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Man Fallen And The Seed Of The Woman

Genesis 3

It is not only Scripture which makes known to us that there is sin and misery in the world. There they are, even if Scripture or a Saviour did not exist. The world is a ruin. Man knows well that iniquity and defilement are in him; and nobody is satisfied with his portion here below, because his heart is ill at ease. The word of God explains, as nothing else can, how Satan entered the world, and reveals the consequence of sin in man's relations with God.

The first thing the old serpent did was to put something between the creature and the Creator, to put himself between God and man. This was subtle, and ruinous if successful, as it was; for the only thing which makes us happy is that there is nothing between—that God loves us.

Satan begins then by producing distrust in God, and so stirring man's will into activity in lust and disobedience. Never does the enemy lead one to think of the goodness of God nor of man's obedience. The woman knew right well that she ought not to eat of the tree, and that mischief must be the result; yet she ate, and gave to her husband with her, and he did eat (v. 1-6). Thus sin is the self-will that sprang from the unbelief which doubted God. By this means Satan made a breach; he persuaded Eve that God kept something for Himself, for fear that His creature should be too happy and too blessed. But Eve was wrong in listening to Satan; she ought not for a

moment to have attended to the voice which insinuated distrust in God.

God has warned man of the consequences of sin, as Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” But Satan, who seeks always to deny the righteousness of God, says to the woman, “ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Nor was this altogether untrue. The fall has rendered man much more intelligent relatively to good and evil. But Satan hid from man that he should be separated from God and have a bad conscience. “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (v. 7). They acquired a knowledge that shewed them their nakedness, which they strove to conceal from the eyes of themselves and each other. All that is brought near us appears to us more important and greater than what is still far off. The forbidden tree being near Eve, and the judgment of God being distant, she took of the fruit, and ate.

So the spirit of falsehood tells men at this day that they shall not die, and that the threats of God shall not come to pass. He conceals the warnings of God, and then men do what Satan and their own lusts urge them on to do. If a Christian even is not watchful, his conscience will lose its activity, and, in place of seeing God, he sees his nakedness.

Man, besides, takes leaves to cover his nakedness. He does his utmost to conceal from himself the evil which has happened to him; but when God is revealed, it is

quite otherwise. God draws near, as if nothing had occurred; then the nearness to God, which would have been a joy for man without sin, becomes on account of sin a source of immense terror, and insupportable. “Adam and his wife hide themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim amongst the trees of the garden.” They had succeeded in veiling their nakedness from their own eyes; they were terrified at the voice of God, and strove to hide from Him. What a horrible thing for man to be in such a case as to wish concealment from God! (v. 7, 8).

Adam “was afraid,” as he confessed to Him who called him from his hiding-place. Conscience trembles at the presence of God. Every hope of enjoying life is taken away when His voice is heard. Man is self-convicted of departure from God because of sin. God “drove out the man “; but man had himself fled from His presence first. His own conscience told him that he could not stand before God; and God made this evident by the words of His call to Adam, “Where art thou?” (v. 9). He was gone from God, banished by conscience before God drove him out. Is he then the one to complain of unrighteousness, whose own heart condemned him similarly before God’s sentence was pronounced? The relations of man were thenceforth broken, and in a manner irreparable, as far as man is concerned. “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (v. 10).

Self-justification is as vain as seeking to hide from God. “And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the

tree, and I did eat" (v. 11, 12). How is the mighty fallen! The head of creation stooping, in order to excuse himself of his sin, to cast the fault on his wife—yea, on God Himself! How debasing is evil once allowed, and dominant! No slavery more degrading, none so immediate and all-corrupting in its effects. Was man then the weaker vessel? or this the way of natural affection? The hardest thing for a sinner to do is to confess his sin truly and thoroughly; to judge oneself is only the fruit of grace through faith. A bad conscience dreads God and the consequences too much to confess, while it knows its sin too well to deny it.

But God will have sin out, and trace it to its source. "And Jehovah Elohim said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And Jehovah Elohim said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the

ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (v. 13-19).

If you had full confidence in God, and you were perfectly sure that God loved you, you would be very happy. But Satan is active, and his power consists in producing distrust, and this where there is happiness and intimate relation with God— to darken, and, if possible, destroy all in the heart. He takes advantage of men who trust their own will and their efforts for their happiness, distrusting God, and neither willing nor knowing how to confide the care of their happiness to Him, and to give themselves up to His mighty love in Christ. And this he does now as ever. He persuades men that God is too good to condemn us because we are sinners; and man, spite of his sins and his conscience, hopes and persuades himself that he will not be condemned. It is the voice of the old serpent.

But God has proved, even by the death of His Son, that He will not endure sin, and that its wages are death, as it will be judgment after death for all who believe not. The conscience being bad, all the effort of man is to hide from himself his nakedness before God. He would put out of the world gross and outward sin, drunkenness, murder, robbery. He seeks by laws and by philanthropic efforts to blot out the exterior effects of sin which shock the world. But these are but the aprons of fig-leaves, which root out nothing whatever, but serve for the moment to conceal from ourselves our nakedness and misery, and to avoid thinking of the righteousness of the condemnation God has pronounced from that day on our sinful state.

Now that sins have come between our consciences and God, one wishes at least that there should be something to hide us before God; and it is with this view that man employs what he calls innocent things. Thus the trees were innocent enough, but what use did Adam make of them? To hide behind them from God. God had given to man all that is in the world; but man now perverts it all to escape from the presence of God, pretending the while to be innocent in such an application of what is good in itself. When the voice of God awakens the conscience, one wishes still for something to hide us from Him; but this is impossible. “Where art thou?” said God to Adam, who had no means of concealment longer. If God were to say so to each of your souls, would it be your joy to be in His presence? God is really the only resource and refuge when we have sinned. It is only God who, by imputing nothing to the believer, takes away all guile from the spirit; Psalm 32. But if you hide away from God, how do you then stand for your souls? God had not yet driven from His presence Adam, who had fled away from Him. Conscience tell us that, if we have sinned and He is a righteous God, there are no leaves or trees to hide us in His presence. Man is miserable in his conscience, and he cannot be happy in sin, save only that there is no God. All the hope of incredulity is that there is no God, or, what comes to the same thing, that He is not righteous or holy. Adam wished to excuse himself, as if he had lusted after nothing himself—he had only followed the voice of his wife, instead of keeping to the prohibition of God. But if there was no lust in us, no sinful act would result. He had disobeyed the word of God, for which he was responsible.

In the midst of all the goodness of God, who has given His Son for poor sinners, if you have no confidence in God, there is the proof of your sin. No matter how it may be manifested, is not this ingratitude and distrust? Eve listened to and believed Satan, in place of listening to God and believing Him; and this is just what man is ever doing, while he hopes for salvation and eternal life, though he sins. All the efforts you make to be happy prove you are not. The immediate effect of God's presence in your hearts and consciences would be to stop your pleasures: if all your pleasures are thus incompatible with the presence of God, what will they be for you in eternity? Will they carry you to the foot of His throne who is holy and righteous, to shew Him that you have passed many innocent hours far from Him? What is there but disobedience, distrust, falsehood, self-will, unless it be a still worse thing, the state of soul which wishes to divert its thoughts away from the presence of God.

Man may withdraw himself from the presence of God while grace lasts, but he cannot when God will judge him. Satan will help you to hide; your best friends following the world will help you also to keep away from the presence of God, to forget and deny it; but this will certainly not go beyond the time of grace which is granted you. Therefore, while it is called to-day, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

God knows that you are sinners; He knows that it is the subtle iniquity of Satan, which would make man his prey. But there is to that an answer, of which Satan knew not, any more than poor, guilty, fallen man: the revelation of the Seed of the woman (v. 15). The question is really between the serpent and the second Man—not the first.

It is neither a promise to Adam and Eve from God, nor a hope of improvement in their children; but God pronounces judgment on the enemy, and in the midst of it the revelation is made of the Saviour, child of the woman who had ensnared the man to be ruined of the devil. The woman's Seed shall bruise the serpent's head, but He is bruised Himself first. What grace, yet righteousness! What humiliation, yet victory! If Adam exalted himself as a robbery to be as God, He who was God emptied Himself to be a man, and became obedient unto death, as the other was disobedient unto it. To lost Adam, the first man, there was, and could be, no promise. All the promises of God are yea and amen in the second Man; but they become the portion of every believer. Faith finds and enjoys the promise, not sin and unbelief. To Eve and Adam God only speaks of the actual consequences of sin (v. 16-19). It is in judging the serpent (v. 15) that He reveals the coming Seed of the woman, and the way of His victory. Thenceforward the only hope of lost man is in this revealed Saviour; and before he is driven out he hears of what Jesus was to suffer in destroying the power of the devil; yet not a single sign of repentance appears in Adam after his sin. He had shewn terror of God, cowardly selfishness as to his wife, as much dishonesty in his own case as dishonour done to God. But God occupies Himself only with His counsels of grace in the woman's Seed, whose person and work and glory are developed in all the Scriptures.

But victory over Satan in the cross of Christ is no longer in any sense a promise; it is accomplished. Had man let into his heart that God did not love him? that He kept back what was good for him, through jealousy or envy of

his happiness? It was Satan's lie; for the suffering second Man, the woman's Seed, is Son of God, the true God, and eternal life, who became man to die for sinners and destroy the works of the devil. Yet is the unbelieving heart so perverse as to refuse its confidence to the God who thus gave His Son. Jesus, instead of fleeing from God's judgment, went to meet it when the hour came, and took on Him the burden of our sins, instead of listening to the voice of man or Satan. "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" By His death He annulled him that had the power of death, and gives the believer perfect confidence in God, all fear of death being gone. His love puts us in peace and relationship with God, unscared by difficulties, now that we are forgiven our sins, clothed with Himself instead of nakedness or fig-leaves, with nothing but grace to stand in and God's glory to look forward to, since He bore the judgment for us.

Is your confidence then in the God who gave His Son to save the poorest of sinners? This confidence inspires and strengthens obedience. Nothing to the believer is more precious than God's love in Christ, which makes us prefer His will to all Satan can offer.

May God touch your heart, and give you to magnify Him by receiving all that His love has done in Christ!

The Blood Of The Lamb

Exodus 12

On the paschal night, when Jehovah struck the firstborn of the Egyptians, and passed over those of Israel, a groundwork was laid for the deliverance of Israel from their bondage to Pharaoh, a lively image of Christ, the Passover sacrificed for us; for we were slaves of Satan, as Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was prince of this world, and the people of God his bondsmen. But God was taking notice of the state of His people, visiting them, and about to deliver them.

In one sense Satan has rights over us as sinners, and the justice of God is against us, because He had said, “In the day that thou eatest [of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die.” Thus Satan can accuse man, though he had said on the contrary, “Ye shall not surely die”; your case is not so utterly desperate as these Christians say. Satan is always the same liar as he was. God cannot say to the sinner as such, Thou shalt not die; but to deliver He must take notice of sin, and lay a righteous foundation, of which faith can avail itself by grace.

Pharaoh had power enough to keep the Israelites, and the more as they were accustomed to slavery, and latterly of the bitterest kind. Pharaoh had no real rights, any more than Satan. Meanwhile he deceives. Such is the state of the world. This is so true, that the higher one’s place is in the world, the more one is really enslaved. A poor man may do many things in the street without any one taking notice of it: the rich man dares not to wound its conventionalities and usages. Our will

contributes also to our slavery. If one were to tell us that we are directed, led, retained by Satan, we should not agree to it. In fact he employs the things of the world to drag us into sin. Judas was drawn into his sin because he loved money. Satan entered into his heart to harden his conscience, and to strengthen him in sin, by taking away from him all hope of the mercy of God. Thus there is first the lust, or desire; next the enemy furnishes the occasion or means of satisfying it; then he enters into us. Satan tries to retort the sin on others, and teaches us to do the same. So Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,” making of his heart an excuse for what his hand had done.

In Egypt Israel became the object of controversy between God and Pharaoh, who represents Satan. The enemy says God has no right to claim them, for they are sinners. It is true that they are sinners; and it is necessary that man should completely bow to the justice of God which condemns him. If one is convinced of being lost, it is impossible that one should not seek salvation, perhaps blindly; still one seeks it every time that conscience is awakened. Without this, people content themselves with saying that God is good, that is, that He must take no account of sin. But ought God to make heaven like what the world is? And is not this just what would be if sin were to enter heaven? Could one give a measure to indicate up to what, and how much, people might sin? But our consciences also accuse and tell us that we cannot get rid of sin; and sin begets death.

God has already been dishonoured by sin, and it is in this world from day to day that God is yet dishonoured. It is here, on the earth, that the angels learn what it is

that God is dishonoured. It is here that we see Satan degrade all the creation.

Jehovah says, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be unto you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (v. 12, 13). This was not the deliverance of Israel, like the passage of the Red Sea, but it was the ground of it; and of the two, the Passover was really the more solemn morally, though the Red Sea displayed God’s saving power more gloriously on behalf of His people and against their foes. But on the paschal night it was a question how God could pass over the guilty, even if His people; and the blood of the lamb sprinkled on Israel’s doorposts declared that God, though expressly judging, could not touch those screened thereby. His truth and justice were stayed and satisfied before that blood. The destroyer was kept from entering. Not an Israelite perished within the blood-sprinkled lintels. It was a question of arresting God’s judgment here, of destroying Satan’s power in the type of the Red Sea; but the blood of Christ laid the foundation for the victory displayed in His resurrection.

Once the Red Sea is crossed, Israel are pursued no more. They are redeemed—they can sing. It was not so when they supped on the lamb in Egypt; yet were they screened from God’s judgment of their evil. Their deliverance from Pharaoh followed.

But must not I see the blood? says many a distressed soul. It is well for me to estimate its value aright, and growingly; but no person could have solid peace on this ground. Nor was it what God told His people. It was indeed a token to them; but their assurance was built on this, that "when I [Jehovah] see the blood, I will pass over you." The Israelite's business was not to look at it for his safety, but to keep within the shelter of the sprinkled blood to which God had thus pledged Himself. It is He who sees the blood and passes over. God alone estimates perfectly the blood of the Lamb; and faith means not our estimate of it, but our confidence in Him. The blood is the token which recalls to us the love of God, as well as His righteousness, but what is shed for sin looks to God and is for God to look on.

Christ thus presents God to us under three aspects: His righteousness that strikes the substitute for us; His love that provides the Lamb for us; and His glory that has raised Him up when all was clear for us. There is thus entire deliverance. We are in Christ before God. The greatest expression of divine hatred of sin is found in His cross. The stroke of judgment fell; the thunder and lightning are exhausted; the sky is pure and calm for those who believe.

But he who is under the shelter of the Lamb's blood must eat of the Lamb's body. It is no question of appetite for it. Doubtless he who has appetite for it enjoys more; and it is so much the worse for him who cares not for it. But it is no condition to do so. What accompanies the act of eating the lamb is the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. On the one hand repentance attends faith and characterises the new life, as it takes cognisance of all one has done and is; and in Christ one tastes, on the

other hand, of what is absolutely without sin. One delights in the Holy One; one judges self, and it is a bitter thing.

There is need also of having the loins girt, shoes on the feet, and staff in hand. The attitude of strangers and pilgrims is the only one for those who are under the blood of the Lamb. Whilst we are here in the world, we cannot let out all that is within. There is danger within and without. We must be ever on the alert and watch. We have no longer a home in the Egypt world. We are bound for the heavenly land. But we are no more slaves. It is the Lord's Passover we are keeping, and we are His for ever, though not yet in the rest that remains but only on the way, while in another sense we are seated with Him in heavenly places.

The fact that the Passover was to be eaten at night, and burnt, or nothing left to the morning, seems to intimate that it was entirely apart from the whole course and scene in which nature and sense are conversant, a matter between God and the soul, abstractedly in the undistracted claim and holiness of the divine nature. No circumstances entered into it, no question of compassionate apprehension of sin and misery. It was sin, and the holy judgment of God, where nothing else was.

So, as a sign of this deep and infinite truth, all was darkness for three hours with Christ: nature hidden; all between God and Him.

Then all was to be burnt. There was no mixing the lamb with anything common. Israel was sanctified by it like the priests, so that he ate it; but it could not be mixed with other food.

Christ A Sweet Savour To God For Us

Leviticus 1, 2

The first sacrifice offered was one of sweet savour. For this there had to be taken of the cattle, from the herds or the flocks, a male without blemish representing Christ without sin. On its head the offerer laid his hand when brought before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, that it might be favourably received for him before Jehovah: not taking from the offerer his iniquities but transferring to him its sweet savour when wholly burnt on the altar, yet making atonement for him. If of fowls, the offering was to be of turtle doves or of young pigeons.

In chapter 2 we have a meat or rather a cake-offering of fine flour with oil poured on it and frankincense, which like the burnt-sacrifice was consumed on the altar, though not wholly, for the priest took from it his handful of the flour and of the oil with all the frankincense. Christ alone is unleavened. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost as well as Son of Mary; Matt. 1; Luke 1.

God has accepted the offering that Christ presented to Him, not only the sacrifice for sin, which comes afterwards in chapter 4, etc., but also the sweet savour of His life which was perfect.

Christ accepted the will of His Father in all its extent, going down, so to speak, from humiliation to humiliation, going on from obedience to obedience, always perfect but perfect as He grew up a man. He advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men (Luke 2); not that His obedience was ever less

than perfection, but that it became ever more painful and difficult, till it went even up to death— death of the cross. The world rejected Him always more and more. There was found in the world only a sepulchre for Him.

Christ perfectly glorified His Father. He rendered testimony to the holiness of His will by accepting it altogether. We on the contrary seek but too often to exalt ourselves even among our brethren; we want their esteem and their respect. Christ sought but “one thing,” the glory of His Father, and not His own. For it, and so for us, He always went lower and lower down in this world. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him. He is accepted fully and on high; and if God is satisfied with Christ, we also ought surely to be satisfied with Him. We can find all repose for our hearts in Christ. Are you tired of the world, weary of the desert of sin, of strife? Well then look to Christ, where only is rest, perfect rest for conscience and heart. He is the sacrifice and the offering of good savour.

Christ was perfectly holy, though He took part in blood and flesh, as the children had their common lot in the same, and was tempted in all things (sin excepted) in like manner with us. He fulfilled all righteousness; Matt. 3. He was Himself baptised, when the penitents flocked to John confessing their sins. If He thus put Himself on a level with the Baptist (“thus it becometh us,” etc.), He puts Himself also on a level with Peter (Matt. 17) when the temple tribute was demanded, whilst displaying His divine wisdom and power in making the most unruly and inaccessible of creatures serve His good pleasure.

But it was not allowed to burn cakes which contained leaven or honey; Lev. 2:11. Oil was there, the Spirit of

God; and also the salt of His covenant; but leaven represented the sin we have in us which gives its character to our bodies as they are; and God could not accept it as being corrupt. Neither could honey any more be offered, representing the sweetness of nature which God gives to us by the way, in which our hearts can find some refreshment. So literally did it happen to Jonathan when faint; 1 Sam. 14. All that man has at his disposal is spoilt and cannot be offered to God; nothing can but the fife of Christ as the meat-offering, and His death as the burnt-sacrifice, to say nothing here of His suffering for our sins and trespasses. In His perfection throughout God the Father finds His pleasure. Christ is all and in all.

As a new creation in Christ we are called to manifest what God is, not in miraculous power, but in doing and suffering all the will of the Father, owning and proclaiming it as alone good in obedience. It is only Christ who has thus absolutely glorified the Father. Even when He poured forth His deepest expressions of grief such as He alone knew, not a murmur escaped Him. Yea, when forsaken of His God and acknowledging it, He adds, “But thou continuest holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,” Psalm 22. Job on the other hand, though he had not his equal on the earth, could only say, “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived… Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, which long for death, and it cometh not,” etc. Such on the one hand was a perfect and an upright man; not such on the other was Christ. In all things He has the pre-eminence.

How Should Man Be Just With God?

Job 9

In Job we have an example of a strong and upright soul, not understanding grace, with a great deal of selfwill. He knew he was not a hypocrite but was upright: God said so of him, and Job knew it. But there was a great deal of self-righteousness, self-complacency, and self-will. His piety made him attribute what came upon him to God, and his pride made him rebel against it. It is very interesting to see the exercises of a soul in this state. Job said many right things of God, and he knew God would not treat him as his friends did. He wants to find God. He knows God would do him justice if he found Him. “He is in one mind: who can turn him back?” But he could not find God. Job had not the secret opened as we have it; he was calling himself righteous. The question raised was how righteousness was to be found. Here is a soul in conflict with Satan.

There was life in Job, graciousness in his walk in life, upright dealing, etc.; and God said to Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” etc. It was not Satan spoke first to God, but God to Satan. God knew what He was going to do, Satan did not. This history shews the resources the soul has when righteousness is called for. This took place before the law was given; if not before promises, before the gospel came. How is a man to be just with God? was Job’s exercise. His friends had no thought about that. They were going on the ground of this world being the sphere in which God’s righteousness in government is manifested; but Job saw the wicked prospering, the righteous sad.

Some will reason, soundly enough too, and tell us the other world will be the sphere where righteous acts will be rewarded and the converse. But why, if worthy of a good place in the next world, are they tormented here? But it is not so, that the condition of- men answers to their conduct. There is another thing besides righteousness, and that is grace. Grace meets with sin, and yet it does not contradict righteousness. Man knows nothing of this way.

Job had not really learnt what his own righteousness was worth, and he had not learnt how God brings out to a soul the consciousness of its state. Neither Job nor his friends understood God's way of grace—how God could ride over the sin by meeting it in grace. Job's friends could philosophise, they could tell a quantity of truths; but what comfort was there in that to a broken heart?

Now God in Christ is dealing with sinners: not men acting for God, but God acting in grace, because of man's state. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Christ had not broken the sabbath, but God was working because man was in sin and in misery.

This was not God dealing in law, nor promise, nor full grace, as shewn out in Christ; but here is a man taken up, Satan accusing him, and God dealing with him. A master hand was guiding all in Job's case, though Satan was permitted to sift him. The accuser goes up, and God says, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Satan accuses. Now he must go through another process to learn how a man, a sinner, could be blessed with God Himself—could know Him, could understand His thoughts and feelings. Satan might touch his goods, but not himself. This seems but an every-day occurrence:

loss of children, property, etc. God carries it on, shewing how He orders everything. Job stands these losses; he blesses the name of the Lord; but his heart was not reached. Satan says, “Skin for skin,” etc. Well, says God, You may go and do it. His wife too comes and says, “Curse God and die.” His piety is proof against this also, his heart was not reached; but God has to do His work thoroughly. Job sits in the gate, his friends around him; he was a mark for every one; it is too much for him. Now he curses the day he was born. He was feeling human complacency before, and had not been exercised in the presence of God. Many can say good things of God who have never tasted what they are themselves in the presence of God. What we want is a righteousness that cannot be shaken in the presence of God. We must be brought to this—not only be conscious of grace, but have truth in the conscience.

Peter needed to learn what he was. There is a practical discovery in the presence of God of all the mischief that is in the springs of the heart; we want the springs of the heart broken up. How many are as discontented with God as possible, not looking after holiness, but seeking to make themselves comfortable! Until the will has been crushed in the presence of the majesty of God, there cannot be a right state before God. God does hate iniquity and love righteousness; but what good is that for a ruined man?

The world goes on the principle of sin being in it. Deceit is the will unbroken in the midst of the consciousness of sin. Those justified God who received Christ. The Pharisees complained because He ate with publicans and sinners; but the publican can say, That is just what I want. The sinner justifies God in owning the sin and

receiving the grace. A man never knows God until he gets to that point— “How shall a man be just with God?” Men are willing to contend with Him; but what good is that? says God. God does love righteousness; but what avails that to me? How many sins to-day, yesterday, and so on, have I committed? It is no good pleading with God on that ground.

Then Job takes up another case. He cannot answer Him in His majesty, and He does not see His love. “If I justify myself, my own mouth will condemn me.” How can I justify myself? How many foolish words this week? If I am unrighteous what can I do? He is vexed in his soul about it. “He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If a scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.” A scourge comes, and perhaps the best family falls a prey to it. Shall I give up God then, and not trouble myself about it? But he has to do with God, and he cannot help it. He cannot escape His hand. He is not a man, as we are. Job would have got away from God’s presence if he could, but he could not; he was all wrong as to this, but he could not get away from God.

“Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch.” I cannot make myself clean before God. Men pass through the world in an astonishing way, thinking about their character, conduct, and of getting honour from one another, etc.;— but what are they in God’s sight? Whited sepulchres, fair without, but full of dead men’s bones within. The more a man labours to be good, the more he finds he is like the Ethiopian who cannot change his skin: the evil is in his nature, and he cannot get rid of it. When there is real integrity of heart, there is struggle. The sense of integrity, without the knowledge of righteousness, is the occasion of much misery in the heart. Job says, “Let not

his fear terrify me." He had this fear. God has taken away the fear in Christ, and there is a daysman betwixt us, such as Job felt the need of.

The consequences of sin are not known yet. God is saving now, not judging in righteousness. There is the time coming when He will rule in righteousness. He is saving souls now for a better state hereafter, but then the "sinner dying a hundred years old will be accursed." We cannot judge of people's state of soul by their circumstances; we cannot say those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse than all that dwelt at Jerusalem.

When I come to that point, to say (not the world is wicked, but) I am wicked, I have the "daysman" between me and God. He is the One who has come to me in all the wickedness of my heart, and has come to me because I am so. Now I have, not only God working in me, sending Satan to plough up the fallow ground, and to shew to my conscience what was there long before, but God doing a work for me. He brings in a righteousness (His own) for the sinner. He works a work for us.

The first thing I find then is that this my state has not kept Him away from me, but it has brought Him to me. That is grace, not righteousness. Hiding my sin from me would not be mercy. Not letting me see things as God sees them is not mercy. It is in meeting me just as I am, and acting above the sin, that He has shewn mercy. Christ never alarms people who come to Him in their need. To the hypocrite He speaks terror, but to the poor in spirit it is "fear not: I am all that you need." You say, "I am such a sinner." Christ says, "That is just the reason

I am come.” You reply, “I have an awful will.” “That is the reason I am come “says Christ: “I will break your will.” “Neither do I condemn you,” said He to the woman accused by the Pharisees.

I defy you to find a case where Christ brought fear upon a convicted conscience. He takes the fear away instead of causing it. He comes in the poorest and the lowest way to meet with those in need, and that they might not be afraid of Him. Grace reigns—it has come in God’s own blessed sovereignty.

How different are men’s thoughts of righteousness now from God’s! We can let all go on quietly without trying to set things right, knowing we have something better. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

We have a daysman not only laying His hand on man but on God. He is the mediator to reconcile. If a day is assigned in a court of law, the daysman is the one who appears on my behalf to undertake my cause. Not only has Christ come to me in my sins, but He has come to answer for me, taking up the whole cause. He has done it—settled the whole thing as to my sins, and is gone back to appear in the presence of God for me. He has appeared for God amongst us, but now He is gone to appear for us in the presence of God. I have given up all attempt to answer for myself: He has taken it up. Has God accepted His answer for me? Here faith comes in to accredit God when He says He has accepted Him. The work that the daysman has done is accepted. We know not only that there is a daysman, but that the daysman has sat down, the work being finished, no more remaining to be done (as to the sacrifice). The Holy

Ghost is the witness of that: “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Righteousness is there. Where? Before God. I am not talking of the fruits of righteousness, but of righteousness itself there. God’s mind is that He has accepted Christ. God has given Him, and that is love. He has accepted His work, and that is righteousness. Now there is no fear. Grace reigns through righteousness. I stand in the presence of God by virtue of the perfect righteousness that has been presented to God. Where is love to be seen? Very feebly indeed amongst Christians, but love is not feeble in God. I find in Him perfect love. He has broken my heart because it was a hard heart.

Here was all the country set in movement to get Job’s heart right!—Sabeans, Chaldeans, etc. God has been working in all this. I have the key to it all now through the gospel. Self-will, pride, all must be broken; but God is perfect love. He has taken away the sin by the cross, and He has provided righteousness. Then what have I to fear? Though He will exercise our souls that we may know good and evil, it is all love. I can glory in tribulation, knowing that it worketh patience, experience, hope.

Now, beloved friends, are you resting on the daysman? or are you saying, “If I can make my hands a little cleaner, my conscience a little quieter, I shall be all right?” If you were to stand in the presence of God, that would be all spoiled; Job 9:31. What righteousness is that which is spoiled in the presence of God?

It is the blood which has made atonement, and Christ at the right hand of God is our righteousness.

Jesus Dependent

Psalm 16

I need hardly say that there are many aspects under which we may consider the Lord Jesus. There was His glory with the Father before the world was. He is Son of man; He is High Priest of His people. He was the manifestation of truth, and everything is made manifest by the truth. There is no real truth anywhere but in Christ. If I knew what God is, He is not known really but in Christ. If I want to know what man is in perfection, I see him in Christ. If I want to know what sin is, “He was made sin”; I see it there, the power of death? I see it in Him. Love? It is in Him I seek it. Hatred? True, it was not in Him, but it was made manifest by Him. All is known really through Him. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The truth shall make you, free indeed; and then, a little lower down in the context, the “Son shall make you free.”

We have seen Christ as the last Adam, and the power of redemption, the real deliverance He has wrought out for us. He is “the second man, out of heaven.” “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” And again we have seen, from Psalm 22, where Christ has brought us. Having come out of death, raised by the glory of the Father, He praises in the midst of the congregation, and gives us to chant the same song with Him, we being brought into the condition of the last Adam before God, although we have the treasure now in “earthen vessels.” Death and resurrection are in Psalm 22.

There are two other characters regarding Christ very precious, because drawing out the affections until by-and-by we shall see Him. He has not only delivering power, whether by life or death, but He is an object, in glory as in humiliation; and there is a third thing: He is a Priest for us, and this character in which He is to us is connected with these new affections, not as an object, but connected with affections.

Christ said, “I go to my Father and your Father,” John 20. “In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you,” John 14. The congregation must not jar with His praise, and are therefore placed in the same position with Him before “My Father and your Father.” Our place before God now is in Him, the Christ in glory. Such is our place, and we are predestinated to bear the image of the heavenly. This gives us power of hope; we are excited by it to run the race; it is not so much dependence marks it (although we must always be in dependence or fall), but the energy and joy of hope. We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. We do not hope for righteousness, we have it, or rather we are it. Christ is the righteousness; He has entered into the glory, and this is the consequence of the righteousness. “We wait for the hope of righteousness”; we wait for the glory. The Spirit now takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us down here—then in glory. The law was a ministration of condemnation, the Spirit is the ministry of righteousness. When Christ was glorified, He sent the Holy Ghost down to seal our persons and make us partakers of the glory to come; the effect of this is, that beholding Him we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. This is practical realisation, and it becomes fruitful in us. Seeing Christ glorified, by the

Spirit, has this effect on our hearts; we are conformed to Him. It is through looking at Christ in glory.

There is another thing of great moment, namely, our looking at Christ as Advocate. “When Jesus knew that his hour was come … he took a towel and girded himself.” He became, in a certain sense, their servant. Whenever we see Him taking a place down here serving, the affections are drawn out in a different way from that which excites the energy of hope. God put before Christ an object of hope, “who, for the joy that was set before him, endured,” etc. So He gives us an object to encourage us and brighten our hope all through the way. We are not counting ourselves to have already attained, “but press on towards the mark.” But when we think of ourselves in weakness and infirmity, there is the sense of dependence on One either to restore or to keep us going on. In this there is daily much exercise to be kept walking before Him (not touching what we are in Christ), and that is very fruitful; 1 John 1:7.

Am I under law? No! “We have an advocate with the Father,” 1 John 2:1, 2. Have I to run to Him to be forgiven? No! We run away from Him when we have sinned. He restores us as Peter. Christ looks at him directly he has committed the fault and brings him back. So now He brings our souls back by the Spirit. He is an Advocate, the One who carries on our affairs before God. The same word is also used of the Holy Ghost who carries on our affairs down here. When we fail, or there is the need that we should fail because of self-confidence, it is Christ’s work on high to bring us back to communion with the Father and the Son. I do not speak of our going to Him to do it, but I am dependent on Him to do it. “To humble thee, to prove thee, to know

what was in thine heart," Deut. 8:2. This God does to make us discern between good and evil, which it is needful for us to discern through the fall. He sets us in righteousness first, and then carries us on by His priesthood, maintaining us in the whole scene of our dependence. Christ is not so much an object in all this as an agent.

In this psalm (16) He is more the object before the soul — our food. Christ becomes properly the food of our souls, not Christ in glory, but here in humiliation. "I am the true bread that came down from heaven"; it does not say the bread that went up to heaven. Then eating His flesh is needed for life. We must know Him as dead. We cannot feed on Him as the living glorified Christ, but as the dead Christ. What draws out our affections to Christ is what He was down here. He was going through all the difficulties here—made His passage through everything about which He has to intercede for us.

God had His food in the offering, but there was the meatoffering and part of the peace-offering which the priests ate. He says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. Then we find the Father has given us the very object He delights in for the object of our affection. The Father could not be silent, when Christ was here. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The perfection of the object is the reason of the imperfectness of our apprehension of it; but that is the way God brings our affections into tune with Himself. He could say at the beginning, because of His intrinsic perfectness, and at the end because of His developed and displayed perfectness, "This is my beloved Son." Then what do we say? In weakness and poverty, yet surely each can say

with unhesitating heart, I know He is perfect. We cannot reach to His perfectness, but we do feel our hearts, poor and feeble as they are, responding. The Father has shewn us something of His perfectness. The Father is communicating of His delight.

“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” not in whom you ought to be well pleased (which is true too); but His way is to communicate to them of His own love to Christ. It is a wonderful thing that the Father should tell of His affection for Christ, and that when He was here amongst us, the Son of man on earth amongst sinful men.

A person need not know that he is righteous in Christ, before he can be attracted by this communication with Him. With the woman in the Pharisee’s house it was what was revealed in Christ to her made her love much, not what she got from Him. The blessedness of what was in Christ had so attracted her and absorbed her mind that she found her way into the house, though not invited there. She was taken up with Him; she wept, but had nothing to say. Jesus was there. He commanded all her thoughts, her tears, her silence, her anointing of His feet—all noticed by Him, and all before she knew what He had done for her. Attracted there by what she saw in Him, she got the answer as regards peace of conscience from Himself.

Now a person may be attracted by grace seen in Christ, but the effect of that will be conviction of sin, and, if forgiveness is not known, the presence of Christ to the soul becomes quite the opposite of God’s righteousness, and holiness will take the form of a law. Many rest satisfied with being only thus attracted for a season, but

then they can slip back into any vanity, because righteousness is not known to the conscience. Righteousness sets us in conscience before God as Christ is— in the light. If I have not peace, I cannot have fellowship with another Christian. My sins are all my thought, if my conscience is awake. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship.” It does not say, if we walk according to the light; but the case stated is being in the light. The Christian state is being in the light, and we have fellowship with one another and cleanness in His sight. There is no communion in sin, but wretchedness and misery. When we are there (in the light, as He is) we can feed on Him.

There is no real feeding on Christ as bread come down from heaven, when not feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood. The power of death must be known before the heart can be given to be occupied with Him. The Lord gives Himself to us, and He expects us to be occupied with this affection towards Him. “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father.” What a place! The Lord comes down here so low and takes such a place amongst men, that He reckons on their affection being such as to rejoice in His joy at going away, though it was for them to be left without Him. This affection that He looks for now cannot be known, unless He is known as salvation.

“In thee do I put my trust.” This is quoted in Hebrews 2 to prove His humanity. There are two things make perfection in a man, dependence and obedience. They were in Christ, the contrast to what was in Adam when he sinned. Christ was ever the dependent and the obedient one. Independence is sin: there is the principle of sin in it. All thought of freedom from the will of

another, where one's own will is at work, is a terrible thing. With Christ there was no will but His Father's. This was not any check but motive. It is most blessed for us to see Christ taking this place of dependence. It is natural to us to say, I must do something. But no! you should not eat or drink unless He tells you. Whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord: yet it is all liberty.

So in family life, no person who has his father in his affections at all times would do anything without a desire to please him. Love makes it perfectly indifferent to the child what is to be done. It is done to please the father. Would not a child like even in eating and drinking to please his father? It is not the thing that is of consequence, but the relationship and affection to him. Satan tempted Christ to make the stones bread, when He was hungry, and He could have done so. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He had taken the place of dependence and waits.

His heart could be moved with compassion; not only could He shew His power in working miracles. And it is in seeing the place of this dependent obedient One down here that the heart gets food. What traits are seen in Him! Asleep on the pillow, He can rise to still His disciples' fear. When sitting wearied on the well, He could converse with the poor woman who came there in need.

He was able in love to go through all; He was thoroughly man—able to touch others, being untouched by evil Himself. The fact of being untaintable made Him go forth in love dispensing blessing to all. "O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, thou art my Lord," v. 2. Now I take the place of a servant. Thou art my Master. To the

young man in the gospels He said, “Why callest thou me good? none is good but One, that is God.” I am my Master’s; I am taking the place of dependence, leaning on Thee, looking to Thee. Then comes fellowship.

Verse 3. “My goodness extendeth not to thee; to the saints that are in the earth, the excellent,” etc. No matter how feeble, how poor, how ignorant, they are “the excellent.” It is not what they had, but what they were. He has taken the place, going before the sheep, finding out all the difficulties because He leads, and meeting all the dangers in the path before them. There is not a step of the path of life that He has not trod. He has shewn the path of divine life up to blessing. “In whom is all my delight.” All His affection flowed out to them. He takes delight in them, not necessarily in their state. There was enough in Him, and He did draw out the affection of His Father, as a man down here (of course, as the Son also) in this path of life. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life.” How dependent for everything! He does not say, I will rise up, but “Thou wilt shew me.” He passes through death in dependence on His Father (there was the blessed perfectness of a man with God); and, at the close of His career, “knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God, he riseth from supper,” John 13. He could go back unsullied to the throne of God, and take man back with Him into the glory, out of which He came. There is manhood now in the presence of God.

In Matthew 3 is John’s baptism. They came to Him confessing their sins: “fruits meet for repentance” were needed. The beginning of all excellence is to confess we have none. “Fruit” was confessing they had brought

forth none. The instant the Spirit of God is working, Jesus goes to be baptised with them; not of course having any sin to confess, but doing His Father's will. He takes His place with them; He had come for that; and the consequence is, that He takes His place after to praise in the midst of the congregation. He must be alone in death, but no sooner is He risen than He must have them with Him; He then will be in company.

Verses 4-8. "I have set Jehovah always before me": still dependence—perfection: "because thou art on my right hand, I shall not be moved." "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." It is most blessed to hear Christ say this. It is the path of death in verse 10; how did He find that of life? Adam found the path of death in his fall and his self-will, but back from it never. The tree of life was never to be touched in the garden of Eden; he had taken the other path. Thus we see there are two trees all through the world—that of responsibility, and the gift of God which is life. All man does ends in death (but it is too late to speak of that); he is dead in trespasses and sins; but now Christ came, bringing life into a world that drove Him away, where Satan the prince of it was, and everything was bearing the stamp of its prince.

In this place of death then He makes out a path for us. He is shewn by His Father and God the "path of life." He was the life, but then the path of life had to be tracked through this place of death, where no one thing testifies of God—one wide waste, where there is no way. Christ has tracked the path Himself: it is for the Christian I am speaking now. The gospel shews He gives it to those who believe. He had to make out the path of life through a world of sin and wretchedness, in obedience, up to God. It must be through death for us, because we are

sinners. Now He says to us, If any man serve Me, let him follow Me. We must take up the cross. The cross to Him was atonement—that was the path. As He came for us, it must be by the cross. He has gone through it perfectly and absolutely. What is the consequence? The end is, “In thy presence is fulness of joy.” He would rather die than disobey.

Notice well that death is gone to us—the end is gained; but we have to tread this very same path that He trod up to His presence, where there is “fulness of joy.” Christ is the blessed Object for our affections. Alas! how little affection we bear Him. In the wide waste of sin, “a dry and thirsty land where no water is,” He could say, “Thy favour is better than life.” Why all this? It was for His own glory and His Father’s doubtless, but it was for these “excellent of the earth.” “In my Father’s house are many mansions… I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

We have to follow Him. It is not the quantity we do, but the measure of presenting Christ that is the value of our service, in a world where there is nothing of God. “All that is in the world… is not of the Father.” In that world the Son of the Father has marked out this path of life up to the Father. “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence” — in the controversy with man in this path; then in the end “I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness,” Psalm 17. Here we get the two parts of the blessedness for us—with Christ, and like Him, in the Father’s presence. If we were constantly before Christ, with the consciousness of not being like Him, it would be constant distress. Now we are unlike alas! but” in thy presence is fulness of joy.” With Him and like Him we

shall enjoy the light of the Father's countenance. In Revelation 4, elders are first seen sitting in peace, then prostrate in worship.

In the Psalms we get Christ walking with the Jewish remnant—Christ first humbled, and glorified in the end; His own experiences. Christ is the object of our study when we have righteousness in Him. When brought into blessing, we can study Him who brought us there. It is this searches the thoughts, affections, motives in the path; then we go through the death in taking up His cross; then in the end we are to be like Him. The Lord give us to know the blessedness of being identified with Him, following in the path He has tracked out for us.

Jesus Christ The Righteous

Psalm 17

This and Psalm 16 give us two great principles of divine life— trust and conscious righteousness. We find them running all through the Psalms, and any godly person's life as well as that of the Jew. But it is worthy of remark that it does not give the foundation fully on which we stand; according to the New Testament our position is different. You do not find in it the foundation of God's righteousness at this time. Souls in the condition of having divine life, but not knowing their standing in divine righteousness, find the suitability of the Psalms to their experience. Psalm 16 is the first that brings in Christ's own experience: for the first time here He takes His place in humiliation amongst them. Psalms 2 and 8 are prophetic of Him as King and as Son of man. In Psalm 16 He is taking His own place amongst these excellent of the earth. The first characteristic of the divine life is Christ putting His trust in Jehovah; as a man He does it. Hence in Luke, where we see Him more as a man, we see Him praying, the true expression of dependence. "Preserve me, O God," etc.; there is the principle of trust.

Then another principle of divine life is the consciousness of integrity. In Peter there was the same when he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." There may be both these things—trust in God and consciousness of integrity—without peace with God. Job said," Though he slay me, yet will I trust him"; and he pleaded his own righteousness against God— "Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me." He had the

consciousness of sin and the sense of righteousness, integrity in himself, at the same time. The soul cannot be at peace in this state. Job was entirely wrong in making a righteousness of his integrity; his friends thought him a hypocrite, but he had the distinct consciousness of not being one. The second principle you have in Psalm 17. God stays up the souls that are trusting in Him until they see Christ. Having got a promise they trust, but cannot say, I have the righteousness of God. Christ having taken up their condition and borne it, they have the consciousness of integrity through Him, and it is the stay of their souls, but not peace.

What a stay it is to find one's feelings expressed in Scripture! Should not I cry out of the depths? You say, I find it in Scripture, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee." The word of God gives expression to certain thoughts and feelings; they are in the word. A person taking up Psalm 88, expressing entire darkness under the curse of the law, may say, If one saint has been in that state, another may be, and so I may be a saint after all, and get comfort in that way by the sanction of the word. There is not peace in this, but it is a prop and stay to the soul.

This applies to the remnant surrounded by their enemies, as we see here; Psalm 17. We have spiritual enemies. Here is the reality of enemies pressing round Christ. Thousands of hearts will be found trusting in God, come what will, and have the consciousness of integrity, Christ having put Himself in the very place; and they will find every imperfectly formed feeling has been perfectly expressed by Him. In the perfect unconsciousness of sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He has come into

all the trial and given expression to it. He has borne the sin too.

There is another thing in the Psalms—mercy always going before righteousness; and they never meet till Christ appears at the end to the remnant. I cannot say righteousness and peace have kissed each other until I know the perfectness of redemption. I may get hope, but I cannot have peace until I get righteousness. It may be said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed,” etc., when Christ comes again (this for the Jew). A Jew under law would put righteousness before mercy; this is the law, and Israel never stood on that ground. They had made the golden calf before the law was given to them. Then God retires into His own sovereignty, and, to spare any, mercy comes in. It was the resource of God when wickedness came in. They were going about to establish their own righteousness and would not have Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness; but when they come back, it will be on the ground of mercy and hope. How many Christians are on this ground instead of in the certainty of possessing righteousness! It is mercy and hope, instead of righteousness the ground of hope. They think of the throne of mercy, and promises coming out to help them, not being founded on righteousness. Of course they could not be saved without it; but the state of their souls is that they have not got into it.

We are not like those who refuse to believe till they have seen Him; we have the end of our faith now, even the salvation of our souls. We know that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Christ is gone into the holy place, and the Holy Ghost has come out, to us the proof of it, and we are certain of the reception of Christ within and of the accomplishment of divine

righteousness. “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight,” etc. (Rom. 3:20.) “But,” it is said, “in Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.” It is not ‘ shall’ to us, but “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” God had been forbearing in mercy with the Old Testament saints, because He knew what He was going to bring in. Now it is declared—it was not declared then. “Not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” — “to declare at this time his righteousness” — “being fully persuaded that what he had spoken he was able to perform.”

I do not simply believe that God is able, but that He has raised up His Son from the dead. One may trust He will help, but not be conscious of being helped yet; this was the patriarch’s portion. But I do not expect Him to do it, but know that He has done it. It is “the ministration of righteousness.” I am not merely hoping in His mercy to do something for me to stay me up; but, besides this trust and consciousness of integrity in the heart, there is the knowledge of accomplished righteousness: righteousness is declared. They could not judge sin in the same way when they had not righteousness as a settled question, which it now is for ever. The Spirit of God now demonstrates righteousness to the world by setting Christ at God’s right hand. Christ said, “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”; and God says to Him, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” And, as regards the believer, righteousness is on the right hand of God for him. The affections ought to be more lively, now there is the certainty of

accomplished righteousness, than when there was only the hope. The Spirit of adoption is given us: we can cry "Abba, Father."

But, note, there is another sense connected with righteousness here—mercy going before righteousness, but righteousness appealed to on the ground of promises: the soul in the lowest depth of feeling; Psalm 42. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts"; "Out of the depths have I cried," etc.; "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps," is in quite a natural kind of experience. There is either the sense of hope in His mercy, or consciousness of sins: when thinking of the mercy, trusting in God; when under the sense of sin, down in the depths. This is not having the sense of everlasting righteousness brought in. All these exercises of soul being expressed give warrant, as it were, to these experiences of heart. It will give comfort, when down in the depths, to know that One has gone down into the depths for him; the soul will find Christ has traced all the way for him. The Spirit of God in Him, going through all these things for us, shews that not one place, from the dust of death to the highest place in glory, but He has been in for us, sins and all having been gone under. The feeblest Christian now knows more than the apostles could when Christ was on earth. Should we be surprised at His speaking of the cross and His rising again? The Holy Ghost has shewn it to us. We feed upon that which frightened them—"Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood," etc. What frightened them was a dead Christ; they fled from it when they saw it in the distance. When once founded on righteousness, it is different. How sad to see a saint crouching on the other side of divine righteousness,

instead of having on the “helmet of salvation,” having communion with Him in the efficacy of His death!

There is another thing to mark in these two Psalms: the character of hope flowing through them, now we tread in this path of life. What was the trust Christ had? He trusted in the goodness, in the infallible love of God. He delighted in communion with His Father; it was the spring of His joy. With us it is the same thing, though mixed up with all sorts of things. What did He delight in? In God Himself. Then as to righteousness, what was that? (See end of Psalm 17.) In Psalm 16, where we see Him trusting in God’s love, what is the consequence? Reward in glory? Not a bit; but, “In thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand,” etc. In Psalm 17, glory is looked for as the crown for a faithful walk. “I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness.”

Christ looked to return to the glory He had left, from the path of humiliation down here: the reward for it would be glory as a crown. This applies to us: when we see Him, we shall be like Him. The highest and most blessed thing is to be with Him in the Father’s house; this will be infinite, unspeakable joy; but there will also be the crowning with glory and honour. Paul speaks of this: “The crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day, and not to me only, but also to all them that love his appearing.” But his brightest hope was to win Christ. As the reward of walking with Him in communion, there will be joy in His presence; as the reward for faithful walk, it will be the place in glory.

He will come to set everything to rights in power; “judgment will return to righteousness, and all the meek

of the earth shall," etc. That has never been known yet. When Christ comes in power, judgment and righteousness will go together. Power will be given to the Judge, who will act in righteousness. Is that all I am looking for? No; I am going up to meet the Lord in the air; the hope is founded on righteousness of course, but I am not looking to be justified. What the church gets in the rapture is (as Christ was raised up by the "glory of the Father," and so taken up into His presence), we shall have the blessed joy of being with Him for ever; 1 Thess. 4. No getting righteousness is there; the best thing is looking out for Himself—to see Him as He is— to be ever with the Lord. When responsibility is spoken of, it is always connected with the appearing; there is the crown, the principle of integrity and faithfulness owned (Psalm 17), connected with the life down here. When speaking of going to be with Christ—the rapture, all go together to enjoy the grace and presence of Him who has done it all. It is very important to lay hold by faith of the truth of the rapture to Christ of the church of God.

Receiving crowns differing each from each is one thing; but all going together is another thing, all alike being associated in His own blessedness, as He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," etc.

The exercise of soul after divine righteousness is very different from these things before one stands in the divine righteousness. One who has this does not speak of crying out of the "depths." There is an immense change. We have the Spirit of adoption. If I am going through all the difficulties and trials of the world, it is as a child I am going through them. My feelings and affections flow from the certainty of relationship. "I have declared thy name, and will declare it, that the love

wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." What was Christ's place on earth? Was He uncertain as to His Father's love? Never; but, on the cross, bearing our sin under the hiding of God's face. There was in Him perfect obedience, but as a Son. If we are led by the Spirit, we have liberty, "not bondage again to fear." Have you liberty? If I have the consciousness of Christ having been in the depths for me, I am out of them, and am no more to be in them; consequently I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The cross behind me, having come by that to God, I look by the Holy Ghost at the cross and see my sins put away there.

Faith is my thinking God's thoughts instead of my own. God says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"; I think so too. God says, "children of God through faith in Christ Jesus"; I think so too. God says, we stand in favour; I think so too. I do not know how God could prove His favour more than by sending His Son. He says, an "heir of glory," "joint-heir with Christ." I have everything Christ has, as a child with my Father. Now comes conflict; but I have the experience of a free man with God. One dead, quickened, and raised up together with Christ is the experience of a Christian, into all which he enters by virtue of divine righteousness in Christ. In the "fulness of time "He came. They were servants before He came; but now we are sons, and the Spirit of God is in us the Spirit of adoption. This is my place. I do not always act rightly in it: the Holy Ghost reproves and humbles me; but that is my place.

Jehovah My Shepherd

Psalm 23

The blessings into which, as the Shepherd, the Lord leads the flock are not merely temporal but spiritual. The veil is now rent from top to bottom, and we are brought to God. God is not only caring for us all the way, but the exercise of our souls should be to walk in the light with Him, and, if by any means, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. The care He takes is to bring us up to walk in the power of that heavenly glory with Himself. “Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.” God is not only known to us as Jehovah, giving us mercies all the way along the road; but it is the Father blessing us with spiritual things. True, the hairs of our head are all numbered; but there is discipline for our souls as well, which leads into blessing.

Any pious Jew, having a renewed nature, in old time might know and use this psalm, saying, “Jehovah, my Shepherd.” The holiness of God was not fully revealed; and therefore the conscience not disquieted, and the distance not felt. They knew the favour of God and counted on His goodness then; but now we are brought into the light and see what judgment is. The veil is rent, and God’s holiness is manifested; for we are in the light, as He is in the light, through Jesus. “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

Now that sin has been fully shewn out—the death of Christ proving what the enmity of the heart was—this matter must be settled. I cannot say, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever,” if I have not the knowledge

of sin forgiven. I cannot talk of confidence, if I have a fear of judgment and I see the desert of sin in the light of His holiness. I cannot consistently speak of One who may be my Judge, that He is my Shepherd, and I shall dwell with Him. To know Him as our Shepherd, we must not have it an unsettled matter about sins being forgiven. God cannot let sin into His presence.

There must be a conscience purged. Christ has been accepted, and He puts us into His place, having made peace through the blood of His cross. “He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” He has “entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” God does not see sin in Jesus; indeed in Him was no sin: and we who believe are in Him; therefore He sees no sin in us. The comfort and peace Christ had, as a man walking on the earth, He gives us. “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Now I have come to put you in the place of unhindered confidence with the Father; and that is, what you could never have, if the least sense of sin were upon you. The peace is made: therefore He can not only say, “Peace I leave with you,” but “My peace I give unto you.” These were not idle words, and we can see how He could give it to us, having brought us to God and put away everything against us.

Now the question is one of happiness with God. Conflict by the way there is also of course; but God is my Shepherd. Not only has He done something for me, but He is something to me: therefore it is said “that your faith and hope might be in God.” I believe in God as seen in Christ, as one who has loved me perfectly and manifested His love by putting away my sins. “The

kindness and love of God our Saviour towards men hath appeared." The thought I may now have of God is that He has done all this for me, and that He is all this to me. I may fail and so get into evil, and this will make me ashamed; but it should not destroy my confidence, because my faith and hope are in God Himself. Now God is my Shepherd, and we may have confidence in Himself, for it is not merely said, He has done this, and He will do that, but "I shall not want." There never can be a want to the soul that has the supply. It is the application of this power and goodness of God to my every-day need that I shall feel, and all this must go on the ground of sin forgiven. Now I have found out, not only my need of being justified, but that He has justified me. Whom He called, them He also justified; Rom. 8.

The starting-point of Christian experience is "God for us"; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" I am the object of His favour, which is better than life. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters." I shall find good everywhere. I shall lie down, no one making me afraid. Though the wolf may prowl in the way, I lie down in green pastures. It is "He leadeth me," and that must be in perfect peace and enjoyment "beside the still waters." This is the natural Christian state. We realise all things ours, for God is for us j therefore we may lie down. We shall have conflict, etc., but amidst it all enjoyment. If the sorrow gets between our souls and God so as to produce distrust, it is sin. Even if sin comes in, sad as it is, He can restore the soul. Whether from trouble, or from offending, He can restore. See what thoughts are here given about God! The Psalmist does not say, I must get my soul restored, and then go to God, but "He restoreth

my soul." So "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Who can restore but He? There may be something to correct in us, if not actually a fall. There may be hardness in my heart, which trouble shews me, and the like. For our good in this way He sends trouble, as well as that which is our proper portion following Him who was the "Man of sorrows." But if He restores, it is "for His name's sake." Here am I, a poor, fainting, wretched creature, and the Lord comes in and lifts me up—why? "For his name's sake." Whatever I am, God is for me; and not only in this way, but also against enemies. "For, though I walk through the valley," etc. (v. 4). Man had reason to quail at death before Christ came; but now in the fullest sense, we need "fear no evil." Death is "ours" now. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." If they took my life, they could not hurt me, for I am trusting to One who could raise me. Paul as good as says, If they take this life, I have lost nothing; nay, it is positive gain, for it hastens me on the road. Death is not terrible now. Why? "Thou art with me." It is terrible without this. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It is not a rod, but Thine, so I shall fear no evil. No one can compete with God. Death is the very thing by which Christ has saved me, and it is that by which He will take me into His presence—"Absent from the body, present with the Lord." It may come as a trial to exercise my soul. Well, I have to remember, "Thou art with me."

There is not only failure in life and failure in death to meet, but there are mighty enemies (v. 5). Nevertheless I can sit down amongst them, and find everything given me for food. I feed on this dying Christ, and it was in His

death Satan's power was most put forth. In another light Satan comes and tempts me with the flesh, but I can say to him, I am dead; I have a right to say it—I may fail in saying it, but that is another thing. Satan cannot touch anything but my flesh; and if I am mortifying my members, he has no power. If my members are alive, Satan cannot count me dead. In the presence of all then I can sit down and say, I have done with them all— "for Thou art with me." I have found that power by which they are made nothing to me. Then we arrive at further security, joy, and blessedness still: "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Now that Christ has ascended and the Holy Ghost has been given, there is triumphant peace and abounding in joy through the power of the Holy Ghost.

I now find God Himself the source of all, and not only this as a present thing, but seeing what God is, I can say, "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever." We shall never want goodness and not find it. "Goodness shall follow me." Assuredly the goodness of God is better than man's, even if we could get this. There is a place to dwell in: that is my hope. For us it is the Father's house. There are not only blessings conferred, but a place to dwell in with the Father for ever. As He brought Christ through, of course He will bring me through too, and I am there now by faith. I am at home with my Father. He would have us feel that all the correctings and chastenings by the way are founded upon the fact that He is for us. When peace is really settled through the work of Christ, I have all these exercises; and what is known only to faith at the beginning becomes afterwards experience, though always faith too; but,

every step having had this experience, we can say that we know it. Whatever it be we meet with by the way, we know it is all for good, and we shall dwell for ever with Him. Wonderful grace!

The Soul In Adversity Considered

Psalm 31

The special subject of all the Psalms is connected with a remnant of Israel, or with such of the Jews as have their hearts touched by the Spirit of God, and look out for deliverance from the circumstances in which they are placed. In some of them the interest which God had in them is then taken up, though prophetically, in great detail; and the Lord Jesus is treated of as passing through circumstances of great trial on their account. It is not but that there are many things we may delight in, and godly souls have found great comfort in all ages in the Psalms, and rightly so. Still it is well to understand what the purpose and intention of the Holy Ghost is in them.

In Psalm 1 (which, with the second, is a sort of preface to the book), it is the distinction between the godly and ungodly man. The godly are called the righteous, and the ungodly are always called enemies. That the Lord should not spare any wicked transgressors is not the grace of the gospel. There are many passages where there is the call for judgment, because there must be the destruction of the enemy to allow of the deliverance of the Jewish remnant who seek rest on the earth. We could not consistently use this language, just as it is in itself, and say, “spare not any transgressor.” Having received grace we cry, “Spare them, pity them, save them, O Lord.” But judgment will be executed another day—when the church is out of, and the Jews are in, the scene. If they have taken the place of adversary against the Lord, then it must be judgment. When the patience

of God has been fully exercised, and the continuance of mercy would only be to sanction and perpetuate iniquity in the earth, “the master will rise up and shut to the door.” Then will be a time, not of grace as now, but of judgment. And then it will be seasonable. The Holy Spirit will warrant their looking for the deliverance which will cut off the enemies. The distinction in Psalm 1, and so throughout the whole book, is between the righteous and the wicked. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” etc. “The ungodly are not so,” etc. “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand,” etc.

In Psalm 2 the heathen are raging, the kings or rulers of the earth set themselves against Jehovah and His Christ. But God asserts and will enforce the rights of His Son on earth. Wherever the Spirit of God is working, there is the cry of the Spirit in the soul which must meet an answer. Now is a day of unmingled grace; but here the Spirit of Christ speaks of them as enemies, and is looking forward, as the only remedy, to their being cut off in judgment, unless they bow. Christ Himself is interested in this remnant, and is brought in as bearing their burdens. “They parted my garments among them” is a direct prophecy about the Lord. He joins Himself with their sighs. He has been with them for their sins, and He will deliver them from their foes. The tone and character of this book gives us the expectant blessings to Israel in letter: the spirit of it we take to our soul’s comfort. I find in my soul certain anxiety and distress—no doubt very imperfectly expressed—but it is more or less the same in us as in the remnant; I look up to the Lord, but it may be my own fault brought me into the trouble, and I do not know what to say: then the Spirit

gives me in the Psalms an inspired feeling of what is right under such circumstances. Thus I hear God's expression of my sorrow. It is a great comfort to the soul, but it must be understood how far they apply. Then again there is sin or Satan. In either case it is wrath against sin which is the source of wrath on our departure from God. Here is the power of Satan and the wrath of God. Christ had to come under the power of death, and therefore He had to come under the sin, I do not say morally, but substitutionally, as bearing the whole burden of our sin; to deliver us He must take it on Himself. He had to drink up the cup of wrath for us—whether for Israel for earthly blessing, or for Christians for heavenly blessing. It is important to see the special bearing. Yet there are certain principles, immutable and that always apply, eternal truths that never vary—whether earthly people or heavenly people are concerned. Only Christ can put us into blessing. The displayed ways may change, but the fundamental principle must always be the same. Sin is at bottom the same, and love is the same too; though the development of both may not be so.

In this Psalm the evil looked at is the bondage of sin; not only servants of sin, but slaves of Satan. He is the god of this world and the prince of its course, and he holds it under thraldom. There are two points in verses 7, 8, I wish to speak about. "Thou hast considered my trouble, thou hast known my soul in adversities and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room." These are the two things God has taken notice of. I would take the great principle of it; true to a Jew, but in a much larger way to us. We are now identified with Christ at the right hand of God. The

High Priest is there. He is carrying on His work there. His place is there. Aaron's place is on the earth. God's love is set on this remnant. There they are— there we may be—held in bitter bondage. It may seem liberty because our wills are in it, but it is real and thorough bondage. A man knows a thing is wrong and foolish, yet he goes on doing it. He is away from God; so that there is no power to deliver himself from sin, from his passion, and he is not able to keep from it until he gets back to God. What he did, he did to render himself independent of God. This ruined Eve. Adam was led astray by her, and lost all his blessing, though our blessings are more than Adam lost. Adam thus cast off God's authority and became the slave of Satan's power.

There is no such thing as independence: man is perfectly incapable of it. He must have something to govern the heart. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Not where your heart is, there your treasure is. A thousand things may govern the heart, but there is something—it may be vanity, or anything else; but naturally it is governed without God. If you had been in paradise now, it would not be independence. "All power is of God." If not, He would not be God. There can be nothing independent of Him. Creature independence is but setting up another god; any other power is not God. Nothing is independent of God. Satan, cast at last into the lake of burning brimstone, will shew that he is not independent. The moment the heart departs from God, it must get some other object. When Adam hears the voice of God in the garden, he hides himself: that is not to be happy. Sin gave him the consciousness of his nakedness, and God had immediately, in his eyes, the character of a judge. Worship and prayer are vanished, the moment we

have sinned and God takes this character before us. Man goes out of his mind if he has not an object. He has lost God as such, and he seeks some other, of which he makes himself the centre. We have left God, and He has got the character of a judge, and so the heart seeks something below itself—looked at as made for God, something to satisfy its nature. An animal could not carry on a course of sin—it has no intellect to indulge in sin—but man does; and thus the superiority of our human nature is used to corrupt ourselves by vices. Man is a slave: the god of this world, the enemy of our souls, has got power over him through his passions, and it is thraldom. A man dare not do anything that would set him at variance with the world.

Man has lost the knowledge of God (not that there is a God, but the knowledge of God), and this aggravates his guilt. He has a knowledge that there is a God, but he does not know Him. I may know there is a great potentate, but I may not know him. A man's intellect may say, "No God"; but his conscience says there is a God, though he has shut God out, and does not know Him. We have lost, in a great degree, the power of measuring good and evil. Would not the young man have known it was unseemly to be feeding on the husks the swine did eat, if he had been living happily in his father's house? We are by nature darkness; God is light. By the fall man lost the image of God—gained the knowledge of good and evil, but not the knowledge of God by which we can judge the things around us. Satan has blinded you by motives. "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death." The moment the

word reaches the conscience, then you say, “I am all wrong.” There may be almost despair, but the revelation of God’s light alone comes in and shews me I was in darkness. Man’s very unconsciousness of evil, and contented-ness with what he is without God, the thirst in his heart for other things, and the asking, “What harm is there?” prove he has not God. If you talk of sin when men are enjoying what they call innocent pleasures, and speak of either grace or judgment, it stops them immediately; it is all gone. They will tell you, “It is not the time.” Man’s pleasure is never the time for God’s presence. They will talk about God, will tell you what He ought to be, but they cannot bear His presence. The Lord may use outward means, trouble, etc., as in the Psalms; or work without outward means, and then we know the struggle against sin. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.” It is better to be struggling against the tide than going down the stream with the world. When the light shines in, there is the consciousness of need; the world sees it; Satan sees it and says, There is a soul escaping. He has got the consciousness that God is not there. It will be detected if the divine nature is at work in a man.

“Thou hast known my soul in adversity” —not my soul has known thee. There is as yet no full apprehension of His grace. I know I have been wrong, but “Thou hast considered my trouble.” I am in distress. What am I to do? Well, God has considered my trouble. There is not liberty yet; but if the word has reached the heart, there may be ever so little perception of God, but there is a link between the soul and God. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.” “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child, for since I spake,” etc. If there is any

reader that knows he has been going wrong as connected with the conscience, and he wishes to get back to God, I say, God knows it, He considers it—weighs the whole process, and He will surely deliver. The soul may know and have to pass through a good deal of exercise; but He is considering it. “Since I spake against thee,” etc. His eye is always upon it. “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.”

There is not only sin but the power of Satan to overcome. You cannot be independent of Satan. You cannot go after the smallest vanity, not even a little bit of dress for vanity’s sake, without making God a liar and believing Satan. Eve did this when Satan said, “Thou shalt not surely die”—God knows if you disobey, you will become as He is. He treated God as a liar, and she trusted Satan for truth, and so God was entirely cast off. In everything you may be deceived by the same enemy.

Man incautiously trusts Satan for truth, and even for goodness. But when you begin to struggle with Satan, he will trouble your soul, if he sees you want to get away from him. He will send friends and temptations to you, so as to deceive (and that is the difference between the devil and Satan). The Lord comes in; Satan claims his right over us and says, You have sold yourself to me already; but God says, “Is not this a brand plucked from the burning? “Satan was displayed specially as the adversary when he said, “Fall down and worship me.” Then the Lord said, “Get thee hence, Satan.” Satan uses scripture for his own wicked purposes and quotes what God has said—” The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” You sold yourself to me. No, says the Lord, My eye is upon you: thou shalt not die. The judgment of death is with God, the power of death is with the devil! Christ comes

and places Himself in blessed grace in our place to bear the whole weight of Satan's power—puts Himself under the consequences of our sin: "was made sin for us." Thus grace brought Him where sin brought us, that He might deliver us from the whole force of evil. Christ, having not only delivered us but glorified God perfectly by the cross, having made good His title at all cost, goes into that glory by virtue of redemption, with the full joy of the firstborn among many brethren, enters as Man into the presence of His Father.

This gives the character of what we are made partakers of. If He enters there, it is in a certain sense our entering; it is for us, as "our forerunner," in virtue of His entering. We have entered in Him as our Head; we sit "in heavenly places in Christ." "Thou hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy, but thou hast set my feet in a large room." There is liberty. The state of the heart delivered corresponds with the deliverance into a large place. "Set my feet in a large room." We are in the presence of God without the possibility of wrath. The cup of wrath has been drunk—it is not now to drink. God's eye was upon me when I was in my sins. He has "known my soul in adversity," and I am brought into the presence of God—into the sunshine of His glory, without a cloud, by virtue of redemption. It is after I was a sinner, I am brought there through the efficacy of the work of Christ. I am there necessarily to be the proof of the value of His blood. God looks upon me as the fruit of His Son's work: I am set according to the value of God's Son in His sight. This is how I know His love, in the perfect favour of God—not only in divine favour without a cloud, but assured that there never can be a cloud. And there is another thing— "Sin shall not have

dominion over you." Not that it will not be there; but that we are set free from sin and death. The same power that raised Christ into the presence of God has delivered me. I may slip through unbelief, but I am dehvered, and am then one spirit with the Lord.

Satan has no power against Christ up on high; all his power was exhausted at the cross, and it is all gone. God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness," and set our feet "in a large room." That we may enjoy this large room, the Holy Ghost is given. "Stand fast in the liberty." Satan has no right or title against Christ. In Him I am delivered. I am entirely out of the enemy's reach (I do not mean if going on in the flesh): in Christ is my title and portion. I have received the Holy Ghost. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "If led by the Spirit, we are not under the law." By the Holy Ghost, I "know the things that are freely given of God," and have the power of enjoying them (1 Cor. 2), an "earnest in our hearts," 2 Cor. 1.

I add another thing that puts the crown to all: "we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." I know it is for ever. The Spirit has sealed me "until the day of redemption." Well, now I can trust and joy in God. "If God be for us, who can be against us? "No creature can separate us from the love of God.. There we find ourselves; and the apostle is not afraid to say, "We joy in God." This is a "large room." All the holiness of God is our delight. He that first descended is ascended into the proper glory; and we are brought into it all. If I cannot see the end of it, I can see it is boundless blessedness. And Christ is all and in all. The Lord give us to dwell there! Surely it is "a large place."

God’s House And The Way

Psalm 84

We get ourselves so accustomed to certain things by their constant use that the power of their meaning becomes destroyed. It may be a bad word or a good word, but words that would deeply affect others thus fail to move us. This we find but too true, as regards the scripture-truth itself. What an effect such an announcement as that in John 3 (“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” etc.), would have upon us, if listened to for the first time, and the value of its meaning entered into! Just the same is it with this scripture before us. “How amiable are thy tabernacles O Jehovah of hosts,” etc. Would not such a thought as being in God’s court, as men dwelling in God’s own house, greatly delight and surprise us, if heard for the first time and its meaning understood? What an effect such a truth as this would have upon us if fully believed—God going to make us dwell with Himself in His own house!

He does dwell with us now, as we know; but we are not yet dwelling in His house. God never dwelt with Adam, nor did Adam dwell with God. He made a suitable dwelling-place for man and put Adam in it. He did come down to visit him, but He did not dwell with him. Indeed the first time we read of God coming down His word is, Adam, where art thou? The paradise on earth was not God’s dwelling-place. We read in the Revelation, the tabernacle of God is with men, and the Lamb is the light and the temple of it.

“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! my soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of Jehovah.” The heart that has found God longs for a dwelling-place with Him. It was this desire that moved the disciples on the mount of transfiguration to make a request for three tabernacles. It was Jewish of course; but they could not bear the thought of the Lord Jesus going away. They wished Him to stay with them; they wanted to keep Him down here. He could not remain, but left them and us words of comfort. “Let not your heart be troubled… In my Father’s house are many mansions,” many chambers. “I go to prepare a place for you… I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” This new thing is brought out here most blessedly—that man shall dwell with God in His own house. The Lord Jesus could not stay with His beloved disciples down here, because it is polluted; but He will have his people with Himself, where there is holiness, and everything suited to meet the need and claims of holiness. His people shall dwell with Him. “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.”

The first thought in the heart of Moses (Ex. 15), whilst recounting God’s acts of power and delivering grace, is the desire to make Him a house: “He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.” But verse 13 gives us a fuller thought of faith: “Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation” —the redemption song of the Lord’s strength and power. In verse 17 we get the clear promise of this new thing—a dwelling-place with God, which He Himself has made. That is what He will do for them: not merely a rest in the wilderness, but the blessed purpose of God is to bring His people into

His sanctuary which He has made. What! man to dwell with God! Wondrous fact! The thought of this new thing fills my soul with the deepest joy.

The heart that longs for God finds rest in the altar of God. “Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts,” etc. “My heart… crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young.” How beautifully this parenthesis shews us the tender care God has over all His creatures! He fails not to find a house for the most worthless of birds, and a nest for the most restless. What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul gets that casts itself upon the watchful tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need 1 of all His creatures! We know what the expression of “nest” conveys, just as well as that of “a house.” Is it not a place of security—a shelter from storm—a covert to hide oneself in from every evil—a protection from all that can harm—a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in? The term is just as familiar in the scripture as that of “the house.” The prodigal well understood the comfort and plenty of the Father’s house before he turned his face towards it; but it was the Father that knew the claims of the house, and He must clothe him suitably for it before he is admitted into it.

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.” It is this new thing—that men should dwell in God’s own house; not be there merely as a visitor, but a dweller. The visitor does not know all that belongs to the house; but nothing can be kept back from a dweller: he is at home, and must know all the privileges and blessings of the house. Surely there will be perfect blessedness in that house, where Christ has

prepared everything—where God is at home and has arranged all according to His own wisdom and power and glory—the Lamb being the light and the temple. Now those who dwell there must have the moral qualities of the house; their tastes, and enjoyments, and nature, must be suited to the house.

In time past God did come into the temple after a Jewish order; but the people were shut out from even this glory — the very opposite to dwelling with God. They were a favoured people, it is true—separated from the nations by God's grace; but they knew not the constant increasing blessing of the house.

There is another thing—the way to this house; the road to that place where God and His people shall dwell. He has been dwelling with them, but He will have them to dwell with Him, and His heart has ordered the way. When we were sinners—merely sinners—and could do nothing but sin, He put it all away. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." He has given us a new nature, which has the moral capabilities of enjoying a dwelling-place with Him in His own house.

God has dwelt with man; the God-man Christ Jesus has tabernacled down here, and His glory was displayed in grace and truth.

In Exodus 29 we learn a further truth of the tabernacle and the altar; but the grand thought all through is not only God dwelling with His people, but He must have them to dwell with Him.

In Ezekiel we see the glory that had rested on the temple departing gradually, reluctantly, yet really. But this had not been the fulness of His indwelling in the Christian; neither was it His presence in the church

which is His body. “Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”

How this new thing occupies God—the thought of His own house! His word declares it; “prophets tell of it”; grace puts us in possession of it; faith gives us the enjoyment of it; the Lord Jesus is the way to it. The First Epistle of John brings out this truth very fully. (See chaps. 3 and 4.)

Now, how is it that we feel ourselves wonderfully more united to a Christian we may only have known for half-an-hour, than to a mere acquaintance we may have known all our lives? Is it not the reality of the truth, God is there? God dwells in us, and we in Him. It is something more than a new nature, for it goes on to say, “We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit he hath given us.” In the next chapter we get that wonderful word, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love,” etc. Oh, the joy this knowledge gives the heart! What comfort the soul gets in such proximity to God! How the thought of this house delights one!—this house that God is bringing us to, where we shall learn Him most fully, and love Him without hindrance.

How complete, how perfect, is God’s work! He gave Jesus to die for us, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost to teach us, to assure our hearts that the Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for us. He has fitted us for this house, and we have in Him all we need. He gives us the moral qualities of the dwellers of the house, the new nature that can enjoy the glory of the house. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still

praising thee." Nothing but praise becomes those who shall dwell in God's house; it will be their unwearied untiring employ—continual praise. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways." If by faith I am dwelling in God's house, I have perfect rest. If I am counting on His strength, let my difficulty be what it may, I have entire repose. Communion with God always gives confidence in His power. This is the key to the psalm before us. If my heart has learnt the love God has for me, and what His purposes are towards me, I can trust Him to order the way. God's love was displayed in His Son—revealed in the gift of Him; and the Son will give grace and strength for the way. "Of those thou hast given me have I lost none." God has fully provided for our need. He has quickened us—cleansed us—sealed us. If Paul had to say, I am not already perfect, he knew it was the way up, the way to the house, the way home. If my heart is set upon this glorious dwelling-place, I shall not be so much occupied about the ease or comfort of the way, as I shall be to know that it is the way. The glory of the inheritance will be far more to me than the character of the things that are round the pathway to it.

Everything may be against me—all may seem united to hinder my progress. Should I be trying to make myself comfortable, desiring to settle down in a place and a world which is striving to keep me from my house and my home, depriving me of enjoyment and blessing? No; the one thing that should occupy me is the way out. I shall not be distressed much by what is going on down here if I can but learn that it leads up there. Is it the way home? Will it take me to the house? This will be a vast deal more important to me than all else. It may be a

dangerous road, a rough road, a difficult road; but is it the way up there? If I do but know that, I shall not care for the difficulties of the hill, nor fear the danger of the descent. Shall I be looking for an easier road, a smoother road? No. Is it the road? Is it the way there? If I am told there is a lion in the way—well, I have no fear: God is my strength—I cannot go without Him. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" were the words of Jesus. He had to suffer, so may we; but is it the way there—the way to the home on which my affections are set—the way to the home of blessing which the Lord has prepared? This settles every question, and delivers from ten thousand sorrows. I do not care for the difficulties nor the dangers: it is the way there. I am kept up in it by the strength of God; I am kept up through it by the love of God.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well" (v. 6). The valley of Baca is a place of sorrow and humiliation, but one of blessing also. To Paul it was the thorn in the flesh—something that made him despicable in his ministry to the Galatians. It was truly humbling, and called forth from him a thrice-repeated prayer. But when he heard the Lord say, "My grace is sufficient for thee," he no longer pleaded for its removal. No; he rather gloried in his infirmity, that the power of Christ might be known. This was the place of blessing to Paul: he found it a well. The valley of Baca was turned into a spot of untold intimacy and nearness to God. With some of us this valley may be the loss of that nearest our hearts, or the thwarting of the will—something that will humble us; but it is a place of blessing. We get far more refreshing from the painful than the pleasant things. The valley of Baca is made a well. Of which of your pleasant

things can you say, you make it a well? The refreshment and the blessing come from that which has pained us, humbled us, emptied us of self! This is God's way of shewing us what He is; and so, in passing us through the valley of Baca, He makes it a well.

So we read in i Thessalonians 5, "In everything give thanks." How is this to be done? Did Paul give thanks for the thorn—the very thing he supposed would hinder his usefulness? Not whilst looking at the thing itself: it was only when his eye was fixed on the heart and the hand that had done it. There are many things in themselves, that we cannot give thanks for—the snapping of the cord nearest the heart, or the cutting to pieces of" what our affections are set upon. We must see the love that has ordered it, and the hand that has appointed it; and then we can give thanks.

"The rain also filleth the pools." The Lord can make springs in the desert to meet His people's need, or send down rain from heaven to supply their wants. He knows neither difficulties nor impossibilities: to lean upon Him is undisturbed security. He will bring His people safely through every trial; and every fresh victory should increase the strength of their confidence in Him.

"Behold O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." In every sorrow God is our shield. Oh! but some may say, My sorrow is brought on by my sin. Sad it should be so! But even then we can say, "Look upon the face of thine anointed." God can always look upon His Son with delight; He is ever well pleased in Him: and we can plead what Christ is. There is no position a saint can be in but that he may go to God for help. No; although his very sorrow is the fruit of his sin,

and there is no other way of getting rid of your sin and out of your sorrow but by going to God and hiding yourself behind His Anointed. You may not choose to say, Look upon me; but you can ever say, “Look upon the face of thine Anointed.” Christ is your only shelter. He is a covert in every storm—ah! even that which your own failure has brought upon you. There is no getting back to God but by hiding yourself in Christ—taking shelter behind Him.

There is just one other word about the way, and I have done. Now, what are your ways? What is your walk in the way to the place you are going to? Is it in keeping with the character of the house? Are your ways suited to the home God has prepared you for?—His own dwelling which He has prepared for you? Are you so behaving yourselves as to rejoice in the thought that this world is crumbling? Is the hope of the Lord’s coming your daily delight? Does it influence you in the ten thousand details of your every-day life? Or are you so walking hand in hand with the world that the very thought of His coming fills you with shame? May the Lord grant you grace to take heed to your ways! May you walk well-pleasing in His sight, caring more for His glory than your own ease! “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah.”

Emmanuel

Matthew 3

The word of God presents to us this very precious fact, that we do not only find there certain truths and doctrines, but also every relation between God and man fully developed on earth, and each day we can clearly see all these things in the Person of Jesus. It is a great mercy of God to have brought Him so near to us, as so to make known to us those relationships in the circumstances in which we are ourselves found. At bottom the life of Jesus was like ours. He was in all things tempted in like manner as ourselves. It was indeed God manifested in flesh; but it was also life, and the expression of a life; perfectly acceptable to God.

In order to make progress in spiritual life we must study the Lord Jesus; whether in the grace of His Person or in the circumstances of His life; or, lastly, in the glorious position He has near the Father, and which we shall by-and-by share with Him.

We see in Christ, from the beginning, the accomplishment of the life of faith, which was tested in Him, and of which He manifested all the perfection.

Jesus is to us a tender and mighty friend; and, while travelling through the wilderness, we know that at the end of the way will be found the glory in which He now is. That is what is said in Hebrews 12:1-3: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" — rather "the leader and completer of faith." As captain, He has gone before us; as shepherd, "he putteth forth his own sheep," and also "goeth before them." He "despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Divine life is seen in that Man who walked in the midst of all difficulties and temptations, who surmounted all, and who, alone amongst all, was not touched by the evil one.

Now He has entered the glory at the right hand of God; and we shall share with Him that glory when He shall appear, since we shall be made like unto Him.

We shall see a little how the Spirit of God presents Jesus to us, at the beginning of His life, when He enters that painful race of faith.

An important thing to remark is, that the light manifests all that is in man.

It is true that God saw what was in the heart of Abel and of Cain, before anything of it was manifested; just as He saw a remnant in the midst of the Jews, in whom grace was working; but things were never brought to light under the law. God was, as it were, hidden behind a veil, and He allowed many things because of the hardness of their hearts, as Jesus told His disciples; for the full light was not yet manifested. But in Christ the light shone in the world.

In the Christian, who possesses the life of Christ, that which is true in Christ is true in him, as it is said in 1

John 2:8: “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

It is always well to bear in mind that, in the former dispensation, God hid Himself, but that He sent certain messengers who were to reveal what was entrusted to them, but without making God known. The law did not manifest Him fully. It is true it says, Thou shalt love; but not, I love thee; it does not reveal a God of love. It does not shew us what God is, save that He is a just God and executes vengeance. It tells us nothing at all of what God is for man, nor of what He is in Himself. The law did indeed make known to men what they ought to be toward God, but it was silent as to what God is for them.

A man is always under law, as long as he is occupied with what God demands from him, instead of understanding what God is for him; for this would produce much more excellent effects. God, being thus hidden, required obedience in order to grant life. It was no question of being able to place oneself in the presence of God. The high priest alone presented himself once every year into the holiest of all; for the way into it was not yet made manifest, and there were many things that God bore with, without approving them. There were ceremonies and ordinances, which were intended to remind man of his dependence, and to bring him into relationship with God, according to certain things which acted upon the flesh and adapted to the flesh, because man was in it, and God placed Himself in a relationship with him. The holiness of God who was hidden was not seen, but there were ceremonies which maintained the relationships between that God who remained hidden and man.

But when God manifests Himself, it can no longer be so; for God is holy, and He is love. He is perfect in holiness, and man must necessarily enter into relationship with what God is. God can forgive sinners—can wash them; but He cannot bear with anything that does not answer to His holiness. If there is grace, there is also holiness, but God cannot, because of His holiness, bear with man, a sinner, just as he is; for God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.”

Let us meditate upon the example of Jesus, the Light upon earth, entirely separated from sinners, which constituted the perfect beauty of His life. On one hand, we see that He is alone, perfectly alone; He is the most isolated man that one can imagine. The disciples themselves know not how to sympathise with Him. The woman of Samaria, to whom He addressed such touching words about the water “springing up into everlasting life,” can understand nothing else but “the well is deep.” She says, “From whence then hast thou that living water? “If Jesus says, “Look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest”; if He speaks of “a meat to eat” that His disciples “know not of,” it is ever the same. He meets with no real sympathy in the midst of men. We feel that this was painful to Him, because He had a man’s heart, and would have desired to find some one who could understand Him; but He found nothing anywhere. On the contrary, as to Him, we see that He has a perfect sympathy toward all. Jesus was the most accessible man, most within the reach of the simple, of the ignorant, and even of the most degraded of sinners. He manifested in His life something that had not its equal. No, there never was all that holiness and love, which is above all our thoughts.

There is so much selfishness in the heart of man that the love of God is to him an enigma still more incomprehensible than His holiness. No one understood Jesus, because He manifested God. I do not as yet speak of His work, but of what He was, when He was manifested in the midst of the world. He had to shew that all the ceremonies cannot make God known; for the thing is impossible. Jesus alone manifested God as He is, and man also as he is.

No religion as such can change man. Man puts on religion as a clothing; but his religion leads him farther away from God.

The first thing God does is to lay us bare in His presence; He takes away everything. He is occupied with us, and not with our religion. Then is all quite removed, and we stand before Him, such as we are. Well! that is what took place when Jesus was here below; and therefore He was unwelcome and found Himself in conflict with every one.

It is impossible we could like to find ourselves in the presence of God, just as we are. A man accustomed to dirt does not know he is dirty, because his whole way of living is fashioned to it; but if he finds himself in certain circumstances, which give him light as to himself, he will feel disgusted to see what his whole life has been. Such is the heart of man; but when the light of God shines in his conscience and in his soul, he sees himself such as he really is in the sight of God, although there be doubtless some defect in the perception of it. This is very humbling; one does not like it, for it is too painful. Once more I say, before God it is not a question of our religion but of ourselves.

Such is the necessary effect of the presence of God in the world. The light shews us in God all condescension, all goodness, all grace: and in man a selfishness which betrays itself before God. One sees that man cannot be saved through himself. A certain man says, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Is it not as good as saying, There is something else that holds the first place when Christ calls me? It is not my will to serve God entirely. “I have bought five yoke of oxen,” says another; and a third, “I have married a wife.” What does this mean? That the heart is fixed on quite another thing; that it prefers its oxen to the feast that God has prepared. Thus all is made manifest, and the heart is laid bare.

All disappears before the testimony of God. Man’s self-righteousness and his pride lead him to hide from himself his own state, in order to take advantage of a religion which descends from his ancestors. But John the Baptist said (Matt. 3:7-9), when he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” It is God who works as He pleases, and in His own power, to create children unto Himself. All your pretensions, as Jews, descendants of Abraham, God takes no account of. He works in that supreme power, in which He is able, even of stones, to raise up children unto Abraham; and that is the reason why He takes no account of your righteousness: He must first have sinners.

There is yet another thing to observe here. John says (Matt. 3:11, 12), “He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Jesus is going to establish His kingdom, and that will soon come to pass. It is a kingdom in which that which is not according to His heart will be burnt with fire. Such was the testimony of John. “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached.” God had given the law to that people which He had gathered and ranged round Himself; He had sent prophets who, as witnesses for the moment, called upon the Jews to walk according to the law. John the Baptist came to announce to them quite another thing: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. God is about to establish a new order of things: are you in a state to enter it? Have you energy to penetrate there? Judgment is there also. He has His fan in His hand. Have you any fruit? If not, “the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.” “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.” Thus it was that John taught; such is the place he takes. As to Jerusalem, it is about to be set aside, and John preaches the testimony of repentance and of the kingdom about to be established; he presents himself in order to draw out every thought towards Jesus. After having announced the testimony of repentance, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to our hearts and souls. Let us rest—rest our thoughts upon Him, who shews Himself to us personally.

The object of God is not only to cause sin to be felt, although that must take place, but to make Jesus known

and to place the soul in the enjoyment of God Himself— to act in grace towards it in order that it may forget itself and be filled with the thought of Jesus. This is the way God does it. He presents the Lord “as a root out of a dry ground.” There is in Him no beauty for man, as there was in the temple; nay, nothing of that which attracts the flesh and might tempt it— nothing of all that. It is on the contrary, a root that none “should desire.” To the eyes of flesh there is absolutely nothing to render Him lovely. Who is it then? It is a poor man who goes preaching! He “hath not where to lay his head.” He is a man condemned by every clerical authority, by all the wise men and all the Pharisees. The Sadducees condemn Him, the priests condemn Him. Thus was Jesus received. In Him is “no beauty that we should desire him.” It was needful He should present Himself thus, that it might be shewn if the heart could discern God, and because He would not supply food to fleshly feeling. He must put the heart to the test, to prove whether God is enough for the heart, and whether the moral beauty that is in God—His love, His holiness, His word that penetrates within the heart; whether, in a word, all that is infinitely precious in the divine nature— can be discerned by man.

When He comes as the light, He never adapts Himself to that which He is going to destroy in the heart: man would do it, and he would call this religion; but it would only be to hide God, or to deny Him. Thus the Lord Jesus presents Himself without anything which could attract man, and that is what we find here. Of course every testimony of grace and goodness, necessary to our poor heart, is there; but nothing to meet its desires. The testimony given by Jesus was perfect and placed before

the heart the grace it needed, to be rendered capable of tasting the grace of God itself.

Jesus has shewn Himself to our faith in all the grace of His divine Person; but He took His place among men as being nothing, save as the object of faith.

The angel appears to Joseph in a dream and says to him: “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins,” Matt, 1:20, 21.

It was as Oshea that God caused Joshua to be called, which means Saviour, for God had charged him to bring Israel into the land of Canaan. It is God Himself, it is Jehovah, who comes as Saviour. It is the first thing that is presented to us: “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” What a great and precious truth— “God with us!” Then God, so to speak, begins over again with man.

As soon as Jesus appears, Satan seeks to destroy Him. It is astonishing to see how forgetful man is. The magi who came from the East had owned Jesus as King of the Jews born in Bethlehem; they had borne a testimony to Emmanuel, to the Son of David. The shepherds, after having worshipped, had spread abroad what the angels had told them; and in spite of that, Jesus, although approved of God, was disowned and rejected by men.

God begins over again the whole history of Israel in the Person of Jesus. He must call His Son out of Egypt, where He had sent Him, because men wanted to slay Him the moment He had come into this world. Israel was really lost, and God must begin over again all their

history in the Person of Jesus. Herod seeks the young child to destroy Him. Thus we find that opposition shews itself against Jesus, even from His cradle.

Satan has carnal motives enough to persuade souls to do away with God. His great work is to supply us with motives powerful enough to lead us to do without God, and to shut Him out of our hearts. Here we find the way he begins. He stirs up Herod against Jesus. Then Joseph takes the young child and departs into Egypt. After that he returns into the land of Israel and dwells in Nazareth, for it was written, “He shall be called a Nazarene.” This is in fact where Jesus begins in the midst of the world. And who is it who dwells there in Nazareth? It is Jehovah, the Saviour; it is “Emmanuel.” And what is that city? It is so bad a place, that to be found there is enough to make men say, Ah! I will have none of it. Nathanael said to Philip, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

It is God whom I first see in the Person of Jesus; but God in the circumstances which the flesh repels, because it is wicked. To know God the flesh must be entirely mortified, and grace in our hearts must lead us to value the love of God in spite of the flesh. This is the history of Christian life.

Outwardly Jesus was only a poor Nazarene; but perfection was in His ways and in His heart, and it’ manifested itself in the midst of every difficulty, of all contempt, and all that was false. Faith alone could discern the ways of Jesus through want and every misery. The broken heart saw this perfection of goodness manifesting itself in the midst of every care. It is necessary our hearts should see also, in that despised

man, God Himself, who reveals Himself to our souls and takes His place in our midst.

Then Jesus comes to John to be baptised. John forbad Him, because he owned the dignity of His Person. “I have need to be baptised of thee; and comest thou to me?” Jesus then “said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Whom do I find here? It is the Lord Jesus and His Person owned; but, in spite of that, His will is to take His place with the least of the saints. “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Who are they, these we? It is John and Himself. Where does He place Himself? He places Himself there, in connection with the first movement of His Spirit in the heart. I place Myself with those who repent, said Jesus. There are some who come to be baptised; I also, I come to be baptised. As soon as there is a movement of repentance in the heart of the sinner— a response to the testimony rendered by the word— Jesus takes His place there with that heart. It is not only that He manifests as an object that which, by faith, becomes the crucifying of the flesh, but He goes with the heart also, and the poor heart sees all that; and what a consolation for us! The one in whom the fulness of the Father was manifested is there, and it is the Son Himself. If a soul is broken down— well! Jesus is with it. If it is in fear, because already “the axe is laid unto the root of the trees,” He is there to encourage it and to shew unto it His grace. He takes His place with His people, and thus we see the perfect goodness of God. It was He Himself who produced this movement of repentance in that heart, and He takes His place with that soul; Jesus is there. If He is to us the most high God, the One who manifests all this light, He is there

also as man, meeting the least of our feelings. He is with us, believers, in all our misery and in all our circumstances.

The consequence of the baptism of Jesus is that the heavens are opened unto Him. It is not only the God incarnate, but heaven is opened over Him; He has the full approbation of God, and thereby we see all the extent of that grace presented to sinners. Never was heaven opened before. God had sent messengers, but never had there been on earth a man upon whom heaven opened.

When Jesus has accomplished the work of atonement, He places us in the same position as Himself. “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.” Heaven is open. There is no longer any veil on our heart.

As man, Jesus was perfectly righteous, and although He placed Himself in the position of those poor sinners who drew nigh to God, He was none the less acceptable to God; and indeed never was Jesus so acceptable to God, as when He bare our sins on the tree. It was at the moment of His death that He perfectly glorified God in all that He was as man, and that He also at the same time bore testimony to the perfect and infinite love of God towards sinners.

Heaven is opened on Jesus—well! it is also entirely opened m us. No sin can be tolerated before God; all that is not of Christ, on whom heaven could be opened, God beholds, and He cannot tolerate sin. But there is no longer a veil as to us: we look on His glory in Jesus with unveiled face; and the glory of God shines on man as he is in Jesus, just as it shone on Jesus Himself. All that is

not Christ is condemned. All that is reprobate is manifested by Himself.

There is another consequence of the acceptance of Jesus; it is the Spirit of God, who descended upon Him like a dove, and the voice from heaven, which made itself heard, “saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Such is the position Jesus takes. He manifests His grace in testimony to man when he is in his sins. He adapts Himself to the circumstances of the sinner in his lowest state; He identifies Himself with him in the first step he takes under grace, but at the same time we see as to Himself that there is a voice “saying, This is my beloved Son.” This is the perfect Man in the presence of God—the friend of poor sinners, and the expression of all that God loves to see in man in the midst of the world.

But further (Matt. 4), if we are the children of God, His beloved children, as we believe, loved as Jesus is loved (as He said Himself: “That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them”), we are through grace in the same position as Himself in the sight of God. But it is needful that this perfectly beloved Person should be tested, and we, not merely to know if we are children of God, nor as sinners; as such, we have already been tested, and we know we are lost. It is needful that grace should work; and when it is a question of grace, it is always the perfect grace of God toward sinners. All that is good must be on God’s side, for in man there is nothing. The light manifests that in God there is nothing but that which is good, and in us no good thing. This love of God, in us, produces a new life. We are in the position of children of God, like Jesus; but

then, the Spirit of God being in us, we must be put to the test. There are many things which hinder us from enjoying the love of God. There is selfishness, self-love, levity: therefore we must be put to the test, as Jesus Himself was. Paul says, “We glory in tribulations also… and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.”

Thus we are conscious of being children of God, being looked upon by Him as Jesus Himself. Then all is begun; but all is not finished. As to acceptance indeed all is finished. The child that God may have just given me is truly my child, though its education be not gone through; but it is as much my child, though just born, as when he will be twenty.

Jesus, owned of God, takes His place according to our weakness, and He is “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” What Satan always seeks is to make us forget our position as children. In ourselves we are slaves of the devil; but we have been set free by God. Satan wanted man to abandon his first estate which he had in Eden; and he succeeded. There were “angels which kept not their first estate,” neither did Adam keep his. Whatever the position in which man was placed, he always failed. Nadab, Abihu, Solomon, were not able to keep the estate in which they had been placed. Satan always seeks to make us fall. Hence, although God brings into blessing, He brings us also into trial; yet we know that “He who hath begun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” If Jesus leads His sheep out, “he goeth before them.” Satan rises up to make us fall if he can; but man must in this world undergo the temptations of the devil. Well, Christ also underwent them, and in that

position He acted as we ought to do ourselves. He does not at first say to Satan, “Get thee hence”; but He places Himself in the same position as ourselves, and He fasts forty days and forty nights. But He is there with Him who said to Him, “This is my beloved Son.” He was conscious of being the Son of God; yet, as man, Satan begins to tempt Him. Do something, he says, inconsistent with your position, something that is not obedience, to please yourself, to satisfy your own will. “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” But Jesus answers him, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

If Jesus had obeyed Satan as the first Adam did, He would have fallen; but He could not. Grace places Him in all the difficulties in which we may be found ourselves. What is precious for us (it matters little in what circumstances) is that in Jesus we find not only life but also the maintenance of that life.

I have life, because God gave it to me; but in a practical sense, if I do not eat I cannot live; John 6. There is not in our souls one single spiritual quality but what comes from God. And, besides, see how Jesus acts practically. There is not a single word in the book of God which cannot feed our souls; and therefore it is important for us to know how to handle that word by the power of the Holy Ghost, in order to be enabled to keep Satan at a distance.

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning

thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan quotes to Him a promise, but Christ will not abandon the position of obedience, and He answers him, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We have here a principle of the utmost importance. We have indeed the whole word of God, as a means to gain the victory over Satan; but it is in the most simple obedience that we find strength. If Christ has not a word from God, He does nothing. He came to do the will of His Father; and if that which He is asked to do is not according to that will, He does not act.

The true affection of Martha and Mary leads them to beg of Jesus to come, saying to Him, "He whom thou lovest is sick." This appeal was very touching; but the Lord does not respond to it immediately: He had received nothing from God, and He does not go. He does not listen to His natural affections. He had indeed healed others that were sick; but if He had healed Lazarus, Martha and Mary would have learnt nothing more. Jesus then suffers Lazarus to die, and allows their heart to feel all the bitterness of death, that they may learn that the resurrection and the life are there.

Such is the obedience which is the principle of the life, and not the rule only; and, as a Christian, I ought to do nothing but what God wants me to do.

But besides I find here another important principle, which is, that I should have in God such perfect confidence that I never need to make a trial of it. It is tempting God not to have the certainty that He loves us. I ought so to reckon on His love and faithfulness as not to need even to think of it.

Again, Satan says to Jesus, “Cast thyself down.” Ah! I need not do it, thought Jesus; I know full well that God will keep Me. The Jews said, “Is Jehovah amongst us, or not? “Well, in that they tempted Jehovah. We ought to have such assurance in God as to be able to think of nothing else but His will.

As soon as the devil said to Jesus “and worship me,” then it is plainly Satan, and the Lord answers, “Get thee hence… Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

The two great principles in which Jesus walked are obedience to the word without having any will, and perfect confidence in God. We also can reckon upon God, because we are sure to have Him for us.

I would also call your attention to the way in which Jesus placed Himself in our position. We see Him taking His place with sinners who needed repentance, but in the act which was the beginning of the divine life in them, associating Himself with them in that baptism where their heart responded to the testimony of God about their sins. They were truly the excellent of the earth, those poor publicans and sinners.

Jesus is found in the position of the obedient Son, and thus fulfilling all righteousness. Heaven opens. Is the temptation there? Jesus is found there also. He is everywhere in order to sympathise with sinners. When He presents Himself in this world, it is God Himself who comes, and He shews in Him all that He would put in us. It is a God who has placed Himself in such a position that flesh finds nothing there. One must absolutely learn that it is the heart which must value God in His love, in

His holiness, and in the midst of a world entirely lying in the wicked one.

How blessed to have Jesus! He puts Himself in our place; and we have to do with a God who has manifested Himself in the midst of the world, and who would have us for Himself, but without sin. Having put away our sins, He draws us to Himself, but without sin, to bring us to enjoy what He is, in spite of every obstacle, and of all that is in the flesh. He would have us to enjoy perfectly that God whom, by His grace, we have known as He is.

May God grant unto us to value the perfect beauty of that Jesus who came to us! We know Him. Ah! how happy are we to be enabled to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him!”

May God shew us all the perfection of Jesus, and that even in temptations; for we shall find the beauty of One who will not forsake us up to the time He will have placed us in the same glory with Him!

Come Unto Me

Matthew 11:25-30

The Lord, though deeply and thoroughly sensible of Israel's rejection of Him, bows completely to the will and wisdom of God in it. (See Isa. 49.) "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." In this His blest supremacy was fully shewn. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." The knowledge of God makes all necessarily good to us, for it comes from Him. It may be very contrary to our nature. To Jesus men's rejection of His message was of course painful. It threw Him on the sovereignty of God His Father whom He knew, in the fact that His Father had hid these things from the sages of the world, and revealed them to the despised and weak. He acknowledged the Father in the thing done, and in its suitableness to the whole order of God's dealings in such a world. That of course was all that the Son of God, or we taught of the Spirit, could desire; but it was in circumstances which required perfect submission of heart and will.

But this perfect submission of the Son gave rest, and brought His Person out to light. If He was thrown entirely on the Father, it was because He was Son, and because of His entire rejection in that character, in which, while perfect and shewing who He was, He had not taken His glory, and would have taken but the earthly dominion. The secret was that this was but "a light thing." All things were delivered to Him of His Father, and by reason of the very glory of His Person,

being Son of God, no man knew the Son but the Father. His service now was to reveal the Father in the prerogative of grace. For none knew the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. "Come unto me," says this only patient witness of love—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Here I am, the rejected One, to whom in sure title all things are delivered of my Father; but One whose heart has bowed in all long-suffering of love, who has learnt submission, who has felt what it is to be pained and scorned and outwardly to find no refuge but submission. Come to Me. Men may have rejected Me, but I am the Son, and none knows the Father but as I reveal Him. Whosoever is burdened and passes not on with this haughty world, whosoever labours and is heavy-laden, here I exercise My love. "Come to me, and I will give you rest." I have learnt how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. (Compare Isaiah 50 and the end of Romans 8, with its full extent of blessing to us.)

It was the Lord's submission under such circumstances which brought the sense to His soul, and the revelation to others, of a much better portion than that of Messiah according to the law and the prophets. In regard to this, so to speak, He was rejected, and blessed be God for it! He had manifested patient gracious love to the nation, but they repented not even where His mighty works were done. The dispensation, although Messiah came in Person, ended in failure. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." He had stretched out His hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people. When He came, there was no man. For His love He had hatred. Reproach broke His heart.

His hopes for the people, the title that He had, the title of His own love, were cast aside. Still there were babes who saw what was hidden from the great. “So it seemed good in thy sight,” was the hinge of the Lord’s comfort. This was enough. But what follows on this rejection? “All things are delivered unto me of my Father”; a wider, fuller, and more real glory. Yet, high as He is, He bids all come and declares He will give them rest—the rest of the revealed Father’s love.

There is none else to come to. All have proved faithless. Come to Me! Who could say this but the Son of God? Who could give rest to all that come but the Son, Jehovah Himself? But One will give rest freely and bountifully, the meek and lowly Son of God. He gives rest supreme, as one who knew what peace was in trouble as none ever did. He speaks the secret of it to others. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” It is not now “I will give.” That He could do as Jehovah and God the Lord; that He would do. But the word here is, “ye shall find.” I have learnt the way. (“Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.”) It is found in the path which Jesus has trodden. He alone trod it, or could tread it, perfectly in this world.

And yet it is not violent or laborious. In one sense it is easy, as the Lord says. Submit! Say, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Such is His yoke, and thus we learn of Him, who ascribed all to the Father, not to the circumstances. Hence He gave thanks to the Father always for all things, as we may and ought to do in His name. “It seemed good in thy sight.” That was enough. It was perfect submission, and the Father beamed out in it. Its value hangs on the perfect

knowledge of sonship. The whole is most blessed, and to be learnt only in Christ. The infiniteness of the Son's divinity was kept up, in His humanity, and therefore apparent humiliation and present inferiority, by His absolute inscrutability therein thus specially and signally maintained; while His oneness with the Father was made known in His competency to reveal, and supremacy of will in revealing, the Father. Both hold their place most beautifully, maintaing the Person in the glory of communion with the Father, and the inscrutability of God thus manifested while the Father was revealed.

How wise, perfect, singularly divine, is Scripture! There is nothing at all like it. No wit of man could have framed such a sentence as that.

Jesus The Sufferer

Matthew 26

I feel some difficulty in speaking of the subject before us here, not as to the doctrine itself but simply for the excellency of it; for where Christ is presented in His own perfectness all our thoughts are so inadequate. The excellency of the Lord so surpasses all our thoughts. He is sufficient to be the Father's delight: surely He ought to be ours. But it is of importance that our hearts should be occupied with Him, and this in His low estate. He is at the right hand of God now: we should look at Him in glory that we may be changed into the same image; but when we look to be the same mind as Christ, we must look at Him down here. Thus in Philip-pians 2, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" —when was that? When He who being in the. form of God in all the glory up there thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; then when He was a man, found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are the two steps as it were as He is descending: first, when being in the form of God He came down to be a man; and then when He who so humbled Himself became obedient unto the death of the cross.

This is the way in which He came from the actual glory of God—came down: nothing stopped Him even then. But here He is before men. Putting away sin He was alone with God. It was all darkness: man had done his worst, and Satan. It was what the twenty-second Psalm

brings before us when He speaks of the bulls of Bashan (v. 11-18). “But be not thou far from me” —it was an appeal to God in what I may call human trials; He was cast into that—all this wickedness; His rejection in His perfectness cast Him upon God; and then to find He was forsaken of God! There we get the efficacy of the sacrifice in putting away sin. But it is the traits of Christ’s character in the path I desire to speak of.

If we come to the cross, we must come by our wants and sins; no one comes truly, unless he comes as a sinner whose sins brought him there. But when we pass through the rent veil into the presence of God in perfect peace through the efficacy of the work He accomplished, and look back at the cross by which we came, in contemplating it in a divine way we find that the cross then has in it a glory and excellency all its own, of which everything in God’s ways is the result—even the new heavens and the new earth. God was perfectly glorified in it. It was the climax of good and evil: all was met there. We must come to the cross as sinners to find the good of it; but if we have found peace by it, coming into God’s presence reconciled, it is everything we shall see for ever. We never shall forget the Lamb that was slain. But still we can contemplate it in a divine way.

I get: in the cross the perfectness of man’s sin, positive enmity against God present in goodness. Nothing would do for man but to get rid of Him— “Him ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” “If I had not come and done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin,” then they would have been justified in rejecting Him, “but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” There I get the extreme of man’s wickedness: when God was

presented in goodness, it only drew out his hatred. The power was present in Christ to meet all the effects of sin by His word: the manifestation of it drew out the enmity of man's heart against Him, and they crucified Him. There you get all that man is brought out in the presence of God. He had broken the law before; and now God had come in in perfect goodness and power (power that could remove all their distresses), but it was God's power; and they would not have it, they crucified Him. On the other hand we see there all the power of Satan: therefore it says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out": they were all led by him against Christ: "this is your hour and the power of darkness." He had overcome him in the temptation in the wilderness; it is said in Luke he departed from Him for a season. Now He says, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me ": he who had power over the earth (for Satan was really the prince of this world) had come back and succeeded in moving up the hatred of man's heart against Him.

But now see the absolute perfectness of the second Man — "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." I get in man (more than man) perfect love to the Father and perfect obedience, and when He had the dreadful cup to drink (mark the absolute need there was of it!) that perfect obedience and love to the Father made good in the very place where He stood as sin. On the other hand in the cross I find God's infinite love and grace abounding over sin: perfect love, giving His Son for us; and then at the same time perfect righteousness judging against sin, and God's majesty vindicated. "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." I see thus perfect evil in man and Satan, perfect good in man (but He was God), and perfect love in God, and righteousness in God against sin when it was met as such, all brought out in the cross; evil and good meeting there. And it is what has laid the immutable foundation in righteousness for all that will come in in goodness and blessing in the new heavens and new earth, resting not upon responsibility but upon the accomplishment of the work the value of which never can be known.

The more we think of the cross (we have come as sinners needing it, but as Christians, reconciled to God, we can sit down and contemplate it), we see it stands totally alone in the history of eternity. Divine glory, man's sin, Man's perfectness, Satan's evil, God's power and love and righteousness, all were brought out and met there. Accordingly it is the immutable foundation of man's blessing, and of everything that is good in heaven and earth. Then, when our souls are reconciled, we look at Him and learn of Him: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest." He sees that the world had given Him up: there was no rest upon earth. He searched with wonderful patience for a place of rest, but there was no such thing to be found. He knew it, and had tried it; the Son of man had not where to lay (not merely outwardly) His head, but to rest His heart; no more than Noah's dove found rest for the sole of her feet. "I looked for some man to take compassion, but there was none." Yet feeling this, it is just there He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you

rest: take my yoke," etc., "and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I desire then that, while we rest in the blessed efficacy of the sacrifice, our thoughts should be formed by the blessed One—that is the practical secret of going through this world; "He that eateth me shall live by me." No doubt the taste ought to grow continually in us. There are the two sides of Christian life; if it is to give courage, victory over the world, I look at His glory as in Philippians 3. There it is the energy that runs after to win Christ at the end, counting all else dross and dung. In the second chapter it is the other side, not the object, but His lowliness in coming down is set before us.

In Matthew He is specially the victim. All through in a wonderful way you get His entire submission, but along with that, what is most striking, the depths of His path of suffering. Thinking of the cup He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." In Luke we read of His sweating as it were great drops of blood; it is as a man there. But you find this extreme sense of what the terribleness of God's wrath was. In the measure in which He knew what it was to be holy, He felt what it was to be made sin before God. In the measure in which He knew the love of God, He felt what it was to be forsaken of God. His suffering was in that sense perfect, infinite, in that He was contemplating it with His Father. Looking at it with Him, He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." You find His soul going through this utter depth, so that He sweat as it were great drops of blood; but when He comes back to His disciples, there is not a trace of it. He speaks to them as graciously and tenderly, entering into their thoughts as if there was no cup at all to drink. "What! could ye not watch with me

one hour?” It is wonderful to trace this, you will find it all through Christ’s life, perfect sensibility to all that was around Him (except in the extreme case when He was forsaken of God), but always Himself—never governed by it though He felt it all perfectly. The instant He turns round to the disciples, He has nothing to do but manifest the greatest tenderness and kindness. You see it all through; even before Pontius Pilate He says nothing, He is as a lamb led to the slaughter; as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth; He was dumb unless kindness and good was to be done to another: then He is as if nothing was happening, perfect goodness, perfect sensibility to all. It is His perfect submission, His perfect sense of the dreadful thing He was just about to go through we see; yet, because He felt it entirely with His Father, He could turn round and be just as perfect as to it with His disciples.

Now they come to take Him. He looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters but found none. He is God over all, yet still and thoroughly a man. Yet, as another has said, He never asked them to pray for Him; but says, “Tarry ye here and watch with me.” To me it is most precious to find thus, that He who was with God and was God made flesh, felt as a man in everything. When asking His disciples to watch with Him, He knew the world was against Him: He looked to those that He had been most with, that they should be with Him. But He must have nothing. He was tested and tried to the last degree of human suffering and sorrow, standing alone in this, praying in an agony and alone. Where were the people that were going to prison and death with Him? They were asleep, deceived; asleep in

the presence of the glory of the kingdom on the mount, asleep in the garden! That shews what poor things we are—not sin exactly; but it shews what Christ was to have as His portion in this world; none to sympathise with Him. Mary of Bethany was the only one, but for the rest never one had sympathy with Him; never one that wanted it that He had not sympathy with. Moved by Judas they say, “To what purpose is this waste?” What kind of hearts had they? It is just there God gives testimony to Him. In John (chap. 11) you have testimony borne to Him as Son of God in raising Lazarus. God would not allow Him to be rejected unless there was this testimony. Then Mary puts this ointment upon Him; and when all were against Him, the Greeks come up desiring to see Him; and the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” There is that care in which God secures a testimony to Him; but I do not think you will ever find another instance of sympathy with the Lord’s heart. How would you like that? It is dreadful! It was a dreadful world to Him. He was perfect and went through it. Here at the very moment that He asked them to watch with Him, they are asleep.

Then He goes all alone with His Father, going through it in spirit with Him. Now, that the answer to that cup might be fully drawn out, He cries, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt.” It was not possible. “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Now having been in this agony He comes back to His disciples and says to them in the gentlest way, “What!

could ye not watch with me one hour?" What gentleness of grace— "watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Now He is thinking only of them. Where is the cup? He had gone through it all with the Father, and therefore His heart is ready in service; even at that very moment He is ready for any service. If we in our little measure carried all our exercises, our little troubles, to God, to go fully through all with Him, our hearts would be all free and happy to turn round and care for others.

The depth of His misery He went through perfectly in His spirit with God; it was fully out with God: and for that reason being thus fully out, He could turn with perfect peace to say to others, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." It is the only place you get His sense of where He was—His saying, "Watch and pray." Everything that meets us is either a temptation or an occasion of obedience. It was to Him an occasion of perfect obedience: "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it? "Everything you meet with is a case in which you serve Christ or do your own will, and this is entering into temptation. See how He speaks in grace to Peter: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Oh I know you love Me; your hearts are all right, but it is this poor weakness. What perfect grace! Counting on their hearts in one sense when the temptation was coming; and when they had totally failed, He thought of the danger to them and says as to it, "Watch and pray … the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"; when the instant before His sweat was as it were great drops of blood. What perfect submission! What lowliness of heart! And therefore what perfection of service, of love to God and to others! Just what we should do. "He went away again the second time and

prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, behold the hour is at hand." You have no need to watch now; the time for it is over.

All through this is the character of Christ—He had gone through it with His Father. On the cross it is—as in all the rest—entire complete submission. He is a victim here, led as a lamb to the slaughter. Even with Judas—"he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he: hold him fast." It is terrible to think of Judas urging them to hold Him fast! In Judas you get lust of money; you see a progress of sin. He was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then Satan tempts him to betray Him, I do not doubt with the idea that He would get free. Then after supper Satan enters into him, and he was hardened against all natural feeling, for many a bad man would not betray his friend by a kiss. "And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took him."

Then we get simple submission on the part of Jesus, meek and lowly in heart. He might have had more than twelve legions of angels; "but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Mark what is most striking here: at this last wonderful moment when He was going to drink that cup of wrath, when the Word, the blessed Son of God as a man, was going into

that which none of us can fathom, that there is nothing like in heaven or earth—to endure that which was due to sin—the Scriptures, the word that God had spoken, must be fulfilled. What a testimony of their being the expression of divine thoughts—of His Father's mind, even to the Lord Himself! And so they ought to be to us. When Satan came, he gets a text— "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When Satan comes again, "It is written." Now at this last moment the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Scripture to Him sufficed as the expression of God's mind. He was in perfect infinite communion with the Father. Look at the gentle patience with which He speaks to the multitudes— "I sat daily with you teaching in the temple and ye laid no hold on me."

In John we look at the divine side of it, "No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." The time was come, "All this was done that the scriptures might be fulfilled." What a scene of obedience, of perfect submission to God's mind! The moment it comes to this point, "all the disciples forsook him and fled." He was to have no comforter. When He is brought to the chief priest, He answers nothing until the high priest adjures Him. If a soul sin and hear the voice of swearing, etc., is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. So He utters it then: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." On His own testimony they condemn Him. He was the truth, and was put to death for being the truth. It was the same way before Pilate, who asks, "Art thou a king? "Jesus answers, "Thou hast said." We have seen

the perfectness of Christ with His Father in all the depths of that which He had to suffer; also His way—the same blessed way—before men. “It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him.” In every circumstance He went through all that was most absolutely painful to man’s heart, and at the same time was there the expression of divine goodness.

I will now just look at the same scenes as they are presented in John and Luke. In John it is the other side of these truths; it is all through the divine side. When they come out to meet Him, He asks, “Whom seek ye?” and they went backward and fell to the ground. Looking at it as a Man, He had only to walk away. It is the divine side of power, while we see His absolute submission as man: “therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down and power to take it again.” He says the second time, “Whom seek ye?, And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.” He puts Himself freely forward, the divine Person giving Himself, and lets the disciples escape. There is no attachment to Himself manifest on their part; but He fills the gap, and they are safe. It is the same on the cross: there is no cry of “my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” there; it is His divine perfectness above it all. “After this [having committed His mother to the disciple] Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.” Then He said, “It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up

the ghost.” When all that the Spirit of God had said would come was fulfilled and finished, He gave up His own spirit to His Father—it is the divine side of it all you see in John.

In Matthew we get the victim; He is the lamb going to the slaughter. But I must say a word on Luke.

In Luke we get the perfect blessedness of the Lord and His sufferings in Gethsemane more fully than anywhere else, but on the cross not one expression of sorrow; He is fulfilling Scripture. Just as in John we have seen the divine side, here I find Him still more distinctly brought out as a Man. “Being in an agony,” in deep affliction of soul, He is cast as man on His Father— “he prayed more earnestly.” So great was His confidence, perfect in His agony. It is there we find “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,” and an angel from heaven strengthening Him. So also in Luke you get Christ praying much more often than in the other Gospels, because the object is to present Him to us as Son of man. On the cross you do not get one expression of sorrow—He had gone through it perfectly (I speak of the cup). “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is not in Luke. The sorrow was there, it is true, but it is not that side. We get then the perfectness of Jesus who had gone through it all with His Father in the garden. And so entirely is He above it that at the close occur the words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this he expired.” We have the blessed Lord thus presented in these various characters.

John gives a divine Person: “as soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground”; He could have gone away, but it was not for

that He had come: “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” You see divine power and the divine perfectness of love, not exercising the power, but putting Himself forward to stand in the gap that they might escape. And on the cross He gives up His own spirit. In Luke I find His own sorrow and suffering as man in Gethsemane, more than in the other Gospels: and on the cross above all the circumstances He commends His spirit to the Father. In Matthew He is the sheep going to the slaughter.

The more we look to follow the blessed Lord in His path here, the more our hearts are bound in right affections to Him. He stood alone, ever as a man down here perfectly alone; and there is nothing more trying. “All ye shall be offended because of me this night.” Again He says, “Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me” —nobody else! He looked for compassion, and got none; for some to watch with Him, and they fell asleep: to stand by Him, and they all forsook Him and fled. He is betrayed with a kiss. He felt it all: it was not an enemy, but thou, a man, my companion; “yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted which did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” Follow Him all through: it puts down the pride of the heart; it sets us men very low, but it sets Him as man in a wonderful perfectness; not man in the glory, but a man going through everything that could test the heart in the purest possible way; a man tested in every possible way, bowing His head as a victim, feeling it so that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, going through it all as man so that our hearts might follow Him— going

through every depth, and we poor creatures only standing by to look at Him. It is well if we are not asleep too! That is where it draws out the affections. It sifts the will. The will and affections never go together; will is self, affections rest necessarily in another. He is the perfect object— "therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." To see Him in the meekness of His path giving Himself for us, never turning Himself aside, perfect in going through all, just as quiet with Him as if nothing had happened. He suffered it so with God. We want our hearts to get right; we want our wills to be broken down; if we go and look at Christ as thus presented to us in Gethsemane, can we seek to satisfy the will now?

Thus I get what is outside myself as an object that sets my affections perfectly right, and that does not leave a possibility of my will working. Looking at One that is beyond me, I find One that does not leave the possibility of the working of my will, but that draws out the energy of the affections of my heart and sets my will aside. He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me": so blessed was it, so perfect was He in it, that it gave a cause to God to love Him. Only divine perfectness could give a cause for divine love. The heart knowing that He is now in glory gets filled. "I am the bread that came down from heaven," that we might abide in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are to be like Him in this character—He humbled Himself, He went always down till God took Him up. Are we content to follow Him? Looking at Him and seeing His perfectness, are we content to have all our affections filled with Christ, and no will at all? We are going to be with Him for ever; and we can enjoy what

He is in heaven, in which His perfect blessedness is before our hearts and has been tested by us. How far have our hearts tasted of that bread, and how far are we kept, our wills subdued and occupied with Christ? It is what God the Father delights in. There is the efficacy of His work as the foundation; but how far is Christ Himself the object of our souls' delight, dwelling on Him so that they are kept awake? There is nothing that forms the heart, breaking down the will in us, like the delight that we have in Christ in fellowship with the Father.

The Lord give us while resting in His precious blood to go and contemplate Him, feed upon Him and live by Him: "He that eateth me, even he shall five by me." See Him the lowly blessed patient One at God's right hand now, the One that God has given to keep our hearts right in the world of folly and pride. The Lord give us to live by Him.

Christ Dealing With Conscience And Heart

Mark 7

It is said that the Lord is the truth, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”; and He does bring out everything in a remarkable way. He shews out what God is in Himself, and what man is; and God’s grace has come with Him: “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

In this chapter we find truth first, truth as to man’s condition; but there is also the grace of God’s heart. It is a great thing to have the two together. If truth had come without grace, we could not have borne it a moment. Man is a sinner utterly unfit for heaven; but it is immense comfort that grace and truth have come together. God’s two essential names are Love and Light. If we had not love with light, it would have condemned us; but we have perfect light in presence of perfect love. Our comfort is that light does come and reveal everything. Being in God’s very nature, we cannot separate the two things, light and love. Just the same things appear in the details of the Christian’s life.

In many instances in Scripture we see how light penetrates: but there is an attractive power along with it. There is never real working in man’s soul without attractive power. The Christian stands “accepted in the beloved”; but the light of God comes in on all his ways. Take the prodigal: the light shines in and shews that he is a lost sinner, but there is attractive power too. “I will arise ‘and go to my father.” Take the woman that was a sinner. There was a sense of sinfulness because light

comes in; but the measure in which light shone into her soul cannot be separated from the love that came with it. Take Peter, falling at Jesus' knees, and saying at the same time, "Depart from me." Wherever the blessed God reveals Himself to our souls, nothing is left in the dark. If anything is not completely revealed it may come out in the day of judgment; but all is revealed. We have a perfect revelation of God as light and as love j and both are working in the soul.

If you have an idea of God's love without the conscience being reached, it may pass away as the morning dew. It is a blessed thing that we are brought to God, and that everything is fully out. The blessed Lord bore our sin; there was full light and full love at the cross. There are two parts in the gospel; one is the revelation of God; the other is the work done by the Lord standing as Man for us on the cross. First we find the revelation of God Himself, then the work of the Lord.

In the chapter I have read it is rather the character of the Lord as thus revealing God than the work which He has done. Here you see first, religious, very religious, man; the authority of the elders, the cleansing of the outside. It is much easier to wash one's hands than to wash one's heart. Man hides the state of his heart by all these outward things. The Lord comes in, searching and judging all the religion of man. Where the heart has not been purified, where the soul is not right with God, religion only hardens. Cain was just the expression of this; he was just as religious as Abel, and his religion cost him more than Abel's.

"Ought" is not the question now; there is another: what we have, done and what we are. The question is not

whether the law is right, but whether I am right. Abel recognised that he was wrong, a sinner out of paradise and without hope, unless God would save the lost. Cain's offering was nothing but perfect hardness of heart. If the light of God shines into my soul and finds nothing but sin and impurity, my conviction is that I cannot go to God in myself, unless He has found and given a blessed way. The real question for people's souls is, not what they ought to do, but what they have done and what they are. Think of the audacity of people coming to God as they are! Man is doing all he can; his thought is trying a way to satisfy God and purify himself outwardly —he feels he cannot inwardly. Here it is not professed religiousness, but the heart of man detected. The Lord goes right through this veil that is over the heart of man to the heart itself, and He tells what proceeds from it. What about the good? He says nothing of it whatever. In us dwells "no good thing." Man is a judged creature. He will set up man in a thousand ways; but God has judged him. There are the natural faculties of man—all true; but what has that to do with the soul? "When his breath goeth forth, all his thoughts perish."

When God was not dealing in a special way with man, he became so bad that God had to bring in the flood. Then, when He did deal in a special way, the golden calf was made as soon as the law was given. Last of all He sent His Son. We are now living in a world where man has rejected God in grace.

The first thing we read of man was that he departed from God; that was Adam. We see the same in Noah before, in Solomon after, as in the Israelites when they made the golden calf. When the priesthood was instituted, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire. There

was the patience of God going on saving souls all the time: I do not deny this. Man was lawless when he had no law; he broke the law when he got the law: he was God-hating when the Lord Jesus came into the world. It is better that the light should come in and shew me what I am.

God has since set out a meeting-place with man—the one way, the altar of the tabernacle. This is God's one meeting-point with man. If you do not come as a sinner, you do not come in truth, you do not come for grace. Having ripped up the veil with which man tries to cover himself, the Lord shewed what the heart of man is—a terrible picture, and terrible because true. He whose love spoke it, comes as light into the world. When light comes, I do not say, man is a sinner, but I am a sinner; "And we indeed justly." There is truth. So far we have it told, but grace had come to tell it. Then all dispensations are set aside, and God comes out as sovereign. There are two things in the gospel: God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and Christ made sin by God. Here it is God coming into a world of sinners.

People know there is a judgment coming, and they hope to get into some kind of preparation for that judgment. In contrast with this thought we have, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Those who are Christians ought to judge everything by the judgment-seat of Christ. It is very fruitful to the Christian, but is not in itself Christianity. The grace of the gospel is the very opposite to judgment. God comes into a world of sinners not imputing their sins. The gospel is this blessed truth, that God is dealing with men above all their sins. He comes into this world to shew holiness itself—a holiness that never could be

contaminated, and to bear love into a world of sinners. The Syro-phenician had no title to promises. Being of a doomed race, as to dispensation, she had only curses, the very opposite to promises. The Lord first deals with her on this ground: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” He brings her to her true place as He always does. You may try and spare the soul, but it must be in truth before it learns grace. Would you all say, “Yes, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master’s table? “She had not a word to say for herself; but she had a word to say for God. The publicans and harlots justified Him, and He justified them. So it always is where He works in grace and truth. I believe there is overflowing goodness for the children; but there is something for the dogs too. Could Jesus say there was not? It was real knowledge of God and herself.

The heart must be brought to this, “I have no righteousness, I have no promises, but I have God come into the world to us as sinners, and because we are sinners.” He never said “Come to me” till He had first come Himself. There was perfect light to convict, but the convicted sinner finds himself in the presence of perfect love. Have you ever said “Yes, Lord,” owning that you had no righteousness and no promises; only that you trust the perfect love that brought Christ into the world? Then the thought of what God is towards you takes the place of what you are towards God. Here I am, just as I am, in the presence of perfect love—love that cannot deny itself. The sinner finds he has a title in God’s heart when he can find none in his own. The woman that was a sinner loved much because much was forgiven her. It was a broken heart that met the heart of God, and the heart of God met a broken heart. It is wonderful when

the heart of man really meets the heart of God. The moment I am brought through grace into full distinct consciousness that there is no good in me, I find this; I find the perfect blessed love of God which has met me where I am in His presence.

At the cross you see sin meeting God, Christ being made sin for us, and the nature of God glorified—far more than merely sin being put away. While the Lord puts away sin, He prepares the way to the accomplishment of all the counsels of God. At the cross I find man made sin in the presence of God—a divine Person too, of course; and this not to screen but to sustain Him. There is love that has met me in my sins, and now there is righteousness in the presence of God, our Forerunner being there. The truth is there; but there is also the perfect love of God to put away sin. The heart is then free to trust the love unhinderedly.

Remember this, beloved friends: I am not my own at all now; I am in a new place altogether—a place into which I have been brought in perfect love, in divine righteousness, in the presence of God Himself. We have power now—the power of the Holy Ghost. The Christian is in this world to shew what Christ is. If you call yourselves Christians, you are the epistle of Christ: it is not merely said you ought to be, but you are. He sends you back to the world to witness what God is. You have responsibility as a Christian now, not as a man. All responsibility flows from the place we are in. If Christian responsibility is measured, as a child of God, nothing that does not suit the blood of Christ suits you. Is Christ the motive of everything you do, and this in things of every-day life? For you are not to be heroes and heroines. Is Christ all and in all? “Be ye therefore

followers of God, as dear children.” Walk as children of the Father.

The Sufferings Of Christ

Mark 14

There are two sides in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus; the sufferings which, during His career, He endured from men, and the sufferings which He knew when, taking the cup He had to drink, He bore the weight of the wrath of God.

The extent of man's iniquity appears in two ways; directly in all that man did in opposing and rejecting Jesus, but, above all, in the weight of sin the Lord Jesus had to bear when He drank the cup which the Father had given Him. For Him this was no light thing. He "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (v. 33).

Among those who may read this, are there not several who have never been saddened because of their sins? Is there anything which more lays bare the folly and levity of the heart of man? We who by sin have made so bitter and awful the cup which Jesus drank, we may consider sin as trifling in the eyes of God! But it is He—it is Jesus who found how horrible it was. If our hearts, miserable as they are, feel not sin, Christ felt it when He drank the cup for us and bore sin for us. If the heart does not understand the gravity of sin, not to the same point as Jesus knew it, but at least in some degree— if, feeble as it may be, the feeling of the gravity of sin is a stranger to us—we have not at all entered into the mind of Jesus.

It is very different to have the heart touched by these things, or merely to have the knowledge of them; for it is

not of this knowledge that I would speak here. To have the knowledge of the gravity of sin, of what sin cost Jesus, and not to have the heart touched by it, is even worse than to know nothing about it whatever. The state of the heart is, in one of these cases, even worse than in the other.

We are going to see feebly, very feebly, what were the sufferings of Jesus.

No one alas! can fathom to the bottom what those sufferings were. Every day you have thoughts, you say and do things, you have the sins which caused Christ to drink the cup and undergo the wrath of God. And, in spite of that, you perhaps think that you have not been so wicked! If you have the thought that Christ suffered for your sins, you will find that Christ did not judge that these sins were not most grave. He was sore amazed and very heavy for them. In the garden of Gethsemane Christ prepared Himself for others to meet with His God, according to the holiness of His judgment. His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” Matt. 26:38.

You who think to prepare yourselves to meet your God, have you these sorrows and that sore amazement? However vague may be the thought you may have of them, if you would learn what they have been, consider how in Gethsemane Christ was heavy and sore amazed at sin! And if you have not done so, no more have you appreciated the love of Jesus, nor the work of Jesus in grace. What is important and needful is, that our consciences should be touched by the thought that Christ was there for us in suffering, that He might bear our sins. If my soul is not brought to own it, it is

necessary that I should pass there myself, and suffer for myself the wrath and justice of God, such as Christ has undergone. If, when His Son, His beloved, who had no sin, was made sin for us, God had to smite sin in Him; if His justice and His holiness could not spare Jesus, think you to escape when you meet the face of God? And when I consider Christ suffering the wrath and curse, can I think that my sins are a trifle? The evil I had done was so serious in the eyes of God and in those of Jesus, that, when Jesus charged Himself with it, this evil made Him agonise, and caused to fall on Him the weight of God's wrath. Christ suffered on the cross the wrath of God, and why? Because you deserved this wrath and eternal condemnation?

Often, without knowing it, souls go to meet God with their sin upon them. Souls are often there without having the consciousness of it. Is it not true, for many among you, that you walk in this life to meet God, and to face His judgment, and that you fear nothing? And if it is thus, if you thus walk at ease in the face of this judgment, what is it to say this, except that the conscience is not awakened (nay, is even hardened) in spite of the agony of Jesus, in spite of the sufferings of Jesus, and in spite of which Jesus had to drink because of sin?

How beautiful it is to contemplate Jesus in the midst of this agony and of these sufferings! We see Him perfectly calm, and weighing with calmness the weight of the cup that He would drink. And in what circumstances? In the midst of all that which was calculated to break and bruise the affections of His heart. The more the world rejects and despises us, the more also have we need of affection. Jesus was full of goodness and of tenderness

for His disciples. He had loved and borne with them. What happiness to Him? What does He find in their midst, when the iniquity of man is about to be let loose against Him? What He finds is, that in the midst of those He loved, of those with whom He was at table, and lived as with His friends and companions (v. 18), Jesus can say, “Verily, I say unto you, one of you which eateth with me shall betray me.” Yes, one of you who have been with Me, one of you My familiar friends! His heart is wounded to the bottom. And as they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? Jesus shews how His heart is broken. “It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish.” One of you who have known me, who have seen me, and who were received into my intimacy. And Jesus was perfectly calm.

Verses 22-26. They went to crucify Him. Of whom does He think? Of His disciples. His body was going to be broken, and His blood shed. He was about to undergo the wrath of God, and He explains to them in peace the cost of what He is going to do for them. He transports Himself beyond those ages in which we live to the time when, satisfied with the travail of His soul (Isa. 53:11), He will drink anew in the kingdom of God the fruit of the vine (v. 25). How beautiful it is thus to see the Lord Jesus cast His glances through the ages! In the midst of the frightful circumstances in which He is found, His soul is calm enough to think of the everlasting happiness achieved for His disciples by His sufferings, and of the joy that He will experience in again seeing them in this state of glory. Without letting Himself be turned away by the thought of His sufferings, without agitation, without amazement, He contemplates in peace the value of His sacrifice, and the happiness of again finding His

disciples at the end. The treason of Judas, the denial of Peter, the forsaking of the disciples, the rejection of the world, the enmity of Satan, nothing troubles Him. “They sung a hymn” (v. 26).

Verses 27, 28. “Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended, because of me this night.” To be ashamed of Him, miserable as we are! And yet how this puts in relief the unutterable love of Jesus! He tells His sheep, who are going to be scattered, that He will rejoin them shortly, and that, as soon as He shall have completed all this work which is to save His own—to manifest alas! all the feebleness of the flesh in them, and all the perfection of obedience in Jesus, He will go before them into Galilee.

Verses 29, 30. Peter has the false confidence of the flesh. Does Jesus reproach him with it? What does Peter’s presumption produce in the heart of Jesus? He warns Peter, and prays for him. His love stedfast, unchangeable, never slackens. His heart is not discouraged. It is He, He who was to bear all the pain, who encourages and consoles His disciples.

Verse 31. It may happen to others beside Peter to say, “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise,” for “likewise also said they all.” Where Christ is honoured and owned, in the midst of His own, in the midst of such as confess His name, people may easily own Him, they may well have a Christ, though rejected of men: but in other society, in the midst of those who reject Him, how ready is the heart to conceal that it knows Him! And if you find it evil in Peter to have thus denied Him, is that less awful in you? And if when we are exposed to disgrace for His name, we do not love to

confess it, do we not deny Him as much as Peter? And it is done because the conscience is not awakened and touched because Jesus suffered for sin. What I desire is, that the conscience should feel the weight of the sin which made Jesus suffer, and this sin is yours: it is that your heart should be touched by the feeling of the love of Jesus, by this power of love, in virtue of which Jesus has charged Himself before God with the weight and the responsibility of sin, and in virtue of which He has borne all this weight, when He was “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities” Isa. 53:5.

Verses 32-39. Jesus tells His disciples to pray (v. 38). It is no more for Him the time of consoling His own. He must meet for them the wrath of God. He now reviews in spirit before God that which He is to suffer in drinking the cup of the wrath of God. Jesus, who was holy, and who had abode in the love of the Father, alone understood what was the holiness of God, and of what cost His love was. He was thence so much the more capable of alone understanding how horrible sin was, and how awful was the wrath of God. Indifference to this wrath cannot be found save in those who, being in sin, know not the holiness of God and who, strangers to God, have not tasted His love. It is awful to see us calm, contented with ourselves, and careless, when one knows the pangs which sin has cost the Lord Jesus, and why He was sore amazed and very heavy.

In His career of obedience Jesus suffered the contradiction of sinners. Never did He turn away from them, and never did He demand that such a cup should be taken away from Him. Why this then? Because this was not merely the cup of the iniquity of men or of Satan’s malice, but that of the wrath of God. In what He

had had to suffer before from men, He had the joy of accomplishing the will of His Father; but in this cup, which was that of wrath, there was not one drop of sweetness. Jesus prays that, if it be possible, this cup might be far removed from Him. And why impossible? Here is the reason. It is impossible that God should endure sin, and (since Jesus Himself was made sin for us) that the wrath of God should not be accomplished against sin.

Behold, dear readers, where you are! If Christ has not borne your sins, impossible that you should escape the judgment that God has pronounced against sin. It is a serious thought. Weigh this expression of Jesus: “If it be possible.” Certainly, if that had been possible, God would have heard Jesus, and He would have spared His beloved Son this unparalleled sorrow. Why does Jesus say, “If it be possible?” Because He who knew what the love of God is was also in a condition to know how terrible is His wrath.

What was the state of the disciples? They slept (v. 37). They had not enough affection for Him to watch one hour. Peter, who was willing to face prison or death, could not watch one hour. He had slept on the mountain during the transfiguration (Luke 9:23), and he sleeps in Gethsemane. This discloses, at the bottom of our hearts, the selfishness which is a stranger to the affections which make our hearts enter into the glory, as well as into the sufferings, of Jesus.

Verses 40-43. Was the love of Jesus disheartened or fatigued by all that? No; He must, He would, glorify His Father, and save His own, and He is not arrested by any difficulty. Impossible that we should be saved if He drink

not the cup, and He takes it. His love is mightier than death. He presents all to God. And from the moment He found it impossible for this cup to pass without His drinking it, calm again possesses His soul, and He takes it.

Verses 44-50. Of what is not the heart of man capable? God has allowed that all the perfidy of the heart should be laid bare, and that man should betray Jesus by a kiss. Not a pang, not a trial, that Jesus has not to endure in order to put His heart to the test. Without that, something would have been wanting to the cup which He had to drink. The trial of the Lord would not have been complete, and the question of man's iniquity would not have been cleared in the presence of the judgment of God; but Jesus has perfectly glorified God His Father in the midst of all the iniquity of man and all the malice of Satan. All that which could wound and crush, God's wrath, Satan's wickedness, man's iniquity, all bruised His heart to pieces, and all made the immeasurable excellence of Jesus to shine before God. The heart of Jesus was probed to the bottom. And what is, after all that, the position of sinners? There remains nothing but the cost and worth of Jesus for them; and in the eyes of God he that believes has all the worth of Jesus before God. He may present Himself before God, as loved of God, to the point that God has given His Son, and as having the cost of all the sufferings of Jesus.

Christ being presented to you, one of two things results; either you are guilty of the sufferings of Jesus, if you despise them; or, if by grace you lay hold of their infinite value by faith, you enjoy the effect of these sufferings. If you despise them, you will be treated as those who despise them. If by grace your eyes are open to

understand what Jesus has done, all the efficacy of His work is applied to you, and you enjoy the love of God. Either you are guilty of the sufferings of Jesus, or you enjoy the cost of His sufferings.

To confess what are your sins which have made Jesus suffer is really to believe that He has borne them. If you say, It is I who have made Christ thus to suffer, you also say, For me, I shall never suffer like that. If Jesus has borne my sins and undergone their consequences, I shall not undergo them, and I am delivered and set free from condemnation.

May God, by the feeling of the love of Jesus, touch your hearts, and make you conscious at what infinite price it is for you that Jesus presented Himself, in order to undergo the wrath of God! Oh, how precious is the love of Jesus!

The Robber Saved

Luke 23:39-43

We do not find, except during the three hours of darkness on the cross, that by any sorrow, weariness, or trial, the Lord Jesus was ever hindered from entering into the sorrow of others. None could put Him in a place, except when working out atonement, where He did not enter into human suffering: such unweariness of love do we see in Christ. Still He was light; and the more we look into His history, the more comes out the terribleness of the heart of man. It was never manifested till then. There are amiable natures and unamiable natures; but we never learn what the heart of man is till then. The thing that tries the human heart is, What is its object? not, What are its mere natural qualities? “There is none that seeketh after God.” Man saw no beauty in Christ. There is nothing in the heart that looks at the Lord so as to find in Him an object and a delight. There is no root till the conscience is reached; there may be attraction, but until the conscience is in the presence and sight of God, nothing is done; it is like the morning dew which passes away. “The same is he which heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself.”

Wherever the conscience is reached by God, there is some sense of goodness. Fear and terror may predominate, but there is attraction, and the heart cannot let it go. Faith always gets both: God is love, and yet He reaches the conscience. There is that which reaches the conscience, and that which inspires confidence, when the eye is on Christ.

On the authority of Christ Himself we have the certainty of salvation, that is, the Christian state; and no other suits the Christian. It is the only real Christian state which the word of God owns. The condition of the Christian is the effect of the work of Christ. It is not that there is no conflict, but that Another has taken my responsibility. My place before God is not the effect of what I have done, but of what Christ has done. Christ is the ground on which I stand before God: if it be so, what has He done for us? He died for our sins; then they must be put away. He is the Judge, but He cannot judge what He has put away. That we might walk with God in peace, He has sent the One who is to be the judge first to be the Saviour. Confidence is connected with righteousness now.

In the history of the robbers we have both sides.

In the other malefactor taunting Christ, we see how the heart of man is enmity to God. It was the triumph for the moment of the first man and of Satan too. It is sad to think what our hearts are if left to themselves. When the heart is let out, where will it stop? Satan is over us. Here then we have the triumph of the wickedness of man over the goodness of God. We cannot get rid of Satan’s power yet; we may bind it in a sense. The heart of man cannot bear the presence of God. There is not a vanity, not a bit of dress or money, that has not more power over the heart of man than all that Christ has done or is. You never yet found a man enjoying himself who would hear of Christ. The world would not have Him when He came in grace, nor would it now; but it must have Him when He comes in judgment. Take the majority of people in this city, and suppose them let into heaven! They would get out as fast as they could.

In the repentant robber, on the other hand, we see grace. He was crucified on a gibbet; but no matter, gibbet or no gibbet, when God and the soul meet, we have the simple and immense fact that the soul is brought at once into His presence. When God has dealt with the conscience, we make no more promises for the future. Unlike the naughty child that says, “I’ll be better to-morrow,” the soul confesses sin to-day. “Dost thou not fear God? “is the word, not “Are you not ashamed of being a thief?”

Have you ever been brought into God’s presence? “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.” If you have not been consciously in God’s presence, wisdom has not begun for you. Before Christ you must be, and you must be there in truth: the difference is whether you are before Christ in the fulness of His grace, or before Him in judgment. “We indeed justly.” He did not say that the world was guilty, but that he was the guilty one; it is not simply that sin is sin, but that I am a sinner. His thought is that he himself is justly there. It is a personal thing, not merely that God is holy, nor merely that the world is guilty, but that you are guilty.

“This man hath done nothing amiss.” He would guarantee the whole life of Christ—it contrariwise was a divine revelation to the soul. Who is there that is a Christian that would not lay down his life for this? “This man hath done nothing amiss.” It was a divine revelation of the perfectness of Christ’s Person. Could your soul answer for Christ in that way? Here is a man who does so when everybody is deserting Jesus: here is divine faith that He was perfectly sinless: his eye is opened, his heart brought to the consciousness of it. It is not only that he has the fear of God, but he sees the perfectness

of Jesus. Heaven was opened when Christ came out for public service; there never was a man before of whom God could say, “That is all I want.” Has your heart echoed, and said, “That is all I want”? Nowhere else can the heart so rest when we see the evil around, and the imperfections even of saints. His mind, having got hold of Christ, finds rest in Him. All around is a wide waste of waters, the heart would get wearied, but it turns to Him; and what a rest! Things would be unbearable but for this, but the heart, when it turns there, enters its sanctuary.

“Remember me,” said the converted robber. What sign was there that Jesus was Christ the Lord? There was not a cloud on this man’s heart, because he was divinely taught. One heart recognises that He is Lord in spite of everything. Pilate had washed his hands before all the people, and given Him up to the Jews; He was denied by one of His disciples, betrayed by another. Everything was against it. “Lord, remember me”; without a sign, the robber owns Him—how bright to faith! This man had no time to grow, or serve, or walk; but there was thorough conversion, full faith, a sense of what the Messiah was, and belief in His coming in His kingdom. Faith in itself is always certain; it may lead us to doubt about other things, but it is always absolutely certain. The believer has set to his seal that God is true; he does not say, “Perhaps He is true.” Wherever I receive it as the word of God, I receive it with absolute certainty; if it be not so, I do not receive it as the word of God at all.

“Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” His whole concern was that Christ should remember him. We see in him boldness with a bold sinner, lowliness as to himself, a sense of the perfectness of

Jesus and the knowledge that He would come in His kingdom. Happy are we if we are in the state of this robber! If you were in suffering, in trial, is it the only thing you would care about, that Christ should remember you?

Another thing is Christ's answer to him: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The character of Luke is to bring in present blessing. Before ever the kingdom came, he would go straight to paradise. Faith never looks at my heart, but at the object God reveals. When brought to the consciousness of what I am, my eye rests on Christ Himself. When the thief looks to Christ, he has Christ's answer. The rest given to our souls is the positive answer of God. We have the positive declaration that this robber, taken up for his crimes, was that day absolutely fit for paradise; so perfect is the work of Christ. Observe this robber, and the woman that was a sinner, how they understand Christ, because they want a Saviour! When I come to God with Christ in my hand (like Abel with his lamb), God says to me, "You are righteous." By faith I see Jesus is sitting on the right hand of the majesty on high; when did He go there? "When he had by himself purged our sins." Then I know my sins are purged before God. There is no progress here, no such thing as being fitted for heaven. Growth there ought to be in us, if left here, progress in likeness to Christ; but it is never in Scripture connected with fitness for heaven: Christ is my title. There is growth, but it is never treated as our fitness. This robber was fit for paradise at once; he went there, any way, that day; I suppose he was fit for it, since he was fit to be with Christ! Suppose I were to make all the progress the most blessed saint ever made, could I say I was fit thus

for Christ? God forbid! yet I am fit. Death for the believer is simply that he has done with all that is mortal and sinful.

How little the outside is the truth! The Jews sent soldiers to break their legs: how little they thought they were sending the robber straight to heaven, to be the first companion (there were Old Testament saints, of course) that followed the blessed Lord!

It would be well for us if we were as close to Christ as that poor robber. When the veil was rent, the whole thing was changed. The Old Testament was a declaration that man could not go to God in the light: God did not come out, and man could not go in. The gospel says that God did come out, and man can go in. “We have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Jesus.” If sin is there, how can I enter into the holiest? I am in Christ, not in the flesh. Our sins He bore; we have died with Him, and should enter into the holiest. Access is free, the veil being rent; we are accepted in the Beloved. Until the work was done, He did not give up the ghost. Now, as a present thing, we have boldness to enter into the holiest. Are you there? The veil is rent; you cannot have God afar off. There is no more a veil; we are before the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So full and complete is the revelation, that I see God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ, the witness of salvation accomplished. The glory is in the face of the One who bore my sins. In the presence of the absolute light and righteousness of God you must stand, or you cannot stand at all. The world may blind your eyes, but there is no veil on the presence of God.

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:1-13

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gpspel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter. The object of the Holy Ghost is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as this opening chapter of his Gospel. His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinct language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Ghost; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Ghost were not. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God who alone was the Word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into the world, but “in the beginning was the Word” when there was no creature. Before anything came into being that was made, the Word was in the beginning with God; not merely in God, as if merged or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before a creature existed. He “was in the beginning with God.” This is of immense importance, and with these truths our Gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterwards. “All things were made by him.” There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that

which had none, causing to exist by His own will and power. Now all things exist by the Word: and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit has added, “and without him was not anything made that was made.”

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made: “In him was life.” It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. “In him was life.” Not that this life began to be: all else, all creation, began to be; and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence. But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature.

It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but in Him was life. Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called the light of angels but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They were kept by divine power and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

And this “light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” It is striking to remark here the entire passing over of all the history of the world of

which we are apt to make so much, yea, even of the dispensational dealings of God with men. All is passed by very briefly indeed—those ages that man thinks all but interminable, in which God gave being to the creature and in which He may have changed over and over again the various forms of the creature, where science is endeavouring to pursue its uncertain and weary way. All this is closed up in the few words, “All things were made by him.” Scripture, and this chapter in particular, summarises it with striking brevity. “All things were made by him.” The details of it were left completely aside. What was good for us to know we are told in Genesis 1. There is nothing like that chapter even in cosmogonies which borrowed from it. And all that man has thought or said or written about a system of the world is not to be named with it for depth or certainty, as well as for simplicity, in the smallest compass.

But there is a reason why all such matters vanish after two or three words. It is because the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, is the object that the Holy Ghost is dwelling on. The moment that He is brought out creation just pays Him homage, owning Him to be the Creator, and is then forthwith dismissed. “All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made.” It is enough to say that He created all. He remains in His own grace. Now we learn what is the Spirit’s object in this. It was not to give us details of the creation; it was to acquaint us with Jesus as the light of men.

In what condition then did He find men? Were there not great differences among them, as was thought? There were some, most indeed, idolaters, yet wise and prudent, worshipping stocks and stones; and others who

were not idolaters but very zealous for the law as given by Moses. Not that a word is said yet about the law, nor about any differences, but that the Word of God was the light that manifested everybody: whether Jews or Gentiles, they were only darkness. It is not therefore only that the physical creation is passed by most curtly, but the moral world is closed with almost equal brevity. "The light shineth in darkness," and whatever the boasting of the Gentiles, and the law of the Jews (which was real as compared with the Gentiles), here all is measured and put out, as it were, by the true light, the Word of God. Jew or Gentile, they are but darkness, and the light shines in darkness, and spite of all its pretension and pride, the darkness comprehended it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." When the Holy Ghost is come down, things are also tested and convicted by Him; and He is brought forward by Paul somewhat as John here introduces the Son of God. It shews how poor all of man is in comparison with God, and how little he is capable of appreciating the truth in the Son or by the Spirit.

Then we find John brought in. The reason why he is singled out from all others I believe to be this: he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord Jesus. He would surely not have been named here if it were not, because he was the moon that derived its light from the sun—from the Lord Jesus just about to come. His was only a derivative light, and he seems brought in here because of that peculiarity. Other prophets were too distant from Christ, but John was near enough to be an immediate precursor of the Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men

through him might believe." It is no question of law-testing or proving. All this was very important in its place; but the glory that the law had is completely eclipsed by a brighter glory. Scripture therefore takes pains to say, John "was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light." He might be a burning and a shining lamp (as it ought to be in chapter 5), but he was only an earthly and derived light. "He was not that light." "That was the true light"; Jesus is the light, the true light, which (as rightly rendered) on coming into the world lighteth every man. It is speaking of the effect of Christ's coming into the world. It is not every man that cometh into the world; but that, when He comes into the world, He is the One that casts His light on every one here below. There had been a time when, as it is said in the Acts, God winked at the ignorance of men; but now everything must appear in its own light or rather darkness, because the true light was come; and therefore when He comes into the world He lights every man there: all are brought out just as they are and none can escape. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him"; and the awful result of this darkness was that "the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

The world was guilty enough, it was so dark that it did not even know Him; the Jews had abundance of truth by which they might know Him, but their will was still more set against the Son of God than even the poor Gentiles. "His own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [title or right] to be children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a blessed place!

and blessed to know that this is our place to which grace has entitled us now in His name! May we seek to make Him known to every creature with all our hearts in the measure of power the Lord has given us, honouring thus, and in every other way, the Lord Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost loves to honour.

We have other glories of His brought out afterwards. We hear of Him as the Son, the Lamb of God, the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost, the King of Israel, and the Son of man. All these are successively unfolded to us in this chapter. Indeed it would be difficult to say what glory of our Lord is not presented here except that of Priest and of Head of the church. John never gives us the priesthood of Jesus. He touches what is close on it, when He speaks in his first epistle of advocacy with the Father; but the business of John was to shew His divine personal glory, yet as man on earth. Priest was what He was called to be in heaven; and as Head of the church He is there also. But John shews us what He was in Himself as coming from heaven, and that He does not lose one whit of His glory by becoming a man. In His being Priest and Head of the church we see special glories which He received on going up to heaven, and these Paul develops fully. John’s point is God and the Father manifested on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

The Presence Of The Holy Ghost On Earth

Consequent On Christ's Exaltation To The Right Hand Of God John 1:29-34 This chapter is remarkable inasmuch as it brings before us the various titles or names of Christ, almost all that He is in His varied titles, unless indeed the relative ones. You do not see Him as Head of the church, nor as priest, nor Christ; but you get Him as only-begotten Son of God, who reveals the Father, Son of and King of Israel, the Lamb of God, Life, the Light, the Word, the Creator, the Son of man, the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost, all the names that tell what He is in His own Person. In an abstract way you have what His nature is, His personality, light, life: only that, when John brings in man's condition with the testimony to what man is as rejecting Christ, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

The three other Gospels present Christ to man to be received, and close with His rejection, but this Gospel takes up His rejection from the very beginning, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not; he came to his own and his own received him not," and you then have what grace does and the objects of grace distinct. After the abstract statement of what He was comes the testimony, not of what Christ was, but what He became. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." There His Person, as incarnate, is brought out, not what He was abstractedly but "became flesh." Then, in the verses I read, you get His work. You have thus what He is essentially and in His nature, then what He became—incarnation in a

word, and also His revealing the Father— “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”; and also we receive of His fulness. He becomes the source, and He is the fulness of which we have all received; and then in the verses read we get the work of grace from the very starting-point of the Gospel.

You get this work in two parts; it is the second I shall chiefly speak of; but the first is Christ as the Lamb of God, and then He is the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost. It is not that He does not exercise also His priesthood—He does; but it is not the subject here. I guard this because it is important to remember that He is Priest. But here He is the Lamb of God, and He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.

This last is a wonderful expression, and contains in it the whole power of our relationship with God. It does not weaken the truth that He is the Lamb of God; yea, it is as to us founded on it. He is that, as is said in Genesis 22, “God will provide himself a lamb” —One therefore that is fit every way, perfectly acceptable and accepted, as perfect for the thing He had to do as God’s mind was who gave Him to do it. The Son of God is the Lamb of God. Just as the first man brought in sin, so the second was to put it clean out of the way. Those who rejected Him, of course, as He said, died in their sins, but He is the One that takes away the sin of the world. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; that, and that only, will be the full result. The sacrifice has been made, the Lamb has been slain; but the grand result will be that God will have a heaven and an earth before Him in which there is not an atom of sin, but wherein shall dwell righteousness.

We had an innocent world, paradise: this was soon over; then a sinful world, though with grace working in it; but we shall have, not an innocent nor a sinful world, but a righteous world; and it will be founded on that which can never lose its value so that itself never can be touched. It is the immutable basis of God's new creation, which is therefore immutable in its blessings where all His ways are manifested. That will be the full result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first world was set in blessing, but it depended on the faithfulness of Him who was placed at the head of it; the final one rests secure on the value of that which is perfected, coming after a work finished and done, a work in which God has perfectly glorified Himself. The basis of the new creation on which it is founded is finished, finished completely and absolutely.

The work upon which the security (morally speaking) of the new heavens and the new earth is founded is finished— finished so that Christ who wrought it is sitting at the right hand of God, and sits there until His enemies are to be dealt with. The work is finished, nothing can ever be added to it, nor can it lose its effect with God; and the blessed result is that which will come in as I have said. The work is done: all moral questions have been settled at the cross, what sin is, enmity against God, what perfect love to God the Father and obedience in man to Him is, what righteousness against sin is, what love to sinners, have all been shewn in the same wondrous work. Unless in the cross, men try in vain to reconcile righteousness and love, love and God's dishonoured majesty, truth as to the wages of sin, and His goodness—all the attributes together.

If Adam and Eve had been cut off when they ate the fruit, it might be quite righteous (you might say they got what they deserved), but there would have been no love in that. Or suppose, on the other hand, every sin had been passed over, what people call goodness—the natural man would think this very right and call it love, but then sin would be no matter, and righteousness not exist; and so the majesty of God, which has been utterly trampled in the dust by the success of Satan with man, must remain so cast down; there would be no means of conciliating the righteousness and majesty of God with His love.

The moment I get the cross, all that is settled; it became Him; it became God, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering— that became God. His majesty is maintained in the highest way. The Son must suffer if He takes up this cause. Then I find perfect righteousness against sin, but along with it infinite love to me, a poor worthless sinner. There I get, consequently, the Son of man glorified and God glorified in Him, and all moral questions in presence of God's revealed nature settled for ever. All is perfectly settled according to God's nature and for God, and by that which passed between God and Christ alone, perfect consequently according to their perfection. As to myself, if I look at the cross, I say, the only part I had in it was my sins and the enmity that crucified Christ. I am put in my place and humbled, and yet I see the great righteous basis of all-divine counsels in it and infinite love to me; but this brings me to know myself too. Nothing ever shewed like the cross the full development and manifestation of evil. Let people say what they like, the perfect development of evil was there

on our part, and the full development of good before and from God.

When I look at the present effect of all that in this scene, in a broad sense there is none. The scene is not changed, looking as the general state of things. Christ has gone to heaven when He had by Himself purged our sins; but as to the state of the world at large there is no effect, though many souls are saved. You get new forms of evil—infidelity as to this love and righteousness, and so on; but as to the state of the world, it remains in the same state, modified only by the rejection of Christ. Sin has not gone out of the world; men are trying to bind it and restrain evil, as of old they bound Legion with fetters and chains; they have set to do their best, and a bad set-to it is, but there it is, to be bound. They talk of progress, and in a certain way, as to physical discoveries and conveniences, there is; but is there morally? I do not see any progress in the obedience of children, nor in the devotedness of servants, nor in faithfulness in all the relationships of life; but I see wonderful restlessness, and greater than ever.

There is progress in railways and telegraphs, and so on, or we might not have been here together as we are; but that has nothing whatever to do with the relationship of man to God or to his neighbour. Cleverness in what is merely material is neither here nor there as to moral state: you might get the cleverest man in telegraphs or science, and find he was a blasphemer or a man walking near to God; it has nothing to do with it. And, after all, when you die, what will it be to you whether there is a telegraph or not? The soul’s state belongs to another sphere of things, save as it ministers to his will and lusts, in which good and evil are brought to an issue

through the cross and God revealed in grace and righteousness, perfectly glorified (as indeed there only) as well as our sins borne. The work is all done and finished on the cross, and accepted too in righteousness; and Christ is sitting down at the right hand of God until He takes His great power and reigns. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, He will reign until all His enemies are put under His feet, and blessedness is complete in a new heaven and a new earth.

But then I get a second thing, which is that in order to do all this He became a man, and, consequent upon His going up to God, risen from the dead, the Holy Ghost is now come down. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth is consequent upon Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. His presence here is that which puts a man down here who has the Holy Ghost into association and relation with Christ in heaven. And so, further, you get the great truth that God now dwells down here on earth. And this is an immense truth; it never was the case before redemption. God never dwelt with Adam though He came down to visit him innocent, nor with Abraham. But the moment that Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, He says, in Exodus 29:45, 46, "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God, and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them." And all this was written for our admonition, and God shewed Himself in the shekinah glory of the tabernacle dwelling between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat.

Now, however, it is the Holy Ghost who is come down, and who dwells either in the individual believer or in the assembly of God, the temple of the living God; and the

consequence of this to me is that I have the knowledge of the whole value of the work that is done, and I have got, through the Holy Ghost here, complete and entire association with Christ where He is, and I rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Until that comes, God dwells already in those who believe in Christ. Mark how it comes in; He was anointed with the Holy Ghost; “And I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.” Before I get the baptising (Christ is not said to be baptised but anointed and sealed) on the day of Pentecost, Christ had been anointed and sealed. He had taken this place as a man, as the pattern of it all; as Son, as a man here, the place into which He introduces us by redemption, the relationship in which He is with the Father and into which He introduces us.

Is Christ alive for evermore? Well, He is our life. Is He righteousness? He is my righteousness; and, though all the results are not yet accomplished, we have certain knowledge of the work He wrought, and we now rejoice in hope of the glory. The heaven was opened, the Holy Ghost came down like a dove, and Christ took this place amongst us, the Son of God amongst men—us—Himself the expression of the place into which God by grace brings everyone that believes on Christ. You read in Proverbs 8, “I was daily his delight rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.” And when the Lord Jesus Christ became a man, or the Word became flesh, as set out in this chapter, we get the angels declaring God’s predilection as to the race of

men: is it not beautiful to hear them, with unjealous hearts, delighting in God's glory, announcing the blessing to others: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in man"?

I speak of the thing in itself, not of the accomplishment of the results, for the present effect was not peace but division; but, when His people take the first step in the right path in obedience to the word, He falls in with them, they indeed confessing sin, He fulfilling righteousness. And thus, at His baptism I get the blessed Lord, coming as a man, as He did publicly then, in full obedience, entering by the door; and He then receives the Holy Ghost, who comes down on Him as such. And how could He receive the Holy Ghost? Because He was righteous in Himself, and we through His work. He was both anointed and sealed, and thus we find Him attributing His works to the Spirit: "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils." It is remarkable how the Trinity is brought before us in this. The Son wrought on earth, cast out demons by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him, He did the works. His work shewed how the Trinity is brought out in specific connection with that purpose in man, through which the Son became man. It is first fully revealed in the passage in Matthew 3. Christ the Son was there, the Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father owns Him, a man on the earth, as Son. So through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, says Peter, with the Holy Ghost and with power.

I notice all this to shew how He who was God over all, blessed for ever, took, in sovereign grace, His part with man. This was the great preliminary path to all blessing. He upon whom the Holy Ghost descended and abode, He

it was who baptised with it: not that it was only this, for we must be sprinkled with blood to have it, and He must be glorified as man to give it. Hence, we read, He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, hath shed forth this. But here He entered truthfully on the path of all this, He associated Himself with the godly remnant, Himself to be the channel, through redemption, of His own blessings to others. Thus Christ was anointed as man and was baptised with the Holy Ghost. We enter into the intelligent place of the blessings which are ours in Him before the accomplishment of the result. We are brought into the same place and relationship, and know the fruit of His being the Lamb before the results are actually produced externally. But, further, before we arrive at the glory, He is entered as man, He is glorified, and so I get an object; I rest in the thought of being glorified with Him, but I cannot rest in myself. I look all around in the world and try everything in it; but Christ says “Are you weary of all that?” “Yes.” “Then you come to Me and you shall find rest.” There is that which gives the heart rest. You may be weary and heavy laden without being able to explain it; now, are you that? Christ is the true rest. God found His rest in Him, and never anywhere else. God could not rest even in the exercise of His love, or any object till Christ was there. He could exercise His love, but not rest in it; but in Christ God did find His rest. I do not talk of His own blessed nature, of course, sufficient to itself; but never anywhere else here could God find rest. And so can I a poor wretched creature, a vile sinner. Well, come, see a man that told me all that ever I did, and this is the One who can be my rest, for He knows all and is perfect love and grace to me when He does. As an object I have nothing more to seek, I have

found my rest where God found His, and I have found God Himself in love. As to my circumstances and sinfulness, I find a full discovery of all that, and at the same time in the Lamb of God, who meets it all and puts it all away for ever; and so through Christ I know God. Very glad I am that God does know all. Thus all was in that which He did, and now I can have truth in the inward parts in God's presence. Take the poor woman in the city that was a sinner: the Pharisee says, "If he knew what she was, he would not let her touch him; he is no prophet," but Christ shews He was a prophet, for He tells out what was passing in Simon's heart. He did know all: but there was that which Simon did not know, the perfect grace of God towards the sinner; and then He takes up the poor woman's case, and says to her, "thy sins are forgiven"; "thy faith hath saved thee" (this goes farther), "go in peace."

We have the real declaration of the Father in Christ, and His love shewn by the work in which righteousness was established: I find the perfect love of God, honesty in the conscience and heart by the knowledge of it, and I find these nowhere else. I can find no person that is perfect in searching my heart out to the bottom, and with perfect love to me, and that has the right to be perfect love to me. But I have got all that in Christ. I find this blessed One, the perfect sinless Man, and Him sealed with the Holy Ghost that I might understand He so came, and that I might be sealed with the Holy Ghost through the work that He has accomplished.

If an angel wanted to see God, he must look on Man, on Christ, "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Then, with all this

goodness towards us, where has this Man gone, the One who glorified God perfectly in the place of sin? He was God, manifested in love to man; and if you have not yet got the blessing of it, still it was God coming to win back the confidence of your heart to God.

The beginning of all sin was loss of confidence in God. The devil suggests to Eve, “Why should God keep back the fruit of that tree? He knows if you eat it, you will be like Him”; and so confidence was lost. But, if I do not trust God to make me happy, I must try and make myself happy; and thus enter lust and sin and transgression and ruin. But Christ comes into this world where I am a sinner, and in Him I get God winning back my heart to Himself, not by hiding my faults—I get them all told out and put away—and the confidence of my heart won, so that I can trust God; and more, I know God’s heart a great deal better than I know my own. I cannot trust my own heart a minute. Test it: I say I love the brethren; but am I not cold sometimes? I have a double heart (I do not say wilfully but there it is); and I must humble myself before God about it, but I cannot deny it. Do you find anything like that in God? I find the perfect love of God in the gift of His Son, and there is no double heart there. And so I get rest. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence before God.

But this is not all. If Christ was the manifestation of God in love to us, He was man made sin before God, and if, won by His grace to confide in God, you set out towards God, you will find the cross in the way, Man made sin before God; but then the whole question settled there, and, coming by faith, the question settled for me touching all my sins in His presence, settled by what is done and finished, and that according to the glory of

God's own nature; so that I can even look sin in the face fully, and find it has been judged for me, while also I have the perfect love of God resting on me in perfect holiness and righteousness, and I am standing in the light as God is in the light in virtue of that which is finished. Through Christ I am brought into God's presence, accepted in the Beloved, as white as snow, while God is perfect in righteousness in accepting me, and grace reigns through righteousness.

Thus it is we get the double character of Christ manifested down here: God in grace towards us; and man made sin before God, but as putting it away for us by His work in drinking the cup His Father had given Him to drink; and, mark, the only part that we have in that work is the sins that put Him to death; and the hatred that did it, when He gave Himself up to it in love. But this is all finished; and when Christ had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high; and thereupon not only is it the fact that the Holy Ghost comes down, but Christ receives it again, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." And I find this, that in virtue of that work of putting away my sins, and having cleansed me and washed me and justified me and redeemed me to God, the Holy Ghost also is given that I may go and understand and enjoy all that Christ is, all that Christ has done, and that He has made my portion in consequence. True, I am here in weakness, a poor earthen vessel that the excellency of the power may be of God; all quite true. But I have the relationship. I am a child, I want to be taught by my Father; and alas! it may

be sometimes a naughty child and I want to be whipped by my Father, but I am a child, a partaker of the divine nature.

Now, it is this distinctive character of the Holy Ghost come down that I want to speak of. It is what constitutes the state of the Christian. He is a man who stands between the first coming of Christ (and the work He then accomplished) and the second coming of Christ, when he is going to enjoy the glory; and, between these two, he has the Holy Ghost. He has all the benefits, not as to his body but as to his standing before God, of Christ's work. Look a little at that.

Him that has taken this place, as now redeemed—I speak of those who are believers—the Holy Ghost is come down to dwell in. You get it in the figures. When the leper was cleansed, he was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil (the figure of the Holy Ghost): the word of God applied to us in the power of the Spirit, the water—the blood, now the blood of atonement—and the anointing. Being quickened, born again of water by the word, must go first; and then the blood; but the Holy Ghost is there too, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Just trace that a little.

The first thing I find in the third chapter of this Gospel is, we are born of the Spirit, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and in that I get an immense truth that I have a nature capable of enjoying all divine things, which the flesh is not. I have often said, if you put a natural man into heaven, he would get out of it as fast as he could; there is nothing there that he likes: even an honest worldly man will own that. Then in John 4 there

is another thing: Christ speaks of the gift of God which should be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. It is not only life holy in its nature, but, in consequence of the Lord Jesus Christ having gone up, I have the whole power of life there, and I go right up into its blessed results, through the Lord Jesus Christ, who has associated my heart livingly as born of God with all the things that belong to one born of God; with that of which he that is born of God is joint-heir with Christ.

He became a man, and will be a man for ever. In one sense He will be a servant for ever. In Exodus 21 a Hebrew slave who had served seven years was to go out free; but if his master had given him a wife, and he said, I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free, then his master was to bore through his ear with an awl to the door post, and the slave was to remain so for ever. Now the Lord could have had twelve legions of angels, and gone out free. But He would not, and so He is a servant and remains so for ever. In John 13, “When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, and that he was come from God and went to God, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end”; and, “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself; after that, he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” He would still be a servant, could no longer (it is true) have part down here with them; but He would not give them up, and so they must have part with Him. They were clean by the word spoken, but in their path could pick up dirt. Dirty feet will not do for heaven, and the blessed Lord still does

the work of a servant. I, says He, am going to wash them. Peter hesitates, and the Lord says, If I do not wash thee, thou hast no part with Me. You are clean, but you are taking up dirt on your feet in the way; and so the Lord washes them. This is His present service. And in Luke 12 He says, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” “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.” As if the Lord should say, “lam going to be your servant in heaven.” We are going to sit down and eat things in heaven which acquire infinite value from His ministering them to us. The next thing is a clear distinct consciousness that the work is finished. The Holy Ghost is sent down from Christ when He is glorified and God has given the positive testimony that He has accepted the work and of that to which it leads. Christ has gone into the glory, and I am going to be like Him, and thus I get the blessed assurance of the efficacy of His work when He came first. He says, “Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” No question about that. He came to be a man, all alone, however, amongst men, and ever accessible until He had redeemed us, and now He has taken us into association with Himself, and I know it by the Holy Ghost. By the Holy Ghost also I know that I am in Him there now, as John 14:20. We have not yet got all the fruits, but I have the knowledge of the fruits of what He has done by the Holy Ghost. In John 14 He says, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto

‘myself, that where I am ye may be also.” This was the first great point and final result in blessing.

Then He shews them what they should have upon earth, meanwhile. They knew where He was going and the way, for He was going to the Father, and they had seen the Father in Him. The revelation of the Father in the Son gave that which was the highest heavenly blessedness, was the full revelation of all the blessedness that is to be theirs, and revealed the way, because in coming to Christ they had found the Father. Philip says, “Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” And now I know what the springs of blessedness are in heaven, because I have seen the Father in the Son. Do not believe for a moment that God has not revealed the things He has prepared for us. “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit,” and “We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

I find thus the Father revealed in the Son, but there was yet more present comfort by the Holy Ghost. They ought to have known the revelation of the Father in the Son, but one thing they could not know until the Comforter was come, and “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you.” You shall know that you are in Me. People tell me I cannot know, that I must wait until the day of judgment; but in that case I cannot have any peace here because I do not know how it will turn out then. Am I not to have part in the day of grace? and that is now. And what it is that I have? What I really have is that Christ has put away the very sins for which otherwise I should have to be judged. And more, I

know that I am in Him, and He is in me. But men say it is so presumptuous to say I am in Christ. Presumptuous! why, Christ told me I should know it; very much more presumptuous to doubt it.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” And do you think God dwells in me without my finding it out? I may not be able to explain it to another: that is a question of intelligence in Scripture and even of gift; but “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” The Holy Ghost dwells in us, and there is the power to overcome temptation, wisdom from God, power to realise the presence of Christ, to live looking on the things that are not seen, joyful liberty in our path with God. Mark the practical consequence of this knowledge as to the character of our walk. I say I am in Christ; but you cannot be in Christ without Christ being in you: then do not let me see anything else in you but Christ; do not let the flesh come out. We fail, I know, but that is the right practical consequence. So what is to be looked for in the Christian is that he is to be the epistle of Christ. This is my place, and the practical measure of my walk is that I am dead and the power of the Holy Ghost within so full that nothing but Christ is seen. We are in Christ and Christ in us.

And consequently there is another thing. If I am asked to prove the love of God, I say, “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us,” but, as to enjoying it, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the

Holy Ghost." I know the love of God, by His dwelling in me who is love: God is love, and the Holy Ghost dwells in me. Not that you cannot learn more, infinitely more. I know my Father, but there are ten thousand things in His mind that I do not know yet. For a man to say that he does not know his own father would be dreadful, though there are multitudes of things in his father's mind and character that he may not yet know. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "I am in the Father," that is Christ's own place, "and we are in Christ." This is not only the fact of acceptance but relationship, for we are sons. And the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of it. And what do all duties flow from? Relationship. You cannot have the holy affections and true duties of a child of God without being a child of God, and knowing that you are one. The Spirit of God "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," and so I enjoy the affections which belong to a child.

Now is that connected with coming before God as a Judge? It is, in virtue of Christ's work, which put away my sins; I am a child in virtue of that which has made me as white as snow. True, if I merely take a cold dead sense that I am safe, there is no affection in that. But our relationship with God and our Father is identified with our being safe. Christ's death for me is, indeed, a motive to make me feel thankful beyond all expression. But there is beyond this as present power that we are taken into an association with Christ, which is so complete, that we know—know now—that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." He would not leave us without our knowing

His love perfectly in the way that He has established me in blessing; and, while I have the perception of the glory and the earnest of the inheritance, the love of God is already shed abroad in my heart; the Holy Ghost dwells in me and gives me consciousness of all that has been done for me, of all that has been given to me.

And if this is true, if I have indeed come to Christ and drunk, then out of my belly shall flow rivers of living water— flow out, that is, to others. God first gives us to enjoy Himself: “we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and then there is the activity of His love reproduced in our little measure, though in the truth of its nature in us.

“You know Me?” He says. “Oh, yes,” I say. How do you know it? “Because I was a poor vile sinner, and Christ came and laid down His life for me.” “You know that? Then go and carry it to other people.” I was a poor sinner, and am made the righteousness of God in Christ. Think what a blessed place that is! And I have that blessed place before God, “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” and in spirit I can now enjoy it, and that is the place I get with God: as a son, as Christ is Son; as to relationship with the Father, “my Father and your Father.” And then He gives me a share in the activity of His love in carrying it out to others. “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Plainly this is not the Spirit as He wrought in them to make them believe, it is clear, for those who believed should receive Him; but, in virtue of the work of Christ gone into the glory, the Holy Ghost has come down and

associated me with Christ in all that He has as man, and then sends me to bear witness to others of it.

But if He takes the things of Christ and shews them to me, what is the effect on me as I pass through this world? “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now”; and, “we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body.” What was Christ in this world? and what does He feel about this world? Could He set it to rights? He could not. If He was love, could He look with indifference at its misery? Neither was that possible. His holiness and His love must be sources of sorrow in this world, as of blessed communion above whilst He was here. Having the Spirit of Christ I may be privileged to suffer for Him, I must suffer with Him; my heart takes up the voice of the groans of creation and carries them up to God. I may not know what to ask for as a remedy: there may be none here. But being here with the spring of divine love in me, the mind of the Spirit is there, the Holy Ghost intercedes in me according to God. It shews what an astonishing place we are in, what a wonderfully blessed place God has put us into while not yet in the glory.

Again, the Holy Ghost having sealed my pardon and given me the consciousness of my relationship as a son, with all that I am walking in in spirit, I turn to see the full effect before the glory which He has revealed to me is mine in possession. The Holy Ghost cannot reveal a glory to me which He does not reveal as mine; but these glories are given us because we are sons and are joint-heirs with Christ. We are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”; and, whatever the

Holy Ghost has revealed of all this blessedness, He reports it to me as mine. “To the glory of God by us,” it is said, and again, “which God ordained before the world to our glory.” 1 Peter 1:10-13 shews very clearly the order of the revelation of all this. The prophets of old “searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves” (not that they will not be there, but their actual condition is what he is speaking of) “but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” We have them not yet, but they are revealed and reported to us. Then “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.”

The Holy Ghost has been sent from heaven for the purpose of this revelation. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” The apostle does not quote the passage to shew it is our position, as so often quoted, but exactly the contrary. Such was the Old Testament state, but we have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. I have got into the relationship of a son and I know it by the Holy Ghost. My chief joy surely is fellowship with the Father and the Son, and this hereafter in glory in the Father’s house. Do we know nothing of what is there? Much, in one sense everything; it is revealed; but take yet another blessing besides God’s presence. The Holy Ghost shews

me another thing: there is not one of you that I shall not see perfectly like Christ in the glory. The Lord Jesus "shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." Think of my seeing Christ admired in all of you!

What is my desire now? That you may be like Him. That desire will be satisfied perfectly, and it is an immense joy. Nothing is too great for us to expect, now that we know that the blessed Son of God has suffered for us and been made sin. And see the way that Christ gives: Not as the world giveth give I unto you. The world gives, gives away: Christ never gives away. The way He gives is to take us into the enjoyment of all that He has Himself. He wants to have us in the same blessedness with Himself. "Peace I leave unto you, my peace I give unto you." He says, "My joy fulfilled in themselves." He says, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me," and "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them," and "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them "; but the way of it is, He has brought us into the joy of relationship to the Father with Himself. It is the Giver that makes the blessedness even more than the gift. Suppose my mother gives me a trifle: it is not the value of the trifle in itself, but the giver that makes the value.

And I know all now by the Holy Ghost, so that I abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. There are two kinds of happiness. There is the happiness of hope that we have; and what is the other kind? Rest in perfect affection; God loves me as He loves Jesus, and I rest in that. To talk about our love to anyone is no proof of love. The deepest affection may shew itself, but is not loquacious about itself, at least when it confides in its

object; nor is the declaration of our great love a proof that all love much, nor complaint of our want of affection a proof that love is wanting, though it may be often that we are thinking too much about it. If there be confidence, the heart rests in the value of the love of the one confided in, and rests in thinking of its object, which is true affection. Supposing a child told me, “I love my mother quite enough,” I say, “You are an unfortunate wight; you do not love your mother a bit if you say that.” But suppose a child says, If you only knew my mother, her unwearied love, her patience with me, and I often so foolish, forgetting her wishes! I made a noise when she was sick, and yet her love never falters, never wearies; I say, That child loves its mother. When I have a sense of the love that outreaches all my thoughts, and thank and bless and wonder and adore at its greatness, and in the sense of it, my heart thinking of Him—that is love to God. But, if I look into my own heart (I do not speak of judging known failure) and measure my love, and complain of my not loving God, in such case you are under law as to it. The law required it, and necessarily and rightly: but that is law. “Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us.” Hence too, when our loving Him is spoken of in 1 John 4, it is not said we ought to love Him, true as it may be, but we love Him because He first loved us.

Well now, the practical effect of receiving the Holy Ghost and abiding in Him is that I am called upon to walk as Christ walked: “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” You cannot have a man living without an object, and whatever the object may be, it characterises him: if it is money, he is a covetous man; if

it is power, he is ambitious, and so on; but if I get Christ the object of my love, I follow Him, and the Holy Ghost reveals to my heart all things that relate to Him.

You cannot have the love of Christ in your heart without loving what He loves, and this not only as to the things the heart delights in, but the persons dear to Him. We shall love all saints, even if going astray, with the patient love with which Christ loves them, if filled with His Spirit, while walking with Him in the joy of communion.

See the apostle in the opening of 1 Corinthians. When he saw them at Corinth all going wrong, he begins by saying all the good things about them he can: “enriched” by him in “all utterance” and all knowledge, coming behind in no gift, “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” who would confirm them, to the end that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God was faithful, and so on. And then he begins to blame them for everything they were doing. Men falsely suppose that the full assurance of salvation, and of final salvation, weakens the bond of duty. First, it is a base principle that only dread of damnation can keep us in the path of duty. But further, a child’s duties are always there because he is always a child and never can be anything else. All duties flow from the place you are in. You can speak of duties only in the relationship from which they flow. You must be a Christian, a child of God, to be under obligation to fulfil the duties incumbent on such. And, indeed, the affections belonging to their relationship also have no place till then. The consciousness of the relationship must be there. How can a child love a father if he does not know whether he is such? “We have not received the spirit of bondage

again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Scripture does not recognise as a Christian a person who does not understand that he is a child of God; he may be on the road, but he has not arrived at his Christian standing. I want no self-confidence, but I want honesty—a divinely given recognition of the relationship in which God has set us, and of which we have the consciousness by the Spirit. In vain we pretend to such a place by merely seeing what Scripture says about it. I would rather see anxiety for holiness and God's glory in a person who had not got assurance, but who was in earnest, than confidence in one who was careless. I quite understand how many dear souls regard this as presumption; I remember when I was awfully afraid myself. But what Scripture tells me is, "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Being children, we are not to be looking up to God as a judge. I am not thinking of God that way; He is one, of course, but that is not my habit of thought about Him. The very person, who is presently to sit as Judge, has hung on the cross for my sins, and put them away, before He is Judge. God would have us before Him in reverence surely, but not in terror. I come to Him as a Saviour, and I find the sins I should have had to be judged for have all been judged already; and when I come before Christ on the judgment-seat, as we shall, why, there, as the Judge, is the very One who has put them all away! How can He impute them to me? We must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ; quite true, but remember we shall all be glorified before we go there. We shall be raised in glory if we have died, or changed into the same if yet alive, as it is written, "our conversation is in heaven, from

whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

One word more. How far, beloved friends, how far, knowing I am a child and that here, and in a path according to God's will, led by the Spirit of God—how far can I at present, look to be like to Christ in this world? I look to be quite like Him in the glory. There is a great deal, and among true souls too, of looking to be conformed to the image of God's Son now. Now there is utter deadly error in that, though not intentional error. They reason, from the desire of uniformity in the renewed soul, to the possibility of it by faith. But this leaves the truth of God out of sight. If I say I have no sin, I deceive myself; but Christ had no sin. Have you no sin in you? It is not said that we ought to be like Christ down here, but that we ought to walk as He walked.

Again, when I come to know redemption in Christ—and only thus, for this is properly deliverance, having died and risen with Christ, not merely knowing that He has borne my sins—then "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The word "free" has two senses in our language: one, as when you say "that horse is free from vice," that is, he has none; and the other, as when you say, "that slave is free," which is quite a different thing, and it is in this sense I am free from the law of sin and death. I find sin is in me, though it was all condemned on the cross of Christ, but I am free from its law, and it is by the knowledge of redemption and deliverance that I get into this liberty.

Who shall deliver me! Why do you not deliver yourself? I have been trying at it, but I cannot. I do not submit to the condemnation of sin in the flesh, so as to understand that it was put to death on the cross; I do not come to that, until I find I cannot myself get the better of it. You get all this in Romans 7. It is not the true Christian state, but the one there finds first that there is no good thing in his flesh at all. And what next? Why, that it is not himself, “it is no more I.” What next? Oh, I must get the better of it. Try away, I say, try away. I cannot succeed. And now you learn that there is no power in yourself to do it. “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

1 need another, a deliverer, and I learn the power of life in Christ, of Christ Himself; but with the knowledge that I have (as regards the old man) died with Him, and that there sin in the flesh was condemned when He was a sacrifice for sin, but that it was in death, so that I am dead to it for faith. And I do not believe as I have said, that a person has ever got out of Romans 7 who has not got into it. In my case, like thousands of others, before I got forgiveness, I had found out what I was; I learned the seventh before I learned the third. But when a full gospel is preached and forgiveness known, the knowledge of self will still be by law, but the form of it is modified. The way more often is, “I hope I am not deceiving myself; I thought I was forgiven. How is it I do so-and-so? how is it I find this power of sin still here?” The flesh is never changed. The truth is they are distinct points, and treated apart; only self-knowledge is the deeper point, and so treated last. But it is law, not for condemnation, but powerless to free, though it may kill and condemn too. (Compare 2 Corinthians 3.)

After man was made, the whole history is, whatever God sets up right, the first thing man did was to spoil it. Adam eats the fruit of the tree. Noah is put in authority, and the first thing he does is to get drunk. God gives a law, and they set up a golden calf. The priests are consecrated and offer strange fire the first day, and die; and Aaron is never allowed to go in his garments of glory and beauty into the most holy place. Solomon fails in the kingdom and it is divided. Nebuchadnezzar is set at the head of the government among the Gentiles, and he sets up a great idol and punishes those that serve the true God, and Gentile authority becomes that of the beasts. It put Christ to death when He came in grace, lusts against the Spirit where He is, and, if one is called to the third heaven, would puff him up about it. And, now, it is not that there is any change in the flesh; but I am not to fancy, that, because flesh is there, I must let it act. No, I must reckon it dead, and should in practice "always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

The Holy Ghost gives us a blessed sense of relationship with the Father; and what, accordingly, you are called upon to do is, in the power of the Holy Ghost, so to live and walk as that nothing but Christ be seen in you.

Born Again

John 3

The truth connected with the Holy Ghost, together with Christ and His work, is the great safeguard against the error by which Satan is working in the present day. The enemy's craft must be met by the truth of God. In this chapter we have the work of the Spirit in quickening souls, and this is brought out, in contrast both with God's previous trial of Israel, and with man's natural power in the reception of outward evidence. From chapter 2:24, etc., we see the need of getting hold of God's truth for our own souls. The profession of Christ may be ever so sincere, but apart from life and fruit it is worth and is nothing. The people saw He was the One who should come, the Person sent from God, and they had right thoughts about His works, and yet all that went for nothing and was worthless in the sight of God. The solemn question was, What was in man? The conviction spread amongst them that He was the Messiah, because of the miracles He did, and they were ready to have Him in their own way. Nicodemus said, "We [not I] know that thou art a teacher sent from God," etc.; but the wickedness of man's heart was not all come out. Man proved what he was in the treatment he gave the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding the undeniable evidence vouchsafed in His works that He was come from God.

There are none so hostile to truth as those who know, but will not have it. The spies who had been up and seen the land were those active in speaking against it. You cannot go the way of the cross without having its trial and difficulty, as well as its infinite gain. The cross is not

pleasant, of course, and it never was intended to be pleasant. Directly I see that Christ has a right and claim on my conscience, my nature rises to resist His power; I see He ought to have the first place, and that other things should give way. This I do not like. The cross must be contrary to our nature.

The Lord now meets Nicodemus with the declaration that he must be born again, or rather anew (which is a stronger word that “again,” or “from above”). It is the same expression in the original as “from the very first,” in Luke 1:3. You may find lovely qualities in human nature; but nature never loves Christ, where the cross and the glory come together. The new birth is a thing totally new. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Christianity does not alter it at all. Man is in love with creation, and neither loves God nor believes His love. The creation is ruined, spoiled—not willingly, as man is, but still it is fallen. Man’s will is gone away from God. His intellect may be all very well in its way; his disposition may be amiable, but you never find one who naturally seeks after God. Nay, you generally find the most amiable person the last to turn to God. Man must be born entirely anew; he must come into heaven with a nature altogether distinct from that which he has got. Man will use his good qualities as well as his bad, just as an animal but with more intelligence. The eye must be opened. It is a new ground and way of perception, by which we can even see the kingdom of God.

There was neither holiness nor righteousness before the fall. The original state was something distinct from both. Adam was innocent, but not properly righteous or holy. To apply innocence to God, or to the Lord Jesus, would be absurd. God is holy; seeing what is bad, and

abhorring it, which holiness, negatively at least, consists in. A righteous man judges what is contrary to justice, and hates it. An innocent man did not know things in themselves good and evil, though, of course, he knew that it was his duty to obey God. Adam's sin was in trying to be like God; our goodness is in desiring to be like Him. Ought we not to seek to be like God—to imitate Him, as Paul exhorts? We are called by glory and virtue, and are seeking to remind our souls that God's counsel is that we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son. This one thing we should do, "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things Which are before." Adam knew nothing of this; his whole moral nature was entirely different. In sinning man got his conscience, and was ruined in getting it, because it was a bad one. Consequently he was afraid of the God he wished to be like. He lost innocence, and we never regain it, but we are renewed after the second Adam. We are, after the image of God, created in righteousness and true holiness, made partakers of.the divine nature, and brought to judge of sin as God judges it, and to love holiness as He loves it.

It is after God we are created again; Eph. 4:24. Not only have we, as men, the knowledge of good and evil, which made the man afraid of God, and hide himself, but now in being born again it is another thing. We have life in our souls in a divine way.

We have the holy moral nature that God has, and in this nature there is a positive delight in the righteousness of God, which does not condemn it, because it is the same. This new nature feeds upon, and delights in, what is of God, and is satisfied with the object before us, even Christ Himself. God has chosen us in Him that we should

be holy and without blame before Him in love—He has us before Him in this the image of His own nature. In Christ we have all that God delights in brought out and displayed in the man. He is the perfect and blessed display of all God is, and He is the expression before God of what He has made us to God. We have the image of God in the man, and, more than this, we have what man is for God.

This quickening of the Spirit has a double character; it is death in both. We are dead, and are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin," etc. This is liberty. But there is death practically, or putting to death, and that is what we do not like, for this is the cross. We like the liberty, but not the mortifying, or putting to death, our members on earth.

The sentence of death that God has passed on flesh and sin is an unchangeable sentence, and it is a positive blessing to have done with the flesh, for it is a condemned thing. The sentence was executed upon Christ, the new man, that we might live after the power of that new Man—Christ. There is an important point as to this, which is often confounded and mistaken. We must live that we may die—not die that we may live, as is often represented. Men talk of death before they have life, but they are wrong. Death, morally, is the consequence of having life. And this is just the difference between a monk—not using the word offensively—and a Christian. As a monk I mortify myself in order that I may live, instead of first having life, as a Christian, from God, that I may die. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter," etc. (v. 5). "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." God has begotten us by the word. "Whosoever believeth

that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." "The word giveth light and understanding to the simple," and the effect of the light's coming in by the word is to bring the judgment of everything in man, as it brings delight in that which is of God.

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is the communication of a new nature in believing; and, when born of God, the truth sanctifies and cleanses. There is "the washing of water by the word"; but this cannot be till after we are born of the Spirit by the word. There would be no sense in saying, that which is born of water is water; but that which is born of the Spirit is of the spiritual nature of God, not of man's nature.

The "living water "made the woman at the well, to whom Jesus spake, hate herself. It detects what is in man. Hence Christ could say to His disciples, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you." In the new and holy nature, in which I am created of God in Christ, I can now take up everything that I delight in, and I can judge everything contrary to it. Thus the word has a cleansing power. Baptism may be the expression and figure of it here, as the Lord's supper embodies the truth of John 6 ("whoso eateth my flesh," etc.)—though I do not say that the Lord referred to either institution, but to the reality of which each is the sign. The substance of the thing is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who came by water—not by water only, but by water and blood. It will not do to look at ourselves with approbation. See what is said of the king of Tyre. (Ezek. 28). We must not look at self, nor take pleasure in it. We want an object outside

ourselves—even the renewed man does. The moment there is the communication of the divine nature, there must be delight in Christ Himself.

This is brought out in this double way in John 5 and 6. In chapter 5 there are dead sinners quickened, or raised. This speaks of God communicating the divine nature. I do not speak of faith now, but it is God's own power that is spoken of—God quickening. In chapter 6 we get faith still more fully insisted on: and here is the object of my faith presented. This is perfection—to be so occupied with Christ, as to be forgetful of self. While told to reckon ourselves dead, we are looked on as dead already in Christ. How is this? Christ is looked on as coming down into the place of death, that there, where I was without stirring, Christ might be and rise up out of it for my deliverance. Because of what He suffered on the cross, as manifested in the power of His resurrection, "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." God will have none of the old thing now. It is denied and corrupted and good for nothing.

"All things have become new," not renewed. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the eternal life that was with the Father and is manifested unto us. This is not the man that fell out of paradise! How then can God and man be connected? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." There was the inseparable barrier of man's will on one side, and the power of death on the other. Therefore he says, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But "if it die (the corn of wheat), it bringeth forth much fruit." "The exceeding greatness of his power," etc. (Eph. 1:19),

is in resurrection. Then, passing over the allusion to the church, in the next chapter we read, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,” etc. In connection with, and the basis of, it all is Christ, who is dead and risen, with whom we are quickened together. The second Adam has not His place as Head of the family, except by death first. Why? Because redemption could not have been wrought. Nor would it have been, as now, a question of God’s righteousness. These being accomplished, He is entirely and in everything fitted to be the head of the new creation. This new link is wrought by the word. The living word, by the Spirit, is the power, and resurrection-life with Christ is the standing into which we are brought.

Christ, we may observe, speaks to Nicodemus about the things that he, as a Jew, ought to have understood. (Compare Ezekiel 36.) He says, “If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? “God’s earthly things were not evil or fleshly things, but the promised earthly portion which the Jews were to look for. In the latter day they must be sprinkled with water, and have a new heart from the Spirit, before they can inherit. This Nicodemus should have known. Then there are the heavenly things, which are better. “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” etc. There is the sovereign acting of His grace. He will take any poor sinners of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, and bring them into the blessing He has to give. “God so loved the world.” This goes beyond the Jews. It is not here that God so loved Israel.

For all alike, Christ was needed. For the best, the Son of man must be lifted up, and for the worst God would give His only-begotten Son. Under promises, law, or nature,

death must come in, if man is to be saved. In nothing can they be taken up in their own title.

What are we brought into by that which Christ has done? He says, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” Here was the double revelation of God. Christ is speaking as a divine Person, and as one who has seen divine glory. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” He knew, and saw, as One familiar and at ease with the Father and the Holy Ghost, with the glory of the Godhead. He was Himself in the unity of the divine essence. And though we were not only men outside it all but fallen men, yet now, as born of God, what are we not brought into! We have resurrection-life in Him; we are one spirit with the Lord. It is not the poor thing of the mere renewal of good qualities; but it is Christ, the Son, Himself making us partakers of His own things.

Notes Of An Address On John 3

This chapter tells us of One who has come down from heaven, who speaks that He knows, and testifies that He has seen; who knows God fully, and who knows what is in man; and He tells us what God requires, and what God gives. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He, the Son of God, came the Light into this world, but men loved, and still love, darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. He was born into this world in grace for you. He has not left us in anywise in the dark about it, but has brought perfect light to our hearts and consciences, which testifies what is of heaven, what is from heaven, and what is needed for any connection with heaven, and in order to be there. So that when I come to heaven, there is nothing in its moral nature that is not brought to my heart and conscience now. You will not get a more blessed thing in heaven than Christ on earth!

Nicodemus had a mere human conviction of Christ; he knew that He was a teacher come from God. When they saw His miracles, many believed on Him. How many Christians are like that now! giving a mere human assent to who He is. It is not insincerity or dishonesty, but they do not know Him. There is no want created in the heart. The Son of God is here: is that enough for you? You do not care to know what He is here for, or whether you have any part with Him! You do not trouble yourselves farther, or care to listen to one word He says; not an anxiety as to what He has said concerning you, or interest as to one thought or feeling He might have. Could you be quiet if you thought you were lost? You

could not. You are lost! and there is no greater proof of the utter ruin of man than that Christ does not attract his heart, speaking and testifying of divine things. Any bit of news will occupy you—a bit of family interest—a newspaper—a thing passing in the street; and here is news from heaven, news from God, and you do not care! —nor for all the love in His coming down from heaven to tell it to you!

You are indifferent to all that God can do, and you tell me that it is not crime; but is it no testimony of the state of your soul? That Christ has no beauty that you should desire Him, and yet you are "hoping" to go to heaven! And what is there in heaven for you? Do you expect to be happy if there this Christ, who is the very centre of heaven's delight, has no attraction for your heart? Impossible! It is quite clear that, if I am to be happy in heaven, it is with God. What pleasure have you in God? Is there one thing in your heart now that would make you happy in heaven, one single affection in your heart that finds its pleasure and company in those who fill heaven? Oh, may it come home to your soul—the conviction I am all wrong, the tree bad, and as I am I can never be better. Here the Lord, speaking what He knows, says, Ye must be born again. This was what God required.

And now we come to the other side—

"THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP."

God gave His Son. This is the grace—this the glad tidings— that you "might not perish, but have everlasting life." He "must," according to the glory of God, but He "must," because you are a sinner perishing! Because you are a sinner, you will reject Him and prove

yourself so bad, that nothing but the crucifixion of the blessed Lord could meet your case. Oh! you must be born again.

But there is another, a deeper, a divine “must”; the Son must be lifted up—terrible necessity of righteousness! God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The Son of God spoke that He knew. Oh, how He knew it! With God there is no allowance of evil, not an unholy thought. We have all had plenty of unholy thoughts. Christ comes down from heaven, and says, “The Son of man must be lifted up!” What blessed grace in His mouth! And mark the complete subjection of His soul, the depth of the love in it, the peacefulness and quietness of Christ thus looking at the necessity of His drinking that cup of wrath, that you might not. And, farther on, when it was going to be accomplished, He set His face stedfastly to go up to Jerusalem, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood as He approached that hour. Yet here, in the beginning of His career, He states it as the thing He had come down from heaven to do. He came to do His Father’s will, and that will was our salvation.

DO YOU DOUBT THAT YOU ARE PERISHING?

Or do you mark how fully grace rises up above all your ruin? Do you discover that the sin that is pressing on your conscience, and plaguing your heart, is the very thing that Christ died for?—that He took it off you on Himself? Now you have got to the gospel, to the glad tidings—the grace—that the blessed Lord Jesus put Himself in my whole place before God— “made sin” — He who “knew no sin.” Suppose I see Him on the cross, standing thus in my place, answering for me because I could not answer for myself, I see that He has not left a

thing that could bar my entrance up to God. He appeared once, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has finished the work.

Did He put me away into outer darkness? No; that would be day-of-judgment work; but He put my sin away, and set me there before God without sin. That was His Father's will, which He came down from heaven to do. And, oh, what unspeakable comfort! there is not a sin in my heart that God does not know, because there is not a sin in my heart that Christ has not died for. He drank the cup, and God set His seal in righteousness when He said, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool"; and now grace reigns through righteousness—grace has risen above all our sin. What true rest to be able to say, "It was all done there between God and Christ—righteousness made good before the universe." The moment your soul gets hold of what those three hours of darkness on the cross were, you see that all was settled there between God and Christ, outside yourself; for if you had got there, you must have got into wrath.

Hence, when you believe in Christ, you come to God to find the whole question setded by Himself—Christ for you— sweet and conscious truth! You can say, "God so loved me that He sent His Son: though my sins were as scarlet, I am white as snow—I can 'go in peace.'" One who came down from heaven to tell me: "You are the vilest of the vile, but I have taken up your cause—I have redeemed you to Myself— go in peace." He who made peace by the blood of His cross, who says, "My peace I give unto you" —wonderful love!— He is able to tell, at such a cost of Himself—having drunk the cup that you had earned and filled—that He has made peace.

Do not let any one make you doubt the efficacy of what He has done. And the Lord give you to hear Him declare in the quietness and grace of that moment, that the “Son of man must be lifted up”; and may He tell you why, in applying it to yourself. And may you learn how blessed it is to be in light— the light of God—where light shews you white as snow—clean according to God Himself; and you will know what it is to walk in the light of His countenance. Amen.

The Well Of Water

John 4

In John 3 we had the quickening power of the Spirit, the contrast of the old and the new creation. Here we have another thing, the dwelling of the Spirit in the believer. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”

A man must be born again—born of water and of the Spirit, if he has to say to God. This is what has to be presented to the sinner: “Ye must be born again”; while at the same time we know it must be God’s work. Not that it is said in a legal sense, “Ye musty” etc., because we know a man cannot accomplish it of himself. But there is a moral necessity for it, because, until born again, the sinner cannot have one desire or anything in him suited to God. It is the requisite flowing from what God is, and what the sinner is. But there is no such necessity for the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer. Instead of being requirement, it is the expression of pure grace; not so much necessary to man, as it is given by God.

Therefore not only the Jews, but the Gentiles might have it. “If thou [the poor Samaritan] knewest the gift of God,” etc.

For the Jew even it was necessary to be “born again,” and that was the instruction in chapter 3. In chapter 4 it is a pure gift of which He speaks, and He would shew that the worst of Gentiles might have it, as well as an Israelite.

The Holy Ghost that is given brings in power, as well as a new nature. The new nature has certain characteristics— love, holiness, etc. “He that is born of God sinneth not,” but there is another thing—power, and without this the very desire for holiness will occasion distress of soul and sense of condemnation, and there will be neither peace, joy, liberty, nor consciousness of relationship, all of which are founded on the indwelling of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit produces these effects in the soul in which He dwells, bringing forth in us what is like God. Thus we see the difference between the Holy Ghost quickening, or giving a new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us and giving us power.

The woman, as we know, comes to draw; the Lord requests to drink. She is surprised at His asking her for water. Before, we have seen Him talking to a Jew, a Pharisee, an honoured Rabbi; but here was a despised Samaritan. She was astonished at His having overleapt all bounds and come in perfect freedom to speak to her; but here was the gift of grace come down to her as well as the Jew. Passing over the details of her conversion which are most interesting, we will notice the lowliness of Jesus in His actings towards her. His position here is founded on His entire rejection as coming in the way of promise. He is on His way, as rejected, to Galilee, the place where God visits His remnant. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.” He left Judea, and God leads Him through this wretched apostate race—just a picture of the Lord’s actings now in sovereign grace, gathering out Gentiles, before He comes to the remnant.

That which lays hold of a sinner is sovereign grace. He is rejected by man, and man is rejected by God. There is

mutual and complete rejection. Promise is gone, because Christ, coming with the promises, was rejected. “My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” It is now a rejected humbled Christ, bestowed as the sovereign gift of God. “If thou knewest the gift,” etc. God was giving freely, and He who gave was there. He who could create another heaven and earth, if He pleased, came to ask drink of her! What confidence in His grace it inspires! He does not expect her to ask of Him until He has asked of her. Our pride would say, If I accept favours of God, He will accept favours of me. Here is God Himself coming, and saying, “If thou knewest the gift of God,” etc. He would be dependent for a drink of the brook by the way. Such was the position He took. When He could put Himself in such a place as to ask favour of her, all the sluices of her confidence are opened. “He must needs go through Samaria.” The path led through. That was the road in which His love, in coming down here, put Him.

There is nothing so hard for our vile hearts to understand as grace; but there is nothing so simple in God’s presence. If you knew the Person of Him who asks you, you would believe the perfectness of grace coming down to the wretchedness of man to bestow. It is not how you must be this or that; but here is God come down to you.

He is at perfect ease with her, though she had been up to this going on in her sins; she a Samaritan, and yet there is God conversing with her! The revelation of God in this way gives the consciousness that we can get what He has to give. The moment a soul apprehends what there is in Christ, it has the blessing. “Sir, give me this water,” etc.

Verse 16. There is a thought added now. The sins have to be made known. There is no understanding of what He has to give until the conscience is reached, and she has the conviction of sin. If the things of God could be received by the understanding (natural), man would in a sense be a match for God. Clearly man is not in that position with God. But when the conscience is opened, it brings the sense of need. Then the sinner sees nothing but sin, and that nothing but God's grace can meet it. A man never gets spiritual understanding until God has dealt with his conscience. Until the flesh is in a measure judged, the Christian has no power to understand God.

When I know the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I have everything I can need, because everything is in Him—love, power, holiness in Him. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." A detected sinner is in a different case from being in possession of the well; and yet the detection was on the way to it. To bring this well into the heart He must convict of sin. She must consciously stand in the presence of God. Do we think of that—that we are in the presence of God? We should never sin if we did.

The woman follows the natural course of her own thoughts in talking about the water from the well (v. 11, 12). But Christ says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water," etc. In using what sin gives in this world, it is soon spent; its strength is gone in the spending: the spring becomes dry. But with spiritual things it is just the reverse. The more I spend, the more I have got. "To him that hath shall more be given." And it leaves no desire for anything else—no hankering after what I have not got. "He shall never thirst"—never thirst after anything else, while there will

be the increasing sense of need of the living water continually. I cannot say this practically of one whose soul is hankering after earthly things. When there is this hard crust over the soul, there is need of humbling; but the natural state of a Christian is to go on and have more given. A Christian sunk down into the flesh is thirsting. If one went down to the bottom of his soul, one might find the well; but there ought to be rather the sense of possession than of need in the soul.

Here is rest and power. We have not only everlasting life in Him from whom we shall never be separated; but the man has a well of water in himself. “It shall be in him a well of water,” etc. This is power coming down from God —heaven is brought down into my heart. It is the power of divine life bringing me into fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is nothing short of all that is in God dwelling in me. I have got something that lays hold of that life—the gift of God. Mark, it is here the well of water in the individual. There is an eternal spring in my own soul. There is a power in the person associating him with all that is in God; the man drinks it in—receives it as a thirsty person—and then it becomes in him a well which makes him partaker of what is in God. It brings into intercourse with, and feeding in spiritual apprehension on, the things of God.

This has not reference to outward gift, but to the living power in the soul, embracing all that the Father and the Son have, and it has the character and stamp in the person of the eternal life to which it springs. These everlasting things belong to the person who enjoys them; the water “springs up to everlasting life.” In Romans 8 the Spirit is brought out as life and power. As the breath of life was given to the first Adam, and he

became a living soul, so we have the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” After life there is power also. This is the consequence of the sentence passed upon sin in its whole nature—not on sins only. Christ on the cross condemned sin in the flesh. God has dealt with it and judged it on the Person of Christ. They are distinct and connected in a moment. As soon as I am quickened, there is the inquiry, How am I to get rid of this sense of sin in the flesh? It is already condemned: not only are the sins condemned but the principle of sin is, root and branch. “They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” There is not only desire but power; “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The Spirit is not only the source of the nature, but the power that puts this new nature into living connection with its object. It is not only the flesh on one side and the new nature on the other, but I have the Holy Ghost in the new nature. God has condemned sin in the flesh by the death and resurrection of Christ. There is the revelation of the Father and the Son, received by the soul in which the Holy Ghost dwells. The Holy Ghost now works in power on the new nature, because Christ has dealt with the old. This is not like the Spirit as given to Balaam, but it is shewing how the believer receives the Spirit after he is quickened. “Not in the flesh but in the Spirit,” which puts me on the ground of what God is to me, and not what I am to God. As to our standing, this is our position—the Father loves me as He loves Jesus. I own no life but what the Spirit gives, and because of the Spirit dwelling thus in me as the grand link with the Father and the Son, there is not a bit of the believer belongs to sin or to the devil, but spirit, soul, and body

we belong to God. “The Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Another thing is, that He will “quicken these mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.” In the burial of a Christian we commit his body, not to the earth, but to Him who redeemed it.

Verse 14. There is also relationship— “sons of God.” If led of the Spirit, I am a son, and have the “Spirit of adoption.” I am thrown into entire association with Christ; I am a child of God and have the consciousness of the Spirit of adoption. “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit,” etc. We are set there by sovereign grace. It is not what we think about it, but what we are — “the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The Holy Ghost cannot lead us to say, ‘I do not know whether I am saved’; ‘I doubt’; ‘I hope to be saved.’ The Holy Ghost brings it into the heart, and gives the blessed sense of the relationship.

When the High Priest went into the presence of God, the light shone upon all the names engraven on the breastplate, etc. That was an inferior relationship, but it is true that the same delight which the Father finds in Jesus He finds in us. There is the shedding abroad in the heart of divine love by the Spirit, just as a candle sheds abroad its light in the place where it is. So, if the Holy Ghost really dwells in my heart, God’s love is there, for God the Holy Ghost is there. Though it is my heart, it is God’s love that is there. The Spirit sheds it abroad by being there, just as Christ, being in the heart, draws down His own love into it.

Again, if the Spirit thus dwells in us, there will be the consciousness of groaning with the creation around. If we walk through the world with Christ’s love filling the

heart, there is not a single thing but what will awaken sorrow—the sorrow not of irritability but of love. Christ did ever the work of love, but with what a sense of the way in which death had come in! He was always sorrowing, because He was all love.

The Son of man was “acquainted with grief”—not only trouble, but grief. It went to His heart. We hear Jesus groaning at the grave of Lazarus, though He knew what deliverance He could effect. If we had been going to do it, we should have gone gaily in, because going to bring comfort to the family; but Jesus had such a sense of the groaning of creation that He “groaned.”

“The Spirit also maketh intercession for us” by putting us in communion with God’s love. The Spirit, by dwelling in me, makes me to realise love in the midst of sorrow. Instead of selfishness, it produces prostration of spirit in the sense of what is around. The Spirit takes up the sorrow which nature sinks under, but helps my infirmities by putting me into connection with the perfect love of God shewn in Christ’s humiliation. The Holy Spirit being given to us in Christ— God’s having come down to us in all our necessities, we are carried back into the midst of the sorrow and the sin in the sense of that in which believers groan.

This woman at the well (John 4) was conscious of the creation she belonged to. She had no power to overcome sin; but perhaps well wearied out with it—coming in the heat of the day to draw water, not at the hour that others came, for shame. She did not know what she was coming for now; and when she had got the living water, she went back to the city to tell the Samaritans. Thus

should we carry the love which has delivered us, back into the world from which we have been delivered.

“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” Our understandings are not fully informed of what we want; but the “Spirit himself,” etc.—and “He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” If God searches our hearts, what does He see there? A quantity of sin, to be sure; but He sees desires there. “The Spirit maketh intercession according to God,” and yet from poor creatures who do not know what to ask for. The use the Holy Ghost makes of it is to take up all the groaning. Every groan I utter is the positive witness of blessing in the midst of sorrow, because of the intercession of the Spirit according to God. What a well of water! It is not crying out for self; but so realising the blessedness of God’s presence in the midst of a world and a body not yet set free by His power, selfishness gone, and a means opened, while in the body, of being the vessel of the intercession of the whole creation. All our own sufferings are lost in the thought of its being the path to glory. Christ’s heart was moved when He saw sorrow. He would not have us cold and indifferent to it, nor yet, on the other hand, selfishly affected by it, but full of tenderness and compassion towards those who are suffering. “He hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps.”

Rivers Of Living Water

John 7

In this Gospel we get not only the testimony to the Jewish people of the Messiah and the message of the kingdom, but the glorious doctrine of the Person of Christ, the rejection of which rendered it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them.

In the previous Gospels we have the Lord set before us, as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of man, the Messiah, the servant, the perfect Israelite. This Christ-rejecting generation not only broke the law but discarded the promises as well. Abraham's seed but rebels against Abraham's God, they who had the promises must now come in on a common level with the Gentile through grace. God is faithful to His word, that is true; but it is only under mercy they can be saved. We have no historical account of Christ in this Gospel—no genealogy, but we are taken back to the beginning of the book of Genesis; and get a truth deeper, higher, and far beyond that of the other Gospels, even the glory of Christ as it ever was, before He became the Incarnate Word: and this is so blessed for us, for we get eternal life in Him—in Him who has life in Himself. It is not the promises we get (though we get them too), but it is the Promiser Himself. It is this blessed One who is our life—life that existed before worlds began. He had a former glory, but this glory of His Person, where is that to be found? In His redeemed, there it will be displayed. Christ came to His own, but they received Him not, and since then they have been treated as reprobates all along. Up to Christ's rejection God tried man; He left

him without law, put him under law, gave him priesthood and prophets, and in due time sends His only-begotten Son. All was without avail. Did they reverence Him? No. This is the heir, said they; we will kill him and the inheritance will be ours, bringing to light that most dreadful truth, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

Man would not have the holiness of God, neither would he have the love of God. And now God brings in a new thing—a spring of life, and puts away sin through the death of His Son; and Christ, having died for sin, takes His seat at the right hand of God, victorious over all, and sends down the promised Spirit to enable us to walk before Him.

In chapter 6 we get Christ feeding the multitude who followed Him (and the disciples too).

There are three great feasts spoken of that the Jews always kept—the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In this last feast the vintage was prefigured, the shewing by a figure they had been a people who had dwelt in booths, but now had rest. Christ could feed them in the wilderness, but He could not go with them to this feast; for before Christ could enter on a rest down here, the work of redemption must be accomplished, and the church must be taken. Therefore He said, “I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not fully come.” His brethren may go, but He could not now declare His glory and enter upon His rest. But there was an eighth day, when comes rest: then He would keep the Feast of Tabernacles, then should God’s holy rest be on the earth, God’s church being in the glory.

We get the Spirit spoken of in three ways: first, all saved ones from the beginning to the end are born of the Spirit; secondly, the Spirit in them a well of water springing up; thirdly, rivers flowing out. “In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise.” The Holy Ghost was not yet given, we read, “because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Mark, before the disciples could receive the Holy Ghost, the work of atonement must be done, and Jesus be a glorified Man, seated up there at God’s right hand. Who? A Man. Why? Sin is put away. Yes; Jesus, as Son of man, is glorified; as Son of God He was ever the glorified One. God was so glorified by the work of His Son that, so to speak, He became His debtor. How did the Son of man glorify God? By suffering for my sins on the cross. God’s judgment was perfectly met, and God perfectly glorified the Man Christ Jesus who endured the wrath. The exaltation of this glorified Man is the witness that my sins are fully put away. What does God say about my sins now? “Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”

Where was the truth of God displayed that said, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die,” and Satan’s lie fully proved which said, Thou shalt not die? On the cross Christ died. God is love. The majesty, the holiness, the love of God were magnified on the cross. The question of sin is settled. The Son of man is glorified. God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have all been occupied about my sin. What a footing I have! Done with sins, no more conscience of them: Christ has taken them clean off. He could not bring us into God’s presence with one sin upon us. No; though they were “as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.” Christ became obedient unto death; and this settles the whole thing, and gives power to the

poor sinner. With what holy freedom I can go into God's presence, when I know Christ is there, seated at God's right hand, as my forerunner! I have a perfect righteousness, a perfect love, and a perfect obedience to appear in. What comfort and what joy! You could not go into God's presence with one sin upon you: it would be folly to think of it—madness to attempt it. One sin unpardoned would unfit you for enjoying God. You must be perfectly clean. The blood of Christ does cleanse from all sin, so that the soul in the presence of God can enjoy God—we "joy in God."

The glorified Jesus, seated in heaven, sends down the Comforter to give us power for fellowship with Him. See the place He has taken, one with the redeemed on earth. Never until after the resurrection does He call His disciples "brethren," nor does He say, "Peace be with you," before then. He did say, "Fear not." (But He had not made peace.) "All mine are thine, and thine are mine" —all are ours in Christ. We have His righteousness; we wait for the hope. We have the earnest; we wait for the inheritance. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. And when we view the holiness, the power, the love of God, how delightful is the thought, He is my Father! The love wherewith He has loved His own Son He hath bestowed upon me. No man hath seen God at any time; but we learn what the Father is by the Son. We see in Him the outflowings of the divine fulness; and we must drink at this rock. It is not enough for us to see: we must draw from Him: and there will be the conscious outflowing of what He is. What a character that truth should give us! One with Christ in heaven, "Head of his body, the church "; a

living union with Him: God for us, Christ in us, the Spirit's seal on us. "If any man thirst."

We must remember we do not drink for others, and other cannot drink for us. I must feel my own want and I must bring my own want to Christ myself. There must be a thirsting before there can be a drinking. Have I a want in my heart that Christ cannot meet? No. Is there a spiritual want in the soul that goes to Christ without finding relief? No. "If any man thirst." Now there must be a need, and that need must be felt, known, and brought to Christ. Then, no matter what it be, He says, "Come unto me and drink." "If ye knew the gift of God ye would ask of me, and I would give you living water." Think, beloved friends, of Christ sitting at a well. Which of us would not gladly go to Him with open hearts, and let Him read out of them all their need? He is not to be put off. He knew her need, and left her not until she felt it, and He met it. If we are to be useful to poor sinners, we must be more like Christ. Why we help them so little is, that we do not come down low enough to them in grace. Think of the place Christ ever took towards them, and follow Him, being partakers of the grace, and remembering the word, "if any man thirst."

In the last chapter of Revelation we have another word. Now, having this water of life in us, we are in a position to say, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." We have not the Bridegroom, we wait for Him; but we have the Spirit, the living water. We can count on the grace and love of God, knowing it will not fail for any who cast themselves on the blood of Jesus.

“Before Abraham Was, I Am”

John 8:58

The Jews were immersed, not in the truth of their system, but in the mere ignorance of acting on present appearances. This is a deep essential principle of error, which one has to watch—not seeing God and things according to His mind (which was exactly in question), but the mind of man in the things of God. Hence precisely the present state of the church. It was the grand question between Jesus and the Jews, the point in which Jesus has to be recognised, and in which faithfulness to Him rests, as in Him to His Father, in this respect. The Jews therefore said to Him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” They thought the sense of this the same, because they looked not beyond the outside. But, on man’s ground, the Jewish reasoning was generally correct. It was utterly wrong morally, without conscience, therefore without God and that which God alone could teach. They now brought It to the point of the mere manhood of Christ—the point of their darkness. Our Lord, as the truth, could but give the light. “Before Abraham was [was born], I am.” Ye know not My existence, My being. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” The great truth was told, the essential vital eternal truth, on which all hung, without which there could be no truth, nor coming unto man, nor bringing man back in redemption to God. For how could he be restored by that which was not? And this was true of everything save One. Should dust be a redeemer? Yet out of dust man was to be redeemed.

The great truth was declared. Lie there could be none against it. The necessity of the existence of the Saviour assumed the nothingness of all else—could be, not falsified, but only denied by violence. They might say it was blasphemy, and take up stones in their zeal for God, rejecting Him manifested. “Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” The time of their iniquity was not come: His time was not come. But what circumstances! and with whom discussed! and what a truth! Do we believe it? Do we, I say, believe it—that Jesus (a man even as we are, save sin) was “I am?” All is told, if we believe Him thus dead and alive again; for therein is the redemption, and through this must He pass.

It is true, most simply true, the centre—wondrous, wondrous to us—of all the manifestation of God, and rightly in its glory to chosen sinners; lovely in its blessing to all sinners; deep therefore necessarily, in its condemnation of blind rejecting sinners. “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of-angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world” —and yet, more wondrous still, “received up into glory.” Thus, as to essential truth, He was “I am.”

Then, as to the dispensation, the thing thus revealed, or rather discussed with the Jews, is the subject of John 8. The Lord is traced as the light of the world; as Son of man lifted up; all through as the Son in the power of life, in person as Son, up to this great revelation of “I am”: the real truth and fulfiller of all Jewish hopes, and the basis of all common promises, and this as, and by, the word—the essential characteristic. I know of nothing

that has so astonished my mind as this revelation of “I am,” or the real thought that Jesus could say, “I am”; the connection of these—to man—inconvertible possibilities, and the concatenation in which all the dealings of God are brought out as fulfilled in it, while yet He remains truly God; and yet could say therein, “the Son of man, who is in heaven.”

How manifest it is, that nothing but the gift of faith could, even in a single tittle, understand or know the truth in the Person of Jesus! while yet, by the perfection of its manifestation in the flesh, every soul was put under the responsibility to receive it as the true word of God, our God, in love. The broad penetrating fact, “I am,” the all-embracing word, must at once close all controversy. We must be opposers or bow before the throne of God. We must stand in awe of Jesus. Well may it be said, “Kiss the Son!” Lord Jesus! what sort of subjection is this we owe to thee? We have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now our eyes see thee, we abhor ourselves. Oh! can we see this in Jesus? Have we seen it? None can see it out of Him. It is the truth only in Him. Surely we should move mountains if we believed it: yet it is simple truth.

Dwell on it, my soul! Jesus, that thou knowest, that stranger in the world among His own, is “I am.” Henceforth let us be dead to all but this. I do indeed stand incapable of utterance. I do read and talk with Jesus, I watch Jesus in His ways, a servant, and, behold, He, even He, is “I am,” with whom I am, whose way I follow, whose grace I adore. Christ is the union of these two things: the man, the rejected man, whom I look at now with most thankful sympathy, and, behold, the presence of God! How low it lays men’s thoughts,

experience, judgments, notions! The perfection of God was there—God rejected of men. What can meet or have a place along with this? Let this be my experience. Glory be to God Most High. Amen. Yet to me it is Jesus; in truth it is “I am.” Here I rest; here I dwell; to this I return. This is all in all. I can only be silent, yet would speak what no tongue can utter, and no thought can think before it. This we shall learn, and for ever grow in —more beyond us for ever, for here is God revealed in His essential name of existence—God revealed in man, in Jesus! I know Him, am familiar with Jesus, at home with God, honouring the Father in Him, and Him as one with and in the Father, yea, delighting to do it. But I say, do we believe it?

I do believe it all: and yet, as it were, believe nothing. I am as nothing in the thought of it, yet alive for evermore by it, blessed be God and His name. All shall praise Him so. Yea, Lord Jesus, God Most High, so shall it be. Lord Jesus! Thou art “I am,” Thou art “I am”; yet didst Thou take little children in thine arms; yet didst Thou suffer, die, and be in the horrible pit—yea, for our sins! Thus I know the mercy-seat: I know that there is no imputing sins to me, that I am reconciled to God, and that God is the reconciling One.

The Resurrection And Life

John 11

The Lord had been now rejected, both in His words and His works. In chapter 8 He convicts by His word. “Before Abraham was, I am.” There was in that the full manifestation of who He was; but they rejected it. In chapter 9 He shews His works; but this testimony is also rejected. And then He shews how all is in grace and in chapter 10 speaks of gathering His sheep. When He said, “I and my Father are one,” they took up stones again to stone Him; and then He goes again beyond Jordan. In chapter 11, in connection with the raising of Lazarus, He is spoken of as the Son of God; afterwards, in chapter 12, as Son of David and Son of man.

What is here specially brought out is Christ’s exercising power—life-giving power. Not so much His holiness or His love; though they were there as perfect as ever, but not what He was specially manifesting. He has come where death was; and He was going to raise out of it, first, the soul, and then the body. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This brings out something of the character of Martha. Martha loved the Lord, and the Lord loved Martha. She received Him into her house. He made His home there, as it were. There was confidence in His kindness, and that kind of care and interest between them that, directly Lazarus was sick, they sent to tell Him, taking it for granted He would come because of the intimacy they had. “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” They were a believing family; and we find that, when people are believers, there are different characters. We see here what Christ delighted

in—what fruit of the Spirit was acceptable to Him. He said of Mary, “she hath chosen that good part.” God may make men as active as possible, like Paul or Boanerges, when He wants them; but communion is the most precious thing to Him. There is a difference between Peter and John: His heart rested with satisfaction on him who leaned on His bosom.

Christ had come into this world, when moral death reigned, to bring in blessing from Himself. But here is a death which could come in and take a man out of the reach of the blessing of healing which He Himself came to give.

Death was the harbinger of judgment. No man could recover from it; no man could cure it; no man could escape from it. And they knew that it would carry on to judgment; for it brings with it the testimony of sin. God could kill and God could make alive. Nature always shrinks from death, because there is this consciousness of its being the effect of sin. Christ comes into this place of death; and the mere relieving man’s misery down here, which He did, never could touch death. Man having now rejected Him, it was needful to shew that, if man was a murderer and would even put Him to death, He had a power which could deliver out of death. Death had lost its power in His presence who was come to bring in life. During all His course He had been ready to heal the sick with a word, and they expected He would do so with Lazarus. But now He would let the evil go to its fullest extent, that we might see His title to do it all away. The Lord, though He heard that He was sick, remained in the same place. When He was coming, He said, “Lazarus sleepeth.” The moment we see death coming to believers we can say, This is no judgment;

“this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.” In connection with Christ, no evil can triumph; but even death can turn for the glory of God. And, mark, it was not for some vague good at a distance, but “that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” The power of life has come into the very place of judgment. We have not to wait till we get to God, but God comes in delivering power to us who were “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Chapter 8 is the truth of God and the Son of God connected; “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” And, besides that, life came by the Son. He could have healed Lazarus and remained safe in Jerusalem: but now He does this miracle in the most public way. And He did this that all the purposes of man might be brought out. Contrast the way in which He raised Jairus’ daughter—in private.

The foundation of the faith of God’s people is in resurrection—“for your sakes,” v. 15. They were to believe in Him, “the resurrection and the life.” “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The law was not truth. The law put man on his responsibility; but now man was taken up as dead already: this was truth. The law put a man on doing— “do and live.” It told him the Tightness of what ought to be, but did not tell him what he really was. It answered the purpose for which it was sent; for it made the “offence to abound.” The law did not tell man what he is, nor what God is to man—love; but when I get the truth, it sets me free. While I am under a yoke, I am made to toil, toil, toil. The yoke draws me down, and I have no power under it. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? “There is no deliverance in that; but if One comes in who says, You are a wretched sinner, dead in trespasses and sins; but I can deliver you

by bringing in a righteousness of God—which sets me free in heart and conscience. I can stand in God's righteousness before a God of truth and love. "If ye continue in my words"; these words He addressed morally to all.

There is another thing. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever," but comes in on the condition of conducting himself well in the house, and, if not, to be turned out. "But the Son abideth ever." We are made free, and may "go in and out and find pasture" as children of the house. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Christ is the proof of God's love—righteousness the proof of what Christ is. I have a place as a son because of what Christ is as a Son. He came in the power of life; not dealing with man as he is, and trying to mend him; but giving life, thus treating him as dead. "Martha said, I know that he shall rise again," etc. But Christ spoke, neither of the resurrection of believers, nor of the resurrection at the judgment. He would shew her that death was nothing in His presence. "I am the resurrection and the life." She said a true thing when she said, "He shall rise again at the last day." But this did not touch Lazarus* case. If you have to be called up at the last day, you do not know but you may rise to be condemned then. Besides, his mere natural life would be subject to death again if he were raised up now, unless He who raised him were "the life" as well as "the resurrection."

Christ does not say, I am the life and the resurrection, but, "I am the resurrection and the life." Death has come in; therefore He must bring in resurrection first. He is the life-giving One who has come in and destroyed the power of death. Death shall have no more dominion.

Death had dominion over the first Adam; but the last Adam gained dominion over death. And He has quickened us together with Him, and has taken us out of that state as having nothing whatever to do with it.

Constancy Of Christ Our Comforter

John 13

It is evident that Jesus here addresses the disciples who then were around Him; but what we see there of Jesus draws the soul to Him. That which draws the sinner, which gives Him confidence, is what the Holy Ghost reveals of Jesus.

I desire we should consider what is found in verse 1, that is, the constancy of Christ's love—a love that nothing damped nor weakened. If we think what the disciples were, and the world, and the adversaries, we shall find that Jesus had a thousand reasons putting a stop to His love. We see round Him three kinds of persons—the disciples, the indifferent, and the adversaries. The latter are more especially the children of the devil. They are those who, when they saw the Lord was going to take the kingdom and reign over those things, said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." There are some who from the bottom of their hearts have the certainty that Jesus is the Christ, and who will not have Him. The adversaries may draw away the indifferent. All that was in this world was of a nature to destroy Jesus' love, had it not been perfect and invariable: for there is nothing that wounds love more than indifference.

We naturally love sin, and we would make use of all that God has given us to satisfy our lusts. Jesus saw all that. He saw the disgusting state of this world and said, "How long shall I … suffer you?" When we are in the light of God, it is thus we judge sin.

Where are the parents who would not desire their children should avoid the corruption they knew themselves? It was because Jesus knew the sad state of man that grace led Him to come to take him out of it. God sees everything. In His compassion He takes cognisance of everything in order to meet our wants. But what does He meet with? Indifference of heart. The heart of the natural man sees in Jesus something contemptible. He cannot acknowledge his own state, and he will not be a debtor to God to get out of it. He prefers remaining in indifference with respect to that God who loves him; and, again, let us remember that there is nothing that discourages love more than indifference.

Jesus met with hatred also. All those who loved not the light, because their deeds were evil, hated Jesus. Pride, carnal assurance, self-will, everything in man, repelled God. There was nothing in this uncleanness, this indifference, and this hatred, that could attract the love of Jesus. That love might have been led to give up when, for instance, Jesus saw that Judas was betraying Him.

If a person were going to betray us, we should be too much occupied with ourselves to think of those who will not betray us. This was not the case with Jesus.

Although iniquity abounded, Jesus shewed all His love; and finally, His disciples themselves forsake Him also! Those who loved Him were so selfish and so much the slaves of the fear of man that it was impossible for Jesus to reckon upon them. Such is the heart of man that, although a man may love Jesus, yet his heart is worthless. Jesus had to love in presence of a hatred which never relented. He loved us even when we were

covered with uncleanness, indifferent, full of hatred for the light and having denied it a thousand times. He who knows himself best knows best how true this is. If we were to treat a friend as we treat Jesus, friendship would not last long.

What a contrast we shall find, if we consider how different that which Jesus found on earth is from what He enjoyed in heaven! There He found the Father's love, and in the presence of that perfect love, the purity of His own could not be manifested, because it found no obstacle. But here below, remembering what He had left, He loves His own, even in their uncleanness; this itself draws out upon them His compassion. The object of grace is iniquity and evil. The indifference of His own proved to Jesus all the extent' of their misery and the need they had of Him! Even the hatred of man shewed that man was lost. God came to seek man, because he was not in a state to seek God. How many things God has borne with! What indifference, what betraying, what denials! One would be ashamed to act with Satan as one acts with the Lord. Nevertheless, nothing stops Jesus: He loves His own unto the end. He acted according to that which was in His heart, and all the wickedness of man was for Him only the occasion of manifesting His love.

The Lord has done all that is necessary to re-establish the soul in relationship with God. Sinners as we are, the grace of God came to seek us. Righteousness and the law require that evil and the wicked be removed. John the Baptist required repentance; it was the beginning of grace. But pure grace (far from saying to man, Leave thy state and come to me) comes itself to man in his sin; it

enters into relationship with him, that God may be much more manifested, than if there had been no sin.

Grace applies what is in God to the need which is produced by the ruin where we are. Jesus loves unto the end.

What consolation to know that Jesus is all that is needed for all that we are! This places us in that which is true, and leads us to confess the evil which is in us, and not to hide it. Grace alone produces sincerity; Psalm 32:1, 2. A man who has a profession to follow wants to appear strong even when he is weak. Grace produces truthfulness—makes us acknowledge the weakness and infirmity in which we are. If we were in the place of Peter, we would do what Peter himself did, if we were not kept. Jesus loves His own "in the world," in their pilgrimage and their circumstances, in spite of their misery, of their selfishness, and of their weakness. All that Satan could do, and all that was in man, was quite of a nature to hinder Jesus' love: nevertheless, "he loved them unto the end."

Can you say, "I have a share in that love, in spite of my weakness? I have understood the grace and the manifestation in Jesus of the love of the invisible God." Have you acknowledged that it was necessary that Jesus should come into the world, in order that your soul might not go to the place where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth?" Have we made up our mind to acknowledge ourselves to be what we are? This is disagreeable to the flesh, it is painful; like the thorn of Paul, it is something that continually tells him, Thou art weak; and that is precisely why God allows it to remain. Is the flesh sufficiently mortified in us for us to be

content that Jesus should be all, and ourselves nothing, and for us to rejoice in seeing our weakness, since it is to manifest the strength of God in us?

Jesus has not forgotten any of our wants. The heart which is free from selfishness thinks only of that which love would do. Thus it is that Jesus, on the cross, does not forget His mother, but commends her to the disciple whom He loved.

Christ The Hope, And The Holy Ghost, With Our Responsibility

John 14

This chapter is an answer to the distress of the hearts of the disciples, and in it we get two things set before them: first, the glory of Christ's Person with His coming again; and, secondly, the coming of the Comforter.

The first great truth that He brings out is that they belong entirely to another place. This world is not good enough for them. He was going away from them, and this was something to trouble their hearts. Therefore He brings before them Himself, as the object of comfort, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." By believing in God, you get comfort; so it will be by believing in Me.

The occasion was a sorrowful one surely; for to know Christ and yet not to see Him, not to have Him with them, might well trouble the heart. They had taken Him for their portion, and left everything else. They had so entirely confided in Him, so rested on Him, that His going away might well trouble them.

The great broad principle set forth in answer to this is comprehended in what He is. And it is as though He said, Do not suppose I am going away to be alone in heaven. No, it is for you I am going. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." There is "room enough and to spare." This was another thing to comfort them—a place in the Father's house. The home of the Christian is there where Christ is. He was not going for Himself only, just to relieve Himself from the desolateness of the world. He was

going to His home as the Firstborn among many brethren, and all the rest will have their place there too at His coming. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself.” This is the language of affection. He does not say, I will send for you. No, that would not satisfy the heart— “I will come.” He would not be content without having them where He is, and without coming to fetch them. He could not leave them down here in this polluted world. “Where I am, there shall my servant be.” And there will be the word for them, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter,” etc. He takes their hearts out of this world altogether—not their persons yet indeed, for they were to be left without Him for a season.

We see the absolute intimacy that existed between them from 1 John 1, “That which was from the beginning … which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,” etc. They knew Him well; so that, when they were to go, they would not be going to a strange place, because they knew Him there. If my father were gone away to a distant country, my heart would go after him there, and would be more at home in that place where he is, than here, although I knew not the place, for I have never seen it. Note that the Lord never supposes for a moment the slightest doubt of their being there. There is the most perfect certainty for them, because Christ would be there Himself. The question of fitness could not come in; for does not Christ know whether you are fit? There would be difficulties in the way—in the world “tribulation”; the road may be rough, but the home is certain. He has taken our sins and blotted them out, and

therefore He can speak as one who knows the full value of His redemption.

“Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Suppose I were going to a strange place, I should want to know the way. He says, “I am the way,” etc. I am going to the Father’s house, and you shall be there too. And what makes the blessedness of the Father’s house? The Father being there, and brothers and sisters there, it is not the place nor the state that we think about in connection with the Father’s house (though there are these as well); but the great thing to our hearts is the Person there—the object in the house—the Father. None can go to the Father “but by me.” If I know the Father, I know where I am going. It is He makes it a home to me. When the prodigal returned to his father’s house, there was great rejoicing—the fatted calf killed, etc.; but it was the spring of joy in the father’s heart that made them all so happy there, whether servants or sons.

Jesus says to them, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” As if He had said, You have got the thing you are looking for, if you have Myself. You have not to wait to get to heaven to know Him. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” If they knew where they were going, they also knew the way— “I am the way,” etc. In seeing the way in Him, I find I have known the Father, before I get home to the Father’s house. He has done that work which makes me fit to be there. He has come down and brought the Father to me through the efficacy of His work. Then I have got home in one sense. How can I get farther than to the Father Himself? You have the thing you are seeking after. You have found the Father in Me, and you have found the way to it.

When Christ is first revealed, it makes us feel our unfitness, but He purges the conscience. The work which has purged sin away is done. The believer is justified from all things. If a man believes in Christ, he has a new nature. Can the flesh believe in Christ? “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,” etc. The soul that believes has all the efficacy of Christ’s work, blood-shedding and sprinkling. I have the happiness Christ has. What is this? All that results from unhindered fellowship with Him. Another thing is the power by which we enjoy it—another Comforter, and this given to be down here. It is here the Father reveals the Son, and this would be a Comforter that would never leave them.

Every one who believes in Christ, resting on His work, shares the blessings of the Comforter now given and abiding. A person is not a Christian unless his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is not known as an object (though He distributes to every one severally as He will), but He is in us— living spiritual power in us. Christ did not dwell so in us. Christ was with them three years, and then went away from them; but the Holy Ghost never goes away, and is promised to be in them “a well of water,” etc. The effect of the Holy Ghost’s power is to bring Christ back to us; not in person, as an object, but Christ becoming, by the power of the Holy Ghost, life in me. “To me to live is Christ,” etc. Christ Himself is He whom the Holy Ghost shews to me. There is a blessed living object in Christ which I do not find in the Holy Ghost. They could not say of Him, “We have handled him,” as of Christ.

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” They were very muddy as to this before, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father” — in the Godhead is this blessed One who was down here as a servant— “and ye in me, and I in you.” Is this home strange to me? No; I have been eating with Him since His resurrection. Not only do I know Christ as an object, but the Holy Ghost makes me know I am united to Him. There is consciousness by the Holy Ghost of this union. And does the one who knows he has it think much of himself for that? No; there can only be wonder and astonishment at such grace; and there is nothing so humbling. The law may torture the conscience, but grace humbles. They could not know it while He was here; but they would know it in that day, when they are “members of his body,” as Paul speaks.

Then there are responsibilities which belong to us as such. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.” “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” If God has loved us in sovereign grace and goodness when sinners, He has also gracious affections towards us when we are saints. There is the every-day government of the soul in His hands. He that loves Me shall be loved of My Father. This is not a question of whether they were to be saved, but the daily manifestation of Christ to the heart. A father might take care of his children, and love them when they are pleasant; but he cannot manifest his favour to them, if they do not please him. God will not fail to keep them according to the prayer of Jesus, “Holy Father, keep them whom thou hast given me.” He will keep them, but this is the way He keeps—revealing Himself in happy

intercourse according to their walking with Him in obedience.

Mark the position of believers: until we make our home in the Father’s house, He makes His home in us.

Christ On High, And The Holy Ghost Here Below

John 16

The Gospel of John brings out specially that which refers to the Person of Christ in contrast to all that is Jewish. At the beginning of it we see Him presenting Himself in divine right and power to “his own,” while “his own received him not”; and towards the close we see Him leaving those who had thus rejected Him, and the Comforter coming to take His place—to take of the things of Christ, and testify of Him to the world, and to be the guide and support of those whom He was leaving behind. In this chapter we see the twofold character of the work of the Holy Ghost: His way with the world, and His way towards the saints.

Verse 2. The first thing the Lord shews the disciples here is, that they are to have the same position as their Master: opposition and rejection. The opposition of the world often comes from entire blindness. “Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” Such is the blinding power of unbelief! It was so with Saul. He thought he “ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” Acts 26:9. Man walks in darkness, because he is darkness, his conscience is darkness, and in consequence of false instruction his mind is blinded too. What a man does conscientiously, he always does with earnestness, though he may be acting wrongly with a blinded conscience. A person may be very conscientious in resisting the truth. What is called conscientious acting is often nothing in the sight of God

but the conduct of one who is thoroughly blinded by Satan.

Verse 3. “These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.” God had given them every evidence of who Christ was, but, in spite of all that God could give, they rejected Him. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness…”

All ignorance is the fruit of sin; but here it is wilful blindness. They “loved darkness rather than light.” Notice here the sin of rejecting light. No general acceptance of truth will do, if it does not enter the soul as of God. The way in which God was proving men now, was whether they would own His Son. He presents Jesus as an object, in order to put men’s hearts to the test, and if Christ is not received, all general acknowledgment of other truth goes for nothing. There is such a thing as a man screening himself from the charge of rejecting truth by just taking a little, as much as will satisfy his conscience; but the great test to the heart is whether he receives that special testimony which is not accredited in the world. If Christ, the Son of God, is rejected, this is everything for condemnation in the sight of God.

By rejecting Christ, men proved they did not know the Father. If Christ had come, saying that God was not Jehovah, they would have been right in not receiving Him; but He always identifies Himself with the Father, and so men were proved the very enemies of both.

“And these things will they do unto you,” etc. Very often when we have received truth from God, we must be content without being able to satisfy others that it is truth. And if others cannot understand, so neither can

we explain. We must go on patiently, though we have to act in a way unintelligible to many. We must expect to be despised. The Lord set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem; and it was the very thing that brought out man's opposition. The path of faith can never be understood, though communications of truth may be.

Verse 5. "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? "We are constantly acting in unbelief in this way. The Lord often tries our hearts. The disciples were thus tried in the prospect of the Lord being taken from them. What comfort they had had in His blessed presence! And now sorrow filled their hearts (v. 6). The sorrow was legitimate, but they were filled with themselves—their own grief, instead of seeing how God was working, and what were His purposes. The real truth was, that the Son was going back to the Father. We may lose God's purpose of blessing to our own souls, by not seeing His mind in that which grieves us. The disciples were shut up in their own sorrows and thoughts, instead of inquiring where the Lord was going. But He would comfort them, in spite of this weakness of faith, and gives them the promise of the Comforter (v. 7).

What a wonderful blessing the presence of the Holy Ghost must be, when it needed that the Lord Jesus Christ should go away in order that He might come! It is well for us to ask ourselves whether we do really believe in the personal presence of the Holy Ghost down here. A soul might say, "Ah, if I had the Lord here to direct me, how well should I do and bear! "But if we know redemption-deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have Him still with us, and in the best and nearest way. For the Holy Ghost dwells in us to unfold Him to our souls, to teach us the glory of

Him who has loved us and shed His blood for us, who has all power, Head over the Jews, Head of the Gentiles, Lord over everything. Nor is it only the glory of His Person, but our union we learn. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” We have the Holy Ghost too as the guide; and the Lord would have us guided not ignorantly but in intelligence. The presence of the Holy Ghost presupposes judgment having passed upon the flesh, which naturally resists guidance, and the flesh must not be allowed place in the Christian, if he would be guided of the Spirit.

In chapter 14 Christ says, “The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name,” etc.; but in chapter 16 the Lord speaks of sending Him by virtue of His own personal title. Going up to glory as Son of man and as Son of God, He sends the Comforter, in virtue of His own official glory.

Then we see the work of the Holy Ghost (v. 8, etc.). The world He will convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. His office again is to guide the saints into all truth (v. 13-15).

“He will convince the world of sin,… because they believe not on me.” It is not here as Messiah to the Jews that the Lord speaks of Himself, but as the Son of God to the world, as such. It was “sin” not to know the Father nor Him. The charge here is not that of having killed the prophets or broken the law; but “they believe not on me.” God had sent His Son into the world, and He had been cast out. (He says this in view of its accomplishment.) The very presence of the Holy Ghost stamps the world with this sin. He could not be sent here, unless Jesus had been rejected—unless God’s own

Son had been cast out. He had wrought always: this is His personal mission and presence on earth.

God said, “I have yet one Son; it may be they will reverence him.” It was His last trial of a world lying in the wicked one, full of all kinds of corruption. He was reconciling the world unto Himself, and saying, as it were, Receive My Son, and I will not impute your sin; but they cast Him out and slew Him, and thus proved that wilful sin was in man. There was the perfect light of God in love and grace, in the Person of His Son, coming down to earth, and men loved darkness better. This was their condemnation. It is not God coming in the terrors of the law to frighten men, but in grace to attract; and they will not have Him. There is no reason why the Son of God was rejected, but the utter wickedness of man’s heart.

It is a moral thing, this unbelief. It is a demonstration of what the heart is by nature. The Lord cannot now with wicked hands be crucified and slain; but the moral guilt is just the same; for the natural man will not receive Christ, he does not want Him. To those who do receive Him, God says, “Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.” But of the world it is said, “The world seeth me [Christ] no more.”

This rejection of Christ is the one great sin that the Holy Ghost deals with the world about. Why do people prefer vanity—everything—anything—to God’s Son? Because they are perfectly opposite to God, and that is sin. It is the plant and pith and sap of that which is in my heart by nature. And if the world is convinced of sin, there is an end of righteousness. The only righteous One who ever came into it was rejected and allowed to suffer

before God. On the cross God leaves the righteous One to be utterly rejected. But righteousness came in by this way; and it was proved when He, who had been obedient unto death, went back to the Father. What an answer to all that He had done was there in this acceptance! He had accomplished all that gave Him a title to be at the right hand of God; He had proved Himself fit for God's throne.

When the Holy Ghost thus convinces the world of righteousness, it is not a testimony of man's fall from God, or of man's corruption, or of man's failure under law, but man's rejection of the One who is accepted at the right hand of God. It is His righteousness and God's righteousness thus vindicated. "Ye see me no more." All was ended as regards the world. When God's Son was rejected, there was to be no more connection with the world, as the world, till the vindication of His title in judgment. "Now is the judgment of this world." Then I come to see that I, in heart, have thus rejected Christ. I saw no beauty in Him; not one affection was set upon Him. Education may have led me to own Him after a certain way, and there is mercy in that; for knowledge of scriptural truth may be used by God: just as when a fire is laid, you have only to put the light to kindle it. But we have all been either despising Him, or in active will rejecting Him.

The world is given up to judgment, while God is still dealing with it in blessed patient grace. We see no sign of judgment yet, though the saints may be rejected now as Christ was. But it is our place to walk as strangers and pilgrims here below. All that is of the world, and the prince of this world, is judged by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Let me fix your attention on the perfect, divine righteousness accomplished by Christ. What the Holy Ghost tells our souls is this, that it is such a righteousness as is fit for God's own throne. There is where I rest as my title to glory. Fruits will follow, of course; but my title to heaven is in the divine righteousness of Him who is there for me.

"He will guide you into all truth." This has nothing to do with the world, as the world. But as when the Lord said, "What I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." "All truth" is the whole truth of the glory and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—all ours. We know but little of it, it is true; but the Holy Ghost is down here to unfold it to us. He brings down to us the things from heaven, the glories of the Father and the Son, the fellowship with the Father and the Son, not what is going to happen to Nineveh. All the counsels of God in Christ are ours, in the power of the Holy Ghost. What a wondrous field of spiritual thought in this new world to which we are introduced! It is filled by Christ for our own use. Our portion is to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not speaking to us of miracles, but taking the heart of the saint into all that God has to say about His Son Jesus. What a blessed place the saints are in! the Holy Ghost to reveal to them all that God delights in as regards the Lord Jesus, His Person, His work—all that the Father has given Him—all His coming glory.

We may not say, "These things are too high for me." The question is, not that we have not been far from Him, but if He is near to us. Suppose my father is the great judge of the country, I ought to be outside the arm of the law, but I am interested because it is my father's work. How

that little word “my” — “our “—comes home to the heart! And all things are ours.

While the Holy Ghost shews us all the fulness of the Father’s house in the glory of Jesus, our hearts are attracted by Christ Himself. When He gives the capacity to understand the glory, He says, I have given it all to you; you shall share it with Me. And, beloved friends, we shall see Him again in all His glory. The secret of our joy now is, that He gets Himself His right place in our hearts. It is the perfection of His grace that He should draw them to Himself. There must be this work in the heart, as well as the arrow in the conscience to shew us what we are; or else it will be as the morning cloud and the early dew. Remember too, we are not of this world. He has separated us to Himself, and we are to walk with Him as His people.

The Son Pleading

John 17

It is very natural that Jesus should have deeply felt, before leaving this world, all the circumstances in which His disciples were about to find themselves. At the moment when the Son had accomplished His work, and completely glorified the Father in the midst of all the difficulties and all the malice of Satan (a moment which has not had, and which will not have, its equal, whether in time or in eternity), it was natural, I say, that He should put all before the Father.

Not only has Jesus perfectly glorified the Father, but there is no one who, like Himself, has felt all the effects, all the consequences of sin. He realised all, and has placed us in the same circumstances as Himself. He felt and expressed all the weak position of His disciples, according to all their need, and according to all the resources which He knew to be in the Father.

He said these things in the world, where He had been the Man of sorrows, and where He had suffered much. In virtue of the work He accomplished, He can enjoy all the privileges of His work; but He takes this into consideration, that His disciples are left in the world.

The natural heart does not feel the privileges of the child of God. The natural heart does not feel its wants. Pride does not see difficulties; hence it “goeth before destruction.” The natural heart escapes many things which are a weight to the child of God. We see that in Jesus. He does not hide from Himself His position. “I have,” He says, “a baptism to be baptised with,” etc. He

did not hide from Himself the state to which sin had reduced men, and the consequences of sin. Love overcame the weight which He had always on His soul, as we see in Gethsemane; yet He remained calm, because He committed all to the Father. We see Him entirely, alone, but calm, full of love, and always capable of acting in love.

At the time then that one does not feel grace, one has not the same wants. The thoughts of being brought low, manifested in this chapter, do not find any sympathy in the natural heart. Christian men are too disposed to avoid knowing this state of abasement; but therefore they do not know the immense resources which are in God. Such is the folly of our hearts!

In verse 10 we have the position where Jesus places His own in their privileges. In presenting to them their resources, He then speaks to the Father. It is the expression of the Son's heart. "The hour is come" —an hour more memorable than that of the creation—an hour during which evil and its effects were conquered.

The glory which He claims is not that which flows from the will of the Father, and which He possessed, as Son, before coming into the world: it is another thing. It is because He had humbled Himself, not to do His own will, but to do that of the Father, because He had been obedient unto death, and had taken upon Himself the consequences of sin, that He could be glorified in saving His church.

The abandoning of His own will shews itself in the answer which He made to two of His disciples, who asked to be placed, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom. That is not in My

power, answered Jesus; but in my Father's. This giving up of His own will to us is of infinite value; it is thus that we can have a share in His glory; for, if He placed Himself under the power of Satan, it was because He was capable of doing it. He must needs be the Son of God to accomplish this work, and He would do it in grace: otherwise we should have no share in it. He has taken the glory as man that we might possess it; for we could not have that of the Son.

He was, in death, under the power of Satan, but He could not be held by it; and it was so in order that we might have a share in this glory. He puts Himself in the lowest place in order to be able to say, Father, glorify Me; and not, I am glorified. Mark well, that though He was humbled, it was perfection, in order that the heart of the Father should be satisfied in glorifying Him.

What power of Satan was not destroyed when the Prince of Life underwent death! Thus God has been fully glorified, and Jesus also, because as man He has fully this glory. Why did the Son need to be glorified? It was for us. He had placed Himself as low as our sins had put us. Now He glorifies the Father in His own (v. 4). We see that power has been given Him "in heaven and in earth." This power was given Him because He humbled Himself. This is very precious: for it is because He was man that it could be given Him; because it was His as Son. It was in order that He might give life to all those whom the Father gave Him, and that He might claim His right for them, and against those who do not recognise Him. He does not speak much of the latter in this chapter, because His heart was full of His disciples.

He is the Head of creation: “The firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist,” Col. 1:15-17.

All that glorifies our Head ought to be precious to us. It was needful He should reconcile all things, according to what is said in the same chapter: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For in him all the fulness was pleased to dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven,” v. 18-20.

Christ was Head of the creation, and Head of all men; they are given to Christ, and He refers all to His Father. It is God who gives. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

Power was given Him, and He should give eternal life to as many as are given Him. This life is to know God the Father. “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” Jesus begins to speak of the work which He accomplished on the earth. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” “I have glorified thee on the earth.” What is it, that the first Adam had done? He had owned neither the power nor the goodness of God; he had denied all that God was towards him. The last Adam, on the

contrary, had felt all that which pride prevents us from feeling. He felt the forsaking of God as to His soul; and He could say, “I have glorified thee.” The more evil there was done here, the more the Father was glorified. Never did irritation enter into Him; no contradiction ever prevented His having the same heart for man and for God. What is precious is, that it is man who has perfectly glorified God: He would do it, and He has accomplished it. It was in man that it was needed to be done, for it is in man that God was dishonoured; it is there that Satan reigns and governs; it is there that the image of God is marred; it is there that God has been dishonoured before the angels; but it is there also that He has been glorified in Jesus—man—not by avoiding the evil but by placing Himself in the midst of all this evil. The more evil there had been, the more the Father had been glorified.

As man Jesus accomplished the work that the Father gave Him—the work of grace; it has been perfectly accomplished. Hence the Father can rest in His Son, having been fully satisfied. He could say, “This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And hence God can pour out His heart into the heart of a sinner.

God could give outward blessings, as the sun and the rain in their season, but He could not be in communion with man. His heart can speak of Jesus—man; He could not keep from saying, “This is my beloved Son”; no more than John the Baptist, when seeing Jesus, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

The heart of the Father wanted to save. He committed this work, to the Son, and this work was perfect. Hence Jesus could say, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me.”

There is nothing more to be done. What rest for the soul! There is nothing but glory to receive. All the rest is done. This word “now” shews that God had found in Jesus that which perfectly responded to His heart.

There is rest. There is perfect equality. Jesus can say, with a boldness which shews who He is, “Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” And we, by the Holy Spirit, are admitted to these conversations between the Father and the Son.’ Already, by the Holy Spirit, we, in our measure, understand what a place the Lord has given us.

The holiness and righteousness of God could find nowhere to rest, like the dove out of the ark. But in Jesus He has found perfect rest. God sought morally as we seek a friend; He has found it in Christ; He cannot seek elsewhere.

From verse 6 Jesus speaks of what He has done for His disciples: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” “I have manifested thy name unto them”—the name of Father. For Christ there were certain relationships, which He could not know save as man, and as man of sorrows; but He knew the Father and committed Himself to the Father. “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.” He was placing their hearts before the Father, where He was Himself. As He knew the Father, so He makes Him known to them.

If any one has been very kind to me, how would I speak of him to a person to whom I wish to make him known? Whilst He was down here, He spoke of the Father in

telling them all that He knew of Him. He tells them that He is His Father and their Father.

God can seek nothing in us, but He can give us all, finding all in Christ. Oh! may we realise what Christ has revealed to us, namely, that the Father is for us. Is this the habit of our souls?

We become the objects of the communications between the Father and the Son. The greater things are, the more magnificent and intimate, the more are they worthy of God, and by infinite grace we are the objects of them. I do things which I should not do if I knew the Father better; and I should also do things which I do not. It is a question not only of not doing what is forbidden; but also of being in the relationship of father and child.

The soul is elevated. The Holy Spirit makes us feel the love of the Father. He brings us into liberty by shewing us, not that we are little, but how great God is. When we are altogether pre-occupied with Him, this liberty produces a holiness which has immovable foundations. God and Christ were occupied with us, when Christ was still in the world and in our position; He has put us where He is.

That produces effects of holiness, because it always brings us nearer to the Father, who is light and holiness. When I see the fruits of the Spirit, I say, God is there, for He is God. Iris not only this that God works in me, but also that I partake of His nature by the Holy Ghost which is given me.

Jesus, having manifested the Father’s name to His own, comes now to speak to Him of their position in the world, while separated from Him. He introduces that by saying that the disciples had received Him not only as

Messiah, but above all that they had understood this revelation of the Father, that they were no longer of this world, and that they had understood that all came from God.

“They have known,” says Jesus, “that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.” They saw the relationship of unity with the Father, relationship until then unknown, and which has been made manifest in the humiliation of Jesus. The Son has been manifested, not only as a Jew, but as man, and man in the lowest place: in that position He received all from the Father. The Father sends the Son, and the Son says, “They have believed that thou didst send me.”

When the Lord speaks to His disciples, He speaks to them according to the position of grace whj.ch He made for them, and not according to the realisation which they had of it. God always speaks to us as to children who know that they are children: it is their own fault if they forget it, or if they do not know it. Jesus says, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,” John 14:4. Philip says, “Shew us the Father.” Well, it is the same thing with regard to the action of the Holy Ghost.

Many Christians have not understood that they are one with Christ and they have to be reproached with this: for Jesus said, Ye shall know I am in you, when the Spirit shall be given unto you. He speaks not according to what is realised, but according to His love and the privileges which He has given us. He has made us partakers, not of His divinity, but of all that the Father gave Him as man. He has such confidence in His disciples, that He gives them the words which the Father gave Him. “I pray for them: I pray not for the

world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." I pray for those who have received thy words.

The Lord acts as apostle for the world, but as priest for His elect, for those who are manifested. Those who are not yet manifested are doubtless known of God; but they do not receive all the care which is necessary to Christians in order to be kept in this world. Those who are not manifested are not thus responsible; but as to Christians, all that makes them feel their responsibility is very precious; for they are placed here below as representatives of Christ.

Jesus says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." And where is the one who, understanding that he is sent as Christ, does not also feel that he needs grace in order to represent Him? It is then most important to understand the position of the elect who are intrusted with representing Christ before the world (not however that this touches salvation Jesus says, "I am glorified in them"; and those who are not manifested do not glorify Him. It is therefore only for those that are manifested that He prays; and it is they who become the subject of the communications between the Father and the Son.

That which is dear to the Father is dear to the Son; if the Son loves the Father, He must pray for us; if the Father loves the Son, He must glorify His Son in us. It is a wonderful position which the Lord has made known to us. These are the two motives which, His work being accomplished, Christ presents to the Father. If Christ had been the Messiah owned by the Jews, He could have remained in the world: but as priest, He could not remain there; and, as to us, we are exposed to all the

evil without having the presence of Christ, and we need something sure to rest upon. This leads to a much deeper sounding of the heart.

There was no such need of a clean heart, when Jesus was upon the earth. His disciples could go and ask Him what the will of the Father was; but now we must have, by the Holy Ghost, the intention of Christ; and this takes place when we realise the communion of the Father. It is a position still more blessed than that which the disciples had. On the other hand, the Christian who is not in that communion may go astray. All intelligence depends upon the state of the soul. It is not with us as with a servant to whom it is said, Do this. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost which makes us know the intention of the Father: only we must walk in Him.

We cannot walk in the world with blessing if we are not in communion with the Lord, and then we are only like servants. The Christian has forgotten that, and thence it is there is so much darkness. Christ is no longer in the world; but as yet, we are in the world, and we have to manifest things which are outside the world, which are in heaven. Hence it is impossible to discern the things of God with the flesh, even for a Christian who is not faithful, for he loses all discernment, and he lowers himself to the level of all that surrounds him, if he does not seek exclusively the approbation of the Father.

Jesus says, “Holy Father, keep “them; that is, for His disciples. He is “Holy Father” for the disciples, and “righteous Father” for the world. “O righteous Father,” He says, “the world hath not known thee.” The world and I can no longer walk together; and the Father had to choose between the Son and the world. “Keep them,”

not with respect to the things of this world, but as Thy children, for glory; not to spare them suffering, but for eternity.

He cherishes us as a Father, who does not permit a single hair of His children to fall without His permission. Those things which appear paltry and little are of some interest to a father and mother. Now God loves us with a perfect love. He takes cognisance of all that relates to His children, and of all that concerns them in whatever degree it may be; and all that does not lead us into the glory He takes cognisance of. This is why He chastens us, for He is the “Holy Father.” He keeps us from evil by the warnings of His grace, by His word, by reproof, by the joys of the family of God (a great means which the Holy Ghost employs), and by the chastisements which He allows to fall upon man outwardly, so that the inward man be kept.

The flesh always pens itself in, because it is selfish. When we are in the Spirit, there is always unity. Three things especially compose the joy of Christ. Being the object of the Father’s joy, His heart enjoyed His communion, and this also belongs to us. Obedience was His food, His meat, the joy of His soul. It is the same with us. As we are the objects of the exercise of this love of the Father, there is a joy for us in the exercise of that love. He makes us partakers of that joy. If there is a conversion by our means, the joy of Christ is in us. It is the Spirit which acted in Christ. He could be a fountain of love, although His heart was “withered” through all that was in the world. Wonderful position! a position of responsibility, it is true; but the joy of Christ who is for us, not only the joy which we shall have in heaven, but which we have already in this world.

The world hates as soon as there is a manifestation of Christ. It cannot be otherwise. We must reckon upon this, that, if we hold forth the light, we shall be hated, even amongst Christians. They do not find that lovely; but the gospel will never be lovely for those who will not receive it. All that is lovely in nature is not the offence of the cross.

If I weaken my Christianity by Judaising, I shall be received; for man will consent to give to God, provided he also be a little glorified. But, if there is nothing but the cross, man hates; whereas the moment one recognises ever so little of the world, we are not hated. It is needful we should count the cost, whether with the forces which we have, we can fight, or whether Satan is stronger than we are; and this will not be the case, if we keep ourselves in communion with the Father.

It is true that it is not agreeable to be hated. All that leads us to be agreeable to the world, and to the customs of men takes away the offence of the cross, and renders us agreeable to the world, but puts us at a distance from Christ.

Jesus The Willing Captive

John 18:1-10

Two points attract and fill our hearts in this passage. First, the perfect willingness with which Christ gives Himself up, the unhesitating way in which He presents Himself to the armed band come out to seek Him, fully knowing what was to befall Him. “Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, I have told you that I am he. If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way,” proving that, while He offers Himself, there is a full and perfect deliverance for us. “Of them which thou gavest me, I have lost none.” The Lord presents Himself, that none of us might even be touched with the power of the enemy. It was the same self-devotion on the cross; though here it was the power of Satan, but He had gone through it. When led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, He bound the strong man, and introduced present blessing into the world; but we as men were unable to profit by this, because of a moral inward incapacity to receive the blessing that came. Outwardly it was received in healing diseases, etc., but men had no heart to receive Him. If He turned out the legion of devils from him that was possessed, men turned Him out. The hearts of men in such a condition were glad to get rid of Him; and this shews another and a deeper evil to be remedied —that man morally has departed from God, and that he is himself irremediable—that nothing will do but a new creation: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” Thus here the Lord has not only to conquer Satan, but to underlay man in his moral departure from

God. “This is your hour” — “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”

Satan brings all this darkness and death to bear on the soul of the Lord, his object being to get between His soul and God. So, the more pressed by Satan, the nearer to God He is. Therefore it is said, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly”; and in consequence He receives nothing at the hand of Satan, but of His Father. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Before He left Gethsemane, the whole power of Satan was morally destroyed. He had gone through the hour with His Father, and now takes the cup at the hand of His Father, as an act of obedience. He is now as calm as when doing any other miracle (healing the servant’s ear), as if nothing had happened. It was their hour, and the power of darkness was upon them, not on Him. “Whom seek ye?” —” I am he.” “As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground”; but He presents Himself again (as He says in John 14:31: “But that the world may know I love the Father… Arise, let us go hence”) saying, “Whom seek ye? … If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way,” and they were not touched, as a token of the complete deliverance of us all.

At the cross He cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? “He went through the hour in Gethsemane, and here drinks the terrible cup. His soul had drunk the cup of wrath, and only one thing remained. He said, “I thirst”: this He said that the scripture might be fulfilled; and crying, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, he gave up the ghost.” Here we learn the perfect deliverance that has been obtained for us, and that all is perfect light and joy for us. If I look

at Satan, I see his power annihilated and destroyed. If I look at wrath, He has drunk it to the dregs. He entered into all the darkness and the wrath of God; but before He went out of the world He had passed through it all, and went out in perfect quiet. The work is so perfectly done, that death is nothing. “His hour being come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,” He passes out of Satan’s reach, and beyond all wrath, to the Father.

No believer is any longer under the power of Satan. Thus Israel of old, though once under Pharaoh in Egypt; but when delivered he was never under the power of the Canaanite, except when he failed, as we know in the case of Ai; so we may fail too, but we are in that new creation that has passed all the power of Satan and the wrath of God. Do your souls realise the truth that Christ has “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light,” so that our souls are brought into the light as He is in the light? It was not true when He was down here; but now we are brought into the light where there is no darkness at all. May our souls know and enjoy the true and perfect deliverance that is our portion in Him!

The Exercises And End Of Grace

John 20

It is remarkable the instruments God uses to display His grace towards man, and the different exercises of heart persons go through, which prepare them for the service on which they are to be sent. There is a loneliness which may even be occasioned by a man's own folly, in which he finds himself without a single thing to get comfort in, that he may prove that to be in the Lord which he would not know in any other way.

God cannot associate Himself with evil. There must be death upon nature altogether. The corn of wheat would have remained alone without death. Christ was alone as to Himself; comforters He had none. "I looked for some to take pity, but none." "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." These are expressions of this loneliness. He was walking in undeviating devotedness with His Father all the way through; but there were none to enter into it, though, speaking of His disciples, He graciously says, "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations." Could He have said more if they had been faithful in sympathy all the time? Our poor hearts have to learn the way the Lord meets the soul that waits on Him.

We see, in the case of Mary Magdalene here, and in the other Mary too who broke the box of ointment on Him, there was something that made them lonely. What made Lazarus' sister Mary lonely? She had found something that took her clean out of the world. Martha was careful about the supper; but with Mary it was not the supper but Himself. His object was not to come for earthly

refreshment, but to pour into His people's hearts the revelation of the Father. Martha was not wrong in preparing the supper, but in trying to get Mary away from the. Lord. If she had been right, she would have been glad to do it all herself. There was not the joy and delight in her heart that there ought to have been. Mary had found one thing that isolated her heart in the most blessed way. Her affections were alive to all the evil that was coming (not as a prophetess, but her spirit was in the thing), and at the right moment she went and spent the ointment on Him. He says of her, "She hath done it for my burial."

In this Mary (the Magdalene) we get yet another thing. Seven devils had been cast out of her, that is to say, the expression of complete diabolical possession, indicating the extreme of wickedness. That isolates a person, who is separated from nature, as it were, by the extent of wretchedness. When the spirit is touched, she is separated from the evil. The effect of finding Christ in such circumstances is that He becomes everything to her. (There is not the same intelligence in her as in the other Mary; we do not find her, as the Magdalene, at the tomb.) She could not leave in the same way. When she lost Christ after the flesh, she had nothing. She was terribly broken to pieces by evil, and Christ was gone. There was something human connected with her affection; there was also culpable ignorance in what she did; but the Lord had compassion on her; and more, He manifested Himself first to her.

The disciples saw, and believed. They perceived He was gone, but understood not the Scriptures. Mary had no home, and when she found not the body of Christ, what had she? The disciples were not isolated in the same

way; they go away to their own homes. She, in her ignorance, but withal in her love, says, “I will come and take him away.” This last is very precious. It is a great thing, when Christ has such a place with us as to be everything. In one sense this is the door by which all must pass through; at death, if not before, nature must decay and vanish. What is more nothing than death? All here is gone. We may learn this spiritually, or by circumstances, or at the moment of death itself; but learn it we must. We must find everything but Christ nothing.

Christ calls her by name. When He comes and calls His sheep by name, it is all right. She had now got Him back after death. Nature had, as it were, passed through death, as Isaac. Nature had mixed itself up with her affections, but now she has got beyond that; all is given up to God. The promises made to Abraham were all surrendered up by him when Isaac was to be taken. Mary Magdalene thought she had Christ back when she had not. She thought of Him corporeally, but she must have Him in another way. It will be so with the remnant of Israel by-and-by. They will have Him corporeally then, but now He says, “Touch me not,” etc. I am going to another place. I am taking your hopes or your promises in another way, and not in flesh. If He was to take it, it would be when the just shine in the kingdom of the Father. He says, “Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” I am giving you something entirely new—not My presence yet—not power yet; but where He was going Himself He would take us.

He does isolate us: He does pass us through different circumstances; but whether gradually or suddenly, His

object is to break down everything of nature, and this in grace to us. Here for the first time He says, “my brethren.” He never called them “brethren” definitely until now. He had been heard from the horns of the unicorns; Psalm 22. During His life He had declared the Father’s name. Now He declares that the love wherewith He is loved is that with which we are loved. He could not say that during His life. During His ministry He was making known the Father, walking with the Father, speaking to the Father. Now He takes them into the same relationship. Why? Because the redemption was accomplished.

Christ never addressed His Father as God—never less than as Father. During His life as given in the Gospels, all His life through, it was always, “Father.” When on the cross it was, “My God, my God,” until all was finished, when He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” In making the atonement, what was not against Him? There was one thing that could not be against any, and that was love; but there could be none as to the feeling and manifestation of it then. He was forsaken; and the more the love was known, the more terrible it was. He was dealt with according to the majesty of God, the righteousness of God, the truth of God, the holiness of God. All that God is was made good against Him. God was thus putting away sin, and Christ was glorifying God about the sin.

But now, being dead and risen, He comes up to put His disciples into the place of full blessing. The work is done, and there is no sin left. Everything that God is is now brought out in blessing, and all the sin is put out of the way. He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection

from the dead. He goes up to God, and takes us too. I am going to My God, and He is your God too. He is going into all that is blessed. I am not going to be present with you corporeally, so that you can “touch “me; but I am going to My God and your God, My Father and your Father. Such is the word to this poor desolate woman. She was a fit messenger, by her very nothingness, to witness of Christ and His work and fulness.

“I go” and faith goes too, entering into that within the veil. It enters into all that which God is. Where we live is within the veil. Sense may come in and hide God’s presence; but the atonement has brought us into it, and into the very same relationship which Christ has as risen. We sometimes enjoy peace, we enjoy scripture, a hymn, or prayer, without realising the presence of God; and then there is not the same power, or the same exercise of heart in it. I can own the blessing, and rejoice in the blessing, without having my heart searched out; but if in these I have the sense of Him, my state is very different. It is very important, not only to have a right thought, but to have it with Him. If you search your own heart, you will find that you may sing without realising Jesus Himself. Then the heart is never probed, the evil is not detected, and the power of grace is not the same. By the atonement sin is put out, and God is brought in. God exercises our hearts about good and evil by first giving us the good. There must be the possession of perfect good, and then there is holiness, and not merely the exercise of dread and fear. Our hearts must follow Him where He is gone. We cannot “touch” Him.

May the Lord give us to live a life in which He is everything!

Peace

John 20:19

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” It is a great thing to say with authority, “peace,” and a great thing for the heart to feel the power of these words.

The Lord had said before, “My peace I give unto you “; and this too is the portion of believers now; but the disciples had not peace without: witness the doors shut on account of the Jews. They thought it had been He who should have redeemed Israel; but now they were in much confusion of heart, and great fear of those without.

They still trusted in the Saviour, in a sort, though He was not returned, and therefore they were in dismay as regarded their hopes, and they feared because of the Jews. God might sustain their hearts, but there was nothing to rest on as a present thing.

Now to this point the soul must be brought—to see no hope but in Christ, even though at the same time Christ may not be found.

The Spirit of grace, speaking to the sinner, convinces him of his lost condition; but the power of grace alone can give peace in the knowledge of sins forgiven.

It is to be remarked here that the disciples had leaned on Jesus as the Messiah; their thoughts had been that

He should have redeemed Israel (that is, lead them on to comfort and blessing). There was this character of trust in Messiah, through whom, while with them, they lacked nothing, for He gave them power and blessing; but to the disciples at that time all this was gone. Jesus on whom they rested, to whom they looked for support and strength, was not there; and to them that knew Him not as risen, everything was gone. So we may hear of Jesus' name and His love, and this may please and attract the mind when the Lord is working in grace; but, at the same time, it is like the disciples resting on a living Saviour, but with no knowledge that we are lost. Jesus may have so attracted our minds, that the world may appear to us but loss, and nothing but Jesus valuable; and we may say even as the disciples, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"; but this is not seeing that we are lost, or knowing the power of the resurrection.

The convincing of sin is a time of most special distress: the world gone, Jesus lost as to sense and appearance and not found again; but it is when in this state and condition Jesus reveals Himself. And how? Saying, "Peace be unto you." And this is not simply blessing and strength to the weak; it is not supply to need that suits the lost: there must be a Saviour for the lost. A man in want may go to the world for supply, and will do so undoubtedly if he be unregenerate; but if a soul feels itself lost, nothing will satisfy him till he finds a Saviour.

And here the value of the cross comes in. The cross is not only the image of our lost condition, but all that belongs to us is there expressed, as borne by another, and here the case of a sinner is met. We may have been before looking for supplies from Jesus to meet our

supposed need, but the discovery of our being lost is only met in the cross. The natural man may see it a happy thing to have his sins forgiven; but to see the power and the effect of the cross, the wrath borne, the cup drunk, to see the curse laid upon Jesus, meets the need of those who have a sense of what is due to sin. The heart that knows what it is to be lost responds to this, a new light breaks in on the soul in the perception in Jesus of what sin has done; had we to learn it in ourselves, it could only be everlasting destruction. And what is the sense of a curse passing on the head of that blessed One, if it was not for us? It does not merely draw our affections, but the knowledge that we are lost is forced upon us in the death of Jesus. What sense is there in the Son of God in the grave, if not for us? A sinless person in life and conduct, “the brightness of God’s person,” and perfect as man; what relation has this to us? what bearing has it on our souls?

I speak not now of grace or supply to the believer, but what meaning is there to our souls in the cross of Christ? what sense is there in the death of Christ, if you are not lost? —lost by all the evil, the sin, the vileness, the transgression that required nothing other than the blood of Christ to blot it out. If your condition is not that to which the blood alone is the answer, let it alone; but if it be, there is One on whom the judgment of God came for sin—One in whom all is accomplished for us, and there it ends. The knowledge of this by the Holy Spirit brings the complete sense of ruin, but with it the perception of being saved, for the knowledge of our being lost, when fully known in Jesus, brings with it the knowledge that we are saved; and then come those blessed words, “Peace be unto you.” But the poor

disciples, with the power of Satan round them and Jesus gone, is the state of those who do not fully understand the power of deliverance in the cross.

The Lord said of Job, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him?” The candle of the Lord shone upon them; but in the character of Job, it is revealed to us that none can stand in the presence of the adversary. The comforts of the Lord are first of all withdrawn from Job, and then an evil disease cleaves to him; yet in this he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly; but afterwards we see him entirely broken down in the presence of the adversary. He was a man whom God could point out as having none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man; yet could he not, with Satan as his adversary, stand before God; and this causes him to make himself more righteous than God, and to curse the day on which he was born. Yet what is the result but the opening of the Ups of Job to say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Not so Christ; He was one who stood before the adversary in the presence of the Lord. And the resurrection proved how unfailing His service was; and we learn in the sorrow and the suffering of His righteous soul, and in His death, what sin is. The Lord coming under the title of death which Satan had against us, bearing our sins. This is what the cross is. The suffering went on in the soul of Jesus when sore amazed in the garden; it went on in the soul of Jesus when He said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In the weight of the wrath upon Him, we learn what the cross was; and if you feel that you are lost, you will know the meaning and the value of it.

It is not a crucified Saviour now, but a risen One who speaks to us, the giver of all victory to us over all that was against us, having delivered us from suffering under it; and consequently the word “peace be unto you” is the authoritative expression of one who knew the ruin, and yet could say “Peace,” because in the full knowledge that everything was done that could bring peace to the soul, for He had risen from the power of sin and death, having met the adversary to the face; and what could a risen Saviour say but “peace”? Could He speak of wrath when He had borne the sin and the curse, and was risen over it all? What could He say but this? And it is a risen Saviour who does say “Peace” to those who, though they have no peace, yet know the meaning of the cross. What the cross shewed the requirement of is finished for ever, and therefore to those that believe it is “peace,” “peace.”

The first person whom the Lord addresses after His resurrection is one out of whom He had cast seven devils; but grace had won her affections. She was drawn to Jesus, though looking indeed for the living among the dead, but still she was looking for Jesus; and the Mary He singled out to reveal Himself to was the one in whom the full energy of evil had been shewn out; and to her the blessed Lord spoke that one word which revealed at once to her, that He who had died was alive again—Mary —giving her a hope that was beyond destruction, because Jesus lived beyond the grave. Jesus, He whom her thoughts and affections were set on, was alive for evermore; and all her hopes rested in the endless life of Him who died for her. What could be darkness to her if Jesus was alive? The darkness had been gone through, for in Jesus’ death she had tasted it for a time; but He

was risen for evermore, and the riches of God's grace through the power of Christ, we find now first revealed to one who had been possessed with seven devils.

And if the Lord speaks "peace" to the soul, what is the meaning of it? This gives it power, that it is not a mere passing word of kindness, but peace, eternal peace, because peace is made by His having borne our sins, by virtue of what He accomplished on the cross. It is on this ground He says "peace"; and if you see that in this sense He never speaks "peace," till He is risen, you see that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. 5:1, 9. Have your souls known this peace? and have you known what it is to be lost? Not merely acknowledging the need of a Saviour, or looking for supplies from Jesus, but knowing that what was due to you was borne by Jesus?

It presses too keenly on the heart and conscience to look at the cross unless you can say, It is peace.

The careless heart of man cannot bear to look at the cross, except he be at the foot of it, acknowledging his need of it; for he has to measure himself by the wrath poured out on Jesus. But if your back is turned on the cross, there is none to give peace. The cross may cause us shame when it leads us to see what sin is; but itself, it is the power of God unto salvation. Haste then to God who beseeches you to be reconciled. And may the Lord, in the riches of His grace, shew you the vileness of sin, and that Jesus has drunk the bitter cup of wrath but is now the risen Saviour; that you may enter this life of

peace through Him who, in that He died, died unto sin once, that he who lives might live unto God.

Lost Or Saved

Acts 26

The peculiarity of the gospel is its activity towards man — dealing with individuals to whom it is addressed, and not merely propagating opinions. It is quite intelligible that a person may like to spread his opinions, but he will soon get tired of it. The gospel deals with man individually, and goes out actively towards man: neither Judaism nor heathenism ever did this.

The character of the gospel is as when Paul preached it, that it turned “the world upside down.” Nothing was to stand before it; nothing could be allowed with it: Judaism, heathenism, etc.—it overturned all. It brought in the claims of God upon individuals. It not only brought truth about God, etc.; but it shewed those addressed to be in a certain position towards God. The gospel comes and says, “You are lost”; and it does turn the world upside down. It is a new thing for them to be told, You are all wrong. Paul did this. He stated soberly what it was—gave proofs of it, but could not convince man’s mind. He treated every living soul as a sinner, a child of wrath, a child of disobedience. That must be from God, not man, and it turns the world upside down. Paul was sent out to all the world, and so were others also; 1 Cor. 15:10. His mission was peculiar; and he brought the claims of God before men, calling everyone to repent, warning them they were all away from God, and telling them to submit to the gospel.

It is a solemn thing for a man to stand up, and say, “You are all lost.” And this is what Christianity tells us is the state of all by nature; and yet it comes in grace. It is not

law: the law never did that. It came to a people already redeemed. They had been brought out of Egypt, and now God said, You are to have that law, and to you only can I give it (any who come in as a Jew may have the same privileges). The law maintained the unity of the Godhead, and it gave a rule of life, or rather principles of blessedness for a creature, if he could keep it. It was given to a feeble people to maintain the truth until the "Seed" came; but it dealt with man (while convincing him that he could not keep it) on his own ground that he could keep it. The Jews to whom it was given were a specimen taken from human nature to test it, and to prove whether any good thing could come out of it. What is the good, you may say, of telling men they are lost? Why not leave it till the day of judgment? This would not be grace; it would do for law, but not grace. There was most important truth conveyed in the law—one God, etc.; but He was behind the veil. He sent out to tell man what He was, but He hid Himself in thick darkness. He never revealed Himself under the law. He gave a law telling men what they should be, but could not reveal Himself. He would not have put man to the test if He had, for "God is love," and love could not deal in law.

If God had revealed Himself, He would have said, "You are perfect sin; but I am perfect love, and can put away your sins." "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The gospel tells you not only that you have done wrong, but that you are a sinner in the presence of a God who reveals Himself. It comes revealing God in such a way, that the contrast between Himself and you is brought to light—sin and light. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness," etc. Christ never turned away any; but He did not cover over man's sin—

He brought it to light. There is truth as well as grace. He came presenting God to the conscience of man, and laid it open and bare before Him. Why should God trouble Himself about my sins, and not leave it all till the day of judgment? It is all grace that makes you conscious of what you are in His presence now. There is life-giving or quickening power from Him, which, however terrible the conviction arising from it, brings a longing for holiness when I have not got it. There is a new nature that cannot get peace for itself; it has the desire after holiness, but knows it has not got it. It is there, heavy laden, though delighting in God, and desiring Him. There is a consciousness of a burden, but no power to get from under it. There must be something else. The gospel brings salvation to the person for whom it is wrought.

There must be righteousness; but the new nature is not righteousness. I have to find out, not only what is in my heart, but what is in God's heart about me. Confessing my faults will not make me happy. Can I be happy, if I have offended my Father, because I feel sorry about it, without knowing what His thought about me is? The gospel brings knowledge of divine love in salvation. The gospel is the perfect full answer from God to the desires He has produced. In a word, it is salvation.

Paul, when the gospel came to him, was full of himself, self-righteousness, and self-complacency. He had been spending his life in doing things to make himself righteous in God's sight, and then found out that it was all in vain, and that the "carnal mind is enmity against God." Self had been the object of all. He had been spending all his activities to drive God out of the world, and hinder the gospel of His grace; if he could have done it, he would. That is the character of every one by

nature; though not so energetic as Paul, they are the enemies of God. Will a wealthy man like to hear money spoken of as good for nothing? If he has none, perhaps he will be glad to hear it; but men do not like what they pride themselves in to be made nothing of. God and man are at enmity. Man is righteous in his own sight, and how will he like to hear his own righteousness called "filthy rags"? "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners" was the complaint against Christ. Will He go to the sinners and slight their righteousness? Will they have such a God as that? Saul was an enemy of God, when in his own sight he was righteous. He wanted his eyes opened, and that is what he got. "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me." Two things must accompany each other—the revelation of God's Son and the knowledge, by that revelation, of ourselves. Paul had all manner of truth before; but God was not revealed to him.

So you too may have plenty of truth or doctrine and not know God. If God is revealed to me, it is because I have not known Him before. Could you be conscious of being in the presence of God—every one is in His presence; but could you be conscious of it—and not know what you are? When the eye is open, we see with the truth of God. Philosophy argues about God, but what are the thoughts of man about Him? Think of a man with plenty of money being told the Lord was to come to-morrow. What would he think of his money? Would he not hide it? We live the life of fools in this world (I do not mean Christians, but in our natural state); and what is more, we know it, but we do not like to know it. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." You must take a child to get the simple expectation of good from this world: men do not

expect it; they know they are pursuing what cannot satisfy them.

In verse 17 of this chapter we get a new starting-point. Paul was one to whom the gospel came thus, his enmity having reached its height, he was turned “from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.” Paul tasted the perfect grace of God, that left not a thought of sin between Him and Paul. “lam Jesus whom thou persecutest.” He saw Christ, and was taken up in the midst of his enmity and sin, and made an apostle, “to turn from darkness to light.” We are not only living in darkness, but we are darkness until our eyes are opened. The sun does not give light to a blind man, and such are we till our eyes are opened. When a person sees with the eyes of God as to himself, as to light, as to God, this is repentance, not salvation yet; and a sinner needs salvation. I cannot get the sun at all, without having a little heat; but this is not peace. You must be at home with God to have confidence —you must see Him. The consciousness that we want God, and the consciousness of knowing Him, are different things. It is what God has done for man that is salvation, not what He has done in man. We can tell men they are lost, because we know it for ourselves. We can tell them they are lost, because we know we are saved. When I have got the remedy and know it will cure, I can tell of it. I know there are sins, but I have got Christ. I have got something beyond the new nature that longs for holiness. I have forgiveness—no mention of sins against the man who believes in Christ.

The gospel not only tells men they need forgiveness, but it tells them they have it—not a single spot—all the sins gone. Any Christian can say he has it, who knows and

believes the gospel. But how can you say that? you ask. Does not God say so? Perhaps you are not caring for it! It is terrible if you are not—terrible that God should send His Son and you not care about it! This is worse than breaking the law, for the blood was shed to wash away that sin. Now when atonement has been made, and is rejected or treated with indifference, what can be done? For “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” By the gospel we announce the forgiveness of your sins, and a perfect righteousness wrought out for you. Have you got it? Do you think God has sent His Son to atone for our sins, and to work out this righteousness, and we not need it? If you need it, have you got it? Nay, do you know you want it? Have you ever been in the presence of God? Have your eyes ever been opened to see your nakedness in the presence of God? The blind man does not know his state. When God has clothed a man, he is not naked. God clothed Adam with skins. When a man has put on Christ, surely it may be said, “By grace are ye saved.”

Christ has wrought out a righteousness in which we can be in the presence of God, and in which He can Himself sit on the throne of God. He has clothed me with divine righteousness as well as given me forgiveness, and He preaches peace. I know, when clothed, I have perfect peace. After this, there is the full and blessed result in glory. What Christ is entitled to we get. He has a title to everything, and I have a portion with Him in all that He has. The work which has earned the glory for Him as Son of man gives it to me. When He comes, we shall come with Him in the glory. There is the “inheritance”; but, what is better, we are to be with Him who is the

universal Heir. He has finished the work for salvation. For whom? For me; for every believer.

Do you say, Ought not I to wait till I am in the glory, before I believe that I am cleansed from all sin? Surely not. The angels will see it then; but we, are not we to see the salvation? We do when we have faith. Those who only expect to see it when they get there will not see it at all. Ought I to wait till then to know the cross of Christ? The effect of knowing it is forgiveness. Am I to wait to know righteousness then? The only way to have it is to see Him by faith, while we cannot see Him. The gospel reveals the answer of God to my soul, that what I want I have in Christ—forgiveness, righteousness, life, peace, glory. My sins are borne away already, and my title to glory just as perfect as when I get there. “We have redemption through his blood.” The consequence of knowing I have it, is that I can walk with God.

How can you walk with God if you have not peace, if you have not forgiveness, if you are not cleansed from sin? Could Adam walk with God when his conscience told him he had sinned? No. But the gospel brings salvation, as it is said, “The grace of God which bringeth” etc. Now, have you got salvation? If your eyes are open, you will want it; have you got it? God does not deceive you. He does not say you are saved, if you are not. The craving after it is not the answer to it. If He has given the craving, He will complete the work; but it is not the answer. If you say, How can I tell? you have not submitted to the righteousness of God; you are going about to establish your own righteousness by the fruits of grace you want to find in yourself, and so to get a proof of your standing before God. But will fruits of grace give you forgiveness, righteousness? They are not

the blood of Christ; they are not Christ. How can they cleanse from sin? God delights in the fruits of grace, but they cannot put away sin. It is the work of Christ on the cross which alone does that. God has set Him at His own right hand; and when I believe it, I see how God has loved me. May you be in yourself so broken down, that you may find One who never breaks down! Grace reigns through righteousness, and will produce all manner of fruits through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death With Christ

Romans 6

This chapter is the application of Christ dead and risen to the believer's walk, and is the proof that grace disallows sin. Hence we have here Christian practice, and the ground of that practice. We are called to liberty, and not slavery, even in holiness. There is righteousness, but it is of that sort which bears fruit. There is evidently wonderful depth and value in it, as there must be in all that which comes from God. Nor is it merely the producing fruit down here (that is man's thought), but it is fruit that goes up to God; for whatever comes from Him goes up to Him. The meat-offering might be eaten, but all the frankincense went up to God. When Christ was down here, He offered Himself in His life as a sweet savour; Eph. 5. It comes down, and goes up to God again. This is Christian morality; and where this is wanting, it is all nothing. The value is in the motive.

Thus, there may be two men—the one doing everything for his own pleasure, the other for the sake of those around him: the one acting on a merely selfish principle, the other feeling aright as the father of the family. Therefore we have constantly to judge ourselves, that we be not judged. The Christian, in judging himself, must be grieved when he sees how many other things come in, and mix up with that which he presents to God. Self is apt to enter, and spoil the savour of the ointment —not, perhaps, in others, but to himself before God.

We have seen that chapter 4 of this epistle brings out faith in the God who had intervened in power, and raised Jesus, who was under the power of death, and set Him

at His own right hand. We thus believe “on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” He had said of Himself, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” speaking of His body.

In chapter 5 faith is applied to justification, and then the law comes in by the bye—righteous of itself, but convicting of unrighteousness those to whom it was given; for they could not keep it. Man must be innocent or saved. If a man is innocent, he does not want the law. Adam could not have known what it meant if it had been said to him, Thou shalt not lust, and, Thou shalt not steal. Whom was he to steal from? Man was addressed in the law as a sinner, and it was not given till 400 years after the promise. By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, by the Other’s obedience many were made righteous.

This display of grace seemed to make it no matter how the believer lived, and to meet such a thought as that we have chapter 6. The perverseness of the flesh will turn the law to a purpose quite opposed to that for which God gave it, and grace to a different purpose from that for which it was bestowed. The law, that was meant to convict man of sin, they use for self-righteousness; and grace, that is intended really to make a man holy, they turn into licentiousness.

Although it is true that souls were quickened before Christ came, in virtue of His coming, we learn this truth, that man is lost, a fallen sinner, before he is the head of the fallen family: and so Christ was the Righteous Man before He became the Head of the redeemed family. Man naturally likes unholiness; and how is he to get rid of this? Nay, “how shall we that are dead to sin live any

longer therein?" The motive to, yea ground of, a Christian life is that we died with Christ; and we have life through a dead Christ, with whom we died. If we have, justification, we are made partakers of His life, and there is the spring of holiness. The blood of atonement was put on the ears, hands, feet; marked by this, they had then to watch. Nothing is to be allowed in thoughts or ways that would sully the purity of that blood. How can a man live in that to which he died? It cannot be. If I once died to sin, I cannot live in sin. God forbid! There is putting your members to death; but you are not told to die, as having died already. The cross of Christ has killed sin. I can now deal with this old thing as not me; I have done with it; and I have got a new life, by which the other is overcome.

What Christ have you a part in? A dead Christ. "Buried with him in baptism," etc., raised up by this new power, "by the glory of the Father"; and I can rest upon that expression, because it can feed the heart, and meet the subtlety of the world, and the subtlety in ourselves. There is nothing connected with the glory of the Father that was not concerned in the resurrection of Christ. There was specially shewn the power of God, and the Father's love. There His own glory is concerned in it, for it is the Father's own Son, who was one with Himself; and the righteousness of God is also concerned. He shall convict the world of righteousness. "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." He was God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels: angels must be witnesses of this great work of the resurrection of the Son.

There would have been a gap in heaven if Christ had not been raised up from the dead. Now we see (I do not say

realise) what this newness of life must be. Ought not I to see divine righteousness in it? Ought not I to see divine love in it? Ought not I to see the glory of His Person in it? And the affections have to do with this too, for He has gone down into the depths of the earth; and how came He there? Because I was a sinner. And do I not see that He who was there so low deserved to be raised? Who was it? The Person of the Son of God. When speaking to the woman of Samaria, He Himself said, “If thou knewest who it is that said unto thee, Give me to drink.” He first speaks to her conscience, after He said, “Give me to drink”; then to her understanding, for “I perceive that thou art a prophet.” Then the Person of the Lord Jesus fills her heart, for she goes and tells others about Him. And this is where we are brought. The heart follows Christ, as it were, and goes up with Him into the new life. Everything is dead below.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.” I do not say there will be no conflict. And the heart has done with it. How very near it comes to me! “Planted together.” And this is no mere intellectual perception, but, as I see that Christ was there for my sins, it is the very way in which my need is all met. “We have been planted together in the likeness of his death,” etc. It comes to me here, and for my sins. And was divine love the less because down here, and not up above? It is in that I learn it, because it was for my sins. Was divine power the less? It is here I learn it. His heart followed me to be made sin, and now mine must follow Him in resurrection. We have no half Christ. We are planted together in the likeness of His death, and planted together in the likeness of His resurrection.

He not only died but is personally accepted. It was “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we henceforth should not serve sin.” You were slaves (speaking after the manner of the country)—under the title of dominion by another—not knowing at night what they should do in the morning— naturally slaves to sin or slaves to the law. Not that the law was sin: see John 8:33, where the Jews are addressed as under the law. “The servant abideth not in the house for ever, … but the Son abideth ever. If, therefore, the Son hath made you free, ye are free indeed.” It is perfect liberty. He that has done with sin must be dead to it. You cannot charge a thing upon a man that is dead. Why did you do so-and-so? “He that is dead is freed from sin.” All is gone to which it attached. Do you ask, How can that be said, when I find I am not dead? Because it is with Christ you died. Christ was put in your place; He has taken it on Him, and done with it. The very things that distress me now are the things that put Christ to death. He has done with sin; therefore mortify it. “Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God.” I should not need such a word as that “reckon,” if there was no need of mortifying. It is holy liberty from sin we have, and not to sin.

“Walk in newness of life.” “Have your fruit unto holiness.” But the great doctrine of grace is—saved by a mediator. “Enter not into judgment.” If judgment takes its course on me, it is all over with me. Wash yourself ever so clean, the instant you see the eye of God upon you, you see yourself as one out of a filthy ditch. Job wanted a “daysman, who might lay his hands upon both.” The more delicate the conscience is as to the sense of the least defilement, the more the need of the mediator is felt. You say, I find that which ought to be

dead is still alive. Did Christ die for the sins you have not, or for those you have? The very things you are finding out are the very things He died for. The more jealousy of conscience, the better, only be sure to see the grace too.

We have a new thing in Him; He is raised from the dead. Judgment cannot touch it—death cannot touch it. There is not a single thing He has not taken upon Himself. And now we are planted in a new state of existence altogether; in that we live, we live in Him, just as much as we died with Him. He died, not for Himself, but He was made sin, etc., and in everything He was put to the test. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. He went through everything— the scorn of the world, the power of Satan—even to the wrath of God. He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin. Satan never could find anything in Him. It was His meat to do His Father's will. But it is never said He could take delight in the suffering for sin; therefore He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Now He lives beyond it all in resurrection. He had the Spirit of holiness. All His life through, this was true of Him; but He was put to the test in everything. But now we see Him in new life. He is no half Christ then. He died to sin, but lives to God; therefore we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God.

This is a very practical question. Not that you are to say, If you have not the realization of this, you cannot have the value of the blood. No; but you must know the value of the blood, and so have it in Christ, that you may live. The groundwork of living to Him is to have died to sin

with Him. That is the position— “Reckon yourselves,” not experience yourselves, etc. “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies,” etc. It does not say, Be alive to God, and therefore reckon yourselves, etc. In the power of this I can be living before the world as belonging to God, as I can hve before God in the sense of acceptance, because justified by Christ’s blood. Live to God. How can I do otherwise than hate myself to be doing even a right thing, and not doing it to God? The worst thing possible is to be bringing corruption into the best things.

“Yield yourselves to God.” Did Christ ever do anything for Himself? His was a life of love. He had not time even to eat—always living for others. He not only did things that were commanded, but because they were commanded. What a blessed thought—to have done with self! It is the best thing in the world. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” etc. Oh! but you say, It has dominion over me, and I am afraid God will not have me. What are you doing with grace? How can you come to God for anything, if you are not standing in grace? To whom can you go, if you are not in grace? Romans 5 comes before chapter 6, and if you try to reverse them, you get into chapter 7. If, because I do not love Christ as I ought (which is a higher thing than the law), I doubt whether I am His, I put myself under law—only it is making Christ the law instead of the ten commandments. It is not realising grace, for grace is favour to those who do not deserve it. It is the subtlety of the heart again to abuse grace, where we do not ignore it as we have seen.

“Ye became servants of righteousness.” A person is not to be licentious because free from the law, but he has to

produce “fruit unto holiness.” What is holiness? Separation from what is evil. Adam unfallen was not, but innocent. God is holy, Christ is holy; so are we holy, for we hate sin, and love righteousness, though we cannot do it as God does. Holiness must have God for its object. Christ never needed an object of faith, though He walked in obedience and dependence, as the Holy One of God. We must have an object, Paul had. He saw the Lord in glory, and bore “fruit unto holiness.” What fruit does sin bear? None; it brings in death and judgment. But what is meant by “fruit unto holiness? “We must like what God likes; and what is the consequence of this? We become separate from unholiness, and increasing by the knowledge of God. Not only actual fruits (that is true—a tree must be known by its fruits), but this practical bringing forth fruit is connected with the righteousness of God. “The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear him.” There is constant reference to God’s will. “If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light.” We have to learn God, not just slipping and getting on, but with consecration of the heart, growing up in the knowledge of God—not only servants to righteousness but “to God.”

God’s own character needs to be wrought in us. Christ thought it worth while to leave heaven, that we should be free to go up there, and made to bring forth fruit unto holiness down here.

There is a positive joy in pleasing God. “The gift of God is eternal life.” It is all grace; and I would rather have eternal life as the gift of God, than ten lives of my own ever so long, because it is the proof of His love to me.

May we grow up to do His will, remembering it is founded on reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thus may we live out of the world, as to separation from its evil, as He is!

How Are We Saved?

Romans 1-8

I should like to go a little into the question, How are we saved? In the first eight chapters of Romans we get the gospel fully brought out. It is just the answer to the question, How can a man be just with God? This is the great question of the whole epistle. We do not get resurrection with Christ in this epistle, nor is there union. It is death with Christ, and life through Him. When you get resurrection with Christ, you are associated with Him in life; and when union is taught, you never find justification; for a new creation clearly does not want justifying. This is the teaching of Ephesians, where you get nothing about justification, but all the privileges and duties of the new creation. In Romans we get sinners, and they want justification. In Ephesians we are looked at as “dead in trespasses and sins.”

There are two parts of justification— “from sins,” and “of life”; the first, the clearing me of my old state; and the second, the putting me into a new place before God. These two parts, are treated of distinctly in chapters 1 to 8 of this epistle, dividing them into two parts, the first part ending at chapter 5:11. In chapter 1 we see the ground that called for justification— “The wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness.” It is not governmental wrath, but wrath against the sinner; and “all have sinned, and come short” —of what we ought to be? of the law? All this is simple, but the word says, “short of the glory of God.” The whole dealings of Christianity are on the ground of that. You must either walk in the light,

or have nothing to do with God. It is not God hidden behind a veil, and setting up a law as to what you ought to be; but you are to walk in the light, as He is in the light. So we are taught in that verse of Colossians 1, “Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” A man’s being born again does not make him meet, his being quickened makes him feel the need of it; there is another thing needed that fits you for glory, and that is Christ’s work in grace. The first thing we get about the gospel is, that it is “concerning his Son Jesus Christ,” not about ourselves first. People have lost sight of the claims of Christ. He is become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

There are two things found here (chap. I:2-4) in the Person of Christ. First, He is in connection with the promises. People rest on promises. But the promises are fulfilled by Him and in Him: Christ is Himself the accomplishment of the promises. “For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” This was by means of His incarnation, and sufferings, and death: “come of the seed of David according to flesh.” He fulfilled the promises; but I do not mean to deny that we have precious promises to help us on the way. But there is another thing shewn us in verse 17: “Therein,” in the gospel, “is the righteousness of God revealed.” Faith receives God’s righteousness in contrast with the law which claimed righteousness from man. Then he goes on to lay the ground why there must be a righteousness of God, because there is none in man. “Holiness “is connected with the nature of God. The reason I am so bold about the gospel is because it is the righteousness of God.

In chapter 1 the fact is first stated that the righteousness of God is revealed; in chapter 2, the proof of this and the condition of man. In chapter 3 the apostle gives us first the privileges of the Jew; then he says, the very thing you boast of is that which condemns you: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith," etc. Then all are brought under sin. Then he turns (v. 21) to the question of righteousness. What is wanted is fitness to stand in God's presence, and not come short of His glory. It was "witnessed by the law and the prophets." The Lord our righteousness was witnessed in the prophets, but manifested now. Now it is without law. Though he speaks of righteousness, he does not go beyond faith in His blood; and then he takes up the Old Testament saints.

"Through faith in his blood." Propitiation meets God as a righteous, holy Judge. When a person has offended or wronged another, he requires a propitiation. God provides the propitiation, and sets Christ forth as such. He had forborne with the Old Testament saints. Here His righteousness in doing so is declared. God's righteousness is now not only revealed, but also imputed, to the believer. Then he takes up Abraham and David, and shews that they both concur in this testimony: justification or righteousness does not go farther than forgiveness here (chap. 4:3-5). There is a great deal more in justification, but we are not come to that yet. The accounting righteous in this part of the epistle is the same as forgiveness. What is a propitiation for? Is it not for sin? God sitting as a Judge, and man brought before Him guilty? The death of Christ glorifies God Himself. It is of immense importance to see the way God takes to put away the sins of the old man; there can

be no peace without it. It is another thing to see how God makes a new man.

We get two distinct characters of blessedness in these chapters: the first, chapter 5:1-11; the second, chapter 8. In chapter 5 I get higher things about God than I do in chapter 8. In chapter 5 I find what God is to the sinner; in chapter 8 it is what He is to the new man in Christ Jesus. God is more fully revealed in the absolute goodness of His character in chapter 5, because it is there His dealings with the sinner, as guilty before Him, and having come short of His glory. But the saint is in a higher place in chapter 8—there God is for me. In the first place (chap. 5), God is known as the Justifier; in the second (chap. 8), as Abba, Father. Part one ends at chapter 5:11; that is the way God deals with a sinner about his sins. Now we come to part two. Part one has nothing to do with experience; there I get my debts paid; this may produce very happy feelings, as we see in chapter 5. Part two has everything to do with experience. “No condemnation” —then it is not sinners. In chapter 4, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” A man in that sense is faultless before God. Christ has made an atonement, and if you believe in Him, no sin will be imputed to you. Quickening is not introduced in part one; man’s nature is not there treated of; it has to do with sins and the remedy— Christ dying for our sins. In part two it is sin and the remedy, my dying with Christ. The whole work was settled on the cross, but it is presented in resurrection. We must have resurrection to make it complete. It must be complete to be presented. “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you,” 2 Cor. 5:14. Sanctification comes before

justification when they are spoken of together. “Ye are washed, sanctified, justified.”

It is the fruit, and not the tree, that is judged in part one. The tree itself is judged in part two. In chapter 3 we get faith in the blood of Christ. In chapter 4 it is faith in the God of resurrection— “if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” I find the sinner in his sins, Christ dying, and the sins not imputed to him. Here is a man who has done this, that, and the other, and Christ died for him. God has raised up Christ, and I believe in Him, and am justified. It is ratified. Justification was not completed on the cross, the work by which we are justified was; but I do not get the assurance of it until I see Christ in resurrection. “If Christ is not risen, ye are yet in your sins.” If my surety is not out of prison, I cannot say I am justified. Supposing me in prison for E.’s debt, my acquittance is his justification, not my paying the debt. There are the two things necessary, not only the mortgage paid, but also the deed signed. The work on the cross is that by which I am justified, He was raised again in order to our justifying. He was delivered, our offences being before His mind. He was raised, our justifying being before His mind.

Then chapter 5 begins, “Having been justified, we have peace.” Here we get the whole past, present, and future: justified as to the past; having peace with God, and standing in the favour of God, as to the present; and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, as to the future. Peace, favour, glory, what more can you want? We may get all sorts of troubles here, but what a mercy God sees me righteous! He never withdraws His eyes from the righteous. I am a righteous man; now I can glory in

tribulation, etc. I have the key to all this. I have learnt by all this process not only what I am, but what He is. I have the Holy Ghost in me, as a consequence of justification, shedding abroad the love of God in my heart. I can joy, too, in God Himself (before whom, in chapter 3, I was guilty, and my mouth stopped), not only that I know myself, but I know God too—God in His own absolute goodness. Peace is a fuller deeper thing than joy; when I know that all is settled, and that I am reconciled, then I have peace. A person may have joy, and not yet know himself reconciled. The prodigal may have had a measure of joy in leaving the far country, but he has not peace till he has met the Father, and learns what is the Father's heart toward him. This is all individual. I have got my sins, my peace, my joy, etc. You have got yours.

But when you come to chapter 5:12, we get all in a lump. All ruined in one man. We have had a man's actions first; now we come to man's condition. Adam ruined us all. It is the state of the race, and not of the individual. I get entirely away from God, and I have a nature away from God. If this be known without any knowledge of the grace of God, it must drive a man to despair, but God never allows it to be so quite. Grace has put away your sin. Another thing God says— "You have died" but then, if I look at my experience, it contradicts that. I say, "How can I have died when I find the nature there? I have got in a passion."

In chapter 5:12 we come to the nature, and I get more troubled about sin in me than by my past sins. But here we find the remedy too; not that Christ has died for my sins, but that I died with Christ to sin. The doctrine is, "By one man's obedience," and "by one man's

disobedience." Oh! then, if by the obedience of one I am made righteous, I can live on as I like? No; the apostle says, "You have died." How can I live on if I am dead? This is justification of life here. We have now the positive side of justification: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." As we see, in the first eleven verses of chapter 5, the blessedness of the believer as the result of what the apostle had been bringing out in the previous part of the epistle, Christ dying for our sins, so in chapter 8 we have the blessedness which is the result of what the apostle had brought out from chapter 5:12 to the end of chapter 7.

In part one we had what the sinner has done, put away; in part two it is a question of what he is: acceptance would be connected with part two. Righteousness imputed is not the same thing as reckoning a person righteous. If I pay E.'s debts, he is reckoned righteous; but the character of imputed righteousness is something to go on with. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law," v. 13. It is as plain as A B C. How can a man break a law when he has not got it? You cannot say to the Gentile, "You have transgressed the fifth commandment," because the law was never given to him. In Hosea 6 we read, "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam received a commandment, and lived so long as he obeyed it. And under Moses Israel received the law, by keeping which they should live; but from Adam to Moses there was no commandment, yet death reigned over those who had transgressed no given law. We find no forgiveness here. Sin is never forgiven,.but condemned. "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin,

in the flesh," chap. 8:3. Sin is got rid of by death. If a man dies, there is an end.

Chapter 5:15. We see that the grace must have an aspect as large as the sin. The presentation of grace is to the whole world, but its application is only to those who receive the gift. Verse 18: "As by one offence towards all unto condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all unto justification of life." The one righteousness, as God's gift, is unto all, but it is only upon all them that believe; chap. 3:22, The contrast here (v. 18) is not between the persons, but the one offence and the one righteousness. The gift of righteousness is unto all: just as the sin of Adam addresses itself to the whole race, so does the one righteousness. "Justification of life?" Here I get justification connected with life (not only from my sins), but I have got life; v. 20. "The law" comes in by the bye. The law required man to make out a righteousness. "The law entered that the offence might abound." It is not that sin might abound, but "the offence." God never made sin abound. Sin abounded over the whole race, and there grace much more abounds. The law not only made sin more manifest, but also aggravated its character. The authority of God has been brought in, and despised. A child might do wrong without knowing it; but when the father gives him a command about it, it becomes disobedience. In chapter 2:12, what is translated sinned "without law," is the same word as in 1 John 3:4 (sin is the "transgression of the law"), which should be, "sin is lawlessness."

What is the meaning of Hebrews 9:26, "Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? "I believe it extends to the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. So also "the Lamb of God which beareth

away the sin of the world." The work that accomplishes it is done, but the power is not yet put forth; 1 John 2:2. "Propitiation for the whole world." That is, atonement has been made, and the blood is on the mercy-seat, so that all hindrance is removed. In Hebrews 9:26, 28 we get the two things, to put away sin," and "sins borne"; just as we get the sin-offering and the scape-goat on the day of atonement. The blood of the sin-offering was first sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, then the sins of Israel were confessed over the head of the scape-goat; Lev. 16. The blood on the mercy-seat now is the ground of invitation to the sinner. I say now to the sinner, Christ has died, and the blood is on the mercy-seat, and you will be received if you come. If he accepts the invitation, I can tell him more.

Not only has the Lord Jesus put away sin, but He has borne all your sins, and confessed them as if they were His own; and they are all gone. It is never said Christ died for the sins of the world. In Romans 6 and 7, I am dead and justified from sin. Now I can reckon myself dead. It is not I; I have had enough of "I." Now Christ is I. If I am alive through Christ, I died through Christ. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." A young man has had debts, but his father has paid them and made him a partner in his own business. Now he speaks not of my business, my concerns, etc., but our business, our concerns. But here, in Romans, he is keeping up the individuality; so we do not get union, or such words as "risen with Christ." In Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians we see three stages of advance: in Romans, dead with Christ and alive in Christ; in Colossians, dead with Him and risen with Him; in Ephesians, dead in trespasses and sins, now

quickened together, raised up together, made to sit together in Him in heavenly places. In Romans the individual is cleared from what he was as a child of Adam, and gets the privileges of a child of God.

Chapter 6:16. Now you are perfectly free: what are you going to do with yourself? You were a slave to sin: now yield yourself to God. In chapter 7 we have the same principle applied to law. Verse 4, having died to the law by the body of Christ, now I am connected with Christ—Him who is raised from the dead. The deduction is, you cannot have both the law and Christ. Verse 6 should be, "having died in that wherein we were held." It is not the law that is dead, but I am dead. The law is the jailer, I am the prisoner. The mistake people are making is that they are killing the jailer instead of the thief. The jailer is not dead, the thief is. Now, if you look back, you will see the condition of a man under law. It is the experience of a quickened soul under law. Experience comes in here, and not in the first part of the epistle. If a man is not absolutely lawless, conscience puts him under law. He says, I ought to do this, and I ought to do that.

The regular Hyper-Calvinists put a man in Romans 7, and keep him there. They put him in the seventh before he gets to the third. In chapters 2 and 3 it is what a man has done. In chapter 7 it is what he is in himself. It is not that I have done bad things, but "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This must be learnt experimentally, and not merely known as a doctrine. The soul here learns three things; first, that in himself, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing; secondly, he sees that the flesh is not himself, for he hates it; thirdly, that it is too strong for him, and he cries

out for deliverance. It is God bringing a man to the full knowledge of himself; then he says, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver?” etc., when Christ comes in, and we have the full deliverance of chapter 8.

“When I was in the flesh,” chap. 7:5. Many Christians would not know what that means at all. It is the state of the past. This chapter is experimental, and the truth must be learned, not merely as a theory, but experimentally. To say my sins are forgiven is not experience; but if you tell me something about myself, my experience answers to it, or it does not. We never give up the flesh till we have learned how thoroughly bad it is. I must learn to say, “It is not I,” though not to say it lightly, because as a child of Adam responsible, it is I; but I have found out another I. As to the flesh, there is no question of forgiveness. I do not forgive an offending power, I want deliverance from it. In Romans, my being alive in Christ is stated as a fact, but the doctrine is not brought out as in Ephesians. The more spiritual we are, the more we shall see the infinite value of the cross. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” etc. (2 Cor. 4)— always keeping it beiore my faith—holding the cross to the flesh, because 1 am not in the flesh (otherwise I could not do it).

People talk of whether future sins are forgiven. All my sins were future when Christ died for them, but I ought not to talk of future sins; there is grace enough to keep me from them, and I must not excuse them. Souls have to learn what sin is. Christ, having met the consequences of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, becomes the tree of life to me; and then I learn.

Romans 5:1-11 is what God was in love to the sinner. Chapter 8 is the condition of the believer with God. Would you not like to feel better in yourself? That is I.

God’s Wisdom In Christ

1 Corinthians 1

All the foolishness of man, even of the saint, is the occasion of bringing out the wisdom of God; all thoughts are turned into good by Him; not that this is any excuse for our foolishness. There are two things brought out here: first, all that is of man is broken to pieces; secondly, God comes in, and the righteousness of man, his carelessness, sin, everything is thoroughly broken to pieces. No flesh can glory in His presence. Then would He have men not glory at all? Not so. “Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.” And this is perfect in strength, wisdom, holiness; he will never have to be ashamed of that which is perfect, and will never pass away, when everything else does fade away. What a glorious thing for the saint! It seems wonderful for a poor sinner to be able to say he may “glory in the Lord.” What a tendency there is in nature to glory in anything else! Man must glory in something; it may even be that he boasts of being the worst of sinners. He may glory in his sins, his wretchedness, anything that attaches to self. When God comes in, there will soon be an end of this; he will hide himself fast enough then, and be ashamed of everything he has gloried in before. The state of man by nature is “without God,” even though he may be blessed by Him with all natural things; he would be glad to be out of God’s presence if he could, but in one sense he cannot. “If I take the wings of the morning,” etc. You cannot fly from His presence; yet you are miserable in it. If a man sets up to be righteous, God will break that down, as He did in Paul. We are easily

satisfied with ourselves; a very little righteousness will do. And there is another thing too: man is content with doing his own will; he knows no obedience. Will that do when God comes in? Christ came not to save the righteous but sinners; therefore, if man is to be saved, he must be treated as a sinner. Where was all the boasted righteousness of Saul of Tarsus? He must be taken up as a poor sinner. All man's self-righteousness turns out to be pride when it is traced to its root. The "elder brother" in the parable says, What, will He take in a prodigal? His pride will not let him come in to be in company with such an one. There are plenty of elder brothers now, and younger ones too. Vain man would set up to be wise: he is like a wild ass's colt. What is his wisdom? He picks up little scraps of knowledge, and calls that wisdom; it is man's wisdom, spinning thoughts to exalt himself. Man is "lighter than vanity." But "there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen it." Real wisdom lies there. All that does not give rest to the conscience is folly and fades away.

Carelessness, and boasting of sin and self-righteousness, are both folly and vanity. The difference between them is that the self-righteous man is more proud than his neighbour; but in the presence of God there is not a single motive that he would be glad to have never had. There is a way of deliverance open from the judgment. God speaks, "Where art thou?" You are naked in His presence; but there is a resource in Christ's love, and this is granted here, not when we get to heaven. There is heart enough in Jesus to open the heart of the vilest sinner. "Doth no man accuse thee? No man, Lord. Neither do I accuse thee," etc.; John 8.

There is love to meet the need: therefore I have no need to hide my sins; it leaves no room for guile in the heart; it offers no temptation to whitewash myself; but when Christ comes, it puts away all this.

Christ Jesus, “has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness (sanctification), and redemption.” When we got eternal life in Christ, there was death in us; but life is come, and that life is in the Son. Christ is made unto us of God “wisdom.” What kind of wisdom? Divine wisdom. How could God love such an one as I am? There is Christ’s wisdom. When Christ is made wisdom for me, I can do without my own, and learn of Him as a little child. How was He wisdom? He went down into the place where death reigned, and got the victory over death. The world sinned against God, and He is come into it in mercy: that is wisdom. Wickedness is going on in the world; why does He patiently bear with it? He is saving sinners by Christ the Lord: that is wisdom.

“Righteousness” is God’s own perfect righteousness. Not only can I get “wisdom,” which makes me calm and quiet, but “righteousness” in which there is not a flaw; and through His grace He is made to me “sanctification” also. The rule and measure, the power and setting apart of the new life, are all in Christ. It is not like Israel, set aside by circumcision, Red Sea, etc., but in Christ. Christ is the key to the puzzle of this world. By Him I may no longer tremble in terror before God. No; but I can glory in Him, worshipping Him who is all I need. The more I weigh and ponder it, the more perfect and the more wonderful does it seem. We are not to be nibbling a little bit of the law, and to think Christ has done all the rest. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He is a full

Saviour; and hence we learn that He is “redemption” too. By this the power of evil and death are set aside. We wait for the redemption of the body. I have got “redemption” now in my Head, and the fruit of it fully I wait for. Why do we wait? It is the time of His “long-suffering.” “We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Now, in the best and highest sense we are redeemed to Him. “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” We not only have the life of Adam, but are of God in Christ— this is balm to the heart. What a different position we are in from a sinner trembling before a judge! Whence does all this come? He has taken our hearts up in grace, and will wring them, as He took Job and wrung him, to shew what was in it. What came out was in it, or it would not have come out. “Glorying in the Lord “is real humility: in it I confess I am ashamed of myself, but I acknowledge Christ.

Christ And The Spirit

1 Corinthians 2

We get two things very distinctly here: the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory (and that in the Person of the Christ), which the princes of this world did not know, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and then we are told that, as “no man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him, so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.” Therefore the world is in total ignorance of the things of God. And so we find with men as such. They may be very learned and clever; but they do not know them. Nay, it is rather their boast that man can know nothing but what he sees, together with a few conclusions which he may thence draw. And it is perfectly true too, and therefore one of the most fashionable infidelities of the day at the same time. Of all that is outside sense they are utterly ‘ignorant; and so they must be. With all the learning and talent that is in man, if he meddles with things beyond these, he puzzles himself hopelessly. He only comes either to say, there is no God; or if there is, he does not know what that God is, just as Pilate asked, “What is truth?” He will make quantities of speculations and very clever ones, but can go no farther. Yet he has a conscience. There is a sense of being responsible to some one. There is a knowledge of the judgment of God (kept out greatly, it is true, by man’s will; but God took care when man fell, that he should carry a certain knowledge of good and evil with him after eating of the forbidden fruit). So he

does carry a conscience—hardened perhaps, but there it is to get hardened and perverted. You may see it in the case of the poor woman taken in adultery: all her accusers went out one by one convicted by their own consciences.

So it has always been, whether God gives man a law, or man is lawless, still there it is—a knowledge of good and evil. And so there is an instinctive sense that there is a judgment, but utter ignorance of what God is, except that He takes account of what man does. There is some feeling, too, at times, that He is good and must be good; but there is no knowledge of the Spirit of God or of His intentions. Of course, beyond this, there is Christianity in its general truths floating about us.

But it is wonderfully expressed here; the wisdom of God in a mystery, hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew. There cannot be a more wonderful expression than that, for Christ is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God, and Christ they crucified. The first thing we learn is, that these counsels of God were before the world. I am now speaking not of election, but of the plans and thoughts of God before the world was. There is the distinct contrast in this verse, thoughts and counsels of God ordained for our glory before the world in which we are now living with all its responsibilities. Now these counsels, which were before the world, had been brought out consequent upon the death of Christ.

I would insist for a moment on this, that there is a world which has its own thoughts and objects; but that world crucified the Lord of glory. All that had the wisdom of this world and its power were found in opposition to Christ. The governor Pilate, the chief priests and elders

of the people, Jew and Gentile, the secular power and the religious power, refused the Lord of glory. And also there is a world in which we are living which has through the cleverness and skill of man under Satan formed round man a wonderful scene so far as man's thoughts go, pleasures, sciences, and the development of the things given in creation; developing again the talents of man amid these things; wonderful combinations exhibited; great skill in turning things to man's use; beautiful music with rich harmonies: all constituting just Cain's history again. He had built his city, he had his artificers in brass and iron (and so have we now); he had harp and organ (and so have we now); pleasing himself without thinking of God, shutting God out and making the world pleasant to the natural feelings apart from Him. It was then and is now alike.

Now Christians are apt to go along with this world and all these things because they have natural powers to appreciate them. There is nothing wrong in these things of the world themselves; it is in the use man makes of them the right or the wrong consists. There is no conscience in these things, no spiritual affections in them, no moral good in them (all God's creatures, of course). Nor are the things evil. Why, in heaven we read of the harpers harping with their harps. It is the use that is made of these things that is wrong; and Christians are very apt to slip into the world's way, and not see the value of what they do, from mere natural delight in things here. It is a world that is forming pleasures for itself out of what God did create; but it does not care for God, for it rejected Him. It did not know the Lord of glory, for it is a Cain-world, with plenty of music of its own of course; and Christians take it up as something

good that they can share; whereas it was nothing but Cain's world to begin with and Cain's world to go on with.

But mark there is another thing altogether—a reality that was before the world and which is known only by faith. It is the more solemn because human responsibility began only with this world. The first Adam was the responsible man, and he failed, and all are sinners since. This is what came in; it was not the counsel of God (in a sense a counsel known to Him of course), it was not a definite design. My responsibility is not God's counsels, and that came in after these counsels were formed. And this is the way of God's dealings and the way He always dealt—He has a thought which He will bring about; but in the meanwhile things are trusted to man, just as in the case of Adam. God had the intention of having the second Man and all His glory set up in Him. This is what God had in His mind. It was purposed in Christ before the world existed. After that God set up the first man Adam; and he—Adam—is the man of responsibility—not the man of God's counsels.

And you find the two great principles in the garden at the beginning in the two trees there—grace that gave life, and responsibility to obey or disobey. The law took up the same two, but put the responsibility first—this do and live. Again a breach followed. Man made a golden calf at once. Then when God set up the church, all went to sleep, wise as well as foolish, or said, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Then God brings out His counsel ordained before the world—that He will bring man into His own glory as well as sinless into His presence in Christ. He forms the church to reign with Christ in that glory. And nothing of this will He fail to accomplish in

result; but first He puts man in responsibility, and man has to learn his total failure in himself, being powerfully convinced by the Spirit and the word of God, so as to be cast upon grace, and find glory.

Now it is the place we get into thus that I desire to touch upon. You may find it in the scheme of God, but yet a soul must go through the question of responsibility for himself. He must own failure and the way in which he has failed— that in his flesh there is no good thing at all—and then, entirely cast on grace, find Christ. Now Christ as a Saviour meets this position and need by putting Himself in charge of the glory of God which we had compromised. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, and has met responsibility completely and perfectly, both as regards our sins and the glory of God. “He bore our sins in his own body on the tree”; and again, “now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” He has completed the work, sins are gone, and God’s glory is perfectly accomplished; so that all is finished, and the foundation laid, not on the responsibility of the first man, but on the accomplishment of God’s work by the second Man, and thus the whole question is ended. And Christ meets the other want also. He is the life; He is both the trees; for the ruin that came in is met by Christ on the cross, and infinitely more, by Christ becoming our life. It is all met now before the things are accomplished in glory, while, as regards the peace of the soul and the redemption of the sinner, and his meetness to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, it is now a settled thing —perfectly settled; for he now has life not of the first Adam, but of the Second. In his mortal body it is now the life of Jesus that is to be manifested; it is Christ who is

our life. This shews that the first thing is judged totally; if any man be in Christ, not only is he a new creature but all is new.

And you find this borne out through scripture. In Ephesians it is not a man living in sins but one dead in sins, so that he is not there meeting sinners in their condition as such, but regards them as created in Christ Jesus, God's workmanship. Consequently there we have the whole full result—ourselves set in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus brought out. In Romans we have the condition of the sinner most completely met. And so the whole thing is settled. There is a world that Satan has formed round the first man, and the question is whether a believer is to go on with it. We have to go through it with this testing us—shall the glory revealed by the Spirit of God, or the world Satan has formed round us in nature, possess our hearts? I am not talking now of sins; but it is a solemn question whether this world possesses our hearts or not. The character of things now is not gross immorality; but is the first man to be exalted, or the Second? Of course there is immorality; but you find persons boasting of a general improvement of society, and with some ground it may be, yet it is all beside the point. Externally it may be something less gross than in times that have passed, but which man is exalted in your hearts—the first, or the Second?

Now the thought and counsels of God, in Christ first as centre, are ordained for our glory that we may be practically drawn out from the world (in spirit altogether). He has called us in Christ and by Christ, and has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And are our hearts there?—bodies

not of course yet, but our hearts? “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; and we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” —suffer truly as regards this world, though at the same time we find it too is all ours, while it does not yet appear what we shall be. Then how far are our hearts set upon that which we are going to be? It is wonderful how the scripture insists upon this with Christians. See in Colossians how it is declared we are dead and our life hid with Christ in God: we get the same share with Him. God has associated the Christian with Christ. Now as to your hearts, beloved friends, are they associated with Christ or does the world and its fashion get hold of you? It touches us all: we all have to go through it; and it is the purpose of God that you should walk by faith and not by sight. If a man saw God, the greatest sinner in the town would not go and sin in His face. Like children in a school, it is when the master’s back is turned that they fall into mischief.

But mark again this—God begins by a perfect redemption: you must not have the slightest cloud upon that part of the truth. Trial of you and your responsibility have nothing to do with judgment and acceptance: on this there is no question. “There is none righteous, no, not one”; and if God enter into judgment with us, no flesh should be saved, no, not one of you: if you have anything to do with judgment, you have certainly to do with condemnation, and nothing short of it. And yet we shall appear (be manifested) at the judgment-seat of Christ—that remains quite true; but to the believer it is not judgment; John 5.

Now God, anticipating all this, brings down the full testimony that you are total sinners, and that in your flesh dwelleth no good thing. God will shew you it all, that He may bring it home to you, by your fears even, if Christ is coming; for you would not feel easy if He came. But God will bring you to this point if you are to get peace. He has done with tlesh, He has condemned it; and so you can have nothing to do with looking for good in it, because He has condemned it. The body is dead because of sin. If it is life, it is alive in sin!

It is not a question of amiable qualities—you find them in a dog; but it is a question whether you like to do your own will; for if you do, you are in rebellion against God. But God has perfectly redeemed the believer out of all this. He has gone through the whole scene of man's responsibility, without law, and under law; lastly He sent His Son who was only rejected and then declared "now is the judgment of this world." And there is your judgment; you are of that world and belong to it, and you have been judged in its judgment on the cross. Stephen charges the Jews that they had received the law by the disposition of angels and had not kept it— "which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" As your fathers resisted the Holy Ghost, so do ye—killed the prophets; rejected God's Son; resisted the Holy Ghost, and this of God's people on the earth!

Well, it is all judged. And if through grace we have been individually brought to a consciousness of it in our own souls, then we are cast exclusively on Christ, and the question is not whether you have failed in your responsibility, but whether God has failed in His work. This is all the question; and herein too is the truth of the gospel.

What ruined the church (that is, as a thing in man's hand, not of course God's work) was, that the sense of complete redemption was quite lost; the fact, I mean, that man does not stand before God in his condition as a child of Adam at all, but in Christ* after Christ has done God's work for him. And each one must learn this in his own consciousness for himself. Christ has borne the things God must have judged man for; and yet more: He becomes our life. Consequent on this work which He has done, we can say we have died with Him; and He is our life. The tree is ended, as well as the fruits. The body of sin is gone for faith; and therefore one can say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is "I" now. I do not admit the flesh to be "I" any more. He is my life; "Christ liveth in me." This is what deliverance means—not forgiveness only but deliverance. Deliverance is that we are not in the flesh at all, not in that which has man's responsibility before God. There is therefore no question of meetness. Christ is meet for heaven; and whosoever is in Christ is also meet for heaven. You must add to the value of Christ's work before you can add to the title of your meetness for heaven.

Then comes another thing. The moment the Christian is seen in Christ—that not merely He has borne my sins, but I am in Christ—there is one who can be sealed with the Spirit of God. If he is born again and washed by the blood of Christ, the Holy Ghost can dwell in him. We must never confound the quickening of a soul with the presence of the Spirit which seals Christ's work. The Holy Ghost quickens my soul, and brings me under the blood of sprinkling whereby I am as white as snow: after this the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in me as thus washed

clean. God sees me perfectly cleansed and the Holy Ghost is the seal of it and of me—all in virtue of the efficacy of Christ's blood.

The presence of the Holy Ghost is a consequence of redemption. When Christ had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and "being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear"; and further, "because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts whereby we cry, Abba Father," and then you see at once this gives me a capacity to enjoy whatever God opens up to me. But Paul says, "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery "; but even a crucified Christ was a stumbling-block to a Jew and foolishness to a Greek. Ah! you may be a Jew or a philosopher; but are you not a sinner? This is all God knows about you. You must all meet God at the cross of Christ, or be judged.

Having brought this in, the apostle goes on to say, "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Now here we find Christ in the glory—a man there; and, connected with Him, God can bring out all these counsels. Christ, who is the centre of it all, is actually a Man in heavenly glory; and, further, the Holy Ghost can come down and unfold all this. Man is in the glory of God, as Stephen shews at the very turning-point of man's depravity in resisting the Holy Ghost. Then the mystery comes out. The Holy Ghost having been sent down, associates us with it on the footing of a place in

Christ (the old man is set aside— “ye are dead”). We stand in a righteousness in Christ which is God’s righteousness, when man had none. Now the Holy Ghost can bring in all the heavenly glory, and this is what He is doing for the Christian. We have the life and the righteousness of God in Christ.

Let me ask you who profess the Lord, are you so distinct in judging all that belongs to nature that this is true to you? There is plenty to learn, I know. We have to be humbled and proved to do us good at the latter end; but why? Because we have been redeemed out of Egypt. You do not find this in connection with Israel until they were redeemed from Egypt. Have you really taken the place of being delivered from this present evil world? Has your heart taken its place where the second Adam has set you?

Oh, but you say, I do not know the things that are there. Why do you not? Have they not been revealed? People quote this passage, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” to shew how great these things of God are—they have not entered into the heart of man. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”: such is the scripture—just the opposite of the common use of it. You see God means us to know them, though we may have been bad scholars at the lesson. But He has given us a title—to what? Simply to be pardoned? Is that all? Is it nothing to say, I am come to God the Judge of all; I can look down upon things that are for judgment, the reproach of Egypt being done away; I am in Christ, and see the glory of the Son of God and Son of man—the Son who earned God’s love? Yes, earned it! for He says, “therefore does

my Father love me, because I lay down my life." Is it nothing to see the Lamb slain? Have we not far more than pardon?

And where is to be your place? You are going to be like Himself. Did you never think of this? "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." "And we have received the Spirit, not which is of the world but which is of God, to know the things which are freely given unto us of God." It is not the redemption, though we must know that truly and get clear as to it; it is more. Again I ask, Have your souls never tasted what it is to be where there is nothing but holiness—not a jar with what God is? What a delight! And all around not a flaw, not a thing that does not answer to the glory of God as God and to the love of God as love! Nothing. Christ is the centre of it, and we, in a certain sense, so too, as in Him. Are our souls living there? Well, you will get a white stone; but you say, Am I to have God's approving delight upon me? Yes. And the new name. Ah, this will be a secret between you and Christ. Is there nothing in that? Is there nothing in His approbation so put upon us? Does it not come into your heart as that which is unspeakable joy? Again "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." But if I see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, Ah! I say, now I am indeed at home, that is the sight that dazzles every other, and that is the sight which is for me; the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple there. We shall sit on Christ's throne with Him—conferred glory surely but none the less real. Will this be nothing? There will not be a thing in Christ's heart that is not satisfied towards us, and is this nothing to us? And is it nothing to us to see the Man that suffered for us

glorified? Now the Spirit of God has taken these things and revealed them unto us that we may live in them.

And mark the order at the end of the chapter— “what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God; now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are fully given to us of God, which things also we speak not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” —lit up in Paul’s heart, like a candle in a lantern. And now he is communicating them by inspiration. He gets them by revelation and communicates them by inspiration. Oh, what a thing it is to hear vain men babbling about the Scriptures and talking of what is right and wrong in them forsooth! Here I have such things as these in the revelation given by inspiration, and men must seek to find faults here. How busy measuring spots in the sun and the bumps upon it if they can, when it has been the light of the world ever since it was created! First there was the revelation of the things, after that the communication of them by inspiration; but then “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth all things.”

Here I get the receiving of what is revealed and inspired — three things in all. First, revelation, and this some would deny altogether; second, communication by the Holy Ghost, and some will not deny that the word of God is in it, but that Scripture is the word of God. I say, Nay, it was the revelation from God to man but it came out

from the man as pure as it came in— “we speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” and as he says again, “we have not corrupted the word of God,” we have given it by inspiration as we have received it by revelation. And now I get the third step, which explains the infidelity as to all the rest— “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God”: that is the truth of the riddle. He is a natural man and does not receive the things of the Spirit of God at all, it is only by power of the Spirit of God that they are received. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.”

There is a great deal to learn yet truly, but it has all been given to us. We know in part as to details; but still the counsel of God in Christ, who is the wisdom and power of God, has been revealed, and revealed too through the cross in which the natural man has been totally judged, while also, consequent upon the exaltation of the second Adam to the right hand of God, it has been given forth to us by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord said after His resurrection, “I go to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father”; that is, if I am going into the glory, I go as your forerunner, for I take you into such relationship. It is ordained for your glory. Beloved, do you believe that, that all these wonderful counsels of God are ordained for your glory? Do you believe?

O the wonderful goodness of God! He is shewing to us the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. Are our hearts touched by it? or is this wretched world which rejected Christ still clinging to us as a briar might when we walk

through a field? Has the power of the divine Spirit separated our hearts from it, and set our affections on things that are above, and not on the things on the earth? Weigh this. If Christ has died in love and given us that place where He is, see whether your hearts are living in what He has brought you to, or in what He has brought you out of. The friendship of the world is enmity to God. Our Lord give us to know the unspeakable love that has given us such things. Presumption! Suppose the prodigal son had said “the best robe is too good for me.” Too good! What business had he in the house at all?

God has glorified Himself in the wonderful work of grace; and I must take my place according to what He has made it to be, and nothing loth to do it either. And yet our glory is in a certain sense poor, compared with seeing Him glorified. The Lord give us to live, in our life in the flesh, that inward life in connection with Christ which is practically dead to the world and alive to God through Christ, to find the blessedness of His love in these things born in our hearts.

Indwelling Of The Holy Ghost

1 Corinthians 6

There is nothing, perhaps, more striking in reading either the Gospels, or the Epistles, the sayings of the Lord Jesus Himself, or what, in some respects, are more wonderful, the statements of the apostles, than the entire familiarity that appears in them, with the highest divine things. It is never, of course, nor could it be, that familiarity which, in human things, because of their imperfection, takes away reverence. But the nearer we are to God, the more we see His blessedness, while there will be the reverence that becomes His presence; at the same time there is perfect familiarity with the highest divine things. It stamps the one born of God; it stamps the divine revelation that we have. I can tell that the Father loves the Son— nothing can be simpler than the expression; but what a thing to know His divine affections in themselves! It is not merely that He loves me, as is very true; but the Father loves the Son. So with the divine counsels. He hath “made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.” It is all brought out; as it is expressed in that word, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

It is not that simply certain testimonies have come out; this was the case with the prophets; or that certain commandments have been given which are the most perfect expression of what man ought to be, as in the law; but God has revealed Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own love, that He might be known. Along with this, and especially characterising

Christianity, there is not only the perfect revelation of Himself in His own nature as God, as light and love, revealing the Father, Son, and Spirit; but He has given us the Spirit. Having made us “partakers of the divine nature,” that we might be capable of enjoying what He is; He has also given us the Holy Ghost, that we might know what He is. You get, first, our being set before God in perfect acceptance, “accepted in the Beloved.” And then, beyond that, the truth that God has not only revealed Himself to us, that we might have confidence in coming to Him in Christ, but that He reveals Himself in us after having set us in Christ there, that the conscience should be placed in His presence.

At the same time we read in Ephesians of being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man”; it is also said in the same Epistle, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” So that He who is the centre of all the thoughts and counsels of God, of all His glory as revealed, the Son Himself dwells in us, and sets us thus in the centre of all this glory, that we should comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. It is not only that there has been a revelation to us of the Father and Son, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but that He has so associated us with Christ as dwelling in us, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, that He sets our souls in the centre of all these affections, and of all this knowledge and glory.

Therefore the apostle cannot exactly say what it is, but only says “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” and adds, “and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” He has been a man, and dwelt

among us, yet He dwells in us, and His love passes knowledge. This brings us into such blessed intimacy, though ever more adoringly; for the more we know Him, the more we shall see that He is God. So even with Christ Himself. We are there in the same glory with Himself, but this only brings us into the capacity to know the infinite blessedness of His Person. We see this in the scene of the transfiguration. The moment there was the thought in the heart, “Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias,” the Father says, “This is my beloved Son: hear him.” Christ stands alone. Yet we now, by the grace which associates us with Him, are brought into that which is divinely blessed and perfect; such is the peculiar blessedness of Christianity.

It is not now merely sending out a law to shew what man ought to be, but it is eternal life given, in the true knowledge of the Father and Son, and this in the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the affections of the heart are of the Spirit, and are filled with the Spirit, and they have their play in all true Christian affection. Being brought into such a place, all our ways, the condition of our soul and our conduct of course, are looked for to be conformed to that of which Christ Himself is the perfect expression. It is not merely that there is a certain rule of conduct, as in the law, but it is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith; so that our thoughts, and feelings, and affections should flow from that source through the Holy Ghost. That is what is meant by being “filled with the Spirit.” We all have the Spirit, but we are not all “filled with the Spirit.” He is the one source of everything where the heart is filled with Him.

That which is here brought before us is not only the blessedness of the place we are put in, but the conduct of the Christian suitable to it in every respect. And it is that which suits the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. Whatever is not fit for His presence is not fit for the Christian. It will come down to the most ordinary things of life, because there is a path which is pleasing to God in this world—there is one way for a person to walk, and no other. Supposing a son has left his father's house, and has gone off to a strange country; he may not be outwardly given up to what shocks the conscience, but he cannot, as long as he is there, do right; he must go back in order to do what is right; until he does this, in all he does there is not one thing that is right. This is the way with man in the world. He has left God, and cannot do anything right, never can do anything positively right, till he gets back.

If we are in our right place, we do not want a way. Adam wanted no way in the garden of Eden; his business was to stay where he was. In the world, where wickedness is, we want a way; but there is no way really, because we have departed from God. But when the Spirit of God has come into it, He has created a path for him that believes. For the Jews in the wilderness, where the cloud went, there was a way directly. God can make a way for Himself, no matter how wicked the world. If I injure a man, it is wrong; and if he revenges himself, it is wrong; but Christ can make a way through it all. He can give me to walk with wisdom and patience in all circumstances. He can bring in motives and principles for every difficulty of this world; and that is where the Christian has to walk. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."

The life of Jesus should be manifested in us. Our life ought to be the expression of this new thing—that is, divine life in the midst of a world that is away from God. Nothing but Christ can do that, and it is Christ in us. The power of it is by the presence of the Holy Ghost acting upon “the new man which after God is created in righteousness and in true holiness.” It is not the old thing corrected at all, because the old man never can have the divine motives, but its own motives. It may be corrected in an outward thing, for people are not all thieves and robbers; but it never can have the motives that belong to the divine nature, and therefore, though it may be decent and respectable, it never can be right. It is the nature that has departed from God, and it cannot be right before Him. We read that that which we have (the new man) is “after God, created in righteousness and in true holiness.” And in another part it is said that it is “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” The measure of spiritual knowledge, as to the walk and affections, is the image of Him who created us; and where do I see this perfectly? In Christ. He is “the image of the invisible God.” The power of that life was shewn in the resurrection; the character of that life was shewn in all His path on earth. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The declaration of the power of the life was in resurrection; the character of it we see in the Son of God walking in this world; and Christ is our life.

“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.” It is redeemed. “Ye are bought with a price.” Being redeemed by God, the body, which is our

servant and vessel of working; is the temple of the Holy Ghost. There I get power, and power by One dwelling in me, whose presence is that which must measure everything I do. Therefore He says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Such is the measure He furnishes us. He gives us intelligence, and affections, and objects, which the law could not do, but Christ does. He gives us a blessed hope too; but He dwells in us now. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost: and we are called upon so to walk, that in nothing, in word or thought or act, we should grieve the Spirit of God. It is a wonderful measure in this case. The Spirit has these thoughts and feelings, and He produces them in us.

Mark then how Christ is connected with this: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? “What sweetness there is in that! But it is not merely a fact; it is the principle by which I measure all conduct in His presence. How do I come there? I have it all of God. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? “What a feeling God must have about me—to make a poor creature like me His temple—the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost! To think that God’s mind about such poor creatures should be that He would make me a temple of the Holy Ghost! that He has given me the Holy Ghost to dwell in me! For this there is absolute cleansing; for He could not dwell in a defiled tabernacle, and thus He seals till the day of redemption. God has given me the Holy Ghost to dwell in me in virtue of having cleansed me, the seal of redemption and earnest of glory. God’s mind has been, having cleansed me, to give me the perfect witness and testimony of His own infinite love.

“He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” He gives us the Holy Ghost to dwell in us, the seal of His love and of the redemption that He has accomplished. He makes our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost; and while this is the measure and test of all that is according to God by His own presence, that presence is the expression of God’s perfect love; for His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

And here he appeals to them as to not sinning. How can you go and sin with a body that is the temple of the Holy Ghost? It is not merely breaking such a command, or the like; but the motive here is, “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” And you are going to commit sin with it? All exhortations are founded upon the blessed place into which He has brought us. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?” God Himself has given it, to put you in connection with Himself, and are you going into connection with sin and vileness? It is applied to purity of life. The body is the vessel of the presence and action of God by the Holy Ghost. We do fail; but that is the power; and we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. What a place we are set in! It makes us feel our wretchedly low ways and shortcomings—and so much the better. If we are humble, we do not need to be humbled. If a man is not humble, he needs to be humbled: if he is humble, he is the recipient of grace; “for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.” And wherever a person is really humble, he may have a great deal to learn, but at any rate he is in his right place with God. Instead of His having to

contend with us, we are the objects of His blessing. If it is not so, humbling must come in. “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?”

Then comes the second motive. “And ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” It is a motive—not simply power in the presence of God, but a positive motive from the perfect work of Christ; we are not our own. If we were, we were lost. If we are to have blessing, to be a blessing, it is in this—that we are not our own at all. Wherever I act in my own will in anything, I am wronging God of His own title through the blood of Christ. We are not our own. Christ is ours: but there is a second thing—not only that Christ is mine, but that I am His; and the heart delights to be His, and not its own, because it has learnt His love to us, who has loved us, and given Himself for us.

Therefore, in the knowledge of this eternal love, our delight is to belong to Him, and this too as to practice. “Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” It is not merely saying, Do right; but He puts us at once in connection with God. Think of our glorifying God! Christ could do it as a man; but can I, wretched as I am, glorify God? Yes. If I am walking in His Spirit, and having no motive but Christ, it brings in the power of God, which the world knows nothing about. We are called to glorify God in our body: it belongs to Him—it is God’s; and what a relief it is when I think that this body, which was the wretched slave of sin, now belongs to God! It is His property. It has been taken out of its old condition entirely, and it does not belong to my corrupt will at all. I am not a debtor to the body, but it

belongs to God. This is an immense joy, and it shews that everything has been done for one; for even this poor wretched body belongs to God, and I am to use it thus—to glorify God. There we have the two great leading motives and springs of conduct which the apostle sets before us here as to our faith and conduct; namely, that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which we have of God; and that we are bought with a price, and belong to God. The power, intelligence, and all, is that which we have of God; it is the Holy Ghost, of which our body is made the temple; and when I look at the body in itself, it now, through the work of Christ, belongs to God. The Holy Ghost dwells in me in power and intelligence; my body is made His temple, and I must use it according to that presence which I thus have of God. I am not my own at all—I am bought with a price—I belong to God.

The Lord give us in joy of heart, in unfailing, deep thankfulness of spirit, to know that, on the one side, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; and, on the other, that these bodies are bought with a price, and that they belong to God!

Victory

1 Corinthians 15

There are two characters of relationship into which we are brought: one is our union with Christ; and the other our relationship along with Christ to God as our Father, He being the firstborn of many brethren. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” This last is the result in glory, but it is founded on the great truth of “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” It flows from our connection with the second Man (He, Head of a spiritual race, as the first Adam was head according to the flesh).

This is a different thing from His relationship to the bride, and the headship of the body. It teaches us how the whole of the Old Testament scripture looks at our history in the first Adam, closing that history entirely, and then brings in a new One. This is not brought out until the second Man is raised from the dead. He was in Person the same before, but He was not head of a spiritual race until He was raised. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone,” etc. It was only then that He could take such a position with His disciples as to say, “I go to my Father and your Father.” All thought of any union as man, with Christ, is wrong. He could not unite Himself with us in sin: He could shew compassion, but it was impossible there could be any connection between us in the flesh, as men in nature, and God. When Christ takes a new position,

outside every position in which flesh could be taken account of, we are united to Him in spirit; but the whole history of man shews the impossibility of connection between man in nature with God. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” “And as I said to the Jews, even so say I to you, Whither I go, ye cannot follow me now.” Flesh, corrupt and corrupting, cannot enter into glory.

True, flesh works in the believer; but Scripture goes deep and brings out this truth, “in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.” So the apostle afterwards says, “When we were in the flesh.” I do not know whether you would be able to say that—when I was in the flesh. If we can say so, our responsibility now is to walk as men in the Spirit. A Christian is not to walk as a man, but as a Christian. There are duties of husbands, wives, children; and the relationships between man and man have to be sustained of course; but before God I am not looked at as a man in the flesh at all. The flesh tries to hinder. It comes to be a hostile power to what I have from the last Adam; but if you walk merely as men, you are lost.

Flesh shewed its weakness. The word to Adam did not provide for sin, and supposed no lust in man. In the garden of Eden lust came in, sin came in, and the separation was complete between God and man. Adam then became head of an excluded race.

Law, given afterwards, supposed men needing life, but invoked responsibility. Man left to himself became corrupt before God. The earth was filled with violence. Then a flood came. Then came the law as a trial of man. Promise was not a trial of man, but it manifested grace without a question of man. There was no promise to

Adam, the promise was to the second Adam, the Seed of the woman. God cannot promise to sin. There was no question of responsibility in promise. He gave it to man and left it. Afterwards the question of righteousness is raised.

We too often may little weigh what the terms of the law imply. Were I to say, If you do this, you will get a fortune, this implies that you have not a fortune without. You cannot say, Do this and live, if you have life. When God said to man, “Do this and live,” it implied his being dead. Man did not think so, but it was the ministry of death and condemnation, because it demanded obedience, which man could not render. Law does bring out man’s guilt; he cannot be subject to the law of God.

But there was another thing that proved his guilt far more thoroughly. Will they accept God’s terms when He came to them in grace? Christ came, and in His life was the perfect manifestation of goodness. He came amongst men to do them good, healing the leper, etc. But could flesh find anything attractive in Him? He was an outcast among the people to whom He brought home the goodness and love of God.

When law was given, they were not subject to it; and when Christ came, they would not have Him. Therefore the Lord said, “Now is the prince of this world judged.” “They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Man, tried in every way, is proved to be bad.

In other circumstances, namely, that of the Christian, there is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the same impossibility of its pleasing God. All flesh shews utter rejection of God Himself, and is proud of itself all the time. Before God executes judgment, man has entirely

cast God off. The wonder of the cross is that He came—the sinless One came into the very place where flesh is. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." He finds Himself in the fully revealed position of man before God; He puts Himself there in grace and in obedience too. There was more than that: "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." He was "made sin," and put it away by giving up the life in which He bore it. God deals with Him about sin, and the very life ceases in which He takes it, and then He rises up. God had dealt with it, putting an end to it entirely on the cross. There was an end of the old man; and now it is said, "Reckon yourselves to be dead," etc. "He that is dead is freed from sin." Christ has taken the place of the first Adam in sin. All that I was in, Christ has stepped into and borne. He rises up, and I have an entirely new position. I am now in Christ. He has closed for ever the history of the flesh (we have it as an enemy—but its history is closed for ever before God) and commenced a place for us in Himself, the second Adam. "Father, glorify thy Son."

Christ returned to His place before God, having accomplished righteousness. He is Head of a new race, a family of His own. He has new glory as thus Head of a race. We are livingly united to Him, being in Christ. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We are not in flesh, but before God in virtue of accomplished righteousness. All God's dealings with man before were grounded on sin having come in; so law, promise, government, until Christ came. Now His dealings with us are founded on righteousness. God has His righteousness before Him in a man. The Son of man has glorified God on the earth, and God has glorified

Him in heaven. It is as a man He is there, though He is much more to be sure.

Life I have in Him and righteousness. Life is in the Son, the second Man, and I can treat the flesh and all connected with it as an enemy. As to that, I am dead: flesh has no place now. I have life in Christ and dead as to flesh. I have nothing to say to it, no relationship with God in flesh; I have to pray against it, fight against it, read, and use all the means I can against it; but I am not in it. There may be confusion in the mind, but not in the relationship. God can have nothing to do with flesh. “Reckon yourselves dead,” for Christ has died. It is not said, Die, to the flesh. The flesh will keep itself alive as long as it can. It will try to mend itself—try to be better. There would be no sense in telling the flesh to die. But Scripture says, Ye are dead. Flesh has been judged in Christ, and therefore I am entitled to say, I am dead and am a new man. Then walk in the Spirit, walk as Christ walked, as the second Man, not as the first. You cannot get back to innocence, the uprightness of creation. True, you are upright, if in the Spirit, but more, righteous and holy. All this is equally true about sins. As surely as the first Adam was turned out of the earthly paradise and became head of a race, so He, the second Man, is Head of a race for the heavenly paradise.

Faith takes absolutely what God says. Where does it take its place? Half way, or entirely, with Christ? Flesh never can take its place before God. Faith says, I have no place before God but in Christ Himself. He is righteousness on the throne of God. Any half-saviour or half-place would not do. We grow up into His likeness: but our place before God is the same at first. Christ’s life upon earth is a perfect pattern for us, manifesting God in all His ways.

Our position before God is one of full favour. And we have the hope of glory before us. How it elevates the heart—not us! Grace humbles us, but elevates the heart. I have boldness before Him in the day of judgment. When we reach the heavenly tribunal, we shall be like Him, the heavenly One.

Grace alone does it. It enables us to discern between flesh and Spirit, not only between what is right and what is wrong; but we can say, That is flesh, or This is Spirit. It may look very fair, but if it is flesh, it comes to nothing. If all the world thinks a thing good, that is not Christ and I would not believe it. If a man walks with the Lord, the flesh is judged. There are the different growths of the babe, the young man, the father; but if we walk with Him, we discern what a thing is. The flesh is very subtle, but it will not last out when the Lord tries me; the wood, hay, and stubble will not stand. Gold is a rarer thing in the world than wood, hay, and stubble, but it lasts longer.

Can you then say, “When I was in the flesh,” with the very distinct consciousness that you are not in it now? Then you are called not to walk as if you were in it. The Spirit does not make a fair show. You may walk with Christians, but you cannot walk with Christ without the power of the life in exercise—not going to look for the power, but having it. May the Lord give us to know what it is to be in the Spirit and not in the flesh! It may try the conscience, but the end will be peace and joy.

An Epistle Of Christ

2 Corinthians 3

The apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, tells us what a true Christian is. He calls him an epistle of Christ. He is a person upon whose heart God has written Christ, as Moses wrote the law on tables of stone. This the apostle opens out; but first he states what Christians are in contrast with the law. A Christian is a person on whom Christ is engraved, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart. If the heart is serious, one must see that many have not this. We see many persons very amiable, and others with a trying nature. But here it is not difference of mere natural character. This is not the point. Natural amiability of character is not Christ graved on the heart. It has nothing to do with being a Christian, which is a positive real work of God. It is the Holy Ghost engraving Christ on a man's heart, putting Christ into his thoughts, his words, and his ways, just as the law was put upon stones. Now a person may get angry at this; but nevertheless Christ is the object of a Christian's life, and your own conscience must judge if it is so with you. It is not that there is not failure. A man who is seeking to make money does not always succeed; but everybody knows what his object is. Just so Christ is the object of a believer's life.

God gave the law, not to make men righteous, but to prove that there were none righteous. The law condemns every one. It was the ministration of death. But after men had broken God's law, He sent His Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent

forth his Son." God's Son has been in the world. How comes it that He is out of it? The world would not have Him. Men spit in His face. This is what the world has done. Now I do not ask you about duties; but I ask, is Christ engraven on your heart? We cannot kill Him now; but our hearts can reject Him as much as ever the Jews did. An honest man—I do not speak of a Christian—will own that from morning to night Christ is not in his heart.

Now what was the apostle doing? When a Christian went from one place to another, it was customary to give him a letter of commendation. But, says the apostle, Do I want a letter? If one came to him to ask what he went about doing, he would say, Look at these Corinthians (for they were going on well then): they were his letter. How so? Because they were Christ's. Now I leave it with you as to whether Christ is on your heart. I do not ask if you love Him as you ought; for if you love Him at all, you will not say that; He is too precious for that. But if you are a Christian, you are sure there is not anything that you would not give for Christ. You may not be able to govern yourself, still Christ is the object of your heart.

Notice now another thing: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." It is not liberty to be fearing and trembling before God. "Liberty" is to be happy with Him. When the Holy Ghost begins to shew me my sins, I have anything but liberty. I begin to be afraid of my sins; I do not know whatever to do with them. False liberty is taken away, and true liberty is not given. And this will always be the case until the perfect love of God is seen. Now law will never teach me that. Suppose I command my child to love me, and threaten him if he does not; will that make him love me? Why, it will make him tremble.

This is what the law does. It cannot produce the love, it can but command. What is the effect? I cannot stand in its presence. When Moses had been up on the mount, his face shone. He had been with God. And when he came down with the two tables of the law, the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. He had to put a veil on his face for the glory of his countenance. After being in the presence of God's glory, they cannot bear to look on him. The only effect of the revelation of the glory of God is to drive me away as far as ever I can get from Him against whom I have sinned. There is not a pleasure in the world that the presence of God would not blast in a moment. There is not a happiness of man, as man, that is not spoiled by the very mention of the name of God. Now think what a terrible state that is to be in.

The apostle calls this claim of God by the law the "ministration of death and condemnation"; because it claims righteousness, and does not produce the thing it claims. Whenever a person is looking to his conduct for what he ought to be, he is under the ministry of death and condemnation. That is not the way to get Christ written on the heart.

Before we turn to look at Christ as He is now, let us look at what He was, God manifest in the flesh. In what state did He find men when He came? He found them "all under sin." And what does Job say of himself, as being in this condition? "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his fear away, then would I speak; but it is not so with me."

Now what do I find in Christ when He came? I find “a daysman” —the very thing that Job wanted. Was there fear in Christ? Was any one afraid of Christ? If a sinner was ever so burdened, he could go to Christ and thus to God. Now here I find that though my sins hindered me from going to God, they could not hinder God from coming to me. You will never find a single case in which Christ did not receive the sinner with open arms—never. Now that is what you want. Christ did not say, Get righteousness and come up here, and I will have you. No; but He came down here to meet us here. That is an entirely new thing. Christ came in this way to win our hearts thus. And therefore they reproached Him with receiving sinners, and eating with them. It is quite true, He replied, but is not a father glad to receive his lost son? Even so is it with My Father in heaven; and therefore am I come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now this is grace.

But there is righteousness too. When the father fell on the neck of the prodigal, he was in his rags. The father could not bring him into the house in his rags; it would dishonour the house. So His blessed love goes on—and Jesus gives Himself for the sins, which unfit me for the Father’s house. I see that the very Lord, against whom I have sinned, has taken my sins and put them all away at the cross.

Now where do I see the glory of God? No longer on the face of Moses—I could not look on it there. But now I see it in the face of Jesus Christ. Ah! I say, that is the One who died for my sins. He could not bring my sins into the glory, and therefore He put them away. I have got His word and His work for it, and the glory for it too; and therefore God is now ministering righteousness.

Now it is “the ministration of righteousness.” The sins are not passed over. He sweat great drops of blood for the sins. He has really gone through everything that holiness required on account of them, and now He is in the glory; so that every ray of the glory I look at is the proof that my sins are put away. When I see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is the very thing I like to look at; because the Man whom I see in the glory is the One who bore all my sins. Oh! I delight to look at Him. And this is the way I get Christ graven on my heart by the Holy Ghost. “We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is the ministration of righteousness, because the Holy Ghost comes and tells us that there is a righteousness accomplished “by one man’s obedience.” It is the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit is given on the foundation of the righteousness. And now the man is at liberty, because his conscience is perfectly purged. Here he will have trial and conflict, it is true; but as between himself and God he will never have anything but perfect peace.

This is God’s way of graving Christ on the heart. First He gives a man the consciousness of being entirely condemned, shewing him that his nature is enmity against God; that the law he has broken; and that when Christ came in grace, Him he did not love. And when He has brought him to this in his conscience, then He shews him that the God against whom he sinned has come and wrought out a righteousness for him, and that this blessed Man is now in glory.

Now mark how the heart thus learns to trust God. What love! when I was in my sins, God came and put them

away. My sins are the very thing that give the greatest proof of His love. He has given Christ for them. Well may I trust Him for everything else.

Let me now ask you, dear reader, if your confidence is in this God? Has your heart been brought to submit to this righteousness, for you have none of your own? Oh, it is the hardest thing for the heart to be broken down so as to be willing to have righteousness by the obedience of another! “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” Rom. 5:19. But if you have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ you will desire to “be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God, by faith.”

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It is good for our souls to dwell on what it is to be an epistle of Christ, though I am sure none of us can express the greatness of the calling. Any gathering of the saints is the epistle of Christ, “to be read of men.” They are His letter of recommendation to the world. The world needs to ascertain what Christ is from the lives of the saints; although they might learn it, it is true, from the word. And the great importance of this place of witness is brought out by the tacit contrast with the law, “written in tables of stone.” Just as the ten commandments were the declaration of the mind of God, under the dispensation of the law; so now the church is the engraving of Christ, “written, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart,” to shew forth the virtues of Him “who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

I would refer to one great thing in the life of Christ, namely, that He never, in one simple act, word, or movement of His heart, did a single thing to please Himself. “Christ pleased not himself”; and so “we ought not to please ourselves”; for “none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” Jesus said, “that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” This was obedience flowing out of love, and manifesting love. Nothing ever moved Him from that. The temptation to move from obedience to a commandment might come in a very subtle form, with all the ardour of affection; as when Peter said, in answer to the Lord’s word about His sufferings and death, “This be far from thee, Lord.” It was affectionate in Peter; but the Lord would not own it, for this would have been to turn from the Father’s commandment. And what does He answer? “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

Another thing I would remark. Not only was Jesus heavenly in His nature, but, as Son of man, He lived in heaven—as He said, “the Son of man which is in heaven.” The whole spirit of His mind, the tone of all His feelings and thoughts, was heavenly. So if there is any motive in my heart which I could not have if I were in heaven, I am not like Christ.

Again, all the grace that was in Him was brought out to meet man’s sorrow and misery, and to bear on every earthly circumstance. In this we often find our failure. Even when the motive is right, the manner is wanting in graciousness. But it was never so with Christ. He was always seeking to promote the glory of God; but never

did He in manner, on any occasion, depart from the spirit of grace. We often are not close enough in our communion with God to have confidence in Him. We become impatient, and resort to means that are not of God, as Jacob did, who had not confidence enough in God to say, “He will secure the blessing.” Would not God have made Isaac give the right answer? Surely He would. So we often fail by not waiting upon God, who will bring the thing to pass most surely, though we know not how. So it was in the sorrowful case of Saul. He would not wait; yet Samuel came at the end of seven days, and Saul lost the kingdom. And those who really are the children of God always sustain loss when they depart from confidence in Him. Christ was always trusting in God, and always waiting upon Him; and so He was ever ready for every sorrow and misery; ever ready to bring out the resources of God to meet every necessity. It is touching to read Matthew 5. Every beatitude is a lively portrait of Christ. Who so poor in spirit as Christ? Who mourned as Christ? Who so meek? so hungering and thirsting after righteousness? His whole life was hungering and thirsting after righteousness. “The life was the light of men.”

But, further, Jesus was the victorious man over all opposition, even though it were death itself. There is a great difference between good desires and power. The quickened soul may say, “O wretched man that I am”; but we cannot be the full epistle of Christ, unless we exhibit power over all obstacles —even over death. Death is given us. The believer, living in the power of Christ’s life, has entire power over death.

Again the Lord Jesus, amidst all His zeal, never failed in love. Strictly speaking, there is no motive in love, though

there may be joy in its exercise; and this is our triumph. If I look for a motive, it is not love. Therefore love enables a man to meet all trials. Should one spit in his face, this makes no difference, for love abides; because it never draws its strength from circumstances, but rides above all circumstances. Nothing can be presented to a saint which can separate him from the love of God. The love which he enjoys triumphs over all circumstances. If we do not shew this heavenly-mindedness of the love which is of God, doing nothing from any motive but obedience, we are not a true epistle of Christ. I might be walking lowlily, but if I did not shew out Christ, I should be nothing. So Christ. He gave no answer when God gave no word. And we, in passing through the world, should stand still and wait if we cannot see how we may so walk as to please God.

In the latter part of the chapter, the apostle tells us how we may be acting as the epistles of Christ—ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit. The letter refers to the requirements of God from man, which necessarily was a ministration of death. But the gospel is the manifestation of God, not from Sinai, requiring righteousness; but from His own throne revealing the accomplishment of His own righteousness, and sending a message concerning it to draw our hearts to Himself. To those who submit themselves to this righteousness, the Holy Ghost is given on the foundation of the righteousness, and He is in them a Spirit of power. So now we can use great plainness of speech, because we are speaking of grace. We can tell men that they are wicked, wretched, and helpless. We can speak all things plainly, because we are not expecting anything from them, but telling them of God’s grace to just such as

they are. We can speak plainly of God, for it is of the God of all grace. Israel could not look at the reflection of the glory in the face of Moses, poor though it was; but now man can look plainly—wonderful to say—at the full glory of God, because it is now in the face of Jesus. It is this very glory that tells me of the putting away of my sin. I see the glory of God, not dimly, but as of one who put Himself in my place as a sinner, and who could not be in that glory if He had not put away all my sins; for my sins are enough to dim any glory. What a glorious thing, not only to see God visiting my soul in grace, but that, so to speak, the glory has taken the place of my sins! The transition from the cross has left nothing between them! Thus we get righteousness in our Head, and the Spirit goes with the message, so that there is power, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

The soul that submits to the righteousness of God becomes the epistle of Christ, because he is looking at Christ in the glory. This cannot be while only looking at Him down here; but when the eye is fixed on the Lord Jesus in glory, we are changed into the same image. The heart living in the glory counts all things else but dross and dung in comparison. This is the real victory—when all of this world surrounds me, to say, I do count them but dross and dung. This is being like Christ. We soon learn the weakness of the flesh in this, but the faith that thus looks to Christ is the true victory. The apostle said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We sometimes say this too lightly, for we have not proved it. We may say a believer can do all things, but he could say, I can do all things through Christ, for he had proved it by deep experience and arduous conflict.

The Lord give us so to recognise the power there is in Christ, as that we may heartily walk in the strength of it; though it humble us in the dust.

That which alone can make us an “epistle of Christ” is looking unto Jesus, or, as in verse 18, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.” The ministry of the Spirit is “taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us.” There is power as the consequence of the Holy Ghost being here. Until Jesus was glorified, there could not be power nor anything to reveal. It is called the ministration of the Spirit. “Ye shall be endued with power,” etc.

It has struck me latterly in the last verse, we never attain the glory while down here, yet are always looking at it as an object, and “changed into the same image,” but we are not actually in any sense the same. Still we are daily growing up into Him who is the Head—who is in the glory. Paul says, “I press towards the mark … if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection,” at the end rather than at the beginning of his course; yet he had attained a great deal, if you look at him as to the realisation of power. Now, that is what the individual Christian is called to, founded on the ministration of righteousness: glory and righteousness go together. It is not now merely that God forbears—this He did before; but He declares His righteousness; it is a righteousness now obtained, not a future thing. The law required righteousness from man, but that is a different thing from the administration of righteousness to man. Now He, Christ, is giving it unto us. The law was called the ministration of condemnation. The ministration of righteousness is also called the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit is here in virtue of

accomplished righteousness in the Person of Christ, who is up there in the glory. “He that ministereth to you the Spirit.” Since redemption God ministers to each saint the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness is shewn by God in two ways: first, in setting Christ at His own right hand; secondly, in not letting the world see Him any more, whom it rejected and cast out. The Spirit now convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: “of sin,” in rejecting Christ; “of righteousness,” because Christ is gone to the Father; “of judgment,” because the prince of this world is judged. If I receive the demonstration, I partake of it, and the demonstration of righteousness placed Christ on the throne at the right hand of God. “I go to my Father.” In verse 7: “So that they could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance,” etc. There was no veil, but the state of Israel was such that they could not bear a sight of the glory, “which glory was to be done away.” So in verse 13, Moses put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel might not look to the end of that which was abolished; shewing, I believe, the moral condition of the people, for Moses had no veil when he went to God, but they could not get beyond the outward thing. The veil was over Moses’ face, and all was veiled to them, so that they could not see to the end. He is here giving the meaning of the act: they could not see to the end, but stopped short in the things given. The veil is now not on the things but on their heart, which is done away in Christ; “nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” In Christ everything is fully revealed in the reality and truth of it, not in mere types and shadows. They could not see to the end; it is always because of the

hardness of their hearts, though the veil is at one time on the glory, and at another on their hearts. Moses put a veil over his face, but it was God's purpose being fulfilled. Now we are not as Moses, but use great plainness of speech. It is not now about the people, but about the ministration.

The Holy Ghost is come down here, because Christ is in the glory; therefore we do not leave people in dimness and darkness. We speak boldly; we tell you plainly you are "accepted in the beloved," righteous as He is righteous, and the glory is your portion. We speak thus very boldly about it; "For we are not as many who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." The difference in the subject of ministration gives this greater boldness. It is not a certain working of the soul to get up to Christ; but when Christ is thus really and truly revealed to the heart, it is inwrought by the Spirit of God in the soul, and graved and written on the "fleshy tables of the heart." The soul will be exercised upon receiving this glory, not to be satisfied in knowing merely as a fact there is this righteousness, but to have it wrought in the heart. We should be not only thinking about Christ sometimes, but wholly occupied with Christ Himself. What a little compass it reduces a man into when Christ is received in the heart! Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts." He carried them about with him, though they were leaving him and preferring other teachers; but he appeals to them as a proof of his ministry, and his commendation is seen and read in them as his converts. Therefore he is proved to be an apostle. There was the public testimony to Christ, and what evil had there been

permitted amongst them was corrected. So he could say, Titus brings me an account of how you received my first letter, and he writes a second, now that he is happy about them, in which he speaks of the glory of God who "comforteth them that are cast down," and of faith and obedience, etc. Still he was jealous over them with a godly jealousy, because of judaising teachers.

The end of that which was to be abolished was Christ. In Hebrews Christ is the starting-point of His house; if they departed from that, they were not His house at all. The law was only a shadow; the substance or body is Christ. The Lord was the body, so to speak, of the spirit; and that is what is meant, I take it, here, "Now the Lord is that spirit." The spiritual meaning of all is the Lord. They had neither the image nor the reality; but the Holy Ghost gives the meaning of those things in the power of a glorified Christ. In verse 7, if they had seen to the end, they would have seen Christ. "If the ministration of death was glorious," etc. There was glory in the establishment of the law, not in the law itself, but going with it. "For even that which was made glorious" — which was introduced with glory— "was not to remain"; but the glory in Christ is not merely introduced; it is a reality which will remain for ever. The law was the shadow, Christ was the fulness. That shews what the things He manifested were, "those which remained." It looks at first as if characteristically the things Paul ministered were to remain, but it is the glory of Christ's Person remains. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, that gives a distinct character to Paul's gospel—not merely the glorious gospel, but really the gospel of the glory of Christ: the glory of God shines in His face.

Short of this, you cannot minister righteousness; you may set forth all the attractiveness of Christ and draw sinners, like the woman who loved the Lord, as a sinner attracted by His grace, but had not found righteousness yet, till sent away in peace. “Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” The Holy Ghost tells us now of righteousness because Christ is set down on the Father’s throne; He declares God’s righteousness by and in “Jesus Christ the righteous.” As soon as you have unqualified righteousness, you have a present heavenly character; you are not merely attracted to Christ, but suffering with Him who is in the glory.

People are told sometimes, practically, they must find out what work the Spirit has done in them, instead of having set forth the work of Christ as accomplished for them. None went beyond the preaching of the cross for many ages past, fearing to preach God’s righteousness, lest it should lead to Antinomianism. But now we see it is the ground of perfect righteousness we start upon; and that is the very reason we desire to walk so as to please Christ.

In John 15 we are spoken of as being loved according as we have loved Him, not as in grace, but by the Father. The place righteousness is put in shews that the church’s place is with God. The heavenly position is shewn. God receives us into His presence in Christ when Christ is received. Having the Spirit, we “wait for the hope of righteousness.” What is that? Oh, it has set Christ at the right hand of God, and in Him sets you there too. “Set in heavenly places” is the church’s place properly. In Romans 3:22 it is not the righteousness of a certain class of men for God, but God’s righteousness for man who had none of his own— “none righteous.” It is

“unto all,” as much for the Gentiles as Jews, “and upon all that believe”; though presented to all, it is by imputation (made real by grace, and not by accomplishment) on them only that believe. God ministers righteousness, which we have none of our own (that is the gospel), because Christ is set down at the right hand of God. But we should have been ignorant of the fact if the Holy Ghost had not come down to tell us of it. The church’s proper association is with Christ in the heavens. And when in the glory, I shall only have my body put right, for everything else I have now by the Spirit. The coming of the Lord is to take us into the place, where we are in spirit by faith already, to which we belong.

“I have finished the work thou gavest me to do… Now come I to thee.” We shall be to the praise of His glory then, as we are to the praise of His grace now. In Ephesians Christ’s coming is not even spoken of, because they were seated in heavenly places; and therefore all that was spoken to them was about the inheritance; the thing set before us is the inheritance in heaven, the possession, not the glory or translation. In Colossians it is “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Why? Because they were not holding the Head, but holding angel-worship and all sorts of things. They had slipped down from the full possession of their place, and he is getting them back. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” In Ephesians they were going on properly, and he could unfold to them all. In Peter it is “to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled… reserved in heaven for you” — “ready to be revealed.” Here they are seen as begotten again, walking towards heaven, and therefore the word is “as

pilgrims and strangers in the earth," in virtue of the resurrection. If the flesh be not judged, one will not stand. The coming of the Lord is the proper hope of the soul to be converted to; as in Thessalonians, "to wait for his Son from heaven."

It is of the utmost importance that we should thoroughly get hold of what the church is and its identification with the Lord Jesus. Its importance may be gathered from the very many and various ways the enemy seeks to attack that truth, and it is always liable to be let slip, for it is easily lost. To have the one truth, that I am in and associated with Christ, uppermost in my thoughts, is a most difficult thing, and the easiest lost of any, because it is a thought, of course, of the Spirit, and nature will always sink the soul down into something in which it is to satisfy God. I am to understand that the power working in my soul is "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." And it will not do if the soul has not taken up its position with Christ. One need not speak of hypocrisy, but sincerity will not do. I ought to crucify the world, and the heart should settle down easy and happy. This puts Satan out. I do not mean that there would be no conflict with him, but we must keep him outside. Satan always acts on the flesh; he has no power over the new man. If we are in the light, all things are made manifest. What a wondrous thing to say we are "one spirit with the Lord!" "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"; and what persons we should be if abiding under the power of that one spirit with the Lord in heaven! What great peace we should enjoy, now that nature is duly judged! The knowledge of righteousness,

without the present power of the Holy Ghost, has led many into Anti-nomianism. They have turned to the flesh to keep down the flesh; and it is impossible, if a man is so occupied with himself, to keep him from self-importance. A danger exists that, when some have seen the truth of the church being in heavenly places, and there has been the labour and working of the soul itself, they may get a great many ideas of the blessedness of the glory, without having got peace, because they have not got their souls on the ground of righteousness, by which alone we are enabled to crucify the flesh. If, all of a sudden, the question were seriously put, Are you safe and ready to be taken? they would be all aback; the ground of the heart is not so thoroughly ploughed up as that they know they are made the righteousness of God in Him. Job said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself,” etc. Was that the first time Job had seen God? Yes, in that way. God will have nothing but good in His presence, and the soul finds itself nothing but evil, and says, “then I cannot have it.” But it is His grace that is working. The soul, brought into the presence of God in that way, rests in His perfect grace, and has done with itself; then all the bright place into which it is brought is enjoyed; and we eat the corn of the land.

Moses saw the promised land from Pisgah, but did not go into it; to see it from outside is a different thing from entering it. It is easier than as Joshua who went in by conflict; Moses on the contrary did not strike a blow. You know now what it is to sit in heavenly places, and what it is to enjoy “the things that remain.”1 It is true, there is conflict; but you do get into possession. It is wonderfully connected with the whole armour of God,

always the defensive first. The person is first thoroughly preserved spiritually, before a sword is put into his hand. Temptation would pull us down from the place God has set us in: but when it is conflict, it is fighting as in danger of being turned out. A person not spiritual cannot tell what it is to be fighting with wicked spirits in heavenly places. He would say, all his battles were on the earth, neither does he know the joy of sitting above. The difference between the Red Sea and Jordan is that the Red Sea is Christ's dying and rising again for us effectually; in Jordan, it is our death and resurrection with Him. Therefore the moment they had passed the Jordan, they were all circumcised. The first thing in the knowledge of the church's place in heaven is the destruction of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (where it is real). We want to have things real with God and not ideas. We cannot go on without faith.

The coming of Christ is such a different thing to the soul when our true position is understood. Instead of my desiring it that I may get rid of myself and what I may be doing on the earth, it will be that I may enjoy Him and be with Him in heaven. The affections may be attached to Christ; but unless righteousness is known, there cannot be the quiet waiting for Christ. I dare not look for Him until I know the righteousness of God in Christ. If I have not liberty, I may be wishing for Christ to give me liberty: but when the soul has liberty, it is the peaceful enjoyment of the soul with Him and happy affections! Nothing more easily slips from our souls, even when there is a true desire for it, than the coming of Christ. "Be not conformed to this world."

1 2 Corinthians 3:11.

The Christian A Representative Of Christ

2 Corinthians 3

This chapter brings out the way in which the power of the truth works on our souls to bring us into the presence of the Lord. It begins with the effect of this in testimony to others; and then lets us know how the effect is produced—what a Christian, and so what the church, really is.

The Corinthians had been calling in question the apostolic authority of Paul. How does he meet this? He appeals to themselves, to their own calling of God when they were turned from idols to Him, “as the seal of his apostleship.” It is as though he said, “If Christ has not spoken by me, how is it that you are Christians?”

So chapter 12:3-5 is not at all a precept to doubt, to examine and call in question their own Christianity. The apostle is shewing the absurdity of their doubt of him. “If you want to examine me, examine yourselves: you commend my ministry, because you commend Christ.”

Then he goes on to tell us what a Christian is. He is a representative of Christ, just as much as the tables of stone were the representation of the law. Only in that case the writing being with the Spirit of the living God, not with ink, Christ is engraven on the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, and they known and read of all men. The world ought to see Christ engraven on the heart of a Christian, just as much as Israel could see the letter of the law on the tables.

It is written on the “tables of the heart,” by the “Spirit of the living God.” Thus merely outward conduct (though there must be that for the world to see) will not do, but Christ within, as the motive and end of all we do.

There is a certain external respect for right and wrong as the result of the Bible and professed Christianity in these countries, which we do not find among the heathen. Thus a man may be following lawful pursuits, and be all that is correct outwardly and morally, yet, if Christ is not the motive, it is all good for nothing. God did not send His Son into the world to bring in a negative Christianity. There must be that result which is worthy of the work. It must be evident through the power of the Holy Ghost. There will be failure, for we ate poor feeble creatures; but the world will see where we are going by the road that we take. A man may get on slowly or stumble, but it is evident what road he is going.

We have to look to ourselves and see how far we are devotedly following Christ, with full purpose of heart—how far we can say, “This one thing I do”; but we must take care at the same time not to get into legal bondage by this standard. If I say, “Here is a rule of conduct: follow it,” this cannot reach the heart, the affections. The ministration of the letter brings only failure, condemnation, and death; for it prescribes a rule which man, being a sinner, can never follow. It does not change man, but it puts him under death; it proves him “ungodly and without strength.”

We may turn even Christ into that letter of condemnation; we may take His life, for instance, and make it our law. Nay, we may turn even the love of

Christ into our law; we may say, “He has loved me, and done all this for me, and I ought to love him, and do so much for him, in return for this love,” etc. Thus if we turn His love into a rule of life, it becomes the ministration of death; for the only thing a rule can do is to condemn. With the children of Israel Moses put a veil upon his face, for they could not bear the sight of the glory—it condemned them. Man tries either to hide his condemnation from God, or his conscience from His condemnation. He excludes himself from God—from the glory of His holiness and from His glory as seen in Jesus; and when His glory shall be revealed in the end, it will only bring out condemnation more fully.

In contrast with this ministration of death and condemnation, we see the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. Now have we this? It is not Christ down here. The Holy Ghost here supposes Christ to be gone: and now it is the power of the Spirit of God revealing the glory of Christ to the soul. What has the Holy Ghost to tell us of Christ? He reveals Him not only as the pattern of godliness, but as always manifesting grace. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of vile, miserable sinners: and Christ says “him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.” “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

The whole life of Jesus was a manifestation of grace. He laid Himself aside for others. He gave Himself to all who came to Him. He “had no time so much as to eat”; in the midst of a world of wickedness He was the perfect manifestation of the goodness of God. And this was not all. He died for sin, put Himself under the whole power of God’s wrath for sin—He was laid in the grave—He ascended into heaven; and sent down the Holy Ghost as

a witness to His glory, and as the minister of righteousness. So it is now God ministering, not requiring.

If I am brought to look at Jesus, I can say, He bore my sins—I did them, but He bore them—He gave His soul an offering for my sins; He has taken the whole charge of my sin. I trace my sins up to the cross and there I have done with them. They are all gone.

Where, then, do I see the glory? Is it on Sinai; or in the face of Jesus Christ who has put away all those sins which were revealed and condemned at Sinai? He has entered into heaven, because they are put away. In Philippians 2 we see Christ in heaven, not only in virtue of the glory of His Person, but because of the work He has accomplished. “Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him,” etc.

We are thus able not only to bear the sight of that glory of God, but to rejoice in it. Our souls rest in it. We do not ask to have it veiled, but that we may see every ray of it. Our hearts can satiate themselves there, because it is the testimony to the love of God, and the perfect putting away of sin.

There is also the ministration of righteousness. “Seeing then we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech.” It is not a little hope here and a little despair there, but it is a message of perfect righteousness to the vilest. “By the obedience of One many were made righteous.” Now, it is God putting in fruit, and not requiring righteousness.

What is the practical effect of this work of Christ received in the heart? Not to make a man careless about sin. Not to give him liberty to sin because Christ has

borne the wrath due to it. The last verse shews how we are made this living epistle. Contemplating Christ we become like Him. If the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to me, I can say, “What a Christ I have!” and there is the spirit of holiness at once. I long for Christ, and look at Christ, and thus I get like Him. The very thing which brings an accomplished righteousness to my conscience makes me like Him. Then, mark, there is no veil on the heart or on the glory. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us has taken it away. And it is said of Israel, “When they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” When Moses went in to the Lord, he always took off the veil; but the children of Israel could not bear the sight of the glory; so he put it on when he appeared to them.

For believers, there is no veil anywhere. They can look at the glory because it tells of salvation, not of judgment —accomplished salvation and effectual righteousness. What perfect liberty to be in the presence of God and enjoy Christ in all His fulness! (v. 17). “The Lord is that Spirit”; that is, Christ is the mind of the Spirit in all these Old Testament things.

Then what is the consequence of this ministration of the Spirit? What follows my knowing that I am the righteousness of God in Christ? that God delights in me? I have a constraint upon my heart to serve Him and follow Him. If I think of His love, have I any fear? I do fail constantly: has God any afterthought about me, or about my sins? There is no uncertainty: nothing is between me and God but the love which has placed me there; without spot and in perfect freedom, for He has given Christ for me. It is now, not God requiring anything from me, but God giving things to me; and this,

that His Son may be glorified in me: not that man may be glorified, but His Son Jesus glorified. God is making a marriage for His Son. We have to be the epistle of Christ. We have this privilege—to glorify and manifest Christ. We should be delighted to be this epistle, cost what it may. Christ died for me, and I have to represent Him. Of course I may fail, often and again; but the heart at liberty before God will run in the way of His commandments; and this because the affections are set upon God and the glory of Christ. My life, my daily path, must be an answer to the love of God. I am debtor to Christ, for He loved me and gave Himself for me. What an amazing privilege to be permitted to glorify Him in any little way in our path down here!

The Two Ministries

2 Corinthians 4 and 5

The apostle speaks here of the ministry that he had received. A man of like passions with us, he was one who in a wonderful manner lived with God so as to carry out this ministry; he laboured more abundantly than they all. Still what he ministered we receive; only he was a vessel filled in a more than ordinary degree. But this same blessed truth, as it especially regards the testimony, is committed to us, whatever the measure, whether the greatest as an instrument or the least, and therefore the thing that he ministered is ours; so that we are vessels each one in his own little measure of that with which he was filled.

The ministry of the Spirit, contrasted with that of the Old Testament prophets, shews that the things must be possessed for ourselves before they can be ministered to others. Now this is not characteristic of the prophetic ministry; for the prophets found that it was not to themselves that they ministered. There are three steps in 1 Peter 1:10-13 as to this. First, the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories that should follow. Next, these things are now reported unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that is, after Christ was glorified. Then we are to have girded loins and “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We stand between the sufferings and the glories, with the Holy Ghost sent down, waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ, in the distinct confession therefore of what the sufferings of

Christ have wrought; and our loins are to be girded while here.

The apostle here shews how the testimony is carried out; it is not “thus saith Jehovah,” but it is carried out in the place in which we stand as possessing the things ministered. “God who commanded,” etc., hath “shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Paul had had a revelation of Christ in him, “when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me.” The revelation of Christ in him was that by which he might preach Him, and it was not only to him but in him—this latter of course in a remarkable way; but in every one of us according to our measure. To Paul it was the revelation of Christ in glory; but He was revealed as Son of God, and this is the character of the testimony. It is the expression in the power of the Holy Ghost of what we have in Christ. It is the ministry of the “gospel of the glory of Christ,” “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” We may see its character and where it sets us. God speaks from heaven; it is not law. His voice then shook the earth: only once more He will shake not earth only but also heaven, so that now we have the last things. It is the glory he is speaking of in contrast with Moses who put a veil over his face. His ministry was of death and condemnation, and even that reflection of glory man could not look at, because it came as a legal claim upon man, a demand or exaction from God. If it had come alone, man might have thought he could stand it; but, accompanied by the glory, it was impossible. The moment the glory of God, the light of God, shines into a man’s heart, the conscience is awakened: the light once there, the man cannot stand in God’s presence. Mount

Sinai was the administration of it. The ministry of the law (2 Cor. 3) was but the glory of the reflection; all was condemnation, because it was God requiring from men what they ought to be. Man must either hide himself from God when he hears His voice, or hide God from himself.

The “glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” is not a little bit coming down with Moses, but a man glorified in heaven who was just before on the cross. Such is the great groundwork of the whole standing of this ministry. When we see the glory of God, we see it in the face of Jesus Christ who hung on the cross—it means that. Sin and death and the grave and the power of Satan are all put away together; and now He who has done it has gone far above all heavens. It is not that God is requiring from men what they ought to be, but He is giving to men from Himself. All passes exclusively between God and His Son on the cross. The only part we had in it was the sins that He bore and the hatred that He met with. That is our sin, our comfort too. There sin had reached its climax in antagonism to that blessed One, and there I see God putting away sin; the work is done, death left behind, and from the glory where He has been received comes the testimony that sin is gone, the work accomplished. Man can now be in the glory, and I get the witness of complete redemption—the glory of God. My sins and my sin are cleared away. I have a poor body of humiliation here, but the glory of God is ministered to me by the gospel of the glory.

I see the Person who was made sin for us, who bore Himself the wrath of God. He has passed out of it all and is in glory by the work He wrought. He, the Son of God, was there before the world was; but He is there now in

virtue of the work He has accomplished, and the testimony that comes forth is this, “The Man that bore all your sins, the Man that Satan did his worst against, is in glory! “These sufferings of Christ are over, and over with God’s testimony to their worth. I have His estimate, for He has set Him at His own right hand in glory; and when I get there, I see it “in the face of Jesus Christ.” This gives a very distinct character to the ministry and to the position we are in. We are brought by Him to believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. There, when I was only in the energy of sinfulness, God has wrought a work by Him so effectual that He who did it is at God’s right hand, and now I can see the glory and delight in it. Instead of seeing the glory of God as in Moses, “We all, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed.” Oh, let me see that! The glory is the proof to me that sin is put away. My sinbearer is in glory. Of course I delight in that. The Holy Ghost comes down because of it, and I am sealed. The Christian stands with the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, looks back at the sufferings of Christ, resting in the efficacy of the accomplished work, and looks forward to the glory. He knows God’s acceptance of the accomplishment of the work, and what it leads to, because Christ is in it as a man. It is not only that the man who bore my sins meets me as a poor sinner, but He treats every Christian as Himself. When He revealed Himself to Paul, He said, “Why persecutest thou me? “If Christ owns me as Himself, what am I waiting for? I am waiting for Him to come and take me to Himself, for I have the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, and my title to glory is the Son of God in heaven. If I die, I go to Christ, but I am waiting now for Him to come, and bring me into that which He

has given me as mine, for the Holy Ghost is sent down to tell me that it is mine. He being in the glory will have me there. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” He has done the work that saves, He has redeemed me to God and sent down the Holy Ghost; and now I am waiting for Him to come to take me up to be like Himself and with Himself for ever.

In the early part of chapter 5 the apostle speaks of the power of life, that has so come down into the place of death, that he can say, I do not want to die or be unclothed—I see a power come in by which I can be changed into the glory without dying at all. Of course he did die; but it is important to see it as a present living power. So he says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The power of death is broken. If I die, says the apostle, it is all gain. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” My spirit will be with Him, and I shall be raised when the time comes. He brings in this blessed truth: the testimony being of the glory of Christ, and Christ in glory the proof that the work is perfectly accomplished, and He sitting down because it is finished; we being sons of God; and the Holy Ghost come down to dwell in us, and make us understand that our sin-bearer is in the glory. The only thing we have to wait for is, that He should come and take us to Himself. We are delivered from this present evil world and we belong to Him.

It is very striking the way in which the Lord speaks to Paul in Acts 26. “I have appeared unto thee to deliver thee from the people [Jews] and from the Gentiles.” That is, he was one completely connected with Christ as his

life and hope; and, seeing the One that was in glory, he was neither Jew nor Gentile. He belonged to Christ in glory. So do we. Of course we have not had a vision; but what he testified we receive and the gospel has associated us so completely with Christ in glory, that we lead the life of Jesus here. Our forerunner has gone in, and He sends down the Holy Ghost to be the seal ot each person in this very position. “He which stablisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God.” The establishing was in Christ, and the anointing was with the Holy Ghost, giving Him as the seal upon our persons and the earnest in our hearts. “To them that look for him will he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”; that is, He will have nothing more to do with sin, because He came once to put it away—the first time. That work is finished. Those who believe not on Him will die in their sins. “To those who look for him” will He appear with nothing to say to sin: it is a resurrection unto life. “I will come again to receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

If I go up before the judgment-seat of Christ, in what state do I go? Why, Christ has come and fetched me! If I think a great deal of any one who is coming to me, I go and meet him at the train myself. This is the way I go up before the judgment-seat of Christ: Christ has had such delight in me that He has fetched me! Another thing is: in what condition do we appear there? “Sown in corruption, raised in glory.” We shall be before the judgment-seat of Christ glorified already! Nothing can be simpler. “Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body?” Did you ever think of this? It is a very great blessing. There we shall have the unceasing grace that has followed us and cared

for us all the way through, and at last brings us there glorified like Christ. Of course in looking back I see it in measure, but then I shall know even as I am known. Do you simply read the fulness of redemption in that way? Now that my sinbearer is at the right hand of God in glory, what need I fear when I come before Him? I shall bear His image. Blessed thought of God! Therefore we wait for Christ. He is Himself our hope, and we have life in Him.

When a Christian dies, he is "absent from the body, present with the Lord," his spirit goes to Christ: but he is not looking for that, he looks to be conformed to the image of His Son in glory. The whole condition is met there. Christ then sees of the fruit of the travail of His soul, because He has made us perfectly happy and satisfied. He was entirely alone upon the cross for us; it was God dealing with sin. Now His sufferings are over and we are looking at the glory of God. I see Him there —I am here upon the earth. He is sitting on His Father's throne, and we are waiting "not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." He has done the work that makes us individually fit to be together with Him in His glory. That is what makes the coming of the Lord so precious. "Every one that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." Thus the position of the Christian is distinct—we are standing between the sufferings and the coming of Christ. Soon we shall see Him and be like Him. The hope of the coming of Christ was the first thing lost in the ruin of the church, leading to the practical state of Christendom at present. "If that wicked servant [he is a servant still] say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming." What made him eat and

drink with the drunken was his heart's saying, "my Lord delayeth." He did not say He would not come back when the end of the world comes, and He sits upon the great white throne, and earth and heaven flee away—which is not His coming!

How is it that saints do not see the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? People wonder that godly men do not see it, though the wise just as much as the foolish virgins went asleep. What then changed the state of things? "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." There is a positive revelation that the thing that wakes them up is the testimony that the Lord is coming. The separation took place then. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." The wise virgins had oil still in their vessels, but they had given up expecting the Bridegroom, and gone to sleep in some comfortable place. Once in the comforts of the world they slept more or less, and the Lord wakes them up with "Go ye out." Do you think that, if the Lord were to come to-night, you would have bright well-trimmed lamps?

Just one word as to the full effect of the evil of these last days. I must warn you that we are in "perilous times," though they are blessed times for all that. I say it because it is of such moment, now that we are in 2 Timothy times. He speaks of the state of things and says, Where am I to look? It is the Scriptures that direct the Christian, and knowing too of whom they are learnt. "Continue in the things that thou hast learnt and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Then he adds, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Jesus Christ."

If I go and learn of Paul, then it is all right; but if you say, The church teaches, then how am I to know? for you all know how the Scriptures are called in question now, and this is Christendom.

The word of God is a two-edged sword; it has no handle: all is blade. It is the word that judges people, and they cannot judge it. “It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” A man comes to me and tell me about various readings and the like: I reply, How do you like “a man that tells you all things that ever you did? “The word of God does not talk about all sorts of fine bits of learning, but it deals with a man’s conscience. That is the way that the word of God is known. Nathan comes and tells David a beautiful story of a little lamb. “Oh! he deserves to die.” You are the very man! Just look at the Samaritan woman. The Lord had been talking to her about wells of water, and never said one word about the rest, till at last comes “Go call thy husband.” What is to be done with such a person as she was? “I have no husband.” She tells the truth to hide the truth. The instant the conscience is reached, there is intelligence of the word of God.

One of the very first things that struck me fifty years ago was that, if the truth is made subject to materialism, this is not having to say to God. When I get into the presence of God, my conscience is there. Faith’s roots are in the conscience. The place where the word of God gets is never in the intellect, always in the conscience; and this must be and ought to be, because it is God’s word. If I question, it is at once starting a lie in order to know whether God’s word is true. When God comes with the point of His sword, He reaches the conscience, and I know very well that the sword has a point. When the

Lord, the second Man, goes to meet the whole power of evil, when Satan comes and tempts Him, what is the Lord's sufficient argument? He comes to bind the strong man; what is His weapon? He quotes a text out of the Old Testament, a book that men think so little of now. "It is written." That was sufficient wisdom for the Lord and sufficient answer for the devil. He had not a word to say. The Lord Jesus coming as a man, everything depended on His getting the victory.

When I look at 1 Corinthians 2 I read, "Now we have received not the spirit that is of the world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God." I find "the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God." "What man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him? "No one knows what is in my heart if I do not tell it. "Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." There are three things. The Spirit unfolds and reveals the things; by words given of the Holy Ghost we communicate them; and by the Holy Ghost too they are received. The word consequently is the resource in the time when people know not what to say about the church.

People speak of "apostolic succession." There is no "succession" in the truth. It is such a comfort that what I have is straight from God. The truth is the expression of what is in the blessed heart of God. I have the truth in Christ. Such is the very character of those who walk correctly. You see the blessed testimony of it in Revelation 3: "Because thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name." An open door He set before them: none could shut it. "Thou hast a little strength." There was not a great deal to say, but what characterised them

was what God delighted in, “thou hast kept my word.” The name of Christ was valued in the soul, and the word of Christ had its authority for the conscience and was treasured in the heart. He kept the heart in grace. He tells them, “Behold, I come quickly.” He is waiting till His enemies are made His footstool, and meanwhile He is sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God. He is set down with His Father on His throne. What about His friends? They are waiting for Him to come and receive them unto Himself. The power of evil He will set aside, He will come out of heaven.

Christ does not take the inheritance alone; all things are to be gathered together in one, and He Head over all. In Philippians 2, when speaking of subjection, we hear, “of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth”; but when of reconciliation, “of things in earth and things in heaven” only; Col. 1:20. But there is a bride— we are like Eve, who was the spouse, the helpmeet, for Adam in the creation he was lord of: she was associated with him who was lord. “Christ is given to be head over all things.” It is not only that Christ is Lord of all things, but there is a holy bride made ready, the Lamb’s wife.

What I desire is that your souls may see that the accomplished work of Christ has set Him in the glory. Then the Holy Ghost having come gives us the consciousness of this, and puts us into association with the glory that is coming. It shews us that our place is where Christ is then there is the patience of Christ.” “Thou hast kept the word of my patience.” He says, I am expecting that day. If I wait for the glory, I know that He is waiting for it too. Then, when we do go before the judgment-seat of Christ, we go there glorified.

We are passing through this world, and we have this treasure in earthen vessels. I turn now to the practical effect of it. How are we to walk according to the power of the grace He has put us into? We are poor feeble ones, yet Christ's members, and through this revelation we know we are to walk in this world according to the power and grace of Christ. We have seen what the ministry we have received is. There is no veil at all; there was a veil before, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest"; but now we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Christianity is the unveiled glory of God. It is the wonderful and blessed truth that there is no veil; the glory of God is unveiled, but it is in the face of Jesus Christ. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. The veil may be on a man's heart, but there is no veil on the glory. That was the case with the Jew—:the Jew might spit on Christ's face. We are all lost in our natural state; but if this remains hid, there is nothing to go back to, nothing remains but fiery indignation.

Then you come to the men who have received the truth. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts." It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The full glory is revealed; that glory thus given shone in our hearts by the power of the Spirit of God, and I come to the person who exhibits it. "In the face of Jesus Christ." "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared." I have the fulness of the gospel—the gospel of the glory of Christ,

for this is the full force of the word. The only thing to wait for is the coming of the Lord to make it good to us.

Now we come to the walk meanwhile. Grace has brought me salvation, and I am looking to the glory to put me into the full result. I know Christ is there in the glory of God. I know the righteousness of God and where that righteousness brings me. But “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” “Troubled on every side [that is the vessel], yet not distressed [God is there]; perplexed, but not in despair [God is there]; persecuted [that is the vessel], but not forsaken [God is there]; cast down [that is the poor vessel], but not destroyed.” What God has done is to take all this perfect salvation, this glory of His Son, this treasure, and put it all in a poor earthen vessel that feels all the difficulties and trials of the way, but has the grace of Christ.

So the more of the glory Paul had, a great deal the more he had of trial; he despaired of his life. “I had the sentence of death in myself.” Why so? “That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.” He was there in despair of his life, so what is bringing death to a dead man? He held himself really to be dead to the world, he had the treasure in an earthen vessel. God was with him in the vessel’s weakness. There I find the Christian’s path. The salvation is complete, our sinbearer is in the glory. Paul had this treasure in an earthen vessel; he held himself to be dead to sin and everything, though he was not insensible to the trial, yet God was in it; and there he learns that the treasure is not here but there, and that there is no possessed power, but a possessed treasure in a dependent man. The treasure is never touched, and I learn continual

dependence. If it is even an apostle, the vessel of the treasure must be a dependent man; and that is how we must walk. When you come to giving out the light of testimony or anything else, the treasure must be there or you have nothing; and the vessel must be nothing, or else you get treasure in the flesh. If I am alive as to the flesh and let it act, it spoils the treasure; if the lantern is not clean, the light will not shine out. I have Christ revealed in my soul; but if flesh comes in, it spoils the testimony.

Every Christian gets the sentence of death on the old man. “Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The old man was crucified with Christ, but all the treasure of the glory of God is in this vessel. If I am not to spoil it, I must hold myself a dead man. If I reckon myself dead, and a man comes and asks me to amuse myself, why, I say, I am dead! I have lit the light in the lantern! if the lantern is perfectly clear, it will shine out. I must have my body and my flesh kept down. I have a glorified Christ; I have the Christ revealed in my soul. The flesh is in me; but it is my privilege for my own sake as for His to give it no place. I say I am not a debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh; I reckon myself dead. Before God a Christian stands only a new man, “crucified together with him”; Christ lives in me. Suppose temptation or persecution comes, I quietly reckon myself dead: if I do not, I am frightened at all sorts of things. I am not afraid of my own reputation. “I have the sentence of death in myself that I should not trust in myself, but in God that raiseth the dead.” He takes up “Christ in me”: he says, “always bearing about in the body,” etc.: he was associated with Christ. Christ has really died for us on

the cross; so Paul takes up death in Christ practically and says, “always bearing about in my body,” etc. He realised his place. That is, I reduce it to practice, and learn that flesh is flesh and must not stir; and if I am full of Christ, it will not. The flesh is not one atom changed, but I am not following it.

The first thing Noah does after God had blessed him is to get drunk. Aaron’s sons at the beginning offer strange fire! Christ—man crucifies! If Paul is taken up to the third heaven, the flesh will be puffed up about it. If it be under the power of the cross in death, that will do—“Always bearing about.” If a Christian is full of Christ, he is not distracted by the things that the devil puts before him. Suppose a mother heard that her child was run over at the other end of the town, do you think she would look at the fine things in the shops as she went along? No, she would not know that the things were there, she is full of her child. “This one thing I do.”

Many of you have sorrows, trials, difficulties. “We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal body.” I see you are in earnest, you are carrying about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus, you must realise it. Paul was in earnest and the Lord comes in and helps him and brings him within an ace of death that he may realise it. That is His way with us if we are in earnest too. If there is any tendency in the flesh to spring up, put the red hot iron on it. “Death worketh in us.” Christ’s death so wrought in Paul that nothing but life wrought from him in the Corinthians: that is testimony. That is, there should be such truth of death in us that nothing but the life of Christ should be seen from us. I see a man entirely superior to circumstances. This death I have

been brought close to was nothing to me. He can say, “God which raiseth the dead.” “When we were evil entreated at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God with much contention.” It is complete superiority to circumstances. There were the stones flying around Stephen and killing him; yet “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Jesus said, “Father, forgive them.” Stephen is the copy of Christ; in the midst of death he is completely superior to circumstances.

Now, mark, this is directed to you. “All things are for your sakes.” Do you believe that? Everything. You are so beloved of God: Paul for your sakes, Peter for your sakes, Christ for your sakes, the object of God’s delight, the Son, the gift, the glory, all for your sakes. God gave His Son to death— “All to the glory of God by us.” Oh, if we only saw it, we should get out of the little narrow path of minding our own things. It would not be subjection to circumstances, the instant that was seen. “Though perplexed, not in despair”; we should be made to feel our powerlessness, what the powerlessness of poor wretched flesh is as a man. “All things are for your sakes … for which cause we faint not; for though,” etc. You have this treasure; if God puts you through the circumstance which puts down the entire man, He makes everything work together for good. And remember “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,” no, never for an instant. It is only the outward man perishing.

Beloved friends, this is the place He has given us in the circle of His thoughts. Well, if my outward man perish, it is only that the inward man may be renewed day by day. Look at Israel going through the wilderness; why their clothes did not wax old upon them, nor their foot swell

those forty years. The Lord was thinking of the very nap of their coats. They were exceedingly evil and naughty; they would not go up. They feared the people of the land and heard that the cities were very great and walled up to heaven. It is all unbelief. What does it matter about a city being walled ever so high, if the walls fall down when we blow a ram's horn! But the children of Israel would not go up, so God says, If you will not go up, you must stay in the wilderness, and He turns back with them! There is His faithfulness to be leaned upon. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." The inward man is renewed day by day.

We get difficulties: still God's eye is upon us; but I never could spend one instant fearing them, if my heart would only recollect, when I know not how to meet them, that the power of God has been in exercise to lead me through the trial and everything, and His eye is upon me. If we only could remember it! "Our light affliction which is but for a moment," etc. I may have to be afraid of my life: no matter, it only touches my outward life. Everything that kept the flesh down, in a certain sense, he has reward for: verse 17 is the effect. The glory had been put into an earthen vessel, and the vessel has been dealt with in death, and now it is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If testimony, it is through this process. "Our light affliction worketh for us … the things seen are temporal." The mind is all fixed on that which is eternal. He is breaking down the vessel, and soon he will have the glory, and then there will be no vessel seen at all. Now there is the Christian!

But as referring back to the old ministry, there are three things it cannot do. It does not give life; it does not give strength: and what is more, it does not give an object.

No object is presented by law to my soul. I may believe in God— all right. But I have Christ—well, I have life; but I am a poor weak creature in myself—well, I have strength (by the Holy Ghost); and what is more, I have an object in Christ. It is a totally altered state and condition. Christ is always thinking of me. He is a living Person; and I have grace sufficient for me—a strength needed, and He will help me in my circumstances on the way to death; and more, I am going to be with Him and like Him for ever in glory. This is Christian standing. Then Paul is brought into the experience of what the poor earthen vessel is. He is learning to reckon it dead every day by having an earthen vessel; if it meddles, it mars the testimony. The power is not in the vessel at all, and, if it acted, it brought something that broke down the flesh. I have the blessed word of God revealed in simple purity and kept in the heart of him that receives it. “Always bearing about in the body”: that is where growth is, the sense that all the glory revealed to us is His.

We have heard some of our brethren speak of having knowledge. I must get to know the thing. It is not insincerity; but flesh and blood cannot understand it. “Flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven”; still, “blessed art thou.” But in the same chapter the Lord has to say to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” There is no question that it was real. God had revealed it to him: “upon this rock I will build my church.” If He was going to build His church, He must die, and therefore He began to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and be killed and raised again the third day. “This be far from thee,” Peter said. Though there be a blessed revelation

of God, it does not follow that the flesh is practically broken down in the measure of the truth we hold; but it is not insincerity. If I have the glory there, it is what suits it here. The flesh does not like the cross, and if the flesh is not broken down to the measure of the revelation, it must be treated as Satan. There is the practical Christian, placed between the sufferings and the glories; the presence of the Holy Ghost in him reveals the glory of God. Instead of being a terror to me, He reveals all that glory and Christ in it—my delight. Satan's power over me, sin and death, are all gone; and what I wait for now is that I may be with Him forever. Meanwhile He has said, "I am glorified in them."

Now let me ask you, can you say that you so see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that salvation is settled for you? That you are set down in the very glory which to Moses could not but be a terror, but is now the proof of salvation? Is that what the glory of the Man who is in glory has done for you? Can you say, with your heart filled with the Holy Ghost, Well, I have done with the world, I am waiting for God's Son from heaven—the Man who has got the victory, to come and take me to Himself? I am like a person here in a poor place, I have sent on all my furniture and everything before me, I am only waiting to be taken into the place prepared: nothing detains me here. Have you been bearing about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus? Have you seen what this wretched flesh is that you are to be practically delivered from? And it is infinite goodness to put this treasure in an earthen vessel which, if it stirs, spoils the whole thing. If I look at my place and standing before God in Christ, I say, I am not a child of Adam at all, I am a child of God. Beloved friends, are. your souls really

believing what Christ has done, and that He is in the glory because of it, and that you are saved by the finished work His Father gave Him to do?

There is no uncertainty about Christ at all. “Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him.” Do you see that, when you stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, you stand there glorified? Has not Paul been with Christ these eighteen hundred years? Do you think God is going to take him out to judge him? There I stand with Christ, my sinbearer: the blessed One who put away my sin and accomplished righteousness is in the glory. I have a full and only hope that this blessed Jesus at a time known to God will come again and receive me to Himself, “that where I am, there ye may be also.” Then I shall be like Him and with Him where He is. And by faith we know this now: the word of God has told it us. And what I have by the word of God and by the power of the Holy Ghost in me is certain.

The Lord give you, if you have not known it, to receive it now, that you may have the stony places broken down, and that the word of God may find an entrance and give you light that you may understand the wisdom of God and see Him who died upon the cross! He has finished everything and is coming again to satisfy His own love; then “he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied” in seeing us in the same glory as Himself. May He give us now to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies!

Death To The Believer

2 Corinthians 5

Redemption sets us at rest and in peace in the presence of God. The whole character of Christian life flows from being brought back to God, and thus we are called to walk with God. To believe that we are brought back into the presence of God is not presumption; it is faith. It is presumption to think that we can be saved in any other way.

The character of our life is that of constant dependence on divine power. If we are “troubled on every side” without being distressed, it must be because the power of God is working. If “perplexed” without being in despair, it is because the power of God is there. But then I must hold myself entirely as a dead man as regards nature, and in the possession of a new life in Christ. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body,” 2 Cor. 4:10. With Paul the flesh was not allowed to interrupt the power of this divine life, so that it flowed on in an unhindered way. This is a blessed state, and we should know it in our measure. Whenever the life is in activity it always rests on its object; while the character of the life is that of perfect obedience and simple dependence. The obedience of Christ is very different from our thoughts of obedience, which often imply a will opposed to God, and moreover it involves in us much that is to be abstained from, as well as many claims to be yielded to. With Christ the Father’s will was the motive, the only motive for whatever He did or

suffered. Hence the motive I have in acting, as far as I am a new creature, is the doing of God's will.

It is an important fact that sacred scripture never tells me to die to sin, for this I never could do. But the scripture tells me that I am dead, having died with Christ, and this is Christian liberty. I begin with being dead with Christ. For I cannot die to sin, when sin is the character of my whole life apart from Christ. But how then have I this death? I have another life; I am alive in Christ. I am to mortify the flesh most surely, but then it is only in the power of this life which I have in Christ that I am able to do that; and God's dealings with us will help us therein. But when I look at self, this is not faith: I cannot indeed see what the life is which I have got, it is all so marred. But when by faith I look at Christ, faith's object, I see it all—love, joy, patience, obedience. And we are partakers of this life, as Christ said, "Because I live ye shall live also." And again, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I thus get confidence with Him, and then His perfectness, which shines as light, shews me all my inconsistencies; and the more I see of them in the light of Christ's perfectness, the better.

In the power of this life I find myself practically dead, and I see my house in heaven, as it is expressed in verse 2. This makes me groan. But why do I groan? Because I have seen and tasted the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in person I am not there yet. The groaning is not from disappointment, but from earnest desire, "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (v. 2). As yet we are not in the positive possession of this glory, but longing to possess it; for faith rests on the ground of our position in that

deliverance which has been wrought for us. Hence there is no Christian, however weak, but has a title to long for the glory to which he has been predestinated. It is true of every believer, that “He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

But we must not think that the earnest of the Spirit is the earnest of God’s love. It is the earnest of the inheritance, the earnest of glory; as in Ephesians it is said, “In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory.”

What God has done to save, He has done perfectly. He has loved us also perfectly, and because of this “we have boldness in the day of judgment.” Not only have we boldness before the throne of grace, but “boldness in the day of judgment.”

Christ also, into whose presence we go, if we depart, and before whose tribunal we are to appear, gave Himself for us, as the apostle says, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” He gave not His life only, nor merely His word, but all; His affections, His heart, all that consistuted Himself. We have not a thought of blessedness in Him, but He has given it to us. For though we are the subjects of redemption, He who has wrought redemption has an eternal interest and stake in it; as it is said, “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.”

There is no kind of hesitation or fear about himself or about believers when Paul says, “We must all appear,” or, as it might be read, “We must all be manifested

before the judgment-seat of Christ." Faith realises this manifestation before God as a present thing, and this is most healthful to the soul. It is that which gives activity to conscience, which is a most necessary thing in our daily walk with God and before men. Paul's conscience was always at work. He exercised himself day and night to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. His was a purged conscience, still it was an active and an exercised one; and it was manifest before God.

It may be that there is no outward or allowed evil, but there is something in every heart which we cannot help knowing that we are sparing, something that is not Christ in us. But we must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. All is indeed grace, but the present working of grace is to exercise the conscience. The effect of grace is now to bring into the light and to make manifest. Having salvation in Christ, and being seen in Him, and righteous too in Him, and consequently having peace of conscience and rest of heart, I can afford to judge myself: to judge myself in the light which makes all things manifest. The Lord grant us deliverance from every reserve in our poor hearts! For there is power of life in Christ to enable us to triumph over sin and death, and to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us, and died for us, and is now seated at the right hand of God. We are already risen in Him and are to be manifested with Him in the glory. Shall I then allow any wretched object or idle vanity to occupy me instead of Christ? It may be perhaps some folly, or some piece of self-importance, or some evil disposition, or even the cares of this life! All this grieves the Holy Spirit of God, and the consequence is, that the eye is dimmed and the

power is gone. Of the good Shepherd it is said, “He restoreth my soul”: and therefore our hearts should not be satisfied to go on at a distance from the Lord, or in a state that will not bear to be manifested by the light. When life acts, it acts upon its object; and just as far as I am occupied with an object outside of myself, I get rid of self. This is true even naturally.

The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God; and hence I do not measure sin by breaking commandments merely, though that of course is sin, but rather by the presence of the Holy Ghost in me; as it is said, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” If I grieve the Spirit I lose my discernment, and sin dims my power of sight, and deadens my spiritual senses; so that the Spirit of God is obliged to bring me to the miserable work of being occupied with my sin (as Peter was) instead of being occupied with all that is precious and joyous in Christ. It is very grievous that, instead of doing the work which it is His delight to do—even revealing Christ—He is obliged to reveal our sins to us, till we weep like Peter over our self-confidence and departure from the Lord. All is manifest unto Christ.

For a moment look back on all your ways from your youth upwards (but you cannot bear to do this if you have not settled peace), look at them all, and look at them all in ‘the light of God’s word and Spirit. Look at your sins before conversion and after conversion: how many there are! By this review, again and again, as humbled and led of the Spirit, I get a special increase of blessing. I retrace the foolishness and sinfulness of my doings and the patience and long-suffering of my God. I see Him guarding me here, teaching me there, lifting me

up when I was ready to fall, and comforting me when I only expected punishment; and hence I adore and praise Him the more! But if it be thus in looking back now, how much more will it be in the moment when set in the glory! I shall then know Him and see Him, and trace all His ways in the fulness of that light which now, in the measure of it I possess, manifests Him and myself in contrast. For surely it is just in the measure in which I can judge my ways in His presence, that the effect is adoration and praise.

It should always be remembered, that Christ is not our life without being our righteousness; and that neither is He our righteousness without being our life. If this be surely grasped, it will enable the soul to look at the judgment-seat of Christ with perfect calmness; and only, as has been stated, to use the thought of our being manifested there to give present activity to conscience if thinking of oneself, or if thinking of others to persuade them, if haply they may be brought now in grace, into the light in which all will be manifested ere long for judgment. “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” And then the apostle immediately adds, as regards himself, “But we are made manifest unto God.” This is a present thing. It is the light in which he is already manifested, and in which he seeks to walk. The knowledge and power of the life we have will bring us peace in the place of terror, for Christ is the object of this life. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ” This fulness of glory, the glory of God Himself, we have as the treasure in our own souls, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

Paul goes on to resurrection, and comes back again to the object of his faith, and then sees himself in the glory. I look to attain to this resurrection (Phil. 3), and would have my conversation in heaven. In result we get a double truth, the power, the expectation working in us, and the blessed fact, that He will Himself receive us into the glory. The doctrine of all this is found in the last verse of the chapter. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Confidence is founded on His being made our righteousness, who was made sin for us! But there is another thing which is exceedingly sweet to me, a profound consolation, a wonderful depth of joy, namely, to look on Christ, and to say, He is my life. Death has no power over the life of Christ. Divine power, working in life, swallows up death, and brings entire deliverance from what sin has wrought. The same divine power which wrought in Christ, in raising Him from the dead, is now working in us and will raise us up by Jesus. And then how plainly do we see, that God does not take counsel of man! He takes His own thoughts and executes His counsels in the riches of His grace. The prodigal’s own thought was to be made “a hired servant.” But the father received him according to his thoughts, robed and fed him according to his thoughts.

So the Lord has set us in His place as man. As He said, when on earth, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” The world gives something out of itself; but Christ brings us into Himself—into His joys, into His peace, into His glory. If Christ comes, mortality will be swallowed up of life; if He does not come, I shall give up mortality. We shall all appear before the judgment-seat,

but before that we shall be up in the glory; received there by Christ, as He says in John 14: “And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Can I then be afraid of the tribunal? No. The more we learn of God’s ways, the more we shall delight in God’s ways. It is an amazing and solemn thought, that we are made manifest unto God! But faith realises this position, namely, our position in the presence of God. “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord,” what then? Is he afraid? No! But the knowledge gives activity to love. “We persuade men.” Paul stood in the presence of God, and manifest to God; and if we thus stand in the presence of God, we shall find out how little the heart knows of” bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus.” We do not find it out, unless we are thus in the light.

The right effect of the judgment-seat is, not what shall be disclosed by it in future, for that is Christ, and I have solid peace because it is Christ in whose presence I shall appear, but the present power to be before it, making it the test of conscience now, and the standard by which we try our thoughts and ways. May we each know it, and walk in it!

The Power Of Life In Christ Risen

2 Corinthians 5

The hope of the believer is not death. It is “not to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life.” He need not be unclothed, that is, of himself. The purpose of God is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the image of Christ; Rom. 8. Our proper hope is to see Him as He is, and be like Him. It is the power of divine life conforming us to Christ the Head that we hope for; and this is what He has wrought us for. Being in utter ruin, we can now only look to what are God’s thoughts and purposes about us, and therefore hope comes in as a very necessary help; but hope is not all our joy now, and when we get to heaven, there will be no hope left. Our proper joy is not hope at all, though now, seeing there is nothing satisfying here, one of our greatest joys is hope. What He has brought us into now is not subject of hope at all. We do not hope for the divine nature or the love of God. The divine joy of the believer is having these, while rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

We have a hope in death, but death is not our hope. There is that in it which is more than hope—the possession of life; and that death does not touch but set free. There are some things we should be at home in. We should be at home in God’s love; and at the judgment-seat of Christ, being like Him, we may be at home. True, we are at home, too, in conflict here, temptation, etc.; the promise is “to him that over-cometh.” But, in spite of conflict, our hearts should be at home where God has put us.

When death comes in, it breaks every possible thought of nature; it is a terrible thing in this way: every thought of man gone—not a single thing to trust in—everything in nature broken down.

Another point is, it is the power of Satan which none can control. God has the power of life, but if He had called in question Satan's power in death, He would have annulled His own sentence. Death must come in, breaking every tie of nature, and bringing in every terror connected with Satan. The sentence must be executed by God Himself, and therefore it is the judgment of God. There is judgment after it. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." What can this judgment be? If I die and God brings me into judgment, I must be condemned for the sin that brought me there. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (I am riot now speaking of deliverance.) In every sense death is a terrible thing. Besides the natural dread that even an animal has, there is a terror in it, because all ties are broken by it; everything, however loving, is gone, when death takes it. The power of Satan ushering into judgment, it can bring nothing but condemnation for sin. It is also what God has put as a stamp on man, and no skill of man can avert it. It comes with bitter mockery amidst all the. progress of which man boasts. In all this we see what death is in itself, as the wages of sin. But there is another way to look at it. The way God has taken it up and entirely delivered us (those who believe); and now, if there is a bright spot in a man's (a Christian's) life, it is at his death. It brings in a bright gleam of the future, entirely by Christ. "If one died for all, then were all dead," etc.; "that through death he might destroy him that had the

power of death … and deliver them who through fear of death," etc. This blessed truth is simple in itself, familiar to us, that the Son of God, of whom it is said that it was not possible He should be holden of death, did come down into it, has gone under it, and is risen. The second Adam came into the very place of the first Adam.

Then we were under sin, judgment, wrath, condemnation, and He has been under it all—He was made sin. Had God not measured the sin? Yes. Did He not know the consequences of it? Yes; and He "spared not his own Son," etc. Did Christ not know all that was involved in it? Yes; and He came in the full love of His heart to accomplish the purpose of God—to drink the cup; but such was His agony at the thought of what the cup was, that He sweat great drops of blood. It was the thought of sin, death, and judgment that made Him shrink from the cup, but He went through it with God. The power of death was gone, in a sense, when those who came to meet Him saw Him, "They went back and fell on their faces." He had nothing to do but to go away then, but He did not: He offered Himself up. His disciples might go away, because He stood in the gap. Thus He takes the cup as judgment, suffering the penalty of sin. It is not now Satan (as in the agony in the garden) but God. When on the cross He cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? "He drank the cup thoroughly on the cross, then He died. His body went down to the grave. Was it the power of Satan when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit?" No. He gave up His spirit, waiting for the resurrection. He went down under death, took up the whole thing—sin, Satan's power, wrath, etc. He was made sin for us. "He died unto sin once."

We have thus seen what death was for Christ. Now see what it is for us. In nature it is everlasting wrath: but there is not a bit of the wrath, not a bit of the sin, remaining for the believer. Is God going to judge the sin He has put away? No; there is not a trace of it remaining. “He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”—“condemned sin in the flesh.” The strength of it all is in this—that He was “made sin,” because He had no sin of His own. He suffered for it once, the just for the unjust; 1 Pet. 3:4. “Condemned sin in the flesh.” God has done it once for all, and now He lives, and there is no more about the sin. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin,” having nothing more to say to it, and apart from the question of sin altogether, to take us into glory.

Looked at as the nature, He had no sin, but I had sin, and that is put away; sin is entirely put away, abolished for ever. He has come up from under the consequences of death, after sin is put away. The life He took up is in the “power of an endless life.” I have new life in Him, life born of the Spirit, and “the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God,” etc. Then what about the old man practically? As I have this new life, the old man is reckoned dead. I am dead. What is dead? The old man; lam” baptised into his death.” The “corn of wheat” must die. Death ended all connected with it, for dying is unto that by which I was held. The law has killed me. The effect of the law, if we see its value, is that it has killed me, and I have life in Christ. Scripture does not speak of our dying to sin, or of our dying to ourselves; but we “are dead,” and are to “reckon ourselves dead.” “Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the

rudiments of the world, why, as thou alive in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" The old man is an antagonist in its will; but I am dead to it. I have done with that which hindered my going to God. Has not a man done with that to which he has died? Literally, when death comes, I shall have done with what is mortal. Mortality is to be "swallowed up of life." The old nature is a thorn I shall be glad to get rid of; it is mortal, corrupt, and now by sin under the power of Satan. But then it will be gone, this corruption and mortality. The mortal body having died, I shall have nothing more to do with death or the old nature.

What of the new nature? Is this done with? No; it is getting home, where the affections will have full play. In death we have done with the old nature, the first Adam, and get a great deal more of the Second. This is "far better." I shall have got rid of mortality when I die. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." Who is this person? The new man. I am absent from the body, present with the Lord. Leaving this wretched poor mortal, to be with Christ, is positive gain. It will be better still to be glorified in the body with Him, complete in all with Christ; but now it is "gain" to die.

What was Christ's own thought about dying? What He said to the thief shews: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; and to His disciples He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to my Father." In Christ there was the perfect consciousness of gain. Was Stephen less happy in his measure when he died? Hear him saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The fact of death is leaving the old man entirely behind, and going to be with Christ. There is positive gain in having done,

in measure, by faith now, or in fact by-and-by, with the mortal.

Then there is the dying daily. But there is not a single thing in which death can come, but it is positive gain, and for the life of the spirit. The sorrow which comes in by the breaking of natural ties is for blessing, reducing the flesh, etc. If there is will in the sorrow, it is bad; but trial is to be felt. Peter did not like the thought of the cross; his flesh was not broken down to the point of the revelation he had from God. Then there must be a process gone through to break it down, either with God in secret or through discipline.

In Christ

2 Corinthians 12

There are some chapters in Scripture which contain so full and blessed a statement of some great truth of God that they acquire and retain a peculiar hold on the believer’s mind. And though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and has the same authority, yet this exceptional effect of peculiar passages cannot be blamed, because it is always found to be produced by some chapter which contains a special revelation of God and His ways, or the love of Christ towards us.

The chapter of which I would now speak can scarcely be said to have this character. But it contains so complete and remarkable a display of the extent and wondrous heights and deplorable depths to which saints may go; of the mighty principles for good or for evil which are at work in those natures, in which they have part in the highest associations on the one hand, and in the lowest degradation on the other; and of the way in which grace acts to give predominancy to good in us—it presents such a view of the whole working of divine grace to give the perfect result in good and in blessing of the spiritual conflict now going on in us, through the knowledge of good and evil which we acquired in the fall, that I think it may be fruitful to the reader if I unfold it a little practically.

The way in which in this one chapter we find the highest state to which a Christian can be elevated, an exceptional one, no doubt, as an experience, and the lowest condition to which he can fall, and all the practical principles on which the divine work is carried

on between these two extremes, is very striking. In the beginning of the chapter we find a saint in the third heaven, in paradise, where flesh could have no part in apprehension or in communication. He knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. There was no consciousness of human existence in flesh: so he could not tell, nor could he utter, what he had heard when he returned to the consciousness of flesh again. Such is the saint at the beginning of the chapter. At the end we find one, perhaps, many fallen into fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and unrepentant yet of their sins. What a contrast of the highest heavenly elevation and the lowest carnal degradation! And the Christian is capable of both. What a lesson for every saint, as a warning, though he may reach neither extreme; and how suited to give the consciousness of what natures are at work and of the elements which are in conflict in him in his spiritual life down here! Another part of this chapter will shew us where power alone is to be found to carry him along his path upon the earth in a way consistently with the heavenly good to which he is called.

Paul uses a remarkable expression as to himself when speaking of his elevation to the third heaven: “I know a man in Christ.” A few preliminary thoughts as to the law will facilitate our understanding this expression. The law gave to man a perfect and divine rule for his conduct upon the earth. But it never took him up into heaven. Heavenly beings indeed, such as the angels, act upon the abstract perfection of this divine rule as it is stated by the Lord Himself: they love God with all their heart and their neighbour as themselves. This is creature

perfection. But it is their nature in which God has maintained them.

To prescribe feelings and conduct by law is another thing. The contents of the law are perfect. It tells us what the right state of a creature is, and it forbids the wrong that flesh is inclined to. But why prescribe this? No doubt obedience is a part of perfection in a creature. Mere doing right would not suffice for a being subject to God to walk righteously, because God has absolute authority over him. Thus God can, and (we know) does, prescribe certain particular acts of service to angels; and they obey. But when a state of soul is prescribed, why is that? Because it is needed. It becomes necessary because of the state of the person to whom the command is addressed. He is otherwise inclined, in danger from other dispositions of doing otherwise. To command a person to do a thing supposes that he is not doing nor about to do it if without a command.

If we add to this that nine of the ten commandments forbid positive sins and evil dispositions, because men are disposed to them, or there were no need to prohibit them, we shall find that the very nature and existence of a law which prescribes the good on God's authority supposes the evil in man's nature which is opposed to it. This is a deplorable truth, take either aspect of the case. You cannot command love, that is, produce it by commanding it, and you cannot put out lusts by forbidding them to a nature which has them as nature. Yet this is what the law does, and must do if God give one. It proves that what is forbidden is sin, and that it is in man to be forbidden; but it never takes sin away. It prescribes good in the creature but does not produce it. It shews what is right on earth in the creature, but how

far is it from taking man into heavenly places! It can have no pretension to this.

Man has now by the fall the knowledge of good and evil. The law acts on this amazing faculty, of which God could say, “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” But how? Man is under the evil, and law requires good in him which is not, and shews him all the evil which is in him. It presses the evil on him and its consequences in judgment, and as to the good it requires in him, it only gives the consciousness that it is not there. Further, it shews no good to him as an object before his soul. I repeat, to make the distinction clear, it requires good in him, loving God and his neighbour for example. But it presents no good to him. There is no revealed object to produce good nor be man’s good in him in living power. It works therefore wrath. Where no law is, there is no transgression.

Now grace works quite otherwise; it does not require good where it is not, though it may produce good. It does not condemn the wicked, but forgives and puts away their sin; it presents to us an object, God Himself, but God come near to us in love. It does more, it communicates what is good. It is not a law. It does not require good where it is not, but produces it. It does not condemn the wicked, but it forgives and puts away their wickedness. It does not lead us to carry on the conflict between good and evil by pressing the evil on us, and making us feel it a burden not to be got rid of, and ourselves slaves to it, which the law does, making us feel “this body of death” as that under whose power we are, sold to sin, and, supposing we are born again, making us only feel more truly and deeply that even this does not make us meet its requirements so that we should be

righteous by it, however much “to will is present with us,” but the contrary. In a word, grace does not, in the knowledge of good and evil with which it deals, lead us to carry on the conflict by the sense of the power and dreadfulness of evil to which we are subject and its consequences, but by the possession of perfect and divine good through which we judge the evil as raised above it, by the possession of an object perfectly good and which is our delight as well as our life, by the possession of Christ—being in Him and He in us.

“I know,” says the apostle, “a man in Christ.” But this we must a little explain and open out. It is often very vague in many a Christian’s heart. In paradise, without law, under the law, and through the presenting of Christ to him, man was responsible for his own conduct as a living man, for things done in the body. He was viewed as a child of Adam or “in the flesh.” He stood, that is, before God in that nature in which he had been created, responsible for his conduct in it, for what he was in the flesh. The result was, that in respect of every one of these conditions he had failed: failing in paradise, lawless when without law, a transgressor when under law, and last and worst of all, the closing ground of judgment, when Christ came, proved to be without a cloak for sin, the hater of Him and His Father.

Man was lost. In a state of probation for four thousand years, the tree had been proved bad, and the more the care, the worse the fruit. All flesh was judged. The tree was to bear no fruit for ever. Not only had he been proved to be a sinner in every way, but he had rejected the remedy presented in grace, for Christ came into an already sinful world, and He was despised and rejected of men. It was not all, that man, fallen and guilty, was

driven out of paradise; but Christ come in grace was, as far as man's will was concerned, driven out of the world which was plunged in the misery to which sin had led, and which He had visited in goodness. Man's history was morally closed. "Now," says the Lord, when Greeks came up, "is the judgment of this world." Hence it is we have, "He appeared once in the end of the world."

But now comes God's work for the sinner. He who knew no sin is made sin for us. He drinks graciously and willingly the cup given Him to drink. He lays down the life in which He bore the sin, He gives it up; and all is gone with it. The very life our sin was borne in on the cross was given up, His blood shed. He suffered for the sins of every believer, by the sacrifice of Himself, He has perfected them for ever. He that is dead is freed from sin. But Christ died; He then is freed from sin. But whose? Ours, who believe in Him. It is all gone, gone with the life to which it was attached, in which He bore it. The death of Christ has closed for faith the existence of the old man, the flesh, the first Adam-life in which we stood as responsible before God, and whose place Christ took for us in grace. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His only Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. In that He died, He died unto sin once; in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

Faith anticipates the judgment, as regards the old man, the flesh, with all its ways. Upon the ground of its responsibility we are wholly lost. We may learn it experimentally by passing under the law, becoming hopeless of pleasing God, as being in the flesh, or we may learn it by finding our opposition and indifference to Christ. But the whole thing is done away with for the

believer on the cross. He is crucified with Christ, nevertheless lives, yet not he but Christ lives in him. If the cross has proved that in flesh there is nothing but sin and hatred against God, it has put away the sin it has proved. All that is gone. The life is gone. If a guilty man die in prison, what can the law do more against him? The life in which he had sinned, and to which his guilt attached itself, is gone. With us too it is gone; for Christ has died, willingly no doubt, but by the judicial dealing of God with the sin which He bore for us. If we are alive, we are alive now on a new footing before God, alive in Christ. The old things are passed away: there is a new creation. We are created again in Christ Jesus.

Our place, our standing before God, is no longer in flesh. It is in Christ. Christ, as man, has taken quite a new place to which neither Adam innocent, nor Adam sinner, had anything to say. The best robe formed no part of the prodigal's first inheritance at all; it was in the father's possession, quite a new thing. Christ has taken this place consequent on putting away our sins, on having glorified God as to them, and finishing the work. He has taken it in righteousness, and man in Him has got a new place in righteousness with God. When quickened, he is quickened with the life in which Christ lives, the second Adam, and submitting to God's righteousness, knowing that he is totally lost in the first and old man, and having bowed to this solemn truth, as shewn and learned in the cross, he is sealed with the Holy Ghost, livingly united to the Lord, one spirit. He is a man in Christ; not in the flesh or in the first Adam. All that is closed for him in the cross, where Christ made Himself responsible for him in respect of it and died unto sin once; and he is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He belongs to a new

creation, having the life of the head of it as his life. Where he learnt the utter total condemnation of what he was, he learnt its total and eternal putting away.

The cross of Christ is for the believer that impassable Red Sea, that Jordan through which he has now gone, and which is his deliverance from Egypt for ever, and, now he has realised it, his entrance into Canaan in Christ. If Jordan and the power of death overflowed all its banks, for him the ark of the covenant passed in. It is just his way into Canaan. That which, if he had himself assayed to go through, as the Egyptians, would have been his destruction, has been a wall on the right hand and the left, and only destroyed all that was against him. He was a man in the flesh, he is a man in Christ. Amazing and total change, from the whole condition and standing of the first Adam responsible for his own sins, into that of Christ, who, having borne the whole consequence of that responsibility in his place, has given him, in the power of that, to us, new life, in which He rose from the dead, a place in and with Himself, as He now is as man before God.

It is to this position of the “man in Christ” the apostle refers, only that he was given in a very extraordinary manner to enjoy the full fruit and glory of it during the period of his existence here below. His language as to this truth is remarkably plain, and therefore powerful. “When we were in the flesh,” he says. Thus it is we speak, when we refer to a clearly bygone state of things in which we are no longer. “When we were in the flesh,” he says; that is, we are no longer in that position at all. “But,” he says, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.” We are now alive in Christ. “If ye be dead,” says he elsewhere, “to the

rudiments of the world, why as though living [that is, alive] in the world are ye subject to ordinances?" "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

The reader will forgive me, if I have dwelt so long upon the first expression of our chapter. I have done so because of its vast importance. It is the very heart of all Paul's doctrine, the true and only way of full divine liberty and the power of holiness; and because many Christians have not seized the force of this truth nor of the expressions of the apostle, they use Christ's death as a remedy for the old man, instead of learning that they have by it passed out of the old man as to their place before God, and into the new in the power of that life which is in Christ. Ask many a true-hearted saint what is the meaning of, "When we were in the flesh," and he could give no clear answer; he has no definite idea of what it can mean. Ask him what it is to be in Christ: all is equally vague. A man born of God may be in the flesh, as to the condition and standing of his own soul, though he be not so in God's sight; nay, this is the very case supposed in Romans 7, because he looks at himself as standing before God on the ground of his own responsibility, on which ground he never can, in virtue of being born again, meet the requirements of God, attain to His righteousness. Perhaps finding this out, he has recourse to the blood of Christ to quiet his uneasy conscience, and repeated recurrence to it as a Jew would to a sacrifice, a superstitious man to absolution. But he has no idea that he has been cleansed and perfected once for all, and that he is taken clean out of that standing to be placed in Christ before God. But if in

Christ, the title and privilege of Christ is our title and privilege. Of the full and wondrous fruit of this, Paul for God's wise and blessed purposes was made to enjoy in an extraordinary and special manner. In that, flesh and mortal nature has no part, nor ever can, though we as alive in Christ have, while in that nature, whatever be the degree of our realisation of it. Paul was allowed to know it, so that, while enjoying it in the highest degree in the new man, in his life in Christ— "the life hid with Christ in God"—the "not I but Christ liveth in him," he had no consciousness of that other mortal part which yet burdens by its very nature (as well as by sin if its will works) the new and heavenly man in us. He could not tell if he was in or out of the body; he knew on re-entering his ordinary state of conscious existence that he had this body; but he could not tell if he was in or out of it when in the third heaven; he was unconscious of it altogether.

The reader will remark too how carefully the apostle distinguishes between the man in Christ and himself as he had the practical experience of himself down here, having indeed the life of Christ and the Spirit which united him to the Head, but having also the flesh in him though he was not in the flesh. Of this Paul, of what he was practically conscious down here, would not glory; but he had been given to be in the enjoyment of his place as a man in Christ with entire abstraction, as to his consciousness of it, of anything else—of such an one he would glory. And so can we, though we may never have been in the third heaven to realise fully the glory and privileges of the position we are brought into, yet we are men in Christ, and we have known enough—the feeblest saint who knows his place in Christ has known

enough—of that blessing to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He glories in the position of the man in Christ, which is his most surely and fully in Christ; and he may realise it too, so that at the moment he may not sensibly feel the working of sin in him, though he well knows it is there. We may be filled with the Spirit, so that the Spirit is the only source of actual thought in us.

Indeed this is our proper Christian state, not always with the same activity, it is true, of the Spirit giving the sensible apprehension of the glory and the things of Christ so as to elevate the soul to that which is above; but so that there is no consciousness of anything inconsistent with it in the mind.2 There may be indeed even then when there is no conscious evil, the effect of obscure apprehension, an apprehension obscure perhaps even in a way which implies fault, negligence, want of singleness of eye, spiritual laziness, swerving from the path in which a single eye would lead us (though there uneasiness naturally follows in the soul because the Spirit does dwell in us and is grieved): still there may be no present disturbing element in the conscience.3 The being, as men speak, in the third heaven is not always our place and portion. It is a mistake to think it would puff us up. A creature is never puffed up in the presence of God and with Him before the mind. It is when the eye is off Him, when we have been in the third heaven but are no longer there, that the danger begins. We are in danger of being puffed up about having been there when we have lost the present sense of the excellency of what is there and in which we lose the sense of self. This is what we find in Paul’s case. The man in Christ has Christ for his title and is entitled thus to all that Christ enjoys, to joys and glories which

mortal apprehensions cannot receive and language formed by mortal thoughts and ways cannot express, that are not meet to be communicated in this scene of human capacities. They belong to another sphere of things.

But wonderful as that is into which we are brought, the question of good and evil, the knowledge of which we have by the fall and cannot get rid of (nor is it desirable or meant we should), must be thoroughly and experimentally gone through by us. It has been as to acceptance. In respect of this it is finally and for ever settled before God by the death and resurrection of Christ. But we have to learn to judge the evil and to delight in the good. The law, as we have seen, makes us learn the evil as looking to be judged for it. In grace we are first put into the position of perfect blessing in Christ, and then we judge what is contrary to it. This is the difference of bondage and liberty. Still we have to judge it and grow in our apprehension of good. In the instruction of our chapter this, as in all God's ways with the apostle, who was to be both quickly and fully taught in order constantly and deeply to teach others, was done in the strongest and fullest contrast of the extremes. The third heaven, if it did not set aside the flesh in fact for ever, must shew what a hopeless unchangeable thing it is. And so it did. Paul had entered into the third heaven with no consciousness of the hindrance of the body, still less with any working in the flesh in any way. But he must return into the practical state of existence in which he had to serve Christ with the consciousness of what he was as Paul. And here the only working of the flesh, the only way it took cognizance of Paul's having been in the third heaven, would have been, if it had been allowed to

do so, to have puffed him up at having such wondrous revelations. It was unchanged in evil. Paul must learn this practically, even by a visit to the third heaven, instead of this amazing privilege taking away or changing it. It was not allowed to act, but he must learn truly to judge it in himself.

Note this difference. It is not necessary when we are in Christ that flesh should act in order that we should learn to judge it in ourselves. Alas! it is often in that way we do learn it, but it is not necessary that it should act even in thought. By God's ways, and through communion with Him, we can learn to judge evil in the root in us without its bearing fruit. If we do not learn to judge it in communion with God, where there may be very real exercise about it (and a very great conflict of will against God if it has acquired any head), we learn it in its fruits through the giving way to the temptation of Satan. When it is not judged, we learn, no doubt, the evil—not yet indeed the root; but Christ is dishonoured, the Spirit grieved, and, but for the coming in of grace, sin will in such case have acquired deceiving power in our hearts.

In what has preceded we have found three important points brought before us in this chapter. Firstly, the man in Christ; secondly, the gross evil of the flesh if our members be not mortified; thirdly, that this same flesh is not at all corrected in its tendencies even by a man's being in the third heaven nor by anything else. Paul needed a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be puffed up. There is another collateral point indeed, which I would here briefly notice: the difference between our abstract position as men in Christ (and we are entitled to consider ourselves as such; it is our true position as Christians according to grace), and our

actual condition with the consciousness of the existence of the flesh and all our bodily circumstances and infirmities down here. Into this actual condition we have now to follow Paul in our chapter and to learn where power is to be found to walk rightly in it. The flesh exists unchangeable in its nature, a pure hindrance.

First, we may remark that no extent of knowledge, even where given of God, is in itself spiritual power in our souls. We cannot doubt that such revelations as Paul received in the third heaven strengthened his own faith, made him understand that it was well worth sacrificing for it a miserable life, such as this world's is, and gave him a consciousness of what he was contending for, a sense of the divine things he had to do with, which must have exercised an immense influence upon his career in this world. But it was not immediate power in conflict in the mixed state in which he found himself when he had to speak of "myself Paul." He had, and so have we, to walk by faith and not by sight. The wickedest man would not sin while his mind had the glory of God Himself before his eyes; but that would no way prove the state of his heart and affections when it was removed. Like Balaam, he would turn to his vomit again. So in point of fact the Christian, however strengthened and refreshed by times on the road by what is almost like sight to him and by communications of divine love to his soul, has to walk by faith and not always in these sensible apprehensions of divine results in glory. Not that he is to walk in the flesh or lose communion, but he is not always under the power of especial communications of the glory conferred on him and of divine love to his soul. Paul knows a man fourteen years ago—not every day in that state. He could rejoice in the Lord always. Some

Christians are apt to confound these two things—special joy and abiding com-nlunion, and to suppose, because the first is not always the case the discontinuance of the latter is to be taken for granted and acquiesced in. This is a great mistake. Special visitations of joy may be afforded; but constant fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus is the only right state, the only one recognised in Scripture. We are to rejoice in the Lord alway. This the flesh would seek to hinder, and Satan by the flesh. Here we find first the privilege of having a title to hold ourselves dead. We are not debtors to the flesh. It has no kind of title over us. We are not in the flesh. We may reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God, and sin shall not have dominion over us. It is all-important to hold this fast. The flesh is unchanged, but there is no necessity of walking in it; not more as to our thoughts than as to our outward conduct. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death; sin in the flesh is condemned by the death of Christ; the power it had over us when under law (if not lawless) it has no longer. When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law wrought in us all manner of concupiscence. But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in us. We are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held. Our whole condition is changed. What the law could not do just because it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh. But if the flesh be not changed, how is this realised in practice? It is this which is taught us here. It is first the giving conscious nothingness and weakness in the flesh. This is not power, but it is the practical way to it. We are entitled, as to our standing before God, to

reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in practice to hold ourselves, as in this condition, not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; and sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law but under grace.

But our chapter goes farther than this; it shews us power so to walk. The flesh is then practically put down. The measure, as stated by the apostle, is this, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” His object was not to gain this life. Alive in Christ we have it; but he held every movement, thought, and will of the flesh under the judgment of the cross, and so the life of Jesus was left free. Such is our path. Admitted into the very presence of God into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we judge in its roots in communion with Him according to His infinite grace everything that is not of Christ in us, and the grace we meet and are made partakers of in this communion carries us along our road in lowliness and grace. Our fleshly tendencies are thus only the occasion of receiving the grace which keeps us safe from their power. I may be humbler than ordinary men if I have dealt with God about my pride, and so of every danger. The present power of Christ keeps the evil out of our thoughts. We have brought God into our life in this respect. It is not merely the absence, comparatively speaking, of a particular character of evil. The flesh—evil—is judged according to God, and I am lowly in spirit and walk softly and safely. But where there are real dangers, God helps us in this. Not only do I bear about the dying, but we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake. God works: some messenger of Satan is sent; not sin, far from it (God cannot send that);

but some humbling process which prevents sin and pride working, unpleasant to the human heart, but needed for it. All self-activity of the flesh is sin; the body is dead because of sin if Christ be in me; that is, if alive, it is only sin; and if Christ is my life, “the Spirit is life.” My body is not counted as alive, or to be so in its will. What is of me in will and nature—me as a conscious living man, a child of Adam in this world—is annulled, or is a hindrance; it has no connection with God. A man in flesh cannot please God. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

We find in Philippians this confidence in the flesh (not lusts of corruption) judged by the apostle. All that made Paul of undue importance to himself or to others, and so reflectively to himself, was rejected. It would have been confidence in self. Our part is to be in the presence of God, that all which is of self may be judged. But God, as I have said, helps us. Here God had, by the abundance of the revelations given to Paul, given an occasion which the flesh could use. In His mercy He meets the danger for Paul, which he might not, surely would not, have rightly met; for God does not afflict willingly. He lets loose this messenger of Satan at him, but to do His own work as with Job. And Paul has some infirmity which tends to make him despicable in preaching. “My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not,” says he to the Galatians; a natural counterpoise to the abundance of revelations. What can the flesh do with this then? Well, it would be spared what seemed a hindrance. To whom? Why, to Paul. Just right. Paul had to be kept down—terrible truth for us. Must we be made weak and inefficient in order to be blessed and used?

Yes, if, wretched worms as we are, we are in danger of leaning as man on the flesh's efficiency and strength.

The works that are done upon the earth, God does them Himself, and above all spiritual work. He gives the increase. If He puts the poor vessel in a certain sense in danger, and in many a case where it puts itself, He meets the danger by striking at its root in self. He makes nothing of self, renders the incapacity of nature to anything not only apparent, but apparent to ourselves; and this is what we want. That self should feel self nothing or a hindrance, is a most divine work, though it be a shame to a man who has been in the third heaven, to think himself something in respect of it; but flesh is incorrigible. But as to the instrumentality used, it is a mean and miserable process, such as becomes making nothing of flesh. If death is our deliverance from all sin, we must taste it for our deliverance practically. The bitter water of Marah must be tasted when the salt waters of the Red Sea have delivered us from Egypt for ever and ever. Put the wood of the tree, the cross of Christ, into our cross, and all will be sweet. "Crucified "is terrible work—crucified with Christ, joy and deliverance; reproach is cruel, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

But there are cases where the will and natural reluctance of the flesh to suffer are in question; there are also those which are characterised by the danger of positive evil working, as pride or vanity in the case of Paul. As to all, death must be tasted. The nothingness and incompetency of all flesh must be felt where it would be disposed to think itself competent. It must find its pretensions arrested and set aside when it has such, or would be disposed to have them; it must find itself

consciously weak where it might hope to be strong or capable of something. As to what sell would lean on, it must find itself a hindering flesh where it would pretend to be a helping one. It is really nothing in the work and path of God; but when it would be positively something, it must be made to feel itself a positive hindrance. This is not the end, but it is the way. We must be humbled when we are not humble, or even in danger of not being so. This work may come in preventively. But the flesh must be nothing if we are to have blessing; and in order that the new man, which is content that God should be all and knows its power is in Christ only, may be free and happy, and God, as it desires, may be glorified. The power of Satan and the power of death concur in ministering to our usefulness in Christ, because Satan wields this power to kill practically the flesh, and we have another life which lives in Christ and lives for Him.

This question is first settled as regards righteousness, as we have seen. We are dead and risen again; but it has to be practically settled as regards life and power of walk also. So that we may say, whatever our little measure may be, “to me to live is Christ.” But the fact that the flesh is thus practically mortified is not in itself power: we must be positively dependent on another, glad to be so, if our heart is in Christ’s service and that we find His help only can make us to serve Him. To have Him is joy in every way. This is what follows: “I will glory in my infirmities”; not sin, but what broke down the flesh in its will and hindered sin, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Here is positive power capable of everything, of rendering us capable of everything in the path of obedience, giving no power at all out of it, but of fulfilling in power all the energy of love in obedience.

For the Christian path is not mere legal obedience which submits to a will which arrests and stops our will, but an obedience which serves with delight in love and in which love is positively and energetically active in doing good. This path is regulated by the Lord's will and fulfilled by the Lord's power, but that power can have no adventitious aid. It must be the strength in us of a dependent nature. In this is the right condition of the creature, obedience and conscious dependence, and both delighted in, on one who has title and alone has title to all the praise, who loves us and on whose love we lean.

In the path of service, the energy of Christ's love impels us, Christ's power sustains and enables us. Flesh, only a hindrance to that, must be put down, and practically annulled, that Christ may work freely in us according to the blessing of that love. We then say the love of Christ constrains us. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, the only true abiding state of the Christian, be he babe or father in Christ; only the thing he may have to do may be different and his temptations too. God in all cases is faithful not to suffer him to be tempted above that he is able. When a man is in Christ then, redeemed, quickened, and united to the Head, accepted in the Beloved, the work of God in order to power is to break down and bring the flesh to conscious nothingness wherever it is needed; not by mending, using, ameliorating, but, if needed by its will to be something, breaking it down, yea, making it for man's capabilities of acting a sensible hindrance. This is all that God makes of man as to his flesh and competency; but there is a deep lesson of blessing in it besides being the path of power in service. We are emptied of self; and

Christ (that is, purity, and love, and blessing—God known to us in grace) becomes everything to us, the more unhindered joy of the soul made practically like Him.

But we become now sensibly dependent, and Christ our power, I do not say sensibly power; for, though there may be a consciousness of His strength, the service and work is done indeed, but done without any conscious strength. It may be done with joy in communion with Christ, and thus with joy in the service itself. It may be done with fear and trembling, and hence with no joy though with confidence. That depends much upon how far we have to meet the sensible power of the enemy, always in weakness as to self, always in confidence as to Christ, though it is His work, and He the doer of it though He may use us as instruments. And this operation is not merely an effect in us, though there be one; it is the positive power of Christ, a real acting and working of His power, for which the sensible putting down of flesh was only preparatory, that it might be evidently not the power of flesh, and that there might be no mixture of the two in our minds. Hence the flesh is turned into positive sensible weakness. But the power of Christ rests upon us, so that it is joy to the soul because He uses us, connects Himself (so to speak).with us, deigns to make us the instruments and servants, willing and rejoicing servants of this power. It is His power, but it rests on us. This is not the man in Christ, but Christ with the man—His power resting on him emptied of self.

The path of strength then is the being made sensible of our own weakness, so that divine strength, which will never be a supplement to flesh’s strength, may come in. Thus there is entire dependence, and the positive

coming in of Christ's power to work by us. If Paul's bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible, and there was something which tended to make him despised, by whose power was it that such wondrous blessing for the whole world flowed forth on all sides from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum?

One or two remarks more, and I will close my imperfect suggestions on this chapter. First remark that the humbling process with Paul was no depriving of the abundance of the revelations, or weakening the consciousness that he was a man in Christ. This would have been positive loss. These were fully maintained and gloried in. The use the flesh would make of them when consciously down here in the body, in the world, was met by an accessory humbling process carried on in the flesh itself.

Next remark that it is not merely power which is gained by this process. The discernment of good and evil, in its more subtle characters, is greatly increased; the judgment and knowledge of flesh greatly strengthened and deepened. Hence the liberty of the new man with God, confidence in Him, the sense of the careful and gracious interest He takes in us, and intercourse founded on this confidence, are greatly increased. Further remark, that dealing with self, our own spiritual condition, is the secret of power, not the quantity of divine revelations we have to communicate, valuable as that may be in its place. For power Paul was dealt with in his own soul, its own dangers and state, and then Christ's power rested on him.

Lastly note, that our glorying in our position in Christ is all right. "Of such an one I will glory; yet of myself I will

not glory but in mine infirmities." When I think of my place in Christ, of the "man in Christ," of such an one we ought to glory. This is no presumption. It cannot be otherwise, whenever we know ourselves in Christ. Do you think I can do anything but glory in being in Christ, and like Christ in glory? Of such an one I will. Let no pretended humility deprive us of this. It is legalism. Of myself, of that of which I have the living consciousness as a man down here, I cannot glory, unless it be in those sufferings for Christ and infirmities, of whatever kind they may be, connected with them, which are used to put the flesh down, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

I would add to these one collateral observation. The Lord can unite discipline with positive suffering for Christ, though the two things are quite distinct. When Paul was subjected to contempt in his preaching it was for Christ's sake he suffered, yet the form of it was, we have seen, a discipline to prevent his being puffed up. This may be seen doctrinally in Hebrews 12:2-11. In verses 2-4 we suffer with Christ, striving against sin, even to martyrdom and death. In verses 5-11 the same process is the discipline of the Lord, that we may be partakers of His holiness. How wise and most gracious of the Lord's ways to turn our needed discipline into the privilege of suffering for Christ's sake, so that we can glory in our infirmities! There is chastening which has not this character, being for positive evil. In this doubtless we have to thank God, but it is another thing.

In fine, before God we have the "man in Christ"—blessed position—which is perfection where we want it; and as to our place before men, besides Christ in us as life, the power of Christ, where we practically want it, in

weakness and imperfection down here, resting on the man for walk and service before men. The first is the basis of all our walk, but it does not suffice for power. This is had in daily dependence in which we walk, as humbled in ourselves, that Christ may be glorified, and the flesh practically annulled.

We need to be taught of God, what this “man in Christ” means. When we speak of a man in the flesh or a man in the Spirit, we mean his state or position; what characterises him before God. A man in Christ does not mean what he is in himself. It is the condition of every child of God “in Christ.” This chapter, in what follows, shews us much of what flesh is; but in this state— “in Christ,” flesh had nothing to do with it. The body had nothing to do with it. Paul could not understand it of himself. He says, “I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body I cannot tell,” etc.; that is, it is not what he was as a man down here. It is the position of a believer contrasted with that of an unbeliever. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” This characterises him, and the value and import of it are unfolded in that passage. And again, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.’ It is quite evident it has nothing to do with anything he has out of Christ. Whatever he was before, he was in flesh; now he is in Christ, and all is measured by Christ: he has got his place in the second Adam, and not in the first. It will shew itself in its practical ways, but this refers to his standing.

I desire to shew, first, the force and bearing of this—a man being “in Christ.” So long as Christ was in the

world, nobody could speak of “a man in Christ.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” God’s grace was working from Adam downwards; but that is another thing. In order to know what it is to be in Christ, we must know what this Christ is. Why should God have peace and blessing for a man in Christ? Because there was none for him anywhere else. There would be judgment for his sin, but no life or righteousness, or power; not one thing that he needs before God could he have without being in Christ. There is plenty of wickedness and pride, creature work of our own, but nothing that can go up to God. We may clothe ourselves in our own eyes, but Adam was naked before God, even when he clothed himself. There may be bright qualities, intellect, etc., but who is clothed in them? Man. He prides himself in them. But there may be good qualities in any animal. There is a difference between some and others; some are vicious, others the reverse. The intellect of man and his wonderful faculties are not the question, but what do they turn to? Pride, title to be something, man clothing himself in his pride! Is this the way to heaven? God says, “there is none righteous, no not one.” Does the man think so, who hopes to go to heaven that way? No! he has nothing else but filthy rags. When the voice of God is not there, the fig-leaves may do very well. They may do for man; but when God comes in, they will not do before Him. God clothed Adam, but then death had come in. When man clothes himself, it only brings out his shame. When God clothes him, he is fit for God; he has “put on Christ.”

There is no desire in the natural man to be with God; man has no desire to go to God. Conscience drives a man away from God, and his heart keeps him away. Any

honest unconverted man would own he has no pleasure in Christ. It is thoroughly brought out that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The man out of Christ is either a gross outward sinner, like the publican, or the respectable and hard-hearted man who has no sympathy with the reception of a sinner. See what the Christ is, in whom we are. Christ comes; God occupies Himself with these sinners, but see how they treat Him! Knowing all the sin, all the hatred of their hearts, the breaking of the law, and a thousand other sins, He came for this reason —He came to seek sinners. The grace of God, who is love, has risen above all that man is. If man feels what he is before God, he gets into despair. You do not trust everyone who comes to you, because you are sinners. God knows all about you. Christ came because you are wicked. If this suits you, that is the God you have in Christ. If it does not suit you, there is judgment for you.

But in Christ God is above all the sin of man, and because it is what it is, He sends Christ to die. What man means by God's goodness is indifference to sin. God never in grace alters His holiness. Before a man could be in Christ, the whole work was needed to be done. He made Him to be "sin for us." The first thing is Christ made sin, and then grace reigns through righteousness. Christ was entirely alone to drink that bitter cup, and then God could not only save the sinner but glorify Himself about the sin. God would glorify Christ in Himself. When Christ was made sin, God was perfectly glorified. There was perfect righteousness against the sin, perfect love in bearing it. He is gone up to the throne of God as a man. Now there is a Christ to be in; righteousness is accomplished; the whole thing is done; and the Holy Ghost is sent down to bear witness that

God has accepted this man and His work. Righteousness is glorified in the presence of God.

As a Christian, I am a man, not in the flesh but in Christ. The whole work is done that fits Him to sit on the right hand of God, He has glorified God, and God has glorified Him in Himself. But before I can have a man in Christ, I must have a Christ to be in there, on the throne of God. Directly I take knowledge of what Christ has done for me, as applied by the Spirit, I am a man in Christ. It is not given to every one to have spiritual manifestations, as Paul had. Paul saw more of what it was to be there by what he saw here.

Now we see what the flesh is in connection with this. In the beginning of the chapter, we see what the height was to which a man could be taken. The thief might go into paradise the same as Paul; but it was a wonderful thing for a man down here to have these revelations. But in the end of the chapter we see what the flesh is capable of. Nature cannot go into heaven. If God is pleased to take Paul up there, there is no consciousness of being in the body at all. “A man in Christ”— “of such an one will I glory.” There is the glorying of a Christian. How many an one would say, “You must not glory;” but Paul says, “I will glory in it.” There is a man dead! No, he is not dead; he is alive in Christ—as a man out of himself in Christ. He will glory in this; and you could not help glorying, if you really believed it. It is not thankfulness not to glory in it. You may not apprehend all about it; but if you believe it, you will glory in it. If Paul had gone up to a fourth heaven, there would have been all the more need for the thorn, or he would have gloried in that. The danger was not when he had the apprehension of the presence of God, but it was when

out of His presence, when he got thinking of it. The revelation was not a source of strength; he needed something else. Whenever he preached, he had something to make him humble, something to keep the flesh down (the thorn, not sin), something to make nothing of him—breaking down the pride of man. He was humbled, because in danger of not being humble. There was strength for him. If he preached in a despicable manner, but souls were converted (as they were), how was that? If that is the way of getting blessing, it was not Paul's power, but Christ's power. Then let me have the thorn, he says. Thus we have the danger of the flesh dealt with in humbling him in the presence of man—breaking down the very thing that would puff itself up, and Satan that would puff up is obliged to be an instrument to break it down.

Now I have the power of Christ in the man, not only a "man in Christ." While in this world, I want something to carry me through, and to protect me from being cheated — something for the conflict I am in. That is power in the Christian, as well as being in the Christ. There was something there to keep the nature down that would have gloried; and, besides that, it was the occasion of bringing in Christ. There is always something to glory in in Christ. Do not believe that the saint is not entitled to enjoy all the advantages he has in Christ. All the hindrance, all the wretchedness, made him glory more in Christ. He says, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

At the end of the chapter we see what the flesh left to itself even in a Christian is. Flesh in its fairest forms, its

capacities, etc., is all a hindrance. He may only glory in the old man, in its being dead— “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We may rejoice in finding the flesh good for nothing. What man is in flesh, and flesh is in a man, is all bad. God says, I will visit you by my word and Spirit, and then bring you to where I am. The sins are gone. But the sin is not gone, you say. But “sin in the flesh “has been condemned. Christ has died for it, and I am clear, justified from it. I have got out of this condition thus condemned. If you have got into the third heaven, you may know that all the flesh could do would be to make you proud of it. A man in the flesh cannot please God, and the flesh in a man cannot please God. If you were in the fourth heaven, it would be just the same. Sinful flesh has been condemned. Then I can say, I am dead and I am in Christ, the Man at the right hand of God. Whether an apostle or the simplest saint that ever was, I need the power of Christ in the man.

The Lord give us to judge flesh, and all the scene around that ministers to it.

We are apt to make a mistake in speaking of our weakness and unprofitableness, forgetting that it is when we have done our duty, we are unprofitable servants. When we speak of it, we mean our failure; and so, when we speak of our weakness of spirituality or conduct we mean failure. But when Paul speaks of weakness, it is that which makes room for power (“when I am weak then am I strong”); and the result fully produced is with the consciousness of there being no strength in us. This is a very different thing from our failure. Our failure ought to lead us to humble ourselves before God for that which led to the failure. If we have

not done what we ought, why have not we? We cannot glory in not having done it. There is a strength that the babe in Christ may have and needs—power guided by wisdom, and this does not fail. When we have not been emptied of self and are full of self-confidence, we must be broken down. Pretension to strength is always in the way for failure. The first step towards failure is forgetting our entire and absolute dependence. As Christians we know we have no strength, but we forget we have none.

This chapter brings out in a remarkable way the dealings of God in giving strength. There is a wonderful scene going on in the heart of man. God does not let us always see it— it would not be good for us: we could not bear it. Sometimes the veil is drawn aside, and, as in the case of Job, the heart is exposed to itself; God and Satan there. It is a serious thing when God thus lifts the veil and shews what is going on for good and evil in a poor little heart like ours! “God hath set the world in their hearts”; and if it ends there, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Another question, as a moral question, is the will of man. When will is not at work and sorrow comes in, it is the happiest portion. The first who begins that question is God. It is a question of Satan’s power, man’s will, and God’s goodness in the midst of all that. You have the conscience of evil in your hearts, and the evil is too much for you. You do not know what to do with it. The conscience of good and evil has come in by the fall. Adam had the conscience of good and evil with sin and by sin; he had it by disobedience. Conscience therefore cannot guide a man right. The converted man has the light of God to bear upon it. This shews man what he is.

The soul has to own its badness and say, God is right. I go with Him morally in condemning myself. God shews man to be vile as to nature, rebellious as to will, and hateful.to God as to his affections; and it is a blessing when He shews it to us. But it is not deliverance; this is another thing. The glory of God's ways is that He puts us down completely as to ourselves, by the fact that our salvation is wrought out by Another, when I had done nothing but sin. I find God has condemned sin in the flesh. Where? In Christ. I see my sin all measured and dealt with on the cross.

As the beginning of the chapter shewed us what a man in Christ gets—revelations, etc. (if we do not have them now, we shall by-and-by); so afterwards we see what flesh in a man is, what it may come to—debates, envyings, wraths, etc. These are the extremes of both—revelations in the third heaven, and flesh in its worst character. Most Christians are in neither one nor the other state practically.

Paul says, "I know a man in Christ… Of such an one will I glory." This is what all Christians should have got hold of. If you are not a man in Christ before God, you are lost; it is presumption to think of being anything else. Can I know that I am going to be like Christ in glory and not glory in it? We must glory. Paul was not glorying in the revelations when he was in them—he had no time then to glory; but he gloried in what was his portion—Christ his life, righteousness, and glory. Paul speaks of those revelations as fourteen years ago. It is not intended that we should be always living in the wonderful enjoyments connected with the glory of Christ; if we were, it would be sight, not faith. There was no danger of being puffed up when in the third heaven,

it was when he came down to Paul again that there was the danger, not while in the presence of God.

By and in Christ I learn now another thing—that it is not God's thought at all to alter my flesh, my old nature; the tree is bad. The flesh can be puffed up in Paul by the consciousness of having been in the third heaven.

There is no good in me. I am a sinner—more than being under the curse of a broken law. Where I am, where my flesh is, I should pervert even the third heaven (v. 7). God turns that by which Satan would have tempted one into a rod to keep down his pride. We are not told what the thorn was, but it was something that made Paul despicable in preaching (alluded to in Galatians) to meet the pride that would come from the revelation. Numbers were converted, not by Paul's eloquence, but by the Lord's power. Their faith was not to stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. There was Christ for the man upon earth. You must be brought down to nothing, having no strength in yourselves. The flesh was not allowed to act in Paul, a thorn for it was sent to buffet him lest he should be exalted. Such is the normal condition of a soul—power given not to sin. If the heart is exercised in dependence, we judge the root of the evil, and it does not come out. My business is to learn the evil in my character by judging it and not by its coming out. If I have a proud character and am humbled before God about my pride, I go out, and am more humble than a very humble man by nature. There is not a bad conscience by the flesh being in me, but I have if I allow it to act: the thorn is sent to prevent it.

Before we come to power, the question of righteousness has been settled by Christ being at the right hand of

God; it is a settled thing. It is practically learned when I am saved; then I have a title to the third heaven; and strength is made perfect in weakness. The Lord never gives us intrinsic strength, He makes us feel our dependence. I am made to feel my weakness when I see how my flesh would even pervert the blessings that are mine in Christ. Therefore will I rather glory in infirmities (not sin, but infirmities—for example, distresses, persecutions, etc.). The Spirit kept him from that which would have given him a bad conscience.

2 This is the state described in the Epistle to the Philippians—the true Christian state.

3 The fact, it is important to remark, of sin being in the flesh does not make the conscience bad. When it becomes the source of thought or action, then the conscience is bad, and communion by the Holy Ghost is interrupted. But our chapter leads us farther into this.

Blessed Through Faith

Galatians 3

In speaking of redemption there are always two questions to be considered: firstly, the great truth of the work of Christ on the cross; and secondly, the application of His work to us. The last is principally that in which Christians go astray. It is the manner of availing ourselves of the blessing that is denied. The Galatians did not deny Christ; they were Christians, but they were mixing up the law with the gospel and connecting ordinances with works, which two always come together. When the heart is not satisfied with works, then it ekes out matters by ordinances. But ordinances cannot give peace to the conscience. God will not let you mix them with Christ. The apostle here shews the real ground of peace. Promise is contrasted with law. “Received ye the Spirit by the law or by faith?” (v. 2). The promised One is come: and the work being accomplished, the Spirit is given as the consequence.

Man is so attached to his good opinion of himself, that God had, as it were, to say, Well if you will have a law, here is Mine for you. They ought to have cried, Oh! we cannot keep the law, we are sinners, ruined; instead of this they presumptuously answered, “All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do.” What could such self-confidence end in but death? On the other hand, we Christians are not under law; nor are we under promise but under the effect of the accomplishment of the promise. He begins with the effect (v. 2): “Received ye the Spirit,” etc. We are under the effect of redemption,

namely sin put away by Christ's sacrifice, and the Holy Ghost present as power for walk, etc. Did we get it by the law or by faith?

Verse 3. "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? "Whenever the law is brought in, so is the flesh also. I never put myself in any way under the law without being condemned and lost, beyond all help; whereas God must have perfect obedience and nothing less. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." If we get off this ground, it would be God accommodating Himself to sinners and allowing sin. When we start upon the ground of man's responsibility to God, we always fail. The Galatians professed to have found redemption by Christ. Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes (v. 1). Again, had "they suffered many things in vain?" (v. 4). Was it all a mistake? When had they this power? It was in the Spirit. The law never pretended to give power. "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to Him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 5-9). When he turns to the ground of faith, then we find the promise, "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Here are thus two great principles in contrast. If it is a promise, what I have to do is to believe it. It is another who accomplished it. God undertakes this, and He

accomplishes it by Christ. It is all on God's side. This is the difference between promise and the law. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And so if I believe God, and it is counted to me for righteousness: "So then they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is not as many as do bad works, but "as many as are on the ground of law-works." The law is good, but we are bad; and hence all is ruin on that ground; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not," etc. I cannot keep it so as to be saved.

According to Deuteronomy 27:1-10, they were to write, upon the stones with which they built the altar, all the words of the law on mount Ebal, where was the law; the letter was not on mount Gerizim, where half of the tribes were to bless (v. 12). But there was nothing there—the letter was only on the mount of cursing. In chapter 28 is both blessing and cursing, but these have nothing to do with Gerizim; they are the blessing and cursing of God's government, as regards their daily walk. We may come under chastisement in our daily walk. It is in vain to mix yourself up as the accomplisher of the law with God as the accomplisher of the promise. If your soul rests upon what God is in Christ and nothing else, you get the blessing. If you choose to stand on what you do yourself, how can you escape the curse?

Verse 13. "Christ hath redeemed us," etc. Then comes the accomplishment of the promise. Man was either, like the Gentile, lawless, or like the Jew, under the curse of the law. What is required by the bondmen of sin and

Satan is redemption. The way God gives us blessing is, not by enfeebling the law, but by Christ's enduring the judgment of guilt for us. The curse that we deserved, another has borne! I do not fly to a promise for peace to my soul. Peace is the accomplished result of Christ's work (Col. 1), and, if you will, of the promise. Christ has been made a curse for me, and I am redeemed entirely from the curse of the law. The curse is utterly taken away. We ought to be astonished at such grace!—laid in the dust, as regards ourselves, but in perfect peace with God. The curse is altogether put away and gone; for Christ has borne sin and death. Then what remains? The blessing of faith as to all that results from His work. We are not merely born anew by the Spirit; but we have received the Spirit as the seal of the curse being gone—of redemption accomplished.

In verse 17 he speaks of God's way of dealing, in order to shew how sure it is. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made." In Genesis 12:2, 3, the promise is made to Abraham—nothing about the seed. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In Genesis 22 there comes a figure of the seed in Isaac. In verses 16 and 17 it is said, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son [a type of Christ], I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven," etc. These are the "seeds as of many." "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." In verse 18, on the other hand, nothing is said of a numerous seed. "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Here it is in one Seed, Christ. In chapter 15 is another set of promises, but the promise is to Abraham in himself. But after Isaac had been offered, we have the seed [Christ] without any conditions at all.

This promise, confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law came in, the law cannot disannul or make of none effect. The law being come, God could not bring in the promise till the curse was put away. Christ was born under the law, as a living man. The promise of God is in a Christ who had to die. But He is risen, the curse being borne. Then wherefore serves the law? (v. 19). To bring out transgressions, to convict of sin, to prove man a sinner, a self-righteous good-for-nothing sinner. The effect was to bring out the sin that was already in the heart. “Transgression” is a different thing from “sin,” which is really said in 1 John 3:4 to be, not transgression of the law, but lawlessness. If I have a son who is idle and runs about the street, it certainly is a bad habit; but if he refuses or neglects to do what I bid him, this is positive transgression. It is not only lawlessness, but transgression of law.

Thus then the promise came first, next the law, and then the accomplishment of the promise. The law was in the hand of a mediator, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made (v. 20). Again, a promise does not want a mediator; for it is all on one side. “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one,” who is the accomplisher of the promise. In Exodus 19 God says, “If you obey my voice … I will bless you.” The mediator comes with this statement from God, and God says, If you do all this, I will bless you. Israel says, “All that Jehovah hath spoken, we will do.” Here is a promise of our God, conditional on something being fulfilled by man. The result is a total failure; because man has been brought in, engaging to do something which he is sure not to accomplish. The moment there is the legal mediator, man is engaged in a condition and has no

possibility of fulfilling it. But (v. 21) the law is not contrary to the promise. The truth is that man was in a condition in which he could not earn the promises, because he could not keep the law. God proposes law and man breaks it. God accomplishes by Christ not merely the law but redemption, so that the original promise of blessing flows out to the Gentiles by faith, who had nothing to do with the law.

After faith is come, even the believing Jews are no longer under the law. We have put on Christ. We are not before God as sinners in our sins. He only thinks of us as in Christ. He does not see it in us, because it is put away; but we see it, hate it, judge it, though we know it has been judged in Christ. He puts the saints in the place of promise in this way. They are in Christ, and therefore they are the seed of Abraham (v. 29). All the promises find their centre in Christ Himself. The moment I am in Christ, all the promises of God are mine too, and I am come into the full blessing of all the promises of' God. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

If I put myself practically under the law, my conscience gets tortured. The more spiritual I am to discern its holiness, the more miserable I become. One proof that a soul is converted is when he feels and says God ought never to give up His holiness, even if he is destroyed by it. It is nothing but pride for a sinful man to go about to establish his own righteousness. Can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? This unbelief hinders the soul from resting on the accomplishment of the promise. If the curse had not been borne, it would have been upon you; but it has been borne, and there is no curse to the believer. Such is your position, because you have put on

Christ. If you attempt to mix anything of your own with Christ, you will always be unhappy; besides, it is unholy to think of it, because it is not acknowledging that in "your flesh dwelleth no good thing." We are not our own at all; we are bought with a price. Whenever a man thinks he has a right to do anything of his own will, he is robbing God. We should render to Him our bodies; it is our reasonable service.

After promise the law was added, and this was, till the Seed, Christ, came. This is very important indeed for us to be settled in. We never shall have solid settled peace till the whole man is ploughed up and searched out, and we get clearly to see that we have no strength in us. Then we are cast over on accomplished righteousness in Christ, on nothing less than God's own Son made sin for us. To know this puts me down in the dust; but it gives me unchangeable peace. And what then is the claim of Christ on us? We ought to realise that we are given up to Him, body, soul, and spirit, even as we are purchased by His blood.

Not Law But Promise

Galatians 3

The way in which the law is placed in contrast with promise and faith in Galatians 3 is very striking. It is not merely that man is a sinner and that there is a judgment (a truth so solemnly revealed in Scripture), nor is it the operation of the law, experimentally known as spiritually bringing death into the conscience, as we find it opened out in Romans 7. The law and promise in grace are brought before us as two systems, both of God, but contrasted in their nature and opposite in their effects, and absolutely exclusive one of the other; existing at separate times, though the second could not disannul the first, and whose co-existence, as the ground of man's standing with God, is in their very nature impossible. Both are positive dealings and revealed ways of God with man, each of its own kind. Man had been turned out of paradise for sin, and he is an outcast from God and all intercourse with Him, such as he once had upon earth. This is his state; but it is no special revelation to him in that state. A judgment4 awaits him too. This will hereafter shew God's righteous way with sin, and natural conscience bears the reflex of it within, in spite of all the sinner's efforts to get rid of it. It is to come, however; not a present dealing with man or a revelation by which he is placed in a special relationship with God according to the terms of that revelation. He has to answer as a fallen sinner for his conduct—terrible but righteous truth! but he is in no present revealed relationship with God. Not so where the promise or the law has come in. Then man has as a present thing to do

with God according to the terms revealed by Him. These are of two kinds, as here brought forward— promise and law; only we have to add, that the Seed to whom the promise was made is now come, and has accomplished the work of redemption for the heirs according to promise.

The Galatians were not rejecting the promise or Christ; but they were adding the law to Christ as completing God's will. This it is that the apostle resists, and declares the incompatibility of the two. Not that the law was against the promises (for if a law had been given which could have given life, righteousness would have been by it); but that the one system was in fact opposite in its principle to the other. They were two distinct ways proposed for having life, righteousness, and the inheritance. One brings a curse and nothing else; the other a blessing after God's own heart, and nothing else. One is founded on man's responsibility, the other on God's gift, when man had failed altogether under that responsibility.

The best way I can treat the subject is to follow the contrast the chapter presents, and then unfold, as clearly as I can from Scripture, the positive doctrine on which our present state, as "delivered from the law," is founded.

First, then, as to the contrast, they did not obey the truth as to the cross if they annexed the law to Christ. The law applied to life in the flesh and its obligations. The cross declares its condemnation and end in death, and death to it. They had not received the Spirit by law but by faith. They had had the Spirit, had begun in it when they had not the law at all, and they were now

looking to be made perfect through the latter, but this was by the flesh; for the law supposed flesh to be alive and applied to it. Further, he who shewed the power of the Spirit, and ministered it, did it, not by the works of the law but by the report of faith. But it was admitted by the few that the blessing was in Abraham. But he got it by faith, and was counted righteous by it without any law at all— not only without it, but on a contrary principle. They which are of faith (that is, who stand on this principle before God) are blessed with faithful, that is, believing Abraham. Now the law is not on this principle. The law is not of faith but on the principle of doing—getting the blessing by doing. But that is not faith.

And remark more than this: not only is the blessing by faith, not by law, not on this principle, and the accomplishment by oneself or another of the law, but as many as are on this principle—as many as stand on the ground of their obligation to keep the law—are under the curse. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” The works of the law are not bad works; they are right works, loving God and our neighbour, and not breaking the commandments which forbid sin. But they that are of the works of the law (that is, that are placed or place themselves under the obligation of the law, of doing these works) are under the curse. He does not say he who has broken the law, he who sins, he who has done evil, but he who is of the works of the law, who goes upon the principle of being under its obligation, and bound to accomplish it, is under the curse.

Nor is there a hint of any one’s keeping it for us, so that we should not be under the curse when we are under

the law. All that are of the works of the law are under the curse; because, according to its declaration, everyone is so that has not kept it. And no man under it has kept it, for he is in flesh; and this is not subject to it nor can be. He must get off this ground to escape its curse. But this can be only by death. The Jew was under it, and all else would have been condemned as lawless had they not come under it then; but, for every one who believed of those who were, Christ took the curse on the cross. It is not pretended that He kept it for them, so that the curse was not needed for their breaking it, because another had kept it for them, for then He had not needed to bear its curse. No: the curse of its head remained there and was borne on the cross; and thus they were redeemed from it, and then, the whole system of God under law being closed and the middle wall of partition broken down, the blessing of Abraham (which was of faith) could flow forth on the Gentiles who had faith. It could not till then. While God maintained the obligation of the law as a dispensed system among men, the Gentile must have submitted to it and become a Jew as to law if not as to race, he must have submitted to its obligation, while God maintained it. But the dispensation of law had now closed by the death of Christ, and the blessing of the promise by faith could flow forth to them who believed.

This brings forward another point in the argument: the historical part of it. A subsequent act cannot disannul, even amongst men, a solemnly confirmed covenant. Now God had given the promise to Abraham without law, and confirmed it to Christ 430 years before the law came. This therefore could not disannul the previously confirmed promise, nor alter its terms. It could not be

disannulled, and it could not be added to. It must be fulfilled as it was given.

Now God had given the inheritance to Abraham by promise. But if of law it was not of promise. And mark, this is the truth for us. It is not of law, not on that principle. If it be, it is not of promise. But as given of God, it is of promise. The two systems are contradictory in their nature. The inheritance could not be by both; but it was first given by promise, and the law coming after could not make this of none effect.5 What was then the use of the law? It was added to produce transgressions—not to produce sin, for sin was there. But law made sin transgression. It entered that the offence might abound. Sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful. But it could not interfere with the promise to the Seed. The promise was prior to and independent of it. It was added, till the Seed should come. This is a very distinct and clear statement. Putting man under law was a temporary expedient, though a most righteous one, and founded on principles of everlasting truth in itself; namely, human responsibility and a perfect rule for it. But it was a principle which with a sinner (and man was a sinner), could only bring a curse, and was meant to bring it, not as the final or abiding way of God, but to bring man’s position clearly out by raising the question how righteousness was to be found or obtained. The law was given by Moses. The law was right, essentially right; but it was after the promise, and until the Seed. It was never God’s way of man’s obtaining righteousness. It was addressed to sinners. It convicted of sin and made it exceeding sinful. Righteousness is not by law, nor is life, nor the inheritance.

If indeed a law had been given which could have given life, then righteousness would have been by it. But no such law was given. Righteousness could not be and was not by it. Scripture has concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. The doing that man may live, the keeping of the law, is not the way of righteousness. It was used for a time to bring man more fully under the conviction of sin. Righteousness never was, is not, and never will be, for sinful man on this principle. He was tried under it for a time, to bring sin clearly out; and then the promise resumed its indefeasible rights in the person to whom the promise was made; and righteousness and the inheritance stood on entirely other ground. Before faith came (that is, the principle of Christianity and grace), the Jews were kept under law, shut up to the faith to be revealed. After faith came, they are not under the schoolmaster—not under law at all—delivered from it—hence not held to it as an obligation; for I cannot be obliged by that which I am not under. Nor has another to fulfil therefore the obligation because I have failed to fulfil it, because we are not under it. We are sons, that is, in direct communion with the Father; if we are taking the pedagogue's orders as between us and Him, we are not.

Such then is the elaborately reasoned out contrast between these two ways of God: law, dealing with the responsibility of man; and promise, declaring the gift of God. The one claims, and is founded on the principle of doing on man's part, so as to make out righteousness in man, of which the law was the measure; the other is characterised by believing God, and that being the ground of counting a man righteous, not his doing, or

responsibility to do, anything. With this the law in its nature could have nothing to do. It is not of faith, but of doing, whoever does it. But we are not righteous on this principle. They are both ways of God, both right, but one brings a curse, the other the blessing. In a word they are contradictory in nature and in principle. Further, they were mutually exclusive of each other. The promise could not be disannulled nor added to by any after act. The law was merely added temporarily till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. When once the system of faith came, those previously under law were no longer so at all, nor consequently responsible to or under obligation in respect of it. It was no longer at all presented as a ground on which man had to stand with God. If we6 are not under obligation to it ourselves, no one had to undertake to fulfil it in our stead, to make good our failures under it, for we are not under it. The righteousness of God is come in.

Let us turn now to God's ways in promise. The earliest revelation of God (on the fall) was a declaration that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was not a promise to Adam, but a revelation of another than him, who should destroy the power which he, by his unfaithfulness, had let in to rule on the earth. On this, individual faith could rest, and we know did rest, in the Enochs and the Noahs; we may trust in Adam himself and many others of his posterity. Still the world grew desperate in wickedness, and God determined to destroy what He had created, and brought in the flood upon this world of the ungodly. The world began anew, and alas! it was soon seen, sin with it. But God would not allow that they should be unrestrained. Man built the tower to have his own way, and not be dispersed; and God

confounded his language and dispersed the race, forming countries, and tongues, and languages. Mighty hunters there might be, and have been; but a divided world and antagonistic races. But the world had gone away from God and, as we know from Joshua, had begun to worship demons. And now Abraham is called. There was no law, no condition, no righteousness, no requirement of it. He is called to break with and quit the providential order which God Himself had established in the world, his country, and his kindred, and his father's house. Country was that new thing of God's establishment, which His judgment on Babel had formed —God's order in the world. Abraham was to leave it; not to act against it, but to be apart from it for God in the world. This was a most important point, and becomes so the more we examine it. It takes Abraham up on ground independent of the common responsibility of men. The world lay under it; sin was there, and a judgment to come. Grace here works. Abraham is called out from among them, and separated from them, and positive revealed blessing is deposited there, and entirely and exclusively there.

This was an immense fact. It is not man responsible and liable to judgment. It is not merely grace working, so that a man may have, individually, share in divine life, and divine favour, and heaven; but one called publicly out from the whole system of God, and made the head of a race (now a spiritual one), and all blessing deposited in him, and wholly in him. This was a new thing on the earth. In a general way one may look at Israel as the natural seed according to the promise, but the details of that part of the history need not detain us here. They

were according to flesh, and the seed of promise was definitely to be accounted heir.

But it is this principle itself which is important. Grace calls out one to be the head of a new race, in which the blessing of God was to be "the blessing of Abraham." This had nothing to do with judging on the footing of responsibility; or any rule or measure given on which that judgment was to be founded. This may be a deeper motive for faithfulness and service than any other, but so it is. But it is one called out from a responsible world which is under judgment for its failure not to give an exact rule by which that failure can be measured, but to set sovereign blessing in him, and by subsequent revelations, in his Seed. As Adam was the head of a sinful and condemned race, Abraham was the head of a blessed race, of whom it could be said, "now are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise." This, by grace, will be true even of Israel in its day; they tried to have it by the works of the law and so lost it, but God will, for all that, faithful to Himself, accomplish His promises. But this for the moment I pass by.

It suffices to point out here the position of Abraham, called to be the deposit and stock of promise and blessing, "Get thee out of thy country and out of thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, to a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Blessing characterised his calling. He is blessed and a blessing. Blessing is measured out by dispositions towards him. And he is the one source of blessing to all the families of the earth. This is a very

remarkable position and a most blessed, and, in its character, a divine one, which we shall do well to consider as regards ourselves. I will suggest a word or two in a moment. But, remark here how divine a one it is in its nature. God is blessedness in Himself. It characterises Him. He is the source of it to all who have any. This was, derivatively, just Abraham's place. He was made blessed, in this sense had blessedness on the earth, distinctively and especially so; he was the source of it to all the families of the earth. If there was a curse, it was only for enmity to this. This is a most precious, and in character divine, place for a creature; a creature blessed no doubt, and quickened of God; but thence only the more precious because the more real.

Thus the place of blessing is definitively settled as of pure grace without law—grace abounding over the whole sinful condition of man, and flowing from and measured by the self-originated fulness of divine love, of which it was the display and revelation. This is what characterised it in Abraham— grace putting man in a divine place of blessing.

But this comes more distinctly and blessedly out when we proceed to consider the way in which it was accomplished.

It was confirmed7 to the Seed, that is, to Christ; and that, as we shall see, by an obedience and in a way far beyond all legal obedience which might have fulfilled the duties incumbent on the first Adam, and been contained authoritatively as duties in the law. The promise was given to Abraham in chapter 12. It is confirmed to the seed in chapter 22, after Isaac had been offered up. Abraham was called to surrender all he loved, all the

promises where God had deposited them; for in Isaac his seed was to be called; an entire surrender of self—"thine only son, whom thou lovest"—and of all even that God had given him, as founded on life in this world, in the seed he had received of God according to promise. He must reckon on God alone and resurrection, and give up all in life down here. And he does. Isaac is surrendered in devotedness to God, and God trusted for promise which must be in resurrection. This was all out of the very reach and nature of law. It was not the claims of obedience to legal righteousness in man, but absolute surrender of self and righteousness and all to God. All was offered up in sacrifice. Law obeyed is life accomplishing its duties. This was the surrender of self and promises and all to God—the sacrifice of all to God. It was the well-known figure of Christ's offering up Himself (only in Him it was really accomplished) and rising from the dead. Then, not till then, the promise was confirmed to the seed. That is, the promise was confirmed to Christ on the ground of an obedience infinitely above all law, and as having passed through death (and law has power over a man only as long as he lives), and as risen from the dead, and to us in Him.

In the meanwhile (but 430 years after the promise, as we have seen, and hence leaving it in full vigour) the law came in, and required human obedience to the exact rule of righteousness: in a word, it declared (under pain of God's curse for failure) all that man ought, as such, to be and to do. It came in by the bye to bring out transgression, it made sin exceeding sinful, and, from the inability of man to establish righteousness for himself before God, it brought him under the curse. The authority of this righteous claim could not be

disregarded, and Christ bore its curse; that, while maintaining its authority, the curse brought by it might be removed. His death, which met and satisfied its curse, took from under it all that are in Him. For they died with Him in that in which they were held, and rose in the liberty in the which He had made them free, the law having no further claim or dominion over them as risen which it held as long as they lived. But they had died and were now risen, to bring forth fruit to God, in connection with their new husband, Christ risen from the dead. Hence too sin had not dominion over them, because they were not under law but under grace.

Thus man's righteousness, which, if there had been any, would have been under law, was out of the question. The curse had been the fruit of the trial. The Scripture had concluded all under sin.

But the obedience of Christ, spotless and blameless under law as He had been, went infinitely farther than law, and indeed was on another principle. It was the voluntary surrender of self and life to glorify God. That self and life, which law would direct, and the love of which became the measure of love to others, was wholly given up. The curse and wrath due under law and to sin were undergone. "Therefore," could Christ say, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Of this the law knew nothing. It was absolute obedience in the total surrender and devotedness of self to God's glory and purposes and our salvation. And God was glorified in Him: God was, and hence God has glorified Him in Himself. And man is entered into the glory which the Son had with the Father before the world was, and is entered righteously. God has displayed His righteousness in setting Christ, the

man who had glorified Him, at His right hand. Thus divine righteousness is established in giving Christ the glory which He deserved through His work for us. But then we must be in this place of glory, for it was for us He did it, and He must see of the travail of His soul in bringing into His own glory those whom His Father had given Him. We wait therefore for the hope of righteousness by faith, the hope that belongs to righteousness; and what that is we see in the glory into which Christ has entered, where the righteousness of God has placed Him as man.

Thus grace could reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It was a glorifying God in the giving up Himself, and that to death, and the curse, and wrath, through the Eternal Spirit offering Himself up without spot to God, and God in righteousness setting Him in glory at His right hand. Thus man took this place in righteousness, according to the purpose of God, we being made sharers therein by grace; and now, having seen the full result in glory founded on righteousness through Christ, let us see what the blessing is.

It is the fruit of God’s promise to Christ, the Seed. Whatever God’s heart could do to shew His love, and that, His love to Christ, and according to the claim Christ had on it, that is the blessing. God, in whom is blessedness, was shewing how He could bless, as in Ephesians 2, that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Christ was the One to be blessed. He was the Seed to whom the promise was made. He was the One who—sin being come in—had established God’s glory in love, majesty, righteousness, truth, inevitable

judgment, salvation, as no innocence could have given occasion to; yet at His own cost. Hence man is in glory. The blessing is the Father's love to Christ, and the glory in which He is, in virtue of that and of having glorified His Father. Such is the place into which we are brought by faith. He in Himself, in Person, the only-begotten, is the Firstborn—as re-entered into glory—of many brethren. He brings many sons to glory.

This blessedness we have in the present sense of divine love; the love of God shed abroad in our hearts; God dwelling in us and we in Him; the consciousness, through the Holy Ghost, that we aie in Christ and Christ in us; in the consciousness that we are sons, through the Spirit of His Son sent forth into our hearts, crying, Abba Father; the looking for glory, to be like Him and with Him; the consciousness of the Father's love resting on us as on Jesus. More than the promise of the Father to Christ, shewing His love to the Son, and having our place in Him before the Father and enjoying His own love, we cannot think of. God has made Christ as Man, and us in Christ, the pattern of what His blessing in love is. As it was said of Joseph, "In thee shall Israel bless, God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh."

And this fulness of love constituting our blessedness flows forth in love in the expression of it to brethren; and to sinners it flows out. "Thou shalt be a blessing; and in thee shall men be blessed."

How brightly does the consciousness of this shine in Paul! "Would to God that not only thou, but all who hear me this day "(there was overflowing uncalculating love) "were" — what?— "not only almost but altogether such as I am, save these bonds." There was the consciousness

of such blessedness that the best thing divine love could wish was that they might be as he was. Oh what true consciousness of blessedness, what genuine love! Oh, how different in spirit, temper, tone, foundation in righteousness, divine outflowings of grace, the love of God satisfying itself in good, from “Do this and live,” were it even done!

There is righteousness, but not man’s, under the law, whoever has accomplished it, but God’s in setting Christ at His right hand in glory, who had given up Himself and all promised, as come in the flesh, for God the Father’s glory, according to the everlasting purpose of blessing and displaying Himself in blessing; of which Christ, the promised Seed, first of all was the object; then, if we are Christ’s, we also are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise. And how the divine Person of Christ comes out to view in this! For God, in a certain sense, was debtor to Him for the maintenance of His glory—yea, for the only full bringing it out in redemption. So that, as we have seen, He righteously enters into it as man. But to whom can God be debtor in any sense? Who can make a “therefore” for God to act upon or love? But Christ in the divine counsels has.

I conclude, then, that life, righteousness, and the inheritance do not come under law, nor by the law: I cannot have righteousness by it, nor be under it at all, if I have it by Christ according to promise. Nor have I righteousness by any one’s fulfilling it for me, for then it would be under and by the law; but if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

4 It is well to remark here, that judgment is always and necessarily condemnation, whenever it is entered into so

as to pronounce on the acceptance, or otherwise, of a man in consequence of his conduct. For this reason God cannot judge His own work, as He created it. It would be judging His own competency as a workman or Creator. He saw it all, and behold it was very good. Now, if man has left his first estate and got away into sin by self-will, and has thus given occasion to the existence of judgment on him, what can judgment be but condemnation? That is, there is no judgment if man be not departed from the state God put him in. If he be, judgment as such must be condemnation. What grace may do is another thing. Hence the really awakened conscience says, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

5 The following verses, which often perplex readers, when viewed in connection with this are easy to understand. God is one: the promise was to Christ the Seed. Its fulfilment depended therefore only on God. In the case of the law there was a mediator, which implied another than God, who was also to get the inheritance on the terms of his own obedience. Hence it did not rest simply on God’s faithfulness to His promise, but on man’s obedience.

6 It may be well for the reader to remark that “we “is often used for Jews here as in other parts of scripture. They were under the curse of the law. Christ was made a curse for them (Jewish believers) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles. The legal curse being done away, which was connected with Jews and the law, the original promise could flow freely out on Gentiles that we (Jewish and Gentile believers) might receive the Spirit.

Hence in verse 23 he says, We were kept under the law; but in verse 26, Ye are all the children of God, for the Gentiles were too. The law had run up to the cross and the curse, but could go no farther. The promise and blessing flowed forth on Jew and Gentile through faith. Hence the statement of verses 27-29. So in the beginning of Ephesians 2. If any one now puts himself under law, they put themselves under the curse; for the law is not an arbitrary enactment, but a real moral one, so that its judgment is felt to be righteous in the conscience. But then it is condemnation and death, and there is no hope at all. They are fallen from grace. Christ is become of no effect for them. iax is He from fulfilling the law for us when we break it, that, for huri who is under it, Christ is become of no effect.

7 To Christ, not “in Christ.”

Our Portion In Christ

Ephesians 1

Part I

There are two ways in which we may look at man in relation to God: first, in responsibility; second, in the counsels of God.

It is important to know the full value of the work of Christ, and our present relationship. All duties and right affections flow from relationships; the Christian lives in those new relationships into which God has brought him. We find in this chapter our relationship to the Father as children (the individual relationship has the first place in Ephesians); then comes in the unfolding of the unity of the body of Christ.

God put man originally in a certain relationship with Himself in innocence; that relationship—the claim of it—must subsist. You cannot destroy God's title by human sin, but on man's side the relationship is gone and broken. Wickedness on one side does not destroy rights or claim on the other.

As to the history of God's ways and dealings, man's responsibility has closed at the cross; it is not a time of probation now, though the individual is proved. In the same cross Christ perfectly glorified God Himself. We find the two things quite distinct: responsibility; and the intentions of God before any responsibility was in question. This epistle takes up the side of these counsels.

In Philippians we are looked at as running the race through the wilderness with our eye fixed on the glory. In Ephesians we are seen as brought completely to God and sent out into the world to shew God's character. In Romans we see the responsibility side simply, the sinfulness of man, what man is without law and under law, and the justification of a sinner. The counsels of God are only just touched on in the verse, "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Man is proved to be a sinner; the blood of Christ is that which cleanses us. There we get responsibility, as also justification—not in Ephesians. God has no need to justify the new creation.

In 2 Timothy I:9 we see that what was before the world began is now made manifest. We have the same thing in Titus 1. This thought of God is very distinct.

In Genesis we begin with the responsible man. All depended on man's responsibility; but nothing could be more complete than his fall. He distrusted God and believed Satan. Distrust of God is the essence of all sin. There is no way back to innocence. We may get divine righteousness, and may be made partakers of His holiness; but we shall never have innocence again. Christ was "the seed of the woman." All God's thoughts and counsels and plans were around the second Adam. Promises there were, and prophecies clearer and clearer; but what God was actually doing up to the cross was trying man on his responsibility.

Before the flood testimony was given; but there were no particular dealings of God. Then the world became so bad that God had to bring in the flood. When God begins

again with Noah, he got drunk. The world subsequently went into idolatry.

Adam was the head of a fallen race, Abraham was the head and father of all that believe. When God had scattered the people of Babel, from among them He takes a people for Himself; then, having chosen Abraham, He gives him promises. The apostle in Galatians shews how the promises to Abraham could be neither disannulled nor added to. The law came in by the bye. To Abraham there was not a question of righteousness—no "if." The law was the perfect measure of what man ought to be. Before ever Moses came down from the mount the Israelites had made the golden calf. At last God says, "I have yet one Son," one thing more that I can do. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him.

Thus in the cross the history of responsibility (not individual responsibility) was closed. Sin had been fully brought out. Man was lawless; then, when the law came, there was the transgression of the law; and when the blessed Lord in wondrous love and grace came into the world and went about doing good, they could not stand God's presence. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? "Stephen gives us the summary—prophets slain, the Just One killed, the law broken, the Holy Ghost resisted. "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ interceded for them on the cross, "They know not what they do," and the Holy Ghost in answer to this says by Peter, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it."

The history of Adam, the moral history, is closed; that is, what we are. In all this we have God's history of man's

responsibility. I find in the cross that I am in a condition which God must reject. Christ has come to be made sin, and a work has been done according to God's holy and righteous nature. If I look up to God now, I find no sin in His presence; I go there by the work of Christ, and God cannot see the sins. Not only has Christ died for my sins, but I have died with Him, I have done with the nature. First, I find the putting away of sins, and along with that I have died with Christ. Christ did much more than this at the cross. Sin was in the world, evil was rampant, Satan reigning, God's glory in the dust, the earth full of violence (whatever the signs of wisdom). It was not merely a question of my sins; but God was compromised in a sense. Christ then was Jehovah's lot.

Suppose God had cut off Adam and Eve, there would have been righteousness, but no love. Suppose He had spared every one, there would have been no righteousness. If I look at the cross, there is righteousness against sin—never such displayed before. And there I learn the perfect love of God. At the cross I see God perfectly glorified in a Man, His own blessed Son, but still a Man. There is a man in the glory of God. Not only is there one man out of paradise, but another Man is in paradise. The work, by virtue of which He is sitting there, can never lose its value. Now the counsels of God can be brought out. If sin is cleared away, why should I be in the same glory as the Son of God? We do not get the one without the other; but nothing can be the result of that work on the cross less than the glory. There are two things: not merely are my sins cleared away, but I stand in the light as God is in the light, as He is. This we are in Christ; and we are to be "conformed to the image of his Son." Now we are brought as Christ

and like Christ. He is the “firstborn among many brethren.” “Tell my brethren that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God.” This is our present place. “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” But, says the Lord, you need not wait till then: “to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

O how the things of this world are dimmed by this that we are loved as Christ is loved! What a blessed place this is! Christ has taken all on Him as man, that we may be for ever with Him. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [a remarkable expression, in the best place, in contrast to Judaism] in Christ Jesus.” There is not one possible blessing into which Christ has entered as man that we are not brought into. Christ never gives away; He brings us into enjoyment with Himself: “not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” This is perfect love.

Have you ever thought of God’s thought about you, that you are “to be conformed to the image of his Son?” “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” This cannot fail. The Lord presses on our hearts that He brings us into association with Himself. “Then are the children free.” He “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” God gives us His own nature, “holy and blameless before him in love.” He puts us in this place answering perfectly to His nature, and with a nature to enjoy it. We are in Christ: this is God’s thought. I get the place of a son with the Father. Servants would not do for Him; He takes us as sons. We are “accepted in the beloved”: “in Christ” would not do

here. “I was daily his delight.” In this One, who was always God’s eternal delight, we are accepted.

Have you the thought of God’s heart about your blessing? Is the thought you have that you are loved as Christ is loved? Are you able to see God’s heart as He has revealed it? Where shall I get what is in God’s heart? Is it in my heart? If the angels want to know what love is, it is in us they see it. Is this the way you think of God? We soon find out what poor creatures we are. Quite true; but can you say, There is where God has set me? This is the very thing that makes us see our own utter nothingness. The reasonings of the Holy Ghost are always downward from God to us; the reasonings of conscience are always upward from us to God. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” The Holy Ghost reasons downward: is this the way we reason? If you are naughty, do you feel you are a naughty child? You cannot be a naughty child, sad as this may be, unless you are a child. If I am a child of God, I am bound to live like one. He expects children’s affections, children’s duties. Have you given up the first Adam entirely, and found your place in the second Adam, “accepted in the beloved”?

Part II

I may remark that it is our positive place before God that lets us into the counsels of God. There is no real knowledge of these counsels except as we stand in our place before God. Knowledge that puffs up is always defective and sterile; it is a statue, not life. There is nothing really connected with it in the mind, when it puffs up. There is a certain place for the believer before

God; into this the heart has to get. We are made partakers of the divine nature. Then all these thoughts and counsels of God come to be precious, not as knowledge, but as belonging to the glory of Christ. “I … beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness.” Where our own souls are before God, according to God, of course there is fellowship and communion with God. Activity of course, even right activity, tends to bring self in. Take Paul: there was danger of his being puffed up; and the Lord sent a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. When he came down from the third heaven into the ordinary activities of life, there was danger. The thorn was a hindrance to him in his ministry, that the power of Christ might be made manifest in him. The moment he finds what it was, he says, “I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Christ chooses things that are weak that no flesh may glory in His presence.

Taking the general principle, if I enter into the knowledge of divine things, it must be along with God. Love is never puffed up; love likes to serve. I am thus blameless that I may have communion. We cannot have practically a more important truth than that all real divine knowledge is found by being in the presence of God; and whenever we are in the presence of God, there must be lowliness of heart and mind and spirit. God’s presence is always a holy thing. There is no true knowledge, and no true communion unless the soul is in that state before Him. There is no more dangerous thing than a certain apprehension of divine things without the soul learning them with God, as we see in Balaam and in

Hebrews 6, where you get all the wondrous things of Christianity poured on the mind and natural heart. This is dangerous even if there is life, and fatal if there is not. The revelation of the counsels of God is founded on knowledge of our place with God. The eye cannot bear light from God except so far as we are right with God. Having brought us into the blessed consciousness of this place, where we are at home with God, now He can unfold His counsels, as to Christ Himself. Having brought us there in grace, He can trust our hearts with all His plans. There is no real divine knowledge of the counsels of God except so far as we are personally with Him. “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? “He reveals to Abraham what He is going to do, not with Abraham, but with Lot.

All flows from the soul being consciously in the place where it is set, in Christ. He can then trust us with the knowledge of His will; He can trust the sons of the family with the family affairs.

Christ was a true real man in this world: was He occupied with the interests of His family, or the interests of man? He was subject to His parents. There was in Him perfect obedience, perfect confidence, and—what is so hard for us— perfect waiting. He gave Himself for our sins; He says, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” This is not merely an outward thing. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Christ was a dying sacrifice. The Christian is to be a living sacrifice: this is to be the whole life of the Christian. We are set at liberty by the power of the life of Christ, and the Holy Ghost is in us, and then we yield ourselves to God. We cannot yield ourselves of ourselves; but the moment we are risen with Christ from the dead, we have

the power of the Holy Ghost. Suppose a child is exceedingly anxious to go and see something, if his father desires him to go, there is an instance of perfect liberty and obedience also at the same time. It is a “law of liberty” to us; the new man having the mind of God, its delight is to do the will of God. We do not belong to anything in this world, but only to God. I have no duty that does not belong to a man who has died and is alive again. Blessed path of liberty it is, but a path of liberty to one who has no object but Christ! This is the Christian’s place, entirely separated to God. If I am my own, I am a poor lost sinner (Christ never called Himself His own); we are bought with a price, and we belong to God. When in that case, He can open out to us all His wisdom and prudence; “we have the mind of Christ.” Thus I first get Christ’s own place; and this is exceedingly blessed, because it puts us into our place. Our calling is what we are towards God. Remember you do not get dispensed glory, until as a first thing you get to God. Christ offers Himself up to God; you have a life to God down here, and then a death to God, before you have the glory. Our relationship to God Himself comes before any acquaintance with the dispensed counsels of God. Responsibility and the counsels of God are distinct. I was a poor sinner: but I find, through the work of Christ, that all that was against me is gone. God’s counsels and plans have nothing to do with man’s responsibility. When man had come to the point of positive hatred against God in killing Christ, then the counsels of God were brought out, the mystery hidden in God. All this plan and counsel of God were before ever the world was. Christ in His rejection does the work which is the foundation of everlasting righteousness.

Everything that concerned the Person of Christ was revealed before in the Old Testament, but not these counsels of God. You may find the ascension, resurrection, gifts—all that concerns the Person of Christ—but nothing of union with Him, of being members of His body, joint-heirs with Him: all these counsels were hidden. I was a poor sinner, I must have my responsibility met; but this does not say that I should be in the same glory as the Son of God. Not merely has He cleansed our sins, but He has glorified God. Man goes into the glory of God because Man (He was more than man, of course) has perfectly glorified God. We are loved as Christ is loved: the world will know it when He appears. Ah! if we only saw where the Christian is placed! It is a terrible thing to see all this rest on the surface. Are you conscious that the Father loves you as He loves Jesus?

The “fulness of times “is spoken of here, not eternity; in eternity we find God all in all. “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.” This is the thought and purpose of God that everything He has created He will bring under Christ’s moral power as Man. He created all things, we read in Colossians. He is going to reconcile the state of things: but we are reconciled. The place of the Christian is—absolutely reconciled to God in a world that is not reconciled at all. Everything in heaven and earth will be reconciled. If you want to go as Christians through the world, you must go as absolutely reconciled to God among things not reconciled. You have nothing to do with “things under the earth” here: in Philippians they bow at the name of Jesus. The scene He created He will

perfectly restore. His first title is Creator; His second is Son—He is the heir of all things.

Actual creation is always referred to the Son and Spirit — God, of course. Man is to be set over it all, set at the head of everything in the fulness of times. As we get into Christ's place in our calling, we get into Christ's place in our inheritance. Whatever He created as God, He inherits as man.

"By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified "; the work is complete and finished for His friends, and He is waiting till His enemies be made His footstool. When that comes, He leaves the Father's throne and takes His own. He who created all things is Son and heir of all things, and He inherits them as man. We are joint-heirs with Him. In the thoughts of God, His Son having become a man, we have become completely associated with Christ. He went alone through the earth; but, the moment redemption was completed, He says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." How thorough is this association! Christ became a man, and in perfect love He brings us to everything He has as man. If He takes everything in heaven and earth, we are joint-heirs with Him (as Eve was with Adam), members of His body. When Mary Magdalene comes to the grave, He says, "Tell my brethren that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

God's heart is set upon me. It is the fixedness of heart on an object, but besides that I have the confidence that He never takes His eye off me. We get divine love in the nature of God, and, besides that, love set on an object. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." My inheritance is in Christ,

because God has associated me with the Lord Jesus. See the way the apostle dwells on and repeats this word “in”!

If I have the love of Christ in my heart, can I look on a world that is under Satan’s power, and not be a man of sorrows? We have joy through Christ, if you take that side. If a holy being is in a world of sin, he must suffer; if a loving person is in a world of misery, he must suffer.

It is not that the glory is the highest thing, for it concerns self. At the transfiguration Moses and Elijah were in the same glory as Christ; but more than that, a bright cloud overshadowed^them. Jehovah was in the cloud; and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son.” When they went into the cloud, the disciples were frightened. The cloud, so to speak, answered to the Father’s house.

This chapter invariably refers to God, His calling, and His inheritance.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ”—hoped before He appears. The world will get a portion under Him, but we a portion with Him. While we must be born of God, there is in the proper sense of the word no glad tidings in telling a man that he must be born again. The thing revealed in the gospel is, that the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared; there is remission of sins and full salvation. Have you never been in God’s presence? Were you fit to be there? The veil is rent: we are just as much in God’s presence as if already in heaven; we shall see it more clearly then. I have everlasting life, I have divine righteousness, because I am in Christ. I am brought into God’s presence, and I am not there without being fit

through the work on the cross. We have not got anything of the inheritance as yet, but we are sealed with the Holy Ghost. The blood of Christ having cleansed me from all sin, the Holy Ghost can take His place because I am clean. “Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?” What if the apostle were to write this to you? Being born again, I have life; when sealed, I have God dwelling in me. The Holy Ghost can take His place as a witness that in God’s sight I am as white as snow. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” Oh! beloved, what a place the Christian is in! If you confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God is dwelling in you. How are you treating the divine guest? “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed.”

It is not merely quickening, which was from the beginning: but when there is life, the Holy Ghost becomes the seal. I do not want an earnest of God’s love. He loved me so perfectly that He gave His Son for me. His is a love proved in the death of Christ, and known in present consciousness. The Holy Ghost is the earnest of the inheritance. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Do not you be looking into your heart to find if He is there. Imagine a child inquiring if he is a child! Look if you are walking up to that. “We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Do you believe in the truth that “Jesus is the Son of God”? “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” But “they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.”

The apostle's prayer here is to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," that the saint might know what He has wrought, and would do for them.

Do you believe that Christ has put you in the same place with God as He is in Himself? We are in Him, we shall be with Him, and like Him, and He gives us the knowledge of it now.

Have your hearts gone back, when accepted, to look at this model? Have your hearts burned within you as you have seen Him, and talked with Him, and have you said "His path is mine?" Has it possessed your souls? This is a matter of daily diligence and conflict. The time will soon come when we shall say, of all that has not been Christ in our lives and ways, "That was all lost."

The Panoply Of God

Ephesians 6

One great thing in Christianity is, that it brings us back to God. Not only have we mercies from God, providential and the like, but we are brought to God. Towards the Jew God had a veil before His face, and He said, “I dwell in the thick darkness”; and once a year, on the day of atonement, the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat; but now once and for ever sin is put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and we are brought into the very presence of God. Good and evil being known, the question between good and evil had to be settled before God. The redemption of the cross brings us out of the evil—from the evil to Himself. God’s Son suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God. The consequence of this is that the whole life of the Christian is to go on with God—every day becoming better acquainted with God— everything going on in the presence of God. All our ways are elevated by this. If only a servant, he serves not only his master but Christ; and therefore, if he has a froward master, he can serve him just the same, because it is Christ he serves. All the life of the Christian is perfect liberty, because he is in the presence of God; it is liberty from sin, from fear, from wrath. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. The commonest things in life are raised in their character through service to Christ. The parent must not allow evil in the child, but train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the master to the servant must forbear threatening. In virtue of our place before God, our liberty and

happiness are as perfect and blessed now as they will be hereafter; only the body will be set right then.

Then, after speaking of the common details of life, the apostle rises up to speak of the proper position of the Christian as such—free in all things; but we are to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." He goes on to speak of the whole armour of God. We are supposed, though in conflict, to be in our proper position of blessing with God, standing in the power of redemption, not having to get there. The warfare is to stand when there. Satan's aim is to get us out of that place. There can be no conflict between us and God, but between us and the power of evil. There we fight as being God's army. We are naturally under Satan's power, but redemption brings us into God's army. This was the position of Israel when warring with Amalek: they were on God's side; and He said He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Christ's conflict in Gethsemane was quite another thing. He was enduring, but He was accomplishing redemption too. We have it through Christ, and now have to stand. God can never use our flesh, but Satan always can; there is the difference. He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. The new nature Satan never can touch, but unjudged and undetected flesh he can, causing one to fall. The first and last thing and all through as a question of power is entire dependence. Satan will come in all manner of ways—worship, etc.; and, if the flesh is not judged, he will deceive us by it. The thing is, we want the evil of the flesh detected by the word of God and not by temptation. "The word of God is quick and powerful," etc. There is no good in the flesh. This, when I see how

bad my flesh is, casts me only on God and makes me feel the need of dependence. With our Lord Jesus there was entire dependence, and this is the perfection of a man. With us how different it is! You know how many things you do of your own suggestion, not perhaps knowingly and willingly, but you are betrayed into it.

“To stand against the wiles of the devil”—that is the use of the armour of God.

Christ has overcome, and therefore we have only to resist the devil who will flee. If we resist him, he knows that he has met Christ who has all strength against him, for He has vanquished him. The devil can never touch Christ in you—only the flesh; so, if there is a fall, it is a proof you were walking in the flesh. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood,” etc. The contrast here is between the conflict with men that Joshua led the children of Israel against (flesh and blood as man, not sinful flesh, is meant here). Now we are not fighting with men, but we are Christians fighting with all these mighty beings, whose subtilty we are apt not to detect because they are so elevated— “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in the heavenlies.”

Satan can easily overcome us with his wiles, if we are not found in the strength of Christ. I must have God’s armour. Man’s armour, intellect, or power is nothing in conflict with Satan. Satan used his wiles with Christ, but He answered him with the word of God, and there was no power against it. We must have the whole or complete armour. If I have a breastplate but no helmet for my head, I am assailable at this point. If it is only a matter of theory with me, I shall forget my helmet; but if

I am in the place of dependence, I shall feel my need of it and take care to have it on. Independence makes us careless. If Satan can get a Christian to give an unchristian testimony to the world, he is satisfied. If he can dim the heavenly testimony for Christ here, his object is gained. Christ was God's testimony here. We ought to be so now; and what Satan is striving at now is to dim it. God would have us "able to withstand in the evil day," etc. All this time is an evil day. Though there is darkness in the world, we ought to be light in it. These are peculiar days of evil—heresy, infidelity, etc. So to an individual there are peculiar seasons of bufferings, tossings, exercises, evil days; but to stand is the great thing. We are sitting in unchangeable blessedness before God, but our position in this world is standing. So David sat before the Lord, yet he had to fight the battles of the Lord.

Our salvation is complete and perfect, for we are set down with Him who has by "one offering perfected for ever them who are sanctified"; but we are standing in conflict—just as the poor man out of whom Legion was cast was sent back to his house to tell them how great things the Lord had done for him. The world (Gadarenes) would not have him, and the world will not have us; but we are to be God's army in this world and a witness to them, though they will not have us. It is a question of struggling against Satan while having the flesh in us.

Therefore we need the "loins girt about with truth"—the affections girt up by the power of truth, and not to have all hanging loosely about. It is not merely having and knowing truth that will do. If the loins are girt about with truth, if the heavenly calling has power over you,

you cannot follow the world; your affections will be in heaven, and Satan can have no power with you. The "loins" represent the inward bracing of the man's thoughts and feelings, and affections. All that is going on in the mind needs to be exercised in the truth so as to be girt with it. I can never use truth but in the presence of God, because truth is light, and light makes darkness manifest. Man on a sick bed will shew what is in his heart. There is sincerity there at last, when brought into the presence of God and abstracted from other things. There may have been much profession before, yet nothing but what is real stands before God.

All the perfection of divine life in man we get in Christ, and He is our example. In having on the armour of God we have on what Christ was and had (for example, the "breastplate of righteousness"). All these things which are ours in Christ should be applied to us. Take truth—Christ is the truth and the righteous One. He is my righteousness. But it is here used for conflict against Satan—not for God, but for practical power. I must have it before God first, or I shall not be able to contend with Satan. I am made righteous before God—this is a settled thing; and now I want all that Christ is and has been for my power against the enemy. If a man have a bad conscience, there can be no power against Satan. There must be the "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." The loins must be girt with truth first, and then a man will walk as in the presence of God. There will be a savour of Christ's ways in his character. What a difference there is between a man walking before God, and one walking before men! What a trouble there is to keep things straight for a man walking before men! While one who is walking before God, though in

the presence of men, can leave things quietly to God. The real difference between a mere professor of Christ and a Christian is just this.

“Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” means, not only having peace with God, but walking in the spirit of peace. There is sure to be peace in the spirit of a man who is girt about with truth, and walking in the power of divine righteousness. A man who has been walking with God many years will be more gentle with others than one who has just begun to know Him; he will neither crave things, nor be irritated at evil in another, for his own soul has tasted what the peace of God is, walking with God in the power of it. Even suppose a man has all this on, there is the need of dependence. Independence is sin, and there is need therefore of always being in conflict, and having the undeviating confidence that God is for me.

The thing wanted then is the “shield of faith.” Satan comes and tempts me: Is God for you? How do you know? There are of course different kinds of temptation —not lusts, but questions whether God is for me, come what will. Then the shield of faith is needed. Christ was in an agony in the garden, but He could say, Abba Father, all things are possible to Thee. On the cross, when He said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — “but thou art holy” —God has His place, come what will. We are not to be afraid with any amazement. If Satan succeeds in terrifying a man, he flies, and there is no armour for the back. Of Saul, David said, “the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away” (amongst the Philistines). “The shield of faith” is that by which one is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. At Christ he threw a fiery dart when he said, “cast thyself down.”

Are you quite sure God is for you? Cast yourself down and try. No, says Christ; I know God is for me, I need not try. “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The dart is quenched by the word of God. If the dart of doubt or fear, etc., gets in, you have no power at all.

The moment the heart gets troubled, remember, “if God be for us, who can be against us? “If thoughts arise about yourself, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” God is for us through all, even chastening. If there is an Achan in the camp, God says, I will not go out with you: and they are beaten by a very little city. If God be for us, who against? The “shield of faith” is mentioned after the others, because there cannot be this lively faith (not the certainty of salvation is meant here but practical faith) if sin is allowed, and if the loins are not girt about with truth, etc. Recognising ourselves as a people connected with God, in respect to this power that is in Him, is just faith. Moses might have reckoned on God through all the murmurings of the people.

All this is defensive armour— “the helmet of salvation” also. There is not a single blow aimed by the Christian warrior yet. What is the helmet? God has saved me and will save me. “Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell,” etc. It is a general, broad, full apprehension that all through God will be with me and for me; not only faith in the particular thing, and at the particular time, but as expressed in Romans 8. Nothing can separate from the love of God: therefore I may lift up my head with joy.

Now I can use the word of God offensively, as “the sword of the Spirit”; now I can fight. We ought to be able to confound every enemy, not with man’s wisdom, intellect, and understanding, but in the power of the Spirit. Do others not believe in it? I am not going to give up the sword of the Spirit because you do not think it will cut. I know it will cut, and therefore use it. There is a power and authority felt by the person who uses it. There must be a sense of dependence for this; and therefore prayer, the sense of dependence expressed, is needed—“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Of one it was said that he laboured earnestly in prayer for the saints. This was because of the sense of the conflict from Satan going on with the saints; therefore labour needed watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. If other things come in, I have no power to turn every thing into prayer; therefore watching is needed. Give yourselves to prayer. You are in God’s interests connected with all saints; therefore pray for all saints.

There is nowhere that conflict is so much felt as in prayer: that is where Satan desires to come in.

Verse 19. We should be bold for God in such a world as this. How far are you identified with Christ in the world? And are you careful to avoid everything that dishonours Christ? Whatever destroys Christ’s character before men is really a fall, though it may not be positively gross sin.

It might seem strange at first sight that, in an epistle in which we get the greatest unfolding of the privileges we have as saints, at the same time, conflict is most brought out, where we have specially the relationship of Father

and of the bride, there specially, in conflict, saints are called upon to take the whole armour of God, in order to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. It may seem strange at first sight here to talk of armour, but just where it is needed is such a place; and we never get into conflict till we realise privilege. Mark, it is not conflict of flesh and Spirit, but warfare in heavenly places against spiritual wickedness; not the same as in Galatians, the flesh lusting against the Spirit. Here we are in the new creation, Christ having ascended on high as Head of it, having led captivity captive, and having taken us so thoroughly out of Satan's hands that He can make us vessels of His glory in this world; and that very thing brings us into conflict. If we have hold of this place, which is ours in Christ Jesus, we must reckon on having special conflict. We cannot cross the Jordan without finding the Canaanite and Perizzite in the land.

The wilderness on the other hand tests the heart, but it is not Canaan. There it is not wilderness exercises, it is wrestling against, not flesh and blood, but spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. The subject we had lately was our being dead with Christ and risen with Him, brought into the heavenlies in Him, a most valuable and precious truth to get hold of very distinctly. It is the place of every Christian, but not realised by many. To most one has to speak of the blood on the door-posts rather than of the Red Sea (that is, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ having entirely delivered them out of Egypt).

The whole question of sin was settled by the cross. As man was driven out of the first paradise because sin was completed, he is brought into the second because righteousness was completed, and the whole question of

sin settled by Christ, now sitting at the right hand of God in glory. Not a thing between God and the saints as to sin, but we have them passing through exercises of heart, all in them tested and tried in the wilderness.

Then is the Jordan: passed through death and risen again, they get into the land of Canaan and eat the old corn. “Blessed with all spiritual blessings,” etc. It is a place that is ours in spirit now and shall be realised hereafter. It is the character of the epistle all through true as to our title. But first we find Canaanites in the land. We are sure of our place in Him, but His enemies are not yet all put under His feet; and the very fact of our being there in Him is to put us in conflict with these spiritual enemies. When people speak of Jordan as death and Canaan as heaven, they forget that fighting characterises Canaan. As soon as Joshua comes into the land, a man meets him as captain of Jehovah’s host with a drawn sword. A redeemed people are Jehovah’s host, and so completely Jehovah’s servants, that He uses them to execute His judgments against His enemies. How could they fight Jehovah’s battles with the flesh? If He uses a people, He must have them dead as to the flesh.

Paul does not simply reckon himself dead to sin, but when it was a question of service, it was always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, etc. He kept all that was of Paul completely down, so that to him to live was Christ, and nothing of Paul appeared. We are delivered to death, that the life, etc. What has a dead and risen man to do with the world?

As soon as Jordan is crossed (not only dead and risen, but circumcised, putting off the body of death mortifying the flesh), the old corn of the land is eaten, the reproach

of Egypt being rolled away. We never get circumcision in the wilderness. What have we as dead and risen with Christ, to do with this world? True we have to run across the wilderness to glory; but as one with Christ in heaven, we are the witness and testimony of what a heavenly Christ is in the world that rejects Him. And in maintaining this place, will Satan (do you think) let you alone? Infidelity, superstition, and worldli-ness, these are things by which Satan is seeking to get souls into his power. His wiles are things that puzzle (the cities walled up)—great forms of piety, without the power, as seen in this day. Then we have these instructions for putting on the whole armour of God, in order to be able to fight against spiritual wickedness. We are not to get through in our own strength, and we have to find out what this armour is which we have to be clothed with.

The loins girt with truth is the first thing. Subjection to the word points out our soul's state, and therefore it comes first. There can be no divine activity till the loins are girt about—a common figure in eastern countries, where the long garments are girded up, not to impede. So we get the soul into order through the power of the truth applied, and everything—the thoughts, and intents, and purposes of the heart tested by it. The Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," John 17. We have in the word all the thoughts of God, that can judge and bless man, and Christ is the centre of all. He was the light in the world. He brought out all the darkness in it, and applied the truth to it all. He brought out all that is divine and heavenly in a man, in contrast with all in men.

People think the world is a fine place; but Satan is the prince of it—they do not believe it; but he proved himself

to be so, by bringing all against Christ up to the cross, and he will head up the world against God soon. Death had not been executed up to the cross. The truth, Christ Himself, came into the world, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the truth is effectually applied, we get the loins girded, the whole condition, as it were, tucked up and not trailing, ready for the activity of service. I have to meet Satan, and carry on the Lord's battles, in conflict against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places; my heart is first to be tested, and to be brought into a heavenly world. Christ brought it there, and He says, Is heaven in your heart? I get the revelation of all in me that is against Christ, and all that is heavenly in Christ; my condition is the effect of truth. He was it, I get it from Him. I do not want armour in walking with God— I want arming against Satan.

Next, the breast-plate of righteousness, not righteousness with God, but taking up armour against Satan, my condition of soul and heart being right. My feet walk through the world, shod with the preparation, etc. It is the practical effect of the condition of my heart, and what a blessed condition! It is not selfishness, saying, "I must maintain my rights." But when a soul is at peace with God, he will be meek and lowly, like Christ; he goes out then in the spirit of peace, and carries through the world the character and spirit of Christ. "Peace that passeth all understanding" keeps his heart and mind. How a man full of peace subdues all around him! Christ practically had perfect restful peace; He carried it with Him in all He passed through; in Him we have the fruits of righteousness sown in peace.

First, then we have the loins girt—the truth of God applied —to bring the soul into a right condition;

secondly, practical righteousness (breastplate); thirdly, the feet shod with the gospel of peace. Now, we have to take up the shield of faith. I need not be thinking of self, though it is quite right to judge myself. I am to have practical faith in God. We are not called upon to confess sin but sins, although confessing the sinfulness of my nature, but it is never to be made an excuse for sinning. If I sin, I have failed in keeping my eye on God, and so have failed in keeping sins down, and in keeping the enemy closely shut up. The shield of faith is to have the eye on God, with perfect confidence that He can keep us walking in the light, as He is in it. Satan may do what he pleases, shoot his arrows from his lurking-place; but they cannot break through the shield of faith. The victory has been attained over him by Christ as man. He not only put away sin, but through death destroyed him who has the power of death. We are exhorted to "resist the devil," etc. Flesh does not resist him, and if he is resisted, he knows he has met Christ in us and runs away. It is not a question of the power of Satan, but of faith, of looking to Christ. The fiery darts of Satan never get through the shield of confidence in God; my weakness is just what His strength is made perfect in. What so weak as death? Christ crucified through weakness. What so contemptible to man as the cross? But it is the wisdom and the power of God. When we own ourselves weak, then we have power from God to overcome Satan. He is a most subtle enemy, he knows how to deal with man, and is much cleverer than the wisest of men. Therefore when you see learned and clever men give way to folly, you must remember that Satan is behind it all; they are using his strength, and he is laughing at them. If the shield of faith is down, the fiery darts will get in.

How blessed to know we have Christ to go through everything with, and, having him, all the evil in the world cannot overcome us. It is not “Because I go to the Father, you shall overcome the world”; but “I have overcome it.” Still we have to be overcomers in a world where Satan, as the power of evil, was never more actively employed than at present. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Having full confidence in God, we can hold up the head, because we have for an helmet salvation. First, godliness of walk; second, peace of mind j third, confidence in God and salvation covering him. The believer can now be active. He takes the sword of the Spirit, and fights, shielded from all the attacks of Satan. Now, there can be activity in using the sword of the word.

But we do not always judge ourselves; we do not always look to see whether we are walking in a practical sense of being all for God, so. that God can be all for us when in conflict. The first great thing, if we are to be active for the Lord, is being right with the Lord. Look at Paul, always self-judging, keeping under his body; always completely for the Lord, and the Lord completely for him. Ever in the secret of the Lord’s presence, he got the power of God for service—the strength of God made perfect in his weakness. He was not hindered, or distracted by circumstances, whatever came; he never drew back; he had the secret of the Lord, and could go out in service, according to what His presence and glory required. Herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void, etc.

“Praying always,” etc. We now get the word of God and prayer. Mary sat at the feet of the Lord, and heard His word. Then, in Luke, the disciples say to Him, “Lord,

teach us how to pray”; again, “Men ought to pray always and not to faint.” The apostles appointed deacons to serve tables, that they might give themselves continually to prayer, etc. When the Lord was in an agony of prayer, Peter was sleeping instead of watching, and so went out and denied his Lord, whilst the Lord witnessed a good confession; and when the soldiers came to take Him, He had calm power. If you want to know what prayer is, see the Lord agonising in prayer in Gethsemane: that is prayer—no hurry or bustle, but the soul perfectly calm with God.

Has God given us to be associated with His own interests? Do I not yearn for the conversion of sinners? Do I not yearn to see a saint representing Christ more perfectly? I must go to God about it in earnest prayer and supplication, watching with all perseverance for the answer. The same word that is used for the praying of the Lord in Gethsemane is used by Paul here—agonising in prayer for saints. We get this earnestness in supplication from being in the interests of God, and knowing that His interests have to be carried on in earnest supplication and prayer, watching thereunto. I have to get with God in prayer, if preaching the gospel. Prayer is the expression of entire dependence on His power; not simply asking God about things, but agonising for the answer. People think that the apostle Paul is beyond, sailing over the heads of all others; but what is his language? “I was with you in weakness and many tears.”

Faith goes with God’s affairs to God, so interested with Him about them, that we make them our own. God takes the people delivered by His Son out of the hands of Satan for His own servants, saying, I want Christ to be

glorified on the earth, and you are to do it. We may be poor feeble things, but we have the same interests as Christ, and His strength is made perfect in our utter weakness. What a blessed place to be in! Being made Jehovah's host, to battle against His enemies and Satan. Those in the forefront of the battle need more the whole armour, because more exposed to the fiery darts, and more in the way of the enemy's snares and dangers; those who lag behind are not in the same danger. But more strength will be given to meet and overcome everything, if there is perfect dependence on and faith in God, as in John, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith," 1 John 5:2. But in no place need one be more unceasing in prayer and watchfulness than in the forefront of the battle.

In bearing witness for Christ, we first have the helmet of salvation from Christ. How little we know how to watch unto prayer! Is all that you and I pass through in the day turned into prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto for all saints? Do you find you are continuous in prayer? Do you find your heart going up in earnest agonising supplications for the saints? Nothing I find so difficult, and nothing so tests my heart, as to the right way to think of others, as asking, Is my soul so interested in others that I can have continuous and earnest supplication going up for them? To do so, the soul must be right with God. I must think of myself else, and that stops intercession for others.

It is an amazing thing to walk with God in the light, so as to be able to take up His interests; provided with this armour, which we have to keep on, to stand against Satan. Satan has no strength against those who are faithful to Christ. It is not leaning on human wisdom.

Satan is much cleverer than all the learned men down here. You will always find it is where redemption is not fully rested in that Satan plays all his tricks. If the finished work of Christ were really known, and full and complete redemption rested in, superstition and ritualism would have no ground to stand on; the foundation of it all is, that something has to be done by man to make the soul right with God. If Christ has settled the whole question for me, I do not want any of their means to settle it. The Puseyites can speak beautifully of the incarnation; but they cannot bear to hear of the finished work, or of your place with God being once and for ever settled by redemption. The sophistries of rationalism and infidelity cannot tell on a soul that knows Christ, and has Him dwelling in the heart.

Oh! beloved friends, may the Lord keep us in more entire dependence and unbroken communion with God, ever walking in the presence of God, in the light, till that blessed day, so soon coming, when Christ will rise up and take us to Himself!

Christ And His Reconciliation

Colossians 1

Part 1

There are two ways in which we may approach the gospel of the grace of God: firstly, the conscience convicted, and seeing how God has met the condition of man, as in Romans 1-3; and, secondly, the counsels of God from which it all flows. We may trace Him up from the poor sinner in his need, or we may see the grace from Him flowing down.

In this chapter we have much of God's thoughts about Christ Himself, as in Hebrews 1, where He is presented to us as "heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," etc., "upholding all things by the word of his power," "when he had by himself purged our sins." It begins with this wonderful counsel of God in grace coming to meet the need, notwithstanding all He was in Himself. In the chapter before us in Colossians we have the glory of this work in Christ; then its extent is shewn; and what is so precious is that when we begin at the other end (conscience and the sense of need) we reach the same point; but there is a fulness and a strength gathered in looking at the place and purpose of God from all eternity, beyond what we get from the need of the sinner being met. It is quite needful in whatever way it is brought to us, that the conscience should be reached, because God cannot reveal His glory to un awakened man. Understanding must come through the conscience, as in the case of the woman of Samaria. Her spiritual knowledge was gained through the exercise of

her soul with Jesus. Where there is not a living work in the conscience, there never can be a link between the soul and the living person of the Son of God. This always is the beginning. The word of God reaches the conscience, and sets it in the presence of the living God. He has made that one step essential to the sinner. This woman heard the Lord speaking to herself. That is the all-important thing, and there can be no truth in the soul till then. What is all the Bible worth to me if my soul is a stranger to. God? If we bring in all the purposes of God, then they must bear upon the conscience this way. A sense of God's love to the soul, etc., will never be truly realised till it is apprehended as flowing downwards from His glory.

We will look into these verses which succeed the prayer relating to the saints' growth in grace, etc. (v. 12) (for it is well for sinners to see the state of the saints, if only to know that they are not saints), "Giving thanks unto the Father," etc. Here is the certain settled knowledge of being fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Then we are fit for heavenly glory! This made us fit for that.

(1) The extent and nature of this fitness—made light in the Lord. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light": and there is the full consciousness of it, for there is thanksgiving. The saints themselves have that knowledge and apprehension of being fit. See the condition of the saints— "Delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." The Christian, can say, I was darkness but am now in the place of Christ as to my standing before God.

(2) The means by which we have been brought into this condition: "Through his blood"; and not only

redemption, but the sins forgiven. I was a slave, but am now a redeemed soul in the kingdom of the Son. It is accomplished between Him and the Father; a settled thing in bringing a poor lost sinner and setting him in the presence of God. Had I any part in it? No. He did it through His blood. When we simply believe, we always know it is by Christ's blood we are purged. You may not be sure you are a believer; I do not ask you if you know this: but do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? If the soul rests on Jesus, there is not a cloud; but if on yourself, you may well be uncertain, because you have got into the mud of your own hearts. But in Jesus there is nothing but blessedness: light, nothing but light; every step of His path perfect light. Faith is believing what Christ Himself is; therefore it immediately breaks out in this passage about the glorious object, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." There are distinct parts of Christ's glory here brought out. The Lord Jesus created all, and therefore He is the Head of all; not only as Adam having dominion, and everything brought to him to name, but "by him were all things created"; and He must be above everything and everybody: "dominions, principalities, powers," etc. Then there is another character of headship in verse 18: "Firstborn from the dead." None could go lower than death, but we see Him going down into it, and rising up from it, and He fills all things. Everything is created by Him and for Him; and, mark, He takes them as man. "What is man?" etc. (Psalm 8). Mark another thing also in this verse 18. He is Head of His body, the church; she is His helpmate, His bride.

The next thing is, we find His inheritance defiled—God dishonoured—the world ruined—and man guilty! The

angels have not kept their first estate above, and man has not kept his state below—none have kept it. But He must be glorified in bringing it all back again, and the first thing was for God to be honoured, for He has been dishonoured; therefore He must make peace through the blood of His cross. In making atonement there were in the type two goats to be taken, one lot for the Lord, and one for the people. The goat on which the Lord's lot fell was to be offered for a sin-offering; but the goat on which the lot fell on behalf of the people had to be presented alive before the Lord, so as to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness; and that goat was to bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the geat into the wilderness. Has God been glorified then? Yes, fully glorified, God's requirements more than met. And who do I find has come in to repair the breach? It is the Son of His love. I find it all done. And where could God ever have been glorified as in the work of His Son? He glorified God. "I have glorified thee on the earth." Could Adam have so glorified Him in Paradise? Such love for a sinner could only have been shewn in the redemption of man. The mercy-seat is sprinkled with blood. God's lot, not the people's lot, is a token of perfect peace being made with God through the blood of the cross: yes, everything reconciled in heaven and in earth: it does not say under the earth, that is not mentioned here. Thus we have the basis of everything ransomed to be with God and for God for ever and ever. It can never stand on creation title; though heaven and earth will stand in the presence of God, but it will be in redemption title alone. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth."

“You hath he reconciled,” etc. This is a thing to give thanks for now. If I am to return in heart and mind to God, I must be reconciled. God saw the need, and from the fulness and perfectness of His own love He did it all. “We have known and believed,” etc. Such is the condition of the Christian; and if you ask a proof of it, this is the answer— He laid down His life. “You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Not only have we a wicked nature in us (“children of wrath”), but more than this, we have done wrong, thought wrong, spoken wrong; and then, besides that, our hearts are alienated, the sure consequence of sin. Did you ever see a servant or a child do wrong, and glad to meet his master or parent afterwards? Does not the sense of having done wrong keep them away from those against whom they have sinned? Yes. Alienation of heart there is, because we do not want God to come and say to us, as to Adam, “Where art thou? “There is first, lust, then the commission of sin, then the mind turned away and at enmity. Then, in this condition, God comes to bring it back. How can He do it? Ruined, unhappy, wretched as I am, if God is for me, I can come to Him. Grace can come and make me happy. God comes in grace to win me back when thus alienated, and tells me He has dealt about my sins. This will bring me back. Law convicts, but never wins back—never. It is as though we said to God, My conscience makes me dislike you—makes me unhappy with you: take away my sins; and I will come back. This certainly is in substance what the gospel of God says to us both about our sin and about His grace.

And will He half reconcile? No, He has completely done it: “In the body of his flesh through death.” There were

you under your sins. Christ came as a real true man about these sins that are distressing you and keeping you away from God. I see Him made sin, bearing to take the dreadful cup of God's wrath: all the sins laid upon Him like the scapegoat: Jesus Christ coming in a body, not with a message that it shall be done-. No, the thing is done. God has visited sinners in love. I meet God by faith there where He had met me; and I see in the body of Christ's flesh through death, He has put sin entirely away. I have nothing to do with it. Who could do anything to add to such a work? Men may wag their heads at it in derision, but the work is done fully and completely. Christ is gone up; and He is gone to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in His sight. Was there any mistake, any uncertainty? No, the soul knows and feels that God has done it. If He has me in His sight, He must have me holy and unblamable and unreprovable, and He has made me so: and when He finished the work, He sat down. "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Well then may it be said, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet," etc. The work is done; and now God sends "to declare," as the apostle says, "his righteousness." Did you accomplish it? Did you do anything towards it? Nothing, but your sins. He has made peace. Our souls then can rest in this blessed peace. And it is not only that I have this peace: no, God has peace for me; and the nearer I get to God, the more I see the fulness and perfectness of this peace. It is God's peace, and I have peace in it. All there is according to His own perfectness. He rests in Christ's work for my sin. If He had nothing more to require, what can I require? All the ground of my connection with God is that His love has been manifested in putting away my

sins; and I have peace in that. If you think you must satisfy God as. a creditor, you do not know God. God is love, and He is known through the cross. If I own God as my Saviour and Lord, it marks all my character. I have new objects and new motives. I may do the same things, harmless in themselves perhaps, but I have a different motive in doing them when I know God. It is not what a man does that marks his character, but why he does it. When I know God in Christ, I go and do right things because I love God. I may be outwardly correct and moral, but the spring and motive may be all wrong at once. A child may see if you say He has translated me from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. If I have peace with God, there is nothing between Him and me. The peace is made. It is a thing accomplished.

Now, are you reconciled to God? Grace, and glory, and love then are brought before your soul by the Holy Ghost; and you will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, etc. If I know I am to be like Him at the day of His appearing, I shall be purifying myself, “even as he is pure” now. May the Lord work in our hearts by His own Spirit, conforming us who believe into the image of Jesus, soon to be conformed to the Firstborn in glory.

Part II

Besides the Person of the Lord coming out fully in this chapter as Head of His body the church, and Creator of all things, the main subject that is developed in the epistle is life, much more in its detail than in the Ephesians, where we have rather the glories of the church of God in contrast with the previous heathen, or

even Jewish, state. Here, in Colossians, it is the life of Christ in us, and does not go as far in regard to privileges. The apostle gives us the saints risen with Christ, and then takes this life and shews what it is. But in doing so he puts the Christian fully in his place with God in that life. The Christian is taken as indeed risen, but yet on the earth, just simply having life yet not sitting in heavenly places. He puts the Christian in the power of resurrection, and the life of Christ in resurrection in the Christian. But heaven is looked at still as a matter of hope: you are looking up to it— "your life is hid with Christ in God"; but you are not seated there yet; whereas in Ephesians we are there in Christ. In Colossians he looks at what the power of that life is, and the Christian as risen put in this place before God; and then he shews the power of this life in the details of daily life.

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The knowledge which we have in this new life is renewed after the image of God Himself. A life has come in which has overcome the world, and I get into the new place which Christ is in as man before God. Thus we have Christ's place, but still down here; then what the power and character of that life are practically, as passing through this world just as Christ did. He was properly a heavenly man passing through the world, overcoming everything, and having all His joy in His Father, and He puts us into that life, both as to its acceptance and as to its power. (You do not get here all the privileges that flow from it.) Consequently the only proper place of one looked at as risen with Christ is the place He has before God.

You have the Head largely brought out here, the object and source of it all. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” In Ephesians we are the “fulness of him that filleth all in all,” for we are looked at as His body. On the one side all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him, a real man, and on the other you are complete in Him and have everything in Him. The fulness of the Godhead has been revealed in Christ, and we are complete in Him before God. He sets us in connection with Him in virtue of Christ who is at God’s right hand, and we are waiting for the hope which is laid up in heaven.

“If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” Speaking of the Christian in Christ, you never get any “if.” I could not say, “If I was at C——,” for here I am. There is no “if” to your place in Christ, no condemnation. But there is another aspect in which we may look at the Christian; he is running a race towards glory. You have it especially in the Hebrews: the saints are viewed there as on earth, Christ the Son of God and man as in heaven; and so you do not get the truth there of their being united to Christ —the body to its Head. Whenever the Christian is looked at in his path through this world, then the “ifs “come in; only with them you get the blessed testimony to the faithfulness of God in carrying us through to heaven. With acceptance and the value of Christ’s blood, there are no “ifs”; but when I am running the race, then I say I must get to heaven. When Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, there was no “if” then: so the one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. I am “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”; but why do I want to be kept? I find with this revelation that

I have a need of being kept, so that I am constantly in need of being entirely dependent every instant upon this grace; but with it the positive revelation that the grace will not fail. Therefore dependence is maintained, and it is very blessed to be kept in dependence. A man has to learn his entire dependence, as the Lord says, “Without me ye can do nothing.” This man does not say, but thinks he can do a great deal; and so we have to learn dependence, but at the same time the blessed truth of the unfailing faithfulness of God. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous”; He always has His eyes on them for blessing, though He may have to chasten them.

“Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Why do you say that? Because the devil would pluck them out if he could. Before we come into the effect and result of all in glory, it is the wisdom of God that I should be called to lean upon Him. So He puts one through this process where one’s faith is constantly exercised; and then I have to learn too that He never fails me. I have to learn myself and to learn God. It is painful to learn oneself, but then there is the blessed truth of the unspeakable condescension of God in taking notice of our state and circumstances. Interested in us every moment, as I said before, “he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” Intercourse with God is maintained; it is the path we have to walk in as being redeemed. Supposing we were to give up Christ and have done with Him, then we should not have life or peace or anything. Some of the Hebrews seem to have been in danger of drawing back and are warned accordingly.

We will see where God has set the Christian. Seeing we are risen with Christ is more than seeing we are forgiven. Forgiveness is the perfect clearing away of

every spot (the first thing we need). Guilt is all gone in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, where we had no part but our sins and the wickedness that crucified Him. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” If we were not perfected in conscience before God, Christ must have suffered often. What is to put sin away if it is not put away now? I may hate it and judge it more (that is the work of the Spirit in me), but I speak of the putting it away once for all. “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” He came the first time to bear sin; when He comes the second time, He will have nothing to do with sin, He comes to receive us to Himself. We stand between the first coming of Christ, in which He wrought redemption on the cross and gave Himself to put away sin, and the second coming of Christ, when in virtue of that work He comes to receive believers to Himself; and the Holy Ghost is come down meanwhile to give me the full sense of what He did the first time, and the bright and blessed hope of what He will do the second time. We have nothing between, except of course the operations of the Holy Ghost, for the work of the Spirit is going on, most blessed in its place, to lead us on to grow up unto Him in all things; but, as regards the work of Christ, He sits in the presence of God because all is done. There is no progress in the value of Christ’s blood, nor in the righteousness of God which we are in Christ.

The first thing then is redemption—a work which delivers us from the place we were in, and brings us into the new place that Christ is in before God as man. God takes away the sins, and gives us all Christ besides. It

belongs to us as being in Christ, though in this epistle it is more Christ in us.

As for the glories of Christ that are to come—all things created by Him and for Him, and He taking them all up as man—we read that He is going to reconcile the whole state and order of things in heaven and earth; but you "hath he reconciled." The Christian does not wait till then. I am perfectly reconciled to God. There I was a stranger and an enemy, away from Him; and here I am, my sins entirely gone, and my heart, by this wondrous revelation of love, brought back to delight in God. I am reconciled; and a great and blessed thing it is. If I am reconciled to a person with whom I have been at enmity, there is nothing any longer between us; if there is anything, then I am not reconciled. If you have an after-thought, a misgiving, "after all I do not know whether it is all right," then you are not reconciled; the heart is not free.

But we do by faith get perfect liberty with God through the precious blood of Christ, and the power and presence of the Spirit of God giving us the consciousness of it in our souls. "You hath he reconciled." He makes this difference between us and reconciling the things around us, which will not be till the new heavens and new earth. The state of things will be reconciled, which is not so now, for the world has rejected Christ, and will never see Him in that way again; but we, believers, are reconciled to God. It is God's estimate of Christ's blood that is the measure of my acceptance with Himself; it gives me peace. I have been reconciled to God in the consciousness of the perfect love that gave Christ; but beside that I am brought into perfect favour with God, the favour which

rests upon Christ. It is not merely that the old things are swept away, and my sins washed out in the blood of Christ, but the perfect love of God is revealed in doing it. I come back to God in unbounded confidence and infinite love. This is the place of the Christian. Christ, being in us, teaches us, and conducts down into our souls this love of God; and the heart is thus reconciled in blessed peace and righteousness, resting in the consciousness of His perfect grace towards us.

If you look up to God and get into His holy presence, do you feel perfect liberty with Him? Poor unworthy creatures we certainly are in ourselves (and in the light I see more how worthless I am); but God spared not His own Son. There is no doubt or cloud as to that which He is for our souls, because it has been perfectly revealed to us in the word of God, as it has been proved in Christ Himself and the cross.

Redemption and forgiveness is the first thing; reconciliation is the second. Then mark another thing, beloved friends: “who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” The world is blinded; where God is not known, they are in pitch darkness. They may be very clever on everything else; but this has nothing whatever to do with God. Man’s mental powers may be great; he may be full of science; but the moment his breath goes forth, all that is gone. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not” —that is, on Christ’s coming into this world. Wherever the light does come in, wherever God is known, what is the effect? It reaches the conscience. If man’s mind were capable of judging what God is, or of knowing what He ought to be, then he would be master of the subject. Do you put God in that place? When God comes in, it is to put me in my

place, and Himself in His place, as with the woman of Samaria in John 4. All true intelligence of God comes in by the conscience. The heart, no doubt, is attracted by His grace; but all true knowledge of Him comes in by the conscience, though it may be developed afterwards. It is not only light but unspeakable love has been revealed, and He has delivered me fully and brought me into the very place in which Christ is before God. I am "translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love." It is the operation of grace which does come in, and makes us know what we are—true moral light in the soul; but the effect is to take me out of darkness, and put me "into the kingdom of the Son of his love."

There is another thing in which many feel more difficulty. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Here we are told of meetness. For what? For the inheritance of the saints in light—that is, in glory. But, as a Christian, I am not looking to get at it—He "hath made us meet." May I not say, See what a work God has done! Yea, I am to give thanks for it too. The thief was fit to be Christ's companion in paradise that day. Christ was there for him on the cross; and the value of the work of Christ was proved in taking that man straight that day to be His own companion above. Did God put him in unfit? Of course not. Fit for what? Fit to be with Christ in paradise. Exactly so am I, having "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," then reconciled to God, and delivered from the power of darkness, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. All that is done, that it may be known now by faith. By grace I do value the death of Christ; but God values it a great deal more.

There is where my sin can be fully estimated: I hate it, and confess it; but after all a holy God sees it a great deal more deeply than I do, however sincere I may be. God knows all my sin, and He knows that Christ has put it away. I am left here for two things—to learn a great deal about myself, which is ever humbling; and to learn of God in Christ the unutterable patience and love and goodness of God.

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” I have not merely, as in the law, what a man ought to be; I have now been taught of God, and know what God is, and that I am His child—brought to Him by redemption. He says that you are a partaker of His holiness; He is making you enjoy His love: now you must not do anything that would hinder your enjoying it, or that would grieve the Spirit. You are brought into the light, and everything that does not suit the light must go. It is not merely avoiding crimes and positive sins, but you are to be filled with the knowledge of His will. God has a thought, and a mind, and a path, for His children; and this is Christ’s path, that we should walk in His steps. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself to walk even as he walked.” Did you ever see Christ avenge Himself? Did you ever see selfishness working in Him? or trying to get rich, or seeking for pleasure or amusement? Then you go and walk like Him, as a person redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ. It is a great mercy that God has a will about us and a path for us. “I am the way,” says Christ. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” It is following His steps, walking in the

spirit and mind in which He walked. “I have set the Lord always before me.”

You will see how the apostle brings that out, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Here am I called to-day and to-morrow to walk worthy of the Lord— nothing that I do, say, or think, which should not be worthy of Christ Himself. Here it is all growth: I have got the life. I say to a child, “You go and walk worthy of your family”; but if he has no sense of what his family is, it is no use telling him to walk worthy of it; but if he has the sense of the integrity and standing of his family, then he knows how to walk worthy of it. “In all things behaving ourselves as the ministers of God.” You get the word “worthy” in three ways. In Thessalonians, “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” In Ephesians it is the same thing practically: “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Here, in Colossians, it is, “Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Did He ever do His own will in anything? No, He did His Father’s. Are you content never to do your own will, but to take Christ’s will as that which is to be the spring and motive of all you do? Then communion is not interrupted; and it is joy and blessing beyond all human thought. You say, “Am I never to do what I like?” Like! Do you like not to be always with Christ? This detects the workings of the flesh.

Then comes the activity, the growing acquaintance with God, “Increasing in [or rather, by] the knowledge of God.” The full joy of heaven is the knowledge of God. If I am going after the world, will this be increasing by the knowledge of God? It tests what I like? Do you like to be away from God, and to do your own will sometimes? But He says, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law

is within my heart." Do you delight to do it? Oh, what a thought it is, that in this dark world God has perfectly revealed Himself in Christ, nay more that He dwells in us! "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Christ, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." There is God by His Spirit.

Now mark how this works. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power." I shall find plenty of difficulties in the way, and temptations of all kinds—possibly death, as has often been the- case in some countries; but we are strengthened with all might. There is the strength. I have been brought into close relationship with God, and there I get this power. Unto what? "Unto all patience." This sounds a poor thing, but you will find it is just what tries you.

"Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And again, "The signs of an apostle were wrought in me in all patience." Are you always patient? Do you not want divine power for it? I may want a setting right in the church of God, or in the Lord's work, or in a thousand things; but I must have patience. I must wait on God.

Supposing my will is not at work, there comes meekness and gentleness. Even things that try, I can take gently and meekly and quietly with others, and then he adds, if that is the case, my life is in full display before God, and there is the enjoyment of God. I enter into all this blessedness, I am not merely "made meet," but "giving thanks," because I am in the positive and blessed enjoyment of all. When I am walking in patience of heart and long-suffering, my soul is with God. I get the blessed enjoyment of what He is, and I grow by the knowledge

of Him; “To him that hath shall be given.” If I am honest, I say, “I do not know what His will is”; perhaps there is something in myself that I have not yet detected. Here I have all these exercises; but it is in the sense of the divine favour resting on me with the consciousness of a child of God. The more a child is with his father, and delights in him, of course the better he will grow up, understanding what his father likes. It is so with us before God.

Later on we are told, we “have put off the old man with his deeds”; and then it is added, “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering” —the graces belonging to the Christian. You must have the consciousness of what you are as the elect of God, and then put them on in that blessed consciousness. It was thus Christ ever walked as man.

“Strengthened unto all patience.” You will find there is nothing that tests the strength of your soul like waiting for God. We think we must do things that we think right; we must rather learn to wait. Take Saul, for example, in i Samuel 13. He ought to have waited, and said, I can do nothing. We have but a little while more to go through the wilderness, but it is with God.

And now, beloved, I only ask, but I earnestly ask, you, Are your souls free with God, reconciled to Him? Are you before God in virtue of the cross? or will you pretend to stand before Him as a Judge? “Enter not into judgment with thy servant,” says the Psalmist, “for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” He who will be the Judge first died on the cross as the Saviour. When I

appear before Him, I find the Person who Himself put away my sins, and in whom I am now resting.

The cross of Christ is where everything is morally perfected. There the whole question of good and evil was solved. The world despises the cross; and God meant it to be a despicable thing—a gibbet. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that no flesh should glory in his presence.” There, on the basest thing in the world, He has hung salvation. But the moment I am inside, I find everything in the cross—the uttermost sin of man in enmity against God, all the power of Satan, but the perfect man in Christ. “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” But, on the other side, God is there in perfect righteousness against sin, and in perfect love for the sinner; and as you go on, you find that the new heavens and the new earth—all things in short—will be perfected by the cross. There I have perfect righteousness against sin, and perfect love towards the sinner; and I find peace and rest, not merely rest but God’s rest. For He rests in His love, in the blessedness of those He has brought near in Christ, and He will bring them into His rest in glory.

The Lord give you fully to see the place where He has brought you, and, in the consciousness of your relationship with God, to set it forth, and walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Surely we have to give “thanks unto the Father,” when we see the unutterable love that is in it all: He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Then follows the suited Christian walk. The Lord give you to see, beloved, with the eyes of faith what God was and wrought in Christ, so that you should be before God according to it, as

reconciled to Him, and then seek to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God.

The Freshness Of Faith

1 Thessalonians 1

There is great power of walk shewn forth in this chapter. It brought persecution, but the word had power in them. The world's hatred of them was a proof that there was testimony to the truth. There was the witness of it constantly brought before others, as well as this inward life in power and suffering. There were faith, hope, charity (or love) (v. 3), these three great elements of the power of life in exercise. They were laying hold of things unseen, which was faith. They were waiting in hope for what was to come. And there was the activity of love. They were not going on listlessly, but divine energy was manifested in their everyday life. When patience was exercised, it was the "patience of hope," and what they had to do was done in faith. How strong a link this was between them and every other Christian! When the living power was seen, they were recognised as God's children: the stamp of God was upon them. We know that divine counsels and thoughts of grace were the spring of it all; but there was that which could be seen.

The word was in the Holy Ghost on hearts; it was not in word only, for there was power. There must be unhesitating confidence in the things laid hold of; then there is power. If I say merely, "I suppose these things are true," this is not assurance. But they received the gospel "in much assurance." The result was complete distinctness from the world, which became their enemies. This was not the most pleasant part. They had "much affliction"; but then there was also "joy in the Holy Ghost." To the Corinthians he says, "As the

sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

These Thessalonians were living in another world after the word came to them in power. There was a divine spring in them that nothing could touch. In other places they might be getting on more quietly; but there was power here, and all they did was connected with God: all was done under God. This is what we have to seek. Then the testimony went forth, they scarcely knew how; but people saw there was this link with God. They did not trouble themselves about what was said of them. "Your faith to Godward is spread abroad so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us," etc. That is, the world became a constant witness of what Paul's preaching was. It could be seen from the conduct of those who received it.

If we were all thoroughly faithful, the world would begin to talk about it, and there would be persecution, no doubt. "Let your light so shine before men," etc.; not, let your good works shine, but "your light." "Holding forth the word of life," etc. They saw not only what the Thessalonians were doing, but they took knowledge of the new truth Paul was preaching to them. They "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

First, there was a total break with all they were going on in before. Not only did they abandon all the wickedness the heathen were living in, but next they served "the living and true God." They had a new centre of all they did. They "turned to God," the living God. "They turned … from idols." The characteristic of these was something for and suited the flesh. Men were looking to

that which the flesh likes, and averting what the flesh did not like. There was no connection with God, nor link for the conscience in having to do with idols; but a licence for lust, and all that is agreeable to the flesh. There are those now who look to their idols to help them to pleasure and money: where is the moral difference between stocks and stones, and what is of a more refined kind now in our day? The Thessalonians turned to God, who gave perfect present blessedness. He is a true God for the conscience as well as for the heart. The world at once sees if God is the centre of a person. The heart is not morbid, but thoroughly happy in God; it has perfect satisfaction in Him. This is what makes such a difference in life. When a man is happy—happy in that which is eternal, what he cannot be deprived of, and which prevents his desiring other things— this is the spring of all he has to do. He acts for the glory of God, whether eating or drinking, or whatever he does.

Besides this new spring and centre for the present, there is something else waited for which gives a form and character to this blessing, “waiting for his Son from heaven.” A most extraordinary thing to do! Waiting for God’s Son! that is, all our hopes are clean out of this world. Do not expect anything from earth, but look for something from heaven, and this God’s Son Himself, “even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.” This forms a background in all the scene. There is a wrath to come to get out of. Not merely was man to be judged, but the whole scene is to be judged. When Christ returns to this earth, it will be to judge it; and they had nothing to say to the judgment. They were looking for Christ. They knew there was wrath coming, but they had nothing to say to it. Those who were

looking for Christ were entirely delivered “from the wrath to come.” This gives a very distinct position to the Christian.

There was of course very little depth of doctrine among the Thessalonians. They had been only just converted; and this letter was written to them directly after. But there is a great deal of the present living power of faith. “Your faith groweth exceedingly,” 2 Thess. 1. Truth, when a person is walking in the spiritual joy and energy of the Holy Ghost after being newly converted, is very different from people holding dull doctrine merely. Here is the historical fact of wrath passed. At Christ’s first coming He had taken up the whole question of wrath; and they had turned to God who had laid all their iniquities on another. A divine Person had taken all upon Himself—put all away entirely. All the question is totally and finally settled: sin is borne once, and He who bore it is raised from the dead. This is what proves my sin put away before God. The fact that God will judge the world, by that Man whom He hath ordained in resurrection, is what gives me the consciousness of being entirely free from it, because it proves He is risen from the dead.

This sets me in perfect freedom; and it does more, because it links me up with Christ in heaven. I know He is coming. Why? Because I know Him there. This divine Person before my soul—this Christ—the Man who, infinitely interested about my sins, died for me, He is waiting in heaven. It is now the patience of Christ. He is expecting until His enemies are made His footstool. So we are waiting. Our interests are entirely linked up with His, and thus we are waiting for Him, while He is waiting to come.

There are three ways in which Christ's coming is put before our souls in Scripture. First, it is the fulfilment of our hope. We are waiting, our bodies to be raised, when we are to see Him and be like Him. This gives a strong living link that takes the heart out of present things—one object before our souls, a living Man who is coming again. We are really waiting for something: for what? For the Person who has so loved us. This is connected with two great systems, the government of God, and the church of God.

Government under Christ is going to be set up. All things are to be put under His feet. This applies to the appearing of the New Testament, the day of the Lord, if you look at it as to wrath— "the brightness of his coming." I shall be happy long before that. Why then do I long for His appearing? Because Christ will then have His rights. It will be the setting up of divine power in goodness, the setting up of divine righteousness too in goodness. This will be the liberty of glory. We have the liberty of grace now, but not His glory. We wait for that. The great centre of all is Christ taking His rights. He has not these now. He has all His personal glory; but He will come in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels. This is the heavenly part of the government of God, but there is that on earth also which will be the manifestation of God's power to put everything in order where Christ has been crucified and cast out.

Government also applies to the church, to the saints. Are we not under government? To be sure we are responsible. If we know to do good and do it not, we are guilty. We are to walk even as He walked. He was the display of divine life in a man. Not merely is there in Him the perfectness of a man before God, but the

perfectness of God before man: therefore His example is far more than the law for us. Another thing is the Holy Ghost given. We are responsible for gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost (as in the parable of the talents). If I have any service as a Christian, I must do it or I shall be chastened. He takes away what He has given if I do not use it. All this is connected with government. As His sons we are all alike saved; liable to judgment as regards our wrong ways, but in blessedness. The “day of the Lord” will be deliverance for all those waiting for Him. There will be the display of all previously gone through. We shall appear with Him. We always find responsibility connected with the appearing.

Another, third thing, entirely distinct, is connected with the church’s proper blessedness. He has taken it up and given it that same place as Himself. We are wrapped up with Christ as part of Himself—entirely outside, or rather inside, the question of His kingdom. No question of government as to that, but the outgoing of the heart of Christ—loved as Himself. It is as connected with this we are caught up to meet Him— His heart identified with mine—not a thought moving His heart that does not touch mine. This promise is given us in John 14. “I will come and receive you.” There is no thought of anything to do with the world, judgment, or government there, but one single thing, “I will come and receive you unto myself.” The secondary and inferior thing is the inheritance that we shall have.

Caught up into the Father’s house first, we get the inheritance as Christ, and with Christ. “We have borne the image of the earthy,” and we “shall also bear the image of the heavenly”; no question of degrees of blessedness or rewards, but all conformed to His image

—He the “firstborn of many brethren.” The next thing is, we come into the Father’s delight, as Christ is—loved with the same love as He is (the full enjoyment in immediate presence); it is given us now in spirit—” thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” We shall enjoy this blessedness along with Christ Himself, and be with Him for ever. “So shall we ever be with the Lord,” 1 Thess. 4.

There is, of course, a great inheritance, but not a word is here about that. “Comfort one another with these words.” There is rest in this prospect. We cannot help resting there; and when He comes, we shall come with Him. Our joy is to be with Himself. We shall be displayed, but this is not our proper joy. The church’s and saints’ place (I speak of the church including all the members together, and the saints individually for themselves) is associated with Him as His body, and to be with Him when all is displayed. If we have entered into the reality of His love, and of our union with Him, it is the great joy and delight of our hearts to think of being with Him.

The consequence of all this is, that when He comes forth, the church, as the “armies which were in heaven,” come with Him. They must be with Him before they come with Him. How have they got with Him? When He rises up from His present place, we shall go too. He is now hid in God, so are we. He is our life. When He shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory. He comes out, the Rider on the white horse, and we come with Him. We have the same portion as Himself. We are still waiting; but He is coming to take things into His hands. At His appearing everything must be in order. He cannot be in a world where all is disorder and going on

in wilfulness. That will be “the day”—the display of His power; but besides and within this we have our own portion.

We love His appearing, but we love Himself better. Therefore we wait for Him to take us to Himself. If our hearts have known what Himself is, we cannot confound His taking us to Himself, with His appearing. We are “members of his body.” “Our life is hid with Christ.” He is to take us up to the Father’s house, the fulness of His own blessedness— with Christ; the blessed outshining of His Father’s love connects itself with the church’s position. All through there is an identity of blessedness with Christ in life, hope, object, all. If this hope is let into the heart, there must be a break with the world. I cannot be waiting for God’s Son from heaven if I am expecting wrath; and I cannot be waiting for God’s Son from heaven if I am linked up with the world. If this world is the scene where my heart is building itself up, if I have an object in this world, Christ will spoil it all.

Suppose God said, “To-night,” etc., would you say, This is what I want? If not, there is something between your affections and Christ.

No trial can touch a person who has Christ for his all. He may have lost this or lost that; but if he has Christ, he has that which he cannot lose.

Promise Of Life

Titus 1

It is at the beginning of this chapter that the Spirit of God marks with an especial character that on which I desire to speak—the eternal thought of God towards us which we find in verses 2, 3. Evil had come in, the Spirit takes notice of it, and the effect in a most remarkable way is to throw us back on the whole mind and thought of God from the beginning. As evil progresses and corruption comes in, the apostle turns back to the origin of all, and coming from the divine nature itself (and all that could meet the evil, and convey us on, must come from that); that is, the eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the ages of time; that which was in the mind of God as to the thing itself before the foundation of the world; that which God had in His mind, the counsel of God for us, before itself was created. It just shews us what we are, and what man is, with and apart from that eternal life. In Ephesians we find it in connection with Christ (chap. 3:3-7): a mystery hidden through all ages in God until Christ was raised up as Head of the body, the bride. It is not on this I would dwell. I am not going to speak about the church, but would turn back to what the life is and would dwell on this thought, the promise of life in the mind of God before the world began. Before that, I say, this life existed in a Person, Christy the One who was in the beginning with God and was God; that is the Christ with whom my life is hidden with the Father. Being in Himself life, He came into the world as the life and manifested the life. The thing was embodied in the Person of the

Lord as Man, and there it was, the life of man, not of angels: that which was specially God's divine thought towards man is shewn out when Christ becomes Man, and this life is communicated to us, the instrument used being the preached word of truth. This divine life had been manifested here in a man—the Lord Jesus. He having given it to us, it is now manifested in our bodies. It has the character of godliness in its manifestation. It tells you what you are. It is in a poor vessel and where there is a wretched will, but it tells you what you are and what the world is; it throws out an additional light to shew what man is, as a creature totally departed from God.

Morally speaking, the world has grown up in departure from God: that is, this world we live in—all that we see around—has sprung up from the creature having got away from God, but the life we have existed before the creation of the world, and this portion of Scripture is very full of the simple, quiet blessedness of what that life is, practically manifested and given in Christ. A great deal of evil had come in. Satan was corrupting the truth by the wild reasoning of man's mind. The apostle specially warns Timothy and Titus, and throws them back, not on common Christian profession, but on the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness. They were to be as those who knew what were the thoughts and mind of God and were cast on Him. If I have got divine teaching, I can say, I know the Shepherd's voice, and if it is not His, I shall know that too. The truth which is after godliness is not only acknowledged, but is marked and stamped as of God by a man living to and for God. Godliness is what a man would do if instigated by God; and what a man would not

do if God were close by him, it is clear, would certainly not be for God. A man daily taught by the knowledge of God how to be living for God would do everything to manifest the ways of godliness, knowing those ways because of knowing God. I speak not of doing right instead of wrong or of conscientiousness. A believer clearly ought to be righteous with regard to others; but I speak of godliness. You never can be for God without knowing what God is. I cannot walk worthy of God if I do not know Him. I cannot walk with God without that, though I may walk uprightly with man. Here it is walking worthy of God, the loins being girded (affections tucked up). This applies to all revealed to us in Christ. A believer, as to his motives and life, has Christ's mind revealed to him, to shew him how to guide himself through all circumstances. Christ was always Himself, never guided by circumstances. Sorrow could draw out His heart in divine love, but in motives and all circumstances He was always Himself (perfect, of course). It is the mind of Christ that believers are to have.

What a wonderful place we have got! Only as we are taught of God can we get hold of this, that is, the hope of eternal life promised by God before the world began, mark that; for as to the Adam life, it never could be that, but a divine life in those who are saved, a life for heaven; we have got it now, and we shall be there on account of it; there will be its full manifestation, everything there, every word, and all praise will be according to the presence of God; as participators of the divine nature we shall be in fullest blessedness, there where nothing inconsistent with the divine nature can exist, but everything will be in accordance with that life

and ourselves as possessors of it in the highest and most blessed perfection. We belong to that place now, whilst our bodies are down here; the life we have got came down from thence, and has its only full sphere of blessing there.

The promise of God before the world began, this life was in the mind of God for us before ever the world existed. I do not speak now of predestination, but of the thing itself in the mind of God, before ever the world existed. If we turn to i John i, we see how this life came down (v. 1-3)— "What our hands have handled, of the Word of life." It is a real man. The life which was with the Father was manifested down here in the Person of Christ. In many you will find great vagueness of thought in connection with this life. It is Christ Himself. "When he who is our life," etc. Before He speaks of the communication of life, He speaks of its manifestation. John could see what it was down here, amongst friends and enemies; he says, "We have looked upon, and our hands," etc. The life which was with the Father is the life promised before the world began. I get what it is perfectly displayed. I see this life in One who, in due time, fully manifested it as man. The second Adam is the Man in whom its perfection is seen; a Man in this world, in all points tempted like us; a perfect Man, without sin, walking in the world in meekness and holiness, a pattern set before us to follow.

2 Timothy 1:9 shews the way it was given us in Christ. God connects the two things here: saved by Christ according to His own purpose and grace given us in Him before the world began. In this life we see a thing that has its display in heaven. We have got it now, and in a place where it is hindered. It leads my thoughts and

feelings to be ever in heaven, where it is as before the world began. Though displayed in all perfection down here by Him who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light, the life was in heaven before it was manifested here. Wonderful truth!

For in the power of this life Christ has gone through death and annulled it. Death is an abolished thing for saints. It takes us out of all the misery of the first Adam. It was not so with saints in the Old Testament; they could not say, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” It was all death to them. Elijah was taken away for a testimony without passing through death, but Christ passed through it and annulled it, rose and went up to heaven, and life and immortality are thus brought to light. Turn to John 1:1,” In him was life.” You never could say that of a saint. God gave us to have that life in His Son; if in ourselves we might lose it, but if He is my life, I cannot. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

He is the life and light of men, not of angels. This is an unutterably humbling truth for us. If God was exercising life-giving power, it was to be manifested in a man, and therefore the Son of His love becomes man. God displayed it by the incarnation of the Word—the eternal Son. He was given in promise to us before the world existed; and He came into the world personally. The Word, made flesh, dwelt among men in all the circumstances in which we walk. He goes down into the death of the first Adam, and abolishes death, brings life and incorruptibility to light, and goes up to the right hand of God, as the display of this life in a man up there. What a thought! That eternal life in this world—a man, a poor man, a carpenter, one who had not where to lay His head. The life, promised before the world began, now

has been made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in due time manifested to those who believe, through preaching. Christ Himself is the great firstfruits of the life that we, as saved ones, have in Him —He the firstfruits of the great harvest of God. I repeat, this life, given in promise before the world was, was manifested by the Christ, who in the power of it passed through death; and in heaven it is now manifested in the risen Man Christ Jesus, while down here it is manifested in those who believe through preaching.

That is how we get it. It is preached in the world now; and what does the world make of it? That is the solemn thing for your consciences. If we take the world, we get not the second Adam but the first. Turn back to the garden of Eden, and you get the clue to the present state of the world and how it began. Man, created in responsibility to keep his first estate, was commanded not to eat the fruit of a certain tree; he eats it, doing his own will, and is cast out of paradise; and the world begins where paradise ends; and that is the world we live in, only it is a thousand times worse, because it has rejected Christ. Yes! the world around us sprang up when man was driven from paradise; a man, in a state of responsibility, departed from God, made the world what it is; and what a world! Solemn as is the responsibility of man in it, for us who have life it is only by the bye; true, we have to go through it, but it has nothing to do with the eternal life we have except as being the place where the eternal life has been manifested and brought to us. I would ask, What is man, departed from God, about? Making the world a scene of delights for himself by cultivating the arts and sciences. (You will find amongst the heathen the most beautiful exhibition of the arts and

sciences.) I repeat man is making a scene for developing and displaying faculties that have nothing to do with God (the best as well as the worst have nothing to do with Him). Well, it is in this world that the eternal life has been and is manifested now. Is it by first mending and reforming man, by setting the world right, that God gives eternal life? Is life to be got by reforming the world, by modifying the evil of the ways and the tastes of man away from God, by improving man first without God?

What is man? A responsible being that has never been lost? A responsible being, I repeat, away from God, and in departure from God, he has built up for himself a world without God. Bring God into all the fine things that man is doing, and what would be the effect? Most of us know it as a matter of fact, that this world, with all its pleasures, and things delightful to the flesh, does not let God in, nor Christ, who is the eternal life; and I get it as a thing that comes in between. Eternal life has come down here, and I have it in a world that has all its life from the first man; in a world entirely departed and alienated from God; a world that had its origin in man having been turned out of paradise; a world that when Christ, in divine beauty and grace, was in it, spat in His face and turned Him out. That is the world I am in now.

But where does my heart go to out of the world? To that blessed life I have in Christ. I may have got it but yesterday, but the thing I have received was up there for me before the foundation of the world. I have got Christ as my life—the life I live is “by faith of the Son of God”; and it was in God’s mind to give me this life before the world was. “He that hath the Son hath life” —a life not of man at all; and having got it I am to shew what is the

effect of it, and from whence I got it. What is the life I got from the first Adam? All sin; if put under law, not subject to it; a life with lusts and a will of its own. I judge it altogether. When Christ was here, the tree being bad, had judgment pronounced against it. The flesh is a judged thing: I find only sin and condemnation in connection with it, but I get God dealing with this sin in the flesh— "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: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Mark, it is not only sins remitted but sin condemned. Oh! I say, sin is in the flesh, I have got it, and I hate it. It is lusting in me, making me dislike what Christ likes whilst my heart is set on Christ. But I find God has dealt in judgment with it, and put it away on the cross. He condemned it where it was put away, and that is where I find I am. I have sin, but I am not to be judged for it—Christ was made sin for me, etc. He, in grace, has taken it. My soul in the power of this truth gets perfect peace. I have no more conscience of sins; I am no longer dreading God's judgment because I am forgiven: all has merged into the deliverance Christ has given. I have perfect liberty; sin has not dominion. I judge this flesh of mine and all its lusts and will entirely, because it is a judged thing—I am crucified with Christ. I stand in a new condition. I have eternal life in me, Christ being my life; I have liberty and joy, by His going through death. I have died and am risen with Him. This is where I am brought.

I have not only a life of him that departed from God, but as a believer the life of Him who came into the place

where I was away from God, to bring me back to God. I belong to Him—I am risen with Him, where the eternal life is to be displayed. In spirit I am up there now, whilst in the body waiting for Him to come. I am in a world that is merely by the bye to me, only a thing I have to pass through—not of it, even as Christ was not. He passed through it, and left us an example that we should follow, walking in His footsteps. I am to reckon myself dead. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, even so," etc. A believer does not belong to the first Adam, but to the Second. The life of Christ is his, and that is all he owns as his life—that life so blessed, so divine, that the world would not have it, and shrunk from it because it was so perfect, and God took it up and put it on His throne as the only place fitted for it.

Christ down here displayed everything that characterises this life. I should like to mark one or two traits of it: one is that quiet confidence with God that springs from, and is the fruit of, divine love, that which can trust God and is capable of enjoying blessed communion with God, enabling one through all things and circumstances here to walk on confiding in God. One could not have had that confidence if Christ had not died to put away sin and brought me into relationship with God. Having a purged conscience, I can delight in God, and as regards my walk through this world, Christ is my life, my all. I am consciously dependent on Him. As we pass on through the world we have to overcome. How? This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Life has this especial character. It avoids evil and walks in grace through the world. If I have the life of Christ, I am to walk down here as He walked, in practical life, "Always bearing about in the body the

dying of the Lord," etc., with the consciousness that it came from God, promised before the world was.

We shall most surely find defectiveness in this from not having self judged and the spirit free to enjoy Christ. We have to watch that things of this world do not narrow up the life that is to be made manifest. Do we not continually find that we get under the power of circumstances, by which the heart is often narrowed? How often we have to say, I did not think of that at the right moment! But if always bearing about the dying of the Lord, it would be always easy to manifest His life. If the heart be full of Christ, it will be always ready for Christ. The tendency of saints is to have the heart narrowed up—never ready for God and their neighbour. It would not be so if we could only get the heart exercised under a deep consciousness of what the life we have got is, and what the world is, what a poor little wretched thing it is. Having hearts exercised to discern good and evil whilst down here, we should pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers, having cleansed consciences able to judge the flesh as being only the old thing. Life being given, the world (grown up from man rejecting God) is the place where this life is to be exercised, and we get various exercises. See what Paul passed through, "We who live are always delivered unto death," etc. He gloried in tribulation and in infirmities if only the life might be manifested. I desire that your hearts should get hold of what this eternal life is, so to live in the power of it, that you should see how it came into the world, revealed in Christ.

Seeing all its blessedness and beauty in Christ, the heart clings round it. In Him the life was the light of men. What a thing—in the place where Satan rules to have

God’s own life given to us in His Son, and that we live in Christ only, but ever remember that this life has no affinity with the world! We have to manifest the light of life in the midst of the world that will not have Christ; and, alas! how constantly everything tends to make us live by sight instead of by faith! But whatever we fail in we shall certainly find that God has given us everything in Christ.

Oh, may He give us to know more and more what that eternal life is which was promised in Him before the world began.

The Saving Grace Of God

Titus 2

The more we study the word, the more we see how it takes us out of the present world, and how it associates us with all things that are of God. When we come to what is Christian, it is not what the law was (that is righteous claim), but the revelation of God's grace and God's mind to give what takes our hearts from this world, and associates us with a revealed scene that is not this world at all, but outside it all. This is Christianity in its practical character; it is an association completely of our hearts with things not seen. When we walk right, we walk by faith.

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Servants are not to purloin. Why? "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Paul was so full of Christ Himself that he could not speak without bringing Christ in. He cannot say, "Husbands, love your wives "without saying what Christ was Himself, "even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." It is no mere morality, nor a question of results.

The Christian is a person whose mind has got hold of the revelation of God by the power of the Holy Ghost. "He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all." The Lord says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." He comes and brings from heaven the full revelation of what He knew. This is the reason that no one received His testimony. He brings in these heavenly

things: all His words were the expression of what He was, at the same time perfectly adapted to man down here, while all the fulness of the Godhead was in Him. We find in Christ that which is entirely divine and perfectly human. It is the bringing down of these heavenly things perfectly adapted to what man was on the earth; and now He sets us to walk through the world according to that which has been revealed to us. So with the servant: it is the motive power. If one say, You will be killed if you do that, my answer is, If I die, I shall only go to heaven. Earth loses its power and so does lust. “Not purloining”: the commonest duties are connected with motives which take the heart above everything here.

There is no difficulty in the world that this principle does not rise above. You can never take a person entirely out of everything that surrounds him without a motive above them all: you may take him out of one thing or another, but not out of everything. Then the motive is everything done for Christ; and everything else is advanced and elevated because the motive is elevated. If the things in this world cease to be motives (of duties there are plenty), in the commonest things you get the soul lifted out of the world; the governing motives are above it. The Christian is thus unassailable. If men try him by pleasant and natural things, he is kept; for they are not Christ, and for him “to live is Christ.”

The law brought in the authority of God, and of course it ought to have been obeyed. The law took up the relationship in which men stood with God and with one another, and said, You must walk according to these words. Duties were there, and God took man according to the way he ought to act, keeping the relationships as they stood; but there was no revelation of Himself. God’s

authority was there in claim, but this was not a revelation of love. Law told them what they ought to be as the means of finding out what they were. Christianity is a different thing; it is God revealed in grace, coming amongst men. What the law told was this, on the contrary: that God did not yet come out to man; and that man could not go in to God. Christianity, while fully upholding the authority of the law, is just the opposite: God did come out; and man is gone in.

The law was not an arbitrary thing, but the commandment was holy, just and good. The apostle, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, was "blameless"; but the moment the law added this, "Thou shalt not lust," to the perfect rule from God for a man where he was, it might as well have said, You must not be a man, for man was already fallen and a sinner. God added that to the rule of ordinary relationships, and it reaches the conscience.

But Christianity tests man in another way, namely, by the very revelation of God. God did come out in blessed perfect grace and unutterable goodness; His Son became a man. Still it was the revelation of God, and men would not have God, but they rejected and crucified Him. Now the condition of man is proved; the judgment of the world is pronounced. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Man was thus fully tested. A nation was taken up to try thorough agriculture of the human heart; but it brought forth sour grapes. Then God said, I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But

said they, “This is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.”

Christianity is the testimony that man is lost. You have thus the rejection of Christ bringing in the condition of the whole world before God. Not only is man out of paradise; but he has turned God out of the world. In the cross, in which man shewed his enmity to God, the blessed work of redemption was wrought, the sacrifice put away sin was accomplished, and man has gone into glory. As the law was the testing of man as a child of Adam, so in the gospel I have now got the “Second man” —much more than a man, of course—gone into glory. The more we meditate on the cross, the more we see the place where sin above all was manifested, the place where obedience was perfected. Sin was at the highest point, and there was the absolute perfection of obedience; I see sin where obedience is perfected. Christ was there glorifying God in the place of sin. There was the absolute perfection of obedience, and the absolute completion of man’s sin. Where was judgment shewn in its fullest character? Not in the condition of the sinner, but in Christ made sin for us. The perfect love of God was shewn there; what man is, was shewn there, what Christ was, what God was also in judgment against sin.

But the consequence of the cross is that man is in glory, and believers are justified and cleansed through Christ’s blood, all cleared and cleansed. Then the Holy Ghost comes down, dwells in them, and connects them with the Man in glory. Paul first sees Christ in the glory; he did not lose Him in the clouds like the others, but he saw Him first in the glory beyond the clouds. “Delivering thee,” in Acts 26:17, means taking thee out from among

“the people and from the Gentiles”: he was neither Jew nor Gentile; he was completely associated with Christ in glory. The gospel went out to every creature, coming out from heaven on the ground that Christ is in heaven.

The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to you. All your relationships as a Christian are in heaven. This is where the Christian is in these verses in Titus. He has the Holy Ghost to go according to the heavenly Christ; he looks back to what I have been speaking of; he stands between the first coming and the second, having a clear apprehension of the effect of the first and also of the second. This is not prophecy at all, which foretells things coming on the earth: there is no prophecy of heaven. Prophecy refers to the government of this world. Hence John the Baptist says, that he was talking of things on the earth. When Christ came He told them heavenly things, and, having been sacrificed to put away sin, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost associates with Himself there.

The Christian is a person who has the Holy Ghost and who stands between the first coming and the second. Israel is a witness of God’s dealings on the earth; the Christian is a witness of His sovereign grace that gives man a place in heaven. Prophecy told of a day of darkness coming on the earth. “We have also the word of prophecy more sure whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a candle that shineth in a dark place.” A candle is a very useful thing. What do you get in the Revelation? Trumpets, seals, vials, all judgment; but this prophecy is my candle, and I see where all evil will end. It is all very useful as a warning; but when Christ as the day star dawns in my heart, it is attracted out, it is of the place. “I will come and receive you unto

myself”—that is in heaven! The Lord teaches us to look for Him in affection: we are converted to this—” to wait for his Son from heaven”; we are not converted to prophecy. Grace has appeared, and it teaches us to look for the glory of His appearing. Compare verse n with 13.

It is hard for us first to feel, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,” and next, to know that the world is judged.

The gospel is grace addressed to the lost, not probation to see how I shall turn out. It has turned out that I loved every vanity better than Christ, that is, in short, that I am lost.

The flowers of human nature are often no less pretty: the blossoms on the crab are as pretty as those of the apple. Character is not the question, but motive. A cross man may be breaking his heart about his temper (there is the same difference in dogs; of course an amiable dog is much pleasanter to meet than a cross dog). It is conscience, not character at its best, which shews I have had to do with God. In the gospel I find what I am, and what God is; I have found a grace which has met man in this state. The gospel turns me from what I am right over to what God is to the lost. I am guilty by what I have done; I am lost by what I am. The fullest grace comes in; but grace connects me with the fullest salvation. The Saviour has come to deliver me out of the condition I am in. All I have done, all my condition as a child of Adam, I am completely done with; I have got to the end of myself. Salvation is a big word. I have my place in the Man that is gone into paradise above, not in the man that was turned out of paradise on earth. That is the way grace appears: it is not help; it is salvation,

the blood of Christ the ground of it. I get sins sent away, the conscience made perfect, and Christ always appearing in the presence of God for me: there is not an instant of my life as a believer that Christ is not before God for me. I am now a man saved, justified, cleansed, made the temple of the Holy Ghost. There I stand in that Man in glory.

Now the Christian is taught by grace— “Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” I am redeemed out of the world, but I have got to walk through it. How did the present world come? God never made this world or age (of course I do not mean the physical world), He made paradise. Sin and the devil made this world; for morally speaking God did not make it. Cain goes out from the presence of Jehovah; he settles, when a vagabond, in the land of his vagabondage, and builds a city. Next, the city must be a pleasant place; what harm was there in brass and iron? None whatever; but there was a great deal of harm in going out of the presence of Jehovah. What harm was there in the trees of the garden? If you bring in God and Christ in speaking to the men of the world, they will turn you out; they say, It is not the time for it. Well, it may not be; but it is never the time with man to bring Christ in. The world is all built up away from God; man will not have God come into it.

You have the whole life of the Christian practically summed up in three words, “soberly, righteously, and godly”: “soberly” with self-restraint; “righteously” as regards others; “godly” with God. In this new place, with new motives, he is to live in the power of his new life; he has an object out of the world.

Faith, human faith, is always the spring by which anything in this world is done; God gives me what is divine. A man is always what his object is; if Christ is a man's object, he is a Christian. "That I may win Christ," this was Paul's object. He had found the blessed Son of God willing to become a man to save him; he is looking for Him; he wants to see the One that loved him.

I am not speaking of doctrine, of an item of knowledge, but of what I am converted to; it is the thing for which a man is converted, the object. As I have borne the image of the earthy, I am going to bear the image of the heavenly. I am going to be with Him, and I want to be like Him. You will find this strikingly as the hope of the Christian; and so the Lord never says a word that goes beyond the present life; He takes care not to put His coming in a shape to make it necessarily more distant. The virgins that fall asleep are the same virgins that awake; this is the principle. The servants the lord gave the talents to are the same servants with whom he reckons. That in the seven churches we have history I do not doubt; but does He give it as history? No, He takes care to give seven churches then before Him; He will never sanction the heart making a delay. You are to live as you would live if you were expecting Him every day. Whether changed or raised, then we shall be with Christ and like Christ. Christ will be satisfied; so shall I. The thought and purpose of God is to have us like Himself and with Himself. He is still gathering out souls. But on the other hand we are to be "as men that wait for their Lord." If a mother is expecting her son from America, she is always expecting him, for she loves him. When a person is really waiting for Christ, he has the room of his heart ready for Him. He has given Himself to have us

for Himself, with hearts united, gathered up, to Him; a peculiar people, a people of possession, manifesting the character of God in grace till He display it in glory.

Now, beloved brethren, where are we? Can we say, “This present evil world,” not in hardness as if we did not once belong to it, but as the world that has rejected Christ, and of which Satan is the prince? The world is not only a sinful world outside the earthly paradise, but a world that rejected Christ when He came into it.

The things I shall have in heaven are to form my heart now. Our hearts are so dim to see these heavenly things, but it is God’s thought to reveal them to us. “Now we see through a glass darkly” —true, but we see the same things. 1 Corinthians 2, often quoted to prove I cannot know them, really proves I can. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” Christianity says He has revealed them all. Quite true, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive them. In the Old Testament they did not know them (of course not); but the Holy Ghost has come down to reveal them to us. The veil is rent, the way into the holiest of all is manifest. There is a perfect contrast as to the condition of the saint now. I am associated with Him now; I know I shall be like Him then. He has become a man for the very purpose to have me with Him in glory. I know that righteousness is there, and through the Spirit I am waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (that is, for glory), for Him to bring me actually there. I am so identified with Christ that, when He appears, I shall appear with Him in glory.

Has this power over our hearts? Are your hearts settled as to the perfectness of His work? Is there such love to Him that you wait for Him who loves you?

The Lord give us in these last days to have hearts thus watching, taking His word, and clinging to it. This gives us what is heavenly, and perfectly suited to us while here.

The Suffering Son Of Man

Hebrews 2

After the first four verses, which belong to chapter 1, we get a statement of the position of our Lord: all things are not yet put under Him, but He is crowned with glory and honour. In chapter 1 the apostle had spoken fully of the divinity of the Lord: in chapter 2 after the first four verses, we have His humiliation, and then the thought of God with respect to us in His becoming man. In chapter 2 we get what fits Him to be the Aposde and High Priest of our profession; then in the close of chapter 4 he takes up His priesthood.

It is a wonderful thing that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” and that He is gone up, as Man, to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is sitting there as having finished and accomplished the work which He came to do: “when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” He is still there in His service as Priest.

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a litde lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hand.” In Psalm 8 we get the purpose of God as to man: in Psalm 2 we get the dealings of God with Israel, and the rejection of Christ. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” Psalm 2:7. Christ has this double character: He is King in Zion, and as born in this world, He is the Son of God

according to Psalm 2. Accordingly in John 1 Nathanael so owns Him as Son of God and King of Israel: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel,” John 1:49. The Lord says to him, “Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man,” John 1:51. He takes that other tide, that larger wider character that was purposed of God as declared in Psalm 8. It is not there that He is the Son of God and King in Zion, but that He is the Son of man. So in Daniel 7:13, 14: “One like the Son of man came to the Ancient of Days… And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” He is the heir of all God’s purposes as to man: all that He had created as God He was to possess as man, but (sin and evil having come in) He comes and takes the redemption title. Psalm 8 is quoted in Ephesians 1:22, and also in 1 Corinthians 15:27, where resurrection is spoken of, and here in Hebrews 2 very definitely and distinctly. We are joint-heirs with Christ: the thoughts and purposes of God are all in man. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come.” “My delights were with the sons of men,” Prov. 8:31. Therefore when the blessed Lord becomes a man and the angels celebrate His birth, they say, “On earth peace, good pleasure in men,” Luke 2:14. Then when He is rejected by His people as Son of God and King of Israel, He takes this wider title as Son of man, having charged His disciples strictly not to speak of Him as the Christ. As the Son of man He takes the wider title, but then He must suffer to accomplish redemption.

1 Corinthians 15 puts in a still stronger way His dominion over all things. “But when he saith, All things are put under him it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.” Then what is said in our chapter is that that is not yet accomplished: He is sitting on His Father’s throne, not on His own at all. “But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus … crowned with glory and honour”: we see part of the Psalm fulfilled, that part in which He is personally crowned with glory and honour, but all things are not put under Him. It is this that makes our new place. Therefore we find in this whole epistle that it looks at us entirely as walking on the earth; it is not union with Christ in heaven here, the church being only once mentioned in a general way. If I take the mystery then I get union with Christ, one spirit with Him; but this is not where the saint is seen here, but as a pilgrim and stranger in the world.

“This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” It is not like Aaron standing there, “offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins”; the apostle contrasts that distinctly in Hebrews 10. Christ is glorified in heaven, but the things are not under Him yet. There is far more of contrast than of comparison in Hebrews. Take Aaron’s priesthood, and you find a constant repetition of these sacrifices in contrast to Christ’s own sacrifice: you get many priests, whereas Christ has an unchangeable priesthood. The veil shewed “that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest”; now “we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”; and, instead of a high priest not going in lest he should die, we find Christ

seated at the right hand of God. Christ did not sit down till that work was completely finished; the Holy Ghost insists upon it in connection with the perfect purging of our conscience. You have in Hebrews the testimony of the Holy Ghost, but not His operation in us, nor do you get the Father; because it is a question of our standing with God as such. The question is, Does the sacrifice of Christ make the comers thereunto perfect? This part of the Epistle says it does: it is a conclusion drawn in chapter 10, having been largely reasoned out in chapter 9.

Now “the worshippers once purged” have “no more conscience of sins.” Christ purged our sins by His work, and the divine testimony by the Holy Ghost purges the conscience. If the “one sacrifice” did not make perfect those coming to God by it, they could not be made perfect at all. “Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” If He did not suffer for sins, He could not put them away. He must drink the cup at the dreadful moment. It was not a mere form of suffering that Christ went through, but suffering such as we cannot fathom. If the work was not done in that one offering, it never could be done, “for then must he often have suffered,” and He is now in glory. As regards our approach to God the conscience is purged and perfected for ever; “the worshippers once purged” have “no more conscience of sins.” These priests were always standing (“standeth” is the emphatic word in verse 11), “offering oftentimes the same sacrifice which can never take away

sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God" (He did not sit till He had finished His work), "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He has finished the work for His friends—believers, I mean j they have no more conscience of sins, "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is not a question of the work done in us; He appears in the presence of God for us, He is in glory, sitting there because His work is finished, giving the testimony that we are clean and our conscience is purged, besides that He has obtained this glory. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"For ever" is a very strong word in this passage, it expresses a thing that is continuous and uninterrupted. As He sits there continuously, so we are perfected continuously. We are always there before God according to the value of the work of the Lord Jesus. In Hebrews 10 you get not only the goodwill of God ("Then said he, Lo I come to do thy will, O God"), but the work done divinely, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost that it is done. I have got God's will and thought towards me; then by the offering of Jesus Christ 1 have got the work done, and I have got His testimony, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us … and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

"Whenever I know really by faith the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot go to God with the thought that He imputes anything to me: I may be in the dust before Him if I have sinned, but I know He cannot impute it to me. The thing is done once for all; as those priests were standing because it was not done, so Christ

is sitting because it is done. “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” Col. 1:12. Do not suppose that it is a light thing, having our conscience thus perfect before God; if we fail, we cannot be exercised about it too deeply; but let us be exercised ever so deeply, the question when I come before God is, not what I have done, but what Christ has done. If I go on the ground of what I have done, I can look for nothing but judgment. “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

The value of what I have done is that I am perfectly lost; but what is the value of what Christ has done? If I go to God really, I find Christ in the presence of God for me, the perfect witness in God’s sight that sin cannot be imputed to me. I cannot walk with God otherwise. Can I, if I am a criminal, talk of walking with a judge? Suppose a child has been disobedient and naughty, he cannot feel free and happy when he sees his father. You cannot have blessed and holy affection without a conscience that is perfect. You must get a clear conscience to have a free heart. In order to lead me to walk in fellowship with God, He makes my conscience perfect because Christ bore my sins, and He is now sitting at the right hand of God. He, “when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” He did not sit down till He had finished the work, till He had blotted out our sins, all our sins. If that work has not been completed and finished, so that He has no more to do, it cannot be done at all. It is the contrast of Christ’s work with the Jewish way of going on that we get here. Therefore do we thank the Father, “which hath made us meet,” etc.

There is where I see Christ. I see Him sitting at the right hand of God as our Priest, and by His work, finished before He sat down, my conscience is perfected for ever. We are now between this work of the Lord and His coming again. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

The question for us all is, not whether we own Christ, but whether we own Him as our Saviour, or own Him as Judge and then have to answer for all our sins. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, all things are not yet under Him; but the work has been perfectly accomplished which gives us boldness to enter into the holiest. There is no veil now. The veil has been rent.

If I look back, I see that the first paradise—the garden of Eden—is over; this world is not paradise, I am sure. Well, what is the state of things? We see in the world sinfulness, corruption, misery, wars: Christ is hid in God, but there is another paradise, and Christ is there, though we are not there yet. Meanwhile, “being justified by faith we have peace with God” —not joy merely, but peace. A very great word is “peace.” There is not a single thing between God and us except Christ as the testimony that the work is done.

It is interesting to see the four things in this chapter (Heb. 2) which made it necessary that Christ should suffer.

The angels—witnesses of God’s glorious power in creation— are in a certain sense passed over, but there is no jealousy in these blessed creatures, and when the Lord becomes man, they say, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.” The

first thing that caused the blessed Son of God to become man was the glory of God. Nothing but the cross maintains the glory of God. The more we look at it, the more we see that the cross stands alone in the history of eternity. “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.” If the blessed Lord undertakes the work, He must go through it really. If we sinners are to be received to glory, Christ must suffer. It is only through the cross, morally speaking, that perfect righteousness and holiness and perfect love are reconciled. If God had cut off Adam and Eve when they sinned, where would have been His love? If sin had been passed over, there would be no righteousness in that; but the moment I get the cross, I get the fullest and most terrible testimony of God’s righteousness against sin. The more you look at it, the more you see how all good and evil were brought to a complete climax there. You get sin and wickedness at their height at the cross. It draws out the complete absolute enmity of man against God. Then I get another thing, the full power of Satan. I see in the cross of Christ man’s perfectness as well as man’s absolute sinfulness; I see His perfect obedience to the Father and His perfect love where He was made sin for us; and I see God’s perfect righteousness against sin. All that man was in wickedness; all Satan’s power; all that God is in righteousness and love was brought out at the cross. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” The whole thing has been settled, and Christ is sitting down at the right hand of God because it is settled.

I get another thing too in this chapter—Satan's power destroyed; "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." His power is destroyed, though its effects are not yet gone. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James 4:7. We may listen to his wiles, but his power is destroyed. Satan put forth his whole power against Christ, and he was allowed to succeed apparently, but his power was broken in resurrection. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," Psalm 68:18. The results are not produced yet, but the work is done that will produce them.

Then I get a third thing. Christ came "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." You get the double character of Christ's work in Scripture. The blood presented to God gives us the propitiation side, while the scape-goat gives us the substitution side. The blood is the perpetual witness before God. The scape-goat has borne away all my sins, not some of them, not my sins up to August 10th, 1874, but all my sins. I cannot think of sinning to-morrow, and I can feel only the sins that are on my conscience (conscience deals with past sins); but when I look at the work of Christ He did not bear my sins merely up to a given day, but "once for all." The scape-goat has carried them to a land not inhabited. I get this double character of the work: the blood under God's eye, the perpetual testimony there; then, if through grace I do come, I find that Christ has been substituted for me, and so the whole thing is settled. I get God's glory requiring this sacrifice; I get Satan's power destroyed; I get the precious blood before God, and Christ bearing my sins in His own body on the tree. It gives me boldness.

There is a fourth thing in this chapter. Christ suffered that He should know how to succour them that are tempted. “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” The believer is looked at as a poor weak creature always in Hebrews. The priesthood of Christ in Hebrews is not about our sins (it could not be, because we “have no more conscience of sins”), but about our weakness. When faith has got hold of the fact, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that Christ has borne my sins, and I come to God by Him, I come in virtue of the work that has purged my conscience. What I do get in Hebrews is, that Christ can enter into all my temptations. I find temptations every moment, the world is a snare; if I want to live godly, I need His sympathy. Christ found none in this world. He, the most accessible and gracious of men, sympathised with everybody, but there was no one to sympathise with Him. He can understand the nature of all these trials and temptations of mine. He knows them a thousand times better than I can, because He has suffered a thousand times more.

There were then these four reasons for Christ becoming a man:— (1) For the glory of God.

(2) To destroy death which was the power of Satan.

(3) As regards sins, “to make reconciliation [atonement] for the sins of the people.”

(4) To be “able to succour those that are tempted.”

As to our walk through this world with all its trials and difficulties, He can enter into all, feel it all, sympathise with it all. Christ having accomplished the work, He could take His people straight to heaven (therefore the thief could go at once to Paradise); but in an ordinary

way He leaves them to pass through the world where they need His help in their weakness.

When it comes to sins, I get (in the Epistle of John) “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Righteousness is not touched: the value of the propitiation cannot be shaken. In virtue of this propitiation instead of imputing sin, the advocacy of Christ is brought out for me. It is not a question of imputing sins, because Christ has already borne them, and God must despise that blood before He can impute sin to me.

You find in John’s Epistles that he does not speak of access to God but of communion with the Father. Communion with the Father and the Son is totally destroyed for the time by an idle thought. Perhaps I may have been in a state of carelessness, and the effect of Christ’s advocacy is to make me conscious of this. Whatever the flesh produces in my nature God can have no fellowship with. But grace is at work: it is not a question of imputation because Jesus Christ the righteous is there, the Advocate is there to restore my soul. The effect of my failing is that He intercedes for me, and the Spirit of God brings home the word to my conscience, “How can you who are sanctified to God act thus? “I may get outward chastening too, if needed. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,” and there in Job He is speaking of chastening. There is not an instant that the high and holy God is not thinking of me a poor worm—not an instant.

“He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet,” John 13:10. The Lord is speaking of water there, not of blood. “You are picking up dirt in your walk: I cannot

stay with you down here, but I am not going to give you up." Where was He going? To God. Through the Spirit and the word they really were washed, and He washes the feet. Everything inconsistent that has come into my ways or heart, He cleanses the heart from it. This is not the subject here in Hebrews, but the ground and character of our approach to God.

If I fail through carelessness or want of prayer, I get grace working to restore my soul, as in 1 John 2:1. Never be content if your communion is interrupted; whenever you get into the presence of God, if the light of His countenance is hindered in any way, do not you be content.

There is no perfection for the Christian till he is like Christ and with Christ in glory. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; there is no other perfection for the Christian. We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"; it is looking at this that leads us on in practical holiness. When I know I shall be perfectly conformed to Christ in glory, then "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." If anything hinders my being positively in the light of God's countenance, let me judge it; as we go on with the Lord, we shall learn to see better what hinders us. There is growth in this surely, but there is no growth in the value of His blood, no growth in the value of His work. If we fail, grace is there to restore the soul to communion; and coming to God we find it out.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" —one set, as it were, in glory (the expression is a very abstract one)— "for which cause he

is not ashamed to call them brethren." This is not forgiveness merely. What a thought it is! It is God's revelation to act on our affections. What unutterable grace it is! How thoroughly we see these are divine thoughts!

The moment, beloved friends, God is shewing "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus," we cannot wonder at anything. When the angels themselves see the thief on the cross, the woman that was a sinner, one of us, in the same glory with Christ, and like Him, they will know the exceeding riches of His grace. The moment I see the blessed Son of God come down here, and die on the cross, what can be too much to expect? The most wonderful thing of all is the cross: after this no glory is too great. That which we have to desire is hearts that own the unspeakable fulness of the work of Christ, and in everything down here to glorify Him. We need the abiding sense of dependence so as to look for that strength which is made perfect in weakness, the care of Christ, the grace and mercy of God in passing through this world.

The Lord give you, beloved friends, to see the full efficacy of His finished work, and then to keep in the sense of entire dependence, seeking continual grace from Him. It is death to mere nature of course, but "It is joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Purged With Blood

Hebrews 9

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

In the latter part of this text we find an exclusive and distinct proposition—that without shedding of blood there is no remission.

In the flaming sword placed in the garden of Eden, after man’s disobedience, we find his positive exclusion from the presence of God; in our being out of paradise, we see the existing fact, that we are in a state of exclusion from God. And the question now is, have we any access to God—to that which is far above paradise?

It is not only that we are out of paradise, but that we stand in all the accumulation of our transgressions. In the first act of sin we find that the will of man is disobedience to God; and every act of his since has been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

When our conscience is awakened, we learn how productive of fruit our evil nature is, and whenever we see that all is gone (for innocency once lost is lost for ever), then we find there is no competency in us to enter into association with God. That which was man’s privilege in paradise has been lost, and we find ourselves not only evil, but daily accumulating transgressions. And can we then enter into the place of God’s holiness? This is the only true question. Let me ask you— Is there nothing your consciences own as needing remission? Murder and theft, etc., which are the consequences of the condition man is in, through

transgression, are owned by all as evil. The natural man may see the blessing of moral conduct as giving happiness on earth, but can discern nothing beyond. But when we look within the veil, it is altogether another thing. Our not wronging our neighbour may produce temporal happiness: but the revelation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ awakens the mind to a new inquiry —its fitness for the presence of such holiness; and this question is soon settled: we find it utterly impossible. It is not fitting us for happiness in the world as it is (that is not the question); but making us competent to be associated with Christ in the glory He is in when He appears. Does the world know anything about it? Is this what they look for? Do they not rather say it is presumption to think any can have association and fellowship with God? The world is a witness to itself that it presumes no such thing.

God's testimony is, "There are none righteous, none understand, and none seek after God." But suppose we have received an understanding to know Him that is true, then still the question is—How are we to stand in the presence of the glory? Can one in a sinful condition abide in His presence? Can we say we are fit to be partakers of the glory? There is nothing in the world fit for this. It is vain to plead the highest morality, or the most refined amiability; they are not the things to qualify us for heaven. We may find the character of evil all around: all are guilty, for all come short of the glory of God. The evil of the root from which it springs may be easily discerned in the fruits.

Now there must not only be a renewing, but a complete purging of the conscience. And I plead this, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission: all other

ways are the efforts of man to depreciate the righteousness of God— the substitution of something instead of God's way of salvation, which is most presumptuous and subversive of the great testimony of God, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. The accumulated sins of our evil nature must be put away. The Spirit of God can have no part but bringing us to the knowledge of the hatefulness of sin, and the necessity of the blood shed; and whenever the soul is awakened to what sin is in God's sight, there cannot be peace until the Spirit which shews the necessity of holiness, and reveals that of God, thus teaches us that nothing but God's own efficient act can put away, by the shedding of the blood of Jesus, that which God testifies against.

The shedding the blood brings it to the actual power of death—the taking away of the life of him whose life is given; and why? Because there is the forfeiture of life, and therefore the necessity of the life being given, the blood shed, to blot out the sin; and here we find Christ stepping in, and all the believer has entirely shut up in Christ, in whom we have a new nature whereby we can delight in God, and not forgiveness only; and this the consequence of the work of Christ alone, shedding His blood before God, offering His life as a ransom to God, presenting that which was adequate for the purpose, but without which there is no escaping the consequences of sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." The blood was shed, but it is manifested as His own voluntary act. At the same time His side is pierced that we might know the act complete. This is presented to our faith as a thing requisite, and which could be done in no other way. Christ had no associate, no companion; but once

alone and for ever the thing was done; and the revelation of it by God to the soul is salvation. This is a transaction between God and the Son; the thing done is the ground of remission of sins to every one who believes.

I have not peace in anything in which I take a part, but peace in that in which Christ acted alone. Man's part in it was only stretching out the sinful hands which crucified Him, and this is all he had to do with it. Is it, I ask, by any act to be done now that peace is obtained? No; it is simply by the blood which has been shed, the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of His death, which can give peace through faith.

If once we see ourselves morally dead in trespasses and sins, and that without the full forfeit of life there is no remission, we shall see, as regards the cleansing of the conscience, there is nothing but the blood for us. But who did this? It is the act of God to provide Himself a Lamb, by the shedding of whose blood the conscience of those admitted into the holy presence of God is effectually purged.

Can you say paradise is lost, and disobedience and sin are here, and yet I shall force my way back to God? What hope can those have who are not washed in the blood, taking a worse ground than that which excluded them from paradise (with thus accumulated sin upon them), treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and despising that blood which cleanses from all sin, counting it an unholy thing? He who seeks God's holiness and passes by Jesus, going to God in his sins, passes by the blood, rejects the testimony of God, and despises Jesus.

The Will Of God, The Work Of Christ, And The Witness Of The Holy Ghost

Hebrews 10

The basis of the argument of the apostle in this chapter lies more in the contrast than in the comparison between the law and the good things to come. The law, he says, had only a shadow, not the very image of things. For example, under the law the priests ministered in infirmity; now Christ ministers in glory. They offered oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins; He one sacrifice—once for all. Then there was a veil; now there is none. Then the priests could not enter into the Holiest; now we have boldness to enter in by the blood of Jesus. The law had a shadow of good things to come, not the very image. It was a mere figurative witness of the things that were to be spoken after. Just as the shadow of a man gives some general indistinct idea of him, but does not present a single feature clearly; so it was with the law. It could never make the comers thereunto perfect, as the repetition of its sacrifices shewed. Now the unity of the sacrifice proves its perfection; and the present position of the worshippers gives the most complete contrast possible to that under the law, though there is a certain measure of analogy.

There are three things brought out in this scripture: firstly, the source from which all blessing springs; secondly, the means by which it is accomplished; and, thirdly, the testimony by which it is known.

This last is a most necessary part of the matter, in order to our communion; because, unless we know sin to be all put away, it would be absolute madness to attempt to enter into the presence of God: a Jew even would not have thought of such a thing, much less a Christian. If I am not as clean as an angel, the presence of God is no place for me; and the attempt to appear in it would be to follow the example of Cain, who thought to stand before God as a worshipper without blood. We may cry to Him from the depths, of course, and He will ever hear; but if the conscience be not perfect, we cannot go into His presence to worship.

With the Jews this perfection was of course only ceremonial; with us it is real: with them the veil hid God; now that it is gone, and that we enter into the holiest of all, there is the greater need of perfection of conscience. This is why the aposde insists so strongly on the word "once." Indeed all the reasoning of the chapter depends on it. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." If those sacrifices could have wrought perfection of conscience, would they not have ceased to be offered? Christ was once offered, thereby proving the perfect result of His word; it needed no repetition. That is why he says, elsewhere in this epistle, that, if this be rejected, "there remaineth no more offering for sin." If that has not made perfect, there is no hope. If that be rejected, there is only "a fearful looking for of judgment." In the repetition of sacrifice there was a remembrance made of sins. It was not God's saying, Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Christians now have often a mind to be in the same place still, and call their unbelief humility. With the Jews, of course, it must have been so, because it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins. Therefore God changes the whole thing. “He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”

This brings out the first principle to which I alluded, namely, the source of all blessing. It originates in the divine will. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” It originates in the will of God, and not in the will of man: this is only sin. As a creature, man should have no will of his own, just as Christ had none. The principle of His obedience was not a controlling power, hindering the operation of His own will; but, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!” This was perfect obedience as a man. God’s will was His; and that will alone brought salvation and life, where man’s will had only brought sin and death. This gives stability and perfection to everything, to find its source and origin in the will of God. If it had been the result of my will, all would have been vacillating and changing as man’s will is; and, moreover, if we had earned heaven by our own will, there would have been no love of God in the matter, and we should lose the sweetness of holding everything as the fruit of divine love.

This will of God is not presented to man to do; it is the Son of God who says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!” Men could never have done the will of God; the second Adam does it. As belonging to the first Adam, our place is to confess that we have not done, and that we never could do, the will of God. When brought back to Him, of course we have nothing else to do, for we are sanctified unto obedience; but, as regards acceptance, it is the

result of the work of another. “By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” God does all for us in grace, and leaves man out in both the will and work. Salvation is the result of God’s will and Christ’s work. And it gives quietness and confidence in this work, to see that it was not a work done to turn God towards us, as it were, but that from all eternity it was counselled by Himself. We have the source of all in the unchangeable purpose of God.

Secondly, we have the work itself. It is a wonderful thing for us to be thus let into what passed between the Father and the Son before the world was; and most blessed to see the freewill offering of Christ. If it were God’s will to be the author of our salvation, it was equally Christ’s to be the instrument of it; and whilst He, in order to be so, makes Himself a servant, His divine power is still evinced in the very expression, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!” That could be said by none but by one competent to execute any command of God. Supposing that command had been to make a world, instead of to save one, Christ was the only one who could do such a will; and in fact, both divine power and divine love were evinced in redemption and resurrection, in a higher degree than in creation.

In verse 5, where the quotation is from Psalm 40, the verbal difference is considerable, but the sense identical. “A body hast thou prepared me,” and “Mine ears hast thou opened,” or “digged,” are both expressions of assuming the form of a servant. The ear receives commands, and the boring of the ear was making one a servant for ever. So when a body was prepared for Christ, He took on Him the form of a

servant. Thus far we have the will of God working in grace, and Christ undertaking to accomplish it.

Then in verse 11 we have the contrast between the priest standing, and Christ sitting. His work is finished—there is nothing further to do; and He sits down till His foes be made His footstool. “For ever,” in verse 12, means “continually “or “constantly,” not that Christ will never rise again; but as regards His sacrifice for sins He will never have to rise again to do anything more. Having offered one sacrifice for sins, He sits down till His foes be made His footstool. As regards His friends, all is done—not as to intercession of course—but as to acceptance and perfecting the conscience. But He has still to deal with His enemies; therefore is He waiting, still retaining His servant character, until God makes His foes His footstool. We too are expecting, till Christ rises up from the throne and judges His enemies. This is not done yet: else wickedness would be purged from the earth; and it explains the call for vengeance in the Psalms, which sometimes puzzles people, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered,” etc.; and, “Of thy mercy cut off mine enemies.” These surely are not the cries of the church. She does not want to see her enemies judged but saved. She goes to meet the Lord in the air. Not so the Jewish remnant. It passes through great tribulation; and “except those days were shortened, no flesh should be saved.” So they call earnestly enough for deliverance. But such is not our part at all; we are associated with Christ while expecting; in grace now, and in glory by-and-by, but not in judgment.

In verse 12 we have seen that Christ’s one sacrifice was. such that He has sat down for ever; so in verse 14 we read, that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever” —

or “continually”— “them that are sanctified.” Thus we are continually perfect; not practically here—though the Spirit sanctifies the heart and affections as far as this goes—but here the work of Christ makes the conscience constantly perfect. “The worshippers, once purged, should have no more conscience of sins.” Thus we are brought into the presence of God, never to have any more conscience of sins. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” We are called so to know Christ’s work, as to see that it is quite impossible for us to have sin on us before God. Sin cannot be in God’s presence. There is nothing but perfection there; and we are there because perfected for ever by the one offering of Jesus. We are in God’s presence because we are clean, as clean as He could wish us to be. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is quite true we have to keep a conscience void of offence, and not to grieve the Spirit; but we are sealed of God unto the day of redemption; and there can be no mistake. The Holy Ghost could not dwell in us unless cleansed by the blood of Christ; and then He is the witness, not to the fruits, but to the virtue of that blood. The fruits could not be produced unless He were there of course, because they are “the fruits of the Spirit”; and when produced, the order is, first, the internal ones, then all the rest. “Love, joy, peace,” precede the outward manifestations of the Spirit’s presence.

The Christian ought to keep himself in the present communion of his known place before God, because then, besides the joy, the Holy Ghost has its full flow in using him as a vessel to others, in God’s service; whereas otherwise He must occupy us with ourselves. I

have not only communion, but power, only as thus in immediate intercourse with God in His presence.

We now come to the third point. Having seen the source of all in the divine will, and the accomplishment of all in the divine work, we get the testimony to it all in the divine witness. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, This is the covenant,” etc., then He said, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” And here is the secret of settled peace. If I think that God will ever remember sin, I am denying the will, the work, and the testimony of God. In short, if a believer in Jesus, it comes to being a sin to have the least thought of God’s ever imputing a sin to me. It is just as much a work of the flesh as to commit the sin. He does not now impute sin, and He never will. “Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,” sweeps away every refuge of lies, and lays the blessed foundation for full confidence. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus,” shews that the very way we enter into God’s presence proves that the thing which shut us out is gone for ever.

“Our bodies washed with pure water,” refers to the priests, who were washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil. The latter is not mentioned here. After they were once washed, the priests needed only to wash their hands and feet. The anointing with blood of the ear, the thumb, and the toe, was the application of the work of Christ to the whole moral man. The work of Christ is always set first, then follows the work of the Spirit. In Ephesians it is said, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water

by the word." Therefore in the tabernacle the first thing you meet is not the laver, but the altar. As a sinner, I must first meet the blood; then I am fitted for service, by the removal of all that is contrary to God: but I cannot skip the altar to reach the laver; I must there own myself a sinner first; then I can delight in the holiness of God, and understand it, too.

The apostle then goes on, "Consider one another to provoke unto love," etc., that is, having got to God in grace, we must be diligent in acting towards others in grace. He introduces "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together," to meet the tendency there was to avoid public testimony, and to think that private faith would do in times of persecution such as these were. This was their natural tendency; and, whether it be persecution or reproach, it is the same thing. The latter is perhaps our snare. "And so much the more as ye see the day approaching"; for judgment is surely coming. If the power of evil increases there is the more need to cling closely to Christ. And we must not suppose that the world is improving because the Spirit is working; on the contrary, this is just the proof that judgment is nearing. The more rapidly souls are gathered in, the more reason have we for believing the coming of the Lord to be at hand. Whilst the long-suffering of God is salvation, the hope should ever be a present one to the church. It was the wicked servant who said, "My lord delayeth his coming"; yet He did delay it.

Then, in verse 26, it is as though he said, If you do not hold fast—if you will give up, and abandon this perfect sacrifice, then there remains nothing further; there is no year of atonement to come round again with a new offering; but just as those who believe are eternally

perfect, so he who refuses is left remediless. It was he who despised Moses' law who died without mercy, and not he who broke it; so it is he who counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace, that shall be counted worthy of a sorer punishment; not he who fails. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins"; such is the gracious provision for failure through infirmity—advocacy, righteousness, and propitiation. But if a man, after having seen all the grace and fulness that are in Christ, deliberately choose sin as his portion; and, rejecting the blood of the new covenant as insufficient, turns back again, then he must take the consequence. God's grace is His last resource, so to speak, for winning man. If that does not suffice, judgment must take its course; and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." On this ground the position is at once that of "adversaries," and we know Him that hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense." "Let us, therefore, hold fast our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward"; and let us remember that we shall "have need of patience; but yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

[End Of Evangelic—Vol. 2]

Faith And Its Footsteps

Hebrews 11

It is impossible to deny that there is some principle livingly working in the world which has signally called out the hatred and opposition of man. It has been so from Abel downwards to the present day.

The “course of this world” has gone on. It is now going on around us. But in the midst of this there has been, and there is, a motive acting, which calls out the hostility and proud judgment of the world. That history is the history of the town in which we are, as well as of Cain and Abel. In every age and in every country it has been so. We find the people of faith the objects of the hatred of man. But God owns this people. “Others,” we read here, “had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy” (v. 36-38). Here God gives His history of them. He does not interfere. He leaves them “destitute, afflicted, tormented.” He does not meddle with the world, and the world goes on. It will not be always so, but that is the present fact. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.” They go their own way, “the course of this world,” Eph. 2:2. It is not God’s world. So little does He meddle with it, that, when His own children—those whom He owns—are “destitute,

afflicted, tormented," He does not interfere. It has departed from Him and He will not own it.

We find the same thing in the message to the angel of the church of Smyrna, in the book of Revelation: "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days." How came that? could He not interfere? "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." There is hope in another scene. If a person will walk with God, he must walk by faith; he is walking in the midst of a world where God is not owned, and where God does not interfere—a world ripening for judgment. He sends a testimony; and just in proportion as we are faithful to His testimony, the prince of this world will torment us. "I say unto you," the Lord Jesus tells His disciples, "that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall the Son of man suffer of them." That is the character of the "course of this world." God may control by secret providence and overrule, but that is its character. Faith has its testimony, and goes on with it, recognising that God does not own the world. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned: and the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth," Rev. n:17, 18. Until then they must live by faith of that which is unseen.

This was specially a trial for the Hebrews. Their very religion was one of sight. They had a system to walk by, a visible temple, sacrifices, priesthood, and the like. Messiah they expected to see. When they did see Him, they hated and put Him to death; and this Messiah was gone to heaven. In becoming Christians they lost all they had possessed, and gained nothing—nothing that was tangible to the flesh. There was therefore the constant temptation to deny an unseen Messiah, and to turn back to things seen.

The apostle sums up in this chapter, and shews that all through man's history, no matter who had obtained a "good report," it was by faith. Men will count us fools. We may give as a definition of folly, a man's acting most consistently for an object that nobody sees, and nobody believes to be true. The saint's warrant is the word of God. The moment he acts upon any object seen, he ceases to act as a Christian. Christ lived, in that sense, the life of faith. It is the life of faith we get here, not salvation, or the finding peace in the way of faith. There is a single exception (Abel), or which may be so in measure. Faith is looked at as the power by which they walked.

There are these two things in faith: as it regards, first, peace of soul; second, power for walk. If I talk of faith, I may mean belief of a testimony—a person tells me a thing, and I believe him. But there is another sense in which I may have faith in that man; that is, I may put my trust in him. We often confound these things. There is the testimony of God, which I have to believe, and a trusting in God, which is the power of my walk. That which gives me peace is, receiving the testimony of God: I do want confidence in God for power of walk, but I

must not confound this confidence in God with His testimony.

We shall find the two things in Abraham. God called Abraham, and shewed him the stars of heaven, and said, “So shall thy seed be,” and Abraham “believed God.” In the offering up of Isaac (v. 9) there was not the receiving of a testimony, but “believing in God.”

Here I am, a sinner, with the consciousness of sin: how can I trust in God? I know Him to be a holy God, a hater of sin: how can I trust in Him? I dare not be in His presence with sin upon me; what can meet that? it is not denying the holiness of God; it is not my putting away my sin; but God tells me my sin is put away. I believe Him. This is not trusting in His power. The thing that gives me peace is my receiving a testimony. My spirit cannot rest, when I am conscious of sin, unless I know that it is not imputed to me: it is God who has seen it just as it is; my being content with myself will not do; I must have God content about me. There is a wrestling going on in the soul that wants to be content with itself. Believing God’s testimony, it would be at peace. It has never yet been brought to feel itself a thoroughly worthless sinner. The question is, not as to my not having sin, but do I believe what God says when He says it is put away? There is really a work of the Spirit of God in this, not in producing what will satisfy me, but in bringing my soul to say, It is all over with me. God often allows it to struggle on, trying to get better; He lets it, and, like a man in the mire who pulls one foot out to get the other in, its case is only worse. The answer to this comes in, the blessed truth of the gospel by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that “by him all that believe are justified from all things,” Acts 13:38, 39. I find God

perfectly at rest: He is resting in Jesus, perfectly satisfied. Christ says, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”; and God says, “Sit thou on my right hand.” I get rest to my soul, because I find that God has not one single thing against me. There is often this struggling under the sense of conviction before the soul gets peace.

Another thing is the walk of faith. Come sifting, come trial, come what may, the ground of my peace is never touched. If it were not completely settled—done, it never could be; and why? because God says that “without [not ‘sprinkling’ but] shedding of blood there is no remission,” Heb. 9:22. Therefore, if not perfectly done, Christ must die again, shed His blood again. But it is finished. The Spirit of God will make me see it; but it is done. I take this word of Jesus, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”; and I say, “It is finished.”

Now I find the path of faith opened before me. I am sure God loves me, and is nothing but love; I can therefore trust in Him. I know His love. He has saved me as a sinner, I can trust in His love as a saint. Mark the order in which things are presented here. To faith that which is unseen becomes as near and as real as though present to sight (v. 1); yea, much more so; because there is deception in seen things; but there is no deception in things communicated by the Spirit to the heart. Through faith we know that creation was by the word of God (v. 3). Then (v. 4) we come to the great basis on which a fallen creature can have to say to God. Let us look a little at the distinctive character of Abel’s sacrifice.

Cain offered to God what cost him more. His was not the case of a thoroughly irreligious man; he offered to God, worshipped God, and was utterly rejected. He was not an infidel or an irreligious man; but a worshipper, and a rejected worshipper. His worship was founded on unbelief. A sinner, one out of paradise, he thought to go to God as though nothing had happened! So with man; they think they can go and worship God, paying a compliment to Him. And what did he bring? The very thing that had the stamp of the curse upon it. God had said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” That is what comes of a person thinking he can worship God (“do his duty,” as he terms it); it is the denial of the whole truth of his condition.

What does Abel? Quite another thing: he brings a slain lamb, he comes through death (in principle, through the atonement of Christ). He sets between himself and God the testimony of a provided sacrifice. “By faith he offered.” Before the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation had been that such a thing would be done; as though I were to say to a debtor in prison, I will pay your debts. All that we enjoy as a finished work was a subject of hope. “Whom God,” it is said, “hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,” Rom. 3:25, 26. We are not looking onward to a future sacrifice; I have not a promise of getting out of the prison—I am out. We have

a testimony that the thing is done, and the Holy Ghost is the seal of the testimony. The Holy Ghost cannot testify anything to my soul otherwise than that the work is done, the debt paid, the door opened, all finished. Two things are spoken of in 1 Peter 1:11, “the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow”: we are between these two things. The believer stands upon one-half done. The Old Testament saints looked for both; we come after the sufferings, and look for the glories. The Holy Ghost has been sent down meanwhile to testify of accomplished redemption. This is not my hope. I am not waiting for my sins to be put away: they are put away. This is the basis on which we rest. God rests in the accepted work of His Son, and there I rest.

Next (v. 5), we come to the walk of Enoch. Here I find another thing. Of course everybody is not translated as Enoch and Elijah were. Not only can I approach God (faith does not merely tell me this), but that has come in which has set death altogether aside. Death belongs to me now; it is not (as it is called) a “king of terrors”: all things are ours; life is ours; death is ours; for we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s; 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. In Enoch we find a walk with God; a power of life with God, and such a power that death is not seen. We have the life of the Son of God, and not only His death; the blessed truth, not simply of a made sacrifice, so as to give my soul peace, but that all the power of Satan in death has been destroyed. God allowed Satan to do his worst: all that” the prince of the world “could do was brought to bear upon His Son, and it is gone for ever. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now life in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and

gave himself for me." "We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord … confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. 5. What I am looking for is not to be "unclothed" but to be "clothed upon"; but if I die, the life that I have is untouched, and I am "present with the Lord."

Here I find two things which faith recognises: first, the blood of atonement, by which sin was put away; and secondly, a power of life, by which we walk (not merely as His people, but) with God. The result will be that the power of death is entirely gone. We are identified with a living Christ—as we are saved by the death of Christ.

We do not hear anything about "condemning the world" in the case of Abel, or in that of Enoch. God "bears testimony to the gifts" of the one; and the other "walks with God." But I find another thing (v. 7). We are going through the world, and God has given us a testimony about the world, and about what is going to happen to the world—infallible judgment. He has "appointed," it is said, "a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts 17:31. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet [prophetic testimony], moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Warned of what is coming on the world, he owns and recognises the judgment, and falls in with God's revealed way of salvation; and he condemns the world. Mark this: faith "condemns the world"; not

merely is it belief in a sacrifice that saves, and power for walk with God; but it says of the world, that it is altogether departed from God, and is going to be judged.

We have the testimony of the word of God, that the thing that is coming upon the world is judgment. There is many a person who, as a saint, would rest in a saint's walk with God, but who shrinks from breaking with the world. The saint is so to act upon this testimony as to the judgment of the world as practically to condemn the world. Had we Noah's faith, as well as Abel's and Enoch's, we could not go with the world.

If His people are saved by Him, He is coming to judge the world; and therefore they have their portion with Christ, and in Christ, so that when He comes they will be with Him. As sure as Christ rose from the dead, He is "the man "God has ordained to judge the world— "this present evil world"; and so sure there is no judgment for you and for me, if we believe in Him. That by which I know there will be a judgment is that by which I know there will be none for me. How do I know there will be a judgment? Because God has raised Him from the dead. What more has God told me of His resurrection? That my sins are all put away.

There is another thing which we cannot enlarge upon now (v. 8). The apostle turns to another point, the practical active manifestation of the power of faith. It was this strengthened Abraham. He trusted, so to speak, blindly in God. God called him by His grace, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. There comes in confidence in God; not simply the receiving a testimony, but blind, implicit confidence in God. A person might

say, If I only knew what would be the consequences of my doing so, I could trust God. Then you will never go. Look at Adam; how did Adam act? He had present external things, but he took the devil's word in faith. God turns round and says, You have believed the devil, when you had all My good things; now you must trust Me. You go out not knowing whither you go, because of trusting in the person that is leading you. God will give light enough to say, God wills this, and I do not see another step. When you have turned the corner, you will see what is round the corner.

Further, when we have taken a step, we shall find that the Lord never satisfies us: He blesses, but He does not satisfy. When Abraham comes into the place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, what has he got? Nothing. He is still a stranger. This the heart dislikes. Hence the disappointments often experienced. As regards our prospects, we have our own thoughts about them; we are thinking perhaps of what we are going to make them twenty years hence. God is going to bring us into His rest.

He brings Abraham into the land; and then He begins to lead his thoughts to another country. He gets near God, and is placed upon a high enough platform of faith to see it is all before him yet. The Lord reveals Himself to him in communion; speaks with him, unfolds to him His purposes; and Abraham worships. He has his tent and his altar. And this is what God does with us; He makes Christians of us, brings us into the land of promise, and makes us see it is all before us yet. This is not the time for rest. The eye becomes clear in the ways of God; and we have the privilege of being strangers and sojourners

with God, and we shall be strangers and sojourners until we get home in the home of God.

Beloved friends, how is it with you as regards this? Can you really say, My home is in God's home (the home of your hearts, that is); I have no home till then, and I do not want one. There is not anything between us and God, no sin between us and God, or Christ is not there (He is there because He has put it all away); both cannot be there. Are your souls then resting on the Lord Jesus Christ? or are you working to settle something that has been settled already? The Lord give us to believe His testimony, and to trust in His power.

It is characteristic of faith to reckon on God, not simply spite of difficulty, but spite of impossibility. Faith concerns not itself about means; it counts upon the promise of God. To the natural man the believer may seem to lack prudence; nevertheless, from the moment it becomes a question of means which render the thing easy to man, it is no longer God acting; it is no longer His work where means are looked to. When with man there is impossibility, God must come in; and it is so much the more evidenced to be the right way, since God only does that which He wills. Faith has reference to His will, and to that only; thus it consults not either about means or circumstances, in other words it consults not with flesh and blood. Where faith is weak, external means are beforehand reckoned on in the work of God. Let us remember that when things are feasible to man, there is no longer need of faith, because there is no longer need of the energy of the Spirit. Christians do much, and effect little—why?

Verses 13-17. Not only were those spoken of here “strangers and pilgrims,” but they “confessed” it. People sometimes wish to be religious in the heart, and not to speak of it: there is no energy of faith there. To see the world to be lost and condemned, to have our hopes in heaven—such facts must, of necessity, produce a proportionate result, that of making us think and act as “strangers and pilgrims “here. And it will be manifested in the whole life. The heart already gone, it remains but to set out. This evidently involves open and public profession of it; and herein is a testimony for Christ. Who would be satisfied with the friend that owned us not when circumstances were difficult? The concealed Christian is a very bad Christian. Faith fixed on Jesus, we embrace the things we have seen afar off; we are not mindful of the country from whence we have come out, we have at heart that which is before us. Where difficulties are in the path and the affections not set on Jesus, the world rises again in the heart; Phil 3:7-14. Paul had not acted in a moment of excitement to repent forthwith; his heart filled with Christ, he counts all but “dross and dung.” Perseverance of heart marks the Christian’s affections to be onward, his desires heavenly. And God is not ashamed to be called his God.

It is either the flesh, or faith; impossible that, at bottom, there can be a stopping half-way. The aim of the Christian must be heavenly things. The appetites, the necessities, of the new man are heavenly. Christians may be used for bettering the world, but this is not God’s design. The seeking to link ourselves with the world, and the using Christianity for world-mending, are earthly things. God’s design is to hnk us with heaven. You must have heaven without the world, or the world without

heaven. He who prepares the city cannot wish for us anything between the two. The “desire” of a “better country” is the desire of a nature entirely from above.

Verses 17-19. Abraham held to the promises more than to natural affection. The strength of the trial to him was in this, that God had pointed out Isaac as the accepted seed, the one connected with the promises. Faith counts on God. God stops Abraham, and confirms His, promise to the seed. In obeying we get an acquaintance with the ways of God, of which otherwise we should have had no conception. Unbelief causes us to lose joy, strength, spiritual life; we know not where we are.

Verses 24-26. The carnal heart uses the providence of God against the life of faith. Providence brings down Pharaoh’s daughter to the child Moses. In the midst of the world’s wisdom, at the court of Pharaoh, providence has placed him (as it might seem) to use his influence in Israel’s favour. The first thing faith makes him do is to leave it all. He might have been able to succour Israel through his influence, but Israel must have remained in bondage to Egypt. Faith is “imprudent”; yet it has that eternal prudence which counts on God, and nothing but Him. It discerns that which is of the Spirit; and what is not of the Spirit is not of faith, and not of God. To hold to providence thus is at bottom the desire to “enjoy the pleasures of sin.” The world is loved, and there is the wish to lean on circumstances, instead of God; it is not a “good providence “when a man is ruined.

Moses appeared to be weakening himself in preferring the reproach of the people of God, and of the people of God in a bad state. He might see them in a sad condition; but faith identifies the people of God with the

promises of God, and judges of them, not according to their state, but according to His thoughts. Energetic against evil, he counts upon God as to the people.

Verse 27. The world would persuade us to be “good Christians,” whilst acting and walking as others. Called to glory, faith of necessity quits Egypt; God has not placed the glory there. To be well off in the world is not to be well off in heaven. “All that is in the world is not of the Father.” To leave the world, when the world has driven us out, is not faith; it is to shew that the will was to remain there as long as we could. Faith acts on the promises of God and not because it is driven out by the world. Moses “sees him that is invisible.” This makes him decided. When we realise the presence of God, Pharaoh is nothing. It is not that circumstances are the less dangerous; but God is there. In communion, they become the occasion of tranquil obedience. Jesus drinks the cup, Peter draws the sword; that which brings out obedience in Jesus is a stumbling-block to Peter. Where there is lack of communion, there is weakness and indecision.

Verse 30. At the blast of rams’ horns, after they have been compassed about seven days, the wall of Jericho fall down. Things which appear base and contemptible are not so when done before the Lord; 2 Sam. 6. To faith Jericho’s walls are not any more than the Red Sea, or the Jordan. Verse 31. Who would have thought of Rahab? yet by faith she acknowledges God. Faith makes nothing of distinctions amongst men; it says that God is rich in mercy towards all that call upon Him. There is no difference, for that all have sinned. In the midst of difficulties she sides with the people of God.

The confidence of faith is manifested in the Christian life as a whole. Christians are often brought to a stand, through measuring their own strength with temptation, instead of exclusive reference to God. They go on well up to a certain point. One man talks of his family, another of the future (if any have not faith, all we can do is to pray for him); in the various concerns of life our reasonings means but this, I have not the faith that counts on God. Faith has reference entirely and exclusively to God. Duty ever leads into difficulty; but I have the consolation of saying, God is there, and victory certain; otherwise, in my apprehension, there is something stronger than God. This demands a perfect practical submission of the will.

When the children of God are faithful, God may leave them in trial and difficulty to bring out that in them which is not of the Spirit. He may also allow evil to have its course and test us, in order that we may understand that the aim of faith is not here at all, and see that, in circumstances the most difficult, God can intervene, as in the sacrifice of Abraham and the raising of Lazarus.

Man looks not beyond the circumstances which surround him. To tarry in circumstances is unbelief; affliction springs not out of the dust. Satan is behind the circumstances to set us on; but, behind all that, God is there to break our wills.

[End of Evangelic—Vol. 1.]