gilgal—self-judgment—is our only recourse, if we are to progress in the divine life.

"And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, in the plains of Jericho" (ver. 10). They are out of Egypt, and in Canaan. The promise of God is faithfully kept, and His purpose carried out; though as yet nothing of Canaan is possessed, nor any victory gained. I have often thought how Caleb and Joshua must have enjoyed that passover. They had eaten it in Egypt, and, moreover, they had kept the passover in the wilderness (*see* Num. ix. 1-14); but I am sure they enjoyed this one a great deal more than the first, or the second. When they ate the second they might have said to each other, "I like this much better than the one in Egypt. We were rather in fear of Pharaoh then, but now he is gone, and we are on our way to the land." Yes, but even then they were not in it. There was what was better in store for faith. But now they sit down and eat the passover in the land. They eat it in heavenly joy. So do we, if divinely taught. Our souls, fully enjoying heavenly rest and association with Christ, feed on that

which is the first thing that gave us the sense of the grace of our God. I believe Caleb and Joshua thoroughly enjoyed that passover, and if you and I are really over Jordan we shall enjoy the Lord's Supper in a wonderful way.

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day" (ver. 11). Yes, they had reached Christ in glory. It is Christ, now known in glory, the soul feeds on. The third chapter of Philippians is the old corn of the land. It is Christ known where He now is. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (ver. 12). But for us to eat the manna is most important. It is Christ humbled in human life here, and we as pilgrims, finding ourselves in the circumstances that He passed through, feed on Him and His ways of grace. That is manna. If I do not feed upon the manna, I certainly shall not be a steady pilgrim (a pilgrim is one who is going to a fixed point), and if I do not feed on the old corn of the land, I shall not be a vigorous warrior. We need both. They had both, and both the manna and the old corn of the land are to be our daily food. "*Unleavened* cakes and parched corn" they partook of there, and may God give us to feed on the same, and thus enter more and more into the enjoyment of what is our own, as risen with Christ.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua came by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto

him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (vers. 13-15). The captain of the Lord's host is the Lord Himself. With drawn sword in hand He would now lead them to victory; but "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy," reminds us that holiness becomes His presence now, just as when He came to redeem His people (Exod. iii. 5). If I am going to enter into heavenly joys and associations with Christ, and be led to victory, there must be, so to speak, the putting off of the shoe, the withdrawal of the foot from what has touched the earth. If you take the shoe off, the foot will be clean. God will have holiness in those that draw near to Him.

It is wonderful what God, by His Spirit, will bring our souls into, if we but yield ourselves to Him. The man that knows most about heaven will, perhaps, say the least about it, but he enjoys it and lives there.

Here, then, we shall conclude our study of Israel's early history. They are *in* the land that flows with milk and honey, feeding on the old corn thereof—that which grew in the land—and have the Lord Himself as their leader to future victories.

May God guide us each to answer to this in the history of our souls. We are to know ourselves risen with Christ; then we feed on Christ, and are to be led by Him to victory over all enemies who oppose our acquisition and enjoyment of heavenly life and blessings.

PART II.

BACKSLIDING AND RESTORATION.

CHAPTER IX.

BACKSLIDING IN HEART.

(JEREMIAH ii., iii., iv.)

IN the fourteenth chapter of Proverbs, I read, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (ver. 14). I have very, very much laid on my mind, I trust by the Lord, the subject of backsliding. You do not find the word in the New Testament, but you find the thing. And I suppose we have not, any of us, very far to look to find the thing in our own history.

The scriptures referred to at the head of this chapter give a beautiful unfolding of the deep distress it is to the Lord if His people are not near Him. And this is always true as a principle. Ah, beloved, nothing can satisfy the heart of Jesus but having you and me near Him. And nothing can satisfy our hearts but being near Him, for "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." It does not say the backslider *outwardly*, but the backslider *in heart*.

How wise is God to say, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23). Again, as a man "thinketh *in his heart*, so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7). It is not what I do, or what I say with my lips: but what I really am, is what my

heart is, what the affections are occupied with. I believe we are in a day when intelligence goes very far ahead of the heart. I shall not be speaking too plainly if I say, the secret of the want of a great deal of spiritual power is pride of heart. Hence would I say before God, let us beware of backsliding in heart. God must have reality.

Now look at these three exceedingly interesting chapters. They show you, that in days gone by, God had a people whom He loved with a very deep love—a love He was continually expressing. They show also the beautiful way in which He seeks to win His people back to Himself, after they had wandered. Nothing could be more touching. Look at the deep-toned affection of God for His people! In the people themselves, too, we may see the picture of what our own hearts are: and the only way, when we have wandered from God, of getting back.

Now God's way of dealing with a backslider is surely not our way. God's way is beautiful and perfect. There had been a great outward revival in the days of Josiah the king (2 Chron. xxxiv.-v.). But God looked underneath, and He saw that it was only feigned. "Judah hath not turned unto me with her *whole heart*, but feignedly, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii. 10). The revival was not genuine. And therefore Jeremiah is selected to bring this word to them.

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall

offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord" (Jer. ii. 1-3). Eight hundred and fifty years had rolled by, since that people, in obedience to God, had turned their back upon Egypt and its flesh-pots, and had come out to the Lord. They were holiness to the Lord then. They were then a separate people for the Lord, the third verse tells us. I love to see the affection of soul, and the energy, and fervency, that mark a young convert. Why, you old, cold, critical Christian, do you think your heart is as fresh as it was the first fortnight you were saved? Oh, you say, I know a great deal more now. Is the simple love of Jesus, the delight in Jesus, the practical holiness, and the desire to be anything, and everything, for Jesus, the same as it was then? You may have forgotten that early thrill of affection, but God has not forgotten. He says, I have not forgotten their early love. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me." Where? Into a wilderness. When they crossed the Red Sea they were in a desert. What was in the desert? Only two things. What were they? God, and the sand, nothing else. There was not a blade of grass, there was no water, and nothing to eat. They had only God and the sand.

I think the second chapter of Jeremiah is very like the second chapter of Revelation. The Lord there says to the Church of Ephesus, "I have against thee, that thou hast *left* thy first love" (Rev. ii. 4). It is not, "*lost* thy first love." I do not think that is a scriptural thought. It is, "*left* thy first love." Something has come in, says that blessed lover in Revelation ii., that has eclipsed Me, and all your affection for Me, and interest in Me has gone, and you can get on

without Me now, but there was a time when you could not. Ah, beloved brethren and sisters, where are our souls, as regards Christ? Well, if conscience smites, and the heart is sensible of a bit of declension, it is a grand thing for us to know it.

The great sin of Israel was that decay existed, but they knew it not. God had already years before addressed them by another prophet, Hosea, saying, "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people. Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and *he knoweth it not;* yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, *yet he knoweth not*" (Hos. vii. 8, 9). When a man sees gray hairs in his head, he is conscious that old age in that sense is setting in. Israel, *i.e.*, the ten tribes (called in the prophets Ephraim) had already grievously declined, but knew it not.

Let me implore you, specially my young hearers, to beware of backsliding. The first movement towards it is that something comes in to intercept the enjoyment of the love of Christ, and your heart loses its sweet apprehension of His love and grace. You have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. I think Paul brings the same thought before us when he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ, but I fear, lest *by any means*, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2, 3). It was a great exercise to the beloved apostle that day, lest anything should come in to make Christ less precious to them. To the Thessalonians also he says, "Now we live, if ye *stand fast*

in the Lord" (1 Thess. iii. 8). You turn back, says Paul, and I shall die of grief.

Are these lines in the hand of a backslider? Do I hear you saying, I have got away from the Lord? It is good that you know it. We do not always know it. The Lord knows it, and ever seeks to bring us back. To effect this, does He chide? No. He may have to rebuke and chasten. But that which restores is His Word. I do not forget your devotedness; you may have forgotten it, but it was sweet to Me, says the Lord, so I have never forgotten the hour when you came to Me, and I was everything to you. By a word like this He sought to recover Israel, and, beloved friend, it is the same with the Lord to-day! He is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same!

When Israel emerged from Egypt they had a deep sense of the Lord's care and protection. "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness; through a land of deserts, and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?" (vers. 5, 6). What a touching plea for the Lord to bring before His people. Had He altered since that day? Ah no, there was no change on His side. They had lost His presence, and they were insensible of the loss. "Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?" They had alike forgotten the grace of the Lord, and the kindness of the Lord.

Now comes God's arraignment. "And I brought

you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof: but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination" (ver. 7). He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan, but somehow or other they had lost all touch with God, and had fallen into gross idolatry. "The priests said not, *Where* is the Lord? and they that handle the law *knew* me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit" (ver. 8). Such was the low state in Israel. Priests, pastors, prophets, and people had alike forgotten the Lord. We have here what you may call downright backsliding in heart. There are many believers in such a state to-day, alas!

If the joy of the love of Christ has passed away, my dear friend, you are very miserable in your soul. Things are in a very, very sad state. Yes, but stop, the Lord wants you to be right, just as you will see He sought to put Israel right.

And now He says, "Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (vers. 9-13). This is His

plea. Did ever the nations—the heathen—do what My people have done? My people have changed their glory for that which *doth not profit.* You will find all through Scripture that that which *profits* is the great point. If there has been departure from God, has it profited you?

The things of time and sense, the business, the duties, and even the cares of life we have to face, but if they eclipse Christ, is it profitable? Ask your own heart. It will say, No! emphatically. That is a striking word—"He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. cvi. 15). Do you want the world? You shall have it. God never demands devotedness. The two going to Emmaus had to *constrain* the Lord to come in. Christ will never force His company. They constrained Him to come in, "and he went in to *tarry with* them" (*see* Luke xxiv. 13-32). True, the love of Christ constrains us first, but He loves to be valued.

My friend, there is no food for the soul, no peace, no rest away from Christ. You may have got on in the world; you may have secured the things you put out your hands for, but what have you paid for them? What about the Lord, the love of the Lord, the company and fellowship of the Lord, and the sense in your soul, I am just in this scene for Him? If you have lost that, there is no profit. Is it not an extraordinary thing that God calls on the heavens to gaze on a backsliding people? (ver. 12). "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters." Ah, what a lovely title, "fountain of *living* waters." What a wonderful thing to be in touch with the fountain of living waters. How God brings Himself before us in all the freshness of His grace, and the living energy of His love. "And

hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (ver. 13). *Broken cisterns!* It does not matter whether they be big or small. The point is, if my cistern be not Christ, it is a *broken* cistern. Alas! how many saints to-day are trying to drink at broken cisterns. A broken cistern cannot hold water. Anything short of Christ will fail to satisfy my thirst.

This indictment is followed by a touching query. "Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled?" (ver. 14). How can this be? "Out of Egypt have I called *my son*," was God's word long before (Exod. iv. 23; Hos. xi. 1). He had been a slave, and God had set him free. "Why is he spoiled?" Is the one who is free, and in the sense of God's love, is that soul to go back to bondage?

It was so in Israel's case, and trouble and sorrow came on them in retributive judgment. It was all their own doing. God keep us from backsliding. Whoever you are, be set for Christ, I beseech you, and let nothing come in to divert your heart from Him.

Read this second chapter carefully. Follow it out for yourself, and note how God seeks to get at the conscience as well as the heart. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?" (ver. 17). All that came upon them was the fruit of their own doing. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7, 8). We cannot sow a handful of seed without the necessary crop which that seed produces coming up. If sorrow

and trial come, what is it? It is the fruit of some seed that we have sown, years and years ago, when we were away from the Lord. If I have returned to Him now, I may be wondering what harvest I am reaping, but I must not forget that I have sown the seed.

"What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (ver. 18). After their redemption neither Egypt nor Assyria had aught to do with Israel till they got away from God. But their hearts, away from God, yearned for evil association, and received their due reward. Most truly does God say, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy *backslidings* shall reprove thee: know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts" (ver. 19). Now here is the first time we get the word "backsliding." Then in the 6th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, and 22nd verses of chapter iii. you get the expression. It is the characteristic word in the early part of Jeremiah. But then it supposes recovery, and that the heart will be turned back again to God, because that is what the Lord wants. He longs to have us very near Him. And do not our hearts love to be near Him? But if I am away from Him, and His hand is on me, I cannot blame Him. Is the blame His? Ah no, I know Him too well to say that.

If there has been departure of heart from the Lord, "My fear is not in thee" (ver. 21) is true of that heart. I think that is the first step of departure; the sense of the fear of the Lord somehow dies out in the soul, and then declension begins.

But it is of no use for a backslider to try and put things right outwardly. That is the next point. External washing will not do. It is the inside—the heart—that must be put right. "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord" (ver. 22). Then He turns to show how they were like the "wild ass" (ver. 24), and, like the "thief found out" (ver. 26), they were "ashamed" because they had got into downright idolatry (ver. 27). How God knows what our hearts are! If we get never so far away from the Lord, should trouble and sorrow come, what should we do? The Lord tells us, "In the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us" (ver. 27). Well may He reply, "But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble" (ver. 28). Let the thing that you have been occupied with deliver you. That cannot be.

Nothing could be more touching than God's next query here, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" (ver. 31). Was I barren? Was there barrenness in my land? Is there barrenness in heavenly things. What a striking expression for God to use to His people? But that is what it is. If the heart loses the sense of grace, it loses its delight in Christ, and "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. xxi. 5), is the sure result.

Then He adds, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (ver. 32). What had He done every day? Watched over and cared for them. Yes, blessed be His name, He had continually thought

of them. We have forgotten Him, perhaps, but He has never forgotten us. We are graven on the very palms of His hands, and the one thing He has before His mind is to have the backsliders brought back.

In chapter iii. the Lord takes a different figure, and likens the sin of His people to harlotry. Even although their sin was as deep as that, we read, "Yet return again unto me, saith the Lord" (ver. 1). So deep was His desire for their restoration.

Following on this the action of Israel and Judah is contrasted. "The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me: but she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass, through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but *feignedly*, saith the Lord" (vers. 6-10). God would rather have reality even though our souls be in distance, than unreality, and professed nearness, when we are not in it. There was *open* backsliding and rebellion on the part of the ten tribes. But what did Judah do? "Judah feared not" (ver. 8). "Judah hath not turned unto me with her *whole* heart, but *feignedly*, saith the Lord" (ver. 10). We get a great

lesson there, beloved brethren. The Lord will not have anything but what is real. In King Josiah's day there had been a revival, as we have seen. You would think that they had really turned to the Lord, but it was simply the effect of Josiah's influence. It was only feigned. The Lord help us to avoid what He comments on here.

Now observe how beautifully He labours with these backsliding ten tribes to bring them back. "And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (vers. 11-15). Backslider! He then called them, and bid them come back. Now He calls you back. You might ask, How can I get back? You say, I feel God has spoken to my soul through His Word, I am drinking at broken cisterns, how am I to get back? Listen. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (ver. 13). There is only one way back, and what is it? Confession. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John

i. 9). How touchingly tender is the call. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you" (ver. 14). There was no break of relationship on God's part. See, too, how He encourages the heart in verse 15. It is really lovely, beloved, the way in which the Lord seeks to recover and link the soul with Himself.

From the sixteenth verse to the twentieth, we are shown how God will, by-and-by, recover and restore Israel. Verse 21 shows the moral state that precedes restoration, *i.e.*, weeping and prayer. Then comes another loving call. "*Return*, ye *backsliding* children, and *I will heal your backslidings*." Who could withstand such an appeal? Many a time a poor soul says, How can I get back, what must I go through to get back? Look at this verse, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings," and note the result of the call, "Behold, *we come unto thee;* for thou art the Lord our God" (ver. 22). Behold, we come. It is done. The soul that heeds the call to return says, "We come to thee; thou art the Lord our God."

If that blessed response to the call does not take place, do you know what will follow? Things will get worse. If we do not heed the recalling word, we shall reach the sixth verse of chapter v. I think God graphically describes to us, in this book, what is bound to follow if backsliding is not checked. "Their *transgressions* are many, and their backslidings are increased" (ver. 6). How solemn!

Nor indeed is this all, for unjudged sin leads to graver evil. Pass ont o the eighth chapter, where the Lord inquires, "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a *perpetual backsliding?* they hold

fast deceit, they refuse to return" (viii. 5). If I do not heed His word and return, I shall get into this awful condition of perpetual backsliding. Well may we heed the word, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. iii. 12, 13).

There is only one way of deliverance from this terrible down-grade path of the backslider. It is by honest acknowledgment of the state, and by simply looking to God for deliverance. It is thus voiced: "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee" (xiv. 7). I do not think that the soul is actually restored there, but there is what you may call the exercise that leads to restoration.

I will now ask you to read the closing chapter of Hosea, because I think God gives us there, in other words, the way the soul gets back to the Lord. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity" (ver. 1). There is God's call again, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" (ver. 2). That is the returning soul's response and language, coupled with the sense of His grace. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" (ver. 3). The two things that always lead the soul back to God are the sense of His grace and His mercy. And now, what is God's answer? "*I will heal their backsliding*, I will

love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (ver. 4). What could be more blessed than this? What could more encourage a returning backslider? It is love's victory over the lack of it.

Then follow the effects of recovery and restoration. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found" (vers. 5-8). Do not suppose, my dear friend, that if there has been distance and departure from the Lord, that it is all over with you, and that you cannot be restored. Oh, no, there are brighter and better days in store for you, if you return. I believe God brings us back to something far better than that we lost by slipping away. We get into deeper and fuller communion with the Lord. I think His grace brings us into the enjoyment of a deeper, fuller, and more blessed place in His affections than we ever had been in before. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon," are wonderful figures of the brightness and freshness of a restored soul. When restored, that soul says, like Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" To this God rejoins, "I have heard him and observed him." Then says Ephraim, "I am like a green fir tree." A fir tree is one of the finest things you ever saw. It is green all the year round. It is

the soul in the sense that it is in all the favour of God, and the love of the Lord is prized beyond everything.

But God says, "From me is thy fruit found." You see that in verse 8 you have a dialogue. There is repentance and a conscious sense of blessing all flowing from God (ver. 9).

Well may Hosea close his wondrous book in these words: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (ver. 9). God give us each to heed His word, and note how tender are His ways, particularly with backsliders. Friend, if you are one, be as hard as you like on yourself, but remember God's heart is full of the tenderest love towards you, and only seeks your restoration to Himself.

Come, Thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for ceaseless songs of praise.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love:
Yet Thou, Lord, hast deigned to seal it,
With Thy Spirit from above.

Rescued thus from sin and danger,
Purchased by the Saviour's blood,
May I walk on earth a stranger,
As a son and heir of God.

CHAPTER X.

Backsliding in Ways.

(Luke xxii. 31-62.)

WE do not find the word "backsliding" in the New Testament, but we find the thing. Now, it is a certainty that no backslider is happy. What the Lord wants above all things for our hearts is that we should be profoundly happy. If you are not happy, you are not right. There is a screw loose somewhere, and the sooner that screw is tightened up the better. You know what that screw is, and you also know the danger of continuing in a wrong state. It gets worse and worse if not rectified, hence the importance to a backslider's soul of learning the way of restoration.

I do not know a heart that does not say, when it hears about backsliding, "God keep me from it." It is pretty easy to get away a very long distance without knowing it. Declension of heart does not come all of a sudden. It came gradually in Samson's history (*see* Judges xiii.-xvi.). He was a wonderful man, nobody like him in the Old Testament in a certain sense. But look at his history. He was a Nazarite, a separate person for God. There was no feat of strength he could not quite easily perform. What was the secret of it? He was sustained of God, and as long as he was separate, he was kept of God. But by-and-by

his affections were drawn away from Jehovah; a woman meets his eye, and she became his wife. Eventually she betrays him. What was his first downward step? You know the story. He lost his separation. He ceased to be a separate person. The thing the devil desires above all things is to get you to hob-nob with the world. He says you must not be too separate. Yes, I know that is exactly what the devil says. He has said it to me, as well as to you. He said it to Peter. But then I think what an old Scotch woman said about Peter was quite right. She said, "He had nae business down among the lackeys." He was warming himself by the world's fire. The same was illustrated in Samson's history. The moment you and I cease to be separate from the world and its ways, we are in for declension of soul. I need not deceive myself. I am in for it as sure as the sun is in the heavens.

This woman whom Samson took tried to get the secret of his strength out of him. She wept for seven days. At length he told her that the secret of his strength was connected with his hair. He was a Nazarite. "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and

brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees: and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges xvi. 16-21).

The Philistines sent Delilah money, and what was the next thing? Off came Samson's hair. The first thing he lost was his separation. And the next thing he lost was his strength. And then he lost his liberty. He was really captured that time. Had not they bound him before? Yes, they had bound him with new ropes, but they were like cobwebs to him. He had lost his separation, and now that his strength was gone he lost his liberty, next he lost his eyes, and finally he lost his life. Lose your separation, and your strength, your liberty, your eyesight, and your life all follow. Samson is the awful figure of a man who went right down from the top to the bottom. He is the picture of a Christian who has got into the world, and been utterly spoiled for the service of Christ. Oh, brethren, God keep us! Samson's history is a very solemn one.

But I come to Peter now. I think it is beautiful to see the way he is recovered. Now the twenty-second chapter of Luke, that I have read, gives you the moment when he fell outwardly. There are four salient points I wish to draw your attention to in

Peter's history; his conversion, consecration, fall, and restoration. Have you ever studied Peter's life? I would advise you to do so. You pick out the life of Peter, and put it together. I have written a book myself on his life, and very happy I was when doing it. But I don't ask you to read my book, read God's Book. It is wonderful to see the place that dear man had. He was a big-hearted man. I know he stumbled, but he even walked on water! Oh you say, he sank. I know he did, but he walked before he sank. Now mark, the great point is not that he sank, but that he walked. It was affection for Christ that drew him out of the boat on to the water, but even affection for Christ does not make us safe unless we *keep* our eye on Christ, which is of the last importance.

We have Peter's conversion recorded in the first chapter of John, when he met Jesus. The Lord changed his name. "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John i. 42). He was converted then, but not consecrated to Christ. You, too, are converted, and can say, I am a believer, and I know I am saved. Yes, but, beloved, have you really set out to follow Christ? If not, you are very like Peter between the first chapter of John and the fifth chapter of Luke. There the Lord wanted a pulpit, and He took Peter's boat for that purpose. The Lord was the best preacher that ever was, I need not say, and a most practical preacher too, for "he opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt. v. 2), and the people heard Him. The point is, if you are addressing people, be sure that they hear you. He addressed the people on the shore, and

speaking as He was from the boat, they could both see and hear Him.

On that occasion He gave them the lovely story of the sower and the seed. The truth went right down into Peter's heart that day. Oh, it must have been a wonderful scene. See Simon sitting in his boat, and listening to all this wonderful ministry. He belonged to Christ, but up to this point he has never followed Him. And now, when the sermon is over, the Lord, who will be no man's debtor, as it were, says, I am going to pay you for your boat, Peter. His words were, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke v. 4, 5). They caught so many fish that the net broke, and they had to get their neighbours to come and help them. "And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." Peter had never had such a catch in all his life, and when he saw it, "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

What brought up this question of his sin? As he got a revelation to his soul of the glory of the Person of his Master, that He was God as well as Man, I judge he was thoroughly ashamed as he thought what his own pathway in relation to Him had been. Peter learned his lesson that day. The light of God fell on his soul, and, although he says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," the moment he comes to land he turns his back upon everything, and follows Jesus. He is consecrated to Him now, and begins to follow the Lord. I have known many a man turn to

the Lord when earthly things had all failed—very likely, the bank had broken, and everything had been swept away. In such circumstances a soul will often say, Now I think I will devote myself to Him. But when the day was brightest, and his business most successful, Peter left all, and began to follow the Lord. Christ filled his heart, and the glory of His Person eclipsing everything here, he left all, and followed Jesus. Now was there ever a moment in your heart or mine like that? Is there anything as fine in the history of your soul or mine? That is the real question for us.

It is very interesting to see how Peter comes to the front everywhere in the Gospels, just from the affection of his soul to the Lord—affection coupled with energy that often led him astray because of his self-confidence.

But now the close has come. In the chapter I have read—Luke xxii.—the Lord has been betrayed, and He knows He is going to die. So when He had gathered His disciples together in the upper room, and had given to them the expression of His love in the breaking of bread, He told them that one of them should betray Him. Peter did not know who it was, and he beckoned to John to ask who it was. And John leaning on the Lord's bosom put the question. You know, beloved friends, it is a great thing to be near Christ. You cannot be too intimate with the Lord. There is nothing He loves so much as to have you near Him. There was not a cloud between John and Jesus, and John put the question, "Lord, who is it?"

After supper was over, "the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you,

that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (vers. 31, 32). That is a very striking word. I think, beloved, it is a great thing for our souls to bear in mind that the enemy is always on our track.

The way the Lord warns Peter is very striking. He says, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as *wheat.*" Observe, it is wheat. Perhaps you may say, I have had a good bit of sifting. Well, there is one thing clear, if you had not been wheat, you would not have been sifted. If you had been mere chaff, the devil would have left you alone. He never worries his own subjects, he keeps them in peace. Saints he always attacks. Sin in a sinner is bad, but sin in a saint is ten times worse, because we sin against Christ and light. Therefore sin is infinitely worse in my life, as a saint, than it was when I was a poor lost sinner. Do not, however, be in despair if Satan does sift you. Self-confidence was the secret of Peter's fall, and usually of all our falls; and it is a great thing, beloved, when the spring of self-confidence in us gets broken up. God allows it to be.

What is the next word? "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." That is beautiful. We should pray for God's servants too. Pray for those who are in the forefront of the battle. The devil is ever ready to trip them up. Before Peter was tempted, Jesus had prayed. "I have prayed for thee." Charming words! The Lord's intercession for us is a wonderful thing, and may well cheer our hearts, but, on the other hand, we must be careful, and prayerful also.

In that prayer, commonly called "The Lord's Prayer"—in reality the disciples' prayer—occur the words, "Lead us not into temptation." We should often pray that, I think. When our Lord was in presence of difficulty, He always prayed. You will find Him in prayer on seven separate occasions in the Gospel of Luke. Trace them out, and their occasion. In our chapter He is found in prayer (ver. 41). The hour of His sorrow and rejection had come, and as Messiah He was being cast out. Hence He could say, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (ver. 53). The more need, therefore, for tenacious clinging to God. He was praying for Himself, but first said to His feeble follower, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Faith is very apt to fail, and, no doubt, when Peter woke up, and discovered what he had done, he broke down. But love had prayed for him, and he was kept from remorse and suicide like Judas. The Lord on high is there always in intercession for us. He died to make us clean, and He lives to keep us clean. He does not say we shall not be tempted, but He does say—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 12, 13).

Sometimes one hears this question—If I go to such a place, or such a scene, shall I not be kept? I know I ought not to go, but, if I go, will God keep me? If you go against the warnings of God's

Word and your own conscience, you will surely fall. Would not the Lord keep me? No, not a bit of it. Do you think God is going to keep any one who is in a path of disobedience? If Peter had only heeded the word of the Lord he would have escaped the fall.

Now look at Peter's answer, and his fall. Would not you have thought that you would have found Peter trembling? Look at the thirty-third verse. "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." What an answer! Beloved, that man had fallen! His fall did not occur when he really denied the Lord. Here is where he fell. He is occupied with his own affection. He did love the Lord, undoubtedly, but instead of being simply occupied with Christ, and clinging to Christ with this sense, Lord, if Thou dost not keep me I shall fall, he was self-confident. The Lord warns him, and us through him. "And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (ver. 34).

But the history passes on. Let us follow the Lord to the Mount of Olives. We go into the garden, and there is the blessed Lord praying. He says to the disciples, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (ver. 40), and again, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matt. xxvi. 36). When He comes back He finds them sleeping. When they should have been praying, they were sleeping. How much do I pray? How much do you pray? Prayer is the secret of the soul's success. "Watch ye, and pray" (Mark xiv. 38), He also says. Here instead of praying they were sleeping. It only shows what the weakness of the flesh is. They see His sorrow, and yet they can sleep. Such hearts as we have! We can sleep in

the presence of His glory (*see* Luke ix. 32), and we can sleep, too, in the presence of His sorrow. "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark xiv. 38), is the Lord's tender comment thereon.

The temptation was now come as the multitude, headed by Judas, appeared. "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him." (Luke xxii. 47-51).

They said unto Him, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" and without waiting for His reply, one of them smote the servant of the high priest. It was Peter who did it, and that was the very action that detected him. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew" (John xviii. 25-27). When he got into the high priest's hall, the wounded man's relation recognised the man that used the sword. Possibly Peter thought he was very devoted, and that he was doing a fine thing. Ah, beloved brethren, what we

need is to get the word from the Lord. Mark Jesus' answer here: "Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him" (Luke xxii. 51).

The next thing was they took Him and bound Him. Do you know the last thing the Lord did before they bound Him? He healed that ear. Blessed Lord, the last movement of His hand was to heal the bleeding ear that His poor servant had cut off. "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. *And Peter followed afar off*" (ver. 54). Poor Peter, when he should have been distrustful, he was self-confident; when he should have been praying, he was sleeping; when he should have been quiet, he was using an unbidden sword; when he should have been separate, he was sitting down at the fire among the worldly; when he should have been near Christ, he was following afar off; and, as a legitimate consequence, when he should have witnessed for his Lord, he denied Him. Poor Peter! How like us too!

Where was John all this time? Another scripture tells us that John went in with Jesus. At first "all the disciples forsook him and fled" (Matt. xxvi. 56). He is left alone. By-and-by John picks up courage, and comes back. Peter followed afar off. Ah, brethren, are we following the Lord afar off? If so, we shall not be kept. What about John? Nobody challenged him. No. He was very near Christ. The man that follows afar off is bound to be found out and tripped up.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, *Peter sat down among them*" (ver. 55). Three times over thereafter he denies his Lord, as forewarned by Him, and ener-

getically refuted of Peter. And when he had done it the three times, "the Lord turned, and *looked upon Peter*: and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly" (vers. 61, 62). How does the Lord recover our hearts? By a look sometimes. He turned and looked on Peter. What kind of a look was it? Was it a look of anger and reproach? Is that the kind of look it was? No, no, I think it was a look of broken-hearted, disappointed love. It said, You do not know Me, but I know and love thee. Nothing has changed My love to thee. That look broke poor Peter's heart, and he "went out, and *wept bitterly*."

I think when Peter found that his Lord was crucified, it must have been a terrible moment in his history. What could sustain that man's heart? I believe Christ's prayer, and Christ's look sustained him. If he had not had the word, "I have prayed for thee," and the look, I believe he would have gone, and followed Judas. Judas went and hanged himself. Remorse puts you into Satan's hands, but repentance leads to real breaking down before God. There never will be recovery without repentance. Peter had the sense that the Lord loved him. He knew that the Lord loved him. Judas never knew that. If he had known the love of Christ, he would not have hanged himself.

Some one may say: "This is very like my life and my history. Years ago I was a bright happy Christian, but somehow I got away from the Lord, slipped into the world, lost my joy and peace, and I have got so down in my soul, that my whole pathway has been a dishonour to Christ." My dear friend, go and weep alone; weep bitterly, and your tears will be

dried some day. Oh, if you only get the sense in your soul, He has loved me, and He loves me still, all will come right. God's word to Israel, "I remember thee, and the kindness of thy youth," is equally true of you. Though eight hundred and fifty years of backsliding had rolled by, God had not forgotten the moment when they loved Him, and He was everything to them (Jer. ii. 2). They had long forgotten it, but He had never forgotten it. Ah, is there a backsliding heart here? My dear friend, do not remain such, but come back to the Lord. Do not lose another hour. Peter had to wait three days for his restoration. It was what the Lord had said to him, and the look of the Lord, that wrought in his heart. He remembered that He had prayed for him, and the last look He gave him was a look of such love and pardon, such infinite grace, that it broke his heart.

You will find that Peter has a private restoration, and a public restoration. The private restoration is referred to in the twenty-fourth of Luke, verse 34, and you get his public restoration in the twenty-first of John. The evidence of his restoration is manifest in the second of Acts. The Lord met him privately. What took place at the meeting nobody knows. The Spirit of God has thrown a veil over it. Shall I tell you why? It would not do you the slightest bit of good to know how the Lord dealt with me when my soul had backslidden, and it would not do me any good to know how he dealt with you. No, no, because the way He deals with you would not suit me. A veil is flung over the scene. But we know this, he was beautifully restored to the Lord. How do we know this? John xxi. supplies the answer. His brethren

were slower than Peter in reaching the Lord on that occasion. He did not wait till the boat got to the shore; he cast himself into the sea in his hurry to get near the Lord. He says, You can have the fish, let me get to the blessed Lord. I know the man was restored by this action.

But then, of course, the Lord gave him a public restoration. I think, beloved friends, you will never find a saint doing any real good until he is completely rid of self-confidence, and broken down before the Lord, and hence really right with the Lord. He is then in a condition for the Lord to use him. We see Peter restored to the fellowship and company of the apostles in John xxi., and then we see him in the second of Acts preaching the Word and mightily used of the Lord. I have said many a time, I believe when the devil saw Peter preaching in the second of Acts, he wished he had left him alone in the high priest's palace. Why? Because the breaking of him was the making of him, and in the first half of the Acts of the Apostles we hear a great deal more about Peter than any other servant. I repeat, the breaking of him was the making of him. He was picked up and restored. Ah yes, there is nothing like grace. Grace saved us as sinners, and grace has kept us as saints. And when we get to glory, what shall we say? It was grace all along the line. And therefore the deeper in our souls there is a sense of the Lord's grace, the more our hearts will rejoice in Him.

CHAPTER XI.

CONFESSION AND CLEANSING.

(NUMBERS xix. 1-22.)

IT is very interesting to see in Scripture, especially a type like this, how God provides for anything that might come in to interfere with the communion of His people with Himself. He loves to have us in His presence, and He loves to have us there happily, that we might be there able to commune with Him. And if there intervene anything, that puts us out of communion, it is blessed to see the way the Lord comes in to remove the hindrance.

I am going to connect this chapter with that which was before us last, viz., Peter's fall. We will see presently how the Lord restores him. But I turn to this scripture because it gives you a figure of that which meets every kind of interception of communion, produced by things other than gross failure or sin.

Genesis is the book of creation. Exodus is the book of redemption. Leviticus is the book of approach to God. And then Numbers presents to you the people passing through the wilderness where things come in to hinder communion. It gives the passage of the people through the wilderness, where they might be defiled, and where the enemy ever beset them.

Our chapter shows how a soul that has got in any sense defiled is restored. Sin is always the working

of the will of the creature. If the will has wrought, sin has come into activity, communion with God is destroyed, and then there is distance. A red heifer was to be taken, and it was to be one in whom there was no blemish, and upon which never came yoke. You have Christ brought before you immediately. The yoke of sin was never on Christ. Alas! we have had the yoke of sin upon us.

The perfection of the sacrifice is the first thing here. "And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face" (ver. 3). The red heifer is the type of Christ, who is also the priest, hence he does not slay. Death, however, comes in. The only way I can get back to God, if I have slipped away from Him, is by the application to my soul, in the power of the Holy Ghost, of the wonderful truth of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heifer is slain, and then the priest sprinkles the blood before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times (ver. 4). You are here reminded of the great thought of atonement. First of all, you see, if it be a question of my sins being put away, or access to God, it is always by blood. And then here, where you have the basis of restoration of a saint, who has gone aside from the Lord, the striking thing you meet with again is the blood.

But here, you must observe, the blood is not *for you.* There can never be any re-application of the blood of Christ. The blood here is sprinkled, not on the defiled person, but before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. That is, it is to be *under the eye of God.* He ever remembers the value of the atoning death of His beloved Son.

Now, when you and I have taken our own way, and the conscience has got defiled, what is the way back? Oh, you say, I will go back as a poor sinner, and be again washed in the blood of Christ. You will never get back that way, for it is not God's way, and not seeing this has kept many an erring child a long time out of restoring grace. How must you come back? You will have to come back as a saint, as a naughty child who has been doing his own will, and you will have to come back in God's way. "And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: and one shall burn the heifer in his sight, her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn" (vers. 4, 5). It is not a pleasant way I admit. But still it is God's way.

Note the ritual here, for it is full of instruction. The whole thing was consumed. All goes in the fire of judgment. The priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning heifer. Here is this victim slain, and then burnt to ashes. It is a striking figure of all that the blessed Lord Jesus Christ passed through when on the cross, where He was made sin. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin. The heifer burnt to ashes is the striking figure of what the first man deserved, and received in the Person of Christ when on the cross: all was consumed there in death. All that I am disappears from God's eye in death! With the heifer is burned also the cedar tree, which is always the figure, in Scripture, of what is lofty, and noble, and grand.

And the hyssop, what is that? A little bit of a shrub. It is the other end of the vegetable kingdom, it is insignificant. Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar

tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings iv. 33). I do not deny that there is something noble in man, and, of course, you will admit there is something nasty in man. We all of us have grand eyes for that. You can see a mote in my eye? Yes, but you do not see the beam in your own eye? We can all see faults in each other, that is very easy. What do I learn here? Whether it be lofty and great, or ignoble and useless, it all has to go, in the burning of the heifer.

Hyssop has a large place in Scripture. A bunch of hyssop was dipped in the blood, and put on the lintel and the two side posts of the door on the passover day (Exod. xii. 22). Hyssop was plunged in the running water when the leper was cleansed (Lev. xiv. 4-6). Hyssop was burned here. David in agony of soul says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Ps. li. 7). Again: "They filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (John xix. 29), in the moment of our blessed Lord's dying agonies on the cross. It has a wonderful meaning in Scripture, connected with man's littleness, while the scarlet indicates the glory of man.

So that whether I think of what is ignoble, or great, or of all that man can glory in, thank God, all goes. There is only one Man who will do for God, and that is the Man who is in the glory of God. The first man with all his glories, and all his insignificance is removed in judgment. I do not deny there are qualities in man that are beautiful in themselves, but they will not do for God. The first man is absolutely set aside.

It is a great point to apprehend this intelligently,

and to say with Paul, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18), and then, as taught by grace, to learn, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). If I look back at the cross, I see the man who did the sin gone there. It is immense gain to see that all goes in the burning of the heifer.

Then the next thing is, the priest must wash his clothes, as well as he who burnt her (vers. 7, 8). And then, "A man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin" (ver. 9). The ashes of the heifer simply but surely bring to your memory what has taken place. They are all that is left of that wonderful victim. There is nothing left but the ashes. All else has been consumed in the fire of judgment. By these ashes, as a figure, the Spirit of God brings to the memory of the soul, in certain circumstances, what it cost Christ to make us clean, and apart therefrom we shall not know, after failure, what purification really is.

You cannot touch anything connected with the first man without being defiled, hence we read, "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days" (ver. 11). Well, you might say, in the ordinary course of my daily duty I come in contact with many things that are apt to defile me. That is what is supposed here. "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean"

(ver. 12). But God does not let us make light of sin. The defiled man was to purify himself on the third day, and on the seventh day, and so be clean. The double purification shows that restoration does not take place in a moment. If my soul has got away from the Lord, it does not get back just in a moment. God gives me time to ponder what my folly has been.

"Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him" (ver. 13). If I get into evil, and do not judge and get rid of it, I am hurting other people. A heedless man then "defiled the tabernacle of the Lord," and if I am going on with what is wrong I am thereby contaminating my brethren. I am one of the congregation, do you not see? How careful, therefore, ought to be our walk for the sake of others. But verse 13 goes further: "That soul shall be cut off from Israel, because the water of separation was not sprinkled on him." He died. For us it is not death, but the unclean saint is out of communion. He does not get the joy that belongs to the company. He is outside morally, and practically. Why? Because there was a way of putting himself right, and he did not avail himself of it. He was careless.

"This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone

of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days" (vers. 14-16). Contact with evil in any form affects us, and hinders communion. It is a great thing to keep the covering on the open vessel. What is the meaning of that? There must be reserve. If you go and walk, and talk with the careless, and the godless, you will very soon find yourself out of communion. God bids us keep the cover bound on the open vessel. This world has a dirty atmosphere, and if it be not covered it becomes defiled. We want Christ to cover our eyes, and fill our hearts every hour of the day (ver. 16). You cannot even go to help a person who has fallen into sin without toning down a little bit yourself. Having to hear of evil, even in the way of judgment, affects us, just as he who touched a bone of a man, or a grave, was unclean seven days.

"And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel; and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean" (vers. 17-20). Observe, a clean person was to sprinkle

upon the unclean, on the third day, and on the seventh day. What is the meaning of that? Each sets forth a different stage in the process of soul-restoration. On the third day I have brought home to me that I have been taking my pleasure in the things that cost Christ the agonies, and the unspeakable sufferings of the cross. This will be accompanied by honest and full confession of the sin to God. There comes into the soul then a very deep sense of sorrow for the sin, whatever it may have been. The soul is filled with horror as it says, I have been sinning against grace; but, along with this, there comes a feeling of deep bitterness, because after all I shall not suffer for it, nor will it be imputed to me, since Christ has already suffered for it. I have been taking my pleasure in all that cost Him the agonies of the cross. He has taken the sin, and borne it and its consequences. And the soul passes through deep, deep exercise—the deeper the better.

It is not the first day after the sin that all this is learned. No, God gives me three days in which to contemplate what the effect on my soul has been of my taking my own way. The ashes is the death of Christ, and the running water is the energy of the Holy Spirit of God bringing to my soul what Christ passed through. He says, Christ has died for you, and He has borne the judgment of God for you, and this very sin that you found pleasure in, drew from His soul that agonising cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And in my soul is wrought the deep sense of what a wretch I am, for I have been finding pleasure in what cost Him pain.

Then comes the seventh day, and now there is the sense in the soul of grace abounding over sin. The

Lord has forgiven me? Yes! And there is immediately a sense of joy to think that I am perfectly clean through the work that Jesus in His love to me has wrought, and that the grace that met me as a sinner has met me as a saint. Now the sprinkling has taken place on the third day, and on the seventh day, and the soul is declared clean, and is consciously clean.

Then a practical change takes place likewise in the soul. Not only can it say, I am perfectly clean, but my sin has not altered His heart. He loves me still! His death is still efficacious to cleanse! It is dreadful to lose the enjoyment of His love, and the comfort that the Holy Ghost would give. We pay a terrible price for our own pleasure. But oh, the joy of restoration! Who does not covet it? The sense of the horror of sinning against grace would seem to be the first part of the cleansing on the third day. On the seventh day perfect restoration occurs as the mind is quite cleared of all soil of sin by the abounding of grace over sin. I first of all get the sense of sorrow, that I have sinned against grace, and then I get the sense, I am forgiven because His grace has not changed (Rom. vi.).

It is a great thing for the soul to get hold of this—if I have grieved His love, His love is there to be grieved. But then I lose the enjoyment of that love in my soul until the day comes when I judge myself and repent. That is what Peter did, I have no doubt. I think I see Peter on the third day in Mark xvi. 7, where a servant, who failed as such (Acts xiii. 13, xv. 37-39), alone records the words sent *to* Peter, and again in Luke xxiv. when the Lord meets him privately. We find him on the seventh day, in John xxi. 15-19, fully at rest in his Lord's love, and trusted by Him.

Notice that the cleansed man washes his clothes. What is that? He changes his ways altogether, and gets rid of the thing that was the hindrance. He is practically washed by the Word.

Now come to New Testament scriptures to connect them with this type. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John i. 6-10). Understand, young Christian, although you are converted, and although the blood of Christ has washed all your sins away, still the truth remains that sin is still in you. The flesh is in us. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." If I were to say, I have no sins, that may be quite true. But if I say, I have no sin, I deceive myself. That is what a perfectionist has been often led to say. It is nothing in the world but a positive delusion.

On the other hand, am I to be ever burdened with the sense of what my sins are? God thus replies: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (ver. 9). You are thus practically purged, do you not see, but it is always through confession to God, not to man, I need scarcely say. If there be anything burdening your soul, you must go and confess it. You will never be right till you have

made a clean breast of it. "God knows all about it," you say. That is quite true, but you will never be right till you have confessed it to Him. Then comes the sense of what grace is, but you will never be right till you have told the Lord everything.

I know that many go on for years, wretched and miserable, and, oh, what lack there is of joy and testimony. That soul is not right with God. My friend, let me implore you, do not you sleep till you have made a clean breast of it all to God. If you are going to be happy and useful, there must be no reserve. There have been no reserves on His side, let there be none on our side.

"My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not," we now read. Do I suppose that a Christian ought to be sinning? No. "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John. ii. 1). Beautiful words! The Advocate is Jesus; He restores me to the Father. If I have sinned and got away, I cannot come back to God as a sinner. I must come back to the Father as a child, a naughty child it may be, but a child. It is a blessed thing to see, that before Peter fell, Christ, the Advocate with the Father, had prayed for him. Ah, beloved, how He loves us. You get that deep down into your heart, and you will be all right.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (ver. 2). There we really have the ashes of the heifer. If I sin, He will pray for me, and then the Spirit of God will make me feel it. It is He, the other Comforter, that, in faithful love to my soul, has brought in the cloud. When you see what it was that produced the cloud, you judge it, and you confess it. And when you con-

fess it, He forgives it. And then you say, Blessed Lord, how Thou lovest me! The effect always is, that you get nearer to Him than ever you were before. Such is His grace.

Of course, if I have done wrong to my brother or my neighbour, I must go and own it. I shall never get right till I have put things right there. Not only must I get right with God, but with my neighbour if I have trespassed against him, because God desires to cleanse from all unrighteousness. Now mark, if we have fallen out with a brother or a sister, our Lord's injunctions for you and me in this respect are plain (*see* Lev. v., vi. ; Matt. xviii.). The whole point is this, Christ always loves for us to do the right thing. I know in my heart that I shall never get on spiritually unless I am honest and clear with God on the one hand, and with my brethren on the other hand. How splendid is Paul's testimony. "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts xxiv. 16).

We will now turn to Peter's restoration for a moment or two. I believe in Luke xxiv. you get the third day. I find that on the third day, the resurrection day, the Lord overtook the two disciples going to Emmaus, and He went with them. It is very interesting to see the way in which the Lord makes Himself known to His own in resurrection. The first heart that He met, and filled, was Mary's, and then her companions. Mary's was a heart that delighted in Him profoundly, and missed Him unspeakably. The next heart He looked after was one that had got away from Him—Peter's. The two going to Emmaus seem to come next. They said, "Did not our heart burn within us,

while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures" (ver. 32). They had never heard such a discourse in all their lives, as He gave them in that eight-mile walk. Why, our hearts glow, and are almost fit to burst, when a dear servant of the Lord, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is opening up the Scriptures to us. But fancy hearing the Lord "expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (ver. 27). No wonder their hearts burned within them.

When "they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, he made as though he would have gone further, but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us" (ver. 29). He does not force His company. But when they got to their house, and the Lord moved to go on, they said, "Abide with us." They constrained Him. They brought to bear upon Him the pressure that love always exercises. They had so enjoyed His ministry that they could not do without it. They did not know who He was, but they had found out that He knew more about the One whom they loved than any one they had met before, so they constrained Him to stay. Well, He goes inside, breaks the bread, and thus He is made known to them in that way. They now know who He is, and then He vanishes.

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (vers. 33, 34). Back they march to Jerusalem. Just before it was too late to go any farther; now, filled with joy, it was not too late for them to go all the way back. They had walked eight miles out, and it was nothing

at all to go the eight miles back again, to carry the tidings of their interview with Jesus, and to share the news. When they got there, they found the eleven gathered, and them that were with them. It was not an apostolic company. It was the company of the disciples generally. "The Lord is risen indeed," they said, "and hath appeared to Simon." Mark you, it was the third day, and I do not doubt that Peter had begun to taste the value of the ashes and the running water in that unique interview. Here I think we only get his private restoration. What the Lord said to Peter, I do not know, but this I know, Peter was restored.

He had met the Lord, and he had heard words from the Lord. God has flung a veil over the scene. I have no doubt at all, it was the Lord that sought Peter. You will find in the twelfth verse of this same chapter that Peter had departed, "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." I will guarantee, before the day was out, that he wondered very much more, as he found that his blessed Lord had come after him, and that everything was forgiven, and that he was restored to the affections of his Lord. In spite of all his sin there was nothing in the heart of his blessed Lord but deep, deep affection for him.

When you come to carefully read Peter's epistles you will find there is scarcely a verse in which he does not allude, in some way or other, openly, or tacitly, to the fact of his fall. For instance, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. ii. 25). Had not he been a sheep astray? He had, beloved, but Jesus, the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul, had restored him.

I will take up what I call Peter's public restoration another time, and we shall see the way in which the Lord re-establishes His dear servant, and tenderly commissions him. It is a pattern of the way He restores the hearts that may have slipped away from Him. But unless there has been a personal meeting with Him, there is nothing effected. You may hear as much about the Lord's grace, and the Lord's love as you like, but there will never be anything in your soul of real restoration till you and He get all alone, and have it out together. May the Lord indeed make His love more and more precious to all our souls for His name's sake.

O Lamb of God, still keep me
Close to Thy wounded side;
'Tis only there in safety
And peace I can abide.
When foes and snares surround me,
When lusts and fears within!
The grace that sought and found me
Alone can keep me clean.

'Tis only in Thee hiding
I feel my life secure,
Only in Thee abiding
The conflict can endure:
Thine arm the victory gaineth
O'er every hateful foe,
Thy love my heart sustaineth
In all its care and woe.

Soon shall my eyes behold Thee,
With rapture, face to face!
One-half hath not been told me
Of all Thy power and grace.
Thy beauty, Lord, and glory,
The wonders of Thy love,
Shall be the endless story
Of all Thy saints above.

CHAPTER XII.

Restorative Ministry.

(John xxi. 1-25.)

WE looked in our last chapter at the occasion when the Lord met Peter after He had risen from the dead. The record is very simple. And what we have had is only told us in Luke xxiv. When the two disciples from Emmaus entered the room, where the apostles and others of the Lord's disciples were gathered together, they were met by this assurance and confirmation of that which their own souls had witnessed and tasted, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Where the interview took place, when, how, or in what circumstances, we are not told. God has been pleased to fling a veil over that remarkable scene, when a Master, inimitable in grace, restores the heart of His failing servant to Himself—a servant who had, in a moment of weakness, grieved that Master, and wounded His love as only love can be wounded; but we are sure that Peter's heart was thoroughly restored to the Lord.

Evidently a few days had rolled by between the scene recorded in Luke xxiv. and those described in John xxi., because it says in this chapter, "This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead"

(ver. 14). It is said to be the third time, but, historically, it is undoubtedly the seventh time. He was seen five times on the resurrection day, the Lord's Day. First of all by Mary Magdalene (Mark xiv. 9; John xx. 1-18), then by her Galilean friends (Matt. xxviii. 1-10), then by Peter (Luke xxiv. 34), then by the two that went to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13-34), and then by the company who were in the room at Jerusalem, "the eleven, and them that were with them" (Luke xxiv. 33; John xx. 19), which of course takes the company out of merely an apostolic category. There were a good many of the disciples gathered together with the apostles on that interesting occasion, when Thomas was not with them. That was the fifth time. The next Lord's Day the Lord appeared again, and Thomas was then with them (John xx. 26-29). And now we have come to the seventh time historically.

In the first of the three appearings recorded in John xx., xxi., you have that which is specially connected with the Church. Closed doors, a company inside, and the Lord in the midst. In plain language, you get the commission of the assembly to be in this scene, like Him, and for Him.

The next week, when Thomas was with them, the Lord appeared again. There you have really the blessing of the Jew prefigured. Thomas would not believe till He saw the Lord. The Jews will not believe in Him till He is seen coming in glory by-and-by. Then the third scene (xxi. 1-11) gives us pictorially the ingathering of the Gentiles. It is a figure of the millennial scene. Thus we have in these three scenes, the Church of God, the Jews, and the Gentiles.

This seventh appearing becomes the beautiful occasion of the Lord's restoring Peter publicly. Christ not only restores the heart that has slipped away privately to Himself, but, if that servant has had a place for Him, He restores him publicly.

Now you will remember that before the Lord was seen of the company of the disciples, the angel had by the women sent them these words, "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you" (Matt. xxviii. 7). Hastening to carry their message, the women were met by the Lord Himself, who says to them, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (ver. 10). His disciples were to leave Jerusalem, the spot of ordered religion, and they were to go down to Galilee, a despised place, outside Judæa.

And now, in obedience to the Lord's command, they find themselves down in Galilee, and they also find themselves in old historical scenes, with the old boats, and the old nets (*see* Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11). And what are they doing there? They are waiting for their Lord to come, and while they are waiting for Him, see what they do. Friends, nothing tests us like waiting. The greatest test of the state of our hearts is time. Nothing tests us like time. Now what were these men doing? Waiting? No! Fishing! And Simon was the ringleader. They thought they would fill up the time. "I go a-fishing," says Simon. "We also go with thee," say the others. It is astonishing how one saint can lead others. It is a great thing to see the way in Scripture in which unconscious influence is described. We all of us affect each other, either for good or evil. You do not need

to speak. I will tell you something far more powerful than your speech. It is your life The spirit of a man is infinitely more important than his communications.

"I go a-fishing," carried the whole seven from shore to sea, but "that night they caught nothing" (ver. 3). In Mark i. 17, the Lord had said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become *fishers of men.* And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him." They had then turned their back on their boats and nets; they had left all to follow Jesus. Now, when the morning had come, the Lord stands on the shore (ver. 4), but they did not know Him. Why? Because, beloved friends, a very little bit of distance from Christ, a little working of the will, will render the sight so feeble that I do not know the Lord, even when He comes near me. They were but two hundred cubits from Christ. They were only one hundred yards from the shore, and yet they did not know who He was. I think that is why the Lord tells us the distance. Ah, my dear friends, if I am going to be useful to the Lord, I shall need to be nearer to Him than that. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee, in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. xxxii. 8), is God's way of guidance. You could not see the turn of my eye at the end of the hall. You could see it if you were near me. "I will guide thee with mine eye" is a most touching way of the Lord's saying, *Keep near me.* However, John knows Him by His word.

Then Jesus saith unto them, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No" (ver. 5). All they gave Him was a cold, No! Oh, the coarse, rough,

cold answer, that comes from a saint's lips sometimes. Yes, brethren, we get coarse away from Christ. Oh, you say, they did not know it was the Lord. That is no excuse. It was not even, No, Sir! This lack of courtesy does not affect Him, as He says: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (ver. 6).

John immediately gets his eyes opened, and says: "It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea" (ver. 7). He made for the shore as fast as ever he could. He wanted to get near the Lord. He had once, when called (*see* Matt. xiv. 28-32), stepped out on the water to meet the Lord. This time he does not wait for an invitation. He seems to say, "I know He would like to have me near Him." And in a minute he is near the Lord. If he had not been all right in his conscience, as well as in his affections, he would have kept away a little bit. This action shows me here that he was all right. All had been forgiven, and the Lord had spoken peace to his troubled heart. And now when he is alive to the fact that it was the Lord, he says, I will get near Him.

"And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" (vers. 8, 9). I have no doubt that that fire of coals spoke to Peter's conscience, because it must have brought to his memory the fire of coals in the high priest's hall, when he denied the Lord. He was then warming

himself by the world's fire, and of course he got his fingers burned. And, beloved, if you and I are hail-fellow-well-met with the world, there must come sorrow and distress.

And now the Lord bids them bring of the fish which they had caught, so "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken" (ver. 11). I do not doubt, I may say in passing, that this is just a beautiful sort of figurative illustration of what will be in the millennial day. In Luke v. the net broke. Here the net does not break. It is the perfection of all that Christ will bring in by-and-by.

And now, when they have brought the fish to land, the next word is, "Come and dine." The Lord prepared that which was necessary for the body, a figure surely of what He gives for the soul. He has the necessary food, and ministers just what we want. And look at the lovely invitation: "Come and dine! And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (ver. 12). Now why do you think the Spirit of God put that in? Because I believe every one of them was longing for an assurance that it really was their Lord. I cannot get away from Christ without there coming an indescribable effect on the soul. Things become misty in the soul's apprehension, and clear spiritual vision is lost.

"Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise" (ver. 13). He is the Master of the feast. He is the Host. With His own peculiar grace He makes them eat. He puts all His guests at perfect ease. When He gave a feast once before, that

none might be missed over, He made His guests sit down in ranks of fifty on the green grass (Mark vi. 39, 40), and the record is "there was much grass in the place" (John vi. 10). Christ's way of meeting the soul is always perfect in tenderness and careful consideration. There is nothing lacking in it.

When they had dined, the Lord deals with Peter. It was not when he was cold and hungry. He will feed and warm you first, if He have to correct you after. "Come and dine," He says to them. They were near a warm fire now, but they had been out in the cold all night, and doubtless were hungry and cold. The cure for hunger and cold, is food and warmth. That is the nature of divine ministry,—the ministry of love. Hence we read, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the Church" (Eph. v. 29). We are nourished by food, and cherished by warmth. Both are in view by the Sea of Galilee.

Now if I have got away from the Lord, it is when He has got me back to His side, and I have known the restorative effect of His ministry that breaks the heart by its grace, it is then that He can ask me any question He likes, and the heart responds. And now all needed in Peter's case comes out.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* thou me *more* than these?" Peter had boldly said long ago, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. xxvi. 33). He now answers, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I am *attached* to thee." It was quite true, and the Lord accepted it. The fruit of His blessed grace was perfectly clear to His eye, and "He saith unto him, *Feed* my lambs."

Then a second time, He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest* thou me?" You will observe the question is different in each case, and so is the commission. The first question is, "Lovest thou me *more* than these?" The next is, "*Lovest* thou me?" Do you *love* Me? Again Peter replies, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I am attached to thee." Then the Lord saith unto him, "*Shepherd* my sheep." He was going away, and He puts into Peter's care those that were dearest to Him. It shows the confidence of Christ in this now broken-down man. "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed* my sheep" (ver. 17).

Here you observe the Lord changes His query by changing the word which expresses love. In the first two questions He had said, αγαπᾶς με. Peter, on each occasion, replies, φιλῶ σε. The Lord's word for "love" is that used for divine love, which never fails; Peter's, that which expresses brotherly affection—which often fails, as in his own case towards the Lord. On the third occasion the Lord comes down to Peter's word, and says, φιλεῖς με, *i.e.*, Are you *attached* to Me? "Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Are you attached to me?" And now, as it were, he flings open the doors of his heart. He says, As I look back at what my path has been, others might well doubt, but "*Thou knowest* all things, *thou knowest* that I love thee." He, so to speak, opens the doors of his heart, that Christ may look down into the deep recesses of that heart. He acknowledges that it required divine penetration to

discover that he, who had boasted of *more* love than any for Christ, had *any* love at all.

The other apostles might have thought he was a hypocrite. But he was not. Self-confidence was the root of his failure, and the Lord here reaches the root. He speaks not of his fault, but of what produced it, and He did not leave his conscience alone till Peter had really judged the root himself. Self-confidence in Simon Peter was completely broken, but in order to this God let him have such a fall that he never forgot it.

There is scarcely a verse in either of his epistles that has not an allusion to his fall, while "Kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. i. 5), seems to be his motto ever afterwards. Go through his epistles, and you will find in nearly every verse a sort of allusion to this sad episode in his history. His self-confidence was utterly broken up, and in place of it there sprang up a simple confidence in Christ, a confidence that the Lord saw and delighted in. When Peter says, "Thou knowest all things," then Jesus replies, "Feed my sheep." He says, I am going away, Peter, but I will now put into your hands that which is most precious to my heart. Here the Lord shows His deep affection for, and confidence in Peter, as He says, "Feed my lambs—shepherd my sheep—feed my sheep." He was restored fully to the Lord, in every sense of the word, and I judge also sweetly reinstated in the confidence of his brethren. I have no doubt that on the day when Peter denied the Lord, and ran away, there sprang up a feeling in the rest of the disciples' hearts, He has disgraced the whole company. I am afraid we are sometimes not a little hurt at the tumble of a brother, because *we* are disgraced. But

have we the sense in our souls that it is the Lord who has been dishonoured? That is far more important for us to feel. But the Lord here restores Peter fully, and he is then commissioned to care for those who are so dear to the heart of Christ, during His absence.

And now there is yet deeper grace on the Lord's part to His dear servant. Peter had had a wonderful chance of witnessing for Christ, but he had missed it. He had saved his life at the expense of denying the One he really loved. And now he might feel poignant sorrow at having missed that opportunity at a great crisis. The Lord seems to say to him, You had a chance before, Peter, but you lost it; I am going to give you another opportunity of witnessing for me, and more than that, you shall not turn aside. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (vers. 18, 19). He would give him an opportuntity of again being a witness for Him, and this time His grace would sustain him. What he had failed to do by his own will, he was yet to do by the will of God. He had said he was ready to die for his Lord in his own strength. In a day to come he should die for his Lord, energised and sustained of God thereto.

Beloved, there is nothing like the grace of Christ. Get your hearts strengthened in the unfailing grace of Christ. Indeed, "it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace" (Heb. xiii. 9). Well might Paul say to his son in the faith, "Be strong in the grace

that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 1). There is nothing so blessed as the grace of Christ. And although we may have often grieved that grace, thank God the grace is there still.

It is important to notice that these words of the Lord to Peter were spoken in the presence of his brethren. He was restored publicly. Whatever they may have thought about him, it was manifest that the Lord thought a great deal of him. We are slow—too slow—to trust a saint who has fallen. Not so Christ. If a servant fall, we say, I can never trust him again. "Never trust a horse with broken knees" is an old saying in the world, and ofttimes saints act on it with a failing brother. Why? Because we have so little of the sense, in our own souls, of what grace is. On the other hand, God cannot trust us till we are broken.

If you study Peter's history, you will see that the breaking of that man was the making of him. God has to bring many a saint down to the very gutter, to break the springs of self-confidence that are there, for He will have reality, and always exposes the reverse, sooner or later. Then He lifts them up, and carries them on, and makes them the vessels of His grace as they never were before.

This charming scene concludes by the Lord saying to Peter, "Follow me" (ver. 20). Precious words of gracious encouragement! "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (vers. 20-22). John was doing what Peter was told to do. The

latter, curious as to his companion's future, inquires, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" How apt we are to be heedless of our own command, and be occupied with that of others—their service and their ways. You had better leave your brother alone, was the Lord's rejoinder. "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? *follow thou me.*" Follow Me, and let your brother alone, says Christ. I believe it is a great principle. That is the last word He said to this dear man in the Gospels.

The Lord help us each one to get the sense of the immensity of the grace of Christ. And if there is a fallen brother, may we have grace to help him. . And then if the Lord pick up and restore that soul, He can make him a most useful vessel. One cannot but be struck with how remarkably Peter ranks in the Acts of the Apostles. As a servant he was really sustained by grace. The bitter, terrible fall that he had was the means of making him follow quietly and simply after the Lord. May we know what it is to keep near Him, because if we follow Him we are safe.

And let me, in conclusion, quote to you young Christians a few words of this beloved and restored servant: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of yonr sojourning here in fear" (1 Pet. i. 13-17).

The day that I fall is always the day that I cease to *fear* to fall. As long as I am fearing I never shall fall. May the Lord keep each one of us, with fear in our hearts, and following Him simply, for His name's sake.

O Lord, Thy love's unbounded,
So sweet, so full, so free:
My soul is all transported
Whene'er I think on Thee!

Yet, Lord, alas, what weakness
Within myself I find;
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind.

And yet Thy love's unchanging,
And doth recall my heart
To joy in all its brightness,
The peace its beams impart.

Yet sure, if in Thy presence
My soul still constant were,
Mine eye would, more familiar,
Its brighter glories bear.

And thus Thy deep perfections
Much better should I know,
And with adoring fervour
In this Thy nature grow.

Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright.

O guard my soul, then, Jesus,
Abiding still with Thee;
And if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee.

That all Thy gracious favour
May to my soul be known,
And, versed in this Thy goodness,
My hopes Thyself shalt crown.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREVENTATIVE MINISTRY.

(JOHN xiii.)

THERE are two points, beloved friends, in this chapter that I want to speak of this evening, in connection with other scriptures—of the deepest importance for our souls to be clear about, for I believe there are no two truths that we, as children of God, know less about than those taught by the basin and the bosom. The basin is the expression of the ministry which puts the heart at rest with the Lord Jesus, and then as a fruit of that the soul takes its place, as John here, and puts its head on the Lord's bosom.

Now I ask you, and I ask myself too: Do we know something in our souls' history as children of God that corresponds with that—a nearness to Christ expressed by having the head on His bosom? It will never be a real practical thing unless what precedes it is understood—the perfectness of the Lord's love for you, and everything else clean out of sight! Your love to Him will never lead to it. It is only as we learn what He is to us that it can in any measure be reached.

We have already contemplated the Lord's *restorative* ministry. What the thirteenth of John unfolds is really of a *preventative* nature. If I truly apprehend

how *near* the Lord loves to have, and keep me, I shall not get far away, and backsliding will be unknown.

This chapter opens with Jesus' love—"Having loved *his own*." Those two little words are very blessed. They do not often occur, but there is nothing of deeper sweetness than to cultivate the thought, I am His own—of value to Him; He has something in a world where He had no place, where there is no room for Him—something here that He loves.

In order to better understand this ministry of Christ it may be divided into three parts—past, present, and future. We get it thus presented very clearly in Ephesians v. 25-27: "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (that is past), that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word (that is His present activity), that he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (that is the future)."

There are three scriptures in the Old Testament that connect themselves in a lovely way with this ministry of Christ. It is wondrous to think that He became a servant. "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister." He was here to serve; as He said to the disciples, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27).

Now see the way in which He serves us. Go back to Psalm xl. for a moment. There you read, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened (or 'digged' the margin gives): burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God" (vers. 6, 7). Perhaps some of your Bibles have a reference to Exodus xxi. 6. Score that out. It has no reference to that whatever. That reference has

led many astray. Exodus xxi. speaks of His death. Psalm xl. of His birth. What do you understand by the "digging" of the ears? It is perfectly simple. Suppose I go out yonder and dig a pit, there is no pit there till I dig it. So He had no ears till they were "digged"—He had never been a listener before! He had created, commanded, governed, and legislated, but had not listened.

There is a beautiful interpretation of this Oriental trope in Hebrews x., which makes the meaning of it quite clear. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (ver. 5). As the apostle goes on to quote the end of the verse, I daresay you have observed that he does not quote it as written in the psalm. Some have been troubled about this, and infidels have not been slow to take it up, and say, "Look at your great apostle Paul, he cannot even quote Scripture correctly." But there is no mistake. It is simply this, that the quotation is taken from the Greek, and not the Hebrew version of the Old Testament Scriptures.

About two hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus, the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek (just as we have had a revised version lately), and when the translators came to Psalm xl. they evidently pulled up, to inquire what was meant by "digging" the ears, and God, by His Spirit, gave them to see that the One spoken of there had never had ears, had never had a body before, but was yet to assume one—*i.e.*, to become incarnate—and they rendered it very freely, and said, "A body hast thou prepared me." When writing to the Hebrews, God, by His Spirit, led the apostle to quote from the Greek, rather than the Hebrew, that we might understand that

He now had a body, and was a listener. What is the value of the ear? It does not see, act, or think, it only receives communications from without. "Lo, I come," He says to God, "a body hast thou prepared me," and, in that body, the eternal Son of the Father came to do what no one had ever done—to listen to the behests of God, and to do His will.

Take another scripture, Isaiah l., a further step on in the blessed history of this perfect Servant. He was a Divine Person, the One who had all power in His hand, yea "Upholding all things by the word of his power," and is heard saying here, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (ver. 3). There we get His deity brought out, while the next verse presents Him as a dependant man. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (or "learner" it should be) (ver. 4). It is the same thing—one who listens. No one but Jehovah ever wakened Jesus, except the disciples once rudely, when they ought not to have done so (*see* Mark iv. 38).

The Father's well-known voice wakened Him, and He received His daily directions. We get His life here in Isaiah, whereas Psalm xl. gives us His birth. He got early communications from God of what the pathway would be, and when He knew *all*, He had a full and perfect sense of the absolute perfection of God's way with Him, and He did not turn back. The verses following reveal His perfect subjection, and His resources in a path of unspeakable trial. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was

not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isa. l. 5-9).

If the history of our souls were honestly told out, one-half, yea, three-fourths of the trouble, exercises, difficulties, and distresses we pass through are the anticipation of sorrows that never come upon us. The Lord Jesus saw the whole way, and He went straight on. How often we have been rebellious, and turned back from what we saw looming in the distance. It is so unlike what we find here. Again, when we have sought to serve Him, how many times we have been humbled because we could not. Perhaps we have got hold of people, and sought to help them, saints or sinners, and then found that we could not help their souls. Why? Simply because we were not near enough to the Lord. Why could Jesus always help souls? Because He was always near His Father, the words He spoke came from the Father. In all the history of Christ, perfect, absolute dependence marked Him. He always had the "word in season"—the right word for every soul He met, and God was *always* glorified, because the needed word was rightly spoken.

Perfect dependence, and waiting on God for guid-

ance are markedly seen in the touching scenes in John xi., when the sisters, Martha and Mary, sent to Jesus to come to their dying brother, feeling sure that the words "He whom thou lovest is sick," would bring Him at once. Supposing a messenger were to come to your house, when you get home to-night, to tell you that some one you love very much is sick, what would you do? Go off as soon as you could, wouldn't you? You would take the first train, or tram, or walk as quickly as you could to get there. Of course you would. But the Lord did not do that. Love always does the *best* for its object. We do not sometimes. I am free to admit to you that oftentimes we do not know enough of the Lord's mind to act in the best way. When the Lord "tarried two days still in the same place where he was" (John xi. 6), what did the disciples think? They were, doubtless, surprised at the way He acted. They had thought He was very much attached to that family of Bethany, but His action would suggest that He did not seem to be. They did not understand what He said, and they misunderstood what He did, and they thought it very strange that He did not go at once. What did the sisters think? "The moment He hears of Lazarus being so ill He will be sure to come at once." They waited and watched, and He did not come. Have we not often waited, and watched for an answer to a message we have sent to Him? What did they each say when He arrived? "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"—if Your feet had only been a little quicker, if You had not been so tardy, this would not have happened. So speaks blind unbelief.

The disciples did not understand it when He did

go. "Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John xi. 7-11). What do verses 9, 10, mean? Apply them to Christ, and to our own path too. He saw the light, and He walked in it. Supposing He had gone off two days before, He would have been walking in the night, because He had not the word for it. That were an impossibility with Him! When He went, He had the word, He walked in the light, and *never* stumbled. It is what I covet for my own heart, and for all saints—this nearness to the Lord—that we may be walking so close to Him, that if we have to go to a certain place, we might put our hand in His that we might not go by the wrong street. There is always a right street, and a wrong one, in every travel. Let us not forget this.

What was brought out through Christ staying in the same place for those two days? Martha learned that her brother would rise again. We get those two little words which have cheered so many hearts at an open grave, "Jesus wept." God's glory was brought out, and Christ's power over death was manifested. He was a perfect servant, and never moved without the word for it. What is the use of a servant running round the house all day long? The duty of a servant is to wait till the bell rings, then to get to know what

his master wants, and to do it. It was always so with the Lord Jesus. He was a *perfect* servant.

Now turn to Exodus xxi. 2-6. I have no doubt the death of Christ is brought out here, but we get also what blessedly marked Him through the whole of His pathway, absolute, complete subjection. He loved His Master, Jehovah; He loved His wife—those in corporate relationship, linked with Himself; and He loved His children, and would not go out free. Christ loved the Church. It is very blessed to know this, because it forms the soul, and attaches the heart to the Lord. Responsive affection to Him is of the last importance. You may be a first-rate churchman (I have no objection to your being a good churchman), but without this affection, be you ever so *good* a churchman, you will be a *very poor* Christian. You may be as *clear* as a great big block of ice, *and as cold.* Do you understand?

Intelligence is made a great deal of nowadays, but I tell you what I think, and that is, that we are all uncommonly ignorant. We are all apt to fancy we know a great deal more than we do. And another thing too, we all give each other credit for knowing a great deal more than we do. And then when troubles come upon us, or questions of doctrine, we are surprised to find how easily saints are affected. What will keep a soul? Intelligence? *No!* Affection! His love to you! Apart from this the profession of Christ is a most miserable thing. You are wretched if your heart is not in the enjoyment of His love.

The Hebrew servant loved his master—figure of Christ's affection to God; his wife, illustrative of the Church, and his children, and would not be parted from them. The boring of the ear indicated this, and

is the figure of Christ's death. Thus in connection with the ear—love's service, Psalm xl. gives me *His birth*, Isaiah l. *His life*, Exodus xxi. *His death.*

Carry this thought in your soul, that the Lord does not want yourself and Him to be parted, not only in eternity, but *now;* so He is going to take away every particle of earth's dust, and every grain of moral grit, that would separate your soul from Himself, and thus put you so close to Him that you would not be happy to be one hair's breadth away. That is John xiii. A person said to me the other day, "Doctor, what is your standing?" "Christ," I replied. "No more?" "*No more, and no less*—that is where I begin, continue, and never end."

Christianity starts with a new man in a new place,—in the glory,—not the first man in innocency, or in guilt, or sins, or death, or anything—that man is gone, and now I am "in Christ," in a new state, never known before, and that is where I begin, taken clean out of myself, out of everything I was in before. Are you in real liberty of soul? People often say, "Oh, I am in a great deal of trouble about *myself*, I am so disappointed in *myself*." There you are—self—it is all self. Why is the man in Romans vii. so wretched? Because he talks forty times about himself, and never once about Christ. Had he not well earned his wretchedness? I think so. Look at Christ; see what He is to God. Where is the Christian? There, in Christ, before God, every rag and vestige of that old self gone. Now, do not give that up if you have it. And do not be content if you have it not, till you get it. If you have not that wrought into your soul by the Holy Ghost, you have not begun to be a Christian.

Man has now a wonderful place of favour in Christ before God, in Him who is our life, our wisdom, our righteousness, our everything. There was no real link with the Lord till He had died, and was risen; not till He rose could our place be spoken of. You study John's Gospel with this thought, and you will see that in chapters i.-xii. He speaks of "*my* Father," in xiii.-xix. "*the* Father," and in xx. "*your* Father." It is the Father's gospel from end to end. In chapter xiii. He is, so to say, breaking the ice, and leading them on in a transitional state. In chapter xx. the full truth comes out, as He says, "*My* Father and *your* Father, *my* God and *your* God." He indissolubly connects us with Himself in the place He has taken.

As in Genesis ii. 7, God breathed on man, and he became a living soul, so, in John xx. 22, the Lord breathed on His disciples His own life and nature, as one alive from the dead. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). How comes a soul to be in Christ? Clearly by the Holy Ghost. Life is the basis. He is there by the Holy Ghost, but he is in Christ by life, as well as by the Holy Ghost. I am there before God "in Christ," who is my life, and the Holy Ghost comes, and dwells in me, to make all good and true in my soul, for the "Spirit is truth" (1 John v. 6), just as it is also stated that "the Spirit is life" (Rom. viii. 10).

The first thing the ministry of Christ does for me is, not only to sweep away, root and branch, all that I was, but it puts me in the place He is in. It first sets me down in the place that is His own (Christ's place before God is our place) and next labours to bring my heart intelligently into the enjoyment of it. John xiii. unfolds what love does for its object.

It is exceedingly interesting, in connection with

the Lord's Supper, to see that in Matthew (xxvi. 17) the disciples come to the Lord to know *where* to prepare the paschal supper, but we are not told *who* did it. Mark (xiv. 13) says it was two disciples. Luke (xxii. 8) tells us that these two disciples were Peter and John. John, with his accustomed retiredness, says not a word as to who prepared it, but, when all was ready for them to sit down to supper, he says, "He washed our feet and made us fit to enjoy it"—and then, emboldened by the knowlege of such love, he lays his head on the Lord's bosom.

John xiii. illustrates the difference between the priesthood and advocacy of Christ. Priesthood maintains us before God, as God. Advocacy has to do with the Father and the children. Priesthood has to do with God, and maintains me before God in all the value and efficacy of the sacrifice, in virtue of which I am brought to God. Advocacy comes in when priesthood fails. Priesthood is preventative—advocacy, restorative, there is the difference. It is all perfect love.

In this thirteenth of John Christ in grace goes down, humbles Himself, and proposes to wash the feet of His loved ones. Peter could not think of His Master going down so low, and says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (ver. 8). The Lord says, You can have no apprehension, and no enjoyment, unless you suffer Me to do as I like, and My heart to travel out to you as I wish. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then says Peter, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." No, that will not do. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit," is love's reply. He would not have a *spot* on the one He loves. Have you ever

heard an old saying, "Love never sees a spot on its object"? That does not mean that love is blind. No, love is not blind, it is intensely acute of vision, nothing more so. It sees the spots, and labours to *remove* them. It is the sweetest thing possible to think of His love in cleansing our feet.

Perhaps you have sometimes heard a person say, "I got a lovely word, and so much help to my soul, through So-and-so." Where was it from? It was from the Lord in glory, using, so to speak, the basin and the water. The channel it came through is unimportant. It is not a bit of odds what kind of pipe water comes through, whether lead, or clay, or terra-cotta, so long as it reaches you, in its cleansing and refreshing power. If you get a little lift to-night, where is it from? From His heart in the glory.

Perhaps there may be one here who is a backslider, it is quite possible. What does He do with backsliders? You go and read Jeremiah ii.-iv. before you go to bed to-night, and you will see what He does. Israel forgot Him, but He never forgot Israel. Ah," you may say, "it is many a month since I thought much of Him, and many a bitter thing has happened since then." Yes, and *He knows* all about it. When you come to chapter iv. you will see that the heart is recovered through perfect grace. Backslider! you have been crooked, wayward, stupid, and wilful, but be you what you may, He loves you. Now, can you look Him in the face, and say, "I'll take my own way"? No, I am sure you cannot. You will say, "If He loves me after that sort, I will cleave to Him, and seek to be to Him what He would like me to be." That is right. The Lord help you.

There is another point of great importance in

John xiii. The way to be intelligent and know the Lord's mind is to be near Him. John, as it were, by his action, says, "I will show you the way." No one, save Judas, knew who was going to betray the Lord, and when He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked *one on another*, doubting of whom he spake" (ver. 22). How like ourselves, when things are low, flat, and consciously wrong in an assembly, how we look at one another. Are things very cold, dull, and flat where you live, and are you looking at one another? Do not do it. There is nothing like the Lord's Table for bringing out where people are. Do you want to come to the Lord's Table? Do not take that serious step unless you really want to walk with the Lord. *All* is brought out there, you will have everything exposed. People talk glibly, and say, "What a blessed thing to come to the Lord's Table." It is an awful thing unless you really want to be for the Lord. Everything comes out, because He is there.

After the disciples had looked one at the other, their consciences began to work, and they looked at themselves, and then each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" (Matt. xxvi. 22; Mark xiv. 19). But this did not bring the answer. Peter, though a hearty man, was not intelligent. He longed to know who was the traitor, but could not frame the suited query. Why did he not ask the Lord Himself who should betray Him? Because he felt and knew, in the presence of the Lord, what we have often felt, that another was nearer to Him than himself. Peter had not freedom and liberty. So he beckoned to another to ask. Who was that other? "Now there was *leaning on*

Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then *lying on Jesus' breast* saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (vers. 23-25). Intimacy is the outcome of affection, and the source of real intelligence.

Peter was not in the intimacy of divine affection as was the one lying on His bosom. There can be little doubt that this was John, for he uniformly speaks of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John xix. 26, xx. 2, xxi. 7, 20, 24). Could you point out in this room to-night the disciple whom Jesus loves? "Oh," said one to me when I asked that question, "are you going to specify it in that way, perhaps you think it is yourself?" "Yes, thank God it is, and I would not lose it for anything. I know the disciple in Edinburgh whom Jesus loves, when I am there, but I would not take it from you. Each one may know 'the disciple whom Jesus loves.'" People sometimes say, "Was there not something peculiar about John?" Yes, he was a very simple man, believed in the Lord's love to him, enjoyed it, revelled in it, and always kept near its source. I think I hear him saying, "I know He loves me, and I know He likes His love to be appreciated, and nothing pleases Him better than my being as near to Him as I can be. He liked me to lay my head on His bosom, and I did so."

Do you know how I gauge my friends? My friends like my company. John acted on this principle in regard of the Lord; and, my beloved friends, I would say—specially to the young ones here to-night—"Cultivate nearness to Christ." Cultivate in your souls the sense that if you wander the least bit from

His side, He misses you, and would fain have you back again.

But the blessed Lord's ministry of love does not cease with what John xiii. brings out. It will go on for ever, right on to the end. Will you now turn to Luke xii. In that lovely chapter, which is occupied first with fears and cares (and there are no two greater troublers in the Church of God and in the heart), we get the third aspect of Christ's ministry. How does He cast out the fear of man? By a greater fear, the fear of God—and He casts out care by the care of God—and now He says, "You are free to think of Me." Everything down here fails (ver. 33). Moth, rust, and thief spoil all. If you go to the woman's side of the house the moth is her pest; go to the man's side, and it is rust that troubles him. If a man say, "I have that which neither moth nor rust can touch," —that is the world—the thief will come and steal it from you, or you from it.

Have you a treasure in the heavens? Perhaps you may say, "I have been trying to make Christ my treasure." Did you ever find out that Christ had a priceless treasure here on earth? If you had gone to John and asked him, "Who is Christ's treasure?" he would have said, "I know, I know, I do not want to tell you his name, but I know who it is. It is the disciple He loves." The moment you find out that He has a treasure on earth, and that you are that treasure, you will be able to say truly, He is my treasure in heaven. It is the reciprocity of love. You cannot help it.

As the sense of His love and what He has suffered for you comes before you, your heart will be fairly captured. Your heart, however, will never be fairly

captured till you find that you are His treasure, and then you will make Him yours. There will be no effort. And if He be your treasure, would you not like to see Him? Surely, you reply. But when would you like the Lord to come? To-night. *Really* now, would you? Are you ready, and watching for Him? Ready to "open unto him immediately"?

I sometimes go to a house, ring, and yet have to wait a long time to get in. My patients know my knock and ring, for I generally let them understand pretty well that I have no time to waste, and want, without delay, to get in. Still I am kept waiting. Why? Was not the ring heard? Yes, but a common Scotch expression explains what they are doing while I am kept waiting. They are just "redding up a little bit" inside, putting things in shape and order, just putting the patient's room a little bit tidy. Have you some "redding up" to do ere He comes, or are you ready for Him to come just now? Could you open to Him immediately?

With fears gone, cares cast out, and the heart above, we are left to be lights for Him in this dark world. I was going along a lane in Somerset a few days ago, and as I saw the glow-worms shining out in the dark night, I said, "That is what we ought to be—glow-worms in the night, shining for Him." Are you a glow-worm in your business, in your house, in your neighbourhood—a heavenly glow-worm in this dark, sin-stained earth, waiting for the Lord?

Are you looking up to-night, watching for Him, waiting, longing to welcome Him back? "Oh yes," you say, "I hold the Lord's coming." Let me ask you a little question. "Does the Lord's coming *hold you?*" If so, you will be not only waiting, but watching.

Notice the 37th verse: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." What is the meaning of those words, "He will come forth and serve them"? When He has taken us to glory He will never cease to be the One that ministers to us. He will serve us for ever. What love! He has assumed manhood that He might serve us, and He will never cease to be a man. Thus we shall ever know Him in glory. What a Saviour!

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," was part of His prayer (John xvii. 24). There is something deeper than the glory—the love that brings us there. We are not in the glory yet, but we are in the love that will bring us there. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," is therefore the Spirit's exhortation (Jude 21). "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 17-19), was the apostle's fervent prayer to the saints. The Lord give us to know what it is to be in the abiding enjoyment of that love for His name's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THORNS AND BRIARS; OR, FALLING AWAY.

(HEBREWS vi.)

THIS chapter is one of three passages in the New Testament which Satan has most incessantly used to torture and distress the souls of the children of God. One of three, I say; the other two being John xv. and Hebrews x.

It describes the condition of a soul who has apostatised and given up all truth. It does not describe a backslider. If you be a child of God you are such, whether in a good state or a bad one. If in a good state, you enjoy communion with God; if in a bad or backsliding state, you have lost that, but are still a child, although a naughty one. Those described in the chapter under consideration were never born of God at all.

I want you to notice that it comes in here as a kind of parenthesis, and this parenthesis commences at chapter v. 11; and then in chapter vii. Paul goes on with his subject, "For this Melchizedek," &c. You must connect, therefore, the last four verses of chapter v. with chapter vi. in order rightly to understand it. The apostle is writing to Jewish professors of Christianity. Although there were among them a great many real, bright Christians, he is writing to those who had been brought up with the traditional

religion of Judaism. And now Christianity had come in; and what is Christianity? Christianity is not outward forms, and ceremonies, and ordinances; but the knowledge of the Son of God—a living Man at the right hand of God—and faith addressing itself to this living One—Christ Jesus the Lord—and finding its all for time and for eternity in Him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christianity, therefore, is a heavenly system, for it has to do with heaven. Judaism was for earth; it was an earthly system. Satan always delights in drawing people down to earth; it is what he is busy about at this present time; he would have the heart occupied with anything short of a living Christ in the glory of God. The object of the Holy Ghost, on the contrary, is to attract the heart, and therefore the hearts of these to whom he is writing, to this living Man, this Christ of God in the glory, and thereby to detach them from all that was earthly and carnal.

The danger of these Jewish converts was, because of persecution, to give up a heavenly Christ, and to turn back again to the earthly ritual which God had set aside. Judaism had received its death-blow in the cross of Christ. It came to an end there, and was as a dead thing in God's sight. And what does God do? He sends Titus and Trajan to sweep away the dead body, and bury it entirely from off the scene. The day has gone by of external ceremonies, and the Spirit of God is drawing the hearts of God's ancient people to the Person of Christ in glory. In chapter v. Paul reproaches them with being babes, when they ought to have been full-grown men. In 1 Corinthians iii., where he is writing to the philosophising Greeks, he says, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat,

for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal" (ver. 3). That which hindered the Corinthians' growing was philosophy, that which hindered the Hebrews was traditional religion; and how much of traditional religion there is in our days you yourselves know, and if God has gathered us out around the Person of His Son, and in His name, and has shown us what the thought of His heart is as to the Church of God, in measure at any rate, it is only His own grace that has done it.

Strong meat belongs to full-grown men. Now, you will find, he contrasts Christianity, as a spiritual and a heavenly thing, with Judaism, as an earthly, and now a carnal system. Judaism, though originally set up by God Himself, had become this, because Christ had come and been rejected; and therefore all that He had to say to man in the flesh was now over, and everything was to be heavenly, connected with the Man at God's right hand. A babe, therefore, in this epistle, is one who is still associated with that which simply appeals to the senses, and who is not simply and only connected with a living Christ where He is.

"Therefore laying aside the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection" (ver. 1). I have no doubt the apostle's expression "the beginning of Christ" alludes to Judaism as divinely set up, and Christ as the Messiah, the head and centre of it all; but Messiah, the head and centre, had been slain, and so Judaism was all over before God; and therefore he says you must leave the earthly thing, and go on to perfection, and by perfection in Hebrews he means Christ in heavenly glory. "Perfect" is used in several different ways in Scripture, and you must know the scope of the passage to understand

how it is used in each one. Abraham, for example, is told to walk before God and be perfect, and his perfection was to be in absolute dependence on the God who had called him out to be a pilgrim. Israel's perfection again was to have nothing to do with idols—they were not perfect, they fell into idolatry. Our perfection in one way is to be always like our Father, always to show grace; for He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good (Matt. v.). Then in Philippians iii. we get perfect twice spoken of: first in verse 12, Paul says, "Not as though . . . I were already perfect," because perfect there means to be like Christ in glory, and Paul says, I am not there yet; but a few verses lower down, in verse 15, he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect," there being perfect is as to the object, having the soul lifted to Christ where He now is in heaven; taken quite off from earth, and linked with Him where He is, and going on to conformity with Him there.

All that you have in the first two verses of Hebrews vi. was common to Judaism, and known quite well by the Jew. There must be "repentance from dead works," and a few certainly knew "faith towards God." Then as to "baptisms," here I apprehend the word means simply washings, of which we know there were many under the Jewish ritual; the priests had to wash their hands and their feet, the victims had to be washed ere they were offered, the defiled had to wash their clothes as well as their persons, &c. Then again as to the "laying on of hands," there was in Judaism the laying on of the priest's hands, and the laying on of the worshipper's hands on the head of the victim. "Resurrection of the dead," too, was

perfectly well known among the Jews. Resurrection *out from among* the dead was what was not known to the Jew, but is the doctrine of Christianity. In Judaism there was a measure of light; but the veil was not rent, Christ had not died, and man had not been looked upon as utterly ruined; but now Christ has come, has gone into death, and has been raised out from among the dead, and the heart is linked with Him where He is in heavenly glory; and the next thing it awaits is the moment when He shall return and take out from among the dead His own people, His resurrection being the pattern and assurance of theirs.

"Well," Paul says, "laying aside all these beginnings of things," "eternal judgment" too, for every Jew believed that, let us go on to perfection. He says, you are not to stop at these things now, but to pass on, and learn that the judgment, the eternal judgment you deserved, was borne by Another, and having been borne by Him, you can never come into it, you have passed to the other side of death and judgment.

Verses 1 and 2 belong then to Judaism, and verses 4 and 5 belong to professing Christianity. I say *professing* Christianity, for there are two things awanting which are the very kernels of *vital* Christianity. I mean, there is no mention of divine life here, and there is no mention of the *possession*, as a seal from God, of the Holy Ghost. But you say, Were they not "once enlightened," what does that mean? surely that must mean converted. Not at all. In John i. 9, it is said of the Lord Jesus, "That was the true light, which coming into the world shineth upon every man." Is every man therefore

converted? Not so; but every man coming into the world is brought into the place where the light is shining. But does every man avail himself of the light though it is there? You know it is not so. The sun shines upon this earth day by day, and sheds its light around. Is a blind man conscious of it? No. Is therefore the sun less shining? The being enlightened is the coming to a man of the light —the good tidings of the gospel, without at all necessitating his receiving them, or being converted by them. Such a one is not left in darkness whether he avail himself of the light or not.

"And have tasted of the heavenly gift" (ver. 4). Surely that must mean really converted? No, not necessarily. They may have been moved and touched after a carnal sort. How many a one has come into a gospel preaching, heard of Christ, been deeply impressed for the moment, thought it a wonderful thing, meant to be a Christian; and gone away unsaved, for there has been no work in his conscience. Like the stony-ground hearers, such receive the word with joy, and give it up for a little trouble. And yet they *tasted* the joy of it, they felt it was a wonderful thing that God could love such as they, and for a moment were touched, but nothing more. They leave the spot where they were thus impressed for the moment, and give it all up—give it up after *tasting* the joy of it.

"And were made partakers (companions) of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 4). What is a partaker of the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost has come down consequent on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is on this earth dwelling in each believer; but dwelling also in what professes

the name of the Lord down here, viz., in the house of God; therefore, if I am in the sphere where He is acting, I am in that sense a partaker of the Holy Ghost. In the early days of Christianity, when Paul is writing, people gathered in the name of the Lord, and with the Spirit of God in their midst; and they were very conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost too in their midst, and also of His miraculous powers. Look at the gift of tongues, for example. The Holy Ghost was on earth giving a testimony to the hearts of God's people, and to the world also; and He was present in such power, that a stranger coming in became conscious that God was there. There was an atmosphere of love as well as of power that could not but be felt. If, then, a stranger came in and took his place there, he was with an assembly of people of whom the Holy Ghost made one, and in this sense was a partaker—a companion—of the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost were acting in power, and a man were in the place where He was acting, he was a partaker of that power—felt its influence.

"And have tasted the good word of God." This even does not necessarily imply divine life in the soul. I ask you, Cannot an unconverted man admire Scripture? You know he can. He may admire it, feel its beauty and its depth, and yet his conscience not be reached by it. The Word of God may be brought to him, and he may see its preciousness, but it may leave him as lifeless as before; he may not be quickened by its means.

"And the powers of the world to come." "The world to come" is not eternity, but the future habitable earth, under the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, during which time the power of Christ

will be put forth, and Satan's power will be removed from this scene, for he himself will be bound in the bottomless pit. When that time comes, and the Messiah is reigning, the lame shall walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, and the sick be healed; but there were beautiful little foretastes of the power of that coming kingdom seen in those early apostolic days. Did not the lame man walk and leap at the gate of the temple (Acts iv.), and the palsied man arise and make his bed? And did not Dorcas, who was dead, come to life again? Do we not read, too, of their bringing out the sick on beds and couches, that the very shadow of Peter might rest on them, and of their being all healed? and also that handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from Paul's body to the sick, and that their diseases departed from them, and that the evil spirits went out of them? These are the "powers of the world to come," and the Holy Ghost says all this may be known, and yet a person not be converted at all—not have a spark of divine life in him. When the disciples were casting out devils, Judas, no doubt, cast them out also; for we find from 1 Corinthians xiii. a person may have faith enough to remove mountains, and yet not have divine life at all; and Judas doubtless believed in the power of his Master, though there was no life in his soul.

In verse 6 the apostle says, if persons who have had all these privileges, and have been brought under all this power of the Holy Ghost, give it all up, "It is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." What had the nation done? It had crucified the Son of God. What were these people doing? The same as their fathers did.

If you give up Christianity, and give up this heavenly Christ—God says He has nothing else left—all His resources have been employed without effect.

Why does he speak of it being impossible to renew them again to repentance? Because repentance is always produced in the soul by the Word of God, and is the effect of the received testimony of the Spirit of God. God had no further witness to give. When God sent His Son into this world, what did man do? He spat upon Him, and slew Him. What did God do? Did He draw the sword of judgment? No; He took Him up to heaven, and from heaven sent the Holy Ghost to say to man, "You would not have My Son as an earthly Christ, now will you have Him as a heavenly Christ?" If man refuses this—rejects a heavenly Christ—God, as it were, declares that there is no other means of producing repentance towards Himself, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. As another has said:* "After having been the subject of this influence of the presence of the Holy Ghost, after having tasted the revelation thus made of the goodness of God, and experienced the proofs of His power, if any one then forsook Christ, there remained no other means for restoring the soul, for leading it to repentance. The heavenly treasures were already expended; he had given them up as worthless; he had rejected the full revelation of grace and power, after having known it. What means could now be used? To return to Judaism, and the first principles of the doctrine of Christ in it, when the truth had been revealed, was impossible, and the new light had been known and rejected. In a case like this there was only the flesh; there was no new life.

* Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, vol. v., p. 276.

Thorns and briars were being produced as before. There was no real change in the man's state.

"When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To 'taste the good word' is to have understood how precious that word is, and not the having been quickened by its means. Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things, and things which accompany salvation, so that all these things could be there, and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be. That supposes life. The apostle does not, however, apply what he says to the Hebrew Christians, for, however low their state might be, there had been fruits, proofs of *life*, which in itself no mere power is; and he continues his discourse by giving them encouragement and motives for perseverance.

"It will be observed, then, that this passage is a comparison between that which was possessed before and after Christ was glorified, the state and privileges of professors at these two periods, without any question as to personal conversion. When the power of the Holy Ghost was present, and there was the full revelation of grace, if any forsook the assembly, fell away from Christ, and turned back again, there was no means of renewing them to repentance. The inspired writer, therefore, would not again lay the foundation of former things with regard to Christ—things already grown old—but would go on for the profit of those who remained steadfast in the faith."

PART III.

MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS.

CHAPTER XV.

DAVID; OR, FAITH'S EXPERIENCE.

(1 SAMUEL xxi.; PSALM xxxiv.)

IT has often been observed that the Book of Psalms is intensely experimental. It is not of course that in that book we rise to the full height of Christianity, but the One whom we know now, fully revealed in the Son, is the One whom the Psalmist knew, and the exercises that he passed through are very similar to the exercises that the saints of God pass through in this day. There is consequently in them that which is very helpful to our souls. I have no doubt that in every age many a saint has drawn comfort from many of these Psalms. David was a man after God's heart. And, beloved friends, it is a great thing to be a man after God's heart.

A noticeable point of the thirty-fourth Psalm is the circumstances under which it was written. What I have read to you in Samuel xxi. tells us the moment when David wrote it. At least that is the heading of the Psalm. Now I do not think that anybody will say that the experience of David in the twenty-first chapter of Samuel was anything exceedingly creditable to a saint. He fled from Saul, and he got the bread, and the sword, but not in the simple way he might have done. It is a great thing to get your bread, and your

sword rightly. You may not always obtain it after a divine way.

When you come to the end of the chapter you see David down among the Philistines, and then taking shelter under their king—Achish—who was an enemy of God's people, and God does not support him. They said, "Is not this David the king of the land?" (1 Sam. xxi. 11). Yes! And here was the king flying, and taking refuge with the Lord's enemies. And then David "changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard" (ver. 13). Not a very nice thing for a saint to do. Then King Achish says: "Lo, ye see the man is mad; wherefore have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence?" (vers. 14, 15). This word of the king evidently touched David, and we read, "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam" (xxii. 1).

In the cave of Adullam David was in the right place, and his experience was, I presume, recorded there. Every saint has experiences, and the person who has not had them is not a Christian. I do not say that you and I ought to have experiences like David, but if a man has in any measure been wrong, it is a very blessed thing, when he gets right, to express his recovery in the language of Psalm xxxiv. It is very simple, very practical, and very wholesome, and I daresay thoroughly known to most of us. It is a Psalm that always reaches my soul every time I read it. If you do not want it, I want it, and I am very thankful for it.

You will find that the Psalm is divided into five sections. The keynote of it is, "at all times." "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (ver. 1). It reminds me of a New Testament servant, deprived of liberty, not flying from the foe, and taking refuge among the enemy voluntarily, but a servant shut up in the walls of a prison, and out of it there rings the trumpet-note of Holy Ghost liberty and joy, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." So said Paul in the epistle to the Philippians (chap. iv. 4). And now I find David saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times." You may depend upon it his soul was thoroughly right when he penned that line. Have you always been right? Have I always been right? You know I have not, and I know you have not, because you and I are exactly alike, since "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxxvii. 19).

The first four verses, which is the first section of the Psalm, celebrate what the Lord is—Jehovah. Of course, brethren, when things are all nice, and smooth with us, we can sing like nightingales. Oh, then we are such a happy people! But then, the storm comes, and trouble arises, and difficulties cross our path, and we do not sing, do we? "I will bless the Lord *at all times*," expresses a beautiful state of soul. "Giving thanks always for all things" (Eph. v. 20) is the New Testament echo. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms," says the apostle James (chap. v. 13). No matter what the circumstances be, this will always be true, if a saint is right with God, "I will bless the Lord at all times."

If we follow the Lord along His pathway, we find

Him saying in one of the darkest days of His pilgrimage, "I thank thee, O Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25-27). Let us mark this perfect Son and Servant, for such was He, I need not say. As a Man He was our example. He has passed the road we tread, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21). This is beautiful. He could truly say: "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." There is nothing so refreshing as to meet a praising saint. A mourning saint, or a murmuring saint, does not do you any good, but a praiseful saint, full of the goodness of the Lord, and the delight of what the Lord is—if you meet with such a saint—he leaves his impression on you.

But again, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord" (ver. 2). It is an Old Testament saint anticipating the New Testament injunction, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 31). "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Lovely words! Look at the effect of this boasting. It is very impressive. There is nothing impresses people like this. It may be a testimony that produces hatred, but there is no testimony so powerful. Look at the sixteenth chapter of Acts, and see two captive servants of Christ in a loathsome Roman prison, with their feet fast in the stocks. With bleeding backs, cold and hungry, they "prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them" (Acts xvi. 25). There was a wonderful testimony in that prison that night. How could these men be so bright and joyful under such depressing circumstances? What was the secret? It was their joy in the Lord.

"The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad," verse 2 continues. It is only the humble that fully take in the import of this boasting. If able to boast thus, I shall be certain to find some who will thankfully join me, and be glad. Who are they? They are not the high, nor the proud, but they are the humble. It will produce gladness, deep gladness in the heart of others, that your soul is so constantly and abidingly in the joy of the Lord, and making her boast in Him.

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (ver. 3). Fellowship is sought now. It wants others to be in its company. And then the last verse of the section gives, so to speak, the reason for all this. Now we get the basis of it. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." You will find the speaker is delivered himself, a verse or two lower down the Psalm, but here he is delivered from all his fears. I think the Lord oftentimes works to deliver us from our fears before He delivers us from our foes. Here is a man who was delivered from the fear of the trouble, before he was delivered from the trouble. It is the discovery of what God is. It is the soul deepening in its acquaintance with God, no matter what the difficulties may be.

In the next few verses (5-10) we get really what the salvation is. You are instructed in what the salvation is that God ministers to the soul that thus really turns to Him. It is a statement of a broad universal principle, no matter who it is. "They look unto him, and are enlightened. Their faces are not ever ashamed" (ver. 5). The sure effect of the soul having to do with God, is that it is enlightened. I am not talking of conversion now. It is true the soul is en-

lightened when it is converted, but here it is more in the pathway. It is a principle of the deepest importance. If you and I look to the Lord, what will be the effect? He will give us light. Why? Because God is light. And what He loves above all is to lead a soul into light, and your face is never ashamed. I have no doubt David was ashamed as he remembered the sorrowful circumstances of Samuel xxi. We hang our heads too as we think of much of our pathway. That is quite right. But you will never hang your head when you look at Him. Oh no, you have the sense of the blessedness of having to do with God.

And now note the next thing: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (ver. 6). What poor man was that? Of course David was the writer of the Psalm, but I have no doubt that that "poor man" was Christ. You will find in His pathway here He was always crying to God. It does not follow that there will always be deliverance from circumstances. That is not the point. In a world of evil we must never forget that righteousness may suffer, but God governs. In these six verses (5-11) you have really a little epitome of the pathway of the Lord Jesus. Where He now is, exalted in glory, is the divine answer to the cry of His blessed and holy soul in all His pathway here.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (ver. 7). A remarkable statement, beloved friends, and yet what an immense comfort for the soul to feel that it has angelic walls, so to speak, round it. If you *fear* the Lord, you are encamped in a safe place. You have many an illustration of it in the New Testament,

and in the Old Testament too. Take the apostles in the fifth chapter of Acts: "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth" (vers. 17-19). Take Peter in the twelfth chapter of Acts: "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (vers. 6-11). How God steps in, if He pleases, in a remarkable way, to deliver His saints! But it is always "them that fear him," whom He delivers.

And now you have a call. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is *the man* that trusteth in him" (ver. 8). The Hebrew word for *man* here is very striking. It is the *mighty man.* It is not the word expressing a poor weak man. No, it is a mighty man. And what is the secret of his might. He trusts in God. He has all his springs in God. You will find there are three things here. There is fearing the Lord, trusting the Lord, and seeking the Lord. In the eighth verse it is, "Blessed is the man that *trusteth* in him." In the ninth verse, "There is no want to them that *fear* him." And in the tenth verse, "They that *seek* the Lord shall not want any good thing." This is a moral set of holy principles that keep the heart always blessedly in touch with God. The soul, exhorted to taste what the goodness of the Lord is, will taste it if these principles are active.

In contrast with this the Psalmist says, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (ver. 10). The Lord is the One who meets the soul in every possible circumstance. He uses the lions as an illustration, because the lion is the master of creation. "A lion is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any" (Prov. xxx. 30). Spite of that even they might hunger, but "they that *seek* the Lord shall not want any *good* thing." Now there is a little difficulty perhaps with some as to this. You say, I have sought a good many things, but I did not get them. It does not say in our Psalm that they sought the things, it says they *sought the Lord.* We all of us would like many things which we regard as good for us. But by-and-by we shall be thankful that we did not have them. It has been the curse of his

life to many a saint that he obtained what he longed for at some time. The coveted thing was not good; but determination laid hold of it. "No *good* thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. lxxxiv. 12). Lay hold of that, dear friend, and if something you have desired is withheld, be sure it was not good for you. If you accept this your heart will say to Him, Blessed be Thy name, I am sure it was not good for me, Lord. There is great sweetness in this, "They that seek the Lord shall not want *any* good thing."

That is the general principle of the way in which the Lord deals with us. The soul is conscious of the light of His presence. You have the sense that the Lord saves you, and that the angel of the Lord is round about you. Then you have the conviction, I am looking to Him, I am counting on Him. If you do not get what you wanted, after a little you will certainly say, O Lord, what a good thing it was that Thou didst not let me have it.

We come now to another section of our Psalm. I think from the eleventh to the sixteenth verses you get the Psalmist giving us most beautiful instruction as to the secret of a happy, progressive, and blessed life. He says, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (ver. 11). There has been a good deal about the fear of the Lord in the first part of the Psalm, but now he fully explains it to us. There is one verse in a previous Psalm that is very instructive in connection with this. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever" (Ps. xix. 9). I think that gives you the keynote of the scripture, as regards the fear of the Lord. Without this you cannot progress in practical holiness, or sanctification.

I believe David teaches us the true secret of it. Now, beloved, this is not the condition, the state of heart that keeps back from the Lord. It is the path of progress—not of the backslider. Another writer—Solomon—says, "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Prov. xxviii. 14). It is not the fear of judgment and wrath, but it is that holy and blessed fear in the soul, which the Spirit of God always begets, a fear lest we fail so to walk in everything as to please Him.

If you will turn to the book of Proverbs, you will be interested to see how you get "the fear of the Lord" spoken of so very frequently there. In the Proverbs I believe God gives us the furnishing of the understanding. If you have time, read a chapter every day of your life. It will preserve you from much sorrow and trouble in your pathway here. I want to point out the way, in the structure of the Bible, in which it is connected. The next two books, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, have to say to the heart. You have the conscience in the Psalms, the understanding in Proverbs, and in the next two books, the heart. They are the complement of each other. In Ecclesiastes Solomon talks of the heart, only to confess that it is empty, and in the Song of Solomon it is more than full. In the one the heart is too big for the object—the world, all under the sun—and in the other, the object—Christ—is too big for the heart. One book is heart-ache, and the other is heart's-ease. The secret of divine peace and joy is found in the Song of Solomon. It is occupation with the love, and the Person of Christ.

But now for the Proverbs. You will find seven

times in this book what the fear of the Lord is stated to be. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. i. 7). The fear of the Lord is the first step to knowledge and progress. Now pass on to the eighth chapter. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov. viii. 13). Things which He hates, we should, or His fear is not in us. Next we get, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. ix. 10). There is a great difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge may puff me up, but wisdom will never puff me up. Knowledge is the apprehension of the truth, but wisdom is the capacity of using the truth. It is the way in which the soul, led of God, can use what it has rightly, and divinely. Then, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27). It is very similar in its tone to what we shall find in our Psalm. Next we read, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. xiv. 27). A sure way of escaping Satan's snares is of priceless value. Sixthly, we read, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Prov. xv. 33). Wisdom is always willing to learn, it is only fools who need no instruction. And now lastly, "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil" (Prov. xix. 23). Abiding satisfaction is a sweet fruit of this holy fear. You will find now that this verse chimes in with our Psalm most beautifully. If you want these points illustrated

they are all visible in the dying thief on the cross" (*see* Luke xxiii. 40-43).

Now turn back to our Psalm. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." It is presented as a daily practical thing. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" (ver. 12). That question appeals to each of us. Do you love life? Do you want many days, and to see good? Is it good you are seeking? Here is the instruction how to secure these blessings. "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (ver. 13). It does not begin here with my heart. It begins with my tongue. "Keep thy tongue." Oh, that is a most difficult job. How do you find it? We all know how hard it is to keep the tongue. But here it is. Are you set to see good? That is the question. I know the people who are desiring good, by the way they use their tongues.

And now, why so keep the tongue? Well, I think the sixth chapter of Luke will answer that question "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (ver. 45). What is really filling my heart will come off my tongue. And therefore you can always tell what my heart is occupied with, because I have a tongue. I cannot long deceive you.

When you come to the epistle of James you find a great deal about the tongue. Strange to say, it is not very often read, and yet that is a most important epistle. No saint gets on rightly that is

afraid of James. "For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (Jas. iii. 2-13). Yes, it is quite true, "in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." I am quite sure I am not that man. But I think it is a beautiful thing to find such a man. Do you know him? No, nor do I ever expect to meet him. Let us

meet him in you. A son was once complaining to his father of the evil in the world. Said the old man, "Improve the world by one man, John!" *i.e.*, begin the correction with number one. Wise old man!

And now pass on to Peter's first epistle, where he quotes from this thirty-fourth Psalm. He there exhorts us: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. iii. 9). We are to carry blessing to others. If my tongue does not carry blessing to others, it is a great pity, because a Christian has been blessed by God infinitely, and he is left by God in this world to be a blessing to others. Some people say to me, "All these Psalms are for the Jews." Peter does not leave them all for the Jews. He knew better than that. I am sure it will be a very useful thing for our souls if we heed what he says. Thus then he quotes, "For he that will love life, and see *good days*, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and *do good;* let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (vers. 10-12). He stops there. He knows how to quote the Scripture. He omits the end of the sixteenth verse of the Psalm, which runs thus, "To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." He does not go on with the Psalm, because that will only take place by-and-by, when the Lord Christ as a righteous King reigns, and righteousness will judge all evil at once. The man that lets his tongue wag wrongly in that day will be cut off.

But even now, in the government of God, if I am

not careful of my tongue, I may come under His discipline. The seed I sow will certainly bring forth its corresponding crop by-and-by, and so will what you sow. I speak very plainly, for I get about a good deal among the saints, and I could not tell you the mischief that is done by unguarded language, and letting forth that which is not profitable. Ah, beloved, God give us all to be more careful.

I must not, as a saint, allow that which is not profitable to issue from my lips. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. iv. 29). All conversation either ministers grace to you, or it corrupts you. I do not think we ought to turn aside the keen edge of the Word of God in respect of this.

But to return again to our Psalm, we find the instruction of wisdom bidding us "Depart from evil, and do good" (ver. 14). This sweetly harmonises with "But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 16). Think of Jesus, He "went about, doing good" (Acts x. 35). What the Psalmist by the Spirit presses on us here, is what the blessed Lord Himself illustrated in all His unselfish pathway here.

"*Seek* peace, and *pursue* it" (ver. 14), is the next injunction. How we are reminded of the Lord's words here—"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9). Again, "Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15). The man that is not a peace-maker is, in the spirit of his soul, a peace-breaker. Why? Because he is not walking in carefulness before God.

Again, turning to the epistle of James, we find that "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (chap. iii. 18). We are called to walk in peace, and, beloved friends, it is a blessed thing to be a peace-maker.

The apostle Paul in the fourth chapter of Philippians exhorts us to follow in the pathway of Christ, saying: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (vers. 6-9). It is not only that if you are prayerful and thankful, the peace of God will keep your heart, but if occupied with Christ yourself, you will carry with you the sense of the presence of the God of peace. And it is a lovely thing, beloved, for a saint to be passing through this world in that character.

But we are further told in our Psalm that "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (ver. 15). How comforting, striking, and also encouraging: only let us mark well that it is the righteous He ever thus regards. The doom of the unrighteous is given in the next verse, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from

the earth" (ver. 16), which points distinctly to the judgment of the ungodly in a day to come.

Now you come to the fourth section of the Psalm, which is an experience I have no doubt that the blessed Lord Jesus knew full well. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (vers. 17, 18). What kind of man could God walk with? With the man of a contrite spirit. If you want to secure the presence of the Lord, what must there be? A broken, and a contrite heart. In plain language, there is a moral state that engages the company of Christ.

From the nineteenth verse to the close is the last section of the Psalm. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (ver. 19). That is the principle. He delivers in His own way, in due time, because He has His eye so upon His people. "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken" (ver. 20). Who could that be, but the blessed Lord Himself, when on the cross? Who could deny the application of this passage to Him? It is absolutely prophetic, and the apostle is very careful to say, "That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36). How God preserved Him! What a sense, beloved, our souls should have of the preserving hand of our Lord.

Then you get in the last two verses a contrast. "Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall bear their guilt (*margin*)" (ver. 21). That is a very striking statement, but illustrated all through Scripture. Evil turns round upon a man that

indulges in it, and slays him. It is a broad principle. "And they that hate the righteous shall bear their guilt." That shows the righteous retribution which God must administer. But the Psalmist adds, "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall bear guilt." The same word.

How blessedly, does the Spirit here, by the pen, and the lip of this really restored man, teach us to find all the springs of our souls in God. May His grace indeed lead us more and more to walk with Him, and to pass through this scene, as a blessing to others, while waiting for His Son from heaven.

"My heart is full of Christ, and longs
Its glorious matter to declare.
Of Him I make my loftier songs;
I cannot from His praise forbear.
My ready tongue makes haste to sing
The glories of the heavenly King.

Fairer than all the earth-born race;
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest, we bow the knee,
And own all fulness dwells in Thee."

CHAPTER XVI.

The King in His Beauty.

(Psalm xlv.)

IT is a great point for us to seek to cultivate that in our souls which comes out in this Psalm. What the King is Himself is that with which the queen is occupied. We should be occupied, in like manner, with what Christ is. We are very apt to drop down into occupation with the blessings which His gracious hand bestows upon us; but in this Psalm it is not what the King does, but what He is, that is dwelt upon. What the Lord values is a heart that delights in Himself.

"My heart is *inditing* a good matter." The margin shows the meaning of inditing to be *boiling*, or *bubbling* up. I fear we are not often in this state. It is a great thing to have the heart boiling up with love to Christ. Instead of this, we are often at the freezing-point—very far from the boiling-point in the measure of our devotedness to Christ. What the "good matter" is, the verse explains: "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King;" that is, what I know of Him; not what I have received from Him, but what He is to me. It is the place His blessed person has in my soul. Mary of Bethany chose to be with Himself. She sat at His feet, and listened to His words. To be near and with Him was what her soul desired.

Affection for the Lord marked her condition, and her place was at His feet. She was absorbed with the person of Christ. And did she lack intelligence? No; but it was not her object. She brake her box of precious ointment over Him, and Jesus said, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." She feared she might not again have the opportunity of doing it. Others made a feast for Jesus; but surely you would not feast one you knew was about to die. Mary's act was in keeping with the circumstances of her Lord. The feast was not so; she was at the feast, yet it did not occupy her. The One for whom the feast was made did. Her heart boiled with love to Him. She was the only one there really in the current of His thoughts. The Lord by His Spirit make our hearts to boil with real, true love to Christ! Love can only be satisfied with love. He loved us unto death, and He seeks in return the true affection of our hearts for Himself. He is worthy of it, beloved brethren.

"My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." It is easy to speak of Christ, and to praise Him, when the heart is boiling with love to Him. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If we are silent in worship and praise, it shows the heart must be empty. Christ as an object does not fill the affections. You say, The Spirit must move us to worship. Yes; but if there be not worship, it is evident you are not moved. It is quite true we are to be subject, in the worship of the assembly, to the leading of the Lord only. So we are taught in the first epistle to the Corinthians; but in this Psalm there is subjection to the Spirit of God, and withal a heart overflowing with that which it knows concerning the King. I envy the state of soul here

manifested. Listen to the language: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into *thy* lips." The address is to Himself. She is so near she can speak *to* Him. This is further than the bride in Canticles ever goes. She says much *about* her Beloved, but not much of this nature *to* Him. He is to her the chief amongst ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One; but the one here is so near she can speak to the King; and all slips out so easily: "Therefore hath God blessed thee for ever." In such intimate nearness there is acquaintance with the mind of God as to His purpose concerning the One He delights to honour.

"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness." There is a right sense of the majesty of His person. He was outraged by man, and the puny but guilty arm of man had been raised against Him in the hour of betrayal and falsehood; but the day would come when He should ride prosperously because of truth. He was the meek and lowly One; but "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted"; and the result of His lowly grace would be His exaltation. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity: therefore, O God, [marg. reading] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Here He is saluted as God; and in Psalm ii. by God as His Son. He is anointed *above* His fellows; He is pre-eminent amongst the fellows. Who are these fellows? Hebrews ii. shows that we are His fellows: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed

to call them brethren." He leads praise in their midst (Heb. ii. 11, 13). And again we read: "We are made partakers (or fellows) of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 14). He is anointed with the oil of gladness, and the precious ointment drops from the head to the skirts of His garments. In the day of Christ's glory, when He will ride prosperously, we shall be with Him, and shall share that glory; the oil of His gladness will drop on us.

"All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." There is fragrance in Christ, and that should come out in us. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 15).

"Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." When the King is spoken of, the bride is Jerusalem; so this Psalm has a millennial bearing. Israel will look on Him whom she rejected and pierced, and will mourn. The Lord will save His people from their sins, and in divine righteousness give them a place in His presence. "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." Then will she consider, and incline her ear to Him. She is to forget her own people, and her father's house. But what does this teach us? That there must be the bringing in of Christ between the soul and everything here. Nature must be distanced by Him; I must forget it. Christ must be my first object. Is He the first consideration with us? or is it self and our houses, and the care of them—the family, the friend, or the father's house? The Spirit of God here says, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;" and

Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37).

"*So* shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." He will *then* see beauty in thee. You will then be for Christ what Eve was to Adam; and there is the other side: "He is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The claims of the Lord weigh with those who have Christ as their object. What joy when our souls in any measure enter into this! Christ eclipsing everything, and worship freely flowing out to Him. And we read of the beauty of the King's daughter that she is "all glorious within." Here are her moral adornings, graced in the virtues of Christ. *His* beauty is that in which she shines, and because of it *He* gets praise: "Therefore shall the people praise *thee*."

What is God now doing? Is He occupied with our blessing, our comfort? or is it not rather with the glory of the One He delights to honour—with Christ, whom He will set as the centre of all things and Head over all? God seeks praise for Him; and this because of what we now are *morally*, as in spirit and behaviour, like Christ, adorned with His virtues; and in another day, because of what we shall be when like Him, and with Him in bodies of glory like unto His own glorious body, when we shall be manifested as "the sons of God," as the fellows of Christ, and endless glory will be our happy portion. The Lord by His Spirit keep His dear Son before each of our hearts, that we may have the sense that He is ever near and with us. May we walk with Him, and ever remember "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

CHAPTER XVII.

RECIPROCAL AFFECTION.

(SONG OF SOLOMON iv.)

IT is a blessed thing to cultivate in our hearts, not only the sense of what God has done for us, but also what He in grace has made us to be for Himself. It is most blessed to get away from ourselves, and entering into the secret of God's presence, there to learn what those sentiments are which fill His heart. The Spirit of God makes those who believe in Christ to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; so the apostle Peter says in his first epistle (i. 8). That is our side of this joy, but "it is meet that we should make merry and be glad," is His, for the Father has His joy as well, and it is boundless. He rejoices to have children near to Him—children who can enjoy Himself. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God*;" and "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 11).

It is that we may enjoy Himself that we are made nigh by the precious blood of Christ. It is not merely what He gives us, but Himself, who is to be the portion of our souls, and this is the fruit of the new birth. Because born again, we enjoy God Himself. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But what is this new birth? It is our getting a new nature, which

has the capacity to enjoy and understand and know God. The soul gets this as the fruit of His grace. We are made to enjoy God; but then He has His side as well. His joy is to have His children near to Him, and we are to have the sense that there is nothing between our hearts and Himself. Thus we see there is the joy of the Father, and the children's joy likewise. In chapter iv. of the Song of Solomon we see Christ's part in this joy. The relationship here presented is not that of father and children. Of that the words of our hymn speak—

"Thou the prodigal hast pardoned,
Kissed us with a *Father's* love;
Killed the fatted calf, and called us
E'er to dwell with Thee above.
Clothed in garments of salvation,
At Thy table is our place;
We rejoice, and Thou rejoicest,
In the riches of Thy grace."

In the fourth chapter of the Song it is the bridal relationship which comes out. It is the joy of the Bridegroom and of His bride.* We are prone to read this book so as to find Christ in it, and our hearts glow as we trace Him in its various scenes; but it is very sweet to turn for a moment and learn what the bride is to Christ. No language could be more lovely than that which we find He uses with regard to her. Listen to Him! "Behold, thou art all fair, my love"—all fair; "there is no spot in thee." Yet the more we know of Christ, the more we know of ourselves; and

* As our readers know, the bride in this book is the earthly one—Jerusalem. Still the heart of Christ is the same in all relationships, and we may therefore fairly make an *application* to the Church.

as we walk with God, as the years roll by, we take lower and lower estimates of ourselves. Each year we think less of ourselves than we did the year before. So much is this the case that the heart is apt to become legal. The exceeding worthlessness of what we find within us is so apparent to us. How blessed then, notwithstanding all we see ourselves to be, that Christ says of us, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (ver. 7).

It is blessed to dwell upon the Lord's thoughts of His people; to think of the Lord's pity, and of His *compassionate* love, though that is not the love referred to in the Song. Here it is the love of *complacency*. He is rejoicing over His bride, and He speaks of her beauty and of her comeliness. But how can He find in *us* that which can delight Him? He does find that which is the joy and rejoicing of His heart, though not because of what we are in ourselves. It is all the result of what He Himself has invested us with. Jacob found in Rachel that which met the desires of his heart; and we find in Christ that which satisfies us; and Christ finds in His bride, the Church, that which delights His heart. "Ah!" you say, "it may be so when He will have presented us to Himself 'a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Then the Church will be holy, and without blemish. Then all that which is worthless shall have been dropped, and only that which is His own perfect workmanship will abide."

But that is not the moment to which this chapter points. That day of glory and exceeding joy will come; but what we find here is something more wonderful than what will then be shown forth. Here we learn that even now, whilst we tread the sand of

the desert, on our way to the glory that awaits the bride and Bridegroom, He finds in the Church that which delights His heart. He waits in heaven at the Father's right hand for the nuptial day. Whilst then He is the portion of our hearts, He finds in us the portion of His heart. Look at what He says. As the Bridegroom speaks of His bride, the expressions of His love and appreciation deepen. He says to her, "Thou hast ravished," or taken away, "my heart; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes." Do we think of this? Do we believe it, beloved, that we are a joy to Him? We might well say of Him, that He has stolen away our hearts; but when He says we have ravished His heart, surely it is a wonderful thing. His delight is found in *us;* in the one He calls His bride.

It is not the individual believer, but the collective thing that is here spoken of. It is always the body of believers when the bridal affections of Christ are referred to; but in order that our souls, as a whole, may walk in the power of this wonderful truth, we must each individually be in the enjoyment of it. Each saint must dwell on that which Christ is seeking for in the assembly of His saints. It is through grace alone, I need not say, that any of us can enter into this—His joy concerning His own. But, I repeat, unless each one is individually enjoying it for himself and herself, we shall not, as a whole, answer to that which Christ is seeking us to be for Himself. There must be in your soul and in mine the sense of what we are to Christ. When this is known, and the heart has tasted it a little, we sigh to know it more deeply.

Look now at the response He gets from the bride. In chapter i. she is heard to say, "Thy love is better

than wine." She knows His love, and it is better to her than all beside; but His language exceeds hers. Hear what the Bridegroom says to her: "*How much* better is thy love than wine!" (iv. 10). What grace in Christ to say this of such poor heartless ones as you and me! Yet this is the estimate Christ forms of any little love He now finds in our souls to Him. "Thy lips," He continues, "O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue." Every word that falls from the lip, all that is the fruit of grace in the soul, is to Him like the droppings from the honeycomb. In Scripture honey indicates that which is food as well as refreshment. How such a scripture as this judges us! What has our conversation been? Has it been that which could feed as well as refresh the heart of the blessed Lord? "A garden enclosed," He says, "is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." All this means she is entirely for Him, only for the Bridegroom. Ah, beloved, it is blessed when the soul gets to this! All that I am, and all that I have, belong to Him, to Jesus only. I am to be for Him here, and He says I am His own. He wants me for Himself. Is not His desire enough to make each soul surrender fully to Him? "He died . . . that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15).

But the Bridegroom enlarges on what the bride is to Him. "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Such is Christ's

appreciation of "His own," and we should have the sense of all this in our souls, of what He *sees* His people to be. If we carried in our souls more the thought of what we are to Christ, He would be more to us. The eye would then be more off ourselves, and off one another. Then would our gaze on Him be more steady, and the joy of our souls be more calm and holy. Then we should be more jealous of that which would cause any distance between our souls and Christ. We would watch with eagerness its approach, and be able to shun it.

But He cares for His glory, and does preserve us for Himself; so we read, "Awake, O north wind." He sends His north wind, bearing its wave of trouble to rouse the careless one. We do not like this; but it is good and wholesome for the spices in His garden. It shakes them out. The wind gets through the branches, and the fragrance is poured forth. Trouble checks us. It casts us on God, and presses out that which is of Christ in us. Thus we learn what He would teach us. Then He can vary His dealings; the wind is changed. He says, "Come, thou south wind, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." He gives deep enjoyment of Himself. He makes the sun of His presence to shine in upon our souls, and the heart turns to Him, and says, "Let my Beloved come into his garden." The joy of communion is then known and enjoyed. Then the heart says: I am all for my Beloved. "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me. Let him eat his pleasant fruits." The soul enters into His thought as to His bride. And how does He respond to her desire to have Him near her? "I am come," He says, "into my garden, my sister, my

spouse." He appreciates that which is devoted to Him. He says, as it were, "It is all mine;" for, "I have gathered *my* myrrh with *my* spice; I have eaten *my* honeycomb with *my* honey; I have drunk *my* wine with *my* milk." As the soul enters into communion, and is conscious that He draws near, the heart goes out more and more to Him, and says, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

But as we thus muse on this joy of communion between the Bridegroom and His bride, we may well bow our heads in humiliation, and say, How little have we known of it! How little can we have been the joy and rejoicing of His heart! True, very true; yet faith lays hold of God's estimate of things.

Turn for a moment to 2 Corinthians xi. 2, and see how the apostle sums up this matter. "I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a *chaste* virgin to Christ." The Song of Solomon does not go beyond the day of espousals, but Paul points to the nuptial day, when the espoused one will be presented as a *chaste* virgin to Christ. What does he mean by a chaste virgin? It is one who is true, about whom a breath of reproach could not have been; so he warns them: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." We need more of this simplicity, brethren—the simplicity that is *in Christ*. Let our souls awake! Let us be able to say before Him, "He is everything to me, and I am everything to Him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S VICTORY; OR PRAYER, FASTING, AND PRAISE.

(2 CHRONICLES xx. 1-30.)

I SOMETIMES ask young converts how they can best please the Lord. How can you best please the Lord? I should very much like to hear what you would say. I have had all sorts of answers. One said to me, "Work for Him." It is a very blessed privilege to work for Him, and a very sweet thing service is. But there is something better than service, and there is something far more important for the saint to get into his soul than even the thought of service.

I was very much struck once, when a beloved brother, now gone to his rest, said to me, "How can you best please the Lord?" I began thinking, and he said to me—"Turn to the sixty-ninth Psalm, verses 30 and 31: 'I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.'" Of course, I saw his point then.

But how beautiful this is, "I will praise the name of God with a song." Of course, the ox and the bullock present the simple thought of service. There is something the Lord enjoys more than service.

How can I best please the Lord? "I will praise the name of God with a song," is the divine answer. We often have prayer-meetings, but I wish we more often had a praise-meeting.

Jehoshaphat had one, in the striking chapter we have read, under very peculiar circumstances.

It was a crisis in his history. We have to meet crises, individually, and I think collectively too. Jehoshaphat and all about him were then confronted by a very great difficulty. "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is En-gedi" (2 Chron. xx. 1, 2). Well, what did they do? "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." Ah, you will never get a right real praise-meeting, until you first fear, and then fast, while seeking the Lord. That is it, my brethren. Do you set yourselves to seek the Lord? I am a very useless piece of goods if I am not setting myself to seek the Lord. How can we get on without His power and grace? Do you ever have a fast-meeting? I recommend you to have one. I will tell you where you will come out at the end of it. You will come out a great deal nearer heaven than before it.

Prayer and fasting are often found together in Scripture, and their importance is clear. When His disciples inquired why they could not cast out a demon, our Lord replied, "This kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 21). Again,

when the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," the assembly of God at Antioch apprehended the gravity of the call, fell into line, so to speak, "And when they had *fasted* and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts xiii. 2, 3). The assembly were fully identified with their mission by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands. I think when it says a fast in Scripture, it means a fast. Frequently one hears it said, "That means a moral state." Do you think it was only a moral state at Antioch? The moral state existed, and it showed itself by a material fast, which was not commanded, so far as we read. I fear that word moral is going to ruin us. If we said we were going to have a fast-meeting to-morrow, I wonder how many would be there? Would you and I be there? I shall never forget a day, when a lot of dear young brethren, in London, whose hearts were troubled about the lack of devotedness, and greatly desirous of a revival of interest in the gospel, said, Might we meet before God for a day of fasting and prayer? It was arranged, and I spent the day with them. It was about the best day I ever had on earth.

Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, and Judah gathered themselves together. I think they felt the difficulty. With one consent they gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord. They said, Lord, what are we to do? The heart of God was charmed that day. Yes, charmed. It is what He longs to see, His people counting on, and confiding in Him. "And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord" (ver. 4). Notice, they came out of *all* the cities of Judah to seek the Lord. You show

me one good, bright, earnest, fervent brother in a district. He will have a fine effect upon those round about him. Jehoshaphat *set himself* to seek the Lord, and then *all Judah* began to seek the Lord. That was the effect. You have one man moving many here, and you will find that God has always had His men all along the line of testimony. He prepared them, and communicated His mind to them, and then used them to affect others. Here then you have fearing, fasting, and praying, an invincible trio, for Scripture well says, "*Two* are better than one . . and a *threefold cord* is not quickly broken" (Eccles. iv. 9-12). Let us all go in for the three.

"And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" (vers. 5-7). Jehoshaphat turns to God in a most simple way. Oh, beloved brethren, get hold of God, hang on Him simply. We have a great deal too much of hanging on men nowadays. We are not hanging simply and sufficiently on God. This man hangs confidently on God, as he prays, "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" He has a beautiful grip of God's purposes, as he refers to Abraham. Jehoshaphat was a bold man. Nobody ever had said that Abraham was the friend of God.

Had he said that God was Abraham's friend it would have been only blessedly true, but to call him "thy friend" was faith indeed.

But Jehoshaphat recollected that in a day when the thunder-cloud of God was about to burst on the godless cities of the plain of Sodom (*see* Gen. xviii., xix.), God had made known His mind to Abraham. We all tell our friends our thoughts and plans. When Abraham learned that judgment was about to fall on Sodom, he began to intercede for Lot, a saint settled down in a worldly filthy city, with his family terribly mixed up with the world. Judgment too is hanging over this scene, and we should occupy the lovely place of intercessors for a doomed world. I wonder if the Holy Ghost could write about you and me, that we were the friends of God. What showed Abraham to be God's friend was that he was a man whose heart was devoted to the interests of the Lord, and that interest showed itself by intercession for God's people. How I long for this, my dear friends, for you, for myself, and for all God's people.

Jehoshaphat reminds God of Abraham's devotedness. He says, Lord, you used to have a friend down here. We talk about God being *our* friend. Hallelujah for that! But Abraham was the friend of God. That is manifest, for nearly two hundred years after this, God, by the pen of His prophet, in an appeal to His people, endorses Jehoshaphat's statement, saying, "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isa. xli. 8). "Thy friend!" says Jehoshaphat. Yes, "My friend!" replies God. It was faith that secured Abraham this splendid title. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac

his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. ii. 21-23). No earthly title can eclipse that heavenly honour, "The Friend of God." Let us all go in for it. It is a great thing to be God's man, and God's friend, in a day of declension as this is.

Let us continue Jehoshaphat's prayer. He reminds God that He had given the land of Palestine to His people Israel: "And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: *but our eyes are upon thee.* And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children" (vers. 8-13). God's house in Jerusalem was then the gathering place of His people, and there prayer was to be made in days of difficulty. Now the house of the Lord is the assembly, and its gathering centre is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I have the wonder-

ful privilege to-day of taking up before God all that concerns Him, in the name of His own blessed Son, with the assurance that He will hear and help. God is a God of encouragement, and what He delights to do for our souls is to encourage us.

Ah, my friends, it is a great thing to have the Name of the Lord as our centre, and to taste the joy of the Lord in our midst. To ensure this, what God wants is simplicity. He wants you just to be what you are. And what are you? If you are a believer in Jesus, you are a child of God, an heir of glory, and you are of the company of the sanctified. You belong to that blessed One on high. You are His, and He is yours. And all His heart, all His strength, and all that He is is yours; and "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear. What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. xiii. 6). The fact is, a saint that is right with God, goes through this dark world like a glow-worm. As you pass through this scene, you go with the exhilarating sense that you have no power save that which is of God, and that is infinite. You have, and are to count on all the resources of God being with you in the day of battle. What a wonderful thing it is to be a saint of God in the night of Christ's absence.

Look now at Jehoshaphat's many enemies. Bear in mind that they were his blood relations. Very often our greatest difficulty arises from our relations, according to the flesh. The children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir, were Judah's relations according to the flesh. They were descendants of Lot and Esau. The difficulty was to know how to deal with them. Jehoshaphat's prayer was charming. "We

have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee" (ver. 12). Ah, that is beautiful—"Our eyes are upon thee!" The Lord help you and me, beloved brethren, to turn our eyes more upon Him. Whose eyes were turned Godward that day? "And *all* Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." Do you bring your children to the prayer-meeting? "Oh no," you say, "we leave them at home." They were wiser in Jehoshaphat's day. "Oh, but we cannot keep them quiet." Then there must be something wrong at home—a screw loose somewhere. It is not the divine order for the men to come to the meetings, and to leave the little ones with the wives at home. But you say, That was a great crisis. I admit it was a crisis, but "Thou and thy house" is a great principle all through Scripture, and in proportion as we neglect it I believe we restrain God's arm.

"Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz: and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against

them: for the Lord will be with you" (vers. 14-17). Notice that Jahaziel was a Levite, one of the sons of Asaph. He was a singing man. I like to meet a singing saint, one who is marked by constantly praising the name of God with a song. It was one of these singers that came out that day. He was, so to speak, a simple brother in the meeting, but he had the mind of the Lord that day, as he rings out to the praying congregation, "Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." How beautiful! The work is God's. The whole testimony is God's. And it is a great thing to let God do His own work in His own House.

I believe the secret of much of our failure and defeat is, that we are rather like Uzzah (*see* 2 Sam. vi. 1-8). We think He cannot do without our help, but He can. God can take care of His own ark—Christ.

The great point is to have the sense that God is ever working for the glory of His blessed Son. Nevertheless I think we should see a great deal more of His work made manifest if there were more prayer and fasting. When saints are not very happy, they sigh. If they are happy, they sing (Jas. v. 13). If you are walking with God, you will pray with the man that is afflicted, and, if you are happy in your soul, you will sing with the brother that sings. It is the Spirit that produces joy in the soul, and that relieves itself in song. The question of having a voice, as men say, has nothing to do with it. I remember a dear brother, a fisherman, who was in the Edinburgh Infirmary when I was a Resident Physician there. He had leave to go out on the Lord's Day mornings to

meet with the saints for the Lord's Supper. On his return, he said: "Oh, it was graund, the presence o' the Lord, and the singin' was sae sweet. Ye ken, doctor, I hae nae v'ice, sae I canna' sing masel, but I aye mak' a joyfu' noise." His heart was overflowing with the grace of the Lord. And, brethren, the Lord stir us up a little bit more to that. He loves to hear our songs.

"Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you," must have been a most cheering and comforting word to them in that day of difficulty. If the Lord is with us, we are all right. But if the Lord is not with us, it is an awful thing. To merely have the ark in the midst as Israel had (*see* 1 Sam. iv. 1), without the presence and power of God, will not do. Assumption God will always expose. He can take care of His ark, or, if need be, let it pass into the enemy's hand, for their discomfiture. God will have reality, and all we have to do is to be what we are, confessedly nothing.

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord" (ver. 18). There is a distinct step here. God's testimony leads now not to praying and fasting, but to worship. Jehoshaphat is a worshipper, and all Judah with him. The sense of God's gracious answer to their cry brings about a worship-meeting. You cannot manufacture that; you cannot get that up. Worship is the overflowing of a heart filled with what God is. You never can get it save by the power of the Spirit of God, and you cannot have it apart from the delight

of the soul in Christ. When He fills the vision of our souls there is real worship.

"And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever" (vers. 19-21). Now you get the song breaking out. You have had the fasting, the prayer, and the worship, and then the song comes out. All was very simple, and very proper. Jehoshaphat's faith was in full exercise, as he says: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." Confidence in God secured full deliverance, and faith sang its songs of victory before a blow was struck. "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever," rent the heavens. That is, they really had a thanksgiving meeting over the victory before the battle began.

The appointed singers lead the army, and the moment the song begins to rise to the Lord, the Lord begins to work. "And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up

against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped" (vers. 22-24). There is no battle, and no fighting. All the difficulties melt away, as every foe helped to destroy another. "And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day" (vers. 25, 26). What a victory! Their only work was a three days' gathering of the spoil, and on the fourth day a renewed worship-meeting in the valley of Berachah, followed up by a return home with joy.

It is a great thing if saints are animated by a spirit similar to that given in this scene. It will lead them to fling their souls into God's work, not only the gospel, but every branch of it. The evangelist's is an important gift, but if the evangelist has done his work, what a privilege all saints have in taking care of the new-born souls, to nurse them, and lead them on. That was evidently found in the Church in early days. Each servant and his work was intimately connected with the assembly. His heart was in it because Christ was in its midst. On the other hand, the

assembly was deeply interested in his work. If God make you the means of the conversion of a soul, my heart ought to be interested in that person, to feed, and lead such an one on.

Without denying this, I often hear this kind of a speech, "Of course it is right to help, but as I do not see what I can do, I have a little difficulty." I think that little word "I" is *the* difficulty. "I" is just a straight line, and you would think it to be the smallest, whereas in fact it is the fattest and biggest letter in all the alphabet. It would be a real victory if we could drop the "I" altogether, and just inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). My brother, that is the whole point. Do not forget that the Lord "gave authority to his servants, and *to every man his work*, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark xiii. 34). To every one of us He has given some little bit of service to do for Him here.

Jehoshaphat's victory was followed by great praise and joy (ver. 26). They had a real praise-meeting in the valley of Berachah. That is the valley of blessing. If our hearts are set to win victories for Christ now, we shall have praise and joy too, as we see souls won for Christ. That is not everything, because we may not always be privileged to see this fruit of the gospel. Our responsibility is not to bring all the world to Christ, but our responsibility *is to bring Christ to all the world.* I repeat, we are not responsible to bring all the world to Christ, but I believe God has given us the privilege, as well as responsibility of bringing Christ to all the world. How are we answering to this responsibility?

When the day of blessing and thanksgiving had concluded, we read, "Then they returned, every man

of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the fore-front of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalters and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord" (vers. 27, 28). They get back to the assembly, as it were. Because you know, beloved brethren, every Christian ought to be like a bee. The bee goes out and labours all the day, and then it comes laden to the hive. If you have gathered anything, bring it back to the hive. We must love the assembly, and live for it too, in the widest sense. Paul writes of "the love which ye have to all the saints," not only the nice ones (Col. i. 4).

The point is, the assembly of God is still on earth, and we should each live in view of it. You are not the assembly. I hope you do not think you are. Do you, who in this city gather to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, think you are the assembly? You are *of* it, and thank God you are gathered on the ground and basis of it, but we must not forget that we are *not it*. It includes all God's saints on earth to-day. I shall never forget what our dear brother, Mr Darby, once said at a meeting at Torquay in November 1863. There had been a good bit talked that day about our being "God's testimony." "Well," said he, "brethren may be God's testimony, if they keep their heads down, but if they do not they will be a testimony, not to God, but a testimony to their own folly and weakness." Wholesome words! Let us heed them!

We are apt to get a little lop-sided. We all need to get back to Scripture. Scripture corrects us, as well as directs us. God always supposes you will go right. If we should go wrong, correction comes in to help us. We are not to think that we are the

people, and that wisdom will die with us (Job xii. 2). It will not! God has given us light and truth. Let us seek grace to answer to it, by going out, and living Christ on every hand. It is not what I say, but what I am, that is of such importance.

In connection with the truth of the assembly, let us never forget that, though we are on the ground of it, we are not it. There are thousands of saints in this town who are part of God's assembly. They are not in function and order. They are in disorder. And the effort of every one of our souls should be to help them in the spirit of Christ, and in no other way can we do so.

Who is on the Lord's side,
  Who will serve the King?
Who will be His helpers
  Other lives to bring?
Who will leave the world's side,
  Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side?
  Who for Him will go?

Not for weight of glory,
  Not for crown and palm,
Enter we the army,
  Raise the warrior psalm;
But for love that claimeth
  Lives for whom He died:
He whom Jesus nameth
  Must be on His side!

Fierce may be the conflict,
  Strong may be the foe;
But the King's own army
  None can overthrow:
Round His standard ranging,
  Victory is secure,
For His truth unchanging
  Makes the triumph sure.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEHEMIAH AND HIS WORKERS.

(NEHEMIAH viii.)

I DESIRE for a few moments, beloved brethren, to direct your attention to Nehemiah viii., which shows us the result of being devoted. We find in this chapter the deepest blessing that could be imagined for any soul. Nothing in the history of God's ancient people presents a greater picture of the grace of God. The blessing of the faithful ones is seen to be higher even than in the palmy days of King Solomon. I speak of it that together we may encourage our hearts in the Lord, and that we may inquire what similarity there is between our circumstances and those of the remnant in Nehemiah's day. Those of whom this chapter speaks were a little company just emerged from captivity. They were setting themselves *to please the Lord.* Blessed object for any people, beloved!

Turn for a moment to 2 Chronicles i. 1, and you will there find a point of great importance. It is said with regard to King Solomon that "*God was with him*," and in Pentecostal days this fact was acknowledged with regard to the Church. God was known to be in the midst of His gathered ones. He showed also He was there in the judgment of evil which appeared amongst them. A holy fear controlled the hearts of men, and we read, "By the hands of the apostles were many

signs and wonders wrought among the people; and of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord" (Acts v. 12). Also in verse 11 we read, "Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things," so that in the world it was known God was with His saints, and amongst the saints themselves there was a wholesome fear of that which would not please the One whom they knew to be with them.

But things had changed since the days of King Solomon. All had turned aside, and the children of Israel had been carried into captivity. In their exile God spake to them by His servants, and in Nehemiah we read of a few who had answered to the prophet's call. We find in 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 26 that Cyrus, King of Persia, took up the prophet Jeremiah's warning, and issued a proclamation to the captives in Babylon. These were his words: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? *The Lord his God be with him*, and let him go up." That which marked the King of Israel in the days of magnificence and power, we find promised to the one who set himself in the day of ruin, to please the Lord his God, and to obey His word. What wonderful encouragement! A company had gone up according to the decree of Cyrus, and in Nehemiah i. 1 we find them at work in the land of Judæa.

In Ezra we get the account of the building of the house. The setting up of the altar, and building of the house in the name of the Lord, may be regarded

as a picture of that which God has done in these last days through a remnant of His people. The power of the name of Jesus has been asserted as God's gathering point for His saints. We are gathered by the Spirit of God, now in this world, to the divine centre—*the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* The name of Jesus is to us what the altar and the temple were to the returned captives of Judah. Look at Nehemiah i. and you will see amongst these people a picture of deep devotedness to God. The house was built, and the altar was there; but the condition of the remnant who sought to do the work of the Lord was far from what it should have been. This devoted servant of God saw this, and what did he do? He betook himself to prayer. "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel *thy servants*, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. . . . These are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power" (vers. 6-11).

It is blessed, beloved, when by the Spirit the question is raised in our hearts, "Is there amongst us that which suits the heart of God?" and more especially when the result of such heart-searching is to send us to our knees in self-abhorrence before God. The state of the remnant exercised the heart of Nehemiah, and prayer to God was the resource his soul prized. There is a personal character about all this, and individual teaching for each of us, beloved brethren. If the condition of the remnant in Israel was to be raised, the work of individual self-judgment was the means to that end, and if we, as a whole, are to be revived, we

must begin at home. In such a way Nehemiah acted. "He sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (chap. i. 4). His sorrow was real and deep; his countenance was marked by the sorrow which burdened his spirit. The king remarked his looks; for Nehemiah was sad in the presence of the king, who said to him, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." Then Nehemiah told the king the cause of his sadness. "The city of my fathers lieth waste," said he, "and the gates thereof are consumed with fire" (chap. ii. 3). And the king encouraged him to make known his desires; but what does Nehemiah first do? Ah, this is beautiful! "So I prayed to the God of heaven." When there is real desire to do God's will, there will be much looking to God, to know what the desire of His heart for His servant is. Having prayed, Nehemiah makes his request to the king. He asked for twelve years' leave of absence, that he might do the work of God, and rebuild the waste places of Jerusalem. He prayed to God before he made his request, and the desire of his heart was granted. The king also gave him letters to the governor, and an escort for the way.

Thus prospered, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem; but, alas! he found no one interested in the work he sought to do, and, single-handed, what could he do? Well, by night he surveyed the city. Thus he made himself acquainted with the state of affairs, and then he tried to interest the children of the captivity. "Come," said he to them, "let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Then he told them of the goodness of God, and the king's

words to him; and what effect had this upon them? They said: "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (chap. ii. 18). Such was the effect of devotedness in one man. The influences of one such on those round about is unspeakable. The Lord stir up our hearts, each one, that there may be this real devotedness working amongst us!

But no sooner is this real devotedness manifested than opposition shows itself. What would now answer to the devotedness which we see in Nehemiah? Souls being in the place the Holy Spirit would gather them to, and, when there, the heart answering to the claims of Him to whose name they are gathered. Beloved, if you give yourself to this, you may expect to be opposed. Satan ever sets himself against that which is really for God. Nehemiah and his brethren soon found this out. They were loaded with scorn by Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. How would you have liked that? See how Nehemiah met his opposers! He said, "The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build the wall: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (chap. ii. 20). Nehemiah knew who sent him to do the work, and he purposed to do it as God would have him. He took up very exclusive ground. What an example he is to us! I exhort you, and seek for myself to go in for this thorough carrying out of God's will. We are to seek to please Him, and He will prosper us.

The third chapter of this book is very interesting. It shows the record God keeps, how He marks our doings. Each company of workers is spoken of,

and what each one did. Notice what is said of the Tekoites. They were so devoted that when they had finished their own work they directed their efforts elsewhere, and repaired "another piece" (chap. iii. 27). But another thing is said of some amongst the Tekoites; for everything is marked by God—"Their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord" (chap. iii. 5). I call this chapter a specimen page of the book of eternity. It shows what note God makes of the actions of His saints. It is the Old Testament parallel to what we get in Romans xvi. of the New Testament. There again the deeds of saints are recorded, and divine comment made upon them. Phœbe is spoken of as a servant of the Church, and the succourer of many. Such was the letter of commendation the apostle could send with her when she went into a new gathering of saints. Alas! it is not often we can write such letters regarding each other. But some one asks, "Are not all the letters of commendation the same?" The apostle's were not all the same, if we may judge from Romans xvi. He is careful to give each credit for the service which marked him; and in Nehemiah iii. the Spirit of God notices the particular work which each company, and even individuals, did in the service of the Lord in that day.

Just look at verse 10, where the work of an individual is recorded—"Next unto them repaired Jedaiah, the son of Harumaph, even *over against his house*." This is very instructive. The Lord sees and knows what is needed to be done over against our own houses. He takes knowledge of the work of saints, even when engaged on what they deem very small service. Home labour is little seen by man, but God

marks it well. It is most important service. You may not be able to pray in the assembly; it is not the place God has given to some to do so; but have you unconverted ones at home? Do you seek their souls for Christ? Do you seek so to live that Christ is commended to them? This is service very pleasing to God, and in His book you will find it has its own record. "Jedaiah worked over against his own house."

But some may not have houses of their own; they lodge in the house of another. Then the service of such an one we find mentioned in verse 30, "After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against *his chamber*." He did his bit of work there, and it also is taken into account. The service of the sisters has its record here also, "Next unto him repaired Shallum, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and *his daughters*" (ver. 12). A lovely sight! There was a thoroughly united household—the daughters heart and soul with their father in the work of the Lord. But all did not work alike, and that also the Lord takes notice of in verse 20, "Baruch the son of Zabbai *earnestly* repaired the other piece." We may well labour earnestly, for who is the One we are called to serve? The Christ of God. And the building, of which we are the living stones, is the habitation of God through the Spirit. An earthly city was the object of desire with the remnant in Nehemiah's day, but how far surpassing is the one God has given to us—the Person of the Christ! We are living stones of the temple He builds.

What motives have we to be in earnest, beloved! Our calling is a heavenly one; but like the returned

captives of whom we have read, we have come out of Babylon. We have made our exit out of that which will culminate in the spiritual Babylon of Revelation xviii. They came from the literal city. We do not come out of the house of God; it would be a mistake to say that, for we are part of that house; but we are to separate ourselves from that which is not according to the Word of God—from the evil that has crept into the house of God. Our calling is to please God. Have we all set out with purpose of heart to do this? If we are faithful in this we may expect opposition; mockery and anger too may be hurled on us. This the remnant of Israel got.

"When Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves?" (iv. 1, 2). But there was more than this. Tobiah the Ammonite heard what Sanballat said, and he also spoke contemptuously, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall" (ver. 3). Thus was the work of these true-hearted servants despised on all hands. Sanballat mocked them, and Tobiah looked upon their work as contemptible. And are there not Sanballats and Tobiahs now, who speak of the truth for which we contend in a similar way? Alas! there are amongst the children of God some who, from lack of knowledge of what the Lord, by His Spirit, is doing in these last days, oppose His truth most warmly, and have said of us, "Their work will all come to nothing." Now, let us learn from the captives of Israel how to meet such mockery and contempt. We read (iv. 4), they prayed, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised," &c. They

told God they were despised, and they contented themselves to leave their defence in His hands. They believed He would care for His work and justify them.

Further, we read (iv. 6) the people "*had a mind to work.*" Perhaps now and then we have a mind to work; but do we come together to pray about the work, as did Nehemiah and his people? Thus only can we be strengthened to go on to the praise of God. If there is not more expression of our dependence on God, the Lord will break us up, beloved. Prayer was always the resource of the captives in Nehemiah's day, and it should far more characterise us. As the enmity against these servants of Jehovah grew hotter, the more we read of their unwavering confidence in God—"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" (chap. iv. 9). They prayed, they watched, and they worked with a mind. They were in downright earnest. Ah, my friends, would to God these traits were all more seen in us!

But it was not all bright; decay began to show itself amongst the workers. Read chapter iv. 10, "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is *decayed* and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." Here is the beginning of *internal* weakness. Hitherto what hindered success came from without; but now faint-heartedness appears in the workers; yet there was amongst them a devoted one, who was equal to the moment. Let us see how he acted: "Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall," said Nehemiah, "and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked,

and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (chap. iv. 13, 14). And what effect had these words of Nehemiah? "And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work." Blessed effect! Their hearts were turned to the Lord when they felt their feebleness; thus were they strengthened to go on. They counted on the great and terrible God, who brought the work and counsel of the sneering to nought, and the faint-hearted burden-bearer was again set heartily to work.

But the workmen were watchmen as well as builders. Read verse 16: "From that time forth, the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons, . . . every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so builded.*" The sword and the trowel are as needed in our day as in theirs. Then at verse 23 they seem to have reached the highest point of devotedness: "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing."

I pass over chapter v. with but little comment. There was internal trouble, and it came out. It is a poor thing when we fall out amongst ourselves. Satan is

not careful what instrument he uses if only he can stop the work of God. His greatest victory is when discord is sown amongst the Lord's people. From verse 15 we learn what it was which ever kept the soul of Nehemiah right: "But so did not I, because of *the fear* of God." Thus was his heart in the presence of God.

In chapter vi. we find the enemy making another and most determined effort. If he cannot succeed by attacking the captives from without, and if the internal trouble is settled, he will now try to get the remnant to be less exclusive. "Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief" (chap. vi. 2). Here is the cry for union: "Why are you so exclusive? Cannot you join with us in the work of the Lord?" Now, beloved, Nehemiah teaches us, and Jeremiah also, how we are to meet all such advances. God in His grace has called us out from the evil that has come into His Church, and we must be careful not to lessen in the eyes of others, nor to lose the sense in our own souls, of the distance between the ground on which we are, and that out from which we have come. Beloved saints of God are where we were, but true love will cause us to walk in the light we have received, that they also may learn and obey the truth in the love of it.

Listen to what Nehemiah said to the messengers of Sanballat and Geshem, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (chap. vi. 3). This was a beautiful answer. So sure as we depart practically from the ground of thorough separation to

which our Lord has called us, our strength will be seen to go. Any vacillation brings in weakness. In the world it is said, "Nothing succeeds like success;" but, amongst saints, "Nothing succeeds like consistency." Nehemiah said, "Why should the work cease whilst I come down to you?" And Jeremiah said another very plain, and most helpful word, which it is well we should heed, each one of us: "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee, but return thou *not* unto them" (Jer. xv. 19). The separated one must say, "I am here for God, and I must abide with God." But if Nehemiah will not listen to this proposal, Satan will put forth one more effort. Tobiah, Sanballat, and others, sought to make Nehemiah afraid, but again he goes to prayer. In everything he turns to God, and at verse 15 we read: "So the wall was finished in fifty-two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Then chapter vii. 2 shows that Hanani and Hananiah were put in charge of Jerusalem, and a very beautiful thing is said of one of these men. Of Hananiah it is said, "He was a faithful man, and *feared* God above many." A lovely thing to be able to say of a brother in the Lord. May we merit such a comment! Let us seek so to live, that in truth this could be said of us.

In the eighth chapter two things come out—a deepening love for, and intelligence in, the Word of God. "The Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So

they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." . . . And all the people wept when they heard the words of the law (vers. 7-9). Ah! the word had great power that day on the hearts and consciences of the people. And what followed this real heart-searching? Blessing, of course. "Nehemiah and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said, Mourn not, nor weep, neither be ye sorry; for *the joy of the Lord is your strength.*" And at verse 12 we read of great mirth, "because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." They wept, for they knew how weak they were; but joy filled their hearts because God was their strength. It is well to feel our weakness, and to acknowledge it; but what cause for joy when we learn the strength of the Lord is ours! The joy of the Lord must be that which sustains us. Then we have strength outside, and in spite, of all circumstances. Individually we ought to be so happy and so sure of our position that we have a portion to give to others. Streams of blessing should flow from us; we should be a refreshment to every one who crosses our path.

Now I think we learn, from what has been traced in Nehemiah, that as the darkness increases so does the blessing of the soul that is faithful to God. 2 Chronicles xxx. 26 confirms what I have just said. There we find that the joy at Hezekiah's passover exceeded all since the days of Solomon. Then we read in 2 Chronicles xxxv. 18 that the passover kept in the days of Josiah surpassed any since the days of Samuel; but what is said of the feast in Nehemiah's day, which the returned captives held after the wall of

the city was finished? It excelled any since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun; "and there was very great gladness." There had been no feast of booths since the first that Israel kept when they entered the land. It was the brightest point in all the history of God's ancient people for the one who was faithful to God, though the surrounding darkness was greater than at any other stage of their history. So, no matter what the difficulty, there is joy as deep, for the saint who will do God's will, in the days of decline, as in the first days when all was as God set it up.

What a comfort this is for us! Then let nothing hinder us; for if we make Christ our object, and "have a mind to work," our joy and blessing will be as great as was that of the Pentecostal saints, when *all* were *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and gladness and singleness of heart was characteristic of each one of them.

"I will never leave thee,
Never thee forsake;"
At Thy words, Lord Jesus,
We fresh courage take.
All may seem against us,
Everything give way;
Thou, O God, art for us,
Thou dost win the day.

Every source may fail us
In the deadly strife;
Thou, Lord, still remainest
Our eternal life.
Blest with every blessing
In Thyself above,
There in fullest favour
Loved with perfect love.

"I will never leave thee,
Never thee forsake;"
At Thy words, Lord Jesus,
We fresh courage take.

CHAPTER XX.

DANIEL; OR, DEVOTEDNESS IN DIFFICULT DAYS.

(DANIEL i.)

THERE is great profit to be found in the study of Daniel's life. It is not Daniel as a prophet I turn your attention to, but Daniel as a saint, and a servant of God. You and I are not prophets. We are all saints. Daniel was a servant, and, through infinite grace, God has given us also the privilege of being His servants. We get the moral features brought out in this book that should ever mark the servant in a day of ruin, and confusion, among God's people.

We are constantly reminded of the ruin, and the broken state of the Church. So patent is this that many a heart has said, "I will give it all up." My dear brother, you may be a Daniel in this day of confusion and ruin, if you only have faith and purpose like him. Ten points strike me in Daniel's history.

1. A SEPARATE MAN.

Nothing could exceed the ruin in Daniel's day. God's people were in captivity. His house was destroyed, and the vessels thereof adorned the idol temples of Babylon. Daniel and his friends were captives in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar, a

godless monarch, who cared nothing for God or for His people. Of these captives, of royal and noble parentage, the king had selected a certain number. "And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were, of the children of Judah—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" (chap. i. 3-6). They had to undergo a three years' curriculum at the college of Babylon, and were to live during their worldly pupilage, with all the surroundings of idolatry, and subject to immense temptation. There is no person exempt from temptation, but I conceive that Daniel and his fellow-students were subject to peculiar temptation, to drop their faith and their Nazariteship.

Now, beloved brethren, where Daniel made his first stand, is where we must begin. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (ver. 8). Daniel "*purposed in his heart.*" It is a fine thing to be a man of purpose. And I tell you what it is, you are no use, and you will never

be of any use, unless you are a man of purpose. Barnabas, when he visited the young converts at Antioch, "Exhorted them all, that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts xi. 23). Paul could say to Timothy, "Thou hast fully known *my purpose*" (2 Tim. iii. 10). I seek to cheer the young. Be men and women of purpose. So here, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." In plain language, he was a separate man. He was a self-denying, separate man, and an obedient man too.

This man had learned, I do not doubt, to read the Scriptures. He knew that the king's meat had been offered to idols, and he also knew God's mind as to the fat, and the blood. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat. And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use; but ye shall in no wise eat of it. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people. Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings. Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people" (Lev. vii. 23-27).

Then, moreover, he had read the sixth chapter of Numbers, where he learned that there was an opportunity for him of being a Nazarite in a day of difficulty, by being out and out for God. He would rise to that privilege, so he declined the king's

wine, as well as his meat. He would deny himself. He doubtless had carefully studied Leviticus xi. and xx. You know, what we feed on makes us. I am not talking only of the body now, but what the soul is occupied with. The first thing I notice is that he refuses entirely that which nature would have accepted and enjoyed. I have no doubt the devil said, "There is no use whatever in your setting up to be a Nazarite in this day of ruin; you are in Babylon, do as Babylon does." I have a purpose in my heart, replies Daniel, and he stuck to it.

Having refused the king's portion, Daniel chooses, and is allowed pulse and water. His action emboldens his fellows. They join him, and we find God blesses them. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (ver. 17). Their education is from God.

2. An Enlightened Man.

"Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm" (vers. 18-20). The moment you set yourself to really follow the Lord, it is wonderful what light the Lord will give you. Wisdom and knowledge will be vouchsafed to you in abundance,

for you will be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and will "increase in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 9, 10). "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams," and at the end of the three years at college is tested. The examination day came, and these four young men came out at the top of the class. When they came in, the king communed with them. They had apparently to go through an examination before the king.

I believe we meet with examination days when perhaps we least expect them. Where my soul is, and what I have been occupied with, really is declared then. The place these captive students get is a great encouragement. The world is before you, and I know very well the temptation it is to Christian young men and women to rather fall in with its ways. Sometimes they think it is necessary in order to get on in the business they have in hand. To me it is very nice to see that the godliest of the lot were at the top of the class in Babylon. There is no gainsaying it, for "in *all matters of wisdom* and *understanding*, that the king inquired of them, he found them *ten times better* than all the magicians and astrologers that were *in all his realm*" (ver. 20). You give me a downright devoted saint, and you will find, in the long run, that he is ten times better than the most instructed worldly man, because he has light from God.

3. A PRAYERFUL MAN.

When you come to the second chapter you find Daniel in difficulties. The king had asked the most preposterous thing. He called on his wise men to recall and interpret a long-forgotten dream. It was a

dream of many years ago manifestly (ver. 1). All the wise men were to be cut off if they could not declare it. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain" (vers. 10-13). Unless they could meet this difficulty there was nothing for them but the sword. But we find a very nice thing. Daniel goes to the king for time, and to God for light. "Then Daniel went in and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (vers. 16-18). In plain language, beloved friends, Daniel got his brethren together, and they had a prayer-meeting. Are there difficulties in your way? Have a prayer-meeting. That is my advice to you. He tells his brethren the difficulty, and gravity of the situation, and then says, We must have a prayer-meeting.

Well, what is the result? "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel

blessed the God of heaven" (ver. 19). And what is the next thing? Away goes Daniel to tell his brethren? No! You have beautiful order in his soul.

4. A PRAISEFUL MAN.

He has a worship-meeting next. He blesses God. And you will find his soul goes out to God in a most beautiful way. "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter" (vers. 20-23). Oh, how his soul revelled in what God was. What a true hold that man had of God. How his soul was entranced with the blessedness of having to do with God. "Thou hast made known unto me now what *we* desired of thee." Mark that little word "*we*," will you? He had sought the fellowship, you see, of his brethren in the matter of prayer, and in his thanks to God he takes his brethren in. He has deeply the sense in his soul of the blessedness of having to do with God.

You have here then a separate man, a devoted man, a man whose ways are suitable to the Lord, and one who is intelligent in God's ways. As a result he can tell the king exactly what is coming.

5. A Prosperous Man.

"Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (vers. 48, 49). Rewarded, and exalted himself, he does not forget those who were at the prayer-meeting. Everything is shared with them.

What a beautiful saint Daniel was! To me there is something very charming in his character. He reminds me in this way of the apostle Paul. There was nothing small about either Daniel, or Paul. How little we are! What miserable pettiness and selfishness we often betray. We have been called to the enjoyment of the fulness of God's things, and to alway continue sharing these things with others is of immense importance.

Daniel was a prayerful and praiseful man, and then, sharing all he received with his brethren, he prospered (*see* also vi. 28). Here is the secret of a prospering saint. Mark, if I have light, it is not for myself, it is for others. We are only vessels, and God puts the light in us, hence, whether it be the gospel, or the truth connected with the Church, we are responsible to circulate and pass it on. And I believe, the truth that you and I may glean and gather, if we do not use and circulate it, will soon moulder in our very souls. We become the subjects of spiritual dry rot. Many of God's dear children are suffering from this disease. They acquire truth, but no one else benefits.

Why? They have been so busy with themselves—so self-occupied, so self-absorbed—that they really have no time, and no heart to think of others. They keep, only eventually really to lose—for it dries up—what they should have been passing on. I think Daniel gives us a beautiful lesson in that respect.

6. A Faithful Man.

The fifth and sixth chapters go together in illustrating this point. In the fifth he is brought in before King Belshazzar, and he is faithful indeed, as he foretells his doom. I am not speaking now of Daniel as a prophet, but as a saint. He is a fearless and faithful man, as he exposes the king's sins, and tells Belshazzar what his end is to be. Look at his independence. How really independent is God's man in every day. Nor does he want any reward. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (ver. 17). He does not want the world's gifts. Not one bit. He is dependent on the Lord alone. He receives everything from the Lord for himself, and he has something for everybody else down here. He is faithful to man in the fifth chapter, and, even so, made "the third ruler in the kingdom," which ended that same night. How beautifully faithful he is to God in the sixth chapter we shall now consider.

7. A Hated Man.

Daniel's faithfulness, trustworthiness, and consequent promotion, led to his being well hated. I believe, beloved friends, to be thoroughly hated for Christ's sake is a wonderful thing. When a man is

here really for God, and the light, the truth, and the grace of God are streaming through that man, he is sure to be hated, and if he be hated for Christ's sake, let him thank God. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke vi. 22, 23). This the apostles did, for we read: "When they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts v. 40, 41). And again, it is written, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. i. 29). The apostle Peter also says, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Pet. iii. 14). "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Pet. iv. 13, 14).

The root of the hatred against Daniel was his ever-increasing promotion by the successive monarchs he served so faithfully. His history in connection with Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus embraces seventy years. His exaltation com-

menced by Nebuchadnezzar making him a judge (ii. 49), Belshazzar made him prime minister (v. 29), and Darius continued him in office, with the added post of what I may call the king's accountant-general. "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might *give accounts unto them*, and the king should have no damage" (vi. 1, 2). This lofty position he received because he was so trusted.

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (ver. 3). An excellent spirit was in him. That is a very nice feature, beloved. A man's spirit is infinitely more valuable than his communications. I may say, by God's help, many a nice thing, and you may hear, enjoy, and then forget it. But if I have done anything nasty to you, you will never forget it. Oh, to be a Daniel in spirit! We shall never be prophets. We are not called by God in that way, but we can all cultivate an "excellent spirit."

Daniel was not only a man of excellent spirit, but a man of practical righteousness, for his accounts were all right. Are your accounts all right? His moral uprightness and integrity, in all matters of trust, enhanced his value in the eyes of King Darius, who "thought to set him over the whole realm." This raised the hatred of the Chaldeans. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him"

(ver. 4). They thought to trip him up, but "could find none occasion nor fault." A man of excellent spirit, and faithful, and no error or fault found in him. What a lovely character! Oh, how like Christ! "I find no fault in this man," was said about the blessed Lord, and here is His servant morally like Him.

Daniel's exaltation by the king does not exalt him in himself. The higher he goes, the lower he is in his own eyes. Blessed man!

Foiled in their effort to lower him in matters relating to the kingdom, his enemies take another course. "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree" (vers. 5-9). What effect has this edict on Daniel? None whatever! He does not alter his course a hair's-breadth, but having faith in God, you will find that he is

8. A Preserved Man.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and *his windows*

being open in his chamber *towards Jerusalem*, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God" (vers. 10, 11). Daniel's action was based on the Word of God. He had heard God's Word saying that if His people were in captivity they were to pray to Him, and to look toward His house. "Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray *toward* their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" (2 Chron. vi. 37-39). Daniel acts on this scripture. He does not shut his windows, nor increase, nor lessen his petitions: he is just that day what he had been every day before. He was a very even saint. It was not the great difficulty that took him to his knees thrice daily. It was his custom, and of course his enemies found him in prayer. What a happy thing for saints to be known as prayerful, and to be found thus upon their knees.

Well then, he is cast into the den of lions. "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake,

and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (vers. 16-20).

The point of this chapter is that the devoted man will be the delivered man. I will guarantee that Daniel had the best of it that night. I believe Darius spent a wretched night, fasting, and sleepless. I think if you and I had gone down to the den of lions we should have found Daniel sleeping soundly. Faith in God, and a good conscience are rare bed-fellows, specially in a lion's den! The king spake in the morning with "a lamentable voice," as he said, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" How cheerily Daniel answered here: "O king, live for ever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of

hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (vers. 21-23). He is a delivered man, and in the end of this chapter you find he is a prosperous man. "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (ver. 28).

When you come to chapter ix. you find that he is unmistakably

9. A MAN IDENTIFIED WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

Chapter ix. shows us Daniel again in prayer, and deep humiliation before God, on account of the sins and transgressions of His people. "In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. . . . Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, for-

give; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (vers. 2-5, 17-19). Nothing could exceed the moral beauty of this prayer. I beg you to read it all carefully. The man who is most clear of the sins confessed, is the one who confesses them most really to God. The sins of all Israel he owns as his; and while speaking in prayer is visited by Gabriel, and sweetly instructed as to Israel's full restoration (*see* vers. 21-27). He really eats the sin-offering before God.

10. A Man Greatly Beloved.

In the tenth chapter you will find he gets a wonderful revelation from the Lord. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphas: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto

me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling" (x. 5-11). How near the Lord comes to him, as he says unto him, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved!" What a touching address. He entered into the sense of how deeply the Lord loved him. The sense of the love of God is deep joy to the soul. "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." What a thrill must have gone through his heart as he heard it.

God sets great store by a character like Daniel's. That is shown in Ezekiel xiv. I do not know if you have ever noticed it. It is beautiful the way in which God speaks of His servants (ver. 14). "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xiv. 14-20). Noah was a just man, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Daniel was greatly beloved. He was a man whose outward character was spotless. And Job spake the thing that was right about God.

I commend this aspect of Daniel to your study. Just quietly work out in your own hearts the moral line that is marked through this book, and see how preserved is the man who is devoted, and separate, and how God can instruct, use, and comfort him. And the Lord give us beloved to be encouraged. I admit that there are great difficulties on all hands. But you and I may be little Daniels in the spot where we live, although the Church is all in ruin. May the Lord give us grace to be such for His own name's sake!

CHAPTER XXI.

OVERCOMING: ITS SECRET.

(MATTHEW iv. 1-11; 1 JOHN ii. 12-29.)

IT is, perhaps, not known to all, because many are young in the knowledge of the Lord, that the expression found very frequently in the epistle of John, "little children," has a peculiar meaning in two places in the epistle, which I will point out to you. You will find "little children" a great many times in the epistle, but you may safely score out the word "little" in every one of those places, except in verses 13 and 18 of chapter ii. The word the Spirit of God uses commonly in the epistle is "children." That is common to the whole family. It includes every child in God's family.

For instance, in the first verse of chapter ii., it is, "My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." A child of God is not supposed to sin. It does not say that he does not, but he is not supposed to practise sin, but righteousness, since the end of the chapter shows that he is born of God. "If ye know that he is righteous, know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (ver. 29). The child is expected to resemble the Father.

In the twelfth verse again it is, "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Every child of God knows that his

sins are forgiven. I want to be distinct about this at the beginning, because, if you are not clear as to the forgiveness of sins, you will not be able to enter into that which is in the verses that follow.

It will help you, to notice that from the thirteenth verse to the close of the twenty-seventh verse is a little parenthesis. In that section of the epistle you will observe there are three classes addressed, Fathers, Young men, and *Little* children, and addressed twice over. The apostle addresses all the classes in verse thirteen. Then, in the first half of the fourteenth verse, he addresses the fathers, and in the last half of the verse, he addresses the young men, and so continues to the end of verse seventeen. And then in the eighteenth verse again, you get, "Little children,"—*i.e.*, the babes in Christ, and their instruction continues to the end of verse twenty-seven.

You have thus three classes in the family of God, which are marked off from each other by a spiritual condition which is the result of growth and experience. It is not a question of age as regards the length of time you may have known the Lord. But it is spiritual growth, and spiritual progress. There are fathers, and there are those that are young men, but there are those also who are babes. And to them, with great affection, the apostle writes more fully than to the others. Elsewhere in the epistle the instruction is what belongs to all God's children in common.

And now, first of all, before I touch the three classes, look at the twelfth verse: "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Now, it is very blessed to see that is where God starts. If a believer in His Son, you are

in His family, and you are there as a perfectly, and absolutely forgiven child. You are there as a child, and the first thing you know is this relationship. There is one thing too that every child of God is entitled to know, and supposed to know, and that is, that his sins are all forgiven. He is in the enjoyment of the blessed knowledge that everything that was between him and God has all been put away by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the testimony which is proclaimed in the gospel. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii. 38). That which the gospel presents, every child in the family of God is supposed to enjoy, for it is the common property of every member thereof, and, if he does not enjoy it, he is not in the privilege of the family.

Well now, come to that which is specific. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" (ver. 13). What marks a father is the knowledge of Christ. He knows Christ. Christ is before him. It is Christ that forms his life. It is all Christ. Christ his soul feeds on, Christ he is sustained by, Christ he is upheld by. He has not a thought, so to speak, apart from Christ. Christ is the subject of his conversation. In fact you will know a father by this. And the saint that is not this is not a father. We may just as well let our souls feel the truth of God's Word. "Ye have *known* him that is from the beginning." Christ indeed is everything to the one who is a father.

Oh! there is something very blessed in meeting with a saint that is in this condition. You cannot go near that Christian without being impressed. The

soul that is living in the abiding enjoyment of Christ, is a father. And observe, the apostle can say no more. Because to know Christ, to know the love of Christ, to be in the enjoyment of that which is unfolded by Christ is everything, beloved friends, to the believing and loving soul. Because what will be our joy for ever is Christ. Our hearts will delight in the ever-deepening enjoyment of the knowledge of that blessed One, who fills the very heart of God with joy.

Then he passes on to the young men. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one" (ver. 13). That which marked them is this, they were superior to the wiles and the power of Satan. Now so far from Scripture supposing that Satan is to overcome us, you see that what it records of a young man is this, that he possesses an energy of soul that leads him so to walk, and so to act, that Satan is overcome. How that takes place I think we learn in a later verse.

And now he speaks to the little children. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (ver. 13). Now if you were only converted last night, and you have the sense that God has forgiven you, well, at once, after forgiveness, there always comes the reception of the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of sonship (*see* Acts x. 43-47; Eph. i. 13). I see in Scripture, that the soul receiving the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of pardon, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, receives the Holy Ghost also. You not only receive the forgiveness of sins, but you receive the Holy Ghost.

Peter, when preaching to the household of Cornelius, did not tell them they should receive the Holy Ghost.

What he did say was this: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." And then we read, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word." And I beg you to notice, three verses after, that Peter says, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which *have received* the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

He told them that, upon believing on Jesus, they should receive the forgiveness of their sins, and we see that they received that blessing, because they received the Holy Ghost also. It is the reception of the Spirit that puts the soul in its new place before God. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. viii. 9). If you are in the Spirit, the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Further, the moment you have the Holy Ghost, He sheds the love of God abroad in your heart (Rom. v. 5). What is the next thing? The Spirit of sonship. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 13-16). We are the children of God, and having received the Spirit of adoption, we cry, "Abba, Father." Wondrous words! They are used only thrice in the New Testament. Once by our blessed Saviour when addressing His Father, in the agony of Gethsemane's garden (Mark

xiv. 36), and twice they are put into our lips by the Holy Ghost (Rom viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6).

How good it is to find the beloved apostle John saying, "I write unto you, little children, because *ye have known* the Father." The essence of Christianity is in these words. And, beloved young Christian, let me say this to you, Above all things cultivate the knowledge of the Father. If you leave yourself in the hands of the Spirit of God, He will lead you to a very deep and blessed knowledge of the Father. This is what Christianity really is. It is the revelation of the Father through the Son.

Go and read John's Gospel. You say, It is all about the Son of God. Yes, that is quite true. But the keynote of that Gospel is the word "Father." It occurs a hundred and twenty times. What does the Lord say there? "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). Christianity consists in the revelation of the Father by the Son. The Father is made known to all the family by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Therefore, the first thing you find is this: "I write unto you, babes, because ye have known the Father." And beloved friends, there is nothing more blessed for a soul than the knowlege of the Father.

But I will tell you what I have noticed. I find there are very few children of God to-day, that are in the happy enjoyment of the Father, and His love. When John says here, "Ye have known the Father," he contemplates them as in the enjoyment of their relationship to the Father. You know the Lord said to Mary, after He was risen from the dead, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). Only three days before you

might have seen the blessed Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, in the deepest agony, as He contemplated the cup He was about to drink. And we hear Him saying, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark xiv. 36). Now in the eighth chapter of Romans, I read, "We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby *we* cry, Abba, Father." That is the blessed term of relationship, and enjoyed relationship and affection too. That which fell from the lips of the blessed Lord in the sorrows of Gethsemane, is the very first thing that comes off the lips of a new-born soul, "Father." Again, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). This is normal Christian language, and what the Father is seeking to hear.

Many dear believers in the Lord to-day, though they be believers, and though they may have received the Spirit of God, enter very little into the enjoyment of the Father, and the knowledge of the Father's love. Therefore, I would say to those here to-night who are young, Oh, seek, above all things, to have your souls bathed in the enjoyment of this blessed realisation—I am a child of the Father. Your relationship now, is the relationship of Him who, when here, said, "Abba, Father." Of course we must remember that we are before the Father on the ground of redemption. That is the ground, beloved, that enables you and me by grace now to take up and enjoy this relationship before God.

And here the Spirit of God shows us that life is in the Spirit of the Son. I believe in this epistle it is life in the sons. It is what is made known to the soul,

and made good in the soul by the power of the Spirit of God, and the very first thing is this, you know the Father, for every child knows the Father.

Then, the apostle again says to the fathers, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" (ver. 14). What more could he say? Beyond Him there can be no reaching. He is the object and the centre of all God's thoughts, and purposes, and counsels. And thus the father, enjoying Christ, and having the whole vision of His soul filled with the glory of this blessed One, who is from the beginning, cannot get beyond that. It is the result of Christian experience. All that is of the flesh is recognised and judged, and only Christ remains. He is ever better and better known. What He is, is realised. This is the most advanced step of Christian experience. There is nothing of self in it. Christ is all. We may be long in reaching this step, but, thank God, it may be reached.

Then, again, he addresses the young men: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have *overcome* the wicked one." Now here is a Bible statement. Very often the language of our souls is, "Oh, how weak we are!" Well, in ourselves we are more than weak. But it is a great thing to see the place and the power God gives us. If we are not strong, why are we not strong? I find here that the young men are strong. I think the secret of their strength is this: "The Word of God abideth in you." The evidence of their power is this: they know and keep the Word of God.

Will you turn to the opening verses of Matthew iv.? Because where Christ was, when on this earth

is exactly where you and I are. His path and ours is the same. We are going through the world, though we belong to another scene; we are children of the Father, and our home is not here. We are passing through this scene, in dependence upon God, surrounded by the very things that surrounded the Lord when here. But there are things that we have that He had not. We have the enjoyment of fellowship, which is a very good thing. He could not have fellowship with any one. He walked alone. But you and I now, we have that which is blessed and happy in our pathway here, the fellowship of the saints of God, and that is a very great cheer as we pass along. You and I have to pass through the same world as the Lord passed through. He had temptations. And have not you had temptations? How do we get on when temptation comes? This is very clear, that the one who overcomes the wicked one, only does it by the Word of God.

Let us now look at Matthew iv. You see there are three temptations. Observe—"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil" (ver. 1). It is a very remarkable thing that. The Lord was full of the Holy Ghost. And He is actually said to be led by the Spirit of God into temptation. It was of course absolutely necessary in His pathway. How otherwise could He succour us in temptation? He has known what it was to be tempted in all points, yet without sin The temptation, you will observe, is threefold. You and I have never known the depth of temptation He knew, for the outward circumstances of the Lord were more difficult than ever yours and mine are. There was no one who ever had so little of the outwardly expressed favour of God as He. Born in one man's

stable, and buried in another man's tomb, He truly said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. viii. 20). If it was a question of tribute money, He said, "Show me a penny" (Luke xx. 24). Why? He had not a penny. I do not believe there is one here that has not a penny in their pocket. Therefore, outwardly, there was none who ever had so much against him as He. But, oh, inwardly, what joy and peace in the Father's love!

You see that after He had fasted, and been tempted of Satan forty days, the tempter comes again. It was a last assault on a truly dependent man. And it is very striking, he tempted Christ just like he begins to tempt you. Do you think you are a child of God? He says to Christ, "*If* thou be the Son of God." He flings a doubt upon it. It was suggesting a doubt, at the same time suggesting disobedience. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Jesus does not, like Eve, parley with him. "He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (ver. 4). Now you will find, I think, if you look at these temptations, that they come in a threefold way, just as the apostle says here to the young men, "For all that is in the world, (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The lust of the flesh was the bread, the lust of the eye was all the kingdoms of this world, and then you have the pride of life, *i.e.*, display—that you are the object of God's favour.

Luke presents them in their moral order. The

order as given in Matthew, and again as given in Luke, is different. You get the historical order in Matthew. That is the real order. Look at Luke iv., and you will see the difference. First of all there is the bread, and secondly, you have the temptation on the mountain (vers. 5-8). "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan." If you have a pencil, take it and score out these words. The Spirit of God did not write them, and the best manuscripts have them not. How they came here is simple. Some one, copying the Scriptures, observed when he came to Luke iv. that there was no command to Satan. Judging that a previous copyist had omitted them by mistake, he inserted them, and that so carelessly that he quoted, not from the fourth, but from the sixteenth of Matthew, where the Lord says to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. xvi. 23).

But now observe how the command to Satan could not be in Luke's account. As it exists in our English Bible we should understand that Satan was bidden to depart, and he did not do it, if these words be allowed. On the contrary he remained, and renewed his temptation. But Satan did depart. That is the whole point. He was bidden to depart, and he went. The sword of the Spirit slew the enemy. As it now stands it has the ugly appearance that Satan was bidden to go, and he would not. The simple truth is, that the Spirit of God, leading Luke to write this temptation in its moral order, guides him in entirely omitting the words, "Get thee hence, Satan."

Luke's moral order gives us first of all a personal temptation, then the worldly temptation, and lastly, the spiritual temptation. That is the way Satan gets at us. He knows how to tempt us on the personal

side; if he cannot get at us that way, he will tempt us on the worldly side; and, if he does not succeed there he will tempt us on the spiritual side. That is the way in which it comes. The personal temptation was to help Himself—make the bread; the worldly temptation, to receive all the kingdoms of the world at Satan's hands, without suffering, and not from God's; the spiritual temptation was to test the truth of God's Word, and he gives Him a text: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xci. 11, 12).

Carefully notice, that Satan leaves out four words of the ninety-first Psalm. The four words are these, "In all thy ways." Jesus said unto him, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." You will observe, it is never the way of a saint to put God to the test. Quite true, the ninety-first Psalm did apply to Him. But it is not the way of a saint to put God to the proof as to whether He would be as good as His word.

Now you will notice, beloved friends, that in each case it is not only that Christ quotes Scripture, but He quotes it as Scripture. He says each time, "It is written." And it is a very remarkable thing that all the Lord's answers to Satan are quoted from the book of Deuteronomy (chaps. viii. 3, vi. 16, and 13, 14). The Lord gained the victory in every instance by the Word of God. It was the outcome of His blessed simple dependence on God, and of having the Word of God in His heart. He proved the truth of the Word, "Thy word have I hid in

mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. cxix. 11). Satan retires vanquished. And observe, "Angels came and ministered unto him." They delighted to see a man overcome Satan by dependence and obedience. They saw that in Christ. Do they see it in us? The secret of strength lies very much in this: having the Word of God hidden in the heart, and implicitly obeying it.

When I am in a difficulty, do you think the Spirit of God will help me to a scripture I have not laid up in my heart? No! I believe if I have been careless, and lazy, in reading the Word of God, I shall not have the Scriptures really hid in my heart. The Spirit of God cannot bring to my memory a scripture I have never read. And I press this, beloved friends, we cannot over-estimate the importance of having our minds stored with Scripture. "The word of God *abides* in you," is what the young men are commended for. Their thoughts were formed by God's Word. You get the knowledge of God by His Word, and of Christ Himself, first of all, for He was the Word. But then, you and I have to hide that Word in our hearts. And that is why in the 119th Psalm, there are only two verses that do not refer to the Word of God. Study that psalm carefully. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (ver. 9). Notice the 174th verse, "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight." It is either the Word of the Lord, or the commandment of the Lord, but in every verse it is the Word. Let us all, therefore, remember the value of Scripture in the history of the soul of a saint.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye

are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The Lord overcame him, we have seen, by dependence and obedience, no matter what the character of the temptation might be. And so, in the history of every saint, the Spirit of God loves to recall and bring to remembrance, in each moment of difficulty, some little bit of Scripture that has been learned in days gone by. But having the Word, the Spirit of God can use it, and it becomes a weapon in His hands against the foe. The result is sure. There will be, in plain language, certain victory. I need not say more to press upon you the great importance of the study of the Scriptures.

Then the apostle goes further, in addressing the young men, and he says now, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (ver. 15). There are two things, you will observe, in regard to the young men. They are the Word, and the world. I am quite sure of this, if the Word does not engage my attention, the world will. The great point is this, that God has a world into which He wants to bring His children. The Father's world is that scene of which Christ Himself, Personally, is the centre. This word of warning is very instructive, for there is many a young man who has at first overcome the wicked one, and then, after a while, he himself has been overcome by the world. If I am not watchful the world will overcome me, and the consequences thereof are sad indeed. He says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That does not mean that a man is not converted, but that, if you love the world, you do not get the love of the

Father. The love of the Father is not in this scene. It is in another world altogether. It is the world of which Christ is the moral centre.

Then he adds: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (ver. 17). The Lord Jesus said: "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 7, 8). When here He did God's will only, and that is why the apostle Paul says, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done (what Jesus did) the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. x. 36). You will find, beloved friends, that all through the New Testament the doing of the will of God is a very important thing. For instance, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. v. 17). I shall never know what the will of the Lord is if I am not near Him in the history of my soul. That is a clear case. A man who is doing the will of God, is not living for himself. His only thought is to do what God wishes. And that is exactly what the blessed Lord did here. To this we are also called, nay more urged, as Paul says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. xii. 1, 2).

The apostle John a second time also addresses the

"little children," and gives them a long bit of instruction (vers. 18-27). We are in the last time, and there is much opposition to Christ. What is to sustain the babes? The fathers live on Christ, the young men are going on in the knowledge of Christ, and now, you babes, do not you make a mistake. You are surrounded by everything that is against Christ. An opposing element is all round about you, and many Antichrists. They had come into the assembly, but they had gone out. They were really servants of Satan. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (vers. 18, 19).

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (ver. 20). It is delightful to see here how the simplest and youngest babe in the family of God has the capacity, by the Spirit of God, to know what is right, as well as what is wrong. One frequently hears this sort of expression, "How can I know?" and, "How shall I be able to meet a difficulty like that?" Perhaps, you have never listened to this word. Read it again. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." There is a capacity, which even the youngest member of the family of God has, to detect what is of God, and what is not of God. It is a principle of immense importance. He knows what is the truth, and what is not the truth.

But, further, "I have not written unto you because

ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (ver. 21). Is not that very striking? It is a very remarkable word. There is a divine competency by the Spirit of God, even in the bosom of the youngest saint, to detect what is of God, and what is not of God. The Spirit of God, I need not say, is the divine and blessed competency.

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? he is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also" (vers. 22, 23). The soul who really knows the Son of God is in touch with the Father. And that is the kernel of Christianity. That must be held firmly. Hence the exhortation: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (ver. 24). Cleaving close to that which God has given you in His blessed Word, you cleave to what is from the beginning. And what is that? Christ, of course. The revelation of the blessed Son of God, and the Father made known in Him who became incarnate. "Hold on to Him therefore," is the word of the Spirit to the young believer. If that which is from the beginning abides in us, there will be ever-deepening enjoyment of this blessed relationship, in which we stand to God as our Father.

Further, the knowledge of the love of the Father, and of the Son too, will be increased, and we shall enter into the enjoyment which the Father has in the Son. The effect is that you continue in the Son, and in the Father. A wonderful place, beloved, for our

souls to be in. We are in the Father, and our hearts are charmed as we behold the beauty of the Son. It is reciprocal joy. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (ver. 25). Our souls are set really in the enjoyment of eternal life. It is the knowledge of the Father and the Son.

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you" (ver. 26). Here we have the reason of the apostle so addressing the babes. We must not shut our eyes to the fact that there is seduction all round about us. But we get their safeguard immediately presented: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (ver. 27). Let us not misunderstand this verse, for I have heard it said, "Oh, I can get on without teaching." I do not think you will. If a man despise teaching, you may depend upon it, that person never grows, or gets on. The Lord has given helps, and teachers. But the point is this, that the young soul has an anointing of the Holy Ghost, and there is no necessity for the teaching of new things. The path is made very plain. The Spirit of God in you is the competency for the apprehension of the truth, and for the enjoyment of the truth, and you do not, in that sense, need anything.

You have everything in the knowledge of the Lord, but at the same time, one knows what an immense boon it is if a teacher, sent by God, come along, who knows the Word of God better than yourself. You then learn afresh, and are helped to more fully enjoy what the Lord gives. The unfolding and ministering

of the truth of God to the soul is ever the Spirit's aim. And bear in mind, what we receive is not for ourselves only, but it is to be circulated. If you do this, you will enjoy it more yourself, and fit yourself, I believe, for God to give you more truth, and more enjoyment of His love.

It is sweet to see here the perfect way in which the babes are set up in this scene, and having concluded addressing these three classes, the apostle comes back in the last two verses of our chapter to the whole family: "And now, children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (vers. 28, 29). He desires that their walk and ways should be such, that the apostles might have credit from Christ in the day of His appearing. A very beautiful desire on the part of a man who had been used of God in blessing to their souls. He longed that their souls should be kept in the abiding, and ever-deepening enjoyment of the love of the Father, and the Son, and that they should be preserved from every error as they passed through this scene.

Thus there are three classes here. A father is in the enjoyment of Christ; a young man is marked by his soul's deep love for the Word of God, and separation from the world; while the babes know the Father, and have a competency by the Spirit of God, to clearly perceive what is, and what is not the truth. May God, in His grace, give us all to set our hearts to go on to learn more of Christ, and thus be true overcomers in a day of seduction and declension.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEATITUDES.

(MATTHEW v. 1-16.)

THE particular aspect in which the Lord is presented in Matthew's gospel is, as the Messiah, the King. Matthew writes specially for Jews, to testify that Jesus was really the Messiah, though rejected. In the first chapter we get His genealogy on Joseph's side of the house; of course really He was not Joseph's Son. Had he been Joseph's Son really, He could not have been our Saviour; but in order that He should by right succeed to the throne, He must be proved to be legally Joseph's Son.

Really, He was Son of Mary, and Son of God, but God devised a way by which His legal right to the throne of David should be indisputable. By Jewish law, from the moment Joseph was espoused to Mary, she was looked upon as legally his wife, and any fruit of the womb was regarded as his. Thus, therefore, Jesus belonged by legal right to Joseph, and was regarded as his Son. Luke gives the Lord's genealogy through Mary, because Luke's object is to present Him as Son of Man.

Matthew ii. shows us the wise men of the East coming up to worship Him, and Satan stirring up the world's hatred and enmity.

Chapter iii. gives John the Baptist's testimony, and

the Father's opening heaven to own Him as His beloved Son, and to testify to His perfect delight in Him.

Then chapter iv. shows that, though Messiah, though God's King, He is a real man, and a man in dependence on God. Satan comes on the scene, and Jesus confronts the enemy. Satan is utterly defeated, by that which is the most difficult thing for you and for me, actual dependence upon the Word of God even for every word He speaks. "It is written" is His unvarying answer, and Satan is foiled. Then He fulfils Scripture, for He Himself is the light (vers. 14-16). Then He goes forth preaching "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You will never find the kingdom of heaven preached as nearer than "at hand,"—about to come. The kingdom of God could be said to be come unto them (Matt. xii. 28), or among them, because the King was there, but the kingdom of heaven was as yet only at hand. It was connected with His rejection and ascension.

In verses 23-25 we have the manifestation of the power of the kingdom, though it was not yet set up. The power of the Lord was wonderfully manifested on every hand, and the fame of Him went everywhere. He presents Himself in the character of the Messiah-King, and His power was blessedly manifest.

Thus it is interesting to notice the connection between the fourth chapter and the fifth. In the fourth chapter you have the Person of the King, and His power manifested in vanquishing Satan on the one hand, and spoiling his goods on the other; and in chapters v., vi., and vii. you have the moral principles of the kingdom which He was about to set

up, and what kind of behaviour He looked for from those that were in the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is heaven's rule over earth, in mystery now, because the King is rejected, but by-and-by to be displayed in power and glory.

What then is the kind of behaviour that becomes His kingdom? The Sermon on the Mount gives the answer, and the first beatitude is characteristically descriptive: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (ver. 3). This is not a question of persons going to heaven, by-and-by, but of heaven ruling them now; it is how to go on before you get to heaven.

We are impatient, sometimes, and say, I should like to go to heaven. "Stop," says God, "I will teach you how to live on earth, before you get there, how to live all along the road."

He who is the King has now gone into heaven. He is out of sight, but He is the Head of a system, and the Lord unfolds here what belongs to that heavenly system, and how those who belong to it should carry themselves.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him" (ver. 1). Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. xviii. 15). As the Prophet-King He here gathers His disciples about Him, to teach them. He goes up into the mountain too, thereby, I believe, signifying His removal from earth, His going back to heaven, his being hid in heaven, for the time.

Do not suppose, because we have these three chap-

ters consecutively, that the Lord uttered all the words we get here at one time. They are parts of different discourses, as we shall find from other gospels. Mark's Gospel will help you largely in discovering this. It is quite clear that in the other gospels, for a special purpose, the Spirit of God relates all sorts of incidents, dislocating them from the time in which they actually took place, in order to present a certain picture. Here in Matthew we get repeated dispensational pictures, according to the scope, and design of the gospel, which reveals Jesus as the Great King. In Luke Christ's sayings are put together with the object of presenting moral pictures, for Luke's design is to present Him as a Man among men.

Here, then, Matthew puts all these words together to form a perfect whole, and to give a perfect picture of what the principles of the kingdom are. On the other hand, a striking selection of sayings and incidents is evident in Luke xiv., xv., and xvi. These chapters give us a moral picture: In chapter xiv., we have earth, with its hindrances; in chapter xv., heaven with its joy and blessedness; and in chapter xvi., in the case of the rich man, hell with all its terrible misery.

And now we read that, "When he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth and taught them" (vers. 1, 2). Oh, how He does love to have His own near Himself. You will notice that there are nine "Blessednesses," and you will also see, they divide themselves into first, seven, and then two.

It is a common thing in the gospels to find seven, for seven is the symbol of spiritual completeness. We find seven parables in Matthew xiii., seven loaves to feed the multitude in Mark viii., and the Lord is seen seven times in prayer in Luke's Gospel. Here it

is a complete spiritual picture of what should be the conduct of those who are His, while He is out of His kingdom.

These seven beatitudes are again subdivided. The first four I might call internal, the last three, external. The first four partake, broadly speaking, of the character of righteousness, and are summarised in verse 10, while the last three have the character of grace for Christ's sake, and are summarised in verse 11.

1. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (ver. 3). What is it then to be poor in spirit? Exactly the reverse of what you find in the world. In the world people stick up for themselves, stand for their rights. A person who does that is not in the kingdom of heaven at all, that is, is not in it in spirit. One who is poor in spirit, is self-emptied, self is out of sight. You will find a lovely connection with this in Psalm xli. 1: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"—that is, the poor Man; and who is the poor Man? Christ! That is, considering the poor Man does not mean giving alms, but considering Him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It is a blessed thing thus to be self-emptied: poor-spirited the world would call you; that is it, but the Lord reckons such "blessed." The Lord give us to know in our hearts the meaning of it.

2. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (ver. 4). Why is it blessed to mourn?

This is not merely the sorrows and trials that compass our paths oftentimes, though God does come in, and comfort our hearts in these. But do we not find ourselves in a scene where everything is opposed to God? Surely! Can we then love the Lord Jesus Christ, and pass through this scene, and not be mourners? Was not He a mourner when He passed through it?

"Love that made Thee a mourner,
It is not man's to tell!"

The Lord is speaking here to those who are in relationship to God, and know the Father. To know the Father, to know God as Father, is the distinguishing feature of Christianity. Do you know God then as Father, and are you passing through a scene where His Son is despised, and set at nought, and are you not a mourner?

In John xi. at the grave of Lazarus Jesus was a mourner, not merely He entered into the sorrow of the sisters in truest sympathy, but before God He felt what a ruin this earth is, how completely sin had marred the whole thing, and He is a mourner, and God comforts Him. In fellowship with Him, must we not be mourners too?

3. Blessed are the Meek.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (ver. 5). I believe that has its full application to the godly remnant of Israel by-and-by, but the principle is of deep value to us. What is it to be meek? It is to be like Him who said down here, "I am meek and lowly in heart." That was said by

Jesus in Matthew xi., in a very dark day. You could not imagine a darker day. John was doubting Him, and Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where His mightiest works had been done, were rejecting Him. What is His resource? He turns round to His Father, and takes everything from Him. He falls back upon His Father's love, and perfect wisdom in all His circumstances. What is it then to be meek and lowly? It is to take everything, as He took it, from the hand of God.

Supposing I give you a cross word, if you take it from me, Satan instantly gets an advantage, and you are angry. If you take it directly from God, you say, "That was not very nice, was not very Christ-like, but the Lord must have had some good reason for letting that cross word come." What meekness that engenders in the soul, when I take everything thus directly from the hand of God. What is it to be meek? It is a person who is willing to be trampled on, a person who takes everything so from God, that the bitter thing is sweet.

People often ask what "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3) is, and they pass over the first two verses. I will quote them. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. iv. 1, 2). You cannot get to verse 3 without passing through, and practically learning verse 2. We need all lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearance in love, in order to keep the unity of the Spirit. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 1), are wondrous words.

4. BLESSED TO HUNGER AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (ver. 6). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, God will fill. It is a hungering, and thirsting, after practically meeting the mind of God. Do we know that? I suppose the reason why we know so little of what it is to be filled, is because we so little hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Now the subject changes. Hitherto we have had righteousness. It is a *right* thing to be poor in spirit, it is a *right* thing to mourn, it is a *right* thing to be meek, it is a *right* thing to hunger and thirst after practically meeting the mind of God. Now we come to the other side of the subject. Grace. Christ!

5. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (ver. 7). What met us at first? Mercy! What keeps us all along the road? Mercy! What does the Holy Ghost bid us look for. Mercy! We have received mercy to begin with, but the biggest mercy of the lot is to be delivered from this place and scene of corruption, is it not. To be taken up out of it all to be with Himself will be an immense mercy. We are exhorted to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

All through Scripture this word mercy abounds: it is a beautiful word, mercy. "Blessed are the merciful." Ah, beloved, I believe we are a hard lot. God delights in mercy. If a person has this thought inwrought in his soul, he will be quit of his hardness.

Not that mercy makes light of sin. Not at all! Those who are nearest to God have this too, they are "pure in heart" likewise, for they are the most like Christ. We *need* all these things, but all these *were manifest* in Him. Was He not poor in spirit? Was he not a mourner? Was He not meek? Was it not His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him? Was He not merciful? Pure in heart? A peacemaker? He was all these, and more, in perfection.

6. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (ver. 8). There is no making light of sin, but the most exquisite tenderness to the poor sinner. The man nearest to God has the most intense hatred of sin, but the most intense love and tenderness to the poor sinner. The man nearest to God is always the hardest on himself, and the most tender to others, specially if they have failed! The further I am away from God the harder I shall be on others, while I let myself off tenderly—far too tenderly.

7. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (ver. 9). How easy to do the reverse, to make a little discord, and be a peace-breaker. The peacemaker shall be called, by the name you and I love best, a child of God. "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26), is but one side of the truth. Prove that you are a child of God by your ways, is the thought. God

is the God of peace. Show your relationship, and your likeness to your father, by being a peacemaker, is our Lord's injunction here.

These last three blessednesses partake largely of the character of grace, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. They are the reproduction of Christ in us.

8. Blessed if Persecuted for Righteousness.

Then there are two additional beatitudes which really summarise the other seven. First, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (ver. 10). That is, if you are poor in spirit, if you do not stand up for your rights, what do you get in this world? You get persecution, you are laughed at as a madman, because the difference between this world, as it now is, and in the millennial time, is, that *now* righteousness *suffers*, then righteousness will *reign*. Now you must do good, suffer for it, and take it patiently, for the kingdom is in mystery, and the King is hidden. By-and-by, when "a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. xxxii. 1), when the kingdom is no longer in mystery, but displayed, then righteousness will *reign*. Now, in this world, if you do right, you may suffer for it, for now righteousness *suffers*. In the millennium evil will be put down, and righteousness will *reign*. Now, if you are poor in spirit, the world will say you are mad, why not stick up for your rights, why allow yourself to be trampled upon? This suffering may come in many shapes—in your business, your family, or from your neighbour.

9. BLESSED IF PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

But there is more than suffering for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (vers. 10, 11). The blessedness of the tenth verse is very different from that spoken of in the eleventh. In the tenth you suffer for righteousness' sake. In the eleventh you suffer for Christ's sake, and that is a higher thing. If you turn to Peter's epistles, you get the two brought out. "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Pet. ii. 19). That is suffering for conscience sake, which has the character of righteousness.

Again, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" The world will try to harm you, and the devil will try to harm you. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Pet. iii. 13, 14). That is suffering for righteousness' sake.

Now look at the fourteenth verse of chapter iv.: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." That is suffering for *Christ's* sake. That is a higher thing: just as grace is higher, in a sense, than righteousness, so suffering for Christ's sake is a higher thing than suffering for righteousness' sake.

Well, if you suffer for Christ's sake, what is to be your recompense? When you learn what is pleasing

to the Lord, and, in order to please Him, you have to do what would displease every one else, what does He say? "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward *in heaven*." It is heaven, now, not the kingdom of heaven; and here is a lovely little word of gracious encouragement to the soul, "For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." That is, you have got into good company, do not mind. Do they say dreadful things about you? Well, let them, He knows all about it, let them, I say.

Of course, if the world can come and lay anything really true against you, you can only be humbled. If they speak lies, just rejoice. There is nothing that so spreads too as rejoicing. Just as in an army there is nothing so injurious as to have a few cowards among it. What did the apostles do in the Acts? "They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts v. 41, 42). They were so happy that they blew the gospel trumpet louder, longer, and more sweetly than ever before.

"Oh," you say, "I do not see the reward." No. I will tell you why, because reward day does not come till the end of the term. And we are not at the end of the term yet, but term day is coming, so go on.

You will notice another difference too, in verses 10 and 11. In verse 10 it is, "Blessed are they." In verse 11, "Blessed are ye," because when it comes to positive suffering for Himself, He drops the abstract term as too cold, and applies it, "Blessed are *ye*." Why? Because you are linked with Him now.

The Lord now uses two striking figures to show

what His own should be in His absence. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (vers. 13-16). "Ye are the salt of the earth." Now salt is preservative, it preserves from corruption. When the saints are taken out of the earth there will be nothing left but the dead carcase of a Christless Christendom, nothing but corruption. *Salt* answers to *righteousness*. But "Ye are the *light* of the world," gives another thought. *Light* answers to *grace*. Salt merely preserves things pure from corruption, but light is aggressive, it drives out the darkness. So grace goes forth outside and seeks. "It giveth light."

A Christian should be a candle, and what for? That his light may be seen, and the Father get the glory. The Lord is very careful not to say, Let your good works be seen, but, Let your light so shine, and why? What is your light? It is the life of Christ reproduced in you, and that being seen, it is Christ in you that is seen. That is the point. The world is to see Christ in you. It is not merely giving a testimony, but being a testimony. Not being a *light-bearer*, but being light; and so your Father gets the glory, for that is all Christ. The reflection of Christ in the life of a saint has this for its effect, men will glorify your Father which is in heaven.

On the other hand, how careful we should be in our walk lest we fail to give light. The world is quick enough to pick up our faults. The world is a close observer of the life of a Christian, and knows full well what is inconsistent with the name of Christ.

The Lord give us, beloved friends, to taste thoroughly in our hearts what He gives us here, that we may so walk, and so witness for Him, that the name of our Father may be glorified in us.

What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone
  Around Thy steps below!
What patient love was seen in all
  Thy life and death of woe!

For ever on Thy burden'd heart
  A weight of sorrow hung;
Yet no ungentle murmuring word
  Escaped Thy silent tongue.

Thy foes might hate, despise, revile;
  Thy friends unfaithful prove;
Unwearied in forgiveness still,
  Thy heart could only love.

Oh give us hearts to love like Thee—
  Like Thee, O Lord, to grieve
Far more for others' sins, than all
  The wrongs that we receive.

One with Thyself, may every eye
  In us, Thy brethren, see
That gentleness and grace that spring
  From union, Lord, with Thee.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PERSONAL ATTACHMENT.

(JOHN i. 35-42, xii. 1-8, xx. 10-18.)

WE have heard times without number, beloved brethren, that it is the loving heart that learns; and it is the loving heart that the Lord leads on. I just turn to these scriptures as illustrative of this precious principle. It is a question all through, you see, of a Person. It is an immense thing to know that Christianity is not a question of doctrines, but of a Person, and the heart being attached to a Person. It is not the head assenting to a scheme of truth, but truth wrapped up in the Person of a living Man, and the heart attached to that Person. There is a peculiar charm in looking at the Gospels, particularly John's Gospel, in this way.

No doubt God has recorded these simple narratives for our help, and to win our hearts to His dear Son, after a similar sort. You see in the early part of John's Gospel a beautiful display of Christ in this scene, and the various ways in which the Lord revealed Himself to many souls, and the way in which He attracted them to, and eventually attached them to Himself. You have the Lord attracting souls in the early part of the Gospel—like a magnet—drawing them out from one recess and another. He attracted hearts to Himself by the revelation of Himself, in a

way that met the peculiar state of the soul He was attracting, and that is just what He is doing to-day. The work is peculiarly individual, and is done very quietly, whether it be in the case of Andrew and his fellow; Peter, Philip, or Nathanael (chap. i.); Nicodemus (iii.); the woman at the well, and the nobleman (iv.); the paralytic of Bethesda (v.); the woman in the temple (viii.); the man born blind (ix.); or Mary of Bethany (xi.); and they are but samples of many others of whom you read in the Gospels. They show the winsome way in which Jesus attracts souls to Himself, and ministers to them according to the skilfulness of His hands, and the integrity of His heart.

At the end of the Gospel you will see what a wonderful place some of these attracted ones have. You will find some of those hearts were able to minister to Jesus; were able, as it were, to present to Him a cup of cold water, as none else could, in the moment of His deep sorrow in this scene. It is a wonderful thing to be able to minister to the heart of Christ in this scene. It is like Genesis xxiv.; the bride was chosen really by the Father; and the appointed servant took her to Isaac. Isaac *loved* her, and then in the hour of his sorrow—for his mother had died—it was by Rebecca that he was *comforted*. In Genesis xxii. you have the story of the love of the Father to the Son. It is interesting to note that this is the first time in Scripture where you get love mentioned; the next time we find it spoken of it is the love of the Bridegroom to the Bride (chap. xxiv.). He loves her, and she comforts him. That is exactly what you would expect to find in Scripture, the love of the Father for the Son first,

and then the love of the Bridegroom for the Bride, he comforted by her. Yes, love is always personal, and reciprocal.

If you look at this scene where John opens his Gospel, it is beautiful. The Baptist sees the Lord, and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (i. 29). Now, observe that no one follows Him, as the fruit of that testimony. It was a good remark made here to-day, that, It is not merely a work, we have to present, but a Person. When the work was presented, no one followed Him. The next day John's eye rested on the Lord again, in a sort of contemplative way, and, as he gazed on Him, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (ver. 36). Immediately it detaches two of his disciples from himself, and they follow the Lord. The Lord turns and sees them following, and says, "*What* seek ye?" To them it was a suited query, for it raised the question as to whether affection really wrought in their hearts; but when the Lord speaks to Mary (John xx.) He does not say, "*What* seekest thou?" No, angels may inquire, "Woman, why weepest thou?" but He says, "*Whom* seekest thou?" He has awakened in her soul affections that only Himself can satisfy, and He says, "*Whom* seekest thou?" Peter and John, after seeing the sepulchre, might go away home, but without Jesus Mary was homeless. Nothing could satisfy her but Himself.

No doubt the Lord begins with us often with "*What* seek ye?" but when love has its own way it is, "*Whom* seek ye?" "Woman, why weepest thou? *Whom* seekest thou?" speaks volumes. Here He says to the two disciples, "What seek ye?"

and the answer is very beautiful, "Master, where dwellest thou?" that is, Where is the place that we can always be sure of finding you? They really wanted His company. He says, "Come and see." They abode with Him that day. There were two hours left of the day. But what was the effect of those two hours? Well, I know that if you spent two hours with Jesus, in the enjoyment of His love and His company, you would be obliged to go and get some one to share it too. Saints sometimes say they cannot preach the gospel! You could not help it if you were to spend two hours with that blessed One. If you sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to your taste, you would be obliged to go, you could not rest till you had got some one else to share the banquet with you.

We only notice Andrew's voice thrice in the Gospels. First, he tells Simon of Jesus; next, he informs the Lord about the "five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (John vi. 9); and lastly, he tells Jesus of the wish of the Gentiles to see Him (John xii. 21, 22). The first day he went off to get Peter. We hear very little after this of Andrew, but a great deal of Peter. Nevertheless, by-and-by, I think it will be very interesting to see the Lord's estimate of, and reward to the man who was the means of Peter's conversion. Probably he was not a great preacher, nor may you be; but he was a lover of Jesus, so brought his brother to Him. "Go, and do thou likewise." If you were the means of introducing some one to the Lord, who turned out like Peter, it would be a very wonderful day's work, though you did no more. Have you ever had two hours with Jesus? It would leave its stamp on you. I know if you had

two hours with Him you would want three, and if you had three you would want four! and some one to share your joy and delight in Him.

I do not go into all the cases where the Lord attracts people to Himself. The man of the third chapter (Nicodemus) was drawn by a needy conscience; the woman of the fourth, by the achings of an empty heart; but in these and every other case it was the influence of His own Person. How blessed to see the Lord drawing hearts to Himself! That was the early part of His ministry. Towards the close of that wondrous life, God shows the other side of our subject, and He has been very careful to show it; but not till the last week of the Lord's life does it all come out.

In John xii. we have the touching scene of the supper at Bethany, "six days before the passover" (that is, the Lord's Day really, I suppose) and you get the moment when the Lord is "comforted," if I may use the expression. In the hour of His rapidly approaching sorrow, the Lord's heart—deeply feeling all that was coming—was met and ministered to by a heart long before attracted to Him. Mary is only mentioned three times. You have her first in Luke x. Martha was busy about service, but Mary sat at His feet and heard His word. You always find her in the same posture, "at his feet." The Holy Ghost is careful to record it. In John xi. she is there again. The Lord loved her, and I conclude she knew it right well, for it says, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It is very sweet to know the love of Jesus—not merely His love of pity, which meets us in our needs—but the love of complacency and delight The Old Testament is very full of it in

figure. How sweet to know yourself loved by Him!

In John xi. we find Mary at the feet of the Lord in the moment of *her* sorrow. She then tasted the sweetness of His sympathy, and her heart got more firmly knit to Him than ever. Then when the moment of *His* sorrow hovered in the distance—when she saw how His death was desired by the Jews, with the intuitive perception of love (nothing is so keen-sighted as love), when the appointed supper-hour came, she brought her alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His feet. It has been well said that Mary's action was the only thing that was right and suitable at that moment. The heart that had learned the sweetness of His love, and the knowledge of His ways, alone had the mind of God for the moment. If you knew some one you loved was going to be cruelly murdered within six days, you would not make a feast. That is not the way you would express your love; so this heart that loved Him, that had heard His word, knew His fulness, and had learned His sympathy, intuitively felt the feast was out of place, but seized the opportunity of lavishing her love—her all—on the One to whom she owed everything. It was a comely act, never to be forgotten. He was alongside of her in her sorrow, she heard Him groan, and saw Him weep; now she is fitted, through affection, to be a comfort to Him in the moment of His sorrow, and to minister to His blessed heart as love alone can do, and, I am bold to say, she did the only thing that was suitable at the moment.

There was not one at that moment in the mind of God but this woman. She brings her box, and anoints the Lord with the ointment. She had kept it for His

burial, but she had the sense—"If I wait till He is dead, I shall never break it over Him; the grave, out of which He took my brother, cannot hold Him.' It was affection that acted so sweetly here. I do not suppose she could have told you in words why she did it. The brethren all looked down upon her. Do you think she wanted to draw the eyes of the brethren upon her, or to display her devotedness? I think, had you asked her, "Mary, why did you do that?" she would only have said, "I do not know *why*, but I just know I did it." It was the one right thing, and the Lord, as it were, throws His wing over her, and says, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached . . . this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." There will be thousands of Marys in heaven, but, of them all, one will be known as the Mary who did the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time, and it was her simple love to Jesus that prompted and wrought such a "good work." If there is one thing above another that God appreciates in this scene, it is attachment of heart to His Son. Was not her act dear to the Lord? I could not trust myself to speak of what it was to Him, but you can infer His estimate of it by the eternal and world-wide publicity He declares her act shall have.

I now pass on to another Mary (John xx.). She had not the intelligence of the first Mary, but she loved the Lord. The other disciples could go to their homes; Mary Magdalene had no home in this scene but the grave of her blessed Lord. He was gone, the light of her life was gone out with His death, and the world was a vast blank. Her heart was buried in the grave of her Lord. He had died. The angels greet her with "Woman, why weepest thou?" She replies,

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She could say in the early part of the chapter to the disciples, "They have taken away *the* Lord;" now in this deep sorrow it is "*my* Lord." Was not that sweet to the ear of the Father? Nor is this all—angels in no sense detain her. Methinks many of us would have taken a good look at these angelic messengers; she turns her back on them. Nothing but Jesus can meet and fill her desolate heart. Turning her back on angels, she sees a Man, and then she hears a voice which says: "Woman, why weepest thou? *Whom* seekest thou?" He alone knew how to do it, and wondrously does He touch a spring in her soul. "Tell me where thou hast laid *him*, and I will take *him* away," was her reply. Do you not think that her answer was most grateful to the heart of the Saviour? A little affection for Himself goes a long way. He loves to have the simple, unfeigned affection of our hearts.

He knew He had her heart's love, even though she loved Him dead; but it was Himself she loved. He says but one word, "Mary." It is enough. She hears the voice she has heard before; she is at His feet, and He brings out to her that wonderful unfolding of truth, the like of which was never presented to any before, as He says to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He says to her, as it were, "You have had Me here, Mary, and lost Me; but I have a place up yonder that was always Mine; it was Mine from all eternity, but I was in it alone. Now I have come down, and died, and risen again, and I am about to

return to that place of joy and rest with the Father; but I am not going back alone, I am going to share that place with others now." He stands on a new platform before God, and says, "I am going to share it with My brethren; go and tell them."

You cannot tell what a wonderful privilege it was for that woman to get that message from the Lord on that resurrection morning, and what a cheer to Him to get a heart really occupied with Himself! True, I repeat, she loved Him dead; but she loved *Him.* Was it not grateful to His heart? I believe it was deeply grateful to Him to find a heart that had not a single thing in the world but Himself. That was the first heart He met when He rose from the cold and silent tomb, and if He blessedly comforted Mary, be assured of it that her love was deeply prized by Him. Oh! to be more like her!

If the box of ointment in Bethany was like water to His thirsty spirit, and the dying thief's blessed testimony—who owned Him when all the world was against Him—was a similar cheer to His heart, was it not refreshing to Him to see, as He came alive in this cold scene once more, a heart that could turn its back on everything in this world for love of Himself? I verily believe it was.

But things are changed now. He has gone to the Father, and He says, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." What a wonderful thing that He should care about the love of such hearts as yours and mine! We have heard much of His love to-day, the Father's love, and the love of Christ. May the result be that we each more simply and truly love Him, while waiting for Him. Then we shall see His face, and rejoice for ever in His presence!

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONVERSATION.

(1 and 2 PETER.)

LET us consider a little the subject of conversation. What the apostle Peter has given us thereon in his epistles, is doubtless the outcome of that which the Lord said to him, on that memorable occasion, in the twenty-first chapter of John, when he received his public restoration.

His first commission was, "Feed my lambs." I have been struck, of late, in seeing how frequently Peter brings in this word conversation. A very important consideration is this: What is the practical outcome of the conversation of the saints? Without doubt its character will affect its results.

What a wonderful effect would be produced in this city if all you dear young men and women were thoroughly for God. What a power you would be. What a testimony too for Christ.

Peter bids us to be "holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. i. 15), and then speaks of six varieties thereof. I will point them out.

1. VAIN CONVERSATION.

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: foras-

much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your *vain* conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 17-21). There you have *vain* conversation, which is connected with fleshly religion. We must not understand it as being merely the talk of the lip. I think Peter uses it in a much larger way than that. What is the first thing he says? You have been brought clean out of that system of religion which suits the first man. You have been redeemed to God with the precious blood of Christ. The first thing, therefore, the soul gets hold of in connection with conversation is this, you are out of the old state. You are delivered from that vain conversation. That is Judaism, which has been received by tradition from our fathers. What we have to do is to shake ourselves clear of everything religiously which does not suit God. That is the first thing.

2. HONEST CONVERSATION.

Now pass on to the next chapter. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation *honest* among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. ii. 11, 12). Now it is *honest* conversation. Beautiful that! Now what are

we? Strangers and pilgrims. What is a stranger? A stranger is a person who is away from home. Where is our Home? It is the place where Jesus is. That is home. He is not here. He is up there, and we are here, strangers, and pilgrims. We are not at home, but we are going home. A pilgrim is a man going a journey, and the point of our pilgrimage is home—heaven. Peter says, If you really understand what the grace of God is, you are a pilgrim. A pilgrim is a man who is on a journey, with the idea of returning home. Paul was a pilgrim, as he says: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 22-24). That is the idea. You are away from home, but you are going home. Does your heart say, Yes, I am set for Him? On the road then you must have your conversation honest. You know we live in a very dishonest day. God says to you and me, See that you are honest. This is a word for all, but for men in particular. See that you have a heart, and a conscience, that is answering to the truth and light of God.

Now go further, and we find

3. Chaste Conversation.

"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 Pet. iii. 1-4). Peter is here addressing women whose path might be very difficult. Cases are before his mind where the wife might be converted, and the husband unconverted. The husband might be won by the chaste conversation of his wife. That suggests the importance of the inside, the home-life. It is a fine word for a day like this. *Chaste* conversation! There is nothing of the nineteenth-century new woman there.

Then we are all exhorted to

4. Good Conversation.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify

the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your *good* conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing" (1 Pet. iii. 8-17). This is to be outside in the world.

Just notice how often "good" occurs in this chapter (*see* vers. 10, 11, 13, 16). Do you know what a Christian is? A Christian is a person who is blessed, and is sent out to be a blesser. You have been blessed of the Lord, and you are set in this scene to be a blesser, as Peter puts it here. You bless the person that is opposed to you. You are the reproduction of Christ in the scene out of which He has been cast. Do you want to see good days, if the Lord tarry? Refrain your tongue from evil.

Here I think we come to the actual talk of the lips, and what the effect is on ourselves, as well as on others. The Lord sees, and hears all. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." The face of the Lord is as much against His own children, if they are doing evil, as it is against the children of the devil. Here he applies it in the practical walk of the Christian. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is *good?* Observe the good things here. Good days, follow that which is good, good conscience, and good conversation. My beloved, if you are doing good, following good, and feeding on good, you will

see good days, and you will have a good conscience, and all the world will have to admit that yours is good conversation. More than that, God will yet so work that "they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your *good* conversation in Christ."

Now pass on to the second epistle, where we read of that which must necessarily pain the saint of God, viz.:—

5. FILTHY CONVERSATION.

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. ii. 4-9). God must and will judge evil, but ere He did it in Sodom He delivered just Lot, vexed with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked. If Lot had had a grain of spiritual sense, and devotedness to God, he would have kept close to his old-fashioned uncle, Abraham. But like many another young man he thought he would get on in the world, and where did he go? He first pitched his tent towards Sodom (Gen.

xiii. 12), and then he got inside it, and dwelt there (Gen. xiv. 12).

God gave him soon after a solemn warning, for he was taken prisoner, by Chedorlaomer and his confederates, and lost all his property to boot. Then his old uncle came again on the scene, and set him free, but heedless of his warning, back he went straight to Sodom. Perhaps he thought he could improve that godless city, like many a Christian to-day, who seeks to whitewash this present evil world, in vain. Eventually God had to drag Lot out of Sodom (Gen. xix.). But he only got his soul *vexed* with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked while in it.

Now there is no necessity for a saint to-day to be in Lot's case. He was willingly and of purpose in Sodom. We have to pass through the world, but there is such a thing as being preoccupied. I will tell you a cure for preventing the conversation of the wicked getting into your soul, and vexing it. Get preoccupied. If you are preoccupied with Christ, there will be no room for this to get in. There is an immense amount of moral filth all round about. Be occupied with Christ, and with the good, the honest, and the chaste conversation, and all the filthy conversation round you will not affect you. If you do this, you may meet with persecution, but you will find in the long run, that the world will not trouble you much. If you take your stand for Christ, you will very soon find what the world will do. It will shake you off. You will never get your soul really vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked unless you are hail-fellow-well-met with them.

6. HOLY CONVERSATION.

Now for the last point. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all *holy* conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 8-14).

In speaking thus of the appearing of the Lord, Peter says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all *holy* conversation and godliness?" That is beautiful! The saint, born of God, and filled with the Holy Ghost, walks in an atmosphere of love—holy love—and he goes through this scene with holy conversation. He lives in a holy atmosphere, and carries it with him. That is, he is one separated to God, with whom he walks, and radiates the

impressions resulting from God's company all around him. I cannot seek anything better for you than that, while wending your way to the heavenly land, and the day of manifestation, and reward, that your souls might know what it is to go through this scene in the power of the Spirit of God. With all affection would I press on you Peter's words, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, *be diligent* that ye may be *found of him in peace, without spot*, and *blameless*" (ver. 14).

You see you have been delivered from "vain conversation"—the religion of men in the flesh—and you have no need to be vexed with their filthy conversation, because you are clear of it. You belong to heaven. And now what is to be your pathway? Honest conversation, chaste conversation, good conversation, and holy conversation. Well I repeat, if we were all really set thus to follow the Lord, I believe, beloved young friends, there would be a wonderful power in this town. Let us seek, with ever-increasing earnestness, the blessing of others. We are fully blessed ourselves, and are left here to be a blessing to others. May the Lord give us grace, each one of us, to set ourselves more simply and fully to follow Him.

We go to meet the Saviour,
  His glorious face to see;
What manner of behaviour
  Doth with this hope agree?
May God's illumination
  Guide heart and walk aright;
That so our preparation
  Be pleasing in His sight.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Gospel, the Church, and the Servant.

(Ephesians iv. 1-16.)

I HAVE before my mind, the Lord helping me, to glance a little at the way in which the gospel and the Church, the Assembly, are connected in Scripture, with the service that is afforded to us by the Lord in His grace. It is of vital importance to be clear as regards the service that is connected, on the one hand with the gospel, and, on the other, with the Assembly, as the Body of Christ, and to know what the relation of the servant is to Christ, as his Lord, and to the Assembly, of which he is an integral part.

Now, beloved friends, it is an immense mistake to separate the gospel from the Church. I do not see how that can enter anybody's mind. The gospel is the revelation of the heart and nature of God. The Church is the tender object of the love of Christ. In it we have also the carrying out, in absolute power, of what were the eternal purposes and counsels of our God. These counsels have been developed in power, so that consequent on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, we have this wonderful new structure, the Church of God, the Assembly, called also the House of God. This Church is the object of

the deep and tender solicitude of the blessed Lord Jesus.

It is a blessed thing to know what the Church is to Christ. I feel utterly incompetent to handle the subject as I would like to, but I count on the Lord's help. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, unfolded the mystery, the truth of the Church as the object of Christ's love and care, because it is His body. He was the "chosen vessel"—a servant of God specially called—to unfold this truth. But his ministry had two sides, for he was "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1), as he says, "Whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. i. 23), and had to suffer "for his body's sake, which is the Church: whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God" (Col. i. 24, 25).

If I speak of the gospel, do I merely mean the tidings that would tell a poor sinner how to get rid of his or her sins? By no means! There is the thought of what it is to have the blessed God, in all the magnificence of His love and grace revealed, and made known here, to the hearts of men, and they brought to know Himself, and brought into the joy of His own love. All such, so blessed, form the Church. You cannot have the gospel standing alone, and leave out the thought of the Church. And I believe the man who is seeking to do that is doing very poor and unsatisfactory work. No, they are really one. The gospel produces the Church, and the Church is sustained, or enlarged by the gospel.

I think the way in which the gifts are introduced in this fourth of Ephesians is very interesting. Paul was chosen to give out the truth of the Church. With this end in view he carried the gospel to the Gentiles,

and the Jews would not permit this, but imprisoned him. It was his very love to souls that impelled him to carry out the gospel.

As a prisoner in bonds he writes this lovely epistle. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. iv. 1). We do well to heed the Word of God, and see that we walk worthy, for we have been called to this. It is the calling from God. We have been called into association with Christ. We have also been called into a sphere that is absolutely and blessedly divine. Scripture calls it a "heavenly calling." It is a wonderful calling, and Paul beseeches them to walk worthy of it.

The way so to do is next given: "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vers. 2, 3). Now I have been at a good many readings on this chapter, and they have usually taken this shape. First, "What is the calling?" (ver. 1). When that has been discussed has come the query, "What is the unity of the Spirit?" (ver. 3). Why have you left out the second verse? We want the second verse. We never shall touch the meaning of the unity of the Spirit unless our souls are bathed in that which the second verse gives. That is the Spirit of Christ, the grace of Christ, the long-suffering of Christ. And do you think you are going to be a churchman without this second verse encircling you? Do not deceive yourself. You will never touch the truth of the unity of the Spirit, nor be in the power of what that truth is, unless your soul has been really bathed into, yea, dwells in the truth of this second verse.

Lowliness will save you from knocking your head against the lintel of a door that is not high. Do you grasp the figure? And if I am walking in meekness, I shall carry myself rightly when other people are not acting rightly towards me. How beautifully do we find this presented in Scripture as that which marked the Lord Jesus. You and I have to be exhorted to be meek, but the blessed Lord was ever the expression of meekness. He could truly say, "I am meek, and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29). It is sorrowful how soon we can be the reverse. That a saint can resemble Christ in this quality is manifest, for "The man Moses was *very meek*, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3).

Perhaps you will say to me, I am surrounded by most difficult people to get on with. Very likely. Do you think they are worse than those who murmured at Moses? If so, there is a fine opportunity for you to show them long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. It is what God's dear people everywhere need, and what every Christian needs the Lord will give us, if we seek His face.

It is only when the soul is in this spirit that it is able to keep the unity which the Spirit has formed. You cannot make it, and you cannot break it. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. iv. 4-6). The apostle talks of three circles here: the Spirit's—reality, the Lord's—profession, and God the Father's—universal ubiquity. Then he says in the seventh verse, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." I apprehend this to mean that

to each the Lord gives that grace in the way of gift, which He sees fit to bestow. With regard to our service, we have each an individual gift and place, according to His sovereign will, and infinite wisdom in the choice of His vessels. From Him comes every grace, every gift, but it is for the good of all. This is evident from verse 16.

But notice that it is only by love that we grow, and only by use that we develop what is given to us, in the way of gift. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). Mere knowledge puffeth up, but love edifies, and builds up. It is only by the exercise of love that we can build up.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 8-10).

Here you will observe the exercise of the sovereignty of the ascended Head in glory, who communicates a certain gift to you or to me, as He wills. All is His doing. If He has made you an evangelist, or a pastor, or a teacher, or if He has only made you a little help in the Assembly, it is all His doing, it all comes from Him. If you get anything that will help the saints, thank Him and use it. Remember there is something in every one. Do not let us forget that, because we are all here to help each other. "To every one of us is given grace."

Now, see how beautifully the apostle traces all gift to Christ ascended. He came down, assumed manhood,

and absolutely overcame the one who had been the victor over man. At first, in the wilderness, He defeated him morally, and then came out in His own blessed grace to meet captive man, and to deliver him in every way from the bondage of sin (*see* Matt. iv. 23-25). But now He has passed, through death and resurrection, out of this scene, and He has gone on high, and although the powers of the world to come are in abeyance, and miracles have ceased, we are suffered to have a most blessed part in what He is doing now, and He counts upon our hearts to be interested in all that He is interested in.

There are three things in the eighth verse of this chapter. (1) He ascended up on high; (2) He led captivity captive; (3) He gave gifts unto men. When He came into this world He found Satan the captor, and man chained, so to speak, to the wheels of his triumphal car. Man was in captivity, led or driven through the scene by the devil. Now the whole thing is reversed. It is not now that Satan is the captor, and man in captivity, but that Christ has been the Victor. He is now risen from the dead, the mighty Victor, and Satan is chained to the wheels of His car. "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These are two wonderful things. Satan vanquished, and man delivered, to become Christ's willing vassal.

He gives the gifts unto men. That is, He makes you the depositary of a certain gift, and then He takes you, gift and all, and makes a present of you to His Assembly. He takes up you and me, who have been under Satan's power, He saves us, delivers us, puts our hearts right with God, and brings us nigh to Him. And not only that, but He gives us the Holy Ghost,

so that our eternity of gladness is begun here, as we go through this scene, and makes us the depositary of some gift by which we are to be the exponents of His grace in this scene. He "went about *doing good*," and we are to walk in His footsteps. That is Christianity, or I do not understand it.

The statement that He ascended up on high is a quotation from the sixty-eighth Psalm, which also says: "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon. The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (vers. 11-18). "The Lord gave the word," and to us is accorded the immense favour and privilege in this scene, according to our little measure, of holding forth the Word of Life. It is not only a question of preaching. But the saint is a light in this scene of profound darkness. A light that comes from Christ in glory. He will come back, by-and-by, and He will put all things right, and He will not need our help in that day of manifest power, but now, during His absence, He will use us if we yield ourselves to Him.

Was there ever such a Master? Was there ever grace like His?

"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" That is the basis of all this unfolding about gift. He has gone right down to the very depths where He overcame Satan, and ascended to God's right hand. His present position and His glory give Him the privilege of making those who were Satan's captives the vessels of His power to deliver others. We follow Him in a holy war against the common enemy of God and man. God fills the whole horizon of the soul here with Christ. Look as deep down as you like, He has been there. Look as high as you like, He is there. Nothing but Christ in victorious power is put before the soul.

And now He unfolds what He gave. "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers" (ver. 11). You have in your English Bible, most probably, a comma (,) before each of these gifts, but it should not be there. I do not think the point in the eleventh verse is that He gave some *to be* apostles, or *to be* prophets, but in the knowledge which He had, of that which was necessary to the carrying out of His own purpose, He gave the persons, in whom He had deposited these various gifts, to the Assembly. Now, as to apostles and prophets, we have not those in person here to-day, nor indeed do we need them. They have been, and have done their work. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-

stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 19-22). The result in full of their work will be seen, by-and-by, in the "holy city, new Jerusalem" (*see* Rev. xxi.).

The work of the apostles and prophets was laying the foundation. That, I apprehend, we have in the writings of the New Testament, on which the faith of our souls is now built, and if once the foundation of a house be laid, you do not want any new foundation. The point is this, they are no more wanted. Consequently the idea of there being apostles and prophets now, in their primary sense, is clearly a mistake. We doubtless still have prophetic ministry in the sense of "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. xiv. 3). Ministry that reaches the conscience, that edifies, or builds up, stirs up, and comforts, is prophetic. The man that can speak in that way is a most useful gift. We all need it. And if there be a prophet here, thank God for it. But mark, he is not a prophet if he do not build you up, stir you up, and bind you up. The prophets of this order are in evidence to-day when the Assembly is in function, *i.e.*, gathered together; but as to apostles, there are none. They have done their work—laid the foundation—and passed off the scene.

But what of apostolic succession? It is a figment of man's mind, and has no trace in Scripture. Successors they have doubtless had, and there are two very solemn scriptures which refer to them. Paul, in addressing the elders of the assembly to whom he wrote the epistle we are considering, thus describes

his successors: "For I know this, that after my departing shall *grievous wolves* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29, 30). The Lord also gave the same Assembly commendation—in the second epistle to them — for having detected impostors. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which *say they are apostles*, and are not, and hast found them *liars*" (Rev. ii. 1, 2). The men, therefore, to-day, who assume to be either apostles, or their successors, are in a serious case. They are either "grievous wolves" rending the flock of God, or "liars," easily, and surely to be so proved. These scriptures settle the whole question as far as the question of apostolic succession is concerned. Apart from these there is no mention of the subject in God's Word.

But if apostles and prophets have passed away, let us thank God that there are still evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, abiding. Such gifts may not be done without, and the Lord continues to give them right on to the end. So long as the body of Christ is here on earth, so long will He give these gifts. Such, alas, is the confusion in the Church to-day that each gift may not be doing his work in divine order, and as a consequence, I think the servant of God to-day has to be a man-of-all-work. That is, he who is an evangelist may have to do a little pastoral work, and seek to teach also, just because all the pastors and teachers

are not exercising their respective gifts according to the lines laid down in God's Word.

First let us glance at the pastors and teachers. The teacher is occupied with the Book, the pastor more with the need of the soul. The latter is a very rare gift, while the teacher is a very useful gift. In Ephesians iv. 11 you notice they are linked together, in a way quite different from the other gifts. Do you pray for the teachers? We ought to pray greatly for the teachers, but we are apt to forget our privilege in that respect. A pastor loves the saints, gets near them individually, and thus helps and leads them on. You can tell a pastor in a minute, by the way he prays for the sheep.

The pastors and teachers, however, would have little to do were it not for the evangelists. Their position is very blessed, for "How shall they hear without a preacher?" is God's query. He answers it by sending out the preacher (*see* Rom. x. 14, 15).

Let us look at what the Scripture tells us about the evangelist, and notice that this gift comes in between the apostles and prophets on the one hand, and the pastors and teachers on the other. There is a great difference in the work of the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. I think I might perhaps put this difference in such a way as the simplest can understand. What is the evangelist occupied with? He is occupied with the soul. What is the pastor occupied with? He is occupied with the sheep. And the teacher? He is occupied with the Book. Men have immortal souls, and what marks an evangelist is intense love to souls. Love for souls should mark every child of God, and if you have it not, is there not grave doubt whether you be one?

Love desires the blessing of others. If you have the enjoyment of the love of God yourself, you cannot be in a right state if you are not solicitous to get others to enjoy it too.

Let me now turn your attention to the Acts of the Apostles. What has greatly interested me lately is the way in which the truth went out in the beginning.

Redemption accomplished, and the blessed Lord gone on high, the Spirit of God came down on the day of Pentecost, and fell upon the hundred and twenty that were gathered together (*see* Acts i., ii.). Do not forget they were gathered together in prayer when the blessed Spirit of God fell upon them, and the House of God was formed upon earth. The effect of that was that "the multitude came together," and the Spirit of God led Peter to preach, and three thousand men were brought to the Lord that day. It was a beautiful triumph of grace.

The day the Law was broken, do you know what took place? A very different effect was manifest. Moses cried: "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exod. xxxii. 26-28). *All* the sons of Levi came to the help of the Lord that day, and three thousand men died. How beautiful is the contrast on the day of Pentecost. The day the Holy Ghost comes down, Simon the son

of Jonas (was he a Levite?), or Peter, as he is now called, drew his sword—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"—gave splendid testimony to Christ, and three thousand men were saved and added to the Lord's Assembly that day.

What was Pentecost? It was the inauguration of the Spirit's day. The Holy Ghost was upon the earth. Is He upon the earth still? Yes, you say, but He is not working now as He wrought then. I admit that, but shall we blame Him? Shall we blame God? I think if we turned the eye in it would be better for ourselves. A faithless Church, an Assembly that has lost the sense of what it is to belong to Christ, is sure to hinder His activity. Do not let us forget, however, that we are in the day of the Holy Ghost.

I believe where we are lacking to-day is in prayer. If you ever traced through the Acts of the Apostles you would be struck with how much prayer comes in. If you read the Gospel by Luke, where you get the lovely history of Jesus, as the dependent Man, you find that blessed One seven times bowed in prayer. Three times seven, and more, the saints are bowed in prayer, in the Acts. The weakness of our day can be easily explained. But we want to be encouraged, and surely what we read of, then, should encourage us.

We have in the Acts the history of a man—and the only man that I know of—who is called in Scripture an evangelist. It was Philip. He was one of those who were selected, if you recollect, to look after the money, and the poor. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews,

because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts vi. 1-6).

In the seventh chapter of the Acts we get the testimony of Stephen, and for his testimony he loses his life. But how did he die? He died exactly like his Master, praying for his murderers. What did the blessed Lord say, when on the cross? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). And what does Stephen say? "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60). Beautiful testimony to Christ.

Now the result of this was that persecution broke out, and they were all scattered abroad, and the disciples went everywhere carrying the gospel with them. "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc

of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts viii. 1-4). Why does the Lord allow that persecution? I have no doubt He had a divine purpose in allowing it, because you know very well in the end of Luke the Lord had told the assembled company of apostles and disciples, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke xxiv. 47). That is how it is put in the end of Luke.

But when you come to the opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles you find that they were to wait in Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost came down, and then they were told, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Now what were they doing? The apostles and all the brethren had stuck fast to Jerusalem. They made it a sort of spiritual metropolis. It is amazing how we like to stick to the old place, the old room, instead of going out. There they were, they would not go out of Jerusalem. The Lord says, I will broom them out, by sending persecution. Probably you say, The apostles stuck there still. They did stick still, but I do not think they were obeying the Lord in their action, and He raises up other servants, lesser, as Philip (viii. 6), or larger, as Paul (chap. ix.). If you go far afield you will be obeying the Lord.

A right evangelist always works from the divine centre. He works from Christ, and from the thing

that is nearest, and dearest to Christ, and that is the Assembly. Philip was in full touch with the nearest Assembly when he went down to Samaria, and "preached Christ unto them," as recorded in the eighth chapter. In the end of that chapter the quality of an evangelist is sweetly seen in him. Commanded of the Lord, he leaves the flourishing work at Samaria, and travels one hundred miles to meet a poor anxious soul that had travelled over a thousand to get light from God. He met that poor solitary eunuch, and "preached unto him Jesus." I do like to hear a brother preaching Jesus. I do not think there are very many that can do it. You need to be very near the Lord to go and preach Jesus. It is easy to talk about Christ. When I was a young Christian I heard more about Jesus than I do nowadays. We have not enough of Jesus about us, nor the grace of Jesus, nor the ways of Jesus. We all of us need a great deal more of Jesus.

Philip caught a great many fish in Samaria, one in the desert, and after he had helped the eunuch he began at "Azotus, and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea" (Acts viii. 40). This evangelist therefore preceded Peter in his remarkable mission to Cornelius, and I venture to think had to do with that beautiful work in Cesarea, recorded in Acts x. In the twenty-first chapter you will find he lived there, and when Paul came thither he stayed with the full-fledged gospel graduate—"Philip the evangelist." "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him" (Acts xxi. 8). The apostles

had a greater idea of the evangelist than many people have nowadays.

Evangelists may not always be very intelligent. If this be the case, help them. If I am wrong, put me right. I really want to know the Lord's mind, and to do it. Possibly Philip needed and desired help; anyway, I am very much struck with the fact that the greatest man that ever lived, save the blessed Lord, when he comes to Cesarea does not go to an hotel, nor to the mansion of the noble centurion Cornelius, but puts up with an evangelist. It would do you good to go and stay with a warm-hearted evangelist.

I have been very much interested lately in considering four things in relation to the gospel: *What* to preach; *where* to preach; *when* to preach; and *how* to preach. What to preach? Well, you will be interested to see the varied kinds of preaching in those days. It was many-sided. It was beautifully varied. You will find it to be so, if you just take the trouble to see what the preaching was like. But we all have to be like Jonah. The Lord said unto him, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it *the preaching* that *I bid thee*" (Jonah iii. 2). Young preacher, preach what God bids you; not what your brethren suggest, or expect, or your hearers like. Get your orders from the top, and stick to them. You must get the right kind of bait if you are going to catch fish. What we want is our hearts enlarged. Oh, for enlargement of heart! That is what we all want, my dear friends. It is a mortal disease physically, but it is the very thing we all want spiritually. A large-hearted saint takes in the purpose of God, the thought of God, and the grace of God, and, in His service proclaims the whole truth of God.

The evangelist's sphere is the world. He brings Christ to it, and seeks to bring souls out of it to Christ. But, if instructed, he always works from the Assembly, and leads souls into it. You know what a pair of compasses is? An evangelist is like that—or should be. One leg is fixed, and the other you stretch out as far as it will go. Where is the fixed leg of the evangelist? In the Assembly; and his other leg, to use my figure, circles the world. He goes out in burning zeal, and whole-hearted energy to seek souls, wherever God leads him. The world is his parish.

My beloved brethren, let us listen to the Scriptures in this matter: "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matt. xiii. 47, 48). When the net was full, they drew it to shore. They work very hard. And mind there is downright hard work connected with the gospel. It is a very easy thing to stay at home, and toast my toes, and say, Thank God, I am going to heaven. But to go out, and labour for the Lord, and get hold of souls, is not so very easy. But they had their recompense. They caught the fish, and "gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." The vessel is the Assembly. You cannot expect to catch fish in the Assembly. You must go out into the dark waters around to catch them. And what is the water? It is the world, beloved friends.

Everything is in view of the Assembly, and leads to it. But the question arises, Is the evangelist for the Assembly? It is to be noticed that in the list of

gifts, which edify it, in 1 Corinthians xii., that of the evangelist is not named. Is this the reason that saints do not need and enjoy the gospel? I trow not. I pity the saint that does not enjoy the gospel. There is nothing I like better than to sit down and listen to the gospel, and we must bear in mind that we live in a day when unestablished souls hover about, and perhaps even get into the Assembly. To all such the simple gospel is divinely suited.

The Lord said to Simon and Andrew, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 19); and what I understand by a fisherman is one who *catches* fish—not merely a man with a rod, or a net, that goes a-fishing. The work of the evangelist is to bring souls to Christ first of all, and then to the door of the Assembly. My advice to you is, Do not introduce your own converts. Let the porters take them in. We read of the porters in Solomon's days. Their *names* are given in 1 Chronicles ix. 17, 18; their *number*, four thousand, in xxiii. 5; their *courses* in 2 Chronicles viii. 14; and their *service* in xxxv. 15. Are you a good porter? A few good porters in the Assembly are of great service, because the porters keep out what ought not to be in, and let in those who have a title to go in. It is a great cheer to a young soul when the porters can say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord." I like a good warm-hearted porter.

We have all had our work assigned to us, but let us remember we are all subject to Christ. The evangelist catches the fish, others should determine if they be good or bad. Then what is the relation of the evangelist to the Assembly? Is he under the control of the Assembly? Under the control of the Assembly! What, my servants under your control? My house

and my servants belong to me, and not to you. The evangelist is of the Assembly, and, of course, if his walk and ways are not right, he comes under the discipline of the Assembly, but he is the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do I owe allegiance to anybody? Yes! to my Lord and Master, surely to none other. Then as to control? "One is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. xxiii. 8-10). Of course as to doctrine, that is quite another thing. Being of the Assembly, if the evangelist's doctrine is not sound, he is therein amenable to it. But for the Assembly to think that the evangelist's business is theirs is a profound mistake. On the other hand, for an evangelist to seek to work in a spirit of independence apart from the Assembly, I should condemn with my whole heart.

If souls are reached by the gospel, what is the natural thing you wish? That they will gravitate to the spot where the Lord is. We might help these dear servants—the evangelists—and we should help them if we prayed more for them. They, however, must be left free to carry out the exercise of the gift which the Lord has given them, where, when, and how He would lead them. For the Assembly to pray much for them is a very blessed and happy thing.

If any whom I address feel that God has called them to this blessed service, let me affectionately urge you to be devoted. Yield yourself to the Lord. You have only one life, and if the Lord has put it into your heart to preach the gospel, go and do it. Do not preach sermons; be like Philip, preach Christ.

Young men, go out into the country, and tell the people, who perhaps never hear the simple gospel, the story of the love of Christ. Oh, you say, I do preach,

but I do not catch any fish—I do not get any conversions. Do not let your mind be occupied with success. The Lord says, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. xxv. 21). He does not say, "Well done, good and successful servant." The great thing is to be simple.

I remember what happened soon after I was converted. I was converted one Lord's Day evening, and at the Lord's Table the next. That was a great favour from the Lord, to put me at once amongst His saints, and I think I may truly say that I have been a Churchman ever since I was converted. Well, after two or three months I began to preach a little out in the country. But some of the saints said, Come and preach in the Room. The Room, of all places! The thought of preaching to these old, intelligent, and possibly critical brethren staggered me greatly. However, I was so pressed by them that I at length consented, and of course got up a most elaborate sermon. Thank God, I broke down in that sermon, which served me right, for I was trusting to my preparation, and not to the Lord. It is the only one I ever broke down in, all the days of my life, for, from that night, I learned to trust the Lord for His support and help when ministering His Word.

If you are going to be a successful fisherman, you will have to keep yourself out of sight. Wait much on God, and remember that men have immortal souls, and are hurrying on to a lost eternity. Then go, and tenderly, lovingly, and beseechingly preach Christ. Tell them of Christ, and, my dear friend, you will be sure of catching men for Him.

The Acts of the Apostles give us great variety in the way of presenting the gospel, and it is very

interesting to see the way in which the gospel is connected with the Assembly, and the way in which the work went on. The gospel and the Church were never dissevered in the days of the apostles. The reason of that was their interest in each other's work, and their manifest simplicity. Look at Philip with that beautiful work going on in Samaria, when so many were blessed. Peter and John came down. Do you think that was to examine the work of the evangelist? I do not believe it. The Holy Ghost did not fall upon the converts until they came down. God did not permit that until these men came down, and laid their hands on them. The reason is plain. The work of God is one, although the instruments vary. There was One Head in heaven, and One Spirit on earth, and the work at Samaria was one with that at Jerusalem, for there was but "one body." The apostles' action, therefore, was to show the identification of the work. The Assembly at Jerusalem took deep interest in the work of the evangelist in Samaria.

Doubtless Philip needed, and gladly received the help of the apostles. He thought Simon was converted, but he was not. An evangelist must be a hearty, sanguine man, or he would not succeed. It is part of his gift to be just that. Nothing daunts him. He is like a cork on the water, the more drenching he gets, the higher he floats. He always comes up smiling. He is set in the name of the Lord, and by the grace of the Lord, to win souls for the Lord, and as long as he is here you will find that is what he will do. Preaching is not evangelising. Many a man likes to preach to a large company, but do you ever find him dealing with souls. Such an one is

not of much use. He is perhaps a splendid preacher, but he is not an evangelist. The going down of the apostles, in the case alluded to, was doubtless an expression of sweet and beautiful interest in the evangelist's work.

When Paul was converted, "straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts ix. 20), before he got really into the Assembly. He was brought into the Assembly at Jerusalem by the commendation of Barnabas, and the saints soon recognised his worth, as he "spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus" (ix. 20-29).

Why did Peter report at Jerusalem the wondrous tidings that "the Gentiles also had received the Word of God"? (Acts xi. 1). To share with the Assembly the victories of the gospel. Would that there were more of that kind of thing to-day, but alas, we are often too self-occupied to be interested in another's work. They were then of one heart, one mind, and one soul. It was not with them the question of this gift or that gift. God was working, and no matter who it was by, all the rest were interested.

See how this is illustrated in the eleventh chapter: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth

Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord" (vers. 19-24).

When the happy tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church of Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas, all the way to Antioch, a distance of about four hundred miles. They were interested in it. When you hear there is a beautiful work of God going on fifty, or five hundred miles away, do you send some one to see how it is getting on? If you do, mind he must be a good man. The man they sent "was a good man, and *full* of the Holy Ghost and of faith." That is the kind of man to send. If he is not a man of that sort, he will do a lot of mischief. They sent down that man to help the preachers, and the converts, and when he was come he was made glad, we read. It is a great thing to be always set to help everybody else. Barnabas comes and sees a company of happy saints, and of course he was made glad. A wonderful thing is the grace of God when it works. Why does He not work more in our midst? That is a serious question.

Now come to the thirteenth chapter, and see how the gospel spread from this same Antioch. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Bar-

nabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (vers. 1-4). Now observe, it was no work of the Assembly. But the Assembly was allowed to have fellowship with what the Holy Ghost was doing. The Holy Ghost led these servants, but He lets the Assembly have fellowship. Could not you do the same? "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." I would be very glad if you did that to me. Mark this, no hypocrisy. If I pray, and put my hands upon a man, I am identified with him. If I put my hand on my brother in prayer, I ought next to put my hand into my pocket, to help him, because "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 7). They were identified with these two men, and doubtless sustained them.

In the fourteenth chapter, you find Paul and Barnabas back again at Antioch. When they get there, what do they immediately do? Let us read: "And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (vers. 25-27). They gathered the Church together, and rehearsed all that God had done with them. When you come back from a happy and successful gospel campaign, do you dear evangelists

gather the Church together to share the good news? Oh, you say, we should not like to put ourselves forward like that. The saints would not come together for that purpose. I am very sorry for the saints. That is all I can say. If you were to go home and do it, probably some would say, He thinks a great deal of himself. If that be so, at least something else is manifest, the Assembly nowadays has lost its first love for the gospel, and its triumphs. In plain language, we are not so simple as they were in that day. God enlarge our hearts, for we need it.

Pass on now to the fifteenth chapter: "And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren" (ver. 3). There again you have the servants sharing their common joy with the saints, and causing great joy. That is what took place in those early days of freshness and simplicity. I am only telling you what the Lord has recorded, just to stir us all up. And if you are not happy, I am. I know the secret of all this communion in the effects of the gospel. They had all one heart for Christ. They thought only of the glory of Christ. Oh, brethren, the Lord give us to be more in the enjoyment of His love.

I have been greatly struck, too, with the way in which the Lord sought to educate, and then sent out His servants when He was here. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that

reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth" (John iv. 34-37). Oh, what an evangelist He was. Come from the Father's heart, and laden with all its love, He travelled all through that burning desert to reach, and fill one empty, sinful heart. Son of God, we adore Thee! He went to death for you and me. Beloved brethren, what are we going to do for Him? Are not souls perishing on every hand? What are we doing? Are we carrying the light, the blessed gospel of God's grace, to them. Mark, it is a responsibility laid on us. Here the Lord says, LOOK, the fields are white already to harvest. May He press these words upon your hearts and mine.

If we go elsewhere, we find it written:—"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; *pray ye therefore* the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. ix. 36-38). "PRAY YE." Oh, how beautiful! In the fourth of John it was, Look ye; here it is, Pray ye. He, so to speak, says, I will take you into fellowship with Me in the work. I do not know that they did pray, but anyway He sent out twelve: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease . . . These twelve Jesus sent forth" (Matt. x. 1, 5). Oh, beloved, the labourers are indeed few. Do we pray after this sort?

In the sixteenth chapter of Mark, we find Him risen from the dead, and there He says in the fifteenth verse, "GO YE into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is it. People sometimes say to me, Where shall we preach? He tells you, "Go ye into *all the world*." I quite admit, if you contend for it, that it was a special injunction to the twelve. But would you limit it to them? We have been noticing that "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, *for the work of the ministry;* for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11, 12). That is to say, He gives in His blessed grace, all that is necessary for the pathway of the saints, and for the carrying out of His work down here, whether in the Assembly, or outside it in the world. "Go ye into all the world," is an imperative command. Have we hearts to obey? Are our hearts so sweetly in tune with Him as to be ready to go.

This answers the question—*Where* to preach? If I look at the apostle Paul, I find him preaching in all sorts of places. Hill-tops, river-sides, market-places, prisons, palaces, and synagogues, and his own hired house, all heard his voice. The point is that the servant is to be at the command of the Lord to carry out the testimony. His only exercise was as to how the Lord's word was to be addressed to those to whom his Master had sent him. Nor was it a question of fellowship with the Assembly, though his oft-repeated request for their prayers showed how he valued their fellowship. If their hearts are right, they will be praying to the Lord for blessing.

The servant gets his commission from his Master.

He wants no other authorisation or commendation. "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and *to every man his work*, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark xiii. 34). He has authority from his Lord: that is enough. What will be the result? There will be a reward for all service rendered to Him by-and-by. The thirty-second chapter of Isaiah gives us a good illustration of the query, Where shall we preach? "Blessed are ye that *sow beside all waters*, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass" (ver. 20). Sow beside all waters. What is the meaning of that? Diligent toil.

But there is not only the question of where to preach, but *when* to preach? Solomon furnishes a good answer; "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight: for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. *In the morning* sow thy seed, and *in the evening* withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Eccles. xi. 1-6). In the East they sow the seed upon the waters, the water subsides, and the seed drops into a soft fertile bed. This is not preaching. It is you and I just being keen to drop

the blessed seed of the Word of God in the soul, wherever God carries us. You are to be a person going about with the heavenly seed-basket on your arm, dropping the seed wherever you go. It may be to a saint. It may be to a sinner. The fact is, far too much is left to the preachers. Verse 4 teaches us not to be governed by circumstances. I think God often gives us a fair wind. It took Paul only a day and a half to come to Philippi from Troas with the gospel (Acts xvi. 11, 12). But it took him five days to get back to Troas again (Acts xx. 6). Do you think God has told us that for nothing? God did not put that in His book without purpose.

Go on with your work. Let nothing hinder you. That is the great thing for a saint to-day. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." That is when to preach. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. iv. 2). Where to preach? All the world your parish. When to do it? Morning and evening, always at it.

How to preach is also of importance, and Scripture tells us how to do it. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6). They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. I think that is the How. There is a moral state. There is exercise of soul. And therefore you sow in tears, and reap in joy. That is a beautiful answer to the How, both in the way you go out, and in the way you present the truth.

Again we get an illustration of this in Paul's history. "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews,

and *so* spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts xiv. 1). Connect that with "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And Paul and Barnabas *so* spake that a multitude believed. It is said of George Whitefield that he so felt the love of God, on the one hand, and the need of souls on the other, that he often wept over them when preaching. Little wonder that they wept under him. The Lord help you and me to preach like that.

What God looks for is a willing heart. You may be as devoted as you like to be, and will be no more. You may yield all to Christ. There is no *must* when it is a question of devotion to Christ. I never say to a person, You must be devoted. But I sometimes say, You may be devoted. We all have the opportunity to be such, and it is a fatal mistake if we miss that opportunity.

There is a striking illustration of this in the book of Judges. Some of the people responded splendidly to Barak's call, others held back. This is celebrated in the song of the fifth chapter, which I would ask you to study carefully in relation to the question of being devoted to the Lord. "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake; utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam" (ver. 12.) They were anticipating the fourth chapter of Ephesians even in that day. No longer captives, but set free, a song alone became them. But some had no part in the battle, and no heart for the song, and so, alas! is it to-day.

"And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot

into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" (vers. 15-18). Reuben thought it was far better to watch his sheep, than risk their loss, while away on the Lord's business. How is it with us? Are we seeking sovereigns or souls? Which is it? Is it Christ, Christ's people, and Christ's service that I am interested in? And to go wider, do I go out to win others for Him? If you are set to please and serve Him, you will have twice as much joy in your own soul. When we love "to hear the bleatings of the flocks," *i.e.*, are commanded by our own interests, our business, our families, our worldly success, &c., we spoil our joy and do not often "utter a song." That is, Reuben had a chance of being devoted, and missed it.

Now, this is really very solemn indeed, for if I miss blessing, I am exposed to the reverse. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (ver. 23). That is, if I do not respond to God's call, which always leads to blessing, I come experimentally under a curse, a blight.

But, you say, does the Lord want my help? Well, you can take what you like out of that scripture. God keep you from the curse of Meroz. "They *came*

not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Their hearts were not free, and devoted to Christ utterly. Are ours? In His blessed grace He gives us the privilege of being thus His fellow-workers. It is a wonderful privilege to be among His helpers, albeit what we can do is little indeed. I expect to meet Lazarus in heaven. It was a wonderful day for him when he was raised from the dead. How did it happen? You say, The Lord raised him. Quite true, but did He not say, "Take ye away the stone"? Very likely more than one had a hand in it. What did they do? They helped to push the stone away.

If you can do nothing more, you might be like a little boy whom the Lord had saved. There lived a great, big, and very godless man in the village. This little lad persuaded him to come with him to a gospel meeting. When they reached the door of the meeting-room, the little fellow gave him a push in, and said, "Here he is, Jesus, save him!" And the Lord saved that man! It was all the little fellow could do, but he did it. He came "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The Lord help you and me to yield ourselves unreservedly to him. I take my orders from the top, and I recommend you to do the same. If you do, you are sure to be right, you are bound to be right. "He gave to every man his work." Let us each do our own work, and seek only to please Him, till we see Him face to face. Oh, how we shall rejoice to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" about others, if He cannot say it to us. It will be well, however, to so devote ourselves to Him, that He may have the opportunity to say it even to us.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THAT THE CHURCH MAY RECEIVE EDIFYING."

(1 COR. xii. 28-31, xiv. 1-5, 29-40.)

THE first epistle to the Corinthians, we all know, differs largely from that to the Ephesians, but what has struck me much lately is the way in which the apostle brings the soul of the saint into the presence of God in connection with the truth of the Assembly. I will turn back for a moment to the earlier part of the epistle to show what I mean, for although many here have been long on the road, there are some younger ones, and it is for them I chiefly speak. It has often been said we are apt to forget the recruits. I say, thank God for the recruits! and thank God also for the recruiting sergeants—those who seek to get them into their places in the Assembly. We all have to learn, and we have to remember there are always those who are just beginning.

It is very interesting to see that of all the epistles in the New Testament those to the Corinthians are the only ones addressed "To the church of God" (chap. i. 2). This remark holds good also with regard to the second epistle. Both are addressed "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." The point was that in the midst of heathen darkness there was that which God could claim as His own, and address as His own. There was a spot where He

was to be known and revealed, and where He showed Himself to His people. That was His Assembly. There is nothing more blessed for the soul to carry in mind than that. At the same time it is a very serious matter—I feel it increasingly—it is a very solemn thing to have anything to do with the things of the Lord, and the Assembly, just because it is *God's* Assembly, not man's.

As you run through the epistle this thought comes out in various ways. Go back to chapter iii. If it be a question of husbandry—"Ye are *God's* husbandry." If Paul and Apollos were fellow-workers they were *God's* fellow-workmen. We too are His fellow-workers, we belong to God, if it be in your hands or mine it is *God's* work. If it be a question of tillage—it is *God's* field; or if it be a building it is God's building—God's temple. So in chapter iv., if it be a question of judgment of their stewardship, he says, wait till the Lord comes, and "then shall every man have praise *of God*." This principle renders you independent of everybody, clear of every influence but this—"I have to do with God: I have to say to God." It makes no difference if I be praised or censured of man. It is a small thing to me, says Paul, whether I am praised or judged—"Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." Our souls are set down before God for everything in connection with His people, and His testimony, and His service.

A great deal more of the same kind is in the epistle, and a very striking word is found in the end of chapter iii. (ver. 19). "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." "The temple of God" is in view, and as I come up to this building—

and it is God's building—I see written over the portico, as it were, these words, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." It conveys to me this thought—If you bring the wisdom of the world into this building you will be found out. When I come to the steps of the building, that is the first thing that strikes me. Remember this is *God's* temple, and what is of the world—what is human—will all be found out and judged. Human wisdom is of no use there. There is another inscription inside the building to which I will come presently.

Passing on now to the chapter which I read, it is very interesting to see the way in which the truth that comes out in chapter xii. is introduced in connection with the parenthesis which intervenes between it and chapter xiv.—which of course is a continuation of the subject, gifts and ministry. For many a long day I failed to see the reason why the apostle stopped his instruction as to the gifts in connection with the body in chapter xii. He stops his subject, as you observe, and then gives us the unfolding of divine love—what love is—and what it is not, in chapter xiii., and resumes his instructions regarding the Assembly in chapter xiv. I trust I see the point of it now! No matter what I may have, or you may have in the way of power—because that is what is unfolded in chapter xii.—no matter what you may have in the way of gift and power by the Holy Ghost, it is of no use without love. Manifestly power is not grace; spiritual power is not grace. A man may have a great deal of power in connection with a gift imparted by the Lord, but it is not grace. So whatever may be the greatness or measure of the gift in chapter xii., I do not think it is of the slightest use in chapter xiv.—which is the

Assembly in function—the sphere and field of its exercise—unless it be baptized into, and permeated with the spirit of chapter xiii.—that is love. It is just what our brother was saying this morning—love is everything. You may not have gift, but there may be that which is more profitable—the outflow of that love which is the mark of a soul belonging to, and walking with God.

The supremacy and sovereignty of God in His Assembly is much pressed in chapter xii.

We read in verse 28, how "God hath set some in the church." If in verse 4 Paul talks of "diversities of gifts," then in verse 6 he says, "It is the same God which worketh all in all." Evidently in Corinth (and I do not think, beloved brethren, Corinth was the only place where the tendency came out, if I know the history of the Church of God, whether in days gone by, or in our own) there was the working of the human will and mind, and a desire on the part of some to have a place of importance. Manifestly there was no desire on the part of Paul or Apollos to take this place, but there was the endeavour, on the part of some foolish men, to put either them, or others, up (*see* chap. iv. 6, 7). Notice how the apostle slays all this factionary work. "It is *God* that worketh all in all." He would slay all schism, and division, and school and party of every kind. If it is a question of the body, it is not Paul or Apollos, but, "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (ver. 18).

If I think of the church as it is presented here in Corinth, I see that God has set the members in the body according to His own will. Do you know, beloved brother, why you are where you are? Why

you are located just where you are? If there be true subjection to God, and subservience to Him, you will feel and own that you are in the spot where it has pleased God to set you, and that is everything. The moment I see that *God has set* that brother in his place, and this one in his, I am content, and say, Thank God for that servant and his ministry! It is *his* place, not mine, so, if I am right, I neither emulate nor ape it, being just satisfied with my own place and niche in the body (ver. 24). "*God* has tempered the body together," &c. God has arranged all, for we read, again (ver. 28), "*God* hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers," &c. Here we have not a complete list of gifts, for that we do not get anywhere in Scripture. We have some mentioned in Romans xii., others in Ephesians iv., and many here, but not in any case a complete and detailed list. In each passage the gifts named are seen to be in connection with the special truth the Spirit of God is bringing before the saints at the moment.

Here it is striking to observe that the list includes no evangelist. The reason is not far to seek. The apostle is instructing the saints about their coming together, and the order of the Assembly before the Lord, and it is not there that the gift of the evangelist is in exercise. I feel strongly the force of what our brother said this morning, that the evangelist is of the Assembly, and belongs to it. No evangelist is working according to the truth, unless he is working in conjunction, and if possible, in whole-hearted fellowship with the Assembly, and he then naturally helps his converts to gravitate towards the Assembly. In the apostle's days that was a natural thing, and

the convert was like a fish out of water if he did not get amongst the saints. In the Assembly was the power of the Spirit: there the Spirit reigned, while outside, darkness and the devil reigned. To-day, in the divided state of things which marks Christendom, it is very different, and I think an evangelist ought to be very careful how he foists his converts into the Assembly. For myself I am very careful how I seek to introduce any who profess to have been blessed by my ministry. I think my brethren are far better able to judge than I am myself of my work. This is a most important principle, and I think I see it in Scripture, *e.g.*, Acts viii., where Philip went down to Samaria. Philip is the only man in Scripture called "The evangelist," and a fine warm-hearted fellow he was—a real fisher of men—he caught a great many fish in Samaria, and he thought he had caught a great fish when Simon the sorcerer professed to believe, and was baptized. Philip would have brought him into the Assembly if the Lord in His grace had not sent down Peter and John to detect him and keep him out.

It is a great thing for the Assembly to be exercised about the reception of souls who confess the Lord. I would like to add a little word with regard to the responsibility of the saints generally in regard to the reception of souls desiring fellowship in the breaking of bread. This is far too much left to the two or three who may commend such. It is necessary, and very nice that they should be commended, but we ought to have in our souls more distinctly the sense that it is the Assembly that receives, as it is the Assembly who may have to dismiss or put away. If the saints were more exercised as to this it would

be greatly for the profit of the Assembly, and tend to practical fellowship.

And now as to the gifts and their exercise, "God has set some in the assembly; first apostles, secondarily prophets," &c. We still have them, if I may so say, in the writings of the New Testament. We "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" of the New Testament. In other words, our faith rests on that which is revealed in their writings (Eph. ii. 20.). Another subsidiary sense in which prophets still remain, we have in chapter xiv. 3. Pursuing, we read "thirdly teachers." The reason why you get the gifts placed in the order of their value—why you have them numbered 1, 2, 3—is because the Corinthians were very full of their sign-gifts, and very much occupied with the man who had power to speak with tongues and the like, and they very little valued these other gifts which were of far deeper importance and value for edification. The Lord comes in and puts things in their true place, and estimates the gifts in their real value before Him, as made known by Him, and "tongues" are put last.

Among the rest we read of "helps." That is a very nice little word, "helps." There are many persons who may be helps in the Assembly who may not be the possessors of any very great gift. It is very nice to be a "help," and it is very gracious that God allows us to be "helps" to one another, as well as to be His helpers. I was much struck the other day with a word in Judges v. There was a great crisis in the history of Israel, and we see a certain company who did not rise to the occasion. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants

thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judges v. 23). It is a great thing to be always free, and fresh, and simple in heart, and ready to be in the hand of the Lord to do just what He would give one to do. Every one has his own little niche for God, and it is good to remember our Lord's word when He "left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to *every man his work*, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark xiii. 34). We can all be "helps." The Lord gives us each an opportunity in our little corner, to sweetly and simply serve Him and His people. This is open to every one.

I pass over chapter xiii.—a wonderfully choice and interesting subject—for time fails to expound this "more excellent way." Whatever gift you and I may be possessed of, it might be augmented, and if we do not possess any gift, I wonder if we are covetous in the sense of chapter xii. 31? Brother, are you covetous after this sort? My young brother, are you covetous of "the best gifts"? If not, I have the privilege to-night of exhorting you to be covetous. Mr Darby used to say, "If there were more devotedness there would be more gift." True indeed, and if there were more devotedness to the Lord, more seeking from Him that we might be helpers to His saints, I am sure there would be more gift than there is. The apostle's exhortation is very striking.

What is the "more excellent way"? This beautiful atmosphere of love of chapter xiii. You remember the word of the apostle to his son Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). These three words bring before me these three

chapters: chapter xii. is "power"; chapter xiii. "love"; and chapter xiv. "a sound mind," and I sometimes doubt, brethren, if we have it; and certainly we have it not if love does not rule our ways and words in the Assembly unto "edification."

I now pass on to chapter xiv. for a minute or two. Verse 1. Prophecy has the double sense of (1) foretelling events, or (2) is that class of ministry which reaches the conscience and brings the soul into the presence of God. You have it beautifully illustrated in the case of the Lord with the woman in John iv. His word, "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband," reached her conscience fully, as she says, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Here, however, clearly, prophesying has a wider range than that, for "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (ver. 3). It is a most blessed line of ministry that. "Edification" builds up. "Exhortation" stirs up. "Comfort" binds up. If the ministry is of a really prophetic character there will be the building up, the consolidating of the Assembly. And there is more than that, "exhortation" which stirs us up. I ask any one who looks over the scene to-day, Do you not think the saints of God want stirring up? I know I need it, and I am always thankful to the man who stirs me up. The ministry which stirs you up makes you to feel, I must wake up; I must lay aside this or that weight. And more than that—this ministry comforts, it binds up, it makes Christ precious to the heart. May the Lord give us more of that kind of ministry, beloved friends. I am speaking of the ordinary round of ministry in the Assembly day by day.

There is one word that marks this chapter. The

keynote of chapter xiv. is one word, "edification." What will edify? That will always be a serious question to every one who possesses any gift. I may think I am edifying the Assembly, and be mistaken. If I do not edify, I think you ought to tell me. If my ministry is unprofitable, I think brothers ought to be faithful to me—while withal they are gracious—and tell me that my ministry is not to profit, and then I trust I shall have grace not to plague you with it. The great point is, what will edify. You find that over and over again in the chapter. It is very important that what takes place in the Assembly should be of that character, and love would desist from continuing ministry which fails to edify. Note how this is pressed in verses 12-14, "Forasmuch as ye are jealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel *to the edifying* of the church." We are bidden also "to utter by the tongue words *easy to be understood.*" Often in our meetings there is a good deal that is not edifying, simply because it is not heard. How can you say "Amen" to a brother's prayers if you do not hear them? You may say, The Lord hears. Yes; but if the part I take is to be profitable to others, I ought to speak so that you can hear, and so plainly that you can understand. If it be the giving out of a hymn, or praying, I judge it ought to be in a way that saints can hear. Here is God's Word for it. I am only drawing attention to what is often lacking, and which many are conscious of. I trust the Lord will use His Word. Let us remember profit is the great thing, and what we can neither hear nor understand will not profit either me or others.

Another point I would touch on. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others

judge" (ver. 29). I apprehend this is an occasion when the Assembly is together. It may be open to question whether a meeting like this where I am now speaking is to be regarded as a meeting of the Assembly. It is, I know, a moot point; but I think "two or three" puts a limit on the number of speakers in a meeting of this kind. As to this I feel speakers need to be individually before the Lord. I name it, because one has heard of not only two or three but more speaking on such occasions; but I take it, the Lord has given us His mind very plainly here—"two or three," and not more.

"If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace" (ver. 30). What does that mean? That the second has to wait till the first sits down? I do not think so. If the Lord gave a revelation to another prophet, he was to rise to deliver it, and the first would hold his peace and sit down. *Now* there is no revelation, and as another has said: "Order is before power. God is never the author of confusion." Subjection is the great point here. It is beautiful to note the way the Spirit of God looks for profit. What is more profitable than to see a man subject to the Spirit? The prophet ought to be under the control of the power of the Spirit of God, and in subjection to Him, because he might have risen in the power of the Spirit to speak, and gone on beyond his measure.

May the Lord give us all to know what it is to be always before Him for real profit, not only now, but when we are at home in the little meetings from whence we all come.

The apostle winds up very beautifully with verses 39, 40. This is what I see written inside the building,

all round the wall, as it were, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Outside the building I saw everything will be detected that is not of God, for "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Now, inside there is what suits the presence of God, and what is to mark His servants and His saints in His Assembly. This injunction speaks for itself, and I desire to have the abiding recollection of it in my heart.

It is a wonderful thing when you think that the Church, the Assembly, is now the lesson-book of angels —that angels are to learn, beloved fellow-Christians, the manifold wisdom of God, as they see the Spirit's blessed activity and power in God's Assembly.

The Lord give us each to be more suitably filling our little niche, as individuals in His service, and likewise to know in our hearts the blessedness of being members of that body of which Christ is the Head, so that when we come into the Assembly we may remember it is God's Assembly, and that all things may be done "decently and in order," for His name's sake.

Thy precious name is all we show,
  Our only passport, Lord;
And full assurance now we know,
  Confiding in Thy word.

O largely give, 'tis all Thine own,
  The Spirit's goodly fruit:
Praise issuing forth in life, alone
  Our living Lord can suit.

Henceforth let each belovèd child
  With quickened step proceed,
To walk with garments undefiled
  Where'er Thine eye may lead.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Gift, and Local Office.

(1 Timothy iii.)

MANY saints have not a due and right sense of what ministry springs from, and so, in their minds, the exercise of spiritual gifts has been confounded with local offices. Now, an elder, or a deacon, might be a gifted man or not. Ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift which flows from the Lord in glory, and belongs to the Church at large; while these appointments were purely local, and are only seen in certain Assemblies, where the apostle Paul or his delegates had ordained them.

In some of the epistles the Assemblies are not addressed as having these local officers, while in that to the Philippians they are mentioned, and their qualifications are given in the first epistle to Timothy, as well as in that to Titus.

The word "elder," as all know, means those who are not young, but advanced in years. The word is used about sixty times in the New Testament, but only a few of these apply to the Church of God, and we will look at these. A bishop had to be an elder, but not every elder was a bishop. The translators of our admirable English Bible, who were used to episcopacy, whenever they came to a word which might be translated bishop, so translated it, as in Titus i. 7.

The word ἐπίσκοπος occurs five times in the New Testament. Four times it is translated "bishop" (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 25), and once "overseer" (Acts xx. 28), and this is the real meaning of the Greek word. In addition we have the derivative word ἐπισκοπῆ occurring twice, and rendered "bishopric" in Acts i. 20, and "office of a bishop" in 1 Timothy iii. 1.

The first time we get the word "overseer" is, as we have seen, in Acts xx. There we read, "And from Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the Church" (ver. 17). In the course of his address to them, he says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28). Thus the *elders* and *overseers* are but two words expressive of one office in this case.

Next we meet with the word in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. "Paul, and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and deacons" (Phil. i. 1). The third mention is: "A *bishop* then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach" (1 Tim. iii. 2). "An overseer must be blameless;" this is clear from the previous verse. "If a man desire the oversight, he desireth a good work,—an *overseer* then must be blameless," and so on. Then we read: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a *bishop*

must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre" (Tit. i. 5-7). Titus is told to ordain "*elders*," and then the qualifications of an *overseer* are given.

The last and most conclusive use of the word is in 1 Peter ii. 25, "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and *Bishop* of your souls." Have we all returned; have you returned? If not, lose no time, but return at once to Jesus, the "Overseer of your soul."

Let us now see what these elders were, and their qualifications. "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. iii. 1-7). It is clear that they were to be men of ascertained moral and spiritual weight, in the Assembly. Each was to be "the husband of one wife." Of course this was necessary, for polygamy was common then, and a man might have more than one wife before he was converted, and afterwards could not put them away, but it would preclude him from this office.

They were to be "apt to teach," likewise, hospitable,

and having their own houses in order; and if they ruled well, we see elsewhere, they were to be much esteemed. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. v. 17, 18).

Now I believe that many of us have been bred with the belief that it is competent to the Church now to ordain or appoint elders, but if we see from Scripture who ordained them, and how they were ordained at first, it will help us.

But first let me carry your minds back to see what the Church of God really is. It is composed of those who have been redeemed by Christ, been washed in His blood, born of the Spirit, possess a new nature, are sealed by the Holy Ghost, and are thus baptized into one body. The Church of God in any place was a company known as God's people, and, let me say, there was only one such company in one place, hence the postman would have known where to take a letter addressed to the Church of God. But it is not so now, nor could you open such a letter, nor could I. Who could open it? It would have to lie at the dead letter office till all the saints in the place should have come together, and then only could we open the letter.

In those early days, if we had asked the most wicked person in the place, they could have told you where the Church of God was. When the Church of God began, none but true children of God were in its ranks. You may quote the case of Ananias and Sapphira. That proves my statement. I am not going to discuss their state, but they were put out, God put them out

by death, and we read, "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (Acts v. 13). Just as a wasp in a beehive is killed or driven out, so, if a false person did come in, the light was so great that he was manifested, and went out, or was put out. Would to God that it were so now.

Believers in Jesus are now linked with Him in glory, so that they are the members of His body, and such a thought as being a member of any other body is of man, if not of lower origin. No child of God should own such membership; it is not of God, and the New Testament thoroughly condemns the idea.

What we find in Scripture is that wherever the gospel was believed, the disciples were drawn together to the Lord's name. A little time passed, and then the apostles entered that Assembly for a definite purpose, and that was to ordain elders and deacons, not to appoint ministers, for there is no such thought in all Scripture. If there be, it can easily be found.

There is one scripture, I am aware, which is the stock passage for the so-called "ordination of ministers," but this, when examined, throws great light on this subject. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts xiii. 1-3). Now, have you the coolness, not to say the audacity, to say that Barnabas and Paul were then ordained? Prophets and teachers ordain apostles!

Impossible! "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 28).

The second and third would be ordaining the first in the Church, if your interpretation were correct. Again, I say, impossible! They were "*sent forth* by the Holy Ghost," and the brethren, prophets, and teachers if you will, knowing that "the apostles Barnabas and Paul" (for so they are styled in Acts xiv. 14), were sent forth for a special work, did what was common then—they flung themselves into the mission with heart and soul—they fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them. Did they ordain them? If so, to what? It could not be to preach, for Barnabas had come on the scene long before. In Acts v. 36, 37, he had shown great devotedness in giving his money. In Acts ix. 27, he had manifested great spiritual judgment in introducing Paul of Tarsus to the Assembly at Jerusalem, and that Assembly a little later had commissioned him to go and see the grace of God in Antioch (Acts xi. 22-24). Thereafter he brought Saul to Antioch, and together they taught that Assembly for a whole year, and then carried their bounty to Jerusalem (Acts xi. 25-30).

Paul's apostleship we know the source of, from his own pen. "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)" (Gal. i. 1). As far as preaching is concerned, he began that at Damascus directly he was converted (*see* Acts ix. 19-22).

The laying-on of hands has a different meaning in various parts of Scripture. The action of those at Antioch was clearly only that of identification with

these two servants when called to a special service. The Church of God at Antioch identified itself heart and soul with the special work of a missionary nature that Barnabas and Saul were called to, and when they had finished their tour and their work, they returned "to Antioch, from whence they had been *recommended* (not ordained) to the grace of God *for the work* which they had fulfilled" (Acts xiv. 26).

In the course of that tour they visited Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. Souls were saved, Assemblies formed, and afterwards we find the apostles returning, and confirming the disciples. More than that, enough time had passed by to reveal who were qualified to be elders in these Assemblies, so we read: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23).

Now mark who it was that ordained these elders. I know some learned ones would say that the Assembly chose them, and then the apostles came along and formally installed them. I am no scholar myself, but I am assured by others, who know the Greek language intimately and accurately, that the word χειροτονήσαντες, in our version rendered "ordained," simply means "having chosen." Evidently it was the apostles that chose them (Acts xiv. 23). And here let me say this is the only place in the New Testament where we see the apostles ordaining them. No doubt there were elders in Ephesus, as in Philippi, and Titus was told to appoint them in Crete (Tit. i. 5).

But then some may say, Were not the people that composed the Assembly the right ones to appoint them, as in the case of the deacons in Acts vi. 1-6?

In no case do we read that hands were laid on elders. The only passage that looks like it, is where Paul says to Timothy: "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. v. 22). But this, I judge, has a much wider meaning.

Hands were laid on deacons, by the apostles, and by them in every case. In the case of the chosen seven, recorded in Acts vi., the Assembly who gave their money were to have the right to choose their stewards, but notice there, that it was the apostles who installed them in office. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts vi. 1-6). All that were chosen were selected from the murmurers. Grace is the great cure for murmuring. It was the Grecians who murmured, and though not called deacons the seven who did the work of deacons were *all* Grecians. Not even four Grecians, and three Hebrews, but *all* Grecians. What a lesson as to the power of grace when it be active!

We have seen clearly that it was the apostles or their delegates who chose elders, and they it was who laid their hands on the deacons, but you must remember that there was only *one church* in each city at that time. It was *the* Church of God, and embraced every believer.

We have noticed that Paul, in his charge to the elders at Ephesus, had said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28). I return to this occasion for the reason that Paul in his first epistle to Timothy says, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. i. 3). From this some have thought that Timothy was a bishop, and was left there to appoint them, but here in Acts xx. we see all the elders doing their work at Ephesus five years before Paul wrote to Timothy, so that theory will not hold good.

Let us now look at some other scriptures very briefly. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. v. 17). We see here that there were some of the elders who "laboured in word and doctrine" yet they were not appointed as ministers, as men now say. How did they get this power to labour in word and doctrine? That alone came from Christ, and flowed from Him as the Head of the Body. It was the exercise of a spiritual gift, which the Lord had given them, and had nothing whatever to do with their official position as elders. They possessed this power, over and above their eldership, in no sense

because of it. And to illustrate this we have also Philip, who was one of the seven deacons of Acts vi. The persecution arising after Stephen's death turned him out of office, so he went to Samaria, preached Christ, and the whole city is moved. It is abundantly plain that he had a gift—that of the evangelist—and he exercised his gift quite apart from his deaconship. To confound gift and office is to spoil both. They are distinct. Gift comes from Christ. Local office was always conferred by the apostles or their delegates.

Now, to come to another definite scripture, Titus, we are told, was left at Crete to appoint elders. Neither Timothy nor Titus were apostles, but apostolic delegates, who received from the apostles certain definite orders, and when Titus' work was done, Paul tells him to be diligent, to come to him to Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12). This shows that Titus was not the Bishop of Crete, as your English Bible says in its footnote.

The question now arises, Have we to-day the power to ordain elders and deacons? I say, No! Are you an apostle? No! Or sent by one, as Timothy or Titus? No! Then do not assume to do their work. You will probably retort, If there be no authority or power to appoint to these offices, why did God give them at the outset?

Your query is fair, but I think is not difficult to answer. At the first everything was in order, and such offices were comely, but God foresaw that His Church would all be broken up, and where was the value of perpetuating an office which, so far from keeping the sheep together, rather keeps them away from each other. You may say, That is strange, but

I say, with no desire to wound any one, look at this city. The more carefully the respective elders of the different sections of Christendom do their work, the more effectually will they keep Christ's sheep apart. The more each diverse set of elders labour the more thoroughly will they keep the "Free" and "Established" and other churches separate, by the very fact of their trying to keep their flocks together.

The truth is, that man has gone on with a form, instead of understanding what God has given for an evil day. I ask you, Which is better, to do *so*, or humbly to take our place, as those who have not the power? Well then, you say to me, is there no rule in the Church? I thank God there is in His assemblies, yea, in every one, yet I deny emphatically and plainly any power for ordination, ministerial, episcopal, or diaconal.

There are two cogent reasons for not attempting to appoint either elders or deacons. First, we have not the competent ordaining power—*i.e.*, apostles, or their delegates; and secondly, we have not *the* Church over whom to set them, if we had the power. It is, alas, broken in numberless fragments. Let me put the case this way. If Paul came into this city to-day, where would he begin to appoint them? Where is the Church? Broken up! Would he treat a fragment as the whole? Impossible! If he did so, he would but perpetuate the divisions which God's Word so condemns.

As to ministerial ordination, I will only say that it is unknown in the New Testament. In not one single case can it be shown that a man was set apart by men to preach the gospel. If it be there, it can be produced, but it is not. Christ, the Head of the Body,

gives the needed gifts for that to whom He will, and His prerogative no man can set aside without loss.

There yet remains another scripture or two which I will touch upon, because it will help us to see that the Lord cares for His Church when man's will and disorder have spoiled His revealed order. He ever gives all she really needs. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. v. 12, 13). Who were those? I judge they were not elders, for spiritually they were but a year old. Are there none such now? I rejoice to know that there are many over me in the Lord, and I rejoice to know that the Lord has given these—not ordination—but spiritual power, and you know water soon finds its level.

And now look at another scripture, where there is nothing ecclesiastical, and found in the last epistle we would have thought of looking at for light and guidance as to rule in the Assembly. "Remember them which have the *rule* over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. . . . Obey them that have the *rule* over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. . . . Salute all them that have the *rule* over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you" (Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24). What were these? They were guides? Does putting a man into an official place make him this? No! Verse 7 speaks for itself. A man who brings to you the Word of God in a moment of difficulty, so that you know it is God's

Word, and your soul is guided by it, is a guide. You will own him as such, and remember him in your prayers, and welcome him, when he again comes along.

I own as a guide not one that takes a place as such, but one who brings me the Word of God, which does its work, and shows me my way. A guide may step out of a well-beaten path, to point out the way—well—let it be so, if it be the Word of God.

It is an immense comfort to know that, if apostles have ceased to be, and local offices are not to be perpetuated in the present ruined and broken state of the Church, the Lord in His tender love continues to His beloved people all they really need. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers He still gives, and guides He has always raised up when needed. The work of elders and deacons is done, without assuming the title, in every Assembly of God.

The guides show me the way from God's Word. Men with pastoral gift there are still to help the souls of the saints, specially in private. And we have teachers too for the saints inside. But let us never forget that all gifts are the common property of the Church. They belong to the whole, and not to some little section, and wherever I see a gifted man I claim him, as from the Lord, for the whole Church, and would to God that he would take his place in His Assembly as such.

I trust it is clear to your souls that ministry is distinct from these local charges, which have disappeared, and so to continue them without divine authority is foolish—not to say sinful.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Man in Christ; and, a Man of God.

(2 Cor. xii.; 1 Tim. vi. 6–12; 2 Tim. iii. 14-17, iv. 1–8.)

YOU will observe, beloved friends, in these scriptures, the occurrence of two remarkable titles, "A man in Christ" and "A man of God." Of them I would speak for a few moments. A remarkable difference exists between the two.

Although every Christian be a man in Christ, it does not follow that he is, practically, what Paul calls a man of God. One gives us position, the other practice.

What a wonderful expression Paul opens with. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago . . . caught up to the third heaven."

Observe the effect of this on Paul. He kept it quiet for a long time. I rather think if some of us had such a revelation as he had, our brethren would have known about it very soon.

Now, what is a man in Christ? I tremble, lest I fail to convey the truth concerning it; but I will say what I trust may help the youngest soul here. If born of God, and possessing the Holy Ghost, you are "a man in Christ."

The history of the first man is very sad. Where does that history end? It only ends in sin, shame, and death, in the scene through which we are passing.

What Paul learns is this, that there has come into this scene One who, Himself God, has become a man, that He might travel over the pathway of man in this world, and one loves to think there is no possible position that a saint could be in that we do not find the Lord taking up. I see two things in the history of that blessed Man. 1. The beautiful and perfect revelation of what God is. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 18). If I would know God I must gaze upon the Person of Jesus. 2. We have the perfect exhibition of the pathway of man, as he should be for God; not only that He comes to make known God to us, but to take up all the responsibilities of man; and once and again He is met by a voice that says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At His baptism the heavens are opened for the first time, and the Father's voice is heard saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22). He does not say at the baptism, "Hear him;" that goes without saying, as if every one would be sure to hear Him. Then again, on the mount of transfiguration, the end of the pathway is drawing nigh, and there Peter suggests the thought of making three tabernacles—"One for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Luke ix. 33). But the Father could not brook such an indignity as bringing Him on the level with the law-giver and the reformer. Their day had gone by, hence the word is, "This is my beloved Son: *hear* HIM" (ver. 35).

Though He might have gone up to glory from that mount, and none would have challenged His right, He turns, and comes down, and goes down into death,

because if He had not died the corn of wheat must have abode alone. But on the cross He took up the whole question of man's sin, and guilt, and state before God.

Not only did He bear our sins, but He was made sin. He bridged the entire distance between God and man. He closed up in His own death on the cross—where in grace He died vicariously—the history of man in the flesh, so that when Jesus was dead on the cross, one universal scene of death was the only thing before the eye of God; every other man was dead *in* sins, and Christ was then dead *for* sin. But what follows? Resurrection! The annuller of death rises from the grave, and meets Mary at its door. Her heart was full of affection for the Lord. She goes to His tomb, and is detained there. She was a woman who had now no home here, because He was absent, and therefore she remained weeping. He rises from the dead to meet the heart that was broken, and bleeding, in sympathy with, and love for Him. I wish we had half the affection which that woman had. She had seen angels, but turned her back on them. Which of us would not have been detained by angels? Then she turns her back on man—the gardener, as she supposed; but she hears a voice, and turns round and sees Jesus Himself, and He reveals the truth. A most blessed revelation indeed was it, viz., that He was going to a new place. He said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Mary, I doubt not, felt thus: "Lord, I lost you, but now I have got you. Am I to lose you again?" How sweetly He calms such a thought in her heart as He goes on, and gives Mary her eternally unequalled commission, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them,

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17).

There is a man gone up into the glory on the ground of divine righteousness. Man in Christ has gone into glory. The first man went into death as the end of a pathway of self-will, disobedience, and sin, and God let him stay there; and now there has come in this second man, this last Adam, who only reached death as the end of a pathway of subjection, will-lessness, and obedience, and God takes Him out of death and gives Him glory; but He does not go up to that glory until He has stopped by the way, to tell this loving woman, and commission her to tell others, that His Father was their Father, and His God their God. He links and associates us with Himself in the place where He is gone—that is what I understand to be "a man in Christ." He brought Godhead to earth, and now He has taken humanity into heaven, and there you have a home. The Lord goes up, and the Holy Ghost comes down. Stephen sees Jesus in the glory. The devil cannot bear that, so he batters his head with stones, and silences Christ's witness in death, in reality doing Stephen a favour, by sending him more quickly to be with His Saviour, for Satan ever defeats himself. Saul of Tarsus was standing by, and Christ takes up this man who had heard Stephen's testimony to Himself as man in glory, and, converting him, in the midst of his murderous work, makes him the "chosen vessel" and channel of conveying these glorious tidings to the Gentiles.

Stephen, who had seen Jesus in glory, dies in the likeness of His master; and then the Lord, as it were, says, "I will pick up that man who has heard I am alive in glory, let him see Me where I am, and then I

will enable that man to live, and testify for Me on earth where *I am not*."

2 Corinthians xii. coincides, apparently, with the time chronologically when Paul came to Lystra (*see* Acts xiv. 6-20). God gave him this marvellous revelation—"Caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 4)—so far as we can judge just at a moment when, for Christ's sake, his life was despaired of by others on earth—for the rabble "having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead" (Acts xiv. 19). It was the fitting moment to let a man, who had apparently done with earth, see what heaven was like. Thus in the wonderful wisdom of God He lets this blessed man, in this particular part of his earthly pathway, see and hear Jesus there; and then he comes back to earth, to the scene whence Christ was cast out, and there he freshly learns the sufficiency of the grace of Christ.

Everything that we possess is up there. All the springs and resources of the soul are in heaven. When Paul came down, what a dingy, murky scene must this world have seemed to him, after the unsullied glories of the scene he had been caught up to! What difficulties he came back to—all the dull duties of life!

Paul has this wonderful revelation, and then he gets the "thorn in the flesh"; and just as he received the "thorn in the flesh"—so the Lord sees good to let us have one—and we cannot get on without the grace of Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee" is a lovely word for our souls at all times.

If you have a very difficult pathway, is not the grace of Christ enough? the arm of Christ enough?

Ah! yes. The more we learn that He is our life, and we are just set here, and to be here for Him, the more deeply we feel we cannot get on a single inch without Him. We then hear Him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The Lord does not usually take away the difficulty, but gives strength to go through it. Paul is an illustration in his own pathway of this truth.

Christianity is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the life of the Christian. As "a man in Christ" I see the place grace gives me in glory, and am to taste the grace that flows from that glory for every exigency of the pathway here.

Now let us briefly look at the "man of God" in 1 Timothy vi. The same man writes to Timothy—a fellow-servant young in years. He had a great desire for him, and he writes exceedingly plainly on the subject of godliness. Some suppose "that gain is godliness." The injunction is: "From such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain." Gain is not godliness, "but godliness with contentment is great gain." This is an immense thing, but how is it to be attained? Lot wanted a little bit more than he had. He had not then this godliness. He was tested and failed. I believe the same test comes often across our path. If I am determined to get on in the world, God may let me, and then I shall find the word true, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" is a good word to remember.

People say sometimes, "He died worth so and so." This is a great mistake. A man never dies worth what he leaves behind, but what he has sent on before.

Do you want to be rich? You will fall into a pit. This is the point. "They that WILL [they want to] be rich fall into temptation and a snare." It is not that there is any harm in money, but in the love of it.

I believe it is often proved to be with us, as you get it stated of Israel in Haggai's day. They were dwelling in ceiled houses, and the house of God lying waste. Self was uppermost, but God was watchful of His people. His hand was on them, hence we read, "He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." How did the holes get there? I believe the Lord cut them.

Having warned Timothy thus, the apostle now exhorts and addresses him by a most lovely title. "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." He, as it were, says, You are here where man has cast God's Man out, and here you are to be in the place of Christ. It is a wonderful favour to be God's man in a dark world. The Shunammite could say, regarding Elisha, "I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually" (2 Kings iv. 9).

What a nice thing that others can perceive the features of the man of God. In 2 Timothy iii. Paul points the way to you and me to be such. He says here, however, "*Flee* these things," which he has named; and then adds, "*Follow these* things;" viz., "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

"Lay hold of eternal life" is a remarkable word. You say, "I think I have got it." Are you quite

sure of that? It is evidently something that he had to reach out and grasp; for was he not told to lay hold of it? It is what belongs to the man in Christ, but he is to lay hold of what really belongs to him, therefore he adds, "Fight the good fight of faith."

In one aspect eternal life is ours now, as being the gift of God received by faith; in another, it is a future thing—"the end everlasting life." That is the goal—the end of the Christian's pathway.

Now turn to the next epistle. What Paul presses here is open to every saint of God. "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 14-17).

Scripture is that which our souls are turned back upon, and which really fits the man of God—whoever he may be—for his work. Then in chapter iv. 5 we read: "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Do the work of the evangelist. People ask me, "Are you an

evangelist?" "I don't know," I reply. I do not know or care whether I am one or not, if I can only do the work of one. The work of the evangelist is to bring Christ before souls, and bring souls to Christ. In the day when everything is out of gear, the servant of Christ is to be "man of all work." When an establishment is in full working order there may be the tablemaid, the housemaid, and the cook, but when things are diminished, and retrenchment is the order of the day, then there comes as a necessity the "maid of all work"; and so the servant of Christ may have to do a little bit of gospel work, a little bit of teaching, a little bit of pastoral work. Any service for Christ is sweet.

How beautiful to find this dear old servant of Christ now saying, "I have fought a good fight;" a lovely close to a grand history. He has spoken in these two epistles about some *making shipwreck* of faith (1 Tim. i. 19); some "*departing from* the faith" (1 Tim. iv. 1); some "*denying* the faith" (1 Tim. v. 8); some "being *seduced* from the faith" (1 Tim. vi. 10); some "*erring* concerning the faith" (1 Tim. vi. 21); others "*overthrowing* the faith of some" (2 Tim. ii. 18); others were "*reprobate* concerning the faith" (2 Tim. iii. 18). But the truth that God had given him he had kept, hence he could say triumphantly, "*I have kept* the faith" (2 Tim. iv. 7). The devil wants us, dear friends, to give up that which God has given us. These epistles show us the value of holding it fast. What joy it is to be a Christian, a possessor of eternal life, passing through this scene of trials, but linked with heaven before we get there. It is very sweet to hear Paul now add, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Faint not then, fellow-believers, fellow-soldiers, for you will get a crown also, for it is for "all that love his appearing" The Lord keep us in His infinite grace, knowing that we are men in Christ, and seeking to be truly men of God, going on simply, quietly, fervently, till we see His blessed face; and what an answer to all the exercises of the way will it be, when we see Him and are like Him, and with Him, for ever in glory.

When wandering far from the Father's abode,
The heart full of pride and hatred to God,
The children of darkness, of Satan the slaves,
'Twas Jesus redeemed us—His merit that saves.

Our sins on the cross He on Calvary bore,
He blotted them out, and they are no more;
Now, pardoned and washed, we boldly draw near,
And cry "Abba, Father!" unhindered by fear.

Despised by the world, we're strangers below,
But called to heaven we cheerfully go;
The Lord is our leader, and, strong in His might,
Though Satan opposes we fight the good fight.

We look for the day when Jesus shall come
And take all His blood-purchased brethren home;
When we shall behold all His glory and grace,
And a heaven be found in the light of His face!

CHAPTER XXIX.

Faith's Encouragement in Evil Days.

(Jude 17–25.)

IT is quite clear the apostle Jude writes for and contemplates the last state of things: what comes under the Lord's eye, and what the saints have to meet. He is showing the resources are the same even to the very end, when such a state of things arrives as is depicted in the earlier verses of the epistle. This we see thoroughly fulfilled in the history, and present condition of the church. But the Spirit of God gives us a word of cheer, to carry us on at this time, when things are outwardly and inwardly so depressing. In Peter's second epistle the Lord tells us what would be the corruption inside, whereas Jude unfolds the apostasy, that is, departure from first estate.

Jude addresses the faithful, however, and says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Four sweet words—"*Building*," "*praying*," "*keeping*," "*looking*." "Building"—take care you do not pull down. What the Spirit prescribes here is building; this is beautiful, because Jude is describing decay, and dissolution, as the fruit of the corruption all around.

Faith is peculiarly sweet to the eye of the Lord when all is going to ruins. What is the warrant for saints meeting like this. "Building yourselves up."

It is the end here, and there is a resource which is competent for the state of things, and enough to keep the saints joyful. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the expected, and suited state of the saints always. Is it not to be the same now? Surely. As the history of God's people darkens, God ever raises a light; the deeper the darkness, the brighter the light. This principle is sweetly illustrated in the Old Testament, and I turn to three scriptures which show that the greater the ruin, the brighter the light, where faith was operative.

First, 2 Chronicles xxx. Things were bad enough in Hezekiah's day, with doors shut, and lamps put out, but he addresses *all* the people of God, and they came together and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, taking advantage of a privilege God allowed (*see* Num. ix. 13). "Great gladness" prevailed, so they determined to have other seven days, and we read "they kept other seven days with gladness" (xxx. 23). Hezekiah got simply before the Lord, and as a direct and natural consequence, "there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem" (ver. 26).

They were very palmy days in Solomon's reign, doubtless, but these were even better than they. You find, too, that when all were thoroughly happy before the Lord, they began to be occupied with the Lord's interests. The people brought in the tithe of all things "abundantly," and the priests and Levites

were "encouraged" (xxxi. 4, 5). When they began to give, the Lord began to bless. As the joy in the Lord rises, the interest in and care for His things break out, and "heaps, heaps" (vers. 6, 12) meet the eye of the gladdened king. The Lord has given us a brightening up many a time, but, alas! how soon we sink down. So was it also in Judah's history.

Secondly. Things got very low indeed till Josiah's time. Then there was another revival. Evil was judged (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3, 7). Then "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord," and "Shaphan read it before the king" (vers. 14, 18). The Word of God produced repentance and humbling, and thereafter "Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem" (chap. xxxv. 1). And the record is given, "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet, neither did *all* the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept" (ver. 18). It was the most remarkable passover since the kingdom had been established. Not even Solomon's could approach it. What an encouragement for faith!

Thirdly. But, alas! enjoyed blessing will not keep the soul unless the eye be single; so deeper failure follows; the people go away again from God, and then into captivity. God's grace, however, never gives up His own, and, through mercy, there is partial recovery in Ezra's time. A remarkable revival occurs, and many return from Babylon to God's earthly centre, Jerusalem. This is but a type of what has happened in our days, in which the Lord has worked blessedly by His Spirit, revived interest in His Word, and gathered back His saints to divine ground. Nehemiah, following Ezra, begins to build his wall.

That was separation. Ezra built the temple, Nehemiah the wall, and many true helpers had he. Nearly all were in the work, sisters and all. Some built two bits, notably the Tekoites (Neh. iii. 5, 27), though of them it is said, "but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord" (ver. 5). *Verbum sap.* But the Lord notices every mark of devotedness, evidenced by repairing the wall, whether it be "Shallum and his daughters" (ver. 12), or Baruch, who "*earnestly repaired*" (ver. 20), or the priests "every one over against his house" (ver. 28), or Meshullam "over against his chamber" (ver. 30), for I suppose he was but a lodger.

Again does the Word of the Lord become precious, and heeded (chap. viii. 1-8), and what good cheer it brought verses 9, 10 indicate, as "this day is holy to the Lord" twice fell on their ears, and "the joy of the Lord is your strength" was the trumpet call of the Spirit. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." How beautiful! If our hearts are delighting in Christ there is always strength and power, and understanding too, so the next thing is, they kept the feast of tabernacles. They anticipated the millennium; in fact, there was more apprehension of the mind of the Lord at this moment than there had ever been in their previous history—for "all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness" (ver. 17). Never in the brightest day of kingly power did such a thing happen. I just show this principle in the history of God's people, that if there be faith, and a desire to follow His Word, the

darker the day, the brighter will be the blessing, if there be only obedience; and the further into the ruin you trace them, the bolder does faith become in its action.

In Jude, who speaks of days of church ruin and failure, we are encouraged to expect great things, if only faith be in exercise. "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves *on* your most holy faith." This evidently is the revelation of God—Christianity as such—on which we are to build. The trowel is ever to be in the hand; "building up," not pulling down, is our business. The Christian is not an "Iconoclast"—a destroyer of idols—but a builder, an unfolder, and living expositor of the truth.

One brother was speaking this morning of the Holy Ghost as the Testifier of Jesus, and here the Spirit of God is the abiding spring of power, realised by our having none, and, therefore, in dependence, we are to be found "praying in the Holy Ghost." Joy in the Spirit, is the result of our yielding ourselves unreservedly to the care and guidance of this abiding Comforter of our heart. We shall thus only be kept to the end, walking in "the communion of the Holy Ghost" and "the comfort of the Spirit." We were exhorted to love this morning, but how can it be maintained? Here we get it: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Yourselves the objects of love; born of God, you cannot help loving. If kept in the enjoyment of the Lord's love, it flows out, you cannot help it, there is no effort. No apple-tree *tries* to grow apples. Do not try to be anything; you keep yourself in the love of God, and you will be like the Son of God; you cannot help it. The atmosphere we live in will tell upon us, just as the ointment on Aaron's

head went down to the skirts of his garments and diffused an odour wherever he went (*see* Ps. cxxxiii.). If we get near to the Lord we shall carry away some of the savour of His presence. We always become like the thing we are occupied with.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not the Lord's coming exactly, but the effect of it. It is connected with our being taken out of this scene, and into our home — heaven. We know we are welcome there—that it is our home: the Spirit even now conducts our hearts there; the more you go, the more you get the sense of the welcome there.

Christ is there, and Paul was always pressing thither by the pathway of resurrection from among the dead. It was his goal. When you wake up in His likeness you will say, "Bless the Lord, His mercy endureth for ever." The deepest desire of the heart will be gratified when we reach the spot the Lord is carrying us to. Do you mean it is not a mercy? It is the greatest mercy the Lord can bestow upon us. We have to serve here, and He is to be manifested in us. But if every saint here were caught up this afternoon before four o'clock, each would draw a deep breath and say, "Thank God, that is the greatest mercy I have ever known; I am out of the world for ever, I am with the Lord, and like Him, and shall never wander from, or be unlike Him again." The Lord, in His grace, keep us, and encourage our hearts to go on "looking."

How beautifully the epistle closes with a doxology of triumph: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion

and power, both now and ever. Amen." Is not that thought lovely? "With exceeding joy." That is not ours, but the joy on Christ's part, when He presents to Himself that Church He has loved, and cherished so faithfully these eighteen hundred years. It will be the day of the gladness of *His* heart.

The Lord enable us to go on "building" (do not drop the trowel!), "keeping" . . . "praying in the Holy Ghost," and then "looking." That fills up the whole life of the saint, and the next thing is, we find ourselves gathered home in the cloudless perfection of His own presence.

Well may we sing—

Lord, we can see, by faith in Thee,
A prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine, in light divine,
In glory never fading.

A home above, of peace and love,
Close to Thy holy person;
Thy saints shall there see glory fair,
And shine as Thy reflection.

O how we thirst the chains to burst,
That weigh our spirits downward;
And there to flow, in love's full glow,
With hearts like Thine surrounded.

No more as here, 'mid snares, to fear
A thought or wish unholy;
No more to pain the Lamb once slain,
But live to love Thee wholly!

No more to view Thy chosen few
In selfish strife divided;
But drink in peace the living grace
That gave them hearts united!

Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray,—
That prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine in light divine,
In glory never fading.

CHAPTER XXX.

WAITING AND WATCHING.

(LUKE xii. 1-48.)

IN the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel you find the Lord definitely rejected by the nation. They attribute to the power of the devil, that activity in Him which led Him to cast out demons. So blinded was the nation of Israel that the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, they attribute to Satan. This declared rejection of Himself becomes the basis, I think, of the Lord's remarks to His disciples, in the twelfth chapter.

He speaks in chapter xii. as One rejected, as One who is outside this scene altogether, and He gives to us instructions of the most lovely nature, as to our walk during His absence. He indicates what the behaviour of His own should be, and how, in every possible difficulty, temptation, and opposition that we could by any means be confronted with here, we should be sustained. The object of this is that our hearts should be kept just simply waiting for Him.

Although you will observe the coming of the Lord is brought in, it is introduced in connection with the kingdom. He is coming back by-and-by, and there will be rewards to those who serve Him during His absence. But it is very beautiful to see the way in

which the blessed Lord clears away the things that are difficulties in every one of our souls.

The moral principles of the chapter are very interesting. Broad, blessed principles of truth of the most far-reaching importance, you will see the Lord brings out here. There was a large company gathered round Him, and they had not felt the force of the truth. But He knew the need of "His own," and unfolded to them what their pathway should be while, in His absence, called to pass through this world.

"In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, in so much that they trod one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke xii. 1-3). He first of all warns us against a danger to which we are all exposed. "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." And the reason is this, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." He warns our souls against being unreal—seeming to be what we are not. We have to watch against hypocrisy. It often takes a pseudo-spiritual form, *i.e.*, the desire to seem more spiritual than we are.

Take the case of Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts v. You may say, it was a very solemn thing for the Lord to cut them off. Yes. But they had not given heed to the Lord's word here, or else they would not have

fallen into Satan's trap. They desired to look a little more devoted than they really were. Are not our hearts subject to the same temptation? We know it. The Lord knows it also, and hence says to us, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Then He adds that everything is to come out. But the light has come in now, and what an upright Christian delights in is the light of God. He does not wait for the judgment-seat of Christ to declare his motives. "We are made manifest unto God: and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. v. 11). The springs of our actions bring out what we really are before God. A Christian should be perfectly transparent. If not, he is unlike Christ. You may read me through and through, says Paul, I have nothing to conceal, all is out now.

Then the next thing is, we are going through a scene, where there must of necessity be persecution for Christ's sake. "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God: but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (vers. 4-7). It is blessed to see what the Lord says here They had cast Him out, and what could His disciples expect but similar treatment? It has not been your lot or mine to have it, but many of His beloved saints have. And what a comfort, to the martyrs of years gone by,

must those words have been, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Everything in this chapter is viewed as to its importance not in connection with the body, but with the state of the soul before God. Hence foes and fears are all pushed aside. It is not a question of bodies, or goods, but the soul in relation to God and eternity.

The fear of man is cast out by a greater fear, the fear of God. Nothing but the fear of God can cast out the fear of man. We shall stand in awe of men round about us, if the fear of God does not control us. But the Lord says, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body." In the plainest possible language He cheers us, for the fear of God works most blessedly in the heart. Then He asks: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. *Fear not* therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Observe, in the fifth verse it is, "Fear *him*," and in the seventh verse it is, "Fear *not*." There is no contradiction. Oh, no! In the fifth verse, it is the holy fear of a child, lest he should do that which would pain, or grieve the Lord. And then in the seventh verse, it is, you have the sense of the care of God. If God keep His eye upon the sparrow, how much more upon His servants, and saints. The care of God, in its exquisite particularity, is put in a way that is very touching. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." There is the blessed, the deeply blessed interest which God has in us, and His eye is upon us in all the tender affection of a Father's love. It is a great thing to cultivate the sense of

this as you go through this scene. What a blessed thing it is to have this sense, I am so the object of His interest, that He has actually numbered the hairs of my head. If you had this sense, you could leave everything with God.

And now He goes further. "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God" (vers. 8, 9). There is another thing now. It is not only that God cares for us, but that the Lord is going to confess us before the angels of God, if we confess Him here. That is the sense of His eye being upon us, and that He knows exactly what our pathway is, and, by-and-by, there will be a recognition on the Lord's part of your path and my path, as we have gone through this scene. How this cheers a saint!

He adds a third thing then. "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven" (ver. 10). That is a wonderful statement, because you see what the Lord speaks of is the testimony of the Holy Ghost through a Christian. That is, He says, I put you down there for Myself, and if a word is spoken blasphemously against you, it shall not be forgiven. Where is the Holy Ghost dwelling now? In the Assembly, and in the Christian, individually. And therefore, really, the Lord regards His people as being, and sets them up here for Himself. It is a wonderful place that the Christian occupies now, in this scene; and immense responsibility devolves on those round about us.

"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (vers. 11, 12). There you have the divine competency of the believer by the Holy Ghost in every possible circumstance. What could we wish more? The care of God, the recompense of Christ, and the sustaining energy of the Holy Ghost—and these for every child of God—are to furnish our souls in the time of our Lord's absence. If persecution come, you will be sustained. The apostle says, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. i. 29). You might get reproach. The apostles in Acts v. "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." A Christian must expect to have the same treatment as his Master. But no matter what comes, he has the support of the Lord, and the energy of the Spirit of God to sustain him.

Of course I take it for granted that when the Lord says, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say," it is the Spirit ungrieved in a Christian, because we are to be here for Christ. It is not a question here of ministry in the Assembly —although the principle be true—but of what falls from your lips and mine day by day. Our words and our life ought to impress the world round about. If they take you before magistrates, "Take ye no thought what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." That is, in plain language, every child of God is looked at as being one through

whom God speaks by His own blessed Spirit, and speaks in such a way that the world is conscious it is God that has spoken. This consideration makes Christianity a very serious thing. But I do not think, because the responsibility is so great, that our souls would shrink from that which the Lord gives us here.

At this point there is a break in the Lord's ministry. A man appears at that moment to ask Him to settle a difficulty between him and his brother. "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (vers. 13, 14). He had not come to be a judge. He had come as the revelation of God in perfect goodness. He is coming by-and-by, both as a Judge, and as a Divider. But it was not His character in that day. He, however, uses the occasion to unfold truth of the most weighty character to His disciples. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (ver. 15). Although the man who had the inheritance had no right to it, and was covetous in keeping it, yet the other was as covetous in wanting to get it. There is a great principle in this, and the Lord uses it for our sake. Elsewhere the Spirit of God bids us mortify "covetousness, which is idolatry' (Col. iii. 5). "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." His life consists really in his enjoyment of God.

This interpretation gives occasion to the parable which follows: "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself,

saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (vers. 16-20). The man thought he would yet lay things up for himself. But God would not have it, and in the midst of his projects he is called hence. What became of his soul? That is a most serious question.

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (ver. 21). Now there, you have the cure, I believe, for covetousness. That is, being "rich toward God." The apostle Paul amplifies this subject in writing to his son Timothy. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. vi. 11). These verses show our danger, while the cure is given in the same chapter. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in

uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (vers. 17-19). But you say, What is the harm of riches? Suppose it kept you out of heaven? Well, I did not think of that. Very probably, few men do, but there is great danger, or our Lord would not have said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 23). It is not the money that there is harm in, but it is the "*love of money*" that is "the root of all evil."

The principle is here, and "Beware of covetousness," God's sure cure. I shall never forget a dear old servant of God speaking upon this chapter thirty-five years ago, and when he came to this verse he said: "Which of us here would not rather have a ten-pound note than a five? That touches us all. And God says, 'Thou fool.'" The man going on that line is reproved, because he is letting the things of this life really command, and govern him, instead of living in the sense of the Father's love and care.

Now, beloved friends, it is beautiful to see the way in which the Lord cures the covetous disposition of our hearts. Here is the cure, being rich toward God. The soul is set down before God. What is it to be rich toward God? I do not think it is a question of much giving. I think the widow in the twenty-first chapter of Luke was rich toward God. She cast in two mites which make a farthing. One often hears the expression, "Here is my mite." Is that exactly half you possess? She cast in both her mites, and I do

not doubt that is why the Lord takes notice of it. The temptation was to give one, and keep one to herself. But she was rich toward God, and into His treasury, and for His work, cast in her all, and that of her penury, we are told. She was a widow, and she had nothing left.

I think if it had been us, we would have said, We will give the Lord one, and keep the other to ourselves. If I had come to my last two shillings, and I gave the Lord one, and kept the other one for myself, I fear that I should think I had done very well. Ah, beloved, look at this, she cast in both. She was indeed rich toward God. It is not the question of the amount, because the Lord never measures by what I have given, but by what I have left after I have given. I think she is an illustration of one rich toward God. On the other hand, you might have nothing to give, and yet be rich toward God. You cling to Him, you live for Him, and in relation to Him. That is really what it is. God rules and governs the soul absolutely. Anyway, this is the only cure for covetousness, of which our Lord and Master bids us beware.

Then the Lord passes on, and touches on a matter of much wider application than riches, viz., poverty. "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke xii. 23-30).

There you get a class, I believe very much larger than the company that the rich man was in. In this world there are a great many more oppressed by poverty, than riches. How am I going to make ends meet? is often in the heart if not expressed by the lip. Care, like a canker, eats out the very life of many a dear child of God. If such be your present condition, the Lord's words, "Take no thought," and "Your Father knoweth," may well comfort your heart. The Lord really says here, Do not think of to-morrow.

In this connection there is a charming word in the end of the sixth chapter of Matthew. Did you ever notice it? "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi. 34). How oftentimes, beloved friends, have we troubled and worried ourselves about what was going to be on the morrow, and, when it came, we found how beautifully the Lord stepped in We found that His care, and His love, had anticipated all our need, and more than met it. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Oh, they are lovely words. To me, these three words, "*Your Father knoweth*," are exquisite. Ah, beloved, to get them deeply engraved in the soul! To remember that your Father knows, is to put the heart

at peace. Further, we might never have to face to-morrow, because, before to-morrow comes, the Lord may have come, and we may have gone home to our Father's house on high.

I do not doubt that when Israel drew near to the Red Sea, and to the Jordan, they wondered how they were to get through, but, when they came to the spot, there was no water to go through. It was dry land. And in principle it is the same with our souls. We are so prone to leave God out. But the Lord here says, You leave everything out but your Father's care, and then your heart will be free. And then He adds, "But rather seek ye his kingdom; and all these things shall be added unto you" (ver. 31). The Father's care, the Father's kingdom, and the Father's good pleasure all go together. You set your heart on the things that are His, and upon the interests that concern Him.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (ver. 32), is the next cheering statement, and, beloved, if He has *good pleasure* in giving you *the kingdom*, do you think He would *grudge you a loaf of bread?* Look at the kingdom, all that is connected with the glory of Christ, that scene where the Father's love is known, and where everything will speak of Christ. Why, He says, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. It is all that is connected with the heavenly place that Christ now has, and which He shares with His people. Well may Paul say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

I think the Lord has a charming mode of winning

our hearts. The way the Lord takes of removing snares and difficulties is wonderful. Here we find hypocrisy swept out, the fear of man swept out, covetousness swept out, and care swept out. If you can show me a heart with all unreality, all fear of man, and all covetousness turned out, the sense of being rich toward God controlling it, and all the care connected with the things of this life gone too, I will show you a heart that is now free to be occupied with the Lord without distraction.

This is what the Lord wishes, and that point gained, He can now say: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (vers. 33, 34). Everything in this scene is marked by waxing old, or becoming corrupted, or stolen. A treasure in the heavens is the only abiding one. I know men often say, Where my heart is, that is where my treasure is. Well, in a certain sense it is the truth, but, even then the treasure is really valueless, for it is only for time. Sometimes you find people who have let their hearts go after earthly treasures. What do you find presently? The treasure is gone, and the heart is left desolate. They have not had a treasure in the heavens. Do I hear you saying, I am trying to make Jesus my treasure? You will fail if you try. Do not try to make the Lord your treasure. Did you ever discover that the Lord Jesus has now a very peculiar and priceless treasure on the earth? And who is the treasure? Am I His treasure? Paul could say, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). The Church, of course,

which He has loved with a love deeper, and stronger, than death itself, is His treasure. But if I do not get hold of this wonderful fact individually, I shall not hold it collectively. "Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*," is a priceless treasure for the soul to apprehend. If you enjoy that, you will have the sense, I am His treasure down here, and the next thing will be that He will become your treasure where He is.

When that state of heart is effected, He says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (vers. 35, 36). Everything is to be ready now for His coming. He says, I am coming back, and I want you to be waiting for Me, in true simple affection. We are bid to gird our loins in the thirty-fifth verse. And in the thirty-seventh verse, He says, by-and-by He will gird His. I must not let my affections wander. My loins are to be girt about with truth. I must get my affections ruled, governed, and controlled by the truth of God, because a person who has his loins ungirded, is not fit for service. In the first chapter of Revelation, the garment of the Lord was down to His feet. That gives the idea of priestly discrimination. It was not tucked up in service. Here it is service.

We have to be waiting and watching, with our lights burning. And what is the light burning? It does not mean a great deal of preaching. The girded loins betoken the affections right with Christ, and then the lights burning show that you are watching for His return. You are sitting up all night. If you go to

sleep, the lamp wick gets long, and if not trimmed, the light gets very dim. It is not a light for the world. But does the Lord see that you are watching? Oh, you say, I hold the Lord's coming. So do I. But I have to ask my heart whether the Lord's coming holds me. Because you see it is very easy for the light to get dim.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew it says, of the ten virgins, that "they all slumbered and slept." And mark, five of them had oil in their vessels. I might go to sleep with the Holy Ghost in my heart. And that is why the apostle says: "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night" (1 Thess. v. 6). Night-watching is a little bit wearisome. It needs watchfulness, and carefulness, and our souls really being exercised before God. Those round about us should know that we are a people who, by unmistakable signs, are, practically speaking, done with the earth. We are to be "*like* unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding: that, when he cometh, and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (ver. 36). It is a very simple figure. Let me ask you, Would you like Him to come now? Am I watching? Am I really on the tiptoe of expectation, looking for His coming? If not, I am not morally right. I would not like to deceive myself.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (vers. 37-40). Now you come to responsibility. I believe waiting shows affection. But now you come to, "*Blessed* are those servants whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching." And you find it three times in this scripture. In verse 37, and in verse 38, and again in verse 43. There is a blessing in *waiting*, there is a blessing connected with *watching*, and there is also a blessing connected with *serving*. Now what are we about? Are we really devoting ourselves to the blessed Lord in His service? Are we set to please Him. We cannot please everybody. It is a great mistake to try to do that. If you can only please the Lord, be satisfied It is not a question of pleasing anybody else.

Now mark, the servants here are *watching* in connection with their service, and the Lord says, "Verily, I say unto you, that he shall *gird himself*, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." That is *rest*. We have been serving Him, and what He proposes is, I am going to give you rest. I shall make you sit down, and I shall serve you. What is that? I think it is this. He has served us already down here, but He has gone as a blessed Man into glory, and He will never cease to be Man. He is the Man who has served us even unto death, and then in glory He will make us to sit down as guests in His Father's house. Thither He will bring us, and there His love will ever minister blessing to us. Love delights to serve, so He will

make us to sit down to meat, and He will serve us. How precious indeed will it be to take blessings then, blessings made infinitely more precious, because ministered to us by His own hand, in the outflow of love that never varies, and never ends. Happy people! Happy to be His servants! Happy to know Him!

Then comes the injunction, "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (ver. 40). Peter then wants to know the extent of application of the parable, and gets his desire. "And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath" (vers. 42-44). Who is now the faithful and wise steward? is a question I have to ask myself. Am I a faithful servant? Am I a wise steward? It is not a question of success. The Lord never bids me be successful. No. The point is, am I wise, and am I faithful? To be really successful I must be faithful, and wise. Many servants have stopped short of the truth, because they feared that they might spoil their success. The Lord has said, also to us: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt.

xxv. 19-21). Carefully observe, it is "Well done, *good* and *faithful* servant," not "*successful* servant." I should like to find that man, the Lord says. Oh, do not look round about to see who the man is. The point for you and me, is—and the Lord exercise our hearts regarding it—Am I that man?

I should like to be found doing just the thing He would like me to be doing. Should I like to be found doing this thing or that, when the Lord comes? No! Then I am done with it. Our privilege is to be giving others "their portion of meat in due season," and "blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall *find so doing*."

Well now, beloved, I am sure that our souls will be in a very happy state, if His Word gets its right place in our heart and conscience. God forbid we should get into the state next described: "But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (ver. 45). That is a very sad thing. We must not delay His coming. If the servant gives up the thought of the Lord's coming, as the Church universally has done, he begins to beat the men-servants and maidens—as Rome has done—and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, as mere Protestantism has done, *i.e.*, got into the world. To fall out with God's people, is as bad as being drunken. The Lord keep us bright, and simply *waiting* for Himself, with our hearts fresh and happy in His love, and our lives devoted to His service while ever *watching* for His return. And then the next thing will be that we shall find ourselves at home with Him, in everlasting joy and rest.

To wait and watch for Him is what we are called to. The two words do not carry quite the same thought, and I cannot better explain the difference than by giving an illustration, which suggested itself to me, when speaking to a company of Firth of Forth fishermen, awhile ago.

The fleet has all gone to the fishing ground, when a furious and long-continued westerly hurricane bursts on them. Rapidly getting in their nets, they have to fly before it. Each day it lasts takes them farther and farther from home, where now great anxiety prevails as to their safety. At length the gale spends itself, and the wind veering to the south-east, the boats, having all weathered the storm, make for home.

On their way they manage to get a telegram flung ashore and transmitted :—"All safe! Coming home," and the good news spreads like wildfire through the village, bringing joy to many a troubled bosom.

Up the Firth of Forth they now come, at a spanking pace, having a fair wind and a flowing tide. The old skipper of the leading craft has a telescope, and as he comes within sight of the pier-head he uses it. After a good long look, he says to his crew, "The hale village is out on the pier, *watchin'* for us, my hearties," which gladdens every man aboard.

As the smack draws rapidly near, the telescope is again used, and this time the skipper is heard to say, half under his breath, "God bless her! the dear auld soul," while a tear rolls down his weather-beaten cheek.

"Who do you see?" says Jim, the mate, who has charge of the tiller.

"I see my auld womun stan'in' at the vera pier-end,

wi' naethin' but her mutch on her heid, watchin' for her auld man," and another tear or two fall on the deck.

"Div ye see my missus tae?"

"Na, Jim, I canna see her; maybe she's there, but she's no visible."

By this time the staunch lug-sail boat had neared the harbour, and loving salutations pass between the old couple, culminating in a warm embrace as the skipper steps ashore.

No special greeting has awaited poor Jim, who, rather dejected, trudges up to the back of the village, where lies his home. Peeping in at the window, he sees his wife sitting at the fire, deep in a book.

Jim opens the door. She hears the latch, and looking up, says, "O Jim, my dear, I'm real glad to see you back; I was *waiting* for you."

"Very like, but the auld skipper's missus was *watchin'* for him at the pier-heid."

Is there no difference between waiting, and watching, for Jesus?

God give you and me to be true *watchers* for the return of His Son. Amen.

We wait for Thee—Thou wilt arise
Whilst hope her watch is keeping
Forgotten then in glad surprise
Shall be our years of weeping:
Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh
That ends our pilgrim story
In Thine eternal glory!

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