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ETERNAL LIFE

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BY

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ETERNAL LIFE.

I JOHN i.

BELOVED friends, this chapter contains a deeply important subject—the eternal life which was with the Father; and which was manifested in Christ; and which also is in us who believe.

There are but few Christians who duly consider what this life is. A peasant having natural life may seldom if ever give a thought as to what *it* is; he may bind sheaves to his bosom, and gather in the grain to the garner, without ever thinking of what it is within him which enables him to do it. There are thousands of believers who, of course, being such, *have* eternal life, but who have never really apprehended it. They know not as they ought either its true nature, or the responsibilities attached to it. Yet this is necessary in order to a true intelligence; also for fellowship. When believers in general speak of eternal life, the idea which is present in their minds is simply that of duration. They think of it as eternal in the sense merely of unending continuity. It means, they

suppose, that it will never end. But this, though true, gives but a poor idea of that eternal life which was with the Father, and which was manifested in Christ. That life had no beginning. It was from all eternity with the Father. Moreover, it was in Christ—in His human body—a body like our own, which contained the divine treasure. It was in Him as man; God manifested in the flesh. It is now in heaven where Christ is. He is Life. And He is our life. And it is not only in Him, but it is also in us; by which life it is we are able to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

Having the same life in us which was and is in God, we know in measure what God is. We saw it first in Christ; in Him, says John, "who was in the beginning;" and that which *was* in the beginning must have been *before* the beginning, even in the eternal ages of ages. Says John, "We have known Him"—heard Him—seen Him with our eyes—handled Him, as did Thomas, or John himself, when he leaned on His bosom. They had seen Him during those marvellous thirty and three years when He was here as man. Especially had they looked on Him with their eyes, yea, with eyes of astonishment, and I will add, of love, during those three years of His public ministry. Ah, beloved! how did they fill their eyes with Him then!

They gazed on and on upon Him as words, how gracious and wonderful, proceeded out of His mouth. They had specially handled Him after He had been dead, but, had not seen corruption. He had been in death for our sins, and was with them again in surprising life. They had often seen Him as having power over death as to others; but now they knew something of the meaning of those words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." The laying of it down in death, and the taking of it up again, were, in themselves, so manifestive of God, so precious in His sight, so glorifying to God, that He, on that account, especially loved Him.

But in how many ways had they seen Him! They had seen Him stopping the course of the bier on its way to the grave at Nain, when He raised from the dead him who was the only son of his mother. They had seen Him by the couch of Jairus' daughter. And, oh, what a sight for the *heart*, for the *affections*! The mother had closed the eyes of her loved one. Like any other mother, her tears—a little pool of them—might be lying on the gentle lashes her hand had smoothed down in death. They had seen the God-Man ascend that chamber. They had heard Him say, "*Talitha cumi!*" "Damsel, I say unto

thee, arise." They had seen those eyes, so lately closed in death, now open on the face of Him who had given her life. They had heard His words, "Give her to eat;" for eating is a true sign of life. Oh, any soul freshly awakened, cries for food—longs for truth; and blessed sign of life is it when any one can say—

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my portion there."

I have often thought that among the five hundred who saw Him after His resurrection might have been that father, and mother, and daughter; and how the father might have said of Him, "No wonder He could take up His own life again. Blessed benefactor! but for *Him* we should never have been as we now are; *you* would not have been here."

They had seen Him again with Martha and Mary. "Lord, if thou hadst been here," they said, "our brother had not died." Then said He to them, "I am the resurrection and the life. Martha, if you die, I am the *resurrection*, or if you do not die, I am the *life*; so that it does not much matter." When He stood near the grave, and commanded to roll away the stone, they said, "No, do not disturb the stone." To disturb death

is only to stir corruption. But Jesus is the resurrection. Jesus had said, "Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth"—and they went home, and perchance Jesus went with them—with Martha, the careful worker, and with Mary, who well knew what He delighted in, and therefore *sat as a learner at His feet*; and with Lazarus, who sat at the table with Him—a picture, beloved, of what it will be when we who are with Him in the glory shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom. Oh, it was love, doubtless it was *love*, that so attracted, and so *often* attracted, the dear Lord to Bethany! Not that their love was the ground of fellowship, but it was that which, as a cup of refreshing, He delighted to put to His lips. Yet, love attracts; as was the case, as we have seen, with Mary of Galilee, who surely, because of her love, had drawn the blessed risen One to the place where she was.

The disciples saw Him as He walked on the waters of the Lake of Galilee. They looked on Him; yea, steadfastly gazed on Him; marvelled how, when they saw Him, that He spake as never man spake, and did as never man did. Said John, this is the eternal life which was with His Father. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily. He was the elect vessel, as man, in whom it was pleased to dwell. The very life of God was in *Him*.

Hence He was God and man—the God-Man. This is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh. All that we see in Him we know to have been, and still to be, in God—forming His life. How can we explain? If you were to ask me, what my life is, I would say, it is made up of a little joy and a little sorrow; a little knowledge and a little ignorance; a little labour and a little rest; so that knowledge is in me, and ignorance is in me. But what is in God? Love is in God; truth is in God; grace is in God; righteousness is in God; life, light, and holiness are in God. These all go to make up the wondrous life which is in God, and which we have seen manifested in Christ. Hence, when He was talking with the poor sinful one at the well of Sychar, it was a manifestation of the grace and love of God. In doing *that*, teaching and saving her, He was doing, He said, the will of His Father in heaven; doing which was His meat and His drink. When He raised the dead, it was the power of God. When He wept over Jerusalem, it was the compassion of God. When dying on the cross, it was a revelation of the holiness, righteousness, and love of God, His righteousness against sin, His love for the sinner. And when you see all this in God, as revealed in Christ, and *have* the love *in you*, the holiness *in you*, the very knowledge which was in God *in you*; when, in fact, you can see Jesus, and

receive Him as God's gift, and can say, "Jesus is mine," you have this same eternal life. How wonderful is this. When you say eternal life is simply a life going on and on for ever, you have a very poor idea of it. It is eternal in the *past* as well as in the future. It had no beginning in God: it will have no end in you. Ah! beloved, when I have this life—am divinely quickened to see and know it—I have in me an *eternal* life; not merely an elongation, but that which had no beginning in God, though it had a beginning in me. I am not only born, but I am divinely born. It is a divine life I get. Take a simple illustration. The light which now shines on this book *was* in the sun. It is now *here*, in this scene. The *love* which is now shed abroad in my heart was in God. It is *His* love, but it is now in me. So also with all else that we see and get in God. God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But have not angels eternal life? No; angels have *angelic* life; and Adam in Eden had a *human* life; but the believing sinner has *eternal* life. The very same life is in him which was in God. He is not merely a poor, wretched, miserable sinner, but a partaker of the Divine nature. That which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*. He who is born of God,

has the love of God in him. God is love. Nor love alone, as we often sing,—

*Just as Thou art, thou Lamb Divine,
Life, light, and holiness are Thine,
Thyself their endless source I see,
And they the life of God in me.*

Not only is Christ our holiness, but that which is born of God in us *is holy*, intrinsically holy, and has not to become so; has not to grow or develop *into* holiness. It is holy. It is perfect. Our standing before God, and His life in us, are alike holy. What a wonderful person a Christian is! Think much of yourselves in this respect, for you are partakers of the Divine nature. It is said of Christ, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And we are complete, filled out of Him. Imagine a man—any sinner—one who has been a drunkard or a blasphemer—all at once, on knowing God, standing out in the love, righteousness, and mind of God. What a wonderful change! In a moment of time, on believing, we have "eternal life." We see it all objectively in Christ; subjectively it is in us. This is eternal life, that ye may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

Shall I tell you how it comes into a poor sinner? In my wrong thoughts I used to think, if I love God He will love me; but I found that God had never

ceased to love me—loved me whilst yet I was a sinner; the Lord says, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” (Heb. ii. 8.) And again, in Jer. ii., “Thus saith the Lord: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth.” Like a father who had a poor prodigal in a far land. He has been absent for years, and he never hears of him; thinks some evil thing has befallen him. “I remember him,” he says; “oh! I remember him. I remember the kindness of his youth. I remember how I loved him; how, ere he wandered, he was a pleasant child. I used to put my hand down on his childhood’s locks. I *remember* him; and sweet, indeed, is the remembrance. Oh that I could have him back again!” It is the 15th of Luke over again. The father yearned for his lost one. And when the messenger met him in that far-off country, and told him his father had never forgotten him; never ceased to love him; that the thing he desired of all others was to have him back; the poor lost one said, “I will arise, and go to my father.” Ah! the very love that was *in* the father was shed abroad in his heart! Like Jacob and Joseph. If Joseph had wanted still to carry on his little plot with his brethren, he made a great mistake in referring at all to his father. As his brethren bowed before him, he saw the fulfilment of his dreams: the sheaves bending to his sheaf, and the moon and the stars

making obeisance to him. And so the thing worked on until, as it were inadvertently, he asked after the old man of whom they spake; for they began to dilate about Jacob. Joseph could refrain no longer. He turned away and wept. The love of Jacob was shed abroad in his heart. This is a sample of what I mean; how that God loves us with an eternal love in His Son; and how what is wanting, is for me to know it; for the Spirit to reveal it. But you are not to *wait* for the Spirit. "I, if I be lifted up, will *draw*." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But if you *do* see, you have an eye; you have a life; you are born again. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." And now "God commendeth His love to us." What love? The love He had in the timeless ages for the sinner. He comes and takes the position of an advocate, and commends His own love, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When I see the love of God objectively in the mind and heart of God, and see it manifested in Christ, who died to bring me to God, not merely out of hell, but *to God*; when I see it and know it, what happens? Why, the love of God is shed abroad in my heart; I *have* the very love that was in God. So, also, I have the grace that was in God, as when that poor woman, the adulteress,

stood in His presence, "Woman," He said, "where are thine accusers? doth no man condemn thee? Truly there is a condemnation, but I have taken it, and now neither do I condemn thee." She became a partaker of the grace that was in Him. And so with everything else in God—righteousness, peace, rest, joy. We have it all. It is something to stand still and marvel at! And the thoughts that were in God in the ages of eternity we may have them all in His Word for only a few pence! How wonderful. We may get what was in His mind in the eternity past, and a view of what He has for us in the eternity to come, by the reading and understanding of what would take only a few hours, as it were, of this brief life to read. And oh, the result is not a flimsy thing, to be had to-day and lost to-morrow, but the very thing that is in God—an infinite love, an infinite grace, an infinite righteousness; but we have it in us only according to our finite limited measure. What we want is to have our thoughts enlarged; that with enlarged thoughts we may have more of God.

And now this life, beloved, as it is in Christ, is all up there. Christ is raised and seated at the right hand of God. And by what we have in us we can see Him there. We know Him, and have seen Him.

"There no stranger God will meet us."

It will be *Him, Him, Him* we shall see throughout all the ages of eternity. It will be still and for ever, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" still and for ever, "I in Him and He in me."

But, now, John wants those to whom he wrote—and many of them, like some of you, were little children, babes in Christ—to know all this; to know, in fact, all that he knew himself. Hence he says, these things write I unto you, that you may have fellowship with us.

Now fellowship requires more than one, and also that the persons to possess it must be mutually instructed. God may have taught you some truth which another cannot see. There can be, in such case, no fellowship. Fellowship is in knowing the same thing. A friend converses with me on medicine; *I* am in ignorance; the conversation is all on one side. If he instruct me, and raise me to his own intelligence, then we may have fellowship. To have Christian fellowship I must know that about which there is to be fellowship. I must know God, His eternal purpose of grace, and love, as revealed in Christ. And I must know the Son—what He is, and what the love of the Father is. It is of no use talking of a million of money to one who does not know what money is.

But, says John, "Our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." Oh, beloved,

this fellowship is something far higher than mere prayer, something far more than merely asking for blessings. What would you think of a child who never said anything to his father but, "Father, I want;" who would come on Monday morning and cry, "father, I want;" Tuesday, "father, I want;" Wednesday, "father, I want;" Thursday, "father, I want;" Friday, "father, I want;" Saturday, "father, I want;" Sunday, "father, I want;" until at last the father asks—

"My child, have you nothing else to say?—nothing else to tell me? You never come but to ask." Dear friends, what fellowship of heart is there between *that* child and his father? How different when he comes to his father, and, putting his hand in his father's hand, and knowing what is in his father's heart, talks to him of what is in his father's heart. Oh! how little do we know of such fellowship with the Father—of such intimate communion with our God. A friend once remarked: "I never come to God but I feel I have so much to confess. What I grieve over is, that I find my time is so much spent in mere confession—I have so little *in common with God.*" Oh! that I could impress this upon you, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus. We come to God too much as paupers. "Ever since you knew me," God might say, "you have been asking, and asking, and

asking: when are the streams going to flow back upon the ocean? when are you going to tell me of that which delights me?" And what is it which does delight Him? Why, Christ, of course. I see Him—what He is, to God and to me, and I tell it all out to God. I see His wondrous love, His beauty, His matchless grace and perfectness, and I tell God of it. I see the glory which, as Son, He now possesses, and the glory which, by and bye, as *man*, He will possess, and I tell God of it; and all this, beloved, is infinitely delightful to the Father's ear. Oh! let me urge you to seek to enjoy such fellowship with God; and then you will know something of what John adds: "And these things write we unto you, that"—that *what?*—"that ye may *doubt.*" Beloved, is that it? "that ye may be stinted and straightened in your desires;" is that it? Oh, no! but, says the Apostle "*that your joy may be full.*" Ah! when the prodigal sat inside that circle in the father's house, when he *saw* the father's joy, the father's heart, then, doubtless, he thought, "it is indeed true; it is all true, what I heard, that his heart yearned to have me. It is true, he was not satisfied until he could see *me* seated at his table; he has saved all for *me*—the best robe, and the ring, and the fatted calf;" and, as he sat and meditated, there was fellowship between his heart and the heart of his father. So,

beloved, fellowship is just getting right out of self, up into God's thought, or rather down, down into the deep recesses of love and grace, in God. It is divine life in us, knowing the life which is in God.

And now, beloved, let us look at another thing—let us look at *the scene of this life*. Where is it? Why, "*in the light*." "If we walk in the light," says John, "as He is in the light, we have fellowship." Unless I am in the light, I have not fellowship. Oh, beloved! where is Jesus? He was down here; He went deep down *with* our sins into death, and He arose from that death, *without* our sins, into the presence of God—that scene of perfectness and rest; and we who were dead, and for whom He died, are quickened, and are raised up together with Him, and are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Hence, as to our standing in Him, we are *in the light*. Yes; yonder, up there, is the scene of our life, of our worship, of our communion; not down here, where the knee bends—not here, where the voice gives its audible utterance—not here, where the four walls rise around us—not here at all, but *there*, in the risen life, where Christ is before God. Our liberty to be there is in virtue of the blood of Jesus. Such is risen life. You know how it was with our Princess, when she was still in Denmark, where, during six months of plighted love, she yet lingered in the old

country. But were her affections still in her old country? Oh, no; from the moment her heart was won they were here in England; all her letters were written, all her wardrobe was prepared, with a view to her position here. She was already in heart and thought over here, in *the reigning house*, with him with whom now her life was one. So, beloved, our spirit is with Him in whom our love is all centred—Jesus. He is no longer here, blessed be God! in a world that scorned and rejected Him! and which, if He were here now, would still scorn and reject Him! Yes, He has risen, and gone up, and is there within the veil, blessed be His name!—no more with marred visage—no more with sorrowing heart. He has gone in there, and there we too are. Man lives, not where he himself is, so much as where he loves. So is it with the believer—he lives not so much where he now is as where the object of his love is—where the Lord is; and He is in the light; and if we are there, in calm, conscious intelligence of this, we have fellowship with Him—we can speak with Him, and we can have fellowship with each other about Him, and our fellowship is in heaven—far above all heights! Oh, wondrous position!

Beloved, do we *know* this fellowship? Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba Father.” How

blessed,—“*into your hearts.*” The Spirit of the Son giving us to know the Son; also the Father, whom the Son reveals. This is a precious truth, that the same Spirit which is in the Son is in us. The Son has fellowship with the Father: we say, “Abba Father.” Suppose for a moment that my spirit, with all its affections, memories, and thoughts, could enter into you—you, having my spirit, would at once be in possession of what is now known only to me. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man who is in him, even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.

And He does reveal Jesus. Said the Lord to His disciples, “He shall not speak of Himself; He shall testify of me.” Just as Eliezer testified of Isaac, his rank, his riches, his person, so the Spirit the Lord through the Word. And as Eliezer led the way through the desert, travelling over many a dark and dangerous place, so the Spirit leads us. And as she who was to share with Isaac his inheritance walked on in fellowship with Eliezer, who unfolded to her all his mind concerning her hope in Isaac, so also the Spirit unfolds to us, through the Word, the nature and joy of our own hope. How eagerly did the one tell and the other hear! But had she not heard there would be no fellowship. So, if I will not hear the truth, I stop fellowship.

Imagine my being in fellowship with the Son, and yet no ear or desire for what is in His heart! He says, "I will come again." But I say it has a meaning different from what it says. Can I be in fellowship, and turn away from the hope that is nearest and dearest His heart; or can I be in fellowship, and not know how He is waiting, in long patience, for the day when His glory shall be consummated? What! in fellowship! and not know the purposes of His own love and grace, or the purposes of the Father!

The Spirit of the Son reveals Him (the Son) to me and *in* me. He reveals Him as a Person. He tells of the love and glory of a personal Christ. Christianity is no myth, no abstract theory. It does not consist in mere doctrines, or truths, however great. No; the very heart strings of Christianity are closely entwined around *a person*. The beginning and end—nay, the very soul and centre of it, is the glorious person of the Lord. Such are our affections that we could not rest in a system of truths merely, nor in a book, not even the Bible, unless it revealed *Him*. If I have not *Him* I have nothing. But I must have *Him*, and live in the sense of His love and grace as a person. Without such a sense I grow cold and worldly. I lose all my freshness of soul and power in service. I grow worldly; I lose all. But having Him, and know-

ing Him, I have all. Paul, standing on this, exclaimed, "I know *whom* I have believed." It is said of Nelson, that he won all his victories with an imaginary ball of glory ever suspended before his eyes. Paul, beloved, had no imaginary glory before his eyes. His was no illusion, no fancy of the brain. His eye was ever on the Lord Himself, whom he had seen in *the glory*. In his spiritual vision one glorious object was ever present. "I know *whom* I have believed." He did not say,— "I know *what* I have believed;" though truly if any one could testify with certainty to the truth of *what* he believed, it was the Apostle. No; but it was, "I know *whom* I have believed." Nor did Paul say, I know *when* I believed, though he did know.

I have very little opinion of people who cannot go back to some period when they experienced a change. What! be quickened from death unto life, and yet be unconscious of the transition! What! transfer your devotion and service from the devil to God, and yet not be aware of the change! Nor did Paul say, "I know *why* I have believed," though reason enough he could give; for seeing Jesus, he had said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus." Yes, that same loving, adorable Jesus who ascended from that Mount, when a blessed confluence of eyes rested on Him. The resurrection

One! who is the grand key-stone of Christianity; for if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins.

But John goes on to add,—“If we say we have fellowship with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we lie, and do not the truth.” If I am ignorant of your property yonder, in India, I have not fellowship with you about it. If you say you have fellowship with Him, and yet are ignorant, are dead in your sins, you tell a lie, says John. How can death have fellowship with life? How can a man who not only has enmity to God, but who absolutely *is* enmity to God—how can he have fellowship with the Father and with the Son? If you say you have fellowship with us who are believers, it is a lie. I meet a man and say, “Do you know the Lord Jesus?” He replies, “Well, I trust I do.” I further ask, “But do you know the value of His blood, and what the power of His risen life is?” He answers, “Oh, I have never thought about that; I do not understand that.” Then, though he may *say* he is a Christian, we have no fellowship; he is not in the light! Even the possession of eternal life is one thing, but the intelligent apprehension of the nature, power, and scene of it, is quite another. Now, mark, beloved, what John says here—“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ”—mark

this, beloved—"the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Mark the beautiful connexion which there is here between our position of fellowship and the blood. Where is the blood now? Not, as once, upon that accursed tree—not in the veins of the God-Man—but up in heaven. Yes; for when the Lord of life and glory rose from the tomb, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He carried the blood in along with Him, and sprinkled it before, and down upon, the golden altar, in the very presence of God. So, beloved, when you and I are enjoying calm fellowship up there "in the light," if the devil, or the world, or aught of sin, should cross our souls, and seek to mar that hallowed communion—what then? Why, then, says John, "*there* is the blood." It speaks *for* us. It is *always* there. Blessed truth!

There are three precious letters in that word Cleanseth; I mean the e-t-h—Cleanseth. The efficacy of the blood is always going on, both while you wake and when you sleep. The blood of Jesus is always before God, in the presence of His holiness, and it cleanseth from all sin. It is always there to meet and remove any thought or act of sin; and Christ is there with the blood. O precious provision for us, poor sinners!

Like Aaron, on the day of atonement, in the Holy place, he was in all perfectness of garb and

mitre; but he could not be there without the blood. God might have said "Aaron, there is sin in the camp," and he would answer, Yes, but here is the blood. "Aaron, the soul that sins must die." "Yes, but here is the blood." And the light of the glorious Shekinah shone out. How was an Israelite assured Aaron was there? You remember what we said about the bells. An Hebrew outside would go and put his ear down to the mystic tent to listen, and would return, saying, "I know he is there." "How?" "I heard the bells." How do I know Jesus is in the light for me? Ah! the bells. What are they? Jesus said, "If I go there the Holy Ghost will come down here." Every sigh for the Lord to come, every moment of joy, every sense of Him, is the ringing of the bells.

This whole subject here bears upon two things—upon our state before God, and our life before men. I could not be *in the light*, where God is, unless meet for the scene. I must be possessed of a perfectness as unsullied as His own. This I have in Christ. He is possessed of complete holiness. Life, light, and holiness are in Him. They are reckoned to me as mine. Thus I am as He is; and where He is, in the light, where God's holiness cannot detect a thought in Him contrary to itself; it is God who has given us this place. His grace has reigned over every obstacle, through righteous-

ness, in putting us there. We are there — “complete in Him”—Christ—“who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

O beloved, are we living in the place thus given us? It is ours, as God’s children, whether or not we have ever consciously possessed it. No words can express its moral blessedness. What perfectness! what rest! what joy in the Lord! what communion! As He is before God in righteousness and holiness, and who rests in God, so are we.

Ah! this it is which gives us our life of holiness before men. We do not walk holily *that* we may be in the light, but *because we are in the light*. I may have conflict, sorrow, and be surrounded by evil on every hand here, yet the constant thought of being in the light, as He is in the light, will keep the soul in peace and rest. And the light will give a capacity to judge of things here. It will make the soul cautious of her path; where the Lord is there is she, and she will not touch that which is contrary to the light. Every thing will be brought up, as it were, to the level of our place before God and judged according to it. What death is this to the Antinomian idea of living as we list! A world whose course is sin will have no charm with one who is living in the power of being raised and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

O beloved, what a height is this! a height not gained by us, but given to us. We did not attain it. We have it on believing *in Christ*. Christ having died, having become man, and being before God for us, we are there in His right, in His holiness, in His acceptance, in His rest. How *could* man have ever reached to such a place? and who but God *could* have found means of placing us there?

How is all this mine? By seeing that I am on the heavenly side of the cross, that sin is atoned for and put away, and that I am not in darkness but in light. When He took the cup on the cross, darkness covered the scene. I stand gazing on and say, *is atonement complete? accepted?* I get over to the *other* side of the cross and find darkness overpast, and I see that atonement *is complete*. I am in the light, and there is only a step from the load of my sins unto Christ; only a step from the darkness of self unto Christ. "There is life for a look." May the Lord, my master, reveal it to you. "He appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself."

Not *sins* merely, but sin; and though many dear believers do not see it, it was not merely sins but sin, sin as God knew it, that Christ put away. Beloved, if sin, sins, all your sins were not there on that tree, you are yet in your sins. But the

Lord did lay upon Him our sins, and He took them down with Him into death; and having fully and perfectly expiated them, He rose without them; and so when He comes the next time, it will be "*without sin.*" "But," says some dear saint, "how can that be; have I not sin? I am constantly sinning." Yes, that is it of which John further speaks,—“If any man sin, if any believing man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,” Jesus Christ the righteous”—one ever speaking for us. He who was with us, “who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” now appears in the presence of God for us. He is there accordingly not to put away sins, but to act as our Advocate and Intercessor with God, with whom He, our Advocate, the righteous One, carries on our cause. So that if we sin—and the Word supposes we may sin—He is there with God to meet our case. And, oh, the thought has often proved a solace to my own soul, He does it *when* we sin; at those times when we, perhaps—alas that it ever should be so!—are not in any sense of the evil we may be in. For it is not said, If any man *feel* his sin, or *repent*, or *confess*; but if any man *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father. But as in the case of Peter, He does, on having interceded for us, bring us into confession, yea, often into deep repentance and sorrow of soul

before God for our sin. But at that very time of sorrow, how solacing to our souls, how restoring to communion, to think, the very sins, the memory of which grieves us were at the very moment of their occurrence, met in grace by God through Him whose blood is ever in His presence, and whose intercession for us never fails. Hence His name, in this respect, is truly precious; which is Advocate—or *Paraclete*—as the word is. We must ever distinguish between atonement and forgiveness. The atonement was made 1800 years ago, but the constant forgiveness we need is assured to us by God, in virtue of the ever-present blood. But to know the grace in which we thus stand is our power in confession, also in the prevention, of sin. For with the *believer*, the more he grows in grace, the more does he see the evil of sin; sin which will be in him to the very last. How many a saint, ripe for glory, on his dying bed, has said—

“A *guilty*, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Thou art my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour and my all.”

Truly we have the evil nature—*sin* in the flesh. The old man, I know, *was* crucified on the cross. But is he not yet in *me*? But my power over him is, to reckon him dead. He has had his doom. Christian, in Bunyan, saw two lions in the

way, and he trembled; but he found they were *chained*, and then he went on rejoicing. When I see myself in myself, I tremble; but when I see myself as having had my doom on the cross, I go on my way rejoicing. You understand.

But then comes the truth, that if we say we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves. What shall I do, I say? Every day I live I find *sin*; even though I could go through a single day without committing actual sin, yet there must be ever the consciousness of shortcomings. The claim which the Saviour has to all the love and abounding gratitude of my heart is great, when I know how justly He claims the supreme affections of my soul—the loving obedience in service of every hour—the joyful and implicit resignation of my will to His will; when I know this, and see that I have *not* rendered it all, then comes the sense of sin. We have seen what John says, beloved, fully anticipating, you see, this position of conflict,—“If any man *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father.” There He stands inside the veil, in all the energy of the blood. And then, as we have also seen, when *known* sin has been contracted, and a believer becomes melancholy and depressed under the deep sense of his sin, why, then, mark, there is further provision—that which comes of *confession*; “And if we confess our sins, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*”

But now let me, beloved, ere I close, speak a little on *the action* of this life. All that comes of self, and not of this life, is sin; it is wood, hay, stubble, which will be burned. If I give large benefactions, and it does not spring from this life, but is of self, it is sin. If I preach, and my preaching does not spring from this life, it is sin. If I visit the poor, or sit by the bedside of a sick one, and if I so speak and act that when I am gone he says, "Oh, what a person! how kind!" and a thousand other things about myself, why, beloved, I have left *myself* there! Instead of leaving Jesus, I have left *self* there; I have, in fact, supplanted the very Lord Himself. We ought to go to others, and it should be all Him, Him; we should leave behind us only Himself. He only should occupy the thought of the poor or the suffering one. Beneficence, education, natural gifts, talents—all our works will be as nothing unless they spring from this life. Oh! did you ever inquire how much of your work will abide the test of *that day*? Lord, what have *I* that will have conveyance beyond death, or beyond the Judgment-seat! Alas! I fear but very little. But just as I cannot lift my finger or move my eye without the exercise of natural life, so, beloved, should it be with this life and all I do for God. I ought to perform no act, speak no word, but in accord with that divine, eternal life, which is in me. This is

a large subject. For how did the life that was in Christ act in Him? It was in this wise: it was His "meat and drink to do the will of His Father." "I delight," He would say, "to do Thy will, O God." All *He* did was according to that will. But, alas! how far short of the Perfect One are we!—self and sin mixing with all we do. It is whilst looking at *Him*, and seeing how little we are like Him, that shame and confusion cover us.

Remember, it is "*if* we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The same solemn "*if*," doubtless, regards also our fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Blessedly it is *fellowship*, and not *discipleship*, that hangs upon this condition; else our hope of being Christians would be in vain. It is well it is not said, that if we walk in the light, then have we an advocate with the Father, or then are we sons, or then are we members of the Body. These are of grace, and are not dependent on our obedience, blessed be His name!

It is our *communion* we lose—our "*fellowship* one with another, and with the Son and the Father—if we walk not in the light. O then, let us not be regardless of our obedience and walk before God. Did you ever, beloved, link together what John says in verse one of this chapter with verses thirteen and twenty-four of chapter ii.,—"That which was from

the beginning" was *Christ*. He had revealed the Eternal Life. The fathers to whom John wrote had "known Him," as John had, "*from the beginning.*" They were to let that "*abide* in them which they had heard from the beginning. For if that which they had heard from the beginning *remained* in them, then they would *continue in the Son and in the Father.*" Thus, beloved, if the Lord REMAIN in you, you will continue in the Son and in the Father.

How beautiful the way in which this whole subject has come to us. Shall I put it again? He who was with us from the beginning was in the bosom of the Father, knew Him, and revealed Him. But John was in *His* bosom, and learned the Father in Him. The Son *revealing the Father is what he learned.* We, through the Spirit's teaching, receive the same. Beloved, is it not so? How immense our position! May the Lord write it more and more on our hearts.

But, it may be, though we are all professedly believers, that some of you are such only in name.

Dear friends, there must be no uncertainty here. Are you yet in your sins? Have *you* this life? Are *you* merely in the energy of nature?—or, are you in the life of God? No fancy will do. No mere profession will do; you must have something solid to rest upon. I had once a dear friend, who was

suddenly struck down—laid low in death. As death had come, he cried, in an agony of despair—

“ I won't die—I can't die—I 'm not fit to die—my God, I *cannot* die ! ”

Ah, beloved, how many have a name to live, and a name only, who are yet *in their sins*. Yet tell a man that he has no religion, and you insult him ; alas ! how many have religion without God ! Oh, let us remind one another. There is but a little while, and in the twinkling of an eye, you may pass into *eternity*, as the Poet sings—

Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death ;
Soon as it fails, at once I 'm gone,
And plunged into a world unknown.

Ah, yes, friends. Eternity, Heaven, Hell, God, Retribution, Salvation. They are each but one word, yet, oh, what a meaning ! It will take eternity to understand them. If these things be so, what manner of persons ought we to be, speaking to one another, and admonishing, both saving ourselves, as Paul says, and those who hear us.

And now, we cannot conclude, without just glancing at the grand rock, or ground on which we stand. Salvation, as I have said, is not merely to be delivered from hell ; it is to be brought nigh to *God*—to be placed in the light—in the very innermost, highermost circle of His love. “ We shall

be seated," where no angel ever sat—where no angel ever will sit; "you shall sit down, says Christ, with *me*, on my throne." But, then, there was one thing between us and that throne elevation, and that one thing was *sin*. Jesus Himself removed it by taking it upon Himself; He DIED to put it away; and so, as some of you say, "He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Sin called for death; death was the great barrier between the sinner and the glory. But Christ comes, and by suffering death takes the barrier out of the way; He has gone *through*—gone right in, and left the way open. Yes, the way is now wide open, but by and bye it will be closed; and oh, if you cannot say, "Now I can read my title clear," then, friends, see why it is. The blood of Christ is the believing sinner's right to stand in the very presence of God, and directly you see the blood, you can read your title clear. Look and live; and as Israel saw their way through the Red Sea, so Christ has come, and made for you a path right through death into *life* and light and fellowship with God, inside the veil where Christ is. How wonderful! Listen to His own blessed, precious utterance—"He that heareth my words, and believeth in Him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." Say have you not now *heard*

His words, and do you not now *believe* in *the Father* who sent Him? And does He not say, that on believing you *have* everlasting life? What remains for you but to take your place as *saved*, as in the light—

In the light where Jesus is,
Light of uncreated bliss,
We have fellowship with God,
Through the ever present blood.

Blessed in that light to be,
Knowing that *we are as He* ;
God, in love, hath set us there,
Perfect love which casts out fear.

Highest height, my soul for thee,
There the Father's face to see ;
One with Jesus, who is there,
Favoured all his members are.

All I have, as in that light,
Holy is in God's own sight ;
Lord, in righteousness divine,
All thy perfectness is mine.

That which I could never be,
Thou thyself art made for me ;
Life, and light, and holiness,
Wisdom, strength, and righteousness.

Sin and self I am below,
Sorrow, conflict, here I know ;
But before th' unsullied throne,
Seen I am through Christ alone.

All of sin, O Lord, is mine,
All of perfectness is thine ;
What of death was due to me,
Thou hast borne to set me free.

Ah! 'tis walking in the light,
Walking perfect in thy sight,
That my walk is close with God,
Through the ever present blood.

Walking in the light I live—
Highest life which God can give ;
That which keeps my soul in Him,
Keeps from Satan and from sin.

O I would for ever stay
'Mid the uncreated ray !
Live that holiness divine,
Which for ever there is mine.

But if walk I must below,
In that light I fain would go ;
Walk as perfect in His sight,
E'en as He is in the light.

8 NO 67
