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Notes On The Epistle To The Hebrews

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents to us the continuation of the testimony, by Christ Himself, of the Old Testament prophets. At the same time, this epistle unfolds the glory of Christ according to the testimony which these prophets have attributed to the Person of Christ the Messiah. He, Son of God and Son of man, came down here as an Apostle, bringing to us the divine truths; then returned to God from whom He has received the mediatorial office of Priest, waiting for the moment when He shall come in the governmental glory of Messiah. To this present glory of Jesus as High Priest in the heavenlies is conjoined a change of great importance in the operations or actings of God. A heavenly call takes the place of the earthly Jewish dispensation. This change of dispensation is one of the principal features of the book.

In this epistle Israel is acknowledged of God as a people, but is only recognised as such as seen in the remnant. Accordingly this remnant is not separated from the whole of the people, as the church is, but presents itself under the figure described in the emblem of the olive tree (Rom. n), forming the branches upheld there by God. It crosses the period of Christianity, partaking of the blessed promises with the Gentiles who are also admitted on the olive tree during that time. We are put, we Gentiles, by the doctrine of Romans n into the place given to the believer in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The church is not at all in question in this epistle, unless in chapter 12, where only it is named amongst those gathered by God for glory. The church is a heavenly

body formed outside the arrangements of God in the ways of His government on earth. It is not a continuation of anything that preceded down here. Amongst the blessed families of God it is the one nearest to Himself. The remnant of Israel, alive during the period of the gospel, belongs to it; it partakes of the nature of the new man (Eph. 2), in which it ceases to keep its distinctive character of remnant of Israel. But the doctrine of the Epistle of the Hebrews gives it that character, and this gives a double place to this class of saved ones, namely, the one of remnant of Israel on the earth, and the other of members of the church united to Christ in heaven.

By the fact of a heavenly call resulting from the setting up of a new dispensation, confided to the Messiah in the heavenlies, the Epistle to the Hebrews pours upon the remnant a blessing which is also heavenly. And besides this blessing adapting itself to the purposes of God towards His people Israel, the epistle unfolds to us the privileges of the second covenant, which can already be realised under the present state of things, although in truth the covenant may only receive its accomplishment in the future. What is also remarkable is to find some expressions speaking of a blessing which could have a fulfilment only after the rapture of the church.

There is no mediator for the church; it is seen in Christ and perfect; but the saints, seen as individuals, receive succour from the Mediator: this shews that in them there may be weakness or failure.

Let us remark also that the Holy Spirit, in putting under the eyes of the Hebrews these numerous developments concerning the change of dispensation, purposes by it to

detach the remnant from the first covenant, in order to bind it in heaven to a heavenly Christ.

Chapters 1 and 2 unfold those glories of Messiah which pertain to His apostleship. It is, although a new feature, joined in chapter 2 to the humiliation of Christ. The Prince of salvation, for the benefit of the children of God He is bringing to glory, has borne the suffering of death and passed through afflictions. By this He is made bearer of the qualities necessary to priesthood. Accordingly in these two chapters are laid the foundations of His apostleship and also of His priesthood: of His apostleship in that He as God came Himself to bring the word to men; of His priesthood in that He as man passed through the experiences of the God-fearing man.

Chapter 1.

Verses 1, 2. “God spake to us in his Son,” not in the Son as instrument of His word, but Himself, God the Son, by the prophets, but in [the] Son.

“In these last days.” At the end of the prophetical period God Himself spake to us: His testimony follows that of the prophets, but His is necessarily superior to theirs. As to “the worlds,” the Greek word in the Epistle to the Hebrews is used in a general sense to indicate all that is in existence: it is used in the plural again in chapter 11:3.

Verse 3. “The exact expression of his substance”; Christ, “the image” of the invisible God. He has revealed down here by His presence the God who dwells in inaccessible light. All His acts did shew that He was God. He shewed His grace when He pronounced the forgiveness of a

sinner, and His kindness when He took little children in His arms, etc. “Having made by himself the purification of sins.” The purification of our sins is here attached to the divine title of Jesus; it is part of His divine glory as much as the creation and preservation of all things. The title is the same also when it is mentioned a little further on: “He sat down.”

Verses 4-14. The Son, who brought us the word, is put in contrast with the angels by whom God dictated His law.

Verse 4. “Having become” or having taken a place. These words indicate the place taken by Jesus at a given time, without looking at what He was previously.

Verse 5. “Thou art my Son: to-day have I begotten thee.” Scripture speaks of Jesus as Son in two different aspects: as Son of God, born in the world, and Son according to the eternal relationship. This verse refers to the first of these: Jesus is seen here not in His glory as essentially divine, but in His glory as born Son. Nevertheless it is very important to consider the glory of Jesus as Son of God before His incarnation; for we could not speak of the love of God as we do, if the One He gave us was not His Son.

Verses 7-9. “Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” It has pleased God to give to these agents of His power this nature of spirits. But as to the Son it is said, “Thy throne, O God! “God, in the exercise of His will, makes of His angels spirits, or flames of fire; but of the Son we do not read that God makes anything of Him. God said of Him, “O God!” This Son exists or subsists in the divinity. Though the angels are in a state superior to that of man, they are,

notwithstanding their glory, in a condition very inferior to that of the Son.

In these three verses the Lord is seen in a personal glory higher than what is shewn in verses 4-6. There we have the Son begotten of God, here He is God Himself. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” How much doth this raise the dignity of Messiah! Nevertheless the same One, who is God, is anointed by God. He becomes man and is in a condition where He finds companions. Wonderful link of man with God in Christ!

“Thy throne”; not the Father’s throne, but the governmental throne of Messiah. “Thy companions,” or, as in Psalm 45 from which these words are quoted, “thy fellows.” When Christ is in the humiliation of the cross God calls Him His Fellow (Zech. 13); when He is in glory, God then gives us to Him for companions.

Verses 10-12. Here is a higher degree of Christ’s glory. He is the eternal God, creator of all things. It is no more Godhead hidden in the anointed Man, but the Creator-God— Godhead fully revealed. Thus, there is no room for misconception as to the Person of the Messiah.

Verse 13. The superiority of Jesus over the angels is doubly established. The Holy Ghost, after having put Him in contrast with the angels as regards His divine Person, views Him as man; “To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand?” This contrast of the Man-Messiah with the angels goes on in the next chapter.

Chapter 2.

Verses 1-4. This is an exhortation of the Holy Ghost brought in parenthetically. We must keep close to the

word of God, the more so as having been pronounced by the Lord Himself. How shall we escape if we neglect it? This greater privilege imposes greater responsibility. It is the preaching of a great salvation, made by the Lord Himself when on earth; not the gospel preached and the church united after the death of Christ. This testimony consequently goes on to the millennium without speaking of the church, a fact to be noticed not only in these verses but in the whole epistle.

We find also in this exhortation that the testimony of the apostles is swallowed up in the apostleship of Christ. Paul is apart from it; thus we see a difference between the testimony of Paul and that of Peter. In Peter's discourses in the Acts he never presents the Lord as Son of God. In conformity to the testimony addressed to Israel, he presents in Jesus the Man approved of God down here, risen afterwards, and glorified by God in seating Him at His right hand, "as Lord and Christ." Whilst Paul, who was brought in outside the teaching of the twelve to reveal that free grace of God which forms a church united to Christ in heaven, sets himself from the beginning of his testimony to shew clearly that Jesus is the Son of God.

Verse 5. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come of which we speak." This is millennial glory. The words "the world to come" do not apply to heaven, but there will be a change on earth. Angels are the instruments of the providential government of God during the present period. We are still in the age which existed before the coming of Christ —an age which began with Noah. But we must notice the two principal phases of it: Moses and Sinai, the time of separation from the age for Israel; and

Nebuchadnezzar in whom God entrusted the power to the Gentiles when He declared His people Lo-Ammi; “not my people.”

Verse 9. “A little inferior to the angels for the suffering of death”; “a little” refers to the degree rather than time. Jesus went down to the lowest of creation to be able to grasp it all. But this point is not unfolded here; it is only said that He went lower than the angels. Notice that in this place the death of Jesus is attached to God’s grace; “By the grace of God,” it is said, He suffered death for all. It is the Man who died to accomplish the grace of a God of love. Other passages present, in the death of Christ, the Man falling under the judgment of God.

Verse 10. “For it became him for whom are all things,” etc. The first object was to bring many sons to glory; but it was necessary that the One who presented Himself before the majesty of God for man should bear the consequences of the state in which man was found. “It became him,” God, “for whom are all things and by whom are all things.” It became His Majesty that the Prince of salvation should pass through the suffering of death.

Verse n. “For both he that sanctifieth and those who are sanctified are all of one.” Christ is a separated Person and exercises a sanctifying power. We, as children of faith, are sanctified by the double fact that we are separated in Him, and we receive of His power a new life. What He is as man, we are by the new life in us. When on the earth He was dependent on His God, obedient, separate from evil, etc.: we are such also by a moral fact, and become so practically.

“Are all of one.” We are in the same condition as the Head of this new family, which could not be the case with angels. The first time we see Jesus identifying Himself with man is when entering His public career. At John’s baptism He identified Himself with those in whom grace had produced the first movement of faith in answer to the testimony of God. He did not place Himself with the infidels who despised the testimony of John and refused His baptism, but with the pious remnant in whom, though very weak at the beginning, grace was operating. That class of people, put aside by John’s baptism, formed at the time the sanctified ones, “the saints in the earth “on whom the good pleasure of the Lord was resting; Psalm 16. But it is not said of Jesus and of men, that they are all of one: it is said, “He that sanctifieth and those who are sanctified are all of one.”1 “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Jesus gave this title of ‘brethren’ after His resurrection, not before. He has put us into His position, but not when He came down to ours.2 Verse 12. “I will declare thy name to my brethren, and in the midst of the church will I praise thee,” Ps. 22.3 Jesus knows so well the Father’s favour towards anyone who finds himself in the grasp of death, that He can declare to His brethren the name of a Saviour-God and reveal all His kindness.

Verse 13. “I will put my trust in him,” as God. Taking the position of man, He had necessarily to take this condition. He walked as a pious man in the dependence of faith. These words “I will put my trust in him” correspond to the expression “all of one” (v. n). They shew that walking by faith and realising the life of the remnant were in Jesus who identified Himself with the rescued ones of His people. The two things, the life of

faith in Messiah, and His association with the remnant of Israel, are found in Psalm 16:1-3.

Verses 14, 15. Jesus had to meet Satan in the very circumstances where man was. The adversary, in stamping death upon man's conscience, kept him in entire captivity. The law did nothing less than add to the power of the enemy on the conscience; but Jesus comes forward, and the enemy sees himself compelled to throw against Him this dreaded death. Jesus received the blow, overcomes death, and delivers His own.

Verse 16. "The seed of Abraham." It is always the same thought: Christ identifying Himself with the sanctified.

Verse 17. "The sins of the people." It is an expression of the Old Testament. The Jews are kept in view all through this epistle.

Verse 18. "He himself hath suffered being tempted." Christ Himself has experienced our trials; He has endured the temptations, etc. But let us not forget that He was found there not by necessity but by the Spirit of God.4 "Himself has suffered." There is no suffering when one gives way to temptation, but there is suffering if one resists it. In that case, the more there is of suffering, the more of spiritual life is revealed. Christ was really tempted; and though for Him the evil could come only from outside, still He suffered under the pressure of temptation. Having known temptation, Christ can sympathise with those who suffer being tempted, and He can come to their help. He does not bring any help to innocent man, nor to man in sin, but He brings succour to the saints in their struggle with sin. The power of temptation is less when it is felt than before it is felt or discerned. But when the struggle

comes we find Christ to sustain, however serious may be the case. If one has fallen, two things remain to do; to extirpate whatever opened the door to the enemy (in other words, to judge the evil to the root); and in the future to leave oneself in the Lord's hands. The two things are seen in Peter's case; John 21.

Chapters 3 and 4 are a digression; they present a subject totally different, which, though not the apostleship nor priesthood, is nevertheless attached to these two subjects. There are literally two digressions: the first (chap. 3) looks at the Son as set over His house, and is linked to the glory of God in chapter 1; the second (chap. 4) takes up the promised rest, and links itself to the glory of the Son of man in chapter 2.

Chapter 3.

Verse 1. This chapter begins by presenting an outline of the two first chapters. It follows from the apostleship and priesthood of Christ that there is for the saints a heavenly calling. 'You, brethren, who are partakers of it, consider the One in whom we possess such high privileges.'

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the holy calling." It is only in chapter 3 that the author of the book speaks to the Hebrews. It presents many indications that the epistle was by Paul; but, not being an apostle of the circumcision, he does not mention his name. He writes not as an apostle but as a teacher. The expression "holy brethren" indicates here individuals called from heaven, and walking towards heaven without meaning the church, although that is composed of persons equally called from on high. The holy calling admits, with the saints of this dispensation, those of the

Old Testament, and probably also the saints which will be on the earth after the rapture of the saints. In the course of the epistle the holy calling is put in contrast with the earthly calling of the Jews.

Verse 2. “As also Moses was faithful in all his house,” Christ is faithful to the One who appointed Him.

Verses 3-6. In contrast with the lawgiver, who had only the place of servant in the house which pertains to God, Jesus is counted worthy of a glory so much the greater, for He is the One to whom the house belongs; He is appointed over His house, and He occupies that place as Son. He Himself rules His own house that He has built. And more than this, this Son is God Himself: “he that buildeth all things is God.”

This house, as we see, answers to the tabernacle formed in the wilderness, and presents its two features. It is first the house of God as uniting the whole of creation (v. 4). God dwells amid His works. It is in that sense, and alluding to the High Priest passing through the tabernacle with the blood, that it is said of Jesus, “He has passed through the heavens.”

Secondly, It is also the house of God as gathering the called ones. God resides in the midst of His saints. We Christians are “his house,” the family He governs. This, though gathering those who are called, does not present itself under the special conditions of the church as a body. It is one thing to say of a man he is the head of a house, and another to say he has a wife. The called saints form the house of God existing now, as the house of Israel formed the previous one. The expression “house of Israel “signifies the posterity of Israel, but considered in the conditions and collective privileges of

the whole family. It is in the same sense that it is also said, “the house of David,” and “the house of Aaron.” There is this difference between the house of Israel and the house which to-day unites the holy brethren: the one was formed by descendants, and the other is by calling. Peter speaks also of the saints as being the house—a spiritual house; the edifice. The Epistle to the Hebrews views the house in the members which composed it.

Verse 6. As it is by calling, it is necessarily by faith that this house is formed. If faith is forsaken, the house exists no more. This is what the Holy Ghost is putting before the consciences of the Hebrews to encourage them to persevere: “Dwell in faith, else you will not be recognized”; for they were always inclined to keep to things that were visible. “If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” This advice, given for the interests of the house, is nevertheless given to individuals. Responsibility is always individual, even when it is meant for common interests. We must keep firm confidence and rejoicing of the hope. Glorious privileges which bind us together! The security of the saints is in no way touched by this; for the advice is for each individual practically, and not on the doctrine of security.

If there is a real giving up on the part of any one, it just shews that the plant has no root; Matt. 13:21.

Verses 7-19. In these verses are many exhortations to the Hebrews to warn them of the dangers of a fall. These exhortations are founded upon the declarations in Psalm 95, where the Holy Ghost puts before them the misery of those who, after having left Egypt, murmured and fell in the wilderness. To prevent such an end we

must guard the way. Verses 7-11 are a parenthesis, we must read, “Wherefore … take heed, brethren.”

Verse 13. “While it is called to-day.” It is “to-day” as long as the word of God is proclaimed, and there is a call on God’s part; the judgment will be the close of this calling.

Verse 14. Instead of the word “confidence,” we may read “substance,” “assurance.” It is a figure to explain something so very sure that we might think we could take hold of it materially. This word occurs again in chapter 11:1.

Verses 16, 17. The Greek is indefinite in this passage, but it is only a question of punctuation. The principal object of the counsel is to point out, that those who had sinned in the desert did not enter into Canaan. In consideration for the Hebrews, and not wishing to be too hard upon them, Paul gives us to understand that but few among them entered the promised land. The warning which precedes leads us on to chapter 4, where rest is spoken of.

Chapter 4.

Verses 1-11. The first portion of the chapter is occupied with two subjects: one is the revelation that those who fell in the desert fell by unbelief; the other, a demonstration that a rest is still before us. From which a new warning comes to us to be careful, to live a life of faith. “Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief … let us labour therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief,” verse 11. There are privileges which we possess; let us fear to lose them: we

are His house, and to keep to that state, let us take fast hold of what placed us there—the assurance and glorious object of this hope. We have privileges set before us—the rest of God and His glories; “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest,” not missing the walk of faith. It is always faith which sustains and takes us out of difficulties in reference to the place of testimony, or as belonging to that house which professes the hope, or our individual portion, or our possession of that rest. The rest that remains, into which we enter, is God’s rest.

Verses 12, 13. All that does not agree with that rest, to which we are walking, must be judged on the way. We are judged by the word of God. He Himself, by His searching word, discovers to us the state of our soul, and probes it to its deepest and dearest feeling. All that is within us must be revealed before Him. God, in reference to His government, generally judges only the outward state of things; but when it is His intercourse with His people, or His rights of love towards them, He judges more deeply. We are shewn by the historical books of the Old Testament how the merciful Lord renewed His blessing whenever the people returned to Him; but if we read the prophets, we shall see how God searches deeply and judges the evil which must not remain after the blessing has returned. During the time of Josiah we see a good return of the people towards God, and there was also abundant blessing; but this does not prevent Jeremiah saying to the people by Jehovah’s orders, “Acknowledge thine iniquity,” Jer. 3:13.

Verses 14-16. Though we have the word of God to keep us when in danger, we have also the priesthood of Christ to help us through the difficulties of the way. His word

judges in us what shews itself as the principle and will of the flesh. The priesthood comforts us in what is weakness or infirmity. Verses 14-16 are the beginning of chapter 5, without detaching them from chapter 4; it is indeed very precious to see the connection of the priesthood with our trials in the wilderness.

Verse 16. We go to the throne of grace, and not to the High Priest; because there is on the throne of grace a High Priest; and we draw near to God with assurance full and free. If we cannot approach God with the assurance of His love towards us, we are not yet made free. We address ourselves to the Lord in reference to the testimony, His church, and His work; or to the Father, in His relationship to His children; to God, when referring to the state of man, or creation—what belongs to the relation of the creature with God.

Chapter 5.

We enter here into the main subject of the epistle, namely, the priesthood of Christ. The developments of it extend to chapter 10:22. During the course of these developments a contrast is drawn between Christ and Aaron, and also between the two priesthoods with the view of unfolding how the new institution is far superior to the old one.

Chapter 5. The principal subject brought to view is the glorious introduction of Jesus into the priesthood, and the appreciation of the qualities with which our Lord entered into this new office.

Verses 1-4. The priesthood being a mediatorial charge, established to maintain the relationship of the weak and the infirm with God in His majesty, it was necessary that

the high priest should be endowed with qualities which enabled him to shew compassion to those who were weak and infirm. Aaron as a man subject to infirmities as other men, would have failed in this condition of the priesthood if he had not found in the priesthood itself what fitted him for compassion and sympathy. He was to offer sacrifices not only for the people but also for himself, and these offerings produced feelings towards others; for at the same time that they established his position before God, they were also the commemoration of his own infirmities. Qualities then were necessary in the high priest's person. But Aaron was trusted with the charge solely on account of God's call. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The high priest was called of God to that charge, and was formed by Him to maintain it. These are the two principles unfolded to us by the Holy Ghost in the Levitical priesthood.

Verses 5, 6. But if there are qualities and titles belonging to the dignity of a high priest, it is Jesus who possesses them and unites them gloriously in His own Person. In Him it is not a high priest as an infirm man under the obligation of offering for himself before offering for others; no, but we have the Son of God proclaimed High Priest by God Himself— Him to whom God said, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee… Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." Jesus has before God a position entirely His own, a position which belongs to Him as Son. And more: His Person presents the high dignity that He could not only offer the sacrifice, but could offer Himself. It is according to these personal perfections that Jesus was entrusted with the priesthood, and is now

before God. Blessed be God! who has given us for High Priest the Son of His love, He who gave His life for the life of wicked man, and whose mercies towards the infirm could not fail us whose weakness demands of the High Priest every day new supplies of compassion and mercies!

Verses 7, 8. Nevertheless, if Jesus did not require to be formed in order to shew compassion, He had to learn something: “He learned obedience through the things which he suffered.” He learned, not to obey, “for the law of God was in his heart,” but He learned obedience, having been obedient in circumstances the lowest and most painful which it was possible for man to pass through, for He went down to death. If Jesus suffered, it was not for Him a necessity which He could not avoid: it was according to the will of God who had appointed Him that portion in the world. The Holy Ghost makes us feel the right Jesus had not to pass through death, when He says, “though he were Son.” Jesus passed through all the degrees of man’s sufferings, so that there is nothing in the sorrows of His saints which He does not know, and is unable to sympathise with them in. But this school of suffering He went through, before being made High Priest, “during the days of his flesh”; and now that He has gone through it all He succours us. This is a case very different from that Of Aaron and his sons. It was needful that they should be in the same circumstances as their brethren, infirmity being necessary to them for the fulfilling of their functions, whilst in the new priesthood the One who exercises it is not a man in infirmity. It is the Son without weakness, who knows by past experience the whole truth as to the state of man.

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death.” At this time the enemy, who at the outset had sought to seduce Jesus by offering Him the things that are agreeable to man (Luke 4), was presenting himself against Him with the terrible things. Jesus never asked that any cup should pass from Him, save that one which meant that God would hide His face from Him. He felt in His soul at that hour of Gethsemane all the pangs attending the reception of the blow which God Himself was about to direct against Him. However, when He enters into the thought that it is the Father who has prepared the cup, He accepts it and offers Himself. In Gethsemane Jesus had to contend with the power of the enemy: “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” On the cross He bore the wrath of God, and cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“And was heard.” Jesus was heard, in the first place, by an internal deliverance, inasmuch as He was enabled to take the cup from His Father’s hand, and not from the hand of Satan. In His struggle in Gethsemane He overcame the direct power of the adversary. The latter, conquered in the conflict he had entered into against the soul of Christ, was powerless when he came in his instruments. The hour of the power of darkness was not entirely spent; but Jesus, delivered from the terrors the enemy had pressed on His soul, and free to escape death if He chose, gave Himself up. He advances towards the wicked and delivers Himself into their hands. Evidently His soul was no longer under the pressure of the enemy. But He was more entirely heard in His resurrection. “He

asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days, for ever and ever," Psalm 21:4.

"And was heard in that he feared." It may be quite as well rendered "on account of his piety" or "of his respect." It is the same word as in chapter 12:28, "with reverence and godly fear." "By the things which he suffered." Instead of fulfilling righteousness in an even path, He met with constantly growing difficulties. He suffered in order to learn obedierice.

Verses 9, 10. All trial being ended for Jesus, God brought Him to perfection by placing Him in a condition where no trial is possible and into which Jesus entered; being acquainted with the suffering of a holy man, struggling with this world, and the power of darkness. It is in this position that God has proclaimed Him High Priest. Thus Jesus, far from being with us in a fellowship of suffering, is the One who is with God (having overcome everything) and who gives us the help needed to bring us out of our distresses. It is as Man that Jesus exercises the priesthood, but, what is very remarkable, it is as the Son that He has been declared Priest.

If, by the very nature of this office, it was needful that He should be the Man-mediator, it was necessary also that His work should commence with God, from whom all grace flows. But the Son, before receiving the priesthood, was led by God through suffering in order to prepare Him for this office. This sums up into two leading subjects the truth concerning the priesthood of Christ which are put forth in this chapter.

Verses 11-14. Before presenting fuller details on the subject of the new priesthood, the writer of this epistle

stops to exhort the Hebrews, whose slowness in the faith made the unfolding of this truth difficult.

Considering the time that had already elapsed, they should have been in a better condition to bear the word of the doctrine of Christ. This warning takes up the end of chapter 5, and the whole of chapter 6.

Chapter 6.

Verses 1-3. Leaving the weak notions of Christ which a Jew or a Pharisee could have understood and admitted, “let us go on to perfection,” receiving the testimony of God respecting the Christ whom He has raised to a heavenly glory. Why cleave to these Jewish notions when in possession of the precious revelations which belong to the heavenly calling?

“Let us go on to perfection,” to the perfect man, to that stage in which our faith lays hold of Christ in His present glory and cleaves to the blessing which flows to us from this Christ in heaven.

Verses 4-8. To return to these early Jewish notions, after having received a promised faith in a heavenly Christ, is to be in the road to forsake Christ Himself. Now, from such a fall there is no recovery. All the characteristics mentioned in verses 4, 5, may be possessed in the church without being born of the Spirit. One may be a partaker of the Holy Ghost, that is to say participate in His operations, without necessarily having received the Holy Ghost who dwells in the saints and is in them the seal of their faith and redemption. Indeed, it was by the Holy Ghost that Balaam, viewing from the heights the beauty of the camp of Israel, rejoiced and exclaimed: “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles,

O Israel!” and yet the sequel shews that he was not a child of God.

“If they shall fall away” —have forsaken Christ—a warning similar to that in chapters 3 and 4; but with this difference, that the warning of chapter 6 looks at the Hebrews as in a lower and more general condition. In the former case they are exhorted to press forward and not to stop in their way. Here they are reminded of their responsibility as having been the objects of God’s care. Such care should be responded to.

Although we do not now see the glorious operations, which in the beginning accompanied the testimony of the gospel, by which through their merely external effects individuals were often led to profess the faith, yet things remain in principle the same.

A man may find himself in the sphere where God is acting in grace, he may go so far as to profess the faith and may after all remain unconverted, in spite of the share which he has had in the blessings God was pouring out for the conversion of souls. Grace has lavished her riches upon him, but in vain. At last the time comes when it is shewn that, though it has received the rain from heaven, this soil has remained barren. It is then nigh unto cursing and its end is to be burned.

Nevertheless their state gave reason to hope better things than this sad picture. The rain of the blessing of God which had fallen on them by the word had produced fruit. God could acknowledge their work and labour of love.

Verses 11, 12. But it was desirable they should shew fresh diligence to the full assurance of hope.

Verses 13-20. This warning being given, the Holy Ghost presents to their view the glorious certainties which God has given for the hope of His own—hope founded on God's promise and oath, and secured in Jesus within the veil, whither He has entered as our forerunner. This is how the grace of God acts towards the saints; it sustains their faith and their courage by directing their gaze to the things which are before. If godliness declines, there is a temptation to go back to works, to return to Judaism, which can give no help, but which on the contrary is a plague in the heart,—yes, in the very heart. But Christ seen in His fulness and glory gives fresh energy to faith.

Chapter 7.

We now return to the subject of the priesthood. Christ having been declared a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, His introduction into this new office is now considered in its relation to the principles of that priesthood, and in respect to the change that results in the priesthood.

But first there are some general remarks.

Verses 1-3. Priesthood and royalty were combined in Melchisedec. He was priest of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. This name Most High God is that which God takes in the millennium, and the royal priesthood is also that which Jesus will exercise in the times of the restitution of all things; but it is not under this aspect that the priesthood is unfolded in the Hebrews. With regard to the type of Melchisedec it is shewn that Jesus was appointed High Priest after that order; but where the present exercise of the office

entrusted to our Lord is spoken of, the Holy Ghost takes the type from the priesthood of Aaron.

“Without father, without mother, without descent.” Melchisedec, though a typical man, is nevertheless a real personage whom sacred history brings on the scene in circumstances calculated to set forth the great principles of the glorious priesthood of our Lord, who is shewn exercising a priesthood as endless as His days. Scripture does not speak of his birth, death or pedigree, thus making an exception, for usually in the Old Testament, when persons having a prominent place in the ways of God are spoken of, we get their genealogy, etc.

Verses 4-10. This king, priest of the Most High God, is a greater man than Levi, the root of the priestly family established under the law; for when he met Abraham, the father of Levi, he received tithes from the patriarch and blessed him: a first proof of the superiority of Christ as priest after the order of Melchisedec over Aaron, priest of the lineage of Levi.

Verses 11-19. The bringing in of Jesus as priest after the order of Melchisedec involves the substitution of a better priesthood than that of Aaron.

Verse 11. It is evident that this old priesthood was not perfect, since God, after having instituted it, speaks of another.

Verses 12-17. The order being changed, the new priesthood is necessarily founded on new principles. Christ, consequently, is not subject to the Levitical ordinance by which the priests entered into office in virtue of their hereditary right as sons of Aaron, and that only for a limited number of years.

After the similitude of Melchisedec He is in the priesthood, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. He possesses an intransmissible office and holds it in the power of an endless life.

Verses 18, 19. By reason of the connection between the priesthood and the law, if the first is changed, the second must be affected by it. “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof [for the law made nothing perfect], and the bringing in of a new hope by the which we draw nigh to God.” A perfection never to be obtained by the law is now enjoyed through the excellency of the new priesthood; besides the privilege of drawing nigh to God—a blessing never even suggested by the law.

“A better hope,” that is, the hope of heavenly things and the favour of receiving them, not by righteousness of man but by grace. See chapter 6:19, 20. Our hope adds, to the privilege of inheriting heavenly things, that of being brought nigh to God. There was nothing of this kind under the Levitical economy; all was connected with the possession of Canaan and the government of Jehovah. Far from admitting man into His presence, God remained hidden in the sanctuary. But the excellency of the priesthood of Christ further appears by many more privileges.

Verses 20-22. Christ is honoured by being made a priest by the word of the oath of God, and by being declared by His word to be a surety of a better covenant.5 Keep in view the parenthesis and read: “And inasmuch as not

without an oath, … by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant."

This covenant derives its dignity from the oath of God. It is as sure and stedfast as the oath of God is weighty.

Verses 23-25. The perpetuity of Christ's priesthood keeps our interests permanently in the same hands, for we have not to fear that our Priest should fail and leave the work of our complete salvation unfinished.

"He is able to save them to the uttermost," to save us in the difficulties we meet with in the wilderness. He is able to make good to us from day to day the value of that eternal redemption accomplished once for all. The priestly service is to save us in passing through the wilderness.

Verses 26-28. The position of Christ as High Priest made higher than the heavens, His blessed and holy Person, His finished work, are all in harmony with the grace which has brought us to God. But more, the care He bestows upon us here below maintains us practically in that position. Instead of leaving us in a stifling atmosphere He raises us (that is, the new man) to the level of our heavenly hopes.

"For such a High Priest became us." Because our calling gives us a place far above the heavens, it becomes us that our High Priest should have His place there also. In chapter 2 we have already noticed that it became God that Christ should pass through sufferings; and in this chapter it becomes us that He should be lifted up higher than the heavens. How much this exalts our heavenly calling!

“Such a High Priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled.” Appearing in the presence of God for us, it is necessary that all the qualities answering to the divine majesty should be found in His Person. Before God Jesus is a High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled; towards us He is a merciful High Priest, having compassion on the weak.

“Separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people’s, for this he did once when he offered up himself.” In the glorious place which our Priest occupies, He is entirely separate from sin, and He occupies this place after having accomplished on earth a perfect redemption, having abolished sin and overcome Satan and death. From the heights of His glory He helps His distressed saints on the earth, but He Himself is never in distress.

It is important for us to discern this position of Christ and to see that the priesthood has for its basis the complete victory over everything with which we struggle here below.

If priesthood is a mediation rendered necessary by the glory of the God who holds intercourse with His own down here, it is also the means whereby God unfolds towards them His tenderness and all the riches of His grace. It is the channel through which blessing is poured upon us from above. Here arises the question: How far is my infirmity the subject of priestly service? It is well to know at once that Jesus never intercedes for the flesh. His care has its object, the maintenance of the new man in the height of the standing He is in Himself before God; and He leads the new man in the path of

submission and dependence in which He walked Himself when down here. He is the head of the new man in us as being essentially in Himself the new man.

The necessity of priesthood is owing to our weakness, to the flesh being still in us. Accordingly priestly service dispenses to us mercy and grace: mercy which bears with us, and grace to help us. If it is a question of weakness or infirmity, Jesus comforts us, but never does He pity the flesh. It is written, “Ye are dead.”

Now, outside of this state of death for the flesh, there can be no occasion for intercession. Are we out of the path, walking after the flesh? Christ will then require that the two-edged sword, which discerns the state of the soul, should pierce us and mortify in us those roots of carnality within. This discipline will have its effects, and then it will be followed by the intercession of Jesus in favour of the new man; and God answering by the Holy Ghost will act in power to give the new man victory over the flesh.

Chapter 8.

Having seen in the preceding chapter the substitution of the priesthood of Christ for that of Aaron, we get in this chapter the position of the new priesthood and the change in the covenants which it involves.

Verses 1-5. The Priest of the new priesthood does not exercise His office on earth. He is in heaven at the right hand of Majesty, a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. Here the Holy Ghost points out to us that the administration of heavenly things by the hands of Jesus is the principal subject of the teachings of this epistle.

Verse 4. For if He were on earth He should not be a Priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law. Therefore, at the very time when the heavenly priesthood was being unfolded to the Hebrews, there existed on earth another priesthood, which though no longer recognised, was yet in operation. This was a time of transition between the two dispensations. We gather from this that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem. For what object? First, to shew the Hebrews their heavenly privileges; but also to bid them go forth without the camp. When the link of Christians with the world is morally broken, final separation is easier, whether the path is trod quietly in obedience to the word “come out,” or if it is a question of acting when events compel us to do so.

Verses 6-13. The priesthood of Christ brings in also a new covenant more excellent than the first, and grounded upon better promises. When God gave the first covenant, He also gave a priesthood which was the key-stone of the whole economy. This being changed, there is consequently a change of covenant; the first falls with its obsolete priesthood, and the second takes its place.

Verses 8-12. God had declared by His prophets that the day would come when He should bring in a new covenant different from the first.

Verse 13. However, touching the old covenant, the Hebrews are treated with consideration in this epistle; for the only conclusion expressed is that the promise of a new covenant makes the first one old and ready to vanish away. Yet the cross had actually abolished it, the blood of Jesus being the blood of the new covenant.

Chapter 9.

The covenant being changed by the bringing in of the priesthood of Christ, the whole system undergoes the change; the sanctuary, offerings, worship, the state of the worshippers— everything is altered. Here the question arises: How near can we approach to God through the new priesthood? The answer is: We draw nigh even to God Himself. This privilege is founded on the perfect value of the blood of Christ; which value is unfolded in these two chapters.

In chapter 9 the special subject is atonement; the blood shed and carried into the sanctuary. In chapter 10 it is the application of the blood to the individual, conscience being perfected through sprinkling of the blood.

Verses 1-10. Under the first covenant there was an ordinance of service with regard to the worship which Jehovah received from His people. A tabernacle had been made in which God concealed His glory; and sacrifices were offered, the blood of which was carried into this tabernacle by the high priest.

We must notice that it is the tabernacle pitched by Moses in the wilderness which is spoken of here. There is no mention made of the temple built by Solomon. The temple was not the shadow of heavenly things; but a figure of the government of God during the millennium. When the ark of the covenant was placed in it, it contained neither the pot of manna nor Aaron’s rod, which are both symbols of the resources displayed by grace in the wilderness. But the tabernacle, with its furniture and service, set forth the provision of the grace of God to help us during our journey here below. In fact this tabernacle belongs to a higher order of

things; for it was not, like the temple, the expression of a terrestrial rest; it exhibited the grace of God going with His people till their introduction into the heavenly rest.

Verse 2. The table of shewbread and the seven-branched candlestick in the sanctuary set forth the manifestation of God in man. God revealed in Christ the anointed man and by the Spirit, according to the riches of a grace which opens its treasures to man.

Verses 3-5. The arrangement of the holiest of all set forth the supreme God in the immediate manifestation of His divine Person: God manifested in testimony to man, as well as in government and judgment in the midst of His people; but remaining in darkness and keeping man at a distance.

Verses 6-8. The priests went daily into the holy place, accomplishing the usual service; the high priest only went into the holiest of all. He carried blood in, that God should not come out in judgment.

The Levitical service was for the children of Israel the means of approaching God. In the state they were in they never could have approached God in the light; therefore it was necessary that there should be this order of things between them and God. Evidently in an earthly system of religion, and under a regimen in which God reveals Himself to man in judgment and providence, God must remain veiled: only the grace which is in Jesus is that which fits man to approach to God without a veil.

Verse 9. “Sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” It cannot be said that, under this order of things, the conscience of the Israelite remained deaf to the

communications of God; but by the sole effect of sacrifices, it was never in a state to bear the presence of God. Their conscience was formed more by personal communications with Jehovah. David, for instance, in his wandering life had found God; and he was nearer to Him in the wilderness than the Israelites were when approaching the altar with the tabernacle and the ordinances, between themselves and God. This advantage was also limited: certain springs of conscience remained inactive. In that state they could not have sustained communion with God in that full light which penetrates man and searches into the motions of his soul. Never would a Jew have been heard speaking of the flesh, saying that it is opposed to the Spirit. In summing up what we learn in these verses of the priesthood under the first covenant, we find that there was a tabernacle in which God was hidden in obscurity, and sacrifices which were not able to perfect the conscience of the worshippers.

Verses n, 12. But the contrast of the new priesthood presents a much more excellent order of things, “Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands … but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” O! how far Christ surpasses that which was greatest under the Levitical economy. Heaven is the sanctuary into which He has entered; and the blood which He has carried in is His own, the blood which has obtained an eternal redemption.

We notice that the truths declared in these verses present the value of the blood of Christ according to the efficacy of the day of atonement. The unfoldings which

follow are, generally speaking, given from the same point of view.6 “By his own blood he entered in once, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” The sacrifice is shewn here as forming part of the glory of Christ; the humiliation of the cross, and suffering for sin, do not appear here. But Christ having obtained eternal redemption by His blood entered into heaven carrying the value of that blood into the presence of God. Moreover the relation of the blood to the state of man, its application to the sinner, is not unfolded here.

It is primarily for God that this sacrifice took place; to Him was the blood offered; and before Him, in redemption, as in all His works, things are set in their proper place before reaching down to man.

Verses 13, 14. If the blood of Christ belongs to God, it is nevertheless on man’s account it was shed. Christ, the anointed Man, offered Himself without spot, and His blood purged the conscience of the believers. But what perfection is in this work of salvation! There is no room left for man to take a part in the divine operations; a redemption which saves him is accomplished, but this work is entirely of God. Christ offered Himself by the eternal Spirit. The work of the cross is perfect and absolute; wrought wholly between Christ and God, to the exclusion of all outside. Christ in His death has been lifted up from the earth. “How much more shall the blood of Christ… purge your conscience? “The purification of the conscience by the blood is simply maintained here. The effect of the blood of Christ unfolded in its extensiveness will be the subject-matter of chapter 10.

Verse 15. The blood which Jesus has shed gives Him a title to be the Mediator of the new covenant. This blood could not belong to the first one under which purification only applied to defilements of the flesh; but it belongs to the second: it is the foundation of this covenant under which sin is no more before God. “That by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant.” This first covenant brought in consequences for which it was not provided: for law makes sin to abound and only acts towards transgressors by punishing them with death. But here is another covenant founded on the value of the blood of Christ and this blood answers for the transgression committed under the first.

It is a retro-active effect applying itself to transgressions committed beforehand, as it applies now to the state of the called. “They which are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.” Everything in this present dispensation is done by calling. Calling opens the door of the new covenant to those who found themselves under the grave consequences of the first, even as also to those who did not belong to it at all. Nevertheless it is with reference to the first of these classes that these truths are unfolded.

Mark how the expressions “entered in once,” “an eternal redemption,” “through the eternal Spirit offered,” “an eternal inheritance” contrasted the heavenly priesthood, and the new covenant with the earthly privileges of the Jews and their conditions under the first. Yet these expressions are still Jewish, they describe very little of heaven; the privileges of saints united to Christ on high are not touched upon.

Verses 16, 17. As the death of Jesus is the redemption of transgressions committed under the first covenant, it is also the surety of the inheritance promised under the second. The word inheritance of verse 15 seems to bring in the idea of “testament” for verses 16, 17. These two verses may be read as a parenthesis. Translating by “testament” the Greek word, the expression “there must also of necessity be the death of the testator” is made to signify there must be the death of the testator to make sure the provisions of it; for as long as he lives he can alter them. Elsewhere in the epistle we always translate the Greek word by “covenant.”

Verses 18-22. The second covenant grounded on the value of the blood of Christ is not on this basis without having a type answering to it in the first. This one, of whom Moses was the mediator, was inaugurated by blood; it had also, by the sprinkling of the blood, means of purification connected with worship.

Verse 22. “And without shedding of blood there is no remission.” There are purifications made by water; also the purification by sprinkling of blood made once; but for the remission of sins the shedding of blood was necessary: blood must flow, some one must die. It is important to notice this; for it often happens that a soul without peace sighs for fresh sprinklings. That soul might as well ask God to renew the sacrifice, for without shedding there can be no sprinkling. It is on the value of the shed blood that the peace of the soul rests. Now the shedding of the blood of Christ has taken place, and it can only take place once. So is it also as to the sprinkling granted to the believers.

Verses 23, 24. The blood of Christ purifies the heavenly places; even as the blood of bulls and of goats did purge the tabernacle. The reason of this rite for the tabernacle in the wilderness is given in these terms, Leviticus 16, “the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness,” v. 16. By this we understand the purification of the heavenly places. God has established His dwelling-place amidst His people. We are in contact with His tabernacle. Our transgressions and our sins are named there. What a thing for sin to be named in heaven! Perhaps there is more general reason for the purification of the heavenly places: the defilement of creation by the entrance of sin into the world. Creation seen as a whole is unclean by reason of the presence of sin.

Verse 24. The entering of Christ into the heavenlies, also His appearing in the presence of God, correspond to a privilege infinitely blessed to our souls. Not only is Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but in this place of perfection He “appears in the presence of God for us “and represents us there.

Verses 25-28. The end of the chapter is specially given up to shewing mat Christ could suffer but once.

Verse 26. For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: the offering could not take place without Jesus suffering. This connection of the offering with suffering is remarkable; the Holy Ghost does not separate them. Some speak of “unbloody sacrifices,” but sacrifice only takes place through the sufferings of death. If then the sacrifice has not been effected, it never will: for Christ cannot suffer any more.

“But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Until Christ, the question of sin had not been settled, but every trial of man under responsibility was being made; in the case of man without law or man under a law, sin had come to maturity. Besides, there was no more occasion for the existence of an age with man in the same way as before, under the same responsibility: the ages were accomplished; Christ appears; He closes the preceding period by abolishing sin, and opens new ages for the glory. Therefore He can now call souls to enter into this heavenly glory. During the call the “present evil age” continues for this world, but the called partake already of the blessing of the ages to come. He appeared (the Greek verb is in the perfect tense); the fact has passed and still subsists.

Verses 27, 28. The offering of Christ made once answers to the condition of man as son of Adam. The fate of sinful man is once to die, and after this the judgment. But Christ offering Himself once hath put away sin and removed the judgment for His own. He will be seen a second time by those who wait for Him, it will be unto salvation.

“Unto salvation.” This expression is in contrast with the judgment to come for man, after death. He has for his end two terrible passes: death and judgment. On the contrary, the Christian possesses two boundless privileges: he partakes of a Christ who died for his sins; and he waits the coming of this Christ in glory unto salvation. Jesus having abolished sin on the cross, the only thing that remains to accomplish after His death is His return to bring His own into the glory.

Chapter 10.

Having shewn in chapter 9 the value of the blood carried into the sanctuary, the Holy Ghost in chapter 10 considers the application of the blood to the conscience of the saints and the price of the sacrifice for their introduction to God.

Verses 1-4. The sacrifices offered under the law could not give a perfect conscience; “for the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin”; and those offerings repeated year after year, far from taking them away, were, on the contrary, their commemoration. The people were always conscious of sins.

Verses 5-7. In contrast with the sacrifices in which God took no pleasure, Jesus Christ presented Himself to God to do His will, and this will required a sacrifice which could take away sin. It is beautiful to see Jesus, when coming into the world, presenting Himself to obey, and speaking to His Father, saying, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!”

“In the volume of the book it is written of me.” Books at that time were rolls of parchment with a label on the outside to indicate the contents; it helped to find the roll when it was on the shelf with others. Well, the spiritual label of the sacred roll, the summary of the scriptures, is that Jesus Christ would come to do the will of God. The offering of the body of Jesus Christ answers to all the sacrifices offered under the law. “Sacrifice [peace offering], and offering [meat offering], and burnt offerings, and offering for sin.” The different sacrifices are gathered together here to shew under all aspects the efficacy of the one sacrifice by which there is not

only purification of conscience, but liberty and privilege to approach to God.

Verses 8-10. Two principal effects result from the will of God being accomplished in the offering of Christ Himself. First, the work of the obedience of Christ takes the place of the Jewish system. Secondly, a new people, sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, is brought forward in connection with the new order of things.

Verse 10. There is here a principle of the highest importance: “We are sanctified by the will of God,” and this will Jesus Christ alone has accomplished. This leaves no room for the will of man: the work by which we are sanctified is absolutely, wholly, of God.

Verses 11-14 are effects more particularly for the conscience. The offering which separates a people also renders the sanctified ones perfect; it places them before God with a perfect conscience. The proof given to us is that Jesus Christ having offered one sacrifice for ever sat down at the right hand of God, until the moment He will rise against His enemies. It is not necessary for Him to come out of the sanctuary to offer fresh sacrifices.

Verse 12. “For ever sat down,” read, “sat down in continuity” (eis to dienekes)7 Verse 14. Perfected as to the conscience; it is the subject presented in the beginning of the chapter. In verses 1 and 2, we read that the sacrifices offered repeatedly could not “make perfect,” also that the fathers had always “conscience of sins,” and in chapter 9 we also saw that gifts and sacrifices of that period could “not make perfect as pertaining to the conscience,” but in this verse of

chapter 10 we read, By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Our position before God is final; “perfected in continuity,” is the same word as in verse 12. As truly as Christ’s session at the right hand of God does not change for an instant; so truly does our position through grace remain unaltered.

Jesus will rise from His throne once, and it will be to come against His enemies; but the first thing He will do on rising will be to take us to Himself. There we shall no more require a priest to appear for us in the presence of God, nor the Epistle to the Hebrews to shew us our privileges and to encourage us.

Verses 15-18. The testimony of the Holy Ghost confirming the position in which the sanctified are through the offering of Jesus Christ. It is not a question here of the work of the Holy Ghost in the believer, but of the testimony which He gives to the work of Christ accomplished down here. There are three things to be noticed with regard to grace in what precedes: the will of God resolving on the work to be done for us; the sacrifice of Christ accomplishing this divine will; and the testimony of the Holy Ghost given to this will of God accomplished by Christ.

Verse 17. “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” According to these words it was necessary that the question of sin should be solved, for God does not say, “I will not remember,” but, “I will remember no more.” He saw our sins and remembered them, since He determined upon the death of Christ to abolish them. And now that they are abolished He remembers them neither to-day, tomorrow, nor for ever.

Verses 19-22 are application. The way into the holiest being open to us by the blood of Christ, let us realise our privilege of drawing near into the presence of God; but let us approach in the condition in which the sacrifice has placed us.

Verse 22. “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The sprinkling of blood is an introductory privilege accomplished once for all. “And our bodies washed with pure water “is also an introductory privilege, but which extends also to daily communion, making allusion to the washing of the priests; Lev. 8; Ex. 30. On the subject of the perfect sacrifice, we find many unfoldings to exhibit the value of the blood of Christ, and our acceptance through it, but we have relatively little as to the daily exercise of the grace which is based upon this offering. Why? It is in order to keep our thoughts and communion up to the height of our privileges, and to remove from us any occasion of delighting in our wretchedness. If we suffer in our souls, let us turn to that perfect grace, let us go to God directly through Jesus Christ.

Verses 23-31 are warnings. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith; … let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves; … but exhorting one another.” We must be bold enough to profess with all the saints the hope which God has put in us.

In verses 26-31 the author of the Epistle presents the other side of the truth. The sword which he uses is indeed a two-edged sword. What he says signifies, you are perfected through so perfect a sacrifice that there is only one such. If you despise it, there is no other to

which you may turn. The Jews, under the law, were always able to return by new sacrifices; under the gospel this possibility does not exist.

Verses 32-39. Besides the perfection of the grace in which God had placed them, and also the warning they received concerning the irremediable state of those who abandon Christ, the Hebrews had other motives for persevering in the faith. They had walked in that path amidst difficulties, and the Lord had given them the victory. A few more steps in the same path, and the Lord will have come. We must not draw back when so near the end of the journey. The just shall live by faith.

Chapter 11.

Following on the exhortations and encouragements which close chapter 10, we find in chapter 11 a review of the illustrious lives of the Old Testament, with the object of putting before the eyes of the Hebrews all the resources of faith. The subject is thus brought forward: “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul; chap. 10:39. Now this is what faith is.

Verse 1. Faith produces two principal effects in the believer: first, it gives to the soul a full certainty as to the object it lays hold of; secondly, it puts the soul in the enjoyment of the object.

Verses 3-7. To know creation is the work of God, to trust in the sacrifice, to walk with God on the earth, and be a witness for Him. Such are the great principles of faith. This comprises the whole Christian system.

Verses 8-16. The child of faith is heir of the promises of God. These promises are for the future, he possesses

them only in hope; but God takes care of him and by marvellous ways leads him through this world towards the goal where they will be accomplished.

Verses 8-10. At present the heir possesses nothing, save the earnest of the Spirit. Abraham, though heir of Canaan, dwelt there as a stranger; but he set his estimation of the promises high enough, so as to meet with Him who built the city.

Verses n, 12. The power of faith acts in the things which are necessary for the accomplishment of what is promised. We must wait by faith for the blessing of the church in another world, and realise now by the same faith the things which work together to the accomplishing of this hope, for instance, the work of ministry.

Verse 13. All these died in faith; in an attitude of faith waiting for the promises. This is how the Hebrews should die if death overtook them before the accomplishment of their hope.

Verse 16. Because these men of faith formed a heavenly people, God was not ashamed to connect their name with His. The same thing occurs for the saints of this dispensation; therefore this is said to the Hebrews.

Verses 17-19. Meanwhile faith is tried, Abraham had to sacrifice the one on whose head the promises had been put, so as to hold them from God only. There is much power in this example set before the Hebrews, for they also were to follow Abraham; they were to leave the Jewish Christ to receive a risen and heavenly Christ.

Verse 19. In the trial one always makes new discoveries as to the resources which are in God. The measure of

grace which sustains us in ordinary times is not sufficient in the day of trial', but then the glorious God unfolds new riches of His grace, to make a way out for His child. It is when death was ready to strike Isaac that Abraham tasted the grace of God who raises the dead. His faith was not confounded.

Verse 20. Very little is said of Isaac himself. This agrees with the place given him as type of Christ in the resurrection state, where He makes sure the promises and receives the church. Jacob, seen as a typical person, represents more Israel.

Verse 21. The blessing given to the sons of Joseph conferred upon them a double portion; Gen. 48. In fact, that portion is the birthright (Deut. 21:17), the portion of Christ. Therefore there is worship on Jacob's part, Christ being discerned in this prophecy.

Verse 22. Lastly one simple principle of faith is shewn us in the life of Joseph: his faith looked to the future. The various examples taken from the life of the patriarchs, present to us faith in connection with the promises of God. The life of Moses, related in what follows, presents faith, in connection with the system appertaining to these promises.

Verses 23-29. The testimony God gives of the faithfulness of Moses in Egypt is, that he illustrated the faith which stands true in the presence of evil, and firm before difficulties. We learn by this example that providence is not the rule of conduct for faith: for if ever providence was clearly seen, it was indeed by Moses being placed in Pharaoh's court. Was he to remain there?

Verses 32-40. The list of the men of faith under the Old Testament is not yet exhausted; but the example of those who served the Lord after the establishment of the people in the promised land would be less appropriate to the need of the Hebrews, so the author of the epistle confines himself to presenting them in a summary way, and citing only the names of some. They also were commendable for their faith, and have not as yet received the promise. There are better things for us, and though they do not appear to inherit all of them, they have nevertheless a part in them; they wait to receive them with us.

Chapters 12 and 13 are exhortations and encouragements given to the Hebrews. Wishes made in their favour.

Chapter 12.

Verses 1, 2. A cloud of witnesses bear witness to the success of faith; and it is for us an encouragement to run the race. But, far above all these witnesses there is One who has shewn faith in its perfection, it is Jesus; and the word directs our eyes towards Him. “The race that is set before us.” Allusion is made to the games of the Greeks; these games were contests in which there were different exercises, such as wrestlings, racings, etc. Responsibility attaches to the race of the Christian, and the Lord will deal in judgment with our race. “Jesus the author and finisher of faith.” In all that touches faith, Jesus has had the pre-eminence, having passed through all difficulties and having overcome them all.

Verses 3, 4. If we have to bear with the contradiction of men, it is no reason for fainting. Christ has met and vanquished this contradiction; in Him we shall also be

conquerors. “Resisted unto blood.” In persecutions; Luke 12.

Verse 5. But persecution may assume the character of discipline from the Lord. If so, there are two things to heed: not to despise it, for it is chastening; not to faint, for it is sent in grace.

Verses 6, 11. Satan is the instrument of the troubles we suffer, be it under persecution or under the discipline of God; but it is from God Himself we receive the strokes. Job received the blows God had intended for him, by the instrumentality of the enemy. Jesus bore the power and wickedness of Satan in the act of drinking the cup of His own death, and yet He took this cup from His Father’s hand. We find the same connection of facts in Psalm 118:10, 13, 18.

Verses 17, 18. Several warnings are given to the Hebrews in verses 12-16. Here are now two motives given to support them: “For you know how that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing, he [Esau] was rejected.… For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched.” You are waiting for a fine inheritance: would you make light of it as did Esau? And consider also that it is not the case with you as with those who were at Sinai; you are come unto mount Sion, you have to do with grace which is followed only by judgment.

Verses 22-24. The enumeration of the families which compose this glorious company gives to us the whole history of the last days. The order to be traced seems to me to be this: the enumeration begins at fhe first step of the ladder to go up to its highest step, even to God, and comes down again to the millennium. There are eight

particular subjects. The conjunction “and” which unites them, being repeated each time, serves to distinguish them.

“Unto mount Sion,” the seat of royal grace. When all was lost and the name Ichabod [the glory is departed] was written on Israel, God intervened for His people. He gave prophets to bring back this erring people; but especially David, the king, through grace. It is by his service the Lord established His ark in rest in Sion. There was through grace the mount of deliverance for Israel after they had failed in everything. This grace abides for the future: Christ shall reign in Sion. “And unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” The church in its heavenly position is seen in contrast with Sion on the earth.

“And to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly.” It is the universal congregation of the heavens, seen as a whole. “And to the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven “is the church in particular. “And to God the judge of all.” It is God in His character of Judge, for the bringing in of the millennium. The church being mentioned, we reach to God the centre of everything.

“And to the spirits of just men made perfect”: the saints of various dispensations before the church. Having ascended up to God, we find the saints of the Old Testament. They are “made perfect,” they have run the race, but have not yet received the crown. It is with them as with those who, among the Greeks, had won the prize in the stadium; the reward was not given immediately. They had to wait for a special festival on that occasion.

“And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” Jesus pressed to accomplish the promises and to bless Israel.

“And to the blood of sprinkling” is the blood of the new covenant. Although it has an application at this present time, this blood belongs especially to the millennium.

Verses 25-27 are a very remarkable testimony to the authority of Christ. He who speaks from heaven now is the One who shook the earth in the day of Sinai, and who will soon shake the heavens and the earth.

Chapter 13.

Verses 20, 21. God is He “that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” The blood shed by Jesus gave Him the right to rise from death with the same efficacy for others.

1 This contradicts the doctrine of the Irvingites, whose error is to identify Christ with sinners and not with the sanctified.

2 To shew the preference He had for His disciples when on the earth, the Lord said, “My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God”; but it was not for them a title of relationship with Jesus.

3 We remark in Psalm 22 three classes of people associated with the joy of Messiah delivered from death. In verse 22 are those whom Jesus names His “brethren,” and of whom He makes a congregation— the “little flock”—“Go and tell my brethren.” In verse 25 is “the great-congregation”: Judah and Israel; in verse 27 “All the ends of the earth.” The title of “brethren” belongs to the remnant which will be on the earth after the rapture of the saints, also to the one which exists now, and the

blessing of Hebrews 2 will be free to have its course in favour of the saints till the moment of Christ's appearing.

4 "Being tempted" is to be induced to act beneath the position in which we are before God. There man fell. Jesus alone could stand. The Christian is also tempted; the worldly man, as slave, is the more easily carried away by Satan.

5 A testament (or covenant) is an ordering, an appointment of God for man, by which man maintains intercourse with God.

6 Chapter 9 of Hebrews takes us back to Leviticus 16 and, though not a complete exposition of its contents, presents the leading features. On the great day of atonement the service of the priesthood consisted in this: the sacrificing of the goat offered to Jehovah and whose blood was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat; the sprinkling of blood on the tabernacle; and the sending off of the scapegoat to the wilderness, bearing away the sins of the people. We find these three actions in this chapter now before us: the blood put upon the mercy-seat (v. 12); the sprinkling on the tabernacle (v. 23); and the scapegoat bearing sins (v. 28).

7 See Notes in the New Translation of the Bible, Hebrews 5:6.

All Of One

Hebrews 2

We never know our place rightly till we know Christ's place. What we find in this chapter is, that we are completely associated and identified with Him. "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Then God's way is to settle our relationship with God Himself first, and then to pass us through the wilderness, till the time comes for the full accomplishment of His purpose in glory. If we do not connect our place with Christ, we do not get the key to it. He passed through the wilderness, dying for us too, and He is now crowned with glory and honour. This chapter puts Him in this place.

The wilderness is no part of God's purpose for us at all; it is a part of His ways, not His purpose. Christ could take the thief straight to paradise without any wilderness at all, so absolute was that work of His in its efficacy. Bringing us to God and into the wilderness is the same thing. Christ's work is complete, and the effect of redemption is to bring us into the wilderness. The Israelites began the wilderness, properly speaking, after Sinai. As soon as they had passed through the Red Sea, they could say, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation," Ex. 15:13. At Sinai Jehovah said, "Ye have seen … how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself," Ex. 19:4. They were brought to the wilderness and to God.

Exodus 15 goes on to shew God's purpose: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Jehovah, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Jehovah, which thy hands have established," Ex. 15:17. That Israel had not got, and we have not got it, but Christ has entered in, and that is the difference.

If you look at Exodus 3, you will see that the wilderness formed no part of God's purpose: "And I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." In Exodus 6 you find the same, and in Exodus 15, where faith celebrates redemption, you have the same thing. "Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation." This leaps right over the wilderness. He did bring them through the wilderness, but it was no part of His purpose for them. Redemption was accomplished when they were brought through the Red Sea. In that way the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce: in both there was the passing on dry ground through the water that formed the barrier, the real difference of meaning being, that in the Red Sea we get Christ's death and resurrection—not merely blood-shedding, we had that in Egypt—and in the Jordan, our death with Christ.

The blood at the passover kept God out, but the Israelites were in Egypt all the while. In Christ's death and resurrection there was the bringing us out of the state we were in into a new one; in Christ risen we have a totally new position. Christ coming and taking our place died to that, not merely bearing our sins—though that is true too—but He was made sin for us; and now He is risen up into a new place as Man, a place that is

the effect of redemption, and He is gone into glory too. This brings us into this totally new place, which forms part of the counsels of God.

The first man was the responsible man; the second Man was the man of God's counsels. At the beginning all depended on Adam, and he totally failed: then Christ becomes Man, according to the counsels of God, and in His own Person He takes manhood into the place of God's counsels about man. The wilderness came in by the bye, very profitable, but only by the bye.

I have got God perfectly glorified in a Man—much more than man, for He is "God over all, blessed for ever"—but still in a man. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead," 1 Cor. 15:21. He comes into this scene of ruin, manifests God in it, and then manifests man to God. God raises Him from death, and puts Him into His own glory as Man. In virtue of the work which has glorified God, man is at the right hand of God. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself [the second step down], and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," Phil. 2:6-9. Because of that He is in glory. As the eternal Son He was always in glory, and He could speak of Himself as "the Son of man who is in heaven." In John 13 you find it there. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him," John 13:32. He cannot wait for

the kingdom and glory that are coming, but personally He glorifies Him at His own right hand.

Then, redemption having been accomplished, the people are brought out through redemption. We get in Jordan, not Christ dying for us, as at the Red Sea, but our dying with Christ; consequently there is not the smiting of the water, as at the Red Sea; there is no judgment, but the ark stood in the midst of Jordan till all the people passed over.

Canaan was a rest in the purpose of God, but instead of that the Israelites found it a place of fighting; Joshua met there the man with a drawn sword in his hand. What characterises heaven now is fighting.

Therefore there, and not till there, we get circumcision: the manna ceased, and they ate the old corn of the land. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand,” Eph. 6:12, 13.

We get the two things: the accomplishment of redemption brings us into the wilderness, and the purpose of God brings us into heavenly places. Faith realises these, redemption perfectly accomplished, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God because it is accomplished. He is not on His own throne at all; “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” Psalm 10:1.

Then the Holy Ghost comes down, and connects us with Him in that place. The believer, therefore, if he knows his place, says, “Thou hast guided them by thy strength

unto thy holy habitation." That is all settled, but we are not there, except in spirit; we are in the wilderness all the way.

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come … can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins," Heb. 10:1, 2. "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." They were always at it, clearing people of sins; every sin committed required a fresh sacrifice. This is in contrast to Christianity, though people do not see it; for inasmuch as Christ is sitting down, the believer, not like the Jews, has no "more conscience of sins." Then, as Christ is sitting there because He has finished the work, our conscience is perfect, not we: it is "once "and for all. If failure comes in, "we have an advocate with the Father"; but the Christian who knows Christ's place has "no more conscience of sins." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. 10:14. "For ever" here is a specific word, meaning continuous, not eternal, though, of course, it is eternal. The point here is, that as Christ is always, continuously, sitting there, my conscience is continuously perfect, because it is the Person who bore my sins that is sitting there. The Christian is not in his right place till he is there—he may be on the way. "No more conscience of sins"—that is what I get in scripture. "Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity," Psalm 32:2. He has not got the blessedness, if he thinks it possible that sin can be imputed to him. Such is the

basis— that, and the Holy Ghost coming down from heaven—of our whole Christian place. “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” Heb. 9:22. It does not say, “without sprinkling of blood” (though the blood is sprinkled); but if anything is to be done for sin now, you must get the blood shed. “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,” Heb. 9:26. If we are believers, we are under the effect of the work of Christ that never changes. We shall know more of its blessedness and value, but there is no renewing of this work of Christ in any sort.

This is only the entrance into the wilderness. He does not bring us into the desert till we are out of Egypt; until Christ has met God for us, we are not brought into the desert at all. We have trials and exercises there, but it is redemption that brings us into it; our path flows from that. In telling of redemption in Egypt, there is not a word about the wilderness; but when the Israelites have gone through it, then, in Deuteronomy 8, the wilderness is reviewed. He talks of the forty years there. “And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no,” Deut. 8:2. There we find all these ways of God proving the heart, yet He was watching their clothes and their feet all the time. He adds another thing— “to do thee good at thy latter end.” Redemption was at the beginning, Canaan at the latter end; the wilderness comes between the two. Through the wilderness we have God with us, and for us, not imputing anything to

us, but exercising our hearts. These are the ways of God, the government of God, and so on.

He begins by leading a redeemed people to God. The force of Romans 8:9 is, that we are in a new place: “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” The flesh is not your standing or place before God at all: before God you are not a child of Adam, but a redeemed child of God.

Hebrews 2 puts the world to come in connection with Christ. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” We speak of a world where Christ shall reign; that is God’s purpose, and it is not come at all. “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” Job says the same thing; he wonders why God takes such trouble about him. “What is man that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, and let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?” Job 7:17-19. Here is the answer: “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thine hands. But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.” Christ, who is the Man of God’s counsels to be over all things, is now sitting at the right hand of God, “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” He has accomplished redemption, and gone to the right hand of God as Man, and He is sitting there till the time comes when He shall take His great power, and reign. All things are not put

under Him yet, but He is crowned with glory and honour.

In Psalm 2 you find Christ spoken of as come to this world, and rejected, and then it goes on to say, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, Jehovah shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” In that character as King in Zion, and Son of God, as born into this world, He was utterly rejected; yet God will set Him on His holy hill in Zion. Psalm 8 tells us what He will be when He is rejected.

To shew how in scripture all hangs together, when Nathanael owns Him as Son of God and King of Israel according to Psalm 2, the Lord answers, “Verily, verily, I say unto you. Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man,” John 1:51. Psalm 8 comes in, and we see the highest creatures subject to the Son of man. He was Son of God and King of Zion (Son of God, even as born into this world). It was all right for Nathanael to own Him as such, but that is not going to be now; so He speaks of Himself as Son of man. In Psalm 8 you get the purpose of God; the Son of man is to be set over all the works of His hands. We do not see the works set under Him yet, but we see Him crowned with glory and honour; half the psalm has been fulfilled, but not the other half. He is waiting, and we wait; meanwhile we have the wilderness, where we have to learn ourselves and God, because we are redeemed.

Therefore, to shew the perfect completeness of Christ’s work, He could take the thief straight to paradise. The thief was looking to share in the glory when Christ came: “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy

kingdom," Luke 23:42. 'Oh,' says the Lord, 'you shall not wait for that.' "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. It is more blessed to wait up there, than to wait down here: "To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. 1:23. The apostle says, I do not know which to choose, but if I am beheaded, I can do no more work for Christ: it is better for you that I should remain—so I shall remain. He decided his own course; it was Christ who settled those things, not Nero.

As regards acceptance, it is a settled thing. Giving "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. 1:12. Even in Colossians you get them passed through the desert. "You are reconciled, but you must hold fast to the end." Whenever a saint is looked at as going through the wilderness, you get "ifs," only with a promise that He will keep us, but we have to be kept. Why is it said that no man is able to pluck the sheep out of Christ's hand? Because, if He were not there, they would be plucked. "The wolf catcheth them"; this is the same word. The wolf may come, and scatter the sheep—that he has done; "but," says Christ, "not out of my hand."

Now see where in the chapter before us we come in. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." There is never such a thing in scripture as the thought of Christ being united to men by incarnation. "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." Here we have that

blessed truth which is at the root of all these thoughts and purposes of God, but you never get this without His personal pre-eminence; you will never find His personal glory compromised. As another has said, 'He never speaks to His disciples of our Father'; but He has brought us into His place as Man. "All of one," all one set, kind, and state— an abstract expression. Adam was the head of the mischief; he and his descendants were all of one: now "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." In wonderful grace He takes us into union with Himself— "My brethren." There we come in, and we come into the desert. Christ has gone through the desert before us, that He might understand what we have to go through.

There are four reasons why He became man:

1. Because of what becomes God;

2. What was necessary as to Satan;

3. Then as to our sins; and

4. As to His sympathy with us.

The glory of God required it; therefore, if Christ took up our cause, then God had to treat Him accordingly. If God had cut off Adam and Eve, it would have been righteous, but there would have been no love in it: if He had passed over all, there would have been no righteousness. In the cross God's majesty was made good as nowhere else. Christ there perfectly glorifies God as to His majesty, His righteousness against sin, His love, and His truth: all that is in God was perfectly glorified in the cross; therefore the Man that did it is in glory. That is the righteousness of God. He has set Christ at His right

hand: the Person that glorifies God goes, as the only adequate measure of His work, into glory. “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.” The consequence is (that being the grand basis of all), “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Then I get Satan in view (we had God in view before): “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” It was through death that Satan exercised all his power; He committed Himself wholly to that, and in the resurrection of Christ all Satan’s power was over— that is, it is Christ’s work that annuls it.

The next reason was for our sins: “To make reconciliation (or, atone) for the sins of the people.” We have got God glorified, Satan destroyed in his power over us, sins—those of all believers I mean—gone. All that is not wilderness work, it is accomplished work. God is glorified; Satan’s power destroyed: our sins all borne: that is all done—if it is not, it never can be.

Then comes the wilderness. Therefore He has not only made “reconciliation” or propitiation “for the sins of the people,” but He has “suffered, being tempted,” that He may be “able to succour them that are tempted.” This is the fourth reason why He became man. He has gone through every trial, everything that could hinder or be opposed to Him; He has gone through ten thousand times more than we can do. “He is able to succour them that are tempted”; He has experimental knowledge.

There are two kinds of temptation. Look at James 1:2: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations”; this means trials in fact. Lower down, at verse 14, you will find quite another kind of thing: “But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” This is what is in my own heart. If we confound the two kinds of temptation, we either put Christ into this evil condition, which would be horrible blasphemy, or we take away the bad kind of temptation from ourselves. That is the reason it is said, “but was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin,” Heb. 4:13. We are tempted by all trials from without, and by sin within. He was tempted by all, sin excepted. I get by redemption into this totally new place, but I am waiting for the redemption of the body. I am in spirit in heavenly places with Christ; my body is not there yet, it belongs to the old creation; I belong to the new.

In Numbers we get, consequently, the red heifer, the provision for the wilderness, which is not among the sacrifices in Leviticus. If you touch death, you want your feet washed. The ashes of the heifer came in for restoring communion, when they had lost it in going through the wilderness. We have an immensity to learn about ourselves, and about God too: we have been left down here, being redeemed, to know ourselves and God, in His own faithful blessed ways with us.

In Joshua, circumcision comes in (when there was circumcision before, they simply followed their fathers); as merely redeemed in the wilderness, they were not circumcised. It is a different thing to say, “I am safe, and my sins are gone,” from saying, “I am dead to the world.” It is only as sitting in heavenly places that I do not belong to the world at all. In Ephesians only we have

God's purpose completely; and there, consequently, we have Christ raised from the dead, and seated in heavenly places; while we are with Him there, and there only, we have conflict properly. We get the three things—"Ye are dead," "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth," Col. 3. We have not got there yet. In Romans 6 faith is told to reckon self as dead, and in 2 Corinthians 4 we get the carrying it out in practice: "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. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you," 2 Cor. 4:10-12. They were so bona fide realising this death, that nothing but the life of Christ comes out in them.

"We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," Paul could say: he was really carrying it out. When God puts him right in the face of death (2 Cor. 1:8), he could say, "You are killing a dead man." "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

I do not know that I could quite say that in Hebrews we are walking down here, while Christ is up there. Hebrews gives us the desert rather than the Jordan. Deliverance has nothing to do with sins, but with sin working in the believer. Then I get, not forgiveness or justification, but deliverance from sin. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death," Rom. 7:5. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," Rom. 8:9. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there

is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17)—liberty with God, and liberty from the power of sin. The way you get it is in having died with Christ. When I rejoice in forgiveness through the work of Christ, then I am sealed with the Spirit; and this makes me know I have died with Christ, and am risen with Him. We get there, in Romans 4:25, "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification"; and in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; this is a new place. Could you charge Christ, who is on high, with sin? You cannot separate "the law of the Spirit of life" from the Spirit in Romans 8. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8:3. Where was the condemnation? In the cross. He did condemn sin in the flesh; when Christ was there for sin. This goes with it, that, when it was condemned, it died there; that is all right—then I am dead. Death and condemnation came together; Christ took the condemnation, and I got the death. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," Gal. 2:19. I have got now not only that Christ lives in me, but that I have a title to reckon myself dead because I died with Him. There is a great difference to note between guilt and nature. That state of which I have spoken is the consequence of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, not of our being converted merely. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," Rom. 8:10. If I let the body live in that moral sense, it is all sin. Suppose a person was lying dead on the floor, could you charge him with evil lusts and a wicked will? He is dead. We are dead by faith, though not in fact, and we have a new life in Christ. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."

“No more conscience of sins” would be true if the believer were falling into sin; which makes it ten thousand times worse. None but a purged conscience can ever be a bad conscience.

The priesthood of Christ in Hebrews is never for sins, except where He offered Himself on the cross. It does people a great deal of mischief to think of Christ as a Priest for sins. I get in John another thing: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” 1 John 3:1. If there is even an idle thought, you have lost communion with the Father and the Son; but then you have Christ as the Advocate on high. “And he is the propitiation for our sins,” 1 John 2:2. He acts as Advocate, and the soul is restored as to its state; the conscience is purged, and we are brought into the light, as God is in the light. As long as there is a question of guilt, I cannot go to God; I cannot have boldness; therefore I do not get into the place where holiness is unfolded, and where there is the Advocate. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” 1 John 1:7. This is an abstract statement; John always gives us abstract truth. “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:10)—he has nothing for the new nature.

We are in the light as God is in the light: if I cannot stand before God, where the light is, I must be off. What is the consequence of being in the light? Fellowship one with another. Divine things are totally distinct from human things. We must have mine and yours down here; if I give you this book, I have it no longer; but if I enjoy fellowship with God, do I lose by bringing you into it?

There common joy and common blessing characterise the Christian state; and you are always perfect because you are there in virtue of the blood that cleanses from all sin.

We have these three things:1. We are in the light, as God is in the light. 2. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. 3. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This is an abstract statement, as if I should say, “Quinine cures the ague.”

Propitiation in John is in no sense a present thing: it is all finished. The blood was on the mercy-seat for a year; now it is with us for eternity: that is what I get in Hebrews.

Romans 7 is not Christian state at all; it is no proper conflict, for I am there a captive to the law of sin and death. In Romans 7 you never find a man doing right; neither Christ nor the Holy Ghost is mentioned until you reach the end: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The moment I am in chapter 8, it is all about Christ: conflict begins then in one.

“What Is Man?”

Hebrews 2:5-18

A wonderful inquiry this is, which is quoted from Psalm 8: “What is man that thou art mindful of him? “It is an inquiry founded upon his nothingness in himself, but bringing out, in God’s answer to it, all His own counsels in Christ. “What is man that thou art mindful of him? “Such is his littleness; yet, when it comes to be answered not according to what man is but in the counsels of God, we find him to be the one in whom all the wisdom of God is displayed. Nor is it the display of power merely—creation shews that—but all those qualities in God where His nature comes out, which are more than attributes. Power can say a word, and the thing is done: very wonderful, of course; but there is a great deal more than this. Man is the one in whom angels have to learn what God is in His ways and counsels, for the simple reason that the Word of God was in those counsels to become a man—that He who created angels does not take up angels, but takes up man.

Thus necessarily all the ways and qualities of God (I use these words as distinct from mere attributes, such as of power, and the like), His holiness, love, and righteousness, all these come out in man; because they were associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this that gives man such a wonderful position. And then it is not like the angels—glorious creatures, but preserved by the power of God unfallen, while that shews His ways in this respect, His power to do so, if He please. But men are taken up when they are sinners to display the glory of

God in them; and this is another matter. Things that are in the highest (a revelation of the character of God) do not come out in angels. No doubt angels in a certain way want mercy; no creature can even stand without being sustained. This is quite true, as I am sure we all know; but they do not want redemption, and as regards grace, mercy, love, all these come out in man. As Paul says, “We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.” In carrying all this out, we have the special testimony of the responsibility of man as an unfallen creature, one who was made in the image of God, which is never said of angels; but in that, when he did fall, we find grace and power coming in and connecting him with the Creator Himself, so that Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren.

This is what is brought out so wonderfully by the question— “What is man?” It was a testimony to man’s lowliness, taking him in himself, crushed; but the moment we have the thoughts of God (v. 7-9), this puts us in a wonderful place. Angels excel us in glory and strength; but they are not said to be in the image of God, and there never was any being set up to be the centre of an immense system that was to turn round himself, till man was (Adam, of course, I mean); but this is fallen now, and every one is seeking to be a centre for himself. The whole system therefore is under the bondage of corruption now. But in the Lord Jesus man will be the centre of everything that God created. He has put under the Lord all the works of His hands; yet when He said “all things,” it is manifest that He is excepted who put all things under Him: God alone is the one exception. The statement of the exception proves that all else is put

under Him. But man in the Person of Christ is Lord of all.

Thus the lordship of Christ over everything is not only dominion, but this in a Redeemer, in One who keeps it safe, One who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, to death, but who descended that He might ascend up far above all heavens and fill all things. But He fills all things in the power of the redemption He brought out. God will gather together in one all things which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him, even in Christ. They were created by Him and for Him, but while presently He becomes Head, He does not take them until He can take them as Man. And then too what is brought in is that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; as He says again in John 17, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one.” These are to come in, though, of course, He is the firstborn amongst many brethren. He brings us in every respect into the relationship in which He stands Himself as Man. Son Himself, He makes us sons, and He takes His place in resurrection that it may be made ours: for He tells us, “I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Then there is another thing to weigh that is so wonderful— it is all by redemption. How could He take sinners and put them in such a place with Himself? Not as sinners; and so He comes down where the sinners are, and puts Himself (sinless, of course) in their place: and in this I learn where I am. “If one died for all, then were all dead.” God “made him to be sin for us.” He came down to the place of death and judgment, passing through all the toil and difficulty of this world as we do,

but perfect in it all, that He might take our hearts up where He is, giving a title by redemption and a condition by grace in which we could be associated with Him as the firstborn among many brethren. It is not merely the fact that I am saved, which is true; but He has associated Himself with us down here, in order that He might take up our hearts there by the love He has brought down into them— up into the very place where He is gone, making all the Father's love known to us; for the word is "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." It is not only that I have a place in glory in consequence; but Christ is come for the purpose of associating us with Himself in heart and spirit and mind, so that He should not be ashamed to call us brethren. He might well be ashamed if He took us as we are.

We see the various characters of the way God brought Him through, and He could say Himself, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He was in Himself a sweet savour to God, beyond the putting away of our sins. In this chapter are given the various grounds upon which He had to go through this place of sorrow in order that we might have this blessing with Him. "It became him in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The truth upon which it is all founded is this —the great original truth—that He was rejoicing in the habitable parts of God's eartn; that is, Christ Himself was wisdom in Proverbs 8, and "his delights were with the sons of men." Thus Christ is the wisdom of God, and He was God's delight from all eternity. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." There I get the link formed with the eternal objects of the Father's delight. Where did His delight go out? Into the habitable

parts of the earth before even they were made. “I was by him as one brought up with him”; but if we look where His heart went out, it was into the habitable parts of the earth and with the sons of men.

Also in due time He became a man: that is the source and foundation of it all to us. He took up the seed of Abraham, who are the heirs of faith. Then comes the purpose and plan, His gathering together in one all things which are in heaven and earth put under His hand as Man. The ground given in Hebrews 1 is that He is Son; in Colossians 1 it is that He created them; and in Psalm 8, Ephesians 1, as well as Colossians 1, it is that all things are put under Him according to God’s counsels and plan. As Son, as Creator, and according to God’s counsels, He takes all. “To the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak”; but “thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” “But now we see not yet all things put under him.”

Such is the purpose and intention of God. There comes in the additional notice that “we see not yet all things put under him.” There is only half of the Psalm fulfilled. He is crowned with glory and honour; but we see not yet the things put under His feet, for He is waiting for His joint-heirs. The time now is the gathering by the gospel the joint-heirs, that He may take His power and reign. As Paul says, “I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” There was another set of promises belonging to this earth, and this we get in Psalm 2, where God sets His king in Zion, and says, “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” This will be “the world to come”; but it is not the higher position of Him who is to have the world

to come; and therefore in that connection we read of Christ's rejection, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against his anointed"—the very passage Peter quotes in Acts 4.

But, being rejected, Christ takes another place—on the Father's throne, where He now is: He is not on His own throne yet, but as He says, "to him that overcometh will I give to sit with me upon my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father upon his throne." He sits as Man at the right hand of God, not having taken His own throne; and this He does not take until the joint-heirs are ready: Psalm 8 comes in (v. 6-9). Nathanael owned Him as Son of God and king of Israel; but to him our Lord replied: "Thou shalt see greater things than these. Henceforth [so it should be] ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." It is a small thing, My title in Israel; but you shall see Psalm 8 fulfilled. He was rejected as the king of Zion, but He was cast out of the world that God's righteousness might be accomplished; and He was answered according to the value and virtue of what He had done in God's setting Him at His own right hand; and so it is said, "Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This has not yet come; and therefore we must suffer with Him, because His enemies are not made His footstool. The world is round us, and Satan is not bound, and everything has been spoiled that God set up good; and so it will be until Satan is bound. So that plainly Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, not having taken His own throne, but with title over everything, not only as Creator but in

redemption, having first descended into the lower parts of the earth; I say, with title over all things, but having taken none, with His enemies still in power and to rise up more dreadful than ever; and then all will be put down.

Now here it is that people are so deceiving themselves—Christians too. They are trying to improve man and improve the world. Why, He was in the world and could not improve it; but Christians are going to try! This is the folly of even real Christians: when Christ has been rejected by the world, they would make it all right! But it is only the time for gathering those who are to be Christ's companions. Of course light does improve the world in one sense: men are ashamed to do in the light what they would do in the dark. But this is all. They are themselves the same, not better.

Now we find this blessed One, of whom Adam was a figure, going to be centre of all things, though not yet. We find Him made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. Then we find the next point—the way in which He was bringing others into full association of heart with Himself. All the glory was His; but He does not go and take His place at the right hand of God as Man until He has accomplished redemption, tasted death, gone down to the lowest place and condition to which man can go. I speak now of sufferings rather than atonement, though this is in the chapter. But He tastes death. He goes down to that in which the curse was expressed on the first man, and a great deal more, as we shall see. But it is here the great and blessed testimony to the way in which He took man up to glory. He came into the world and left it to go to the Father, but not by the aid of

twelve legions of angels; but He as man goes through where we are, on His way as man to glory. I speak of the road He took. He tasted death. The great general fact is that He who created everything, and who is now sitting at the right hand of God, did not take that place until He had gone down to the lowest place, down to death: and this without speaking of atonement. Two things are there: the fact of the death and the life spent where hatred and death reigned. He came to destroy Satan's power; He came to glorify God; He came to be able to sympathise with every trial and difficulty and sorrow of my heart while trying to walk rightly. There are therefore objects: the glory of God, the propitiation for sin, the overcoming the power of Satan, and the entering into all our sorrows. This is what He does as Priest. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We see Him, "Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." "It became him [that is, God] in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." He was perfect Himself. He came from God, and went to God, and still was the Son of man who is in heaven; but He had come to obey, to serve us, and bring us there also; and if this were the case, He must take the consequences. The moment our blessed Lord had undertaken our cause, it became God to deal with Him according to the place He had taken.

The majesty and righteousness of God must be maintained, and none could have vindicated them but Christ: there never could have been security for God's glory otherwise. It became Him to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings— "perfect,"

that is, in the full result of glory—to bring Him into the state of a glorified Man if He would bring sons to glory. In Himself He was the perfect One; He always is in the bosom of the Father; and all that He did was the Father's delight; so that, if I may reverentially use the expression, the Father could not be silent, but opens the heavens and says, "This is my beloved Son." But in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is a question of the majesty of God, and we do not find "Father."

Hence, if Christ takes up these sinners, He must take the consequences of taking them up. God's glory must be maintained. If He was to clear us from our sins, He must deal with God about them and be made sin—He must die. It was His own blessed grace to do it, but through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. It is not spoken of here as clearing us, but as called for by God's glory; and the more we look at the cross, the more we shall see God could not be glorified any other way. If He had cut off all men as sinners, there would have been no love in it; but the moment Christ gives Himself up for the glory of God, there is perfect dealing with sin in righteousness and perfect dealing with the sinner in love—infinite love in the sacrifice for sin, and infinite righteousness. Of course, all this is in God's nature; only it is here displayed, so that there is nothing like the cross. Nobody in what he is himself could be there in the glory with Christ. Therein is expressed all that God is, every character of His, and Christ giving Himself up in perfect love to His Father, in love to us, and in obedience to God. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but He is made perfect through sufferings; He goes through the effect and consequence of having taken up our case, so that

He could say, “Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.” He has that place, is a glorified Man now, and will be displayed in glory when He comes again. God would straightway glorify Him. Only faith sees this. The world will be judged when He comes again; but faith sees it now and sees it at once, not when displayed in judgment. As He glorified God perfectly on the cross, so He is gone as Man into the glory of God. It became God to deal with Him thus. And what a thought it gives to the depth of the place Christ was in, that in the depth of the place among sinners He was making good the glory of God! It was amongst sinners, yet He was the sinless One.

The first ground laid here is that “it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me,” Heb. 2:10-13. Now we find the association of His people with Himself—He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified. It is not simply the fact of incarnation, but this in resurrection. They are “all of one” after His death; for He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. He declares His name after He has accomplished redemption. He had said, “Behold my mother and my brethren “in a vague way: but now He calls them His brethren and not before. “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This name is

expressly declared after redemption was accomplished. These then are His brethren, made “all of one” with Him. Here we have it in a poor earthen vessel; but it is so. Those who are His own are all of one before God, they are Christ’s brethren, and they are entirely and for ever associated with Himself, they the redeemed, and He the redeemer; we the recipients, and He the exerciser of the grace, it is quite true; but this is what is done.

We are “all of one.” The more it is looked at, the more striking it will be seen to be. All through the life of Christ He does not once say, “My God.” He lived in the perfect relationship He was in, and says, “My Father”; but on the cross, when He was drinking the cup of wrath, He says, “My God.” This was His perfectness; it was not the expression of relationship: but it was the expression of infinite suffering, and of infinite claim. But when this was accomplished, so that we could be brought in, He uses both names; and on those names of God our whole blessing rests. If we look at God as He is, we can delight in that name; for we are made partakers of His holiness. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ; of course, we are so suited to God; while we have also the blessed relationship of sons, and say, each of us, He is my Father too. And so we read in Ephesians I:3, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ “has blessed us. Of course Christ is a Man, and so God is His God; and because He is His Son, God is His Father. Grace has brought us perfectly to God, and this is the blessedness which is wrought for us. Then the whole place is perfectly settled.

I do not say we may not have trembling faith in our hearts; but the place is settled—“my God and your God.”

We have not the full results of it all yet, but the grace which gives us the full consciousness of it. In three ways we have it. If I take John, I say, Christ is in me, and I in Him; if I take Paul, I say I am a member of Christ's body; but if I take the question of coming to God, which the Epistle to the Hebrews treats of, I can go into the holiest. I do not call this priesthood; but it is the place where we go through redemption. And it is important to understand this, because it is often used as if priesthood was to bring us there, and therefore persons go to the priest. Surely He will hear them in His mercy, though they are wrong. But it is not right: we are there, accepted in the Beloved. By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

But is this all? It is not all the truth. Did not Christ live on earth? Was He not perfect on earth? Are you living on earth? Are you perfect on earth? That is another story. It is not all the truth to say, "I am in Christ before God"; it is the foundation of all, but it is not all the truth of what is passing in your hearts. Have you not difficulties? Do you not find you give way sometimes through want of faith? This is not suited to heaven: the more you consciously belong to heaven, the more unsuited you feel it to be. And God deals with this. It is a tremendous mistake to think that, because I have a place in heaven with Christ, God is not concerned in my path down here. In this respect I am present in the body and absent from the Lord; and God deals with us in this condition. He brings practical death on all that is in us (on the flesh I mean), and not only where there is failure (this is met rather in i John 2). And in all the weakness here, I have the blessed sympathy of Christ with my heart in all I am passing through, where I need help, and He obtains help

for me. I am before a throne of grace, and there is righteousness truly—grace reigns through righteousness. But what is the confidence I have? “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.” I am talking to God, and getting answers from God.

This is not perfection. Certainly if there were not perfection, I could not go on; but now, mark, it continues, “seeing we have a great high priest” (Heb. 4:14-17); and so I go boldly and find grace. I have standing there a witness of righteousness and propitiation. He is there; and this because He is both these. Then in 1 John 2,” If any man sin, we have,” etc. He is my righteousness, and all this is settled: if not, I should have the sin imputed to me. But I.stand in Him as my righteousness before God; and He is there according to the value of His propitiation; and if I fail, He there has taken up my cause. Grace comes to deal with my heart and spirit and restore me, my righteousness never being touched. It is because my righteousness can never be touched at all, that I go on. This is not my highest place, but to be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—in one word, to be in Christ; but it is the highest character of His grace now to help us when we are in weakness and infirmity. If God has commended His love towards us, it is when we were sinners, but I learn it all in joy in God. He loved me when there was nothing in me to love; and the grand testimony of absolutely divine love is that God loved sinners. So the grace of Christ to me is not my highest place; but it is the highest place of Christ. It makes me little and Christ great. To be put into Christ makes me great; to find Christ going the same

path as myself that He may understand every feeling I have makes His grace great. And this is most precious.

The next point is— “I will put my trust in him.” He passed through the whole scene, it was part of His perfection, dependent on His Father; when going to appoint the twelve, He prayed all night, and so on. Then we see Christ treading this path of opposition and insult; and we know that we have not one who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. But in my infirmity, as Paul says, I can glory that Christ’s power may rest on me. You know what the Lord does there—He sends a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him: but He says “my grace is sufficient for thee.” He answers, deals with him, understands him; and this is all he wants. It was the humble weak place of the believer, but the constant and touching exercise of Christ’s grace towards him.

Another reason why Christ took this low place (not part of priesthood exactly, though the priest took it) was to annul the power of Satan—in order to be able to die and destroy Satan, that is, his power. First, it became God to lead Christ through this path in regard to His own glory; then Christ was there putting His trust in Him while going through it. Then He destroys Satan’s power. And next we come to the more proper and immediate exercise of priesthood, and He says, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels,” etc. (v. 16-18).

First, the children were partakers of flesh and blood in trial and difficulty (it does not say sin, though they might sin). He calls them His brethren, and sings in the midst of the church. Think what it is!—not, you may sing now, for I have accomplished redemption, though this is true;

but I will sing! Christ leads our praises; He has associated us with Himself now that He takes up all our thoughts and feelings. It is praise for redemption, but it is every thought and feeling I can express to God. For He is a Man; He knows what it is, as none of us ever will know, to bear God's wrath. It is over; it is gone for Him on the cross; and it is gone for us by His having taken it. When risen, He declares the Father's name to His brethren, and leads their praises. It is from below the praises go up, founded on redemption and atonement; but the expression of every thought and feeling that can be in my heart, as an exercised man down here, goes up in praise. Christ has gone through all this, enters into it all, and sings in the midst of the church—a figurative expression, but true. That is, He is the Person who leads every feeling and thought of exercised persons, because He has gone through it all.

And when it comes to the accomplishment of the way, it is the same thing, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." He understands it. It is not a question of perfectness or acceptance before God, but the heart of the Lord entering into every trial and difficulty I have. As He might ask, "Do you think I was not tempted and have not gone through sorrow?" He could say, "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say?" There was the constant passing through this world with all that is in it. And there He is understanding every thought of the exercises through which we pass as belonging to God. He belonged to God, and as such was made perfect through sufferings; and if we belong to God according to His acceptance, we must pass through sufferings. It is in this respect He can help us. He succours them that are

tempted. There is the link of our weakness and dependence and exercises and trials we go through here. They have an echo in Christ's heart and are a link between our hearts and His.

It is not a question of righteousness, but belongs to the righteous. That is the difference. It is not the question of sin, but it is having our whole heart, as a man's down here, brought into the tune and tone of Christ's feelings, who went through it here that He might call our hearts into the current of His own. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest. It was a strictly priestly act: the high priest did it. It was not the going between the people and God at all. He was victim as well as High Priest. But Christ did not exercise His priesthood on earth, for if He were on earth He could not be a priest; but the people must have a ground on which they could stand in such a place. Christ made propitiation before beginning His ordinary exercises of Priest. He stood as representative of the people. Christ was both. There is this blessed truth in it. There is the perfectness of the work, but the full confession of the sin. Christ was owning all my sins upon the cross. He was the victim and scapegoat that bears them; but as the high priest He confesses them. And so He charges Himself with them all, the basis of all the rest. "He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him"—not only scapegoat, but this thought too (and that even of Christ as man), that He it is that confesses all my sins. He is scapegoat as well as high priest.

Then I learn that He suffered, being tempted. That is not atonement; it was part of His trial, and it enabled Him to succour them that are tempted. It is not atonement but succouring. And, I repeat, though God does not make an

offender for a word if the heart is right, it is not that we go to Christ, but Christ goes to God for us, and we go to God by Him. The Spirit of God groans in us. The word "Advocate" is the same as Comforter. The Holy Ghost carries on in divine sympathies, as dwelling in us, and takes up all our sorrows; while Christ takes them up for me in the presence of God, and the effect of this is that the blessing comes down on my soul by the Holy Ghost. In this connection it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—unto the end. He is talking of all this, of our going through the wilderness. It is not union that we find spoken of here in the wilderness, but exercises and trials. Christ enters into all these, and there is grace to help in time of need. His death has perfected us for God; His life carries us on with God until we reach Him. He ever lives for this; and in this we have a blessed consciousness of our weakness, and quite right too; so that with the weakness we look to One and lean on One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Do you believe that this is Christ's heart now? I do not believe it has its place until we have righteousness, for it is a mistake to think that we go by the priest to get righteousness. Christ is there, and, believing in Him, we are made the righteousness of God in Him. But this leaves us free, in perfect acceptance with God in Christ, to learn all that He is by the way. God is thinking of us too in His own heart; and we have a Man sitting at His right hand touched with the feeling of our infirmities, One who takes every sorrow, weakness, and difficulty, as the occasion of ministering grace bringing us into the presence of His faithful love. It is not mere righteousness; it is a Christ I can trust. And I admit, and press it too, that it is not our highest place; but it is

blessed, precious, perfect grace that we learn. My weakness makes me insist on what the grace and tenderness of Christ are. By Him I am perfect before God; but while I am absent from Him, I never lose the exercise of His heart for me before God to secure for me grace and strength. This carries our souls on with Him. I would have you feel that it is a low place, but it is true. It is your weakness and your infirmity, and it may be a thorn in the flesh; but it is to put you in the place where the grace of Christ can meet you, and His strength be made perfect in your weakness. It is a great thing to learn the constant exercise of grace, as it is our highest duty to shew the life of Christ; but it is the daily exercise of Christ's grace that obtains for us grace to help in time of need. The time of need is the time of grace. The Lord give us to know it in power!

Perfection

Hebrews 6

Nothing seemed to be a greater burden on the heart of Paul than to keep the saints up to their privileges. The Hebrews saw that Christ had died for them, though this had not the power over them which it ought to have had; but they were risen with Him also. They were in Christ in heavenly places within the veil, and the question was, were they realising that?

There is great force in the expression he uses in chapter 5:12, “ye are become, such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” “Are become” marks the process by which they had reached the state they were in.

Freshness of affection, and quickness of understanding go together. There is less spring, less apprehension, less clearness when our hearts are not happy. On the other hand, my judgment is clear when my affections are warm. Motives that acted before cease to be motives when my affections are warm. Freshness of affection being lost, the Hebrews were “dull of hearing”; and so were “become such as had need of milk, and not of strong meat.” And then the apostle explains that those who use “milk” are unskilful in the word of righteousness and are babes; while “strong meat” belongs to those, not who have made great progress, but who are of full age—men in the truth in opposition to being children or babes—and who have “their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

But how can I separate the “knowledge of good and evil” from the knowledge of Christ? If I were to try to

separate between them of myself, shutting Christ out, how could I? He is my standard of good; and it is what I find in Him that gives me power to judge what is evil. How can I walk as He walked without Him? “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ for, the word of the beginning of Christ], let us go on to perfection.”

Instead of wasting your time with what has passed away, go on to the full revelation of Christ. Be at home there, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. For how can I walk as He walked without Him? I know not how to attempt it. The secret of everything is found in that truth, “Ye are complete in him.” As Christ Himself also has said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me.” But what is that? and where is Christ now? In heaven. Then I am there too, and my affections should be there also. My hope is to be thoroughly identified with Him. For the portion I have is what He has—life, glory, all that He has risen to—and all my associations are with Himself. There is the difference between “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” and the full perfection. Of Christ Himself it is said (chap. 5:9), “Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.”

Now He was not made perfect down here, but in being glorified in heaven. He went through the experience down here; as it is said, “He learned obedience by the things which he suffered,” and then went into heaven to be Priest, because our blessings and associations and hopes are all up there. He is “made perfect” as our High Priest in heaven and not down here. He had not reached that point in the counsels of God in glory, when He was down here. Now He is there He has associated me with

Himself in that place. I can see that Christ has been through this world so as to be able to sympathise with me in all my sorrows and all my trials; and He has also borne my sins in His own body on the tree. But where is He now? He is in heaven; and I am there too in spirit, and He will soon bring me there in fact. Where He is, is His being "made perfect." The work is done, and now He is shewing me the effect of its being done; and is teaching me the walk that belongs to the redemption He has wrought out. He has taken my heart and associated me with Himself, and He says that is the perfection I am to go on to.

Where did Paul see Christ? Not on earth; for long after He had left the earth Paul was a persecutor; but he saw Him, as we all know, in heavenly glory. His only knowledge of Christ at all was of a Christ in heaven. His course on earth he might learn; but the revelation of Christ that brought his soul into the presence of God in the power of an accomplished redemption, was the revelation of Christ in heaven and in glory. Hence he says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The Christ he wanted to "win" (as he says in Phil. 3) was a glorified Christ. It may cost me my life, but never mind. That is my object; after that I am reaching. I am alive from the dead, because Christ is; and I want to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. I am not in the flesh, but in Christ. I have the consciousness that this work of Christ has put me in a. new place (not yet glorified in body, but) in a new place as to my life and associations and home; and this is the perfection we are to go on to.

It was this that ruled the apostle's affections, as he says, "that I may win Christ." This was his object, to "bear the

image of the heavenly." His mind was full of it. The Holy Ghost has come down to bring all these things to our remembrance. Believers are united to Christ in glory. It is never said that Christ is united to man; but believers are united to Christ. Then the apostle was living by the power of the Holy Ghost; so that one may conceive what a trial it was to him to see these people going back to the first principles. They were all true, but if people stop there they stop short of a glorified Christ. To the Galatians he says, "who hath bewitched you?" speaking of himself he says, "I know a man in Christ." "A man in Christ" is a man risen out of all that connects itself with the law and ordinances, as well as with sin and death, and all that is sorrowful or attractive in this present evil world. His spirit is broken to find the saints resting with things on earth about Christ. The Holy Ghost was come from heaven to make them partakers of a heavenly calling; to associate them in heart and mind with Christ, and to shew them things which would not only keep them from "the evil which is in the world," but from the world itself.

The Hebrews had a temple standing when Paul wrote, where Christ Himself had been. Why, then, should they have left it, if Christ had not judged the flesh, and shewn that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God"? "The middle wall" had been put up by God Himself; how should they dare to break it down, if God had not done it? If God had not said that He would not have to do with flesh any more, how could they dare to leave the camp, and go outside? Christ glorified is the end of all the first principles, and we have to go through the world as strangers and pilgrims. The only thing God ever owned in religion was Jewish, which had to do with the flesh—

with men here in the world—but that is gone by the cross. All is crucified; “the handwriting of ordinances” has been blotted out— “nailed to the cross”— and thus taken out of the way; and in a glorified Christ we see the end of all that is abolished. Henceforth our life, our home, our associations, are all in Christ.

But the doctrine of the beginning of Christ was not that.

What do we find as long as Christ was upon earth? Why, the testimony of the law and the prophets, which talight righteousness and called the nation to repentance and faith. Christ Himself also speaks of a judgment to come, which they believed. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead. Baptisms or washings, and the laying on of hands, they had them. They constituted the elements of a worldly religion, and were sanctioned by God until the cross. The Messiah coming on earth is the “doctrine of the beginning of Christ”; but now I leave that and go on to perfection. I do not deny these things, but I go on to the fuller revelation of Christ. These first principles are all true, but then I have other and far better things.

Saul might have been the brightest saint living under the old order of things, but not knowing Christ. But supposing a person got into the heavenly things and was “enlightened” and had “tasted the heavenly gift, and was made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” and then gave it up—what could he do then? What else was there to present to such an one? There might have been a going on from faith in an humbled Christ to a glorified Christ, but there is nothing beyond. For it should be observed there is nothing of life

signified here. The expressions do not go beyond the indication of truth that might be received by the natural mind, and the demonstrative power of the Holy Ghost, which persons might partake of, as scripture shews, without being participators in eternal life.

There may be light in a sense without the smallest trace of life, of which Balaam is an example. Of the stony ground hearers also it is said concerning the word that "anon with joy they received it"—they "tasted the good word of God." Moreover, Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest: he was a partaker of these "miracles of the coming age." And Christ had said (Matt. 7:22), "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Still they are disowned of Christ as "workers of iniquity."

But there is this farther in the case supposed: "They had crucified the Son of God afresh," by turning back again from these heavenly things, and therefore could not be renewed to repentance. The nation had indeed crucified Christ, but they did not know what they were doing. This could not be said of those of whom the apostle is speaking. This was not ignorance, but will.

There is a great difference in what is expressed by "anon with joy they received it," and the word ploughing up the soul, giving the sense of sin and bringing into subjection to God's redemption. The result of life is seen in fruit, not in power. In the parable of the sower the seed received into good ground "brought forth fruit." In the other cases there was no "fruit brought to perfection." If there is any fruit, the tree is not dead.

Hence the apostle says, “We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” These were not power merely nor joy; for these might exist and there be no life. Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest; but Jesus said, “Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” The connection of your heart with Christ—the consciousness of God having written your name in heaven is the blessed thing. The fruit which the apostle takes notice of in verse 10 is love to the brethren. This was there, and shewed itself in the active ministering to the saints, out of love to the Lord’s name; while full assurance of hope to the end was to be desired. There might be working of miracles without knowing or being known of God; but fruit-bearing in grace is the token of being branches of the true vine.

In the example of Abraham, the apostle presents an encouragement to their faith, which needed to be strengthened. Abraham had the promise of God, and he believed it; he had His oath, and he trusted it: but we have more. It is not to us that God presents a promise of future blessings, and adds an oath to assure us of their accomplishment; but He has performed all that He calls us to believe. We have a redemption now in the presence of God. Christ, having wrought the work, is sitting down in the presence of God, and in spirit has brought us there. But we have more than that; for, in hope, we are partakers of all the glory which belongs to that redemption. We have life, redemption, the Holy Ghost as the seal, and more. The forerunner is gone in, and the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of our union with Him, and not merely that our sins are put away through the blood-shedding of Christ. We have the Spirit in

virtue of Christ's redemption, and He is come to tell us that we are in that Christ, who wrought the redemption, and is now in the power of an endless life within the veil.

But what is the practical consequence of all this? Why, if the glory He has is mine, and I am going on after Him, then all the world is but dross and dung in my esteem. This will be faith's estimate of everything in the world, when Christ is filling the heart's affections, and when the soul is pressing on after Him, in the certain hope of being for ever with Him. One moment's real apprehension of Christ in the glory is sufficient to dim the brightness and glitter of every earthly thing; but the soul must be occupied alone with Christ for this.

If our affections and desires are lingering on earth, or stopping short of a glorified Christ in heaven, as the one in whom our life is hid, and to whom we are presently to be conformed in glory, and that in the glory where He is, we shall find soon that earthly things are something more than dross and dung. Leave a stone on the ground for a time and you will find that it will gradually sink into it. And our hearts, if they are not practically in heaven with Christ, will soon become attached to earthly things.

There is a constant tendency in earthly things to press down the affections. Duties are more apt to lead away the soul from God than open sin. Many a Christian has been ensnared by duties, whose heart would have shrunk from open sin. But we have only one duty in all the varying circumstances of life—to serve Christ. And we should remember that if things on earth are dark and the heart is tested in journeying through the world, all on the side of God is bright. "Therefore leaving the

principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”

Christ’s Work And Its Consequences

Hebrews 9 and 10

The thought that runs through all this part of the scriptures, beloved friends, is this: our entering into the holiest, the true holiest, of course. The Spirit now referring to the tabernacle, was writing to the Hebrews, who were accustomed to it. The Christian is given boldness to enter into God’s own presence, the holiest now, with a purged conscience. Here he unfolds what that is, to which we will turn with God’s help. God has brought me in there by dealing both with sin, and with sins, so dealing with them as to put them away according to the exigency of what His holy nature is. God has stepped in and done that once for all: it consequently is an eternal redemption. There is that which is necessarily connected with this, and that is not only that the sins are purged, or else I could not come into the holiest.

That is brought out in the next chapter in a singularly gracious way, that we may understand the divine source of this salvation and have a divine knowledge of it, divine certainty. If God had spoken, it is not I think, or I hope, but, I have set to my seal that God is true. The work is divine, the knowledge of it is divinely certain, and we are brought into the divine presence; this flows from God taking up the question of sin and sins. The conscience takes it up when the Spirit of God works in the soul, and our reasoning upon the possibility of being with God is always upon this footing, and must be so. This is the effect of reasoning from what we are to God. If I am a sinner, well, I say, how can He receive me? If I

were righteous, He might receive me. We always reason from ourselves and our state to God; the Holy Ghost never does. He reasons from our state to condemnation; but in reasoning as to salvation, He always reasons from what God is and has done to this effect upon us, and never from what we are to God. I speak of salvation in speaking of the reasoning.

I am saying this because, beloved friends, you will find it a constant tendency of your hearts to reason from what we are to what God will be for us. It will be fancied "humility," just like the prodigal son when he had not met his father, he was reasoning from what he was. When he had tasted God's goodness in a measure, reasoning from what he was, with some little glimpse of what God was in goodness, to what he would be when God met him in judgment. When the conscience is awake, I say, how can God meet me with all those sins? Quite true, that is judgment. Judgment is according to works; but as to that, the sinner is brought to own that he is lost. God is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and man finds that he is a sinner. What the gospel comes and reveals to us is God's intervention for those that are such, so that we reason from what God has done to what He will do. For instance "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The Spirit of God reasons from what God has done to how He will act. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." He reasons down from what God is and has done to what we are to God. Now, the Spirit of God leads so; but we continue that same thing until we have learnt that the simple result of what we are with God must be condemnation. Then we give it up,

it is no good going on then: the case is settled. The gospel, when we are sinners, lost sinners, comes to reveal to us what God has done. The language and experience here take that very point, that it would have been judgment, if God had not interfered in grace.

You see, beloved friends, that as a sinner, I am really brought to the sense that I am lost, and I am cast upon what God has done for me. The real question is as to the efficacy of that work. That is what He has been unfolding, and insists upon. It is that I will look upon a little, for it changes my whole condition with God. I have God as a Saviour, not as a judge; as to my state of relationship with Him, He is always that for me. And He is that, because I was lost. The work of Christ has purged my conscience and put away my sins. I affirm that the rather, beloved friends, because there is the constant tendency to mix up the two, because we are apt to mix up the state of our souls with the sense of the completeness of the work God has wrought for us in Christ. I would not hinder exercise of conscience, but there are conclusions drawn from the state we are in, to question the completeness and the efficacy of that work. That is the mischief. We cannot press the devotedness and full following of the Christian too much; but if I mix up what I have felt with what God tells me of the efficacy of the work of Christ, I am mixing water with good wine, and both are spoilt. We never get right till we have got the thorough effect in our souls of our sins, and our sinfulness too. “I find that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”

Well, when I learn that they that are in the flesh cannot please God, that the flesh has lusts and the law condemns them—the flesh has a will, and the law forbids

its desires; I find that I am lost. Man finds that there always is a will of his own and lusts. The Christian condemns them, and judges them; still that which is born of the flesh is flesh. I may reckon it dead, and hold it dead, but that is what it is. If I am looking at myself as a child of Adam standing before God, I have lusts and a will that is evil. Well, is He going to justify evil? No. What God does, beloved friends, is to bring in Christ. If the man is a sinner, He judges his sins; but the work is often deeper when the man is a fair honest character, as Paul was. Why, the man could not eat for three days! As to conscience, he thought he ought to destroy Jesus of Nazareth, religiously misguided as he was—all his religious leaders sent him forth to do it, and he had been trying to make out a righteousness by it; and supposing that he could— those things that were his righteousness just brought him into open enmity against God. He was consciously trying to destroy Christ! God has taken care that, when man fell and was turned out of Eden, he should carry out a conscience with him. A thief, or a murderer, or a fornicator, whatever it might be, he knows it is wrong, not only that God does not allow it. I find the struggling of these lusts; the moment I find this in the spirituality of the law, I see I have a bad nature; the tree is bad. Well, then, the man is brought to complete condemnation, not a pleasant thing at all. He comes to see that he cannot please God. Why the heart of man rebels against it in an awful way—thinks it a cruel thing to say that he cannot please God. Therefore God does bring me (a person like Paul perhaps, in three days; where sin has been in a grosser shape, the conviction may not be so deep) to the consciousness not merely of what I have done, but of what I am. I find not merely that the fruit is bad, but that the tree is bad. Why

have we committed sin? Because we liked it. A man is morally what he likes; a man who loves money is a covetous man; if he likes amusements, he is a man of pleasure. We like sin; that is what we are. Christ changes this.

I say so, because we must be brought clearly out of this mixing up of what we are with what God has been for us in grace, this looking at God as one that judges instead of one that saves; and saying: “Well, if I am all this, how am I to get salvation? “There must be this change effected. Put a man of the world in heaven, and he would get out of it if he could; there would be nothing he would like there; there would be none of the pleasures he cares for; there would be no money there, and the things that are there he would not like. Well, that is an awful thing to find out. It is not merely a question as to the imputing of my sins. Everybody in his senses would say: “Of course, I should like to go to heaven.” Well, if it is a thing you really wish, of course you would like to have it as soon as you can. When would you like to have it? To-day? To-morrow? When you cannot help it! I say this, beloved friends, to discover not what sins are, but what the flesh is. There is no good thing in it at all.

I repeat it, beloved friends, there is often a deeper work goes on which judges the movements and principles of the heart, in one who is naturally an upright man, than there is where there is merely judgment passed on outward sins. I should be in despair about myself if I learnt my condition before God, and did not see the work of Christ for me; yet not quite in despair. Wherever God works in the conscience, there is always more or less of the sense of love in it. There is a conflict goes on, but always a sense of the love of God maintained. The

man is in conflict between the sense of God's goodness in the heart, and the consciousness of the holiness of God's nature. It is a blessed truth that, wherever there is a work of God in the soul, there is always a clinging to the sense of His goodness, let the work of conscience be ever so deep. In the beautiful narrative in Matthew of the Syrophenician woman, she says: "I know I am a dog, but I know there is goodness enough in God to give even to a dog." He cannot say there is not. There is one overleaping the barriers of dispensation in the sense of the goodness of God.

Well, having just said that, see what the work of Christ effects, beloved friends. God turns to that which meets this lost condition. It is the grace of God that brings salvation. Now there are two parts in that; there is a quickening power in the Spirit of God, that I have already supposed. The Spirit of God works, the soul gets to see something of the love of God, but quickening does not clear the conscience. Quickening does not make me say, "I can go into the holiest," but "I cannot." Now, beloved friends, you may have a great deal of gracious dealing, a great deal of the revelation of God's ways; but until the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ there was the veil, behind which God was, and nobody could pass it. The testimony was there, "I cannot let you into the holiest; you are not fit for the holiest." "The way into the holiest was not yet made manifest."8 The Holy Ghost meant by saying so that the work was not yet done. When Christ died, the veil was rent from the top to the bottom, God saying, "Now you can draw near." When the veil was there, even with the typical sacrifice, you could not go in, not even the priests.

Now in the consciousness of what God is, “we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” I have now the very opposite thing as to the new nature and its desires, as to my condition and relationship with God: that as it was then signified I could not go in, now it is signified I can. Now he shews how this has been brought about, beloved friends. There is more than one thing needful for this access to God. I must get my sins purged. Sin cannot come into the holiest. And further, I must have my conscience purged, or else I shall not venture in. If a man has debts, he does not like to meet his creditors; but if his debts are paid, and he does not know it, he does not hke to meet them either. We must know that the conscience is cleared if we could go right up to God. If God is dealing with us (perhaps I should rather say, for us) He brings us into His own presence with our conscience cleared.

Now note what a remarkable expression we have here in contrast with those Jewish things. “For Christ being come, an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and oi goats —and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean— sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?… For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor

yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the 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 has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." We are not come to the end of the world yet — the full force is "the consummation of the ages." That is, the consummation of the whole thing that man had been tried and exercised by, to bring out what I have been speaking of, "that the natural mind is enmity against God."

It was not only that man had sinned, that he had broken the law, and been proved guilty before God; but when the Saviour came in grace, man refused Him. God came into the world— "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." That is the sense, that full trial had gone on without law, under law, and in the trial of His love they had rejected Him in love. That is what the cross was. "They hated me without a cause." Christianity starts from this: that God had been in the world in love, and that man had turned Him out. It is not merely that God has turned man out. This was the case in Eden. But when He came into this world of sin, man said, 'We will not have Him, even if it is in love!' The Lord Jesus Christ said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." If I am a Christian, it is that Christ has been rejected. What was Christ? "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." It is blessed to see it. Perfectly holy in all His ways, He could not be defiled, and therefore He was able to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Nature

cannot stand here; let it be honest enough. It must be all grace, nothing else will do. This light detects a Pharisee. The scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in adultery—in the very act. If He says, “Stone her,” He is no Saviour. If He said, “You must not,” He has broken the law. “You must either give up grace, or you must give up the law,” they urge.

‘Stop,’ says the Saviour, ‘I am going to apply the law to all of you.’ “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it being convicted by conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest unto the last, and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” The eldest had most character to lose, and he went out first. It does not make a bit of difference, whether a man has ten sins or five hundred. A wretched sinner she was—nobody excuses her. God says: It will not do to bring up this one, and leave you hardened ones behind. God takes them all into the light. Who will stand that? No one in Leamington, or anywhere else! Now come, He says, I can shew grace, I am not come to judge, I am come to save. The sin was completely proven, and in that moral sense it was the end of the world. Leave man to himself? Why, God had to bring the flood in, he was so bad. As to Israel, attaching the name of Jehovah to their sins, they only made the name of Jehovah blasphemed amongst the heathen. Love they rejected, and this is the end of man’s history, and the beginning of God’s declaring for Himself—Now we have the end of what you are, what I am must come out. You have brought out enmity against God, and I am going to

shew you that I love you. The individual sinner is brought to conscience about himself. We have to begin the history of God's way as a Saviour; when my own conscience comes to own this, not only that I have broken the law, but that I am a lost sinner: Well, God says, Now you know yourself. I come that you may know Me, and I say you are a lost sinner, and Christ has come into the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The cross was the turning-point to God. He bore on it our sins, and the hatred that crucified Him was all we had to do with it. The thing that saves me is His own. What part have we in it? None else besides our sins, and the hatred that crucified Him. God's part was giving His only-begotten Son. I have God's blessed part in it to save me; whereas the work of the Spirit of God in quickening his conscience makes the sinner see and hate the sin. We have now to see what God can do for man; not from reasoning as to what he is for God, but by believing what God is to him.

When the prodigal son had the best robe on, he could not say: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." His father was treating him as a child. He was come into the new condition. It was not merely the desires he had, it was not merely the repentance, but it was what the father had done for him, so as to bring him into his own presence. There was I, a sinner, loving any trifle rather than Him. He who has so loved me as to give His own Son for me! "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There I get in my heart and mind not simply a general vague sense that God is love, but I learn that in that love He has done a work for me.

We have this blessed comfort: you will see it as it is said here, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” He has so loved me as to give His own Son for me! Well, I believe, Christ died for my sins. Had He to die often? “Oh, no!” says the apostle, “that could not be.” It was not like one of these Jewish sacrifices, in which there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. Mark how strongly it is put: “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” He had really to drink the cup. He sweat great drops of blood when thinking of it in the garden of Gethsemane. He suffered. Well, if it is not done perfectly, done once for all, Christ must have suffered often. This cannot be. He cannot come down again, become a man, and die over again. If He has borne my sins in His own body on the tree, He has done once and for ever the thing that puts them all away. If that putting away all my sins is not done, it never can be. Individual after individual is brought to acknowledge it, but if the work is not finished and done, it can never be done.

Therefore Christ says, in John 17: “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” He said, “It is finished; and bowed the head, and gave up the ghost.” Those priests were “standing often, offering up the same sacrifices which could never take away sin.” Sin came up, they had to do it again: it was a perpetual remembrance of sins made again every year. A year goes round, the sacrifice must be repeated. Sins were there. It was a continual memorial. “But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. From henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footstool.” He for ever “sat down.” It was after standing. The work was completely and fully

done, once and for ever, and He sits down, the work accomplished once for all, completely, according to the glory of God.

Woe to him who neglects this great salvation! It is a finished work. You cannot have a stronger expression of it than this, that the worshippers “once purged, should have no more conscience of sins.” The Lord Jesus Christ has offered himself by the eternal Spirit, without spot to God.” He drank that bitter cup for me, and the next point He brings out is this, that having done that: “He appears now in the presence of God for me.” Who, “being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high”; and when I go to God I find Him sitting there, the perpetual witness that He has cleared my sins away, and that He is in the presence of God for me. I find Him who has done it, sitting there. “Else he must have suffered often, since the foundation of the world.” The sins could not be put away if He had not finished the work. He has. If not, it never could be done. It is settled peace when my soul receives the testimony of the Holy Ghost to this. “For by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” “He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” “He is the mediator of the new covenant, that, by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

Then you see, beloved friends, supposing through grace I say, “Well, I am a poor sinner, I hate those sins, the root and principle in me; how can I be in the presence of God?” I find Christ there, who has put away those sins; I

find this blessed truth of a risen Saviour in the glory. I follow Him up to the cross, I see Him there under my sins, I see Him now at God's right hand in the glory! O! I say, He has not got my sins there! If I see Him in the glory, I say, "Well, my sins are gone." That is the practical word. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." I see Him in the glory who bore my sins, and I know they are all gone. Well, my conscience is purged, when, in the simplicity of faith I see that God Himself has put away my sins, that the Lord Jesus Christ has drunk the cup for me, that He Himself bore my sins in His own body on the tree. I know they are gone. The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. When I look up to God and see Christ in glory, is there a question of imputation of my sins to trouble me?

Mark, beloved friends, I do not speak of "past, present, and future" sins, I cannot say "future." I never ought to think of committing a sin again. I do not put my state at this moment before God into question. I see souls saying, "Oh, I know my sins up to conversion are gone!" Did Christ bear your sins up to conversion? What is the meaning of that? It is confounding the sense of it brought home to my soul, with the efficacy of the work by which He appears in the presence of God for me.

How comes it all about? It is by God's blessed will, He willed my salvation. He has given me the Saviour. There are three things connected with the work of which I speak. There must be some one having the kindness to do it. It must be done. And I must know that it is done. Of these three things in Hebrews, the first is that it is by the will of God: we see the blessed Son "was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that he, by the

grace of God, should taste death for every man." "Then, said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He was crucified. It is done. It is not only that there was the goodwill of love, to be willing to do it, but it is done. I get the divine good will of God in it. It is a divine work, done and finished, so that Christ, who bore our sins, "has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." Now, I want to know it. The Holy Ghost tells me of the eternal efficacy of the work. I have got the blessed will of God that gave Christ. I have now the work finished, and I have also the divine testimony to it by the Holy Ghost. I have got the three things, the love that was willing to have it done, I have got the work finished in that which was done once for all upon the cross, and I have got the testimony of God Himself that He no more will bear my sins in mind. My sins are purged by the work of Christ, and my conscience is purged by the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

Mark the effect that flowed from it. The veil was rent from the top to the bottom. The work has put away my sins that shut me out, and it has opened the door to let me in. I go right into the presence of God Himself in the holiest, and I go in white as snow. The very thing that let me into the presence of that holiest of all was the very thing that put all my sins away.

Now, beloved friends, a step more for those who have got that conscious access to God. The apostle goes a little farther. We find our nature an evil tree; we have got the sins put away. "Christ appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." That is, that the work of the blessed Lord, besides the

bearing of the sins, is so perfect, perfect in everything, that He was made sin for us; and that there sin was dealt with absolutely. “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” It is not only that my sins have been borne, but that God Himself has been perfectly glorified in Christ who died. “Now,” he says, “the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.” That is, He stands there as made sin, not only as bearing my sins, but as the Holy One; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Not only as the obedient One; God has been perfectly glorified in Him. I have no doubt the full result does not come out till that day when there will be the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. “The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world”—that being so, the whole question has been settled with God, so that finally we shall have the new heaven and the new earth.

In everything God has to do now, He has to do with sin; supposing He judges, it is against sin; supposing He shews mercy, it is because sin has come in. He has to deal with it in everything, either in mercy or in judgment. The time will come when there will be no sin, and that founded on the cross of Christ; founded upon the efficacy of His finished work, wherein He perfectly glorified God. The effect is that there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The work has put away sin, I know now, and I get by faith this blessed result. I know it in myself; I have Christ as my life. The practical result is to reckon myself dead. He has borne my sins upon the cross. He has died and glorified God perfectly. He has risen up in a totally new state. The old Adam state is done with. For everyone that believes on Him He is the beginning, the

Head of that new creation of God; and I find, myself, that my part is with Him, and not with the old sinful world. As to my body, I am in the old creation still. I stand before God in the effect of His work.

Christ stood before God taking the effect of my work; I am before God taking the effect of His work. That is where the believer has overcome death. Death is all gain to me— I shall only go to the Lord—there is complete and absolute deliverance; I have been taken out before God, and as to my standing before God out of the position I was in, and put into another, not only under shelter, and not only like Israel at the Red Sea, but taken out to go into a new position before God. This is expressed in Romans: “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.” By the presence and power of the Spirit of God, He can dwell in me because I am cleansed by the blood. I am united with Christ; He can dwell in me because I am united with Christ; and if dwelling in me, I am united to Christ. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” There I get practice too. I cannot be in Christ, without Christ being in me. Well, let me see Him in you; God and the saints and the world too, have the right to expect to see Him in me. If I am accepted in the Beloved, Christ is in me, and as the apostle says, it is “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body.” Therefore he says to the Christians: “Ye are the epistle of Christ”; Christ is to be read in you; He is graven upon your hearts by the Spirit of the living God. As to my standing as a Christian, Christ is before God for me, and my place is settled; I

am to bear Christ about in the world, and there is my responsibility.

You will see, beloved friends, how the apostle puts it plainly here. “He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” When my heart is before God, I can say: Well, not only Christ has put away sins; I stand before God in the result of what He has done! I do not call myself a child of Adam; I am a child of God. He has put away sin, and our place is in Christ. Mark then the contrasted fact that follows therewith. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” There is the entire effect of sin, I mean according to God’s order. If God enters into judgment with sinners, all are condemned. “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

Well, as Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, so to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time. What to? To salvation. Now I get the place of the Christian, and I feel happy. I begin at Christ’s first coming, and I say, Oh, He has put my sins away, He has made an end of sin once for all, and I am before God in Him, and I have got the Holy Ghost as the blessed consciousness of it. “At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you.” Death is gain to me, if I get that; and as to judgment, the Person who is my judge is the Person who has put away all my sins for ever. He cannot charge the sins upon me that He has put away Himself. God has taken care for your peace in that way, that the Person who is to be the judge, was first the

Saviour. No fear at all: God has dealt with our sins. He sends out the tidings of it. All the world has the testimony by the Spirit to it now, testimony received by faith. God has dealt with them already, put away instead of leaving them to the time when He comes to deal with them in' judgment. Has He not come the first time? To be sure. Is He not coming again? "To them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "Without sin," having nothing more to say to it. When He comes the second time, He comes having nothing to say about sin. Why? He came to put it away the first time by the sacrifice of Himself. "Unto salvation." That is to bring them into the glory, "that where I am, there they may be also."

Such is the place and the blessedness we have. Do I fear the Lord's coming? The very opposite. Do you think He was coming to receive men there, in their sinful state? He came to put it away. He makes us feel the sins, makes us hate sin, but God has dealt with our sins in Christ, and to bring them up again, would be to deny the efficacy of Christ's work. If a man neglects this great salvation, he is doubly guilty. "How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation? "Well, what is this great salvation? He has borne away my sins by the sacrifice of Himself. I believe He has done it. He had to do with sin before. He has nothing to do with sin the second time. His whole business was with sin in a certain sense before. It was just the thing He had to do with, but really to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself; because He put it away the first time, He has nothing to do with it when He appears the second time. The more you look into Scripture, the more you will see how clear it is. How does the resurrection of the saints take place? We shall

be raised in glory. We go in glory before the judgment-seat. How can you have a man in glory, and raise a question about judgment there? God will have you to be conformed to the image of His Son. There has Paul been these eighteen hundred years with Christ. Are you going to take him out for judgment? There is the perfect work accomplished, and hereby also Christ in you the hope of glory.

Your responsibility is not mixed up with your acceptance, but with your glorifying God. Quickened and born of God, you are responsible to act accordingly. If you were my children, I should expect you to behave as my children: you must first be children. All our responsibilities, whatever they be, flow from the places we are in. Duty flows from the place we are in. When you are a child of God, your duty to act as one begins. It will not stop of course in heaven. It is the consequence of the place I am brought into. And now I have it in a poor earthen vessel, but being sealed by the Holy Ghost, I can therefore look with delight and joy for Christ's coming. His time is best. "God is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The saint can rejoice in the trial of his faith, but in it all the Christian is looking for the coming of Christ. See how a mother watches for her child because she loves him.

The Christian believes that the blessed Son of God became a man on purpose to be able to die and suffer for him. He has been judged for him, has put away his sins, and I say, O that I could see Him as He is! and more, when I do see Him, I shall be like Him. God's purpose is not merely to save you by Christ, but to bless

you with Christ! We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and 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.” How can we think of such a thing? And if I know it is grace (as is expressed in Ephesians, that in “the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”), I see that He must do something wonderful. If I am reasoning from what I am, it would be impossible. But if I am reasoning from God’s work, if He has given His own blessed Son to be a curse for me, I can expect anything. And I expect to be like Christ. Why? He has told me so. “When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

And see how God has taken care to shew me what sin is. But see how He has taken care, if through grace your hearts hate sin, to shew you how He has made an end of it, and “brought in eternal righteousness.” You are guilty? Very well, you are justified by blood. Defiled? Cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. You have offended God? You are perfectly forgiven. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.” Well now, says God, you must try My love. You cannot have thoroughly happy and blessed affections with God till your conscience is purged. Let your father be the kindest in the place, and the child know it, if he has been nalighty he will skulk away. He gets a good conscience, and will run into his arms. When the conscience is purged, who did it? Why, God did it. He has made me His child, given me the very same name.

Christ has called me His son, and therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.

Oh, beloved friends, have you got the consciousness that God has interfered on your behalf; that God has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; that Christ has come to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Have you the consciousness of that? Hating the sin of course. But have you known and believed the love God has toward you, and the efficacy of the work that love has done? I understand your not having hold of it. For many a year I had not hold of it myself; but if Christ has not put away your sins He never can! If He has suffered once for all, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and He is seated at the right hand of God until He comes to bring us unto glory.

Beloved friends, if Christ were to come to-night, and I do not know when He may, at even, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning—He is like a man that has his hand on the door to open it at any moment. If He were to come to-night, where are you? Would you say, Oh, that is the Lord that gave Himself for me, come to take me to Himself? Or is there some fear in your heart about Him? Well, if there is, you have not got hold of the perfectness of His work in putting away sins. Would you like to be with Jesus? Can your heart say, Well, I am a poor helpless thing, but if He hung on the cross for me, I am certain of His love. I cannot doubt the perfectness of His love. Through grace, I say, your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Do not you do anything to grieve Him. Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord. Do it in the Spirit. It does not matter what it is: a child wanting to please his father would want to please his father in the trifles. A holy life comes with practice. It is perfect

peace, perfect joy; joy because I am waiting for Jesus to receive me to Himself; and a perfect measure of practice, because I see that I am to be conformed to Him now, if I am to be like Him when I see Him as He is. The Lord give you to be able to say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” To you who believe, He is precious.

8 This is a solemn truth. It is not that there were not good people hoping for Messiah; they feared God and walked in the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah. But law was there requiring what he ought to be. There was the veil saying, You cannot come into My presence.

Christ’s Coming, Faith’s Crowning

Hebrews 9:27, 28

The apostle after speaking of Christ’s first coming, and the work accomplished by Him, as the sacrifice for sin and of His having entered in once by His own blood into the holy place (heaven itself), “having obtained eternal redemption,” sums up the whole doctrine in the closing verses of this chapter, and there contrasts, in a definite way, the portion of the first Adam and those who belong to the first Adam, with the place and expectations of the believer. “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment [that is what we have to say as to men, that there their history is ended], so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many [for the believer death and judgment have been already met—Christ having died for him and borne his sins]; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

A word in explanation of a portion of this passage. The Lord Jesus, as regards Himself, appeared the first time, as truly “without sin,” as He will the second. But then He appeared the first time, though without sin, yet about it (v. 26); He came to bear it. The second time He has nothing more to do with sin; it will be unto salvation,” as He says, “I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,” John 14. His second coming is to fulfil in the result all the designs of His first coming for those who believe. This makes it their hope— “that blessed hope,” Titus 2:13.

This event has nothing whatever to do with death (with which it has often been confounded): so far from it, that, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, if a believer be alive, he will never see death. See 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:15, 17. So little has it to do with death, that the apostle declares expressly, “we shall not all sleep.” Here it is contrasted with death.

Another thing note. It is said, “unto them that look for him shall he appear.” It is not a question about Christ’s appearing to us at death; we “depart to be with Christ.” So Colossians 3:4, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”; not only He appears, but we appear with Him. Again, 1 John 3:2, “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him,” etc.; at His coming we are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son in glory; Rom. 8:29.

See too Philippians 3:20, 21, “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Many other scriptures might be quoted, but these will suffice to shew that His coming has nothing to do with death. It is the power of the living Saviour taking us out of the reach of death.

If the Spirit of God works in our hearts with power, this gives us present fellowship with Jesus glorified at the right hand of God. The heart of the saint is fixed on Christ Himself. This is what sanctifies: “We all with open face,” etc. What then is our hope, connected with this? Our hope is to be conformed to the image of God’s Son in glory. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,” 1 Cor. 15:49.

Such is the desire, the object of hope in the soul. Now we are bearing the image of the earthy, but we hope to be made like Christ on high. “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” It is not that there is not a moral change wrought now, but the effect of this is to produce the desire to be conformed to the image of God’s Son in glory.

This being so, God could not have given us a more glorious hope or one more practically powerful in disentangling from the world. But when is it we are to be conformed to His image? At death? Clearly not, for then the bodies of the saints are in the grave, and our hope is to have them fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body. Scripture speaks of men being glorified, but nowhere of glorified souls. It is “far better” to depart and to be with Christ; Phil. 1:23. I would not weaken that. “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened,” says the apostle (2 Cor. 5), “not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. [That is what I want, to have this mortal body changed without seeing death.] Now that he hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit; therefore we are always confident,” etc. The confidence I have is not interrupted at death; the life in my soul will not be affected. If I depart, it will be to be present with the Lord, and I am “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” But I want “mortality to be swallowed up of life”; I want this to be accomplished in myself, I am to be conformed to what I have seen of His image by the power of the Holy Ghost, and I want to be “like him.”

There are but four passages in the New Testament which speak of the joy of the disembodied spirit: Luke 23:42, 43, where the dying thief says to the Lord, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” and the Lord replies, “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” Acts 7:59, where Stephen says, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit”; then 2 Corinthians 5:8, and Philippians 1:23. We see in these passages that the soul, on departing from this world, freed from sorrow, placed out of the reach of sin, enjoys the Lord apart from it; but this is not the object of our hope—our hope is to be conformed to the image of God’s Son in glory. We are to be “like him.” “Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” There is the practical effect of this expectation. It is never said (blessed as that is), ‘he that hath the hope of going to heaven purifieth,’ etc. What am I expecting? To be like Christ. What is the effect of this? I am trying to be as like Him as I can now. This is the present practical effect of the certainty of being like Christ, when He appears.

But it is a hope which I have in common with all saints, not merely my individual hope. It is the church’s hope. And therefore, as regards the Lord’s supper, it is said, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death [not, till death, but] till he come,” 1 Cor. 11:26. There is the basis of our common hope—the death of Christ, and we go on shewing this till He comes again to receive us unto Himself. If I think of death, of my departing to be with Christ, it is myself that

I am thinking about; I shall be happy, but not the whole church glorified. When Christ comes, every saint will be there, and Christ shall then see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. The bride shall have the Bridegroom, and the Bridegroom shall have the bride. It is not merely that I shall be happy. The Spirit of God carries me out of myself, in thinking about it, to the whole body of Christ. Christ shall have that church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself (Eph. 5), with Him in the glory.

See another thing. It fixes the heart on Christ Himself. I am looking for a Person whom I love. He, who has loved me, died for me, is coming again to receive me to Himself, and I am looking for Him. The angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts 1. The Person whom they loved they had lost; they stood looking stedfastly towards heaven, longing after Him, and the first thought God brings upon the heart is, He will come back in like manner. They were to expect His return. It was a grand truth to be kept as a present thing before the soul. I see it all through the epistles, mixed up with every present feeling, whether of joy or of sorrow.

For example, turn to 1 Corinthians 1:7. They were all there together "waiting [it was an individual thing, it was a common hope] for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; not all waiting to die, but "waiting for the revelation," etc.

And mark another thing. Many have supposed that we are to be waiting for another outpouring of the Holy Ghost. A very characteristic and essential feature of the church of God is the fact that the Holy Ghost dwells in it.

This is not our hope, but what we have already. The Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, that “other Comforter” to “abide with us for ever,” John 14. “I thank my God,” says the apostle, “always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you,” etc.

If we turn to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, we find everything there having reference to the coming of Christ. It is mixed up with all the constant daily thoughts, hopes, affections, motives (with every element in the daily life), of the saints. As to their conversion itself (chap. 1), the power of the word had made them so like what Paul preached, that their neighbours could not help seeing it. The very world was speaking about them (perhaps saying, “How foolish,” yet still bearing witness). And what did they say? That they had “turned to God from idols” and were “waiting for his Son from heaven.” That is, that they had left their idols, the stocks and stones they had formerly worshipped, and were waiting for God’s Son to come down from heaven.

And the apostle Paul sanctions it. It was so little their death they were expecting, that he says (chap. 4), “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,” etc. Let us be only, as an habitual thing, waiting for God’s Son from heaven, it would cut short the links that bind us to the world, and knit us in heart to Him and to one another.

Look at Christian affections in the apostle; chap. 2. What a picture of careful tending of the flock! And he concludes, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.”

That is the time (he says), when I shall get all the joy of Christian affections.

Again (chap. 3), it is associated with holiness in the saints— “to the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Again (chap. 4), what comfort at the death of brethren! where it is still more remarkable. They were uneasy at seeing Christians die (so present a thing was the hope of the return of Christ) and it was therefore a mutual comfort at the death-bed of a saint to be enabled to remind one another of a mutual meeting. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be calight up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” The apostolic consolation to saints mourning the death of brethren was not, “Be content, they are gone to heaven,” then it would have been “You will go to them”; but so did the coming of the Lord fill the soul, as a present thing, that he gives this comfort, as it were, at the dying-bed of a Christian, “Be content, God will bring him back, when Jesus comes.” It need not

be said that it is not death, for it is comfort against death.

In the second epistle we get it linked with comfort in trial and persecution. They were in terrible trouble (though exceedingly patient under all; their faith growing exceedingly, and their love one towards another abounding). What comfort does Paul give them? “You will go to heaven soon?” No! there will be respite, when Jesus comes. Again, it has no connection with death.

These passages have been quoted, and it may be added, that all through the epistles we find the same thing, in order to shew that this grand truth (not death) is kept as a present thing before the soul, mixed up with the whole course of feelings amongst them in their everyday condition. Thus it enters into the whole framework of Christian service. It is quite evident if this be left out there must be a gap, a spiritual gap. And this becomes even still more evident when we consider (as properly characteristic of the saint) such passages as, “Unto them that look for him,” “Unto all them that love his appearing.”

At the close of Matthew 24 the Lord mentions the sign and characteristic of the “evil servant,” and what I find there is that, the evil servant says in his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming, and then begins to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.” Were we going to trace to its source the evil, ruined state of the church (considered in its relations and responsibilities here below), we should find that the putting off of the Lord’s coming brought in all kinds of evil.

See in connection the beginning of Matthew 25: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom [death is not the bridegroom],” etc. “While the bridegroom tarried,” it is said they all slumbered and slept. The whole were asleep—the wise as well as the foolish, and both awoke together. While the wisdom of the first was in having oil in their lamps (the Spirit in the heart), when the others had not, there was forgetfulness of their hope, and consequent slothfulness. They had gone to sleep. What brought them out of this condition? What roused them? “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh,” etc. That was what was to rouse the slumbering church. Time sufficient is given to prove if there is oil in the lamp, but not to procure it.

Passages might be multiplied from the Gospels, as from the Epistles, one more however will suffice; Luke 19:12-27: “And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come,” etc.

We cannot mistake, if we really attach importance to the word of God, the vital importance of all this.

The resurrection of the saints (the “first resurrection”) takes place at Christ’s coming; as it is said, “Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming.” This resurrection is

altogether another thing from the resurrection of the wicked. There will be a resurrection, both of the just, and of the unjust, but on different principles. The former have life in Christ, which life has nothing in common with the world around. Moreover, they have the Spirit of God dwelling in them. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,” Rom. 8:11. “The body is … for the Lord and the Lord for the body; and God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power,” 1 Cor. 6:13, 14. The body is the Lord’s as well as the soul. As to the wicked, Christ raises them up for judgment, but not at the same time. Christ will accomplish, for the bodies of the saints, what He has already accomplished for the soul; the wicked will be called up for judgment, and forced to honour Christ in spite of themselves; John 5. In Luke 20:35, 36, there is a remarkable distinction. As regards all my sins, He put them away at His first coming. I am going to appear before Him who has already died for me.

But then there is another aspect of the coming of Christ, and a most important one as regards the present interests and operations of the church; namely, the way in which God is going to accomplish, through it, His purposes towards the world.

I quite understand a person saying, “I do not see this”; but I do not understand the saint saying, “I do not see the importance of it.” Christ is soon coming again, and He is coming to judge the world. Now is not that important? A man may not believe it, but it is folly to say that it is unimportant. The world is going on in a rapid progress of evil, concerning which Scripture gives

abundant testimony, and the preaching of the gospel is not that which is to convert the world which is all ripening for judgment. And here it would be well to guard against a false thought, namely, that to insist upon this would hinder the preaching of the gospel. Quite the contrary. It would urge to it with more power and energy, with more of the activity of love to go and say to poor sinners, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Did the sure knowledge of judgment coming hinder Noah? It is admitted on all hands that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will one day fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea. But the question is, how is this to be brought about? In Scripture this event is attributed to the glory of Christ. Nobody can be saved unless born again, unless washed in the blood of Jesus, but they may believe through seeing Him, like Thomas.

If we turn to Isaiah 26:9-11, we there find it said, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewn to the wicked [the character of the gospel], yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah. [Grace does not produce that effect.] Jehovah, when thy hand is lifted up (just ready, as it were, to strike), they will not see: but they shall see,” etc.

Habakkuk 2 speaks of the universality of blessing: “Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” Is that the success of the gospel? yet it makes the prophet say, “for the earth shall be filled,” etc.

So Isaiah 11, and here again it is connected with His glory. In Isaiah 25:6-8 we read, “And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, etc… and he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory,” etc. Doubtless, it is the desire of our hearts that this terrible veil might be taken off, and we get (1 Cor. 15:54) a positive revelation as to the time at which it shall be so taken off. “Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” We must be subject to the word of God as to when, and how.

We ought (as regards responsibility) to have filled the earth with the knowledge of Jehovah; but we have not! And what have we done? We have let the enemy into the church of God. See the parable of the wheat and tares, Matthew 13: “While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” Through the carelessness of men Satan could come and spoil the results of Christ’s sowing. Could this be repaired? are we to undo it? No! we cannot undo it. The mischief is done, and there they must stay until the harvest (v. 28-30). It will be rectified by a dispensation of judgment—a harvest, not a re-sowing of the field. We ought to have filled the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, but we have failed; and here we get a truly sorrowful revelation (blessed be God! He can come and set all to rights); the mischief done, where good was done, is irreparable.

God, in the accomplishment of His purposes, is gathering out, through the gospel, the co-heirs of Christ; but there is a sorrowful side of the picture. It is blessed

to preach the gospel to sinners; but it is profitable for us, as saints, to own where we have failed. “In the last days,” says Paul to Timothy, “perilous times shall come”; and again, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

If we take two other passages, we find the same testimony as regards the carelessness of man in responsibility, and the continuance of evil (so introduced), up to the time of Christ’s coming, leaving no room for intervening blessing.

First, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8: “The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” The principle of evil is already working in the church—it has begun, and it will go on working till Christ comes: there is now a hinderer; but when this is taken away, the man of sin will be manifested; and then it will be put an end to by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same truth is revealed in the Epistle of Jude. When Jude gave all diligence to write about the common salvation, he found it needful to exhort believers earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; “for,” says he, “there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; their character is described in detail, v. 4-13. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,” etc. He identifies these very men with those whom the Lord is about to destroy.

Let us now turn to God's dealings with the nations.

When "Lo-Ammi" was written upon Israel, God gave power into the hands of the Gentiles; Dan. 2. How is it that the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ? Is it by the preaching of the gospel—a clear duty, whether the earth be filled by that, or whether judgment is to come first? The word says, "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them [there was the most complete and utter destruction of the whole system of the image]; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth," v. 34, 35. There again I get a positive revelation that the universal prevalence of Christianity will be preceded by the execution of the judgments of God. The little stone cut out without hands does not become a mountain, etc., until it has executed judgment upon, broken in pieces, and destroyed the image. And, note, the act of smiting the image and then filling the whole earth is not the setting up of Christ's kingdom at the day of Pentecost. It is not an influence that changes the gold, the silver, etc., into the character of the stone; but the sudden execution of judgment upon the image—a blow, which breaks in pieces, and leaves not a trace of the existence of the image, so that we read, "no place was found for them."

If I turn to Revelation 19:11-22, and compare it with Isaiah 63:1-6, I get a striking testimony respecting the judgments of the nations. "Who is this that cometh from

Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me [it is not here "He that was trodden in the wine-press," but "He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," Rev. 19:15]; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment [not whiten theirs]. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." Revelation 14:17-20. The clusters of the vine of the earth are gathered, and cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

One passage more, Zephaniah 3:8: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." Verse 9 brings out subsequent blessing. This needs no comment.

Whatever part of scripture I turn to, bearing upon these things, I find the same uniform testimony.

There is another part of the subject, for which there is not space now beyond a brief notice: namely, its connection with the destinies of the Jewish people, "as concerning the gospel, enemies for your sakes, but, as touching the election, beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom. 11:28); "of whom, as concerning the flesh,

Christ came," Rom. 9:4, 5. We say, with the apostle, "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid." Israel, as a nation, will be saved, and planted in the land. "There shall come out of Zion the deliverer," etc. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." The promises have never been accomplished. God gave certain promises to Abraham, unconditionally. Israel got into the land conditionally under Joshua, failed, and were turned out of the land. The promises are taken up under the new covenant, and connected with Messiah. Their return from Babylon was nothing in that sense; Neh. 9:36. And Messiah was not there. When He came the first time, they rejected Him. But even this, while it filled up the measure of their guilt, did not touch the promises given without condition. If this be so, it must be under a new dispensation. It is another state and condition of things altogether.

"In the dispensation of the fulness of times," God will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him," Eph. 1:10, 11. When Christ, who is "heir of all things," takes the inheritance, we, as joint-heirs with Him, shall be brought into the same glory.

In conclusion, as it regards Christ's coming to judgment: I find there a very solemn testimony against being identified with the world in its interests, its pursuits, expectations, etc. The world—aye, and the church (in the general vague sense of the word) too—is ripening for judgment. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." How can I be found identifying the interests and objects of the world with my interests and objects as a saint? making myself a nest in the place

where Christ has been crucified, and where He is coming to judge?

But here is another thing. If I look up, “Glory is coming! there is the Bridegroom! I am going to see him as he is, to be with him in the glory, to be like him.” “Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.”

The Lord give you to search the word, and see if these things be so. May you receive them, not merely as matters of knowledge, but of faith and of hope. This plants a thousand joys.

Faith

Hebrews 11

We find in this chapter not exactly a definition of faith, but the effects of its power, brought before us; and this is to make things so present as that they should be real to the soul. The things looked out for are as substantial to the soul as if possessed, and this which are not seen are as vividly before us as if they were seen. This is what characterises a believer. He is a person who has such an evidence of things not seen as to govern his thoughts and affections, as his motive. The world in which he lives is seen and felt by faith.

This is calculated to bring home that question in a man's soul which God Himself answers. Is there any substance in my soul? are things unseen as real to me as if I saw them? Faith is opposed to law; for "the law is not of faith." Law brings out the rebellion of the will. The carnal mind is opposed to God's law; and, therefore, there is disobedience wherever there are self-will and law. If I have no law, I may do my own will; but if there is a law, it is the will of someone else I must do.

There is another character of sin brought out here. It is not rebellion against a law, as in Adam. There was the absence of faith in Cain: while it is said of Abel, "by faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." What substance have you of things hoped for? This question does not disturb one who has real faith. I do not ask if you live up to these things—that is another question; but have you faith? The Jews had killed the Holy One and the Just, but they believed that He was the Holy and the Just One, for if they had not, they would

have said, when they were charged with having killed Him, Oh, He was not the Holy and the Just One at all; but their very confession of “What shall we do?” proves that they did not deny His being so, and it made them fear. They were not what they should be, but they were pricked to the heart; and the effect of it is they cry out, “What shall we do to be saved?”

The conscience may be frightened about sin, but that is not faith. There is no power in natural conscience to acquire life, but there is fear of punishment— “a certain fearful looking for of judgment”; but this is not faith. There is nothing “hoped for.” Have you such a sense of the reality of future things on your heart? Is it a reality in your souls, so that it controls your thoughts and feelings and habits? If not, you have not faith. In the end of John 2 we see a class of persons on whom there was no insincerity charged, but there was no faith in them. They saw the miracles and they marvelled; but Christ did not commit Himself to them.

All through this chapter (Heb. 11) faith is spoken of in a practical way. “By it the elders obtained a good report”; and in all the instances mentioned, it was such a real and practical thing that it characterised the man.

If your soul is distressed with the thought that you have not the outgoing of soul answering to what Christ is to you, it is a proof that you have faith. Christ has such a substance in your heart. There is something wrong, something not given up—some levity, carelessness, vanity, etc.; but still you have got some substance. There is a connection between these four first examples of faith. The first shews us its exercise about the sacrifice, on which Abel rests. The second is, the walk with God

consequent upon this. The third is, the knowledge of the future which actuates. The fourth opens the special subject of walking as pilgrims and strangers; but all following each other in order.

The moment a soul is brought home to God, it changes everything to him. “The fashion of this world passeth away.” He sees God through it all, instead of seeing it as He did before, only as man’s world with none but man through it all. You cannot bring God into a world which has rejected and slighted Christ, without altering everything to the heart and judgment. You are not in paradise now, and you know and feel that you are not. There is not a circumstance in the world, but in it we see the results of our having broken with God, and God having broken with us. The very fact of our dress reminds us of it; it is the consequence of sin.

Cain went out from the presence of God, and what does he then? He builds a city: and what next? You cannot have a city without having something to amuse. Then comes Tubal-Cain with the arts and sciences, and Jubal with pleasant sounds— “he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” There was no harm in the music, etc., itself; but why did they want it? What was the source of it? What use did they make of it? It was to make them content in being away from God. Is not this “harm” enough? Adam, after he sinned and heard God’s voice, hid himself among the trees in the garden: there was no harm in the trees, but there was harm in his hiding himself. There is harm in man’s trying to make himself comfortable away from God. The prodigal went and joined himself to the citizens of the far country: but when he was in want, no man gave to him. There is none to give him where the devil reigns. Man never can

satisfy himself in that country. Bring God in; and what is the result? It gives the consciousness of the truth. It makes him feel and say, “I am perishing with hunger.” This is the first effect of faith coming in. Mark, too, the next consequence. How thoroughly he would hate all those things which governed and attracted his heart before! There is nothing a soul will detest so much as the very things he loved most before. When a soul comes to God, he finds out what it is to have left God—that he might do according to a will that is utterly corrupt—his own will. This is the effect of such a discovery. He thinks of the contrast and of his father’s house: “How many hired servants of my father’s,” etc. The sense of the contrast comes in when God is made known. Then comes the sense of sin—I am this wicked person. There is not only wickedness, but it is I that am this wicked thing; and then the discovery of ourselves, just as we are, would be more than we could bear; we need the revelation of God’s grace. We could not bear to see all otherwise. There was One and only One who could. The conviction of sin comes into the soul in the sight of the blessedness of Him who is without sin.

Let us look a little at these religious characters brought before us. Cain and Abel were both alike as to outward character and circumstance. They were both under the sentence of banishment from the presence of God. They both had employment, and both seemed to have been outwardly decent characters. They both came to worship, too, and Cain brought that which cost him most, that for which he had worked. God had sent him forth to till the ground, and he tilled it; that was all right, and it was right for him to bring an offering. The difference between them was not in all that. In outward

character, too, Cain was just like Abel; nothing came out amiss until he killed his brother. What was the mistake in Cain? There was no sense upon his heart that he was driven out of paradise because he deserved it: he might not have known that he was driven out even, for he thought he had nothing to do but to go to God, as if he was all right with Him. This is just what men are doing now. They are driven from God's presence and favour, going on with their occupations, tilling the ground and the like, and, when the time comes round, thinking to come and worship! What would a father feel about his child who had been disobedient to him one day, and coming the next, just as if nothing had happened, expecting to be received as though all was right between him and his father? This is just what men are doing with God. But, dear friends, you are out of paradise, and can you think to come and worship God as if nothing had happened? Are you expecting to get into heaven just the same as (not one whit better than) Adam was when he got out of # paradise? If you got into heaven, you would spoil it; but the truth is, you are making your own heaven down here.

Abel was not a bit better than Cain as to his position and nature; but there is one great difference—he owns it all, and obtained testimony that he was righteous. "By faith he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice," etc. It might have been said he was not so right as Cain in a natural sense, as to his calling, for God had not set men to keep sheep, and he had to till the ground; but he brought a sacrifice from the flock, a bloody sacrifice. He had a sense of being out of paradise; but, more than that, he had a sense of being an outcast for sin. He felt he was a sinner. He had a sense of having broken with

God and God with him, and he knew Him to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He owned that God had not done wrong in turning man out, and that it would be wrong to let him in. He owned that death hung over him as his proper desert.

It is God's sentence upon me, and my ruin is my desert. These things had such a reality to his soul that he would have known it would have been presumption for him to go to God as though nothing had happened. Then he had something more still; for he had learnt, through the grace of God, that there was something needed between him and God, and that this something was there. Sacrifice was the only way. See the other side of this blessed truth. Not only could he not go without a sacrifice, but, beyond this, it was there: and we know who this is—the Son of God. God says, I cannot look at sin; but there is one thing I can look at—an offering about sin, and that is my Son as a sin-offering. Faith apprehends this, and there was no thought of coming in any other way. "There will I meet with thee," God said to Moses. And what did he put at the door of the tabernacle? The altar of burnt-offering, the sacrifice for sin God had there; and faith rests on this as the only possible way of approach.

There was no climbing up some other way. There is but this one door by which to enter, and it is through that sacrifice, by which the holiness of God is fully maintained, as well as His love manifested, in the highest way. I want to see my sin put away in His sight, just as I see it brought out first in His sight; and here is the perfect sin-offering, and there is no place where this wonderful question of good and evil has been judged as at the cross of Christ. The sacrifice is fully accepted. He

has borne all the wrath and put it away. Hear Him saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There was perfect obedience and perfect love. He was a perfect sin-offering; and there He is now at the right hand of the Father. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” His offering for sin has for ever settled the question of sin. He has made peace about my sin and for my sin; and has He done it in part? Would that be like God? No; it was complete. “When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” When I see that, I cannot go to God as Cain, just as I am; and yet I must go to Him if I am to have happiness or blessing. But I also see that God has provided Himself with a burnt-offering. It is taken out of our hands, as it were; it is God’s own perfect work; it is His settling of sin, and I can rest in the result of what He has offered. This is faith. Now we go to God by Him. This is, as it were, offering Christ. God gives me the resting-place; and the convinced sinner cannot come to Christ without finding all his sins put away for ever. The sacrifice of the burnt-offering is there, and the moment I am there I come with the sacrifice, and can be happy in His presence, though with a perfect knowledge of His holiness.

“Abel obtained witness that he was righteous”: not merely that the sacrifice was perfect, but he had the witness that he was righteous. It was not only true that he was righteous, but that he also had the witness of it, and this gave him peace. The gospel is God’s witness to His acceptance of Christ. See how this is “God testifying of his gifts.” If you bring that Lamb, I accept you according to all the value of that Lamb.

The next effect of faith we see in Enoch, walking with God when brought to Him, and it is with a God who has found a propitiation in the blood of Christ. “Am I accepted in the Beloved? “I have no hope but in Christ; but He is my hope. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” etc. God’s holiness is the measure by which He has put away sin, and there is not a spot upon him that believes in Christ. Then I can walk with God. It is not only peace, but walking with Him till I am in heaven with Him. How can I have all this? Christ is my title. I may expect all that God can give as the fruit of the travail of Christ’s soul. I know God and am known of Him; and walking in the comfort and peace of His grace and truth in Christ, I trust Him.

Burning And Eating The Sacrifices

Hebrews 13:7-19

There was a twofold character in the offering which has its counterpart for us in Christ: and the want of firm grasp of this, to distinguish and yet maintain them together, lies at the root of much want of enjoyment and of feebleness in the children of God. The first and most fundamental point was that in the offerings there was that which was consumed. Being identified with the sin of man, it was consumed under the wrath and indignation of God; or it went up as a savour of rest, as that which was sweet and acceptable to God, as for instance in the burnt-offering. In the sin-offering there was God's judgment of sin, and therefore the greater part was burnt outside the camp. But, besides this, there was another character that entered into the sacrifices. In very many cases men partook of them. In the meat-offering and peace-offering such was the fact: and even in the offering for sin the priest had a portion.

And I believe that this is what is referred to here. These Jewish Christians were in great danger of forgetting their privileges. They had abandoned everything that they had once revered as the religion given them by God: they were no longer gazing on things that shadowed His glory. The grandeur, the magnificence, the glory, of the Levitical institutions—all was left behind. God was not now, as of old, thundering from heaven. He had wrought with infinitely greater moral glory. He had sent His Son from heaven: pardon and peace had been brought, and joy and liberty in the Holy Ghost; but all this was unseen. It is, however, one thing to enter into

the comfort of the truth when all is bright and fresh, and another thing to hold it fast in time of reproach, shame, derision and the falling away of some. When the first joy is somewhat lessened, the heart naturally returns to what it had once rested on. And there is always this danger for us— when evil is felt, the blessing not being so present to the soul. Who among us that has long known Christ—known His ways— has not felt this snare?

And what is the divine remedy? It is just that which the Holy Ghost here uses—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." We must not sever this verse from the succeeding one: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," etc. The Holy Ghost would guard these Jewish believers against that which, compared with our own proper Christian blessings, is mere trash, earthly priesthood, holy places, offerings, tithes, etc. These things, after all, were but novelties compared with the old thing, which is Jesus.

Looked at historically, Christianity might seem a new thing. He had been but recently manifested; but who was He? and whence had He come? He was "the first-born of every creature"—yea, the Creator! "All things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." He was the One whom God intended to manifest from all eternity. And here we see Him in His complete Person—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Through Him God could bless. With Him He would have us occupied.

We are told a little before to remember them that had the rule over us—to follow their faith, even if themselves were gone. But these all pass out of the scene, while

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” This is the only thing that abides unchangeably, and establishes too. “Meats have not profited those who have been occupied therein.” Many might have abstained—it was God’s bidding that they should; but if occupied with the thing, it was not for their profit. Christ was the substance: all else was shadow. Therefore He goes on to say, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” If others have the husk, we are feeding on the kernel. (The “tabernacle” was used to express the Jewish system.) Everything had passed away in Christ. In Philippians the apostle could speak contemptuously of circumcision in contrast with having Christ, even though it was of God. To be occupied with it, now that Christ was come, was to be outside, to be of “the circumcision.”

“To eat.” It was not merely the offering, nor the burning of the offering, but the partaking of it. We have got Christ Himself, and our sins put away—sin, root and branch, dealt with by God. There is not now one question unsettled for us who believe. Has He one question unsettled with Christ? and if not with Christ, He has not with us, for He died and rose for us, and we are one with Him. As in the Jewish system, God and the offerer had their portions in the sacrifices, so now we may say that God has His own portion in the same Christ on whom we feed. The entrance into this exceedingly blessed thought is one of the things which the children of God greatly fail in—that we are seated by God Himself at the same table where He has His own joy and portion. Of course there is that in which we cannot share. In the burnt-offering all went up to God. The sweet fragrance of all that Christ was goes up to Him. We must

remember that God has His infinite joy in Christ; and not only for what He is in Himself, but for that which He has done for my sins. When we think of this, all of self is absorbed, and must sink before it. The old nature we have still; but it is in us to be crushed. We have to treat it all, its likings and dislikings, as a hateful thing. But the new life needs sustaining. It grows by feeding. As in natural life, the mere possession of riches will not sustain life, but it has to be nourished; so in spiritual life, it is not only true that Christ is my life in the presence of God, but I must make Christ my own for my food—eating of Him day by day; John 6. He is in very deed given to us, to be turned by faith into nourishment for us. And the sweet thing is that we are entitled thus to think of Christ, given by God to be this food for us. It is not only that Christ is God's, but He is ours too: our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Obedience The Saint’s Liberty

Hebrews 13:17-25

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of all godliness. The spring of all evil from the beginning has been independence of will. Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme—would cease to be God. Where there is independence, there there is always sin. This rule, if remembered, would wonderfully help us in guiding our conduct.

There is no case whatever in which we ought to do our own will; for then we have not the capacity either of judging rightly about our conduct or of bringing it before God. I may be called upon to act independently of the highest authority in the world, but it ought never to be on the principle that I am doing my own will, which is the principle of eternal death.

The liberty of the saint is not licence to do his own will.9 If any thing could have taken away the liberty of the Lord Jesus, it would have been the hindering Him in being always obedient to the will of God. All that moves in the sphere of man’s will is sin. Christianity pronounces the assertion of its exercise to be the principle of sin. We are sanctified unto obedience (1 Pet. 1:2): the essence of sanctification is the having no will of our own. If I were as wise (so to speak) as Lucifer, and it administered to my own will, all my wisdom would come to be folly. True slavery is the being enslaved by our own will; and true liberty consists in our having our wills entirely set aside. When we are doing our own wills, self is our centre.

The Lord Jesus “took upon himself the form of a servant,” and, “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” Phil. 2:6-8. When man became a sinner, he ceased to be a servant, though he is, in sin and rebellion, the slave of a mightier rebel than himself. When we are sanctified, we are brought into the place of servants, as well as that of sons. The spirit of sonship just manifested itself in Jesus, in coming to do the Father’s will. Satan sought to make His sonship at variance with unqualified obedience to God; but the Lord Jesus would never do anything, from the beginning to the end of His life, but the Father’s will.

In this chapter the spirit of obedience is enforced towards those who rule in the church— “obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves,” v. 17. It is for our profit in everything, to seek after this spirit. “They watch for your souls,” says the apostle, “as they that must give account.” Those whom the Lord puts into service He makes responsible to Himself. This is the real secret of all true service. It should be obedience, whether in those who rule, or those who obey. They are servants, and this is their responsibility. Woe unto them if they do not guide, direct, rebuke, etc.; if they do not do it, “the Lord “will require it of them. On the other hand, those counselled become directly responsible to “the Lord “for obedience.

The great guardian principle of all conduct in the church of God is personal responsibility to “the Lord.”

No guidance of another can ever come in between an individual’s conscience and God. In popery this individual responsibility to God is taken away. Those

who are spoken of in this chapter, as having the rule in the church, had to “give account” of their own conduct, and not of souls which were committed to them. There is no such thing as giving account of other people’s souls; “every one of us must give an account of himself to God,” Rom. 14. Individual responsibility always secures the maintenance of God’s authority. If those who watched for their souls had been faithful in their service, they would not have to give account “with grief,” so far as they were concerned; but still it might be very “unprofitable” for the others, if they acted disobediently.

Wherever the principle of obedience is not in our hearts, all is wrong; there is nothing but sin. The principle which actuates us in our conduct should never be, “I must do what I think right”; but, “I ought to obey God,” Acts 5:29.

The apostle then says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,” v. 18. It is always the snare of those who are occupied with the things of God continually, not to have a “good conscience.” No person is so liable to a fall, as one who is continually administering the truth of God, if he be not careful to maintain a “good conscience.” The continually talking about truth, and the being occupied about other people, has a tendency to harden the conscience. The apostle does not say, “Pray for us, for we are labouring hard,” and the like; but that which gives him confidence in asking their prayers is, that he has a “good conscience.” We see the same principle spoken of in 1 Timothy 1:19; “holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.” Where there is not diligence in seeking to maintain a “good conscience,”

Satan comes in and destroys confidence between the soul and God, or we get into false confidence. Where there is the sense of the presence of God, there is the spirit of lowly obedience. The moment that a person is very active in service, or has much knowledge and is put forward in any way in the church, there is the danger of not having a good conscience.

It is blessed to see the way in which, in verses 20, 21, the apostle returns, after all his exercise and trial of spirit, to the thought of God's being "the God of peace." He was taken from them, and was in bondage and trial himself; he enters, moreover, into all the troubles of these saints, and is extremely anxious, evidently, about them; and yet he is able to turn quietly to God, as "the God of peace."

We are called unto peace. Paul closes his second epistle to the Thessalonians with, "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means." There is nothing that the soul of the believer is more brought to feel than that he has "need of patience" (Heb. 10:36); but if he is hindered by any thing from finding God to be "the God of peace," if sorrow and trial hinder this, there is the will of the flesh at work. There cannot be the quiet doing of God's will, if the mind be troubled and fluttered about a thousand things. It is completely our privilege to walk and to be settled, in peace; to have no uneasiness with God, but to be quietly seeking His will. It is impossible to have holy clearness of mind, unless God be known as "the God of peace." When everything was removed out of God's sight but Christ, God was "the God of peace." Suppose then, that I find out that I am an utterly worthless sinner, but see the Lord Jesus standing in the presence of God, I have perfect peace. This sense

of peace becomes quite distracted when we are looking at the ten thousand difficulties by the way; for, when the charge and care of anything rests on our minds, God ceases, practically, to be “the God of peace.”

There are three steps:

1. The knowledge that God has “made peace through the blood of his cross,” Col. 1:20. This gives us “peace with God,” Rom. 5:1.

2. As it regards all our cares and troubles, the promise is, that, if we cast them on God, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” See Phil. 4:6, 7. God burdens Himself about everything for us, yet He is never disturbed or troubled; and it is said, that His peace shall “keep our hearts and minds.” If Jesus walked on the troubled sea, He was just as much at peace as ever; He was far above the waves and billows.

3. There is a further step, namely, He who is “the God of peace” being with us, and working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. See verses 20, 21. The holy power of God is here described as keeping the soul in those things which are well pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ.

There was war—war with Satan, and in our own consciences, but it met its crisis on the cross of the Lord Jesus. The moment that He was raised from the dead, God was made known fully as “the God of peace.” He could not leave His Son in the grave; the whole power of the enemy was exercised to its fullest extent; and God brought into the place of peace the Lord Jesus, and us also who believe on Him, and became nothing less than “the God of peace.”

He is “the God of peace,” both as regards our sins, and as regards our circumstances. But it is only in His presence that there is settled peace. The moment we get into human thoughts and reasonings about circumstances, we get troubled. Not only has peace been made for us by the atonement, but it rests upon the power of Him who raised up Jesus again from the dead; and therefore we know Him as “the God of peace.”

The blessing of the saint does not depend upon the old covenant to which man was a party, and which might therefore fail; but upon God who, through all the trouble and sin and the power of Satan, “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” and thus secured “eternal redemption,” Heb. 9:12. All that God Himself had pronounced as to judgment against sin, and all the wicked power of Satan, rested on Jesus on the cross; and God Himself has raised Him from the dead. Here then we have full comfort and confidence of soul. “Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” argues faith (see Rom. 8:31-39), for, when all our sins had been laid upon Jesus, God stepped in, in mighty power, and “brought again from the dead that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” The blood was as much the proof and witness of the love of God to the sinner as it was of the justice and majesty of God against sin. This covenant is founded on the truth and holiness of the eternal God having been fully met and answered in the cross of the Lord Jesus. His precious blood has met every claim of God. If God be not “the God of peace,” He must be asserting the insufficiency of the blood of His dear Son. And this we know is impossible. God rests in it as a sweet savour.

Then, as to the effect of all this on the life of the saint, the knowledge of it produces fellowship with God and delight in doing His will. He “works in us,” as it is said here, “that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.”

The only thing that ought to make any hesitation in the saint’s mind about departing to be with Christ is the doing God’s will here. We may suppose such an one thinking of the joy of being with Christ, and then being arrested by the desire of doing God’s will here. See Phil, 1:20-25. That assumes confidence in God, as “the God of peace,” and confidence in His sustaining power whilst here. If the soul is labouring in the turmoil of its own mind, it cannot have the blessing of knowing God as “the God of peace.”

The flesh is so easily aroused that there is often the need of the word of exhortation—“I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation,” v. 22. The spirit of obedience is the only spirit of holiness.

The Lord give us grace to walk in His ways.

9 An entire self-renunciation (and this goes very far when we know the subtlety of the heart) is the only means of walking with the full blessing that belongs to our happy position of service to God, our brethren, and mankind.

Brief Exposition Of The Epistle Of James

Introduction

The Epistle of James is not one in which the doctrines of grace are developed, although sovereign grace is clearly recognised; chap, 1:18. These doctrines are presented to us under the form of the work of God in us, not under that of redemption through the precious blood of Christ, which is His work for us. It is a practical epistle—the holy girdle for our loins, in order that the external practical life should correspond with the inner divine life of the Christian, and that the will of God should be for us a law of liberty. Redemption is not spoken of in this epistle, neither is faith, as the means of participation in the fruit of this accomplished redemption. But since many had already made profession of the name of Christ, the writer desires that the reality of this profession should be manifested by works, the sole witness to others that true faith is working in the heart; for faith works by love; Gal. 5:6. James sets forth the true character of this new creation, and the way in which it is manifested in practical life, so that others are able to see it.

James remained at Jerusalem to tend the flock which was found there—more especially the Jewish portion of the church. We find him in the history of the gospel, but always as presiding over the Jewish flock, and that before it had become distinct from the Jewish nation. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Spirit of God exhorts them to go forth without the camp, that is to say, to

separate themselves from the unbelieving Jews; Heb. 13. Up to that time they had remained together, and Christians offered sacrifices according to the law. There were also many priests who were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7)—a thing incredible to us, but the fact is clearly proved by the word. Moreover they were still all zealous for the law.

Let us trace the history of James as we find it in the Acts. But first we get him specially mentioned in Galatians 1:19, as having been seen by Paul, who, at that time, with the exception of Peter, had not seen the other apostles. Then we find him in Acts 15, presiding if we can so say, in the assembly of the apostles and elders, for deciding whether the Gentiles ought to be subjected to the law of Moses. His decision is final, though Peter and Paul as well as the other apostles were present, with the exception of James, the brother of John whom Herod had slain.

The decrees ordained by the apostles and elders were a testimony from the Jewish church. God had not allowed Paul and Barnabas to decide the question at Antioch: such a decision would not have ended the controversy; it would have made two assemblies. But the moment the Jewish Christians and the assembly at Jerusalem allowed liberty to the Gentiles, none could oppose themselves to their deliverance from the law. It was not a point determined by the apostles in virtue of their apostolic authority, although that authority confirmed the decree. They disputed much in the assembly. The decision is afterwards sent in the name of the apostles, the elders, and the whole church. Judaism had allowed to the Gentiles liberty from the Jewish yoke.

Here again we find James. He ended the discussion by saying, “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.” It is not certain that he was an apostle. Probably he was not. He was at the head of the Jewish church at Jerusalem. For this reason the angel of the Lord, when he had brought Peter out of prison, restoring him to liberty, says, “Go and shew these things to James and to the brethren,” Acts 12:17. Again, at Antioch, “before that certain came from James, Peter ate with the Gentiles, but after they were come, he withdrew and separated himself,” Gal. 2:12. We see how James is linked in the minds of the Christians, including Peter, although an apostle, with the Jewish feeling that still held sway in the hearts of the Jewish Christians, especially at Jerusalem.

Again, when Paul went up to Jerusalem for the last time, “he went in,” it is said, “with us to James, and all the elders were present,” Acts 21:18. James was evidently at the head of the assembly at Jerusalem, and expressed in his own person the strength of that principle of Judaism, which still reigned in the church at Jerusalem, God bearing with it in His patience. They believed in Jesus, they broke bread at home, but they were all zealous for the law. They offered sacrifices in the temple, and even persuaded Paul to do the same (Acts 21), and they were in no respect separated from the nation. All this is forbidden in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but it was practised up to the last days of Judaism.

This principle reappears in the Epistle of James—a true presentation of the state of the Jewish Christians, James himself being in his own person its representative and embodiment. As long as God bore with the system, the

Spirit of God could work in it. We learn from profane history that James was killed by the Jews amongst whom he bore the name of “the just”; and Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us, that for this crime Jerusalem was destroyed. After the destruction of Jerusalem the system disappeared. We can well believe that the true Christians acted upon the testimony given in the Epistle to the Hebrews. However that may be, there remained only one or perhaps two small heretical sects, who held formally to Judaism, and they also soon vanished. They were called the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. But we need not occupy ourselves with these things.

The position of James, and the state of the assembly at Jerusalem (that is to say, of the Christians who were externally linked with the unbelieving Jews, although they might break bread and worship apart), makes it easier to understand this epistle. It is no question of its divine inspiration, but of its character. God in His goodness has given us all the forms with which Christianity has been clothed, and among others this first Jewish form, when the Christians had not yet separated themselves from the nation.

We do not, therefore, here find the mysteries of the counsels of God, as in Paul; nor redemption as set forth in his writings, and in those of Peter; nor the divine life of the Son of God, in Him and then in us, as we find it described in the writings of the apostle John; but his subject is the practical life of the poor of the flock, who still frequented the synagogue, and denunciations against the rich unbelievers who oppressed the poor, and blasphemed the name of the Lord.

Chapter 1.

The epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes. The nation is not yet looked upon as finally rejected of God.

James writes to the dispersion, that is to say, to the Israelites dispersed everywhere in the midst of the Gentiles. Faith recognised the entire nation, as did Elijah in 1 Kings 18:31, and as did Paul in Acts 26:7. Faith recognised it, until the judgment of God was accomplished. In order to understand the counsels, the purposes of God, His assembly, the glory of Christ, and our place now in Christ, and hereafter with Him, we must read the writings of Paul.

The patience of God with His ancient people is here shewn, although James warns them that the Judge is before the door. He carefully distinguishes the believers (chap. 2:1), though not yet separated from the people. Their privileges are not found in this epistle; they could not enjoy them in company with the unbelieving Jews; but he could point out to them— though in the midst of such—the difference of the Christian life, and it is of this James speaks.

He does not style himself an apostle; yet he was in a practical manner—not as an ordained elder, but from his personal influence, at the head of those Christians who were not separated from Judaism. He always thinks of Christians, and of the walk which became them in the midst of the nation. Peter, who wrote to a part of the Jewish dispersion, does not speak of the Jews, but calls the believers the nation, and addresses them as in the midst of the Gentiles (1 Pet. 2:10-12); but by James the Christian walk is described in terms which seldom go

beyond what ought to have been found in a man of faith under the old covenant.

We see that he has Christians in his mind, but Christians who are on the lowest step of the ladder which reaches towards heaven. Yet, since in point of fact, we are upon the earth, this epistle is most useful, as pointing out the walk and the spirit which become us, however great our heavenly privileges may be. Although the light of our hearts is there above, a lantern for our feet is not to be despised, and it is all the more valuable, because we are in the midst of a Christian profession— of people who say they are believers. The epistle puts the truth of this profession to the proof. Whatever may have been the connection of the believers with the people, the writer of our epistle supposes faith in those to whom it is addressed—a faith which perhaps might have been practically found in a Jew before he believed in Jesus—therefore, with the addition of this belief, a true faith which had been produced by the word of God in the heart. As Paul himself, coming down from the height of the revelations granted him by God, recognises the faith of Lois and Eunice, and likens the faith of Timothy to that of these women.

Let us now examine the epistle itself. At its very commencement, temptations, the discipline of God in favour of the believer, are the test of faith; chap, 1:2-12.

As to their position, they were associated with the people; the state of things which the writer has before his mind is a profession of the faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall see that he addresses others with whom they were found linked, and warns believers against the spirit in which such walked.

The Jewish Christians were tried and persecuted. Peter also speaks of this in his epistle, encouraging them to suffer with patience. James exhorts them, as Paul also had done in Romans 5, to esteem persecution as all joy, and for the same reason that Paul had given. The trial of faith works patience; the will of man is broken; he has to wait for the operation of God; he feels his dependence on God, and that he lives in a scene where God alone can produce the result desired, overcoming and arresting the power of Satan. Often we may wish when occupied with good, that the work should be hastened, that difficulties should disappear, and that we should be freed from persecution; but the will of God—not ours—is good and wise: the works that are done upon the earth, He does them Himself. Patience is the perfect fruit of obedience.

See what is said in Colossians 1:11: “Strengthened with all might, according to the power of his glory”—what mighty deeds should not such strength produce!— “unto all patience and longsuffering, with joyfulness.” All might, according to the power of His glory, is needed to enable us to bear everything without murmuring, and even with joy, since all comes from the hand of God. It is His will, not our own, which sustains the heart. When Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:12, gives us the signs of an apostle, the first is patience with all longsuffering. Paul also gives us the key to this apparent contradiction: “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,” Rom. 5:3-5.

When the love of God is known, and the will broken, there is confidence in God. We know that all comes from Him, and that He makes all work together for our greatest blessing. Thus the trying of our faith works patience. But patience must have her perfect work: otherwise the will revives, also confidence in self, instead of having it in God. We act without God, and apart from His will, we do not wait upon Him, or in any case impatience and the flesh shew themselves in us. Job was subject for a long time, but patience did not have her perfect work. Saul waited long for Samuel, but he could rft>t wait quietly till Samuel came, and he lost the kingdom. He did not wait for the Lord, conscious that he could do nothing of his own will, and apart from God: patience had not her perfect work.

Now affliction, the dealing of God which acts for us externally, and inwardly too, by His grace, puts patience to the proof; and when this work is accomplished and we are wholly subject to God, desiring nothing apart from His will, we are perfect and entire, lacking nothing. Not that we have nothing to learn as to acquaintance with His will; we find the contrary in verse 5, which follows; but the state of soul is perfect, as to the will, as to our relations with God; and He can reveal His will to us, for it is the only thing we desire. See 1 Peter 1:6, 7.

Patience had her perfect work in the Lord. He felt deeply the affliction He passed through in this world, and felt it more than we do.

He could weep over Jerusalem, and at the sight of the power of death over the hearts of men. The refusal of His love was a perpetual source of grief to Him. He upbraided the cities in which most of His mighty works

were done, but He is perfect in His patience, and in that hour He said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes,” Matt. 11. He gives thanks at the same moment that He upbraids. We see the same thing in John 12. In both cases His soul, being perfectly subject to His Father’s will, expands with joy at the prospect of all that which is the result of submission.

Christ could never lack divine wisdom. But with us it is very possible that wisdom may be lacking, even when will is subject, and we truly desire to do the will of God. Therefore the promise follows, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” Absence of, will, obedience, and the spirit of confiding dependence which waits on God, characterise the new life. We pass through tribulation in the world; but this life develops itself in these qualities. But it is necessary this confidence should be in exercise; otherwise we can receive nothing. It does not honour God to distrust Him. Such a man is double-minded, like a wave of the sea driven by the wind. He is unstable, because his heart is not in communion with God; he does not live in a way to know Him; such an one is, of course, unstable. If a believer keeps in the presence of God, near Him, he knows Him, and will understand His will; he will not have a will of his own, and will not wish to have one; not only on the ground of obedience, but because he has more confidence in the thoughts of God concerning him than he has in his own will.

Faith in the goodness of God gives courage to seek and to do His will. We have in Christ Himself a perfect and

beautiful example of these principles of the divine life. Tempted by Satan, He has no will of His own; it does not stir; but He shews that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It is absolute and perfect obedience. The will of God is not only the rule but the sole motive for action. When the tempter desires Him to throw Himself down from the temple, to see whether God will be true to His promises, Jesus will in no way be tempted; He cannot question His faithfulness. He waits quietly for the power of God, whenever the occasion may present itself for manifesting it, in the path of His will.

Such faith and confidence are indeed a sign that the soul is near to God, living in intimacy and fellowship with Him. Such an one will be assured that God hears him. This is what forms the soul in the difficulties and trials of this present life, so that it can be said, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.”

Verses 9-11 are parenthetical.” The new man belongs to the new creation; he is its first-fruits, but he nevertheless finds himself down here in a world, the glory of which passes away as the flower of the grass. Thus the brother of low degree is exalted to have fellowship with Christ, and to share His glory. However humble he may be, he becomes, even in this world, the companion of all the brethren. “God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.” The rich own them as brethren, and they meet together at the Lord’s table, as possessors of the same privileges. On the other hand the rich man, if he is faithful, cannot walk in worldly grandeur, in the pride and vanity of a world which has rejected the Lord. He makes himself—

God has made him—the brother of the poor man who loves the Lord. They enjoy the communion of the Spirit together, and share the most precious and intimate things of life. They rejoice together; the poor man in his exaltation—Christ is not ashamed to call such 'brethren'—and the rich man glories in that title much more than in all those that belong to him in the world. That title is despised in the world, and counted for nothing; but he knows that the glory of this world passes away as the flower of the grass, and he rejoices in being the companion of those whom the Lord of glory owns as His. The world will pass away, and the spirit of the world is already passed from the heart of the spiritual Christian. He who takes the lowest place shall be great in the kingdom of God.

All this is very far removed from the spirit of envy and jealousy, which would like to pull down all that is above it. It is not selfishness, but the Spirit of love, which comes down to walk with the lowly, who are not little in the sight of God; like Christ, who indeed had the right to reign, and to be first, but who came down, in order to be with us, and made Himself a servant in the midst of His disciples. For us the glory of this world is only vanity and deceit. Love likes to serve, selfishness to be served.

The apostle returns to the character of the new man, for whom life down here is a test. He is blessed when he passes through temptations, and bears them with patience. This is the normal state of the Christian; 1 Pet. 4:12. The desert is his pathway, his calling is patience here and glory hereafter. Tested here, through grace he abides faithful and unmoved in temptation and trial, and afterwards he shall inherit the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him. The life that has no

trials is no life, but he who is tried is blessed. The life is not down here, though it is indeed passing through the wilderness. We are on the journey, not in the rest; it is not yet the life in the rest and glory of Christ.

In order to develop this life, the affections must be set upon the promised crown and blessings. When we have the life of Christ, we need to be exercised in order that the heart may detach itself from things around, which constantly invite the attention of the flesh, and that the will may not yield. Resisting the allurements of vanity, the heart should habitually keep itself by grace in the way of holiness, and in the enjoyment of heavenly things in communion with God. Now trials borne with patience help greatly to this result. A heart weaned from vanity is an immense gain to the soul. If the world is dry and arid for the heart, it more readily turns to the fountain of living waters.

There is, however, a second meaning to the word “temptation.” Though it often signifies trial from outward circumstances, it is also employed for another sort of trial—that which comes from within, the temptation from lust, which is entirely different. God can try us externally, in order to bless us, and He does so. He tried Abraham, but He cannot in any way tempt by lust. When it is a question, not of putting obedience and patience to the test, but of sin, the condition of the soul is dealt with, for its correction and advancement. But as regards the calling forth of lust, it cannot be said that God tempts. “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Christ Himself was tested of God throughout His whole life, and nothing but a sweet savour came forth. Always perfect in obedience, having come to do His Father's will, He yet learned obedience in this world of sin and enmity against God. Satan desired to rouse self-will in Him, but in vain. He was indeed led of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, but that He might overcome him for us, who, through sin, are subject to his power.

No lust was found in Him; but He was capable of being hungry, and He suffered hunger. He had been declared by the Father's voice to be the Son of God, and Satan desired that He should leave the place of servant, which He had taken in becoming man, and do His own will: therefore he suggests to Him to make bread of the stones. Here we have a temptation of the enemy; but the Lord abides in His perfection; He would live by the word which proceeded from the mouth of God. God put Him to the proof through suffering, but no lust was found in Him; and when Satan would make use of hunger—which is a human need apart from sin, and was found in Christ as a man—He remained in perfect obedience, and had no other motive for action than His Father's will.

With us there are temptations springing from the inner man, from lust, altogether different from the trials coming from without, which test the state of the heart, detecting self-will, if we are not perfectly subject to the will of God, or if we are actuated by other motives besides His will.

Now James is always practical. He does not search out the root of everything in the heart, as Paul does; he takes lust as the source which produces actual sin. Paul shews that the sinful nature is the source of lust—an

important distinction, which also illustrates the difference between the two writers, or the object of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle of James, namely, the outward practical life, as the evidence of the character of that life, which owes its origin to the word of God, that had wrought through faith. With James, lust—the first movement of the sinful nature which discloses its real character—having conceived, brings forth sin, and sin being finished, brings forth death. It is the history of the workings of the evil nature. James is occupied with its effects, Paul with its source, in order that we may know ourselves; Rom. 8:8.

Then in opposition to lust, and shewing the action of God, which is not to tempt, but, on the contrary, to produce good, James tells us that “every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures,” v. 17, 18. As I have said, he owns grace as the sole and divine source of the good that is in us, as born of God, and that through faith, since it is by the word of truth. By it we are born again; it is a new life, and that by the will of God. We belong to the new creation; we are its first-fruits. Immense blessing! which belongs not only to a new position, though it is that, but also to a new nature which makes us capable of enjoying God. James does not speak of righteousness through grace, but of an entirely new nature, which comes from God.

Thus, self-will being broken, and self-confidence destroyed, he exhorts us, as those who receive all from grace, to be willing to hear rather than to speak, to be

slow to wrath, which is but the impatience of the old man, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. He who is talight of God is subject to Him. He lays aside all filthiness and superfluity of nalightiness, and receives with meekness the ingrafted word. This is an important passage, for it presents the condition of the man of God, and that which acts upon him. The will of the flesh does not act in him, nor does self-will; he hearkens to what God says, he receives His work with meekness, and is subject to it. Then God engrafts the word in his heart. It is not knowledge merely, but the truth of God, His word which is able to save the soul. It is both the seed of-the divine life, and that which forms it.

The sanctifying word is ingrafted in him; the graft is introduced there by God, the new man which brings forth the desired fruit. But this life must be expressed in practice. A man must be a doer of the word, not a hearer only; otherwise, there is no longer reality, but he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; he goes away and all disappears, all is forgotten. “But he that looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein—he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word—this man is blessed in his deed.”

We find here an important expression— “The law of liberty.” If I tell my child to remain in the house when he wishes to go out, he may obey; but it is not a law of liberty to him; he restrains his will. But if I afterwards say, Now go where you wish to go; he obeys, and it is a law of liberty, because his will and the command are the same; they run together.

The will of God was for Jesus a law of liberty. He came to do His Father's will, He desired nothing else. Blessed state! It was perfection in Him, a blessed example for us. The law is a law of liberty when the will, the heart of man, coincides perfectly in desire with the law imposed upon him— imposed in our case by God—the law written in the heart. It is thus with the new man as with the heart of Christ. He loves obedience, and loves the will of God because it is His will, and as having a nature which answers to what His will expresses, since we partake of the divine nature; in fact it loves that which God wills.

Verses 26, 27. But there is an index to what is found in the heart, which, more than any other, betrays what is within. This index is the tongue. He who knows how to govern his tongue is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. The appearance of religion is vain if the tongue be not bridled; such a man deceives his own heart.

True religion is shewn by love in the heart, and by purity — keeping himself unspotted from the world. It thinks of others, for those who are in distress, in need of protection, and the help and support of love, as widows and orphans. The truly religious heart, full of the love of God, and moved by Him, thinks, as God does, upon sorrow, weakness, and need. It is the true Christian character.

The second mark of Christian life, given by James, is to be unspotted from the world. The world is corrupt, it lies in sin, it has rejected the Saviour—God come in grace. It is not only that man has been cast out of Eden because he was a sinner—which is true, and suffices for his condemnation— but there is more. God has done much

to reclaim him. He gave the promises to Abraham, He called Israel to be His people, He sent the prophets, and, last of all, His only Son. God Himself came in grace; but man, as far as he could do it, cast out the God who was in the world in grace. Therefore the Lord said, “Now is the judgment of this world.” The last thing God could do was to send His Son, and He has done it. “I have yet,” He said, “one Son, my well-beloved; may be they will reverence him when they see him. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.”

The world is a world which has already rejected the Son of God, and where does it find its joy? In God or in Christ? No; in the pleasures of the flesh, in grandeur, in riches; it seeks to make itself happy without God, that it may not feel its want of Him. It would not need thus to seek happiness in pleasures, if it were happy. Formed by God with a breath of life for Himself, man cannot be satisfied with anything less than God. Read the history of Cain. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod.10 Then he built a city, and called it after the name of his son, Enoch. Afterwards, Jabal was the father of such as have cattle (the riches of that day), and his brother’s name was Jubal, the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah bare Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.

We have here the world and its civilisation complete; not having God, they must make the world pleasant and beautiful. It will be said: But what is the harm of harps and organs? None, surely; the harm is in the heart of man, who uses these things to make himself happy without God, forgetting Him, flying from Him, seeking to content himself in a world of sin, and to drown the

misery of this condition of alienation from God, by hiding himself in the corruption that reigns there. The elegance which man affects makes him, only too often, slip insensibly into this corruption, which he seeks to conceal with mirth.

But the new man born of God, partaking of the divine nature, cannot find its delight in the world; it shuns that which would separate it from God. Where the flesh finds its happiness and its pleasures, the spiritual life finds none. James speaks of actual corruption; but he does not speak as though one part of the world were corrupt and another pure; on the contrary, it is defiled and corrupt in its principles, and in every way. He who is conformed to it is corrupt in his walk. The friendship of the world is enmity against God. Whoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. We must keep ourselves pure from the world itself. We have, indeed, to pass through it, and to be in passing through it the epistle of Christ, undefiled by the world which surrounds us, as Christ was undefiled, in the midst of a world that would not receive Him.

Chapter 2.

In chapter 2 believers are clearly distinguished; they are not to have the faith of the Lord of glory with respect of persons. To despise the poor was contrary to the law, which regarded all Israelites as objects of the favour of God, and considered the people as one before Him, each one being a member of the same family. It is also entirely contrary to the spirit of Christianity, which looks for humility, and calls the poor happy, which gives us to seek greatness in heavenly glory, shewing that the cross here answers to the glory above. Faith has seen that

Lord of glory in humiliation, not having where to lay His head.

Moreover, the rich had, generally speaking, remained the adversaries of Christianity; they blasphemed that good name by which Christians were called; they drew them before the judgment-seats. God has chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him. Paul also gives the same testimony. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; 1 Cor. 1:26.

These things—riches, family, power—are claims which bind the soul to this world. Grace can indeed break these chains, but it does not often happen. “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” These chains are too strong; but with God all things are possible.

James contrasts the glory of the Lord, with the false glory of man in this world; for the fashion of this world passes away. He insists much on this point, as does Peter likewise. If they made a difference in the assembly between the poor and the rich, they became judges of evil thoughts. Blessed be God, we can live together for heaven and in heavenly things, at least in the church, where true difference consists, not according to the vanity of this world, but in degrees of spirituality.

Remark here, that the assembly is called the synagogue, shewing how the mind of James ran in Jewish habits of thought.

Now the fact that a difference was made between the rich and the poor, by which they were convinced of the law as transgressors, leads James to speak of the law.

He speaks of three laws: the law of liberty, of which we have spoken; the royal law; and the law in its usual sense. The royal law is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” He who does it does well. Then he adds a very important principle— that, if we have kept the whole law, and yet have failed in one point, we are guilty of all. The reason of this is simple. When lust has actuated us, we have transgressed the law, and have despised the authority of Him who established it. It is not supposed that a man has broken all the commandments in detail, but He who gave the one gave all, and where the flesh and the will in concert with it has been in activity, we have followed our own will, and despised the will of God. His will has been violated.

Christianity requires that we should speak and act, as those who have been set free from the power of sin, to do the will of God in all things, His will being ours. He has delivered us from bondage; we are truly free to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Precious and holy liberty! It is the liberty of a nature that finds its pleasure and joy in the will of God and in obedience. Now the Christian is always free to do the will of God; he may, indeed, get away from God, and through carelessness and unfaithfulness, lose strength and zeal; but still, all he says and does will be judged according to this law of liberty. Important truth! He grows in the knowledge of the will of God, and he is free under grace to practise what he knows. The needed strength is found in Christ.

To this thought of judgment James adds the necessity of walking according to grace. “He shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy.” The Lord had already established this principle, that sins should be forgiven to him who forgives. If the spirit of grace is

not in the heart, we cannot be sharers in that grace which God has manifested towards man. According to the government of God, he who does not act with mercy in the details of this life may taste the severe chastisement of God; for God finds His delight in goodness and in love.

Now he insists upon works—an important part of this epistle—not that in itself it is more important than other parts, but it becomes so on account of the many reasonings of men.

The principle that love has to be shewn, not in words but in deeds, introduces the question of works. The spirit of James is practical; he is occupied with the evil produced by a profession of Christianity without a practical life in accordance with this profession; and the two principles —that love should be real, and that faith should manifest itself by the works it produces—are mingled in his observations. “If one of you say, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?” Certainly, this is not true Christian faith. Faith is a powerful principle, the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart, a spring which moves all the wheels of the heart, a principle which raises it above selfishness and all the base motives of the world, attaching its affections to Christ. Christ becomes our true motive; living in us, He is the source whence our actions flow, so that we walk as He walked. We are far behind Him indeed, but the principle of our life is the same; it is He Himself who lives in us.

It is evident then that true faith works by love, and produces good deeds: it cannot be otherwise. But we

have still another principle in this passage, which is expressed in the words, “shew me.” It is clear that faith is a principle hidden in the heart, it cannot be seen; even as the root which causes the plant to grow and bring forth fruit is not seen, though it draws nourishment from the soil, as faith draws from Christ. As without the root the plant cannot bring forth fruit, so without faith good works cannot be produced. Some things outwardly good may be done without having any value. Much may be given, much may be done, without true love, without faith; but a life of love which follows Christ, and does His will, because it is His will, not seeking anything else, cannot be without faith. Now the one who claims to possess faith owns that it alone is good, or can produce what is good.

James therefore says: “Shew me thy faith without works.” But this is impossible. It is plain that it is a hidden principle in the heart, a simple profession without any reality: yet we need not always connect this with hypocrisy, because education, the influences which surround us, and external evidence, may produce as a habit of mind belief in Christianity, and its fundamental doctrines. But in such faith there is no link with Christ, no source of eternal life. A man may not be openly unbelieving, he honours the name of Christ, but such faith produces nothing in the heart: Christ cannot trust it. See John 2:23-25.

When true faith, the effect of grace by the action of the Holy Spirit, is produced in the heart, there is felt at once a personal need of Christ, of possessing Him for oneself, of hearing His voice. We find this in the case of Nicodemus. He goes in search of Christ; and, mark well,

he quickly feels that the world is against him, and so he goes by night.

Now, as true faith cannot be seen, he who claims to possess it, has nothing to reply to him who says, “Shew me thy faith.” But he who has genuine works of love cannot have them without faith, which is the divine motive power of -Christian life in the heart, working patience, purity, love, and separation from the world, whilst walking through it. We cannot move without a spring. The faith which truly looks to Christ, and finds all in Him, manifests itself in this life, which is the life of faith.

It is a question of shewing faith, and to whom? To God? No surely. It is “shew me,” that is, man who cannot see the heart as God sees it. The whole reasoning of James, all its force and meaning, is in this word, “Shew me.” He does not speak to us of peace of conscience, being justified by faith because the Lord, the beloved and precious Saviour, has borne our sins, being given for our offences. Faith believes in the efficacy of the work of Christ, it knows that God has received it, has accepted it as a perfect satisfaction for the sins of believers, a work which will never lose its value in the sight of God, there where Christ is gone in, not without blood, that is to say, His own blood, where He always appears in the presence of God for us, set down at His right hand, because the whole work as regards our sins was finished upon the cross, according to the glory of God.

Here, on the contrary, James speaks of vain and empty faith, of the profession of the name of Christ, of calling oneself a Christian, without having Christ in the heart: true faith shews itself by works, by fruit. It is seen from

the fruit that the tree lives, that the root which draws its nourishment from Christ is there. The justification of the profession is made before men, to whom it must be shewn, by means of the fruits which are produced. When we closely examine the examples here given, we shall see plainly, that it is a question of the proofs of faith, not of good works in the ordinary sense of the term. Here faith is shewn by works in the same persons as those instanced by the apostle Paul: by the act of Abraham, who was ready to sacrifice his only and beloved son, when God required it of him; and by that of Rahab, who hid the spies and sent them away in peace, a witness of her faith. There can be nothing stronger than these instances. Not only was Isaac an only son, but in him all the promises of God were established, so that absolute confidence in God was called for. See Heb. 11:17-19. Humanly, there is nothing good in slaying a son. In like manner Rahab was a traitress, unfaithful to her country, if we think of her act as a natural one. But she linked herself with the people of God, when His enemies were in full power, and when His people had not as yet gained a single victory, or so much as passed the Jordan.

Such is faith, which confides in God at whatever cost, and links itself with His people, when all is against them. Abraham's faith was simply faith in God and His word; but it was manifested absolutely, and without hesitation, when he offered up his beloved son, in whom all the promises were established. The faith of Rahab was also a simple faith in God, but it was displayed when she linked herself to the cause of God, when all the power was apparently on the other side: for God does not make Himself visible. In fact to call oneself a believer and to produce nothing, is not really faith. Faith

realises its object, and the object produces its effect as a motive in the heart.

He who receives the word, is born again of incorruptible seed, is a partaker of the divine nature, and obedience, purity and love are reproduced. We have, it is true, still to overcome temptations and difficulties; we are not what we wish to be, nor even what we might be: still, more or less, the life does produce its fruits. And though the heart may through carelessness be sometimes unfaithful in the path, faith, nevertheless, always produces its own proper fruits. The Christian well knows, that the faith which produces nothing, is not true faith. Faith realises the presence and the love of God known in the new nature—it enjoys both, and reflects, though feebly, the character of Him in whom it inwardly delights. We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

It is from faith, though it be human faith, and not that of the inner divine life, that everything is done, that does not find its motive in the purely animal instincts of our nature. Why does the husbandman sow his seed? Because he believes it will produce a harvest: it is thus as to everything except eating and drinking. In order to have divine faith, it is needful that the things of God should be revealed to the soul; this is the work of the Spirit of God. Faith in God is that which is acceptable to God: but such faith, we being quickened of God through His word, brings forth the fruits of divine life.

By means of this faith, we have fellowship with God, with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and He is not ashamed to call us His friends (John 15:15); as Abraham was called the friend of God. In business with the world, we say what has to be said of

the matter in hand, as courteously as we can; but this said, there is an end of it. With a friend, we open our minds, we speak of things that have no connection with business, of all that is in our hearts. God was not talking with Abraham of the promises made to himself, when he was called the friend of God; but He was telling him all His intentions as to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” It is beautiful to see the intimacy of communion with God, when the walk is in faithfulness before Him. See Gen. 18:17-20.

The believer who was in Sodom was saved, though with the loss of everything; and he lived in disquietude and trouble, fearing the mountain where Abraham was (for the place of faith is always terrible to unbelief), fearing Zoar after he had seen the terrible overthrow of the other cities, and finally fleeing to the mountain of which he had been previously afraid, and living there in misery and shame.

We have in Abraham the picture of a believer who lives by faith; in Lot, that of a believer who takes the world, beautiful to the outward eye, for his dwelling-place: he inherits judgment, though he was saved; whilst as for Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, God told him to lift up his eyes and behold all the land of promise, to realise its extent and to know that all was his.

Faith gives fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; the participation and reahsation of all that belongs to us. It is not to be wondered at, if this faith produces fruit according to God. God grant that we may live so close to Himself, that unseen things may act upon

our hearts, and that we may go on in patience and with joy until the Lord come, who will introduce us there where we shall need faith no longer, but shall be in the full enjoyment of that which faith had believed, when the things themselves were not seen.

Chapter 3.

James would have humility in speaking, and that we should not be many teachers. When we do not know ourselves, it is far easier to teach others than to govern self. Now the tongue is the most direct index of what is in the heart. We all fail in many things and if we assume to teach others, our offences are the more serious, and all the more deserve condemnation. Humility in the heart makes a man slow to speak: he waits rather to be talight, and for others to express their thoughts; he is more ready to learn than to teach.

With this exhortation, James begins an important dissertation on the dangers of the tongue. No one can tame it, it is in fact as I have said, the most immediate index to the heart. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Many people do more with the tongue by hard speeches, than they would do with the hand. Besides, light and empty words are often spoken.

James always desires that the will should be bridled, that we should not be self-confident, and that the lightness of the flesh should be held in check by the fear of God. And first, he would not have the Christian lightly put himself forward to teach, nor that there should be many teachers, knowing they would receive the greater condemnation. Love prompts to build up the brethren, and the Spirit leads the lowly in the exercise of their gifts. But it may be that a Christian likes to make

himself heard, that he is not lowly, that he speaks because he has confidence in himself. Now this is not brotherly love, but rather love of self.

Moreover, we all fail in many things, and if we teach others, or at least assume to do so, we are clearly more responsible and our faults become more serious. How teach others, when we know not how to walk in faithfulness ourselves? This is not the fear of God. If the conscience is not good before Him, we cannot possibly set forth His grace and truth in His power, for we are not in His presence and He is not with us. The first effect of His presence would be to arouse the conscience. He who teaches ought to maintain true and deep humility, and to watch that he may not stumble in his path.

Such a spirit of humility is not lack of confidence in God; it is on the contrary linked with this confidence. The humble one will not say to the Lord: I know thee that thou art a hard man. But he has no confidence in self, he speaks only when it is the will of God; then he speaks in the power of His Spirit. He is slow to speak, he waits for God, that he may do it with Him.

Some other important truths are connected with these words. And first, we all offend in many things. He who calls himself perfect deceives himself. This does not necessarily mean that we commit any scandalous offences, but we do and say what is wrong in the sight of God. Our speech is not always with grace, seasoned with salt: failure is found in it. We cannot excuse ourselves, for the Lord has said, “My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness,” nevertheless we fail, sad as it is, and we are compelled to own it, if

we are walking with God; grace will make us feel and own it, and we shall walk more closely with Him, with more watchfulness and lowliness, and in greater realised dependence upon Him.

But we find yet another truth in these words. The exhortation would not have been needful, had not the liberty to speak, when God willed it, belonged to all the brethren according to their gift, and according to the direction of the word, since such directions are found in it. If one person had been appointed to speak, such an exhortation would have been quite useless.

Thus there is a moral exhortation to humility, quietness, distrust of self, and the fear of God; for the danger of offending and our responsibility are spoken of. The passage also excludes any thought of ministry by one person only in the assembly. It is not here questioned that a single individual may exercise a ministry which God has confided to him—on the contrary, such a ministry is permitted to any to whom the Lord has imparted the needful gift—only under the direction of the word. The activity of the flesh is rebuked, and the liberty of the Holy Ghost is set forth. The Lord makes use of each one as seems good to Him; whether by those permanent gifts of teacher, pastor, and evangelist, which are to continue with us to the end, or by the ministry of each member in the place where God has set it.

Now what is said as to offending, leads to a continuation of the discourse concerning the tongue; that most direct index to the heart, which is so easily set in motion, and which follows every impulse of the heart. All things, even wild beasts and serpents, have been tamed; but the tongue can no man tame, it is full of deadly poison. This

is very strong, but alas! it is very true: nevertheless, let us remember that if the flesh is practically held for dead, and we are living by the Spirit, the tongue will become the expression of His impulses, or there will be silence, because grace has nothing to say.

Many according to the flesh would avoid giving a blow, who cannot restrain a passionate or hard word against a neighbour. But if no man can restrain the tongue, the grace of Christ can do it, for the inner man on one side is under the yoke of the Lord, and is meek and lowly in heart: Christ fills the heart, and thus precisely because the tongue follows the impulses of the heart, the speech will express this meekness and lowliness. For this, it is needful that Christ alone should dwell there, and the flesh be so held in check, that when temptation comes it may not stir. It is difficult not to fail, but it is very useful to see that the tongue shews what is working within, just as the hands of a clock shew the hidden workings of its wheels.

Such is the beautiful portrait of divine wisdom. It is well to note how James always desires that self-will should be silent, in order that we may be capable of doing the will of God, and, as partakers of the divine nature, of manifesting His character—the character of Christ, God manifest in flesh. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He ever submitted Himself even to wrongs and injustice, doing good and walking in calmness and love. To do well, to suffer, and take it patiently, this (says Peter) is acceptable to God. Love is free when self is dead. We walk in peace, we make peace, and the fruits of righteousness in peace are sown for them that make peace. (It is thus I understand these few words.) “Blessed are the peace-makers; for

they shall be called the children of God." It is a reproduction, in the walk of a man, of the peace and love of God as it was manifested in Christ down here.

Chapter 4.

Having commended the spirit of peace in the Christian's ways, James now asks, "From whence come wars and fightings among you." But here we must inquire what is meant by "among you." It is not necessarily among Christians. Meekness of wisdom, wisdom that is gentle and easy to be entreated, became them. But, as we have seen, they found themselves still in the midst of the twelve tribes, who are, I doubt not, included in this "among you." And the Christians might find themselves implicated in these disputes, so that the exhortation is addressed to them also. These fightings came from their pleasures; the will was unbroken, lust distracted their hearts; they desired to have what they did not possess; conscience was silent, overpowered by lust, and the desires (unchecked by the will) gave the rein to the passions: "Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, and yet ye have not."

Dependence on God was forgotten; will acted for itself; they did not ask of God, or if they asked, it was but with the desire to make God Himself the servant of their pleasures. God does not respond to such prayers. Sad state of man! God was forgotten, and still worse, the heart was the slave of pleasure, and under the yoke of its passions, far from peace and quietness: war within, and open sin without, afar from God in the world—this passing scene in which such desires find their sphere—or, at least, if God was known, He was forgotten by their rebellious hearts. Therefore the friendship of the world

is enmity with God. Such a Christian, conformed to the world, forgets that he is purged from his old sins. He walks in forgetfulness of God, in the path of the unbeliever, and conscience retreats driven back by lust. When he asks of God he does not receive, because he asks, as a worldling might, to spend it on his pleasures.

We need not suppose that all those whom James calls “adulterers and adulteresses” were actually such. Many were really such sinners in the world; and others, even though Christians, walked in the same spirit of unfaithfulness to God, and gave the rein to their pleasures, walking with the world. This, surely, is not the path of the Christian; but when he abandons the ways of God and finds himself mixed up with the world, he is often ashamed of his Christianity, he dares not confess the Saviour’s name. Then conscience becomes hardened, and thus he becomes like the world or worse, having overleaped every barrier. Satan rejoices then to see the name of Christ dishonoured by those who bear it.

Now a principle of great importance is found in this passage, “The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Powerful testimony! which judges the walk and searches the heart. The world’s true character has now been manifested, because it has rejected and crucified the Son of God. Man has been already tried without law, and under law, but after he had shewn himself to be wholly evil without law, and had broken the law when he had received it, then God Himself came in grace; He became man in order to bring the love of God home to the heart of man, having taken human nature. It was the final test of man’s heart.

He came not to impute sin to them, but to reconcile the world to Himself. But the world would not receive Him; and it has shewn that it is under the power of Satan and of darkness. It has seen and hated both Him and His Father.

The world is ever the same world: Satan is its prince; and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. The heart of man, the flesh, has since the fall been always enmity against God. It is often thought and said that, since the death of Christ, Satan is no longer the prince of this world; but it was precisely then that he declared himself as its prince, leading on all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, to crucify the Saviour. And although men now bear the name of Christ, the opposition of the world to His authority remains the same.

Only observe and see if the name of Christ is not dishonoured. Man may indeed be talight to honour it, but it is none the less true that where he finds his enjoyment, where his will is free, he shuts out Christ, lest He should come in and spoil his pleasures. If left alone, he does not think of Him; he does not like to be spoken to of the Saviour, he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. Man likes to do his own will, and he does not want the Lord to come and oppose it; he prefers vanity and pleasures.

We have the true history of the world and its practical principles in Cain. He had slain his brother, and was cast out of the presence of God, despairing of grace and refusing to humble himself. By the judgment of God, he was made a vagabond on the earth; but such a condition

did not suit him. He settled down where God had made him a vagabond, and he called the city after the name of his son to perpetuate the greatness of his family.

That this city should be deprived of all the delights of life would have been unbearable; therefore he multiplied riches for his son. Then another member of the family invented instruments of music; another was the instructor of artificers in brass and iron. The world being cast out from God sought to make its position pleasant without God, to content itself at a distance from Him. By the coming of Christ the state of man's heart was manifested, not only as seeking the pleasures of the flesh, but as being enmity against God. However great His goodness, it would not be disturbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, nor submit itself to the authority of another; it would have the world, for itself, fighting to obtain it, and snatching it from the hands of those who possessed it. Now it is evident that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. As far as in them lay, they cast God out of the world, and drove Him away. Man desires to be great in this world; we know that the world has crucified the Son of God, that it saw no beauty in the One in whom God finds all His delight.

The scripture says, "Does the Spirit which has taken his abode in us desire enviously?" On the contrary—and herein is found the means of overcoming it— "God giveth more grace, he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." This is the true secret of strength and victory, and hkewise of peace of heart, in the midst of the difficulties and contrarieties of the world.

James again insists on humility; that man's will should be broken, and that he should be subject to God. For obedience, and having no will of one's own, is true humility; and to this the goodness and grace of God invites man. Confidence in God leads the soul to submit itself to Him. This is both a duty and a necessity, but it is done heartily where confidence exists. It is the truth of our relationship with God, and the soul is happy. We do not need to have a will for ourselves; if God who loves us has a will for us in all things, we ought to commit ourselves to Him. What grace that the omnipotent God should be always thinking of us in all the details of our lives!

The devil is an enemy; he tries to deceive us, he lays snares, he seeks to act upon us by means of our lusts. He may also indeed raise persecution to arrest us in the path of faith, but in ordinary life he deceives us by the things that suit the flesh.

If we are persecuted, it is our glory. "To you," says the apostle, "it is given … not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." But this danger from the will of Satan is constant; it is continually around us. The important thing is that, living after the new man and in communion with God, we should be able to discern the deceit of Satan, which is never obedience to the will of God. Very possible the evil may not be apparent. When Satan suggested to the Lord that He should make bread of the stones and eat-, it was not apparent evil. To eat when hungry does not seem a wicked thing; but it would not have been obedience. Satan could do nothing. To eat simply because one is hungry is an animal action, which does not refer to God. We ought to do everything, even eating, in the name of Christ, giving thanks to God.

Everything is sanctified to us if we realise the presence of God.

Satan then cannot hide himself, if in obedience we resist; he flees, conscious that he has met the One who overcame him—Christ in us. The word of God suffices to make us walk in a path, in which Satan has no power, where he is compelled to leave us, in which also we detect his deceit, and discern that he is the enemy. The Saviour walked thus; He quoted the word of God, and the devil was silenced, and sought to deceive Him by other means; he did not openly shew himself, but the perfect obedience of Jesus made his snares powerless. When Satan shewed himself to be such, offering Him the glory of the world, Jesus commands him to depart, and he goes. The Lord's path is ours, His strength is ours, and if we walk with Him in obedience, His wisdom will be ours: only He has already overcome the tempter. The difficulty is, so to walk in communion with Him, as to discern the deception. We must have the whole armour of God.

In short, if the presence of God is realised in the heart, if the Spirit of God rules there, and the sense of dependence is active in the soul, we shall feel that what the enemy presents to us is not of God, and the will of the new man will not desire it. Satan once detected, the new man resists him, and he has no strength. Jesus has overcome him for us. We learn here that, if we resist him, he will flee; he finds that he has met the Spirit of Christ in us, and he flees. The evil is, that we do not always resist him; we accept his enticements, because the will of God is not everything to us: in many things we still like to please ourselves. If grace is known, obedience and dependence guard us from the wiles of

the devil. He has no power against the resistance of faith; he is manifested as Satan, the adversary, as he was when Jesus suffered Himself to be tempted for us, and Satan fled before His resistance. He knows it is the same One whom he meets in us.

This is not the place to speak of the armour of God, yet a few words as to it may be useful. With the exception of the sword, all refers to the state of the soul. The effect of the truth to keep the soul in order, its affections regulated, and conscience having its due power according to the will of God; the breastplate of practical righteousness, so that conscience is good: in the path, the feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—that is, the behaviour bearing the stamp of that peace which we enjoy in Christ; then, confidence in God, which these things produce, and which prevents the suggestions of the wicked one from reaching us. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” We shall not be wounded by the fiery darts of the enemy; doubts and evil thoughts about God will find no entrance into the heart; then the certainty of salvation, which enables us to lift up the head in battle with the enemy. Then we can take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and use it in the conflict; shielded by the armour of God from the enemy’s assaults, we can be active in employing the word in the service of the Lord, though ever dependent upon His help. This dependence expresses itself in prayers and supplications. Let us then resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

Verse 8. Let us “draw near to God, and he will draw near to us.” In this is shewn the active dependence of the heart. Thanks be to God, we can draw near to Him! His throne is for us a throne of grace: we may come into His

presence without fear, because of His love, and enter into the holiest by the precious blood of Christ. When near Him, we learn holiness, we discern His will, the eye sees clearly in this pure atmosphere; the heart is subject; the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. They walk with God, but as talight of God, and the whole body is full of light. Then He is with us, He draws near to us, He inspires us with confidence. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” says the apostle. It is not only that the strength of God is with us, but His presence produces liberty and confidence in our hearts, for we feel that we have the knowledge of His will, since He is with us. The sense of His presence gives joy, calmness, and courage, in presence of the enemy, and in the difficulties of the way we rest in Him. “Thou wilt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou wilt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.” The presence of God, a true and real thing for the heart, keeps the conscience awake, and the heart filled with quiet confidence. Draw near unto Him.

But to do this, the hands must be cleansed, and the heart purified, that in nothing we may be double-minded. God is light, He will have purity and integrity in the inner man. Full of goodness and condescension, He is swift to help the weak, but He closes His ears to all who are double in heart. He looks for a pure walk and a sincere heart in those who seek to draw near Him. It cannot be otherwise; He holds Himself aloof from those whose hearts are not open in His presence; He sees everything, but for Him to hearken, the heart must be sincere.

James also touches upon the foolish joy of this world, which leads to eternal ruin, and he calls on those who

have ears to hear, to be afflicted, to mourn, and weep, and to change their lalighter into mourning. The heart that has intelligence, that thinks of others, and is stirred by love—the Christian, who partakes of the Spirit and thus of the mind of Christ, will have a sense of the moral and actual misery that is around him. He will have joy in Christ, but sorrow as to the condition of men of the world.

Sin has made the world unhappy and miserable; it is itself the greatest of all miseries and one sees on all sides the ills it has brought in. Nevertheless the heart will feel the love of God in the midst of all; it will rejoice in eternal salvation, and in His goodness which has obtained it. It will also rejoice in the daily mercies of God; but this will not be the foolish joy of the world, which seeks to hide its emptiness, and with lalighter to stifle the sense of its misery. Now in solitude, emptiness, and often pain, makes itself felt, which in the company of others is forgotten in lalighter. Men do not like to burden others; they must make them believe they are happy. The world cannot be real with itself; yet sorrow and affliction are but too real. The Lord could weep but not laugh; Christian love and feeling follow His example; they follow it heartily, and from a like feeling. James desires that worldly joy should give place to Christian feelings, sentiments of love, and wisdom. Moreover, in chapter 5, we see that judgment is soon to put an end to the false joy of the world. Here the exhortation is moral; there it refers to the cutting short of this joy by the hand of the Lord.

Then he exhorts them to humble themselves in the sight of the Lord and He would lift them up. It is what Christ did (Phil. 2), and He has said, “He that humbleth himself

shall be exalted." God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humility becomes man; it becomes his littleness before God, in the sense of the greatness of His grace, and of all that man is in himself. The great glory which the believer waits for is also the occasion of humility to him when he considers his unworthiness: he knows that he can understand and do nothing in divine things without God.

But James, having in his thoughts the pride and halightiness of the spirit of the world, which is also in the Christian, desires not only humility, but the humbling of self. If one is humble, there is no need to humble oneself; but in reality the spirit of man rises up again so easily, that we do need to humble ourselves, and to realise the presence of God. In His presence we are always humble; we have the sense of our own littleness; we think of Him, not of ourselves. To exalt the proud would only be to encourage that pride which becomes neither sinful man nor pious man; moreover, piety and pride cannot exist together. But God delights in exalting the humble, and such an exaltation, coming as it does from God, is a source of gratitude and joy, not of pride. The heart is with God in the sense of His goodness.

Remark, that the humbling oneself is in the sight of the Lord, not of men—a real inward work which destroys self-esteem; realising the presence and the greatness of God, it gives Him His true place in the heart, and gives us ours also. Then all is real, and then alone we can act for God according to truth. Verses 9, 10 are the effect of the realised presence of God in a world of sin and misery, on a heart which is there, and which feels both the one and the other.

“Speak not evil,” says our epistle, “one of another”; a formal precept, which ought to restrain many tongues if they were obedient, and which would put an end to much evil. Love would not do it; but as we have seen, the tongue is a fatal evil, full of deadly poison, and it kindles a great matter.

But there is more. He who speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law. For the law, on the part of God, presents our brother to us as an object of love and affection, not to be persecuted, ill-treated, and disparaged in the eyes of others. By so doing, we forget the place in which the law has set our brother, and our duty according to the law, and our position as brethren. If we set ourselves as judges and law-givers over the law, we transgress it, we do not obey it, nor follow its precepts; but we assume to be above it. There is one Lawgiver and Judge who is able to save and to destroy. Who are we that we should judge one another?

The word again condemns false confidence as to the intentions of our own hearts. The heart of man afar from God thinks to direct his own steps, and decides what he will do, without thinking of the will of God, or even of God at all. Possibly the thing intended may not be evil, it may not wound conscience, nor make it uneasy; but God is entirely forgotten; the man acts without God, as though the earth had been left to man, and God had withdrawn, and as though His will counted for nothing. Such a man, as far as regards religion, in the practical things of everyday life, lives in atheism. God is not in his thoughts; money and worldly ambition govern his heart, though he may not be exactly living in sinful pleasures. He has no sense that he belongs to God—bought, if he

be a Christian, with the precious blood of Christ. He lays out his plans according to his own will, his own wisdom, and his worldly interests. God has no place in them, he is without God in the world, he seeks earthly things, and truly it is not in them that God is to be found. It is according to the will of God that we should labour to obtain what is necessary, and His blessing can be sought because it is His will. But this is not the question here. James speaks of one who would dispose of his time, and go and seek gain for himself without thinking of God, or looking to Him for guidance and the manifestation of His will. He does not know what the morrow will bring forth; he does not know whether his life will be prolonged until the next day; it is as a vapour which vanishes away. Such is life down here. It becomes us to say, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.”

James always and everywhere opposes the pretensions of man’s will; he would have the will broken, that man may take his true place, and be in his true condition of obedience and subjection. God must have his place and man must be dependent and obedient. All the activity and all the pretensions of man’s will are evil.

Another important principle is found at the end of this chapter. Man’s own will is always evil. Where there is the knowledge of good, the heart, or at least the state of man is evil, if he does it not. Grace and love are lacking. To seek self-interest, to do one’s own will, to satisfy one’s own desires, characterises the natural man. To do good, to seek the good of others, and to serve them, is the fruit of love. Now, if, when there is the knowledge of what is good, and the opportunity of doing it occurs, man does it not, it is a sign that the heart is evil; love for others, and the desire to do good is lacking. Not to do

good is sin; it shews the absence of grace and the activity of the natural will.

Chapter 5.

The portion of believers is not in this world. Christ has won them for Himself, that they should be in His likeness in glory, co-heirs with Him; for His love would have them enjoy all that He Himself enjoys. His love is perfect. But if so, they must suffer with Him. If it is given to us to suffer for Him, it is a great privilege, but it is not the portion of all. Nevertheless all who will five godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; 2 Tim. 3:12.

But it is impossible to escape suffering with Him; if we have the Spirit of Christ, we feel as Christ felt. Holiness suffers at the sight of the sin which is around, and in seeing the condition of the church of God and of His people; besides which there is sorrow on all sides, and the need of souls who will not have Christ or salvation. Each one ought to take up his cross, and besides this, God permits us to suffer, because in so doing, we learn patience, and that our inheritance is not below. Experience, which is the realisation of practical truth, is confirmed in the heart, and hope becomes much clearer and stronger. This, it is true, supposes that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; and if this is not the case, God allows suffering, and also sends it, to renew the heart. He chastens whom He loves.

James addresses the rich, who have possessions in this world, and who do not consider the poor, whilst “blessed is the man that considereth the poor,” Psalm 41:1. He who despises the poor because of his poverty despises the Lord Himself. “As for me,” says the Lord, in the

psalm preceding the one from which I have quoted, “I am poor and needy,” Psalm 40:17. The Lord had pronounced His blessing upon the poor; to such the gospel was preached; it was a sign announcing the Messiah. We all know that a poor man may be just as wicked as any other; but riches are a positive danger for us, because they nourish pride, and tend to dispose the heart to keep aloof from the poor, with whom the Lord associated Himself in this world. “He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.”

But here the rich had been foremost in evil. They oppressed the poor, they kept back from them the wages for which they had laboured. James places us in view of the last days. The cry of the poor had entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. He exhorts the rich to weep and howl for the miseries that should come upon them. They had lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton. But not only this: when we live in pleasure, we do not like anyone to come and disturb our happiness—they had condemned and killed the Just, who had not resisted. They wished to secure the enjoyment of the world in a false tranquillity, which thinks neither of God, nor of judgment, nor of death.

If conscience was aroused, they were disturbed, and they hardened themselves as far as possible, that it might not be aroused.

God does not for the present alter the course of this world. If He did so, He must execute judgment, instead of working in love for the ungodly and sinners. He is not willing to smite them, nevertheless He is not slack concerning His promise, but is longsuffering to usward,

not willing that any should perish. The Christian then must take courage, must be patient and submissive to outward evil, until the coming of the Lord; even as Christ Himself, who did well, and suffered, and waited patiently; thus the Christian should walk in His steps. Our portion is not in this world. If we suffer for well-doing, this is acceptable to God, and still more so, if it is for Christ Himself that we suffer.

The life of the Saviour was all suffering and patience; but now He is glorified with God the Father. Soon He will come a second time into the world, in the glory of the Father, and in His own glory, and in the glory of the angels; and then He will be glorified in His saints, and will be admired in all them that believe.

In that glorious day, when the poorest of His own—Christians, oppressed by the enemies of the truth—will be like the Lord Himself in glory, we shall make our boast in having been permitted to suffer for Him, and in having maintained patience and silence through the unjustly imposed sufferings of the Christian life. Then, “blessed are they who are found watching; he will gird himself, and will make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” What joy! What grace! It will be the glory of the Saviour Himself to give us to enjoy the blessings of heaven in the Father’s house, ministering all with His own hands. It is well worth while to suffer for Him a little, and for a little while, and then to possess heavenly blessing, communicated by the hand and the heart of Jesus Himself. We shall reign with Him, and enjoy the fruit of the work which we have been permitted to do for Him; if it is only a cup of water given in the name of Jesus, it shall not lose its reward. But far better still will it be to sit down in peace, enjoying those

eternal blessings in the Father's house, which Christ will abundantly minister to us—precious testimony of His approval and of His love. See Luke 12:35-44.

Remark here how the coming of Christ was a present hope. The oppressed one was to have patience until that coming. "Be patient," says James, "until the coming of the Lord." Some one may say, then they were deceived. By no means. We may indeed die before the Lord's coming, and in fact, we know that these saints did die. But they will reap all the fruits of their patience, when the Lord comes. And till that moment they are with the Lord—absent from the body, present with the Lord—and they will come with Him, and will then enjoy all the fruit of those sufferings, in which they had been patient, for the love of His name, seeking to glorify it down here.

But this exhortation clearly shews how this hope was a present thing, which was interwoven with the entire thread of Christian life. It was not a theory in the head, a point of acquired knowledge, or a dogma of belief only. They expected the Lord in person. What consolation for the poor and the oppressed! What a check upon the rich to be constantly expecting the Lord! To know that He will soon come, that troubles will cease, and that we shall be with Him who has loved us! Nothing produces separation from the world like waiting for the Lord—I do not say the doctrine of His coming, but true waiting for Him. His coming will separate us from it for ever; the heart waits until He come.

The Lord's supper expresses the Christian state—the Lord's death at His first coming, which we celebrate with thanksgiving, remembering Him who has loved us, and feeding on His love until He comes to take us to be

with Him. It is the formal expression of the practical state of the Christian as a Christian—of Christianity itself. Let us add, that it is by the Holy Spirit alone that we are able to express this in truth.

But remark yet another thing in this exhortation. “Be patient, brethren.” We are always waiting for the Lord, if we really understand our position; but whatever may be our desires, we cannot command the Lord to come, nor know when He will come. And blessed be His name! the Lord is patient; as long as there is yet one soul to be called by the gospel, He will not come. His whole body, His bride, must be formed; every member must be present, converted and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Then He will come and take us. Christ Himself is seated on the Father’s throne, not on His own throne. He also is waiting for that moment, with more desire surely than we are; and therefore the patience of Christ is spoken of: this is the true meaning of Revelation 1:9. Thus also in Revelation 3:10, “because thou hast kept the word of my patience”; also in 2 Thessalonians 3:5,” the patience of Christ.”

We are talight also in Hebrews 10:12,13, that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting till His enemies shall be made His footstool. We may well wait if Christ is waiting; but we wait in suffering and conflict. He is waiting to reign, and then He will cause full blessing to flow forth for His own, whether in heaven or on earth, and will banish evil from both.

Thus we need patience, that neither self-will nor weariness of the conflict should take possession of our souls; but in the confidence that the time God wills is best (for it is that which divine wisdom and His love for

us have ordained) let us fix our affections on the Lord and on things above, because we wait for Him with desire of heart, with broken will, and unwavering faith, leaving His return to the decision of God. In fact we cannot retard it, but the heart has entire confidence in His love, assured that the Lord waits for us with greater love than we for Him, calm in confidence, patient in the wilderness journey. How sweet to wait for Christ—for the fulness of joy with Him! Thanks be to God, He says, "it is at hand."

Moreover, James draws two practical consequences from this expectation of the Lord. First, then we ought not to resist evil; the Just One did not resist. We must wait with patience, as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth, until he have received the early and the latter rain, the means which God uses to bring the fruit of harvest to perfection. The Christian should stablish his heart by this expectation, while passing through the troubles of this life, and the persecutions of the world, which is ever the adversary of the Lord.

Next, he warns the disciples against walking in a complaining and quarrelsome spirit, one toward another. If we are waiting for the Lord, the spirit is calm and contented, it does not get irritated with its persecutors; moreover, we bear with patience the ills of the desert, and resist evil as Christ resisted, suffering, and bearing wrongs and committing Himself to God. We are contented and quiet, with a happy and kindly spirit, for kindness flows easily from a happy heart. The Lord's coming will put everything right, and our happiness is found elsewhere. This is what Paul says in Philippians 4:5: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Let us repeat it. How real, how mighty

and practical, was this expectation of the Lord! What power it had over the heart! “The Judge standeth before the door.”

Then he gives examples. The prophets were examples of suffering affliction, and of patience, and they counted them happy in their sufferings. And they have not been alone; others also have endured, and have been counted happy. For example, if we see one suffering unjustly for the name of Jesus, and he is patient and meek, his heart called out on behalf of his persecutors, rather than irritated against them, then we recognise the power of faith, and of confidence in the love and faithfulness of the Lord; he is calm and full of joy, and we say, See how grace makes that man happy! And we too are happy when we suffer; at least, we ought to be so. But it is one thing to admire others who are sustained by the Spirit of Christ, and another to glory in tribulations, when we are in them ourselves. We need a broken will, confidence in God, communion with Him who has suffered for us, in order to be able to glory in sufferings.

Job is another example; but he is introduced here, to shew the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Yet the example is most instructive. Job was a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil; but he had begun to take pleasure in himself; he did good, but he was occupied with his goodness; it was hidden self-righteousness, but it marred his piety. God withdraws not His eyes from the righteous. He saw Job’s danger, and drew Satan’s attention to him. It was God who began all. Satan, the accuser of the saints, insists that Job should be sifted, and God permits him to tempt Job, to do as he would with him, but sets a limit to his malice. Satan did all that

he was allowed to do, and Job remained subject, and did not sin with his lips. Satan persists in his accusations, insinuating that, if the trial were increased, Job would curse God. God gave all into his hand except Job's life. Job remained faithful; he did not sin; he had received good at the Lord's hand, and should he not receive evil? His wife also tempted him in vain.

Through grace Job's patience triumphed over Satan, who was unable to shake him. Through the grace of God, the efforts of the enemy were overcome: "We have heard of the patience of Job." But the work of God for Job's blessing was not yet accomplished. He had by His grace sustained Job's heart against the enemy, and Job had shewn his faithfulness. Satan, as the instrument of God's ways, had done much through the sorrow he had brought upon Job; but Job's heart was not yet reached; he did not know himself; on the contrary, although the preparation had been wrought by means of Satan, Job was, by the grace of God, practically justified from his accusations, and if the matter had ended there, his state would have been worse than before—at least he would have been in greater danger than ever; he could have said, I was meek and upright in prosperity, and now patient in adversity. God must do His work, in order that Job might know his own heart.

Job's friends come to see him. They remain seated, amazed at the condition in which they find him. Alas! pride is often roused in the presence of man, and wounded pride irritates the heart; firmness gives way in the presence of sympathy. However that may be, the presence of his friends lays bare the depth of Job's heart. He curses the day of his birth. Now his heart is laid bare, not only to God, which it always must be, but

—which is so deeply painful—to himself. Where is now his gracious meekness? He contends with God; he says he is more righteous than God. Nevertheless it is beautiful to see that at the bottom of his heart he had just thoughts of God. If I could meet Him, he says to his friends, He would not be like you, He would put words into my mouth. His friends alleged this world to be a perfect display of God's government, and that consequently Job must be a hypocrite; for he had made a profession of piety. Job resists this unjust decision, and insists that, although the hand of God was occasionally manifested, yet evil often ran its course in the world, God taking no notice of it, for the wicked often prospered. But Job allowed the bitterness of his heart to come out. Elihu reproves him for making himself more righteous than God, shewing that there is indeed a government of God over His own. He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous; He chastens because He loves them. Then God manifests Himself, and shews Job the folly of contending with Him; upon which Job owns his vileness and his nothingness, and instead of saying, "When the eye saw me, it blessed me," he says, "Mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He knows himself in the presence of God. After that God was able to bless him, and He did so more than at the first. This was "the end of the Lord." Job had been patient under the greatest afflictions and trials; God searched his heart, and then abundandy blessed him.

In verse 12 James continues the subject which forms the burden of his teaching. He will not have the will to act, nor the flesh to appear, but the activity of nature

restrained, and the heart learning not to give way to those impulses of impatience to which it is so prone.

When a man swears, he allows this impatience of the heart to act; he forgets the glory and majesty of God, irreverently introducing His name with unbridled flesh to confirm an assertion, or to give force to a vow, or in His place he puts some creature whom he invests with the authority and power that belongs to God alone. The root of all is the unsubdued will and unbridled passions of man's heart. Only, with an intuitive sense of his impotency to ensure the fulfilment of his desires, he irreverently brings God in, or, as a heathen of old was wont to do, he introduces some creature practically deified for the occasion. It is not lust, but the unbridled impetuosity of the flesh (see Col. 3:8), the irreverence, presumption, and independence of the man carried to its utmost extent.

Therefore James says, "Above all things." He would have us, in calmness and quietness, affirm what we have to say with a yes or a no, in the fear of God. It is of all importance, that we should hold in check the movements of nature. We should do it if we saw God before us; we should certainly do it in the presence of a man whom we wished to please. Now God is always present; therefore, to fail in this calmness and moderation is a proof that we have forgotten the presence of God.

Verse 13. James frees the mind from worldly habits. Men seek to deceive themselves by avoiding thought; they would foolishly forget the cares and troubles, from which they cannot escape, and amid which, thanks be to God, He gives a refuge to the heart in His love, and in

the sense of His care for us. He would not have us insensible to the troubles of this life. God, who never withdraws His eyes from the righteous, sends them for our good. Even a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our Father—not only without the will of God, but not without that God who loves us as a tender Father, who may indeed chasten us, but who thinks upon us while chastening, in order to sanctify us, and to draw our hearts nearer to Himself.

By drawing near to God in affliction, the will is subdued, and the heart consoled and encouraged. God Himself is revealed to the soul, and works by His grace; and in the sense of His presence we say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” And not only are we near to God, but we also open our hearts to Him. He would have us do so, for He is full of grace. He desires our confidence, not only that we may be subject to His will, but that we may present our cares to Him.

“Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,” Phil. 4:6, 7. Paul is speaking here of cares, but comfort and rest are equally found there in affliction. “Who comforteth us,” says the apostle, “in all our afflictions,” and he appeals to God as “the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.” At Philippi they were filled with peace, through the consolation poured into their hearts. This may also be through circumstances; for Paul says, “God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus,” 2 Cor. 7:6. He had been utterly cast down, because he had not met Titus, who had been

sent to the Corinthians when they were walking very badly. He had abandoned the open door for the gospel at Troas, and his heart had even gone the length of regretting that he had written his first inspired epistle. His faith had sunk below the level of the power of God, which had impelled him to write it. Arrived in Macedonia, still on his way to meet Titus, though testifying to Christ as he went, his flesh had no rest; he says, “We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.” God allowed the apostle to feel his weakness; but it is worth while to be afflicted, if God Himself becomes our comforter. Titus arrives bringing good tidings to the effect of his first epistle, and the apostle is full of joy. God often takes away the affliction itself and fills the soul with gladness, pouring His consolations into the heart which thus becomes more matured for communion with Himself and for heaven. In every case of affliction prayer is our resource; we own our dependence and we confide in His goodness. The heart draws near to Him, it tells out to Him its need and its sorrow, laying it down on the throne and the heart of God, who answers either by circumstances which make us happy, or by pouring in His consolation—an answer which is still more blessed than outward happiness—but ever by that which is best for us, acting according to His perfect love.

The pious heart, under the influence of grace, refers also to God in its joy. If the heart dwells only on the cause of its joy, this becomes a danger for it. But if God is a refuge in distress, so is He the portion of the soul in joy. When I have a subject of happiness, I tell my intimate friend, that he may rejoice with me, and this doubles my own joy. But in this passage there is something more; for

the heart feels that God is the source of the blessing and the cause of the joy. Even when there is no special reason for rejoicing, the heart is happy, and the pious soul, living in communion with God, desires to have God with it in its joy. Moreover, if the soul gives itself up to joy, it becomes empty and light; the heart gets estranged from God, and folly takes possession of it. In trouble dependence upon God is realised, hut in joy there is a danger of forgetting it, and joy often ends in a fall; at any rate, the flesh is then in activity, and God is forgotten. This exhortation of James, to mingle joy with piety, is therefore most important for the Christian.

If the thought of God is there, it expresses itself in psalms and thanksgivings to Him. God is present to us in our joy, and faith, communion, and spiritual power are increased by the sense of His goodness. Thus we apply ourselves to the toils of life, encouraged and strengthened through the sorrows of the wilderness, by a deeper conviction that God is for us.

Verse 14. The thought of affliction and joy leads James to another condition of the Christian, namely, sickness, which is often, though not always, the effect of the Lord’s chastening. Sickness, as well as death, came in by sin; and we find it now throughout the whole course of man’s history. But a sparrow falls not to the ground without God our Father, as the Lord says, and although these ills now belong to the natural condition of man, yet God uses them for the correction of His children. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,” Job 36:7. In either case, whether as ills natural to humanity, or the direct chastisement of God, God now makes use of sickness, when the heart, instead of considering all that happens to it with indifference, draws near to God, who

thinks upon the sufferings of His own, and has respect to the submission and to the cry of those whom He chastens.

The prayer of faith heals the sick, and if the sickness is the consequence of sin, the sin which occasioned it shall be forgiven; the sufferer has owned the hand of God in his sickness, and God answers to the faith of him who prays. There are two kinds of forgiveness in the ways of God. Eternal justification—according to Romans 4 and Hebrews 10 —is the blessed portion of those who believe in the efficacy of the blood of Christ; that is to say, their sins are imputed to them no more. “Whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” God took up the question of their sins at the cross, and He has made an end of them for ever; He will never remember them again. But there is also the government of God—the government of a Father, but of a holy Father who loves His children too well to allow them to walk badly.

When in the book of Job Elihu says that God withdraws not His eyes from the righteous, and shews the blessing which naturally flows from His favour, the effect of His goodness, he immediately goes on to speak of chastening—an explanation clearly of Job’s case.

The Spirit of God here again supposes the possibility of such a case, speaking of my faults. But it is not always so. In Job 33 it is said that God speaks and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He prevents the evil, as in Paul’s case; 2 Cor. 12. He humbles man to prepare him for blessing. In every case He makes all things work together for good to those who love Him; Rom. 8:28.

Now, if the will be not broken, we complain, and murmur, and lift ourselves up against God; but if the heart refers to Him, owning His hand, whether in suffering which is the natural heritage of sinful man (though it can never be apart from the hand and will of God), or in positive chastisement, or again, though it may not know why the suffering is sent, it turns to God, owns that its condition is the result of His will, and seeks the remedy in His grace, as subject to and dependent on His power and His will. Now the faith of true Christians alone can call down from above the answer and the blessing.

James no longer speaks of the synagogue, but of the assembly. There must be true faith, in order for blessing: now God has set blessing in the assembly of true believers; in His government and discipline it is found there for faith. When sin is openly manifested in such a way, that it can be said of one called a brother that he is a wicked person, it is the duty of the assembly to put him away from among themselves. The sins are bound upon the one who is thus put away. But if he humbles himself, and from the bottom of his heart owns his sin, then the assembly ought to restore him (2 Cor. 2); in this administrative sense, the sinner is pardoned, the bonds are loosed.

And this is valid for two or three who are gathered to the name of Christ in the unity and in the power of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 18); for it is by the Spirit alone that this can be done in reality. It must be done also by the assembly as such, not only because the promise belongs to it, but also that it may clear itself. It is to the assembly that the exhortation of 2 Corinthians 2:7, 8, is

addressed. The sanction of this solemn act is in the presence of Jesus according to His promise.

In this passage in our epistle, it is not a question of sins which draw upon the individual the judicial action of the assembly, but of the ways of God Himself, in the ordinary circumstances of life, and more especially as regards the chastening of God. Now the individual seeks the intervention of God, according to His grace, not viewing what has befallen him as an accident, but owning the hand of the Lord. The assembly is the place where He has set His name, and His blessing, and the general administration of His grace. Christ is there; and when the assembly was in order, the elders, those who watched over it, were sought by the sick person, in order that he might enjoy the grace and the blessing of God.

Nevertheless it was personal faith, which by prayer drew down the special blessing of heaven— “the prayer of faith,” as it is said. The elders were but a sign of the special intervention of God, as we see in Mark 6:13. There it was a miracle performed by those who were specially sent by Christ to do them, with power given for that purpose. Here it is the blessing of God in the bosom of the assembly, administered through its elders, if faith was there. The original order now exists no longer; but Christ does not forget His assembly. The promise of two or three gathered to His name, according to the unity of His Spirit, remains always sure; and if there is faith in those who watch over them, the answer of God will be found in a like way. Though we cannot expect that the blessing should flow in its natural current, when the channels are broken and spoiled, the case remains the same, and His power is unchangeable. It is precious to

know it! When the Lord rebukes the disciples for their unbelief, He says at the same moment, “bring him to me”: and the child was healed; Mark 9:19.

Therefore James recalls the example of Elijah, who was a man of like passions with ourselves; yet in answer to his prayer it rained not for three years and six months. The external order of the assembly is lost, but the power, love, and faithfulness of the Lord are unchanged. He may let us feel that, through the sin of the assembly, we are not as we were at the beginning: nevertheless, where God gives faith, the answer on His part will never fail. That is not godliness, which does not feel the loss that has come upon us since the time of the apostles, through the unfaithfulness of the assembly; neither is it godliness to doubt the power of Christ, if God gives faith to make use of it.

When it is said, “if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him,” it means, that when such a brother has come to himself, owning the hand of God, if sins have drawn upon him the chastisement of God, and have hindered the healing of the sickness, they shall be forgiven as regards the discipline of God in His government. This discipline had manifested itself in the chastening, that is to say, in the sickness: if this is removed, the discipline is ended, the sins are remitted.

But here we find another and more general instruction, which, however, also depends upon the state of the assembly. We have seen that, when all was in order, the sick person was to send for the elders; and this can still be done by calling for those who practically are elders. Only it is needful that faith wrought of God, and those acting on His part, should be there. But, whatever may

be the state of ruin in which the assembly of God is found, we can always confess our faults one to another, and pray for one another, that we may be healed. This does not require the existence of official order, but it supposes humility, and brotherly confidence, and love.

We cannot indeed confess our faults without confidence in a brother's love. We may choose a wise and discreet brother (instead of opening our hearts to indiscreet persons), but this choice alters nothing as to the guilty person's state of soul. Not hiding the evil, but opening his heart, he frees his troubled conscience; perhaps also his body.

Truth is wrought in the heart; the guilty one does not seek a good reputation—which after all, can only be a false one—but an upright conscience, upright before God. God takes pleasure in setting the conscience at liberty; He also frees the body from the sickness if necessary; then the heart grows happy in the sense of His favour. A pure and upright conscience is a source of joy in God's presence.

It is most important to remember that there is a government of God with respect to His children. It is no question whether they are justified and forgiven; for this government supposes that they are righteous in His right, as to salvation; Job 36. But then the Lord ever keeps His eye upon them, blesses them, and makes them conscious of His favour when they are walking aright in the enjoyment of God. But if we do not walk aright, we are warned, and if we do not take heed to the voice of God, He chastens in order to arouse the soul that is falling asleep and has begun to forget God. And His

goodness, His wondrous patience, His love for us, are never weary!

Verse 19. Finally, James adds an exhortation to encourage our hearts to seek the blessing of others. He who brings back a sinner from the error of his ways is not only the means 6f saving that soul, whether it be a sinner walking in his sins, or a Christian walking badly, but also of hiding a multitude of sins. That the soul of an unconverted man should be saved is simple; in the case of a Christian pursuing an evil way, he is at least arrested in the road which leads to perdition.

But this second point calls for a little more explanation, and it is not without importance. Sin is hateful in the sight of God; He sees everything. When we think of the state of the world, we understand how wonderful is His patience. Now the conversion of a sinner removes all his sins from before the eyes of God. As though they were cast into the depths of the sea, He sees them no more; as it is written. They are immediately cancelled. It is in this sense that “love covereth a multitude of sins.” They are no longer there as an object hateful to God. If we do not forgive the sins of a brother, the enmity remains before God as a wound in the body of believers, something that is not healed. When forgiven, love is the object that presents itself before God—a thing pleasing to His heart. Thus when the sinner is converted—brought back, the love of God finds its pleasure in this, and the offending object is removed from His sight.

In the Epistle of James we find but little doctrine; it is rather the girdle of righteousness, the manifestation of faith in works, in the Christian character. Submission under the hand of God, and patience under His

government, are developed in a way most useful to the Christian.

10 Nod is the same word as vagabond (Gen. 4:14). He built a city, where God had made him a vagabond, and this is what man has done.

Notes On The Epistle Of James

James addresses his epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel; but whilst owning the people that are beloved for the fathers' sake, he takes the ground of faith. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes."

At the time this Epistle was written, the gospel, which was first preached in Judea, had produced great results amongst the Jews; many churches had been formed, multitudes of Jews had believed (Acts 21:20), and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith; Acts 6:7. In those early days the believing Jews still held to the old order of things, they were zealous of the law and some even offered sacrifices. Jerusalem itself was in a peculiar position; through the bringing in of Christianity and on account of the faith entrusted to the holy city at this the starting-time of the gospel, she was under fresh responsibility. But this privilege was lightly esteemed of her children, and was about to pass from her hands into those of the Gentiles. In the midst of these circumstances James, though having chiefly the believers in view, nevertheless writes his Epistle to the twelve tribes, the whole of Israel, giving a last warning before God severed the church from the Jewish system. James does not deal with Israel as Paul, who, when in conflict with the synagogue, would separate the disciples from it and at a distance continue the work of the gospel in favour of the Gentiles.

There is even a noticeable difference between the two apostles of the circumcision, namely, Peter and James, in the way in which they look upon Israel in their Epistles.

Peter is occupied chiefly with the faithful remnant and views it in those who, among the Jews, had received the faith; he sees Israel only in this remnant, whilst James takes in the whole of the nation. Doubtless the faithful remnant therein comprised is the only living portion wherein the great truths of faith and life are realised, still James writes to the whole people. He looks upon the nation as under the favour of the promises of God, then being presented in the gospel.

As to doctrine, the Epistle of James sets forth as much as any other the great truths of the gospel of God; but it goes no farther than the first elements; we do not get unfolding of truth as in Paul. Nevertheless it does not follow that the things written in James are of less absolute authority. For instance, what more positive than this statement— “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creature?”

When reading these elements of the gospel, we are surprised at not finding therein all that the Spirit of adoption has revealed to us; but let us acknowledge that such unfoldings do not come within the scope of the Epistle, and moreover that the condition of those to whom it was written did not admit of such. If this Epistle does not shew all the riches of the revelation of the gospel, yet is it none the less useful as a girdle of righteousness, as a voice of warning which keeps the conscience awake. It requires that the faith and life of the Christian should be visible to the eyes of men by these effects. The Epistle of James is simple enough when we understand the circumstances of Christians in the midst of the Jews in those days when Christianity was not yet defined in all its points.

The level it maintains is that which may have been the moral state of the faithful in all ages; namely, God known by them according to His eternal truth, either outside or above the particular characteristics which the various revelations of Himself impressed upon them. Dispensations have differed, they have brought out in succession various characteristics of God; but God in Himself does not alter.

Chapter 1.

Verses 2-15. From the outset James lowers man, he puts him in a place of dependence upon God, he sees him submitted to the trial of faith. But trial works its results; it bears the fruit of patience; it leads to the prayer of faith; it causes us to value a low degree, and lastly, makes us worthy of the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

Verse 4. “But let patience have her perfect work.” Patience sustains and enables us to wait according to God for the issue of the trial, without availing ourselves of speedy deliverance out of it, suggested by the flesh. For instance, Saul was not able to wait patiently.

Verse 5. “Let him ask of God.” When trial comes the first resource of the Christian, as also the first motion of the new man, is prayer. God always hears the prayer of His saints. Thus strengthened from above, the Christian is enabled to go through the trial in the spirit of obedience. In Gethsemane Christ prayed before being in the trial; then in obedience He took the cup from the Father’s hand. If we neglect prayer and the difficulties come upon us unawares, we enter into temptation and we fall. Peter slept when he should have prayed, drew the sword when he should have submitted, denied Jesus when he

should have confessed Him. God “upbraideth not.” God gives without reproaching our state.

Verse 6. “Let him ask in faith.” God desires that we should cause our prayers to ascend in a spirit of confidence in His goodness.

Verses 9-11. A low degree is that in which alone God is willing to meet us in this world.

Verses 12-15. Trial (or temptation) may come to us from two sources: from God, when heart and faith are tested — “God tempted Abraham”; from the adversary when it reaches us through lust, and flesh is allured. How much better is it to have to do with God in the trial than with Satan!

Whoever knows himself will pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” May the grace of God so work in us that we may not need to be sifted by Satan in order to be stripped of our pretensions. When Jesus prayed for Peter, whom He knew to be self-confident, He did not ask that His disciple might be spared the sifting of the enemy, but only that his faith should not fail him.

Verse 15. “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” Paul speaks in the inverse order in his Epistle to the Romans; chap. 7:8. “Sin wrought in me all manner of lust.” The difference between these two statements is this: Paul confines himself to spiritual principles; whilst James desires to shew their effects. One completes the other; sin, in the nature of man produces lust (Rom. 7), and lust produces sin in the conduct; James 1.

Verses 16-18. The Epistle of James acknowledges regeneration by the power of the grace of God, even as it owns also faith in Jesus (chap. 2:1)—two fundamental

truths of the gospel. “Begat he us with the word of truth,” 1 Peter 1:23-25; John 3.

“That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” God will reconcile all things to Himself; His creation and His elect. We, the begotten of the Father, are the firstfruits of that reconciled creation. In a certain sense, Adam after his sin may be said to have been the firstfruits of fallen creation.

Verses 19-27. Patience and obedience are two practical graces, two of those perfect gifts which the Father gives and which He delights to see developed in us. The new life is always dependent: too much or too little energy is worthless. As soon as self-will manifests itself, as soon as the man wills, there is sin.

Verse 21. “The engrafted word.” As a graft becomes an integral part of the subject into which it is engrafted, so the word becomes a part of the Christian. This is not the case with a law which remains a command outside of us. Let the word produce its effect in us, still its authority over us remains, an authority which is of God. The word builds up, enjoins, or condemns, as the case may be.

Verse 25. “The perfect law of liberty.” In James, the divine nature in us is always seen to be in perfect conformity to the law of God. That nature loves what God enjoins. When it so happens that the person to whom a command is made desires to do the thing commanded, he is pleasing himself whilst obeying the command. Such is the law of liberty. We see it exemplified in Christ; in order to attempt the hindrance of His liberty, it would have been necessary to impede His obedience. So it is with the divine nature in the Christian, it is always free, that is to say, ready to do the

will of God. The conflict of the Christian does not destroy this truth, the principle in such case being “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Three laws are mentioned in James:

Firstly, the law of Moses in chapter 2:10, 11.

Secondly, the royal law, which is love to one’s neighbour in chapter 2:8.

Thirdly, the perfect law of liberty, in chapter 1:25; chap. 2:12. The two last resemble each other.

Verse 26. “And bridleth not his tongue.” The tongue is that which divulges most promptly the state of the soul. When abiding in the presence of God we have not an evil, or over-abundant, speech. “The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him,” Hab. 2:20.

Verse 27. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father.” When abiding in subjection to God, life manifests itself, selfishness disappears, and we keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Chapter 2.

Verses 1-13. It is quite useless to pretend to acquaintance with the Messiah (our Lord Jesus Christ in glory), when the conduct does not answer to the profession. Here, as in the course of the whole Epistle, James inveighs against the spirit of the world. Human grandeur, the attractions of the rich, respect of persons and despisal of the poor, all such things agree not with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for “God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.” Yet James does not level all ranks; what he

requires is that there should be no preference given to the rich. On account of his position, the latter may have more needs; but it is needful to distinguish when such are genuine, or when arising from the tendency to pretend to riches, to appear grand, etc.

Verse 12. Judged by the law of liberty, that is to say, according to this nature imparted to us. That nature is holy: we ought therefore, according to this nature, to speak and act holily and so judge ourselves. Woe to him who to excuse evil would say, “I do that which I would not,” for although flesh is in us, we are not debtors to it.

Verse 13. “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment”—the same expression as in Exodus 8:9,” Glory over me.”

Verses 14-26. Faith is shewn by its fruits. James demands proof of professed faith and the answer if there is faith should be, “Behold the fruits.” That word “shew me” is the key to the subject. You say, I am a Christian: very well, but I cannot see the faith which is in your heart; shew it me by your works. The works required by James as evidence of faith are not such as are generally termed “good works.” He calls for works of faith, works similar to those of Abraham and Rahab. Such actions as putting one’s son to death, leaving one’s country, are not generally called good works, but they are works of faith. When Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his only-begotten son, he still believed he should have the numerous seed promised him by God. Rahab believed the Canaanites were cursed and that God had given their land to Israel, and she cast in her lot with the destiny of the people of God. These works, which manifest faith, are acts in which flesh can have no part.

Chapter 3.

Verses 1-12. James reaches the pride of man in another way, and combats against it: the endeavour to shine by fine speeches, to speak without restraint, does not agree with the respect due to our God and Father. If it is evil not to bridle the tongue in daily life, it is also evil to be itching to speak before an assembly. Be not many teachers. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, for the tongue is the instrument in man which is most ready to serve good or evil, it reveals the state of the soul. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Verses 13-18. A wise man endued with knowledge will display himself, not by words, but by good conduct with meekness and wisdom, he will shew himself modest without hypocrisy, sowing the fruit of righteousness in peace.

Verses 14-16. There is a wisdom which is not from God, but which is seated in the human intelligence; it is earthly, sensual, devilish, and it is false to the gospel, because it professes to appertain to it.

Verses 17, 18. But the wisdom which is from God is first pure, then peaceable. It is the effect of the word when received; it makes us pure and peaceable.

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace. Christ obeyed the will of God spontaneously without experiencing any inward resistance. Not that He was insensible to the suffering resulting from His faithfulness, for He felt it; still the motion of his soul was obedience only. So with us, although we have sorrow in persecution, or in the various troubles that come upon us, yet we should fulfil the will of God without internal

conflicts; and this would be so, were our hearts more weaned from the rudiments of this world.

Chapter 4.

Verses 1-10 speak against lust. The apostle has just said that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, but lust is the enemy of all peace. It works perturbation in the saints and in their intercourse with God; they pray, but God does not hear them.

Verse 4. There is no agreement between the love of the world and the love of God, one destroys the other.

Verse 6. God it is who gives, but He gives to whom He chooses, namely, to the humble.

Verses 7-10. Do you desire to avoid the danger and the evil consequences of lust? Humble yourselves, submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, purify your conduct, feel your state. These things wound the pride of the flesh, but are able to keep us in a true state in the presence of the Lord who Himself will lift us up, and then it will be without danger.

Verses 13-17. We are again reminded of dependence and submission to God. It is not for us to choose our ways. To do so would be forgetting the authority of the Lord, obeying our lusts and acting in a boastful spirit.

Chapter 5.

Verses 1-6 are another censure upon the rich. James calls to mind the oppression of the great, and it is remarkable to see that he identifies those who seek after riches with those who condemned and killed the Just One.

Verses 7-9. “The Lord is coming.” Waiting for Him keeps the heart from the love of riches. We must wait in patience, and live in peace.

Verses 10-20 give various consolations and changes. Those that have suffered by the will of God are now blessed. If we suffer, we must follow their example, namely, suffer patiently.

Verses 14, 15. God in government sometimes afflicts by sickness, we must then judge ourselves; but He hears the prayers of the saints, forgives and heals.

Verses 16-18. The prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias is a proof of this.

Verses 19, 20. The love of souls is very precious; to turn a sinner from the error of his way is to save a soul from death, to cover a multitude of sins and to be doing as God does.

Reading On 1 Peter 1 And 2

Peter is only laying the foundation here; you do not get anything of the proper subject of his Epistle until “Dearly beloved, I beseech you,” in chapter 2. In each Epistle he lays the foundation of redemption. They give the government of God that the Jews were put under. “He that will love life and see good days,” that is not redemption for heavenly glory. Or, again, “The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.” As far as I have seen, the first Epistle is government in favour of saints, telling them they will suffer, and so on; and the second is government in respect of the wicked. In this chapter he tells first of redemption, and then how judgment begins at the house of God. And it is very instructive as to the order of the revelations and dealings of God. It is addressed to the scattered Jews through Pontus, etc.: “sojourners of the dispersion” it really is. “Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?” is the same. They are Christians, converted Jews, though scattered, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Peter was put to death before Jerusalem was destroyed, according to common chronology. You never find anything about the church as a body in Peter, but as a house. Paul alone speaks of it as the body of Christ; this was his special ministry. Peter does address them in their new standing, but it is individually in accomplished redemption, not as in the one body united to Christ.

At the end “the church that is at Babylon,” I doubt. “Elected” is in the feminine, and no word is given for “church” at all; many have thought it refers to Peter’s

wife—a sister. Only Paul touches the subject of the body of Christ, and so he alone speaks of the rapture. There is in John's Gospel, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," but nothing more. As to the house it is in chapter 2. They were converted or Christian Jews, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; it was any quickened soul among the dispersion. Peter was specially the minister of the circumcision.

James writes on a larger scale. He says "the twelve tribes," and he talks about anyone coming into their "synagogue"; it is like a national body, but he singles out those who are believers. And he says "twelve," though ten are in captivity; this is faith. Like Paul, "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come"; and like the twelve stones of Elijah at Carmel. He could say "instantly," as it was so, though they were doing it very ignorantly and badly; just as Paul himself had been doing when he was Saul. All really honest Jews were doing so. They might have done it in a bigoted way; still they were serving. Just as you may have a church so-called kept open night and day, it is kept open whatever may be there beside the truth itself.

The cross really ended Judaism, though it continued after. You see "how many thousands of the Jews there are that believe, and they are all zealous of the law," offering sacrifices, etc.: and you get Paul going on to do as much. What is striking enough is, that in James you never have a word about redemption; grace you get, "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." It fits in pretty close to the conscience, if you will only let it. It does not allow will in man at all, but patience. Its general character is practical righteousness, the total destruction of self-will in the Christian, and the

renouncing of the world. He takes them where they avowedly are, and says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” and so on. He takes the cross for granted; but you get the grace that quickens us. And it is all the putting down of the working of evil in every shape. In James you get positive grace, but there is the judgment of all a man’s heart.

Peter goes farther than that; he takes up the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. “Jesus Christ” applies to both those. Is it the obedience of Jesus Christ instead of the law? No; I take it, the obedience of Jesus Christ is not merely that there is a rule given, but rather His own. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” There is a whole life which has no spring of action except the will of God; and if there was no will of God, He did nothing. At the beginning the Lord says, as it were, to Satan, “I am come to live by the word of God.” He could have turned the stones into bread, of course, but He had no will of God for it, and so He did nothing.

There are two characters of it—obedience such as Christ’s, and confiding dependence (or dependent confidence, if you like). “Through sanctification of the Spirit” means that the Holy Ghost has wrought in us to put us apart for these two things. You are elect to both, but the way by which you are brought into them is by “sanctification of the Spirit.” Thus the Holy Ghost has come and taken man out of the flesh altogether, and put him into this place. And then these two things are, if you please, His life and His death. It is a different kind of obedience from that of an obedient child now; my child wants to run out, and I say, “Sit down, and do your lesson.” Well, he does so, and that is very pleasant and

right. But Christ never obeyed thus, He never wanted to be stopped; He says “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In 2 Thessalonians 2 you get “sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” together—the same thing pretty much.

You must begin practical sanctification by setting me apart first. The Holy Ghost comes, and sets us apart to God, separated out of the flesh to obedience. It is not so much the fact of the new life, as it is that the word has wrought in me; “being born of the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever.” In Hebrews sanctified by the blood of the covenant is another aspect of sanctification. Here the Spirit is the one who. brings it into actual operation. In “by the which will we have been sanctified,” you get that which sets us apart judicially; but the direct action of God at all times is by the Holy Ghost. So we are born of the Spirit; there is a new life communicated, the Holy Ghost giving me a renewed mind, bringing that into me, whereby my thoughts and feelings are all changed. It is God’s purpose to set me apart by the Spirit. God’s purpose is in His own mind, and God gave His Son that we may be, in a redemption way, set apart to Him. But we all the while are still sinners. Then comes the Holy Ghost, who operates in us, and sets us actually apart. Sanctification of the Spirit is actual operation. All the working of God is by the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit, born of the Father in one sense, and the Son quickens whom He will. And the Holy Ghost still operates, for He takes the word, and He makes the children grow.

Sprinkling is the application of blood, in opposition to what we had under law. There was a certain sanctification of Israel to God, but not by the Holy

Ghost, and they had the blood of sprinkling in a way; but it is Christ's blood that we are sanctified to, and not that of bulls and goats. Obedience comes first, because you get the actual thing that I am sanctified to—the obedience of Christ. But if I am to be before God, it must be by His blood; the one is for cleansing, and the other is His life. It is general, but more the person that is in view, because the blood has been put upon the mercy-seat, and this made God approachable.

It was Jehovah's lot, and without that we could not have had the sprinkling. John uses the fuller word, and says "washed." If God had not been glorified as to the question of sin, which is specifically Jehovah's lot, you could not have had this; the two goats make one Christ. It is the general idea here of sprinkled blood; sometimes it was on the person, sometimes on the altar to God, but then the person got the benefit of it. When it was sprinkled on all the people, it was to hold them though under the penalty of death. It is the legal character of it there, but this is not for us. It is not the new covenant here, but just what it says: I am set apart to obey, and to all the value of Christ's blood. It is a great thing not to bring into a verse what is not in it. You get other verses and other truths, and clearer light by putting them together, but it is an amazing help to keep clearly what a verse gives. There is nothing about the covenant here, but a set of people, elect, chosen, and set apart to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. "Sanctified by blood," in Hebrews, applies strictly to Jews, though we come under it in the fatness of the olive-tree.

A person could not walk practically in the path of obedience without the sprinkling of the blood; we should

not be set apart to God at all without it. It is in contrast with Judaism, where, as a matter of fact, they were brought through the Red sea, and so separated from Egypt. Here it is the Holy Ghost that does it, and it is a real thing in the soul. In Hebrews you do not get the sanctification of the Spirit at all, though you get holiness; they are sanctified by blood, and are warned not to fall away. Where there was faith, they, of course, had the actual value of it all; and where it is individual, it says, “perfected for ever.” It is a great thing to take our verse up absolutely and simply. Here am I set apart to have no will at all, only God’s; obedience is not having a will of my own, and that is the law of liberty. Just as if I told my child again to go off and play in the street, he would go off, and be obedient in doing so, but it would be what he liked to do. Here, He says, I am bringing you out of a sinful world, where the carnal mind is enmity against God, and I set you apart to do my will in the world, and nothing else. And then comes the second blessed thing, all the value of Christ’s blood.

“Blessed be the God and Father,”—you often get that, Christ as Son, and as Man, “my Father and your Father, my God and your God” — “of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Lord is another title: “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” “Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” We had got into this state of death and sin, and Christ came there, and took us out of it, so that I have a living hope, and there I get the key of all this government. “Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” I am not to be catching up theories, but have a positive thing from God, kept there for me, and I am kept while

down here by the power of God through faith. God's power keeps me, but it is keeping me by faith, unto a salvation ready to be revealed. The salvation here is the full description of the status of a Christian, and he is kept by the power of God. Peter is shewing the way of the government of God; there is nothing about advancement in this world.

Hebrews is very much upon "Peter" ground, chapter 12:22-24 describing all the millennial blessedness from top to bottom, but you do not get "union." "Fellows "is not union. If he speaks of the Father and of Christ, then he can speak of first-born among many brethren, but it is individual still. John, too, is always individual, and yet he carries us quite as high, dwelling in God, and God in me, but this is not union with Christ. When I get union with Christ, it is God raising Him from the dead as a man, and putting Him at His right hand, and He takes and puts me into Him there. Christ as Head (Eph. 1) is looked at as a Man whom God has raised. Peter answers to wilderness experience in measure, but "ready to be revealed" is a different thing. Paul's revelation in Colossians is more like Peter, and so you get only, "we shall appear with him in glory," but not the rapture; "called in one body" you have, and "not holding the head," but even that is not developed at all. Peter here is the contrast with having Canaan and all that on earth. Here the inheritance is in heaven; the difference in Ephesians is, that there I am seen sitting in heaven in Christ, that is, in Christ in glory. He says, "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled," and so on. The one thing you do not get here is the union with Christ by the Holy Ghost.

Would you say that you have eternal life in Peter? It is not developed in Peter. You never get a hint about God's love in Peter, though you get the things that flow from it. It is, God has wrought this, and has given that, and He keeps us safe, and so on; but you never have what you find in Paul and John, "God so loved the world." It is a governed world, people in view for whom redemption has been wrought, the perfect standing of a Christian with an inheritance in heaven, and the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. You get the fact of redemption and actual standing, but you never find Peter saying, "Ye are dead"; he does say, "He that hath suffered in the flesh." Paul says, "dead to sin," and goes to the root. Peter says, "dead to sins," which is another thing, being practice, and not root.

The moment I am in Christ, I am in a totally new place, where man looked at as born of Adam is done with. But Peter gives you the whole statement of my relationship to God, as redeemed, and quickened, and walking down here, but with a hope up there. And then government comes in—I am kept by God's power through faith. The rapture is not mentioned, for it is not an act of government, but of sovereign grace. But 2 Peter 1:19 is a most interesting passage, for you have this dark world —Satan's darkness—and this light of God, which shews how all here is going on rapidly to judgment.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians is the most extreme contrast that can be conceived: "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"— "but fornication, and all uncleanness." Paul goes down from my being an imitator of God Himself down to all that is

vile in a man. Verses 6, 7 are government again, but it is as to men who are walking down here, yet redeemed and having this inheritance above. In verse 7 the fruits of all these dealings in government will come out. It is not that you find a poor sinner, who is taken up and put up in glory with Christ, that is not Peter.

What is the salvation of soul? It is in contrast with the deliverance that Israel had, I think. Soul-salvation is contrasted with temporal deliverance. Then comes an orderly statement in verses 10, 11. The prophets which were before speak both of the sufferings of Christ, and of glories which were to follow; but we now stand in between the sufferings finished and the glories not yet come.

The prophets were telling of both; neither had yet come, and they searched to see what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, and it was revealed to them, when they studied their own testimonies, that they ministered not to themselves, but to us. This is very striking; for, so far from its being the expectations of their own minds that they were telling, they had to study their prophecies to understand them if possible. But now the Holy Ghost come down reports these things to us, things which are to be brought unto us, but are reported now.

It does not state that we have got them, but the glory is reported, and by the Holy Ghost sent down. The Holy Ghost was not until Pentecost, but the thing that distinguishes Christianity is the Holy Ghost down here; just as of old Christ, looked at as coming down here, was not yet. All this does not go on into Paul’s statement, nor into John’s. Peter’s is complete and perfect in itself.

I have soul-salvation and eternal life, and Christianity makes me wait for glory. It is a report now. I am changed, but I have not a single thing but life and the Holy Ghost. Of the things that belong to me as being alive, I have nothing but the earnest of the inheritance. You have the new nature? Yes, this is eternal life, and yet, in the full purpose of God, the end is everlasting life. God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, He has called me to His kingdom and glory, but I am not there yet. I am waiting for that. The grace of God has appeared, teaching me to wait for the glory; it is all revealed, and I have the life that enjoys it as a revelation, but I have not come into the estate yet. When the revelation comes by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, other things are brought in. As the Lord says to Nicodemus, “If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?” It was necessary, even for the Jews, to be born again for their earthly things. In John’s “last time” you get Antichrist, the day of the Lord; and yet the days immediately preceding are the last time. Messiah is come, and yet He is not come: Elias is come, and he is not come, and you never see clearly in this kind of statement until you see that. Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing, He has none of the things that belong to Him yet. But the moment the Son was there, the Father’s name was revealed, though they did not understand it. And when the Holy Ghost came down, you get the Spirit of adoption, and Christ’s place where we are heirs; all that was not in the Jewish promises, any more than the church was. The whole state in Peter is different, without going to Paul, because the veil is rent.

Present relationship with God is made perfectly clear by redemption and the new nature, and the Holy Ghost too, and this is an immense thing. We read in this very chapter, “Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory.” Do you mean to say that God gave His Son for you? Then there is perfect love in the sight of God. I believe in God by Christ, and I say, God out of the depth of His own heart would have me with Him. He shewed it by rending the veil from top to bottom. Certain privileges were not thereby revealed, but my soul’s relationship with God, as brought to Him, is revealed. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end,” v. 13-17. So I am calling upon the Father as a child during the time of my sojourning here, and such is my place of relationship with God during that time. This is practically where we are. “In fear” is a very good thing; “Blessed is he that feareth always.” “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It has nothing to do here with final judgment, of course—Peter does not think of that with fear. But if you are calling on the Father, and His name has been revealed, and the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and the Father is keeping His children, still it is as a holy Father—so mind what you are about.

Judging according to every man’s work is a present thing; otherwise, “the Father judgeth no man.” Then he goes to the foundation of it: “Forasmuch as ye know ye were redeemed.” Silver and gold are the general character: the infinite price with which we have been redeemed is contrasted with poor corruptible things—silver and gold. The Jews understood it very well.

You get in Jude the corruption of the church brought in by false brethren, and in John you get them going out in apostasy. The two characters of the last days are, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and apostasy or giving it up. These are all going on to this day; they crept in then. Though the last days be spoken of and perilous times, yet the Lord let it come out in germ at that time, that we should have the word of God about all. Enoch prophesied about them. The moment Christ was rejected, all was closed, except the present time of mercy. As Christians we do not belong to this world at all.

“Who by him do believe in God.” The statement is general, and the effect is that their faith and hope are in God. I know God through His means; this gives a distinct aspect of God altogether. It is trust in God in everything, for I know that God has come into my case. I know the love of God in giving Christ, and I know that all my sins are gone, and God Himself is God my Saviour. He is not in the character of Judge there; nor is it faith in Christ before God, but in God Himself who raised Christ from the dead, so that it takes in everything between me and God, and alters His whole character from Judge. I may believe God as a righteous Judge, and so He is; but this will not save me, though there must be that for salvation. Abraham believed God, that is, believed what God said, and you get various forms of that. There is the Jewish expression, “hope”; but hope is used as confidence, as “in him shall the Gentiles trust,” that is, hope. “Hope thou in God.” Hope is used as counting on a person; but He will give us glory too; here it is the general thought— we reckon on Him. Believing on Him, and in Him, are different. “I believe in God” is a different

thing. This is the object and the confidence: God is the object of the faith. It is the Red Sea. God raised Christ from the dead. There is no knowing God any other way, except as Creator. I do not know God really, save as I know Him in Christ. “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” is knowing God the Father, not merely God. The other names of God do not give eternal life, but the Father sent the Son that we might live through Him, and He gives eternal life. Then comes another thing—first, the revelation in Christ, and then, obeying the truth through the Spirit. This is what sanctifies the soul.

“Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” It is wonderful how purifying the heart, and love, go together. You may get hold of truth, but it is always imperfect, badly put together, and that kind of thing, in man’s hand; but here it is obedience to the truth through the Spirit—another thing. You see selfishness is at the bottom of all sin; the opposite of selfishness is love, and we are purified from selfishness by this love. It is love of the brethren, and love which brings in holiness. You get the two things so in 1 Thessalonians 3:12: “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you, to the end he may stablished your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.” Love and holiness—it is a wonderful power which has come out in Christianity. Paul adds, in Thessalonians, “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” It is not, establish your hearts here, but he is looking at it in all its fulness when Christ comes. It is the power of the hope too, “He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.” And therefore it is in John 17, “Sanctify them through thy

truth, thy word is truth; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." It all takes us up into the other world. "As we do towards you" is the pattern of it, but it is towards one another, and towards all. Observe, you never find that Christ loved the world, nor that God loved the church, because that is the relationship of Christ and the church, His body and His bride. When you get "love as brethren," it is again relationship, love unfeigned. It is the opposite of feigned; it is not "putting it on," as you say, but real. It is the converse here of what it is in Thessalonians. It is the bringing in of divine life, and the Holy Ghost was there, and He is the spring that is in my heart. So it is not talking about inconsistencies, but what is love, and what is God's nature. It is a wonderful thing for us to look at in all our path—Christ, and then in that sense we could not know any man after the flesh. Purity and love is what God is looking for here. Self is dead, and consideration for others is what reigns in the heart according to God. And the recognition of God's presence is the great secret of that. I was struck some time back with this, that when the apostle describes what love is, it is all subjective. In 1 Corinthians 13 you do not get one atom of activity in it; it bears, endures, hopes, and so on, and that is all. Love is not always subjective, but it is so in 1 Corinthians 13. Disappointing! You go and live it out, and see if other people will be disappointed. Activity, of course, is all right too. God gives to us in the blessedness of His nature, He makes us enjoy Himself, and, besides that, He gives us a share in the activity of His love. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." These instructions are drawn from the very depths of God's nature, and you get God and grace instead of self.

Suppose a man is giving way to bad feelings, the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. I ask myself how should I feel if I met that man at the door of heaven, going in—supposing I had met a heretic, or anything else. Would it not be nice to meet people here as you will meet them there? Only when you have to meet opponents, take care that it does not connect itself with anything of feeling as regards the individual. Look at Christ in Gethsemane in an agony. He asked His disciples to stay, and He went farther, and when He comes to them again, He finds them sleeping, but He only says, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” and He goes back again into His agony; and this was His way to them when He was thinking of meeting God in judgment!

Verse 22 is love “fervently.” “Seeing ye have purified,” etc., is the principle; now let us have the practice in all its extent. He is looking for fervent love in a pure heart, seeing that they have been brought into this relationship. God is light, and He is love, and He has come down in light and love, and He wants this divine nature which has root in us to come out. “Increase and abound” is to be brought about by keeping nearer to God. I have often thought that it requires great grace to see a little grace. If you go out in love, it will find some response. At one place they complained that all was so dreadfully cold, and I could only say, Why do you not go out in love, and warm the rest?

“Born again.” This is divine life, for this connection of purity and love is by the Holy Ghost. John 3 is the same truth, but more specific. John says “born anew “; he insists on its being altogether new, and so it is more emphatic. Here it is connected with the word; in John

with the Spirit. In John, too, you get the positive communication of the new life, in Peter you get the practical effect and working, not the source. It is similar in 1 Peter 4:1: “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,” but in Paul I get “He that is dead”; it is the same truth, only the one is the principle, and the other is the outward practical carrying of it out. Again the Jews must be born again. We are born of the Spirit, and get a new life, but it brings in divine thoughts, so that I am cleansed. The sin in them, then, remains, as in Ezekiel 36, and so it does in us now.

It is a great thing that the word lives, it comes from God, and is really in the power of the Holy Ghost, but then it brings in the things it tells about. In John 8:25 the Lord tells them what He was—in principle (or altogether) what I also say; in our version it is, “even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.” His word expressed Himself. And the word not only lives, but it judges what is in us too, because it is true.

Sanctified, Purged, And Kept

1 Peter 1:1-9

Sanctification of the Spirit is spoken of before the “blood of sprinkling.” Israel in Egypt were taken and set apart (which is the same as sanctification) for God while they were in Egypt. This sanctification is spoken of in Jude’s Epistle as the Father’s work—“sanctified11 by God the Father.” In Hebrews Jesus is spoken of as sanctifying—“That he might sanctify the people with his own blood.” Here, in Peter, it is spoken of as the Spirit’s work. The setting apart to God is a different thing from having forgiveness, and it is the accomplishing of God’s purposes, though not the purposes themselves. The prodigal in Luke 15 turned back in the far country, and then he was set apart for God. There was a total and utter change, but not all the effect yet. When he began to return, his face was turned towards his father; while, when he went away his back was towards him. So the soul set apart by God is livingly turned to God in power; it may be, as the prodigal, in rags and want; but there is the turning of heart, and, like Paul who was converted on his way to Damascus, there is a new creation. The will is broken. There will be conflict afterwards as the result, but the whole man is changed. It is not that there are not difficulties to be overcome, but the object before the mind is different.

The soul is thus said to be “sanctified unto obedience.” It is not a question of being better or worse, but it is turning to God; and if it is sanctification to obedience, it is also to the “blood of sprinkling.” Now I have to learn the value of that blood. He has brought me under the

sprinkling of blood, as Israel was by coming out of Egypt; and what was the sprinkling of blood then? It was the seal, while liable to the sentence of death, of the covenant which they were to obey; Ex. 24:6, 7, 8. If they obeyed, they stood, but if not, the penalty of death was their portion. Is it so with us? No. We have disobeyed, but He (Jesus) has suffered for us, and we are sealed under the covenant brought in by Him for the disobedient. We are brought under the blood of sprinkling, whatever its efficacy is. Nothing has power against this title. Does my guilt rise up? or Satan come against me? All is gone, because of the value of His blood. I have, as the first thing, redemption through His blood, perfect deliverance from all that was for my condemnation. I am, in my whole condition as a sinner, redeemed out of it for ever. The covenants, we know, were sealed with blood. Abraham and Jeremiah killed a calf, and the blood was a witness to the covenant. This covenant differs from former ones, inasmuch as it is not binding as to guilt if we fall; on the contrary, it discharges us from guilt by the blood that was shed for it.

Another kind of purging is that of cleansing from defilement, so that by the blood we are not only acquitted of guilt, but made absolutely clean. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” Another effect is, that it brings us into wonderful nearness of thought with God. The blood has been already spilt. Christ has done it and I see in it that He has taken the deepest interest in my soul, and given Himself that I might be delivered. Was He all alone in it? As regards man, He was; but God the Father had to do with it. He spared not His own Son, and I am reconciled to God by His death.

That is more than being merely turned, in will, to God. Where is my assurance of its efficacy? God Himself having done it, who “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” we have, then, a dying Saviour, but a living hope. We have life in Him, power in Him, through the Holy Ghost. The Second Adam, the Quickener, is He who went into death for our sins, but who came out of death, and is risen in the power of an endless life. This life then makes us pilgrims and strangers down here, and there is not a single object here for the Christian but to please God. With Jesus it was ever His delight to do His Father’s will. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,” etc. This puts the heart to the test. Do you say what harm is there in this or that? Your flesh is after it, and that is the harm! Are you to live after the flesh? If the old man is working in you, that is the harm. We are “begotten unto a living hope,” etc., “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away”—just the contrast of everything here. If the divine nature is in us, it has divine tastes suited to that to which it belongs. My heart’s affections have found a home, where God has found His rest, in Christ.

Besides, it is “reserved in heaven.” No moth or rust can corrupt there, neither thief break through to steal. It is preserved by God, and “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have,” etc. It is safe. Another thing is, we must wait for it; but we know it is well kept, if God keeps it. “Reserved … for you who are kept.” The inheritance is kept for you in heaven, and you are kept on earth waiting for it. He will keep you for the inheritance and the inheritance for you. It is then not a question of my perseverance, but of God’s

faithfulness. Do any say, Oh! I shall never hold on to the end? But God has said, “They shall never perish.” Ah! but it may be said, there is all the power of Satan! Again, “None shall pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” “I and my Father are one.” There is one common counsel between them. “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed.”

There is not something to be done, something not yet accomplished. No! it is done, and that is what could not be said when Christ was upon earth. But now He has passed through death, risen out of it, ascended to the right hand of God, where He is waiting until “his enemies be made his footstool.” It is ready to be revealed, and is only delayed while souls are being brought in for the completion of His body. That is matter of joy to wait for; though, in one sense, we should desire that it were already completed, that glory may be revealed. But there is rest to the heart in the consciousness that the salvation is ready, and that we are kept through faith. There is blessing in that, through exercise, because the flesh never has faith; and if a single worldly or careless thought comes in, faith is not in exercise, and the image of Jesus is dimmed in us. We do not live, except when and so far as faith is in exercise; for all that is of the flesh perishes. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Another blessed thing for us is, that everything becomes maner of exercise. We must never do a thing we have not faith for.

This makes us feel the need of having the affections “set on heavenly things.” “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” “Wherein ye greatly rejoice,” etc. Are you greatly rejoicing in this salvation? “It shall be in you a well of living water “was the word. There are none so subject to

inertia as the Christian who is halting between two opinions. If worldliness, love of ease, self in this or that form come in, who are so weak and wretched? We cannot find happiness in the world and be rejoicing in heavenly things. If the soul is occupied with this great salvation, it will rejoice therein. There will be heaviness through manifold temptations, but the valley of Baca will become a well, the rain filling the pools.

We now have the “earnest of the inheritance”; not the earnest of God’s love, for this is fully our portion now, and not merely the earnest of it. The “trial of faith will be found unto praise,” etc., at the appearing of Jesus Christ. He has entered within and has His crown; and now at the thought of that, we can rejoice with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It is “unspeakable” because it is Himself, and “full of glory” because He is in the glory: and lest the fire which tries should cast the least cloud over the hope and the joy, it is said, “receiving the end of your faith.” I have received the salvation of my soul, and that is really the end of my faith, though I may have to go through trial to purge away the dross.

Is your face turned upward to God, and not as the beast’s which goeth downward? or is your back towards God, as Adam turned when he had sinned and was ashamed?

The Spirit of God in the Epistles of Peter does not contemplate the Christian as united to Christ in heaven, but as running the course through the trials of this world toward heaven. Both things are true, and we need both. We are running through the wilderness towards it, and at the same time we can say through the Spirit that

we are one with Christ in heaven. It is in the former of these two ways that the Christian is looked at here. The inheritance is reserved for him, and then we get the application of the truth and grace of God to the condition we are in. It is exceedingly precious to know that, no matter what the trials may be or the difficulties, we are to expect that down here. It is merely a passage through the trials and difficulties (which are useful to us after all), and there is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled,” kept safe in heaven for us; and, as he adds then, we kept for it by the power of God through faith. That is the position in which he sets the Christian. We are “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It is not exactly that we are risen with Him, but he looks at Christ as risen and gone in, and therefore that He has begotten us again to a lively hope and that hope “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” There it is, kept safe in heaven for us. As Paul said, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” All his happiness was safe in heaven, and the Lord could keep it safe for him; and then we get the blessed truth that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

We get the character and path of the Christian—both these things. The blessed faithfulness of the Lord in keeping it for us and us for it, and at the same time the character of the Christian as passing onward toward it, and a little of the trials of the way. We first see that here. You will find it in the striking contrast with the law and the position that Israel had under it. Indeed this runs through the whole—constantly in the New Testament.

He says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” He settles them on this blessed truth—their being elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Not merely a people chosen out as a nation, but it was that foreknowledge of God the Father through which they had this place: and then the Spirit of God comes and sanctifies or sets them apart. We get then what they are set apart to practically, as a present thing, and that is, the obedience of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. These are just the two essential points of the life and path of Jesus, one running into the other: and, in this case, if I may so speak, the one completing the other. For us the great thought is the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ applies to the obedience as well as to the sprinkling of the blood, and both are in contrast with the law, whether as regards what the law required, or as regards the sacrifices of the law—the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ are in contrast with both.

As regards our obedience it is essential for the true character of our path as Christians that we should get hold of what this obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was. Legal obedience in us is a different thing. We have got a will of our own; that was not true of Christ. He had a will in one sense, as a man, but He said, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” But we have got a will of our own; it may be checked and broken down. But if the law is applied to us, it is as stopping this will, but finding it here, and our notion of obedience constantly is that. Take a child—there is a will of its own: but when the parents’ will comes in and the child yields instantly without a struggle, and either does what it is bid or

ceases to do what it is forbidden, you say this is an obedient child, and it is delightful to see such an obedient spirit. But Christ never obeyed in that way. He never had a will to do things of His own will in which God had to stop Him—it was not the character of His obedience. It is needed with us, and we all know it, if we know anything of ourselves; but it was not the character of His obedience. He could not wish for the wrath of God in the judgment of sin, and He prayed that that cup might pass from Him. But the obedience of Christ had quite another character from legal obedience. His Father's will was His motive for doing everything: "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God."

That is the true character of the obedience of Jesus Christ, and of ours as Christians. The other may be needed for us— the stopping us in our own will; but the true character of our obedience, and that which characterises the whole life of the Christian is this—that the will of God, of our Father we can say, is with us, as it was with Christ, our reason, our motive, for doing a thing. When Satan came and said to Him, "Command that these stones be made bread," He answers, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." His actual life as carried out in conduct flows from the word of God which is His motive for doing it; and if He has not that, He has no motive. You will find that it alters the whole tenor and spirit of a man's life. We have to be stopped in our own will, that is true, because we have the old nature in us; but it alters the whole spirit and tenor of a man's life. If I have no motive but my Father's will, how astonishingly it simplifies everything! If you never thought of doing a thing except because it was God's positive will that you should do it, how three-

quarters of your life would at once disappear! This is the truth practically as to ourselves; yet we clearly see that such was the obedience of Christ.

This, too, is the principle of real piety, because it keeps us in constant dependence upon God, and in constant reference to God. It is an amazing comfort for my soul to think that there is not a single thing all through my life in which God as my Father has not a positive will about me to direct me; that there is not a step from the moment I am born (though while we are unconverted we understand nothing about it), in which there is not a positive path or will of God to direct me here. I may forget it and fail, but we have in that word and will of God what keeps the soul, not in a constant struggle against one thing and another, but in the quiet consciousness that divine favour has provided for everything—that I do not take a step but what divine favour has provided for. It keeps the soul in the sweet sense of divine favour and in dependence upon God, so that like David we can say, “Thy right hand upholdeth me.” Moses does not say, Shew me a way through the wilderness, but, “Shew me now thy way.” A man’s ways are what he is: God’s way shews what He is.

The heart gets separated in its path more and more intelligently to God, and gets to understand what God is. If I know that God likes this and likes that along my path, it is because I know what He is; and besides its being the right path and causing us thus to grow in intelligent holiness of life, there is piety in it too. The constant reference of the heart affectionately to God is real piety, and we have to look for that. We have it perfectly in our Lord; “I know,” He says, “that thou hearest me always.” There is the confidence of power

and reference to God with confiding affection. If I know that it is His path of goodness, His will that is the source of everything to me, there is the cultivation of piety with God, communion is uninterrupted, because the Spirit is not grieved. This is the obedience of Jesus Christ, to which we are set apart.

Then there is the other blessed truth. We are set apart through the Spirit for, and to the value and the sprinkling of, the blood of Jesus Christ. We know that, when the priests were consecrated, the blood was put upon their right ear and upon the hand and foot, as a token that all the mind and work and walk should be according to the preciousness of this blood. In God's sight there is not a single spot upon us because of the blood that has been shed, and we have to walk according to the value of that blood before God. In the case of the leper the blood was to be sprinkled upon him seven times. He was set apart to God (in type) under the whole, perfect efficacy of what the work and blood of Jesus are in God's sight.

Such was the double character of Jesus, whether throughout His life or in death. Even in dying His obedience was His life in that sense. And that is what characterises the Christian. This introduces us at once into the unclouded apprehension of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I see His path down here—He has gone up there—death has no power over Him. And now through Him nothing stands in the way between me and the incorruptible inheritance. Death itself is totally overcome—so entirely, that if the Lord Jesus were to come soon enough, we

should never die at all. In any case, we shall be changed and glorified; but I speak now as shewing the way in which the power of death is set aside, so that, instead of our belonging to death now, death belongs to us. All things, the apostle says, are yours, “Whether life or death, or things present or things to come.” Christ having come in and having gone down to the full depth of everything for us, He has gone through it all and has left no trace of it in the resurrection. It is not merely that the blood has been sprinkled, but He has left no trace of anything. Therefore, though we may die, it is gain if we do. It is to an inheritance incorruptible.

Then we come to a third point in the chapter, that is, the being kept through the way. There are difficulties, and trials, and temptations—it is well we should look them in the face. Everybody is not passing smoothly through this life, though some may be more so than others. There are plenty of difficulties and trials, and we have to make straight paths for our feet. Still, we are “kept by the power of God,” but, mark this, it is “through faith.” We have to remember that, and this is why the trials come in. We can count upon the whole power of God, but it is exercised in sustaining our faith in God, as the Lord says to Peter, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” He does not take us out of trial; on the contrary, it is said, “Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” There may be this heaviness through trial; no such thing as doubting God’s goodness, but the pressure, whether of sorrow or of that which might tend to make our feet slip, may produce heaviness of spirit. But after all it is “only for a season,” and “if need be.” Do not make yourselves uneasy: the One who holds the reins of the need-be is God. He does not take pleasure in

afflicting. If there is the need for it, we go through the trial, but it is only for a moment. It is a process that is going on, and do you fancy that you do not want it?

The great secret is to have entire confidence in the love of God, in the certainty that He is the doer of all—not looking at circumstances or at second causes, but seeing the hand of the Lord in all, that it is the trial of our faith, and that it is only on the way. When the day comes when God has things His own way (He does His own work now, of course, but when He has things His own way), these very trials will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is a process that He is carrying on now, it may be even the putting into the furnace to bring out the preciousness of the faith. It is not a question of being cleansed, but He does cause us to pass through all that which He sees needed for discipline. He uses the things that are in the world. The evil, the sin, the ill-will of others, all the things that are in the world, He uses simply as an instrument to break down and exercise our heart, so that our obedience may be simple, and that our faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus.

We see thus what a strengthening thing is the waiting for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for two or three days on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better, but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here; if there is a bit of the old life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord

Jesus Christ—waiting for God's Son from heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed to bring us there where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself and that for ever. And there is nothing more practically important for every-day work and service, than our waiting for God's Son from heaven. If you want to know what this world is, and if you want to get comfort for your soul, you will be waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am belonging to the world, I cannot have comfort. The apostle says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me with an object, and that object that it should be to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you all to search and see what would be the effect of Christ's coming on your souls? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations, but He will come and take me out of it to Himself? Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old (there may be more to learn if we are young; but), would the coming of the Lord Jesus find you with plenty of things that you would have to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercise of heart? He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between

Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul—He is coming to take me away to Himself.

The Lord give us to be of a true heart, and to remember that if we are Christians, Christ is our life, and Christ could not have a portion down here. Joy and peace and quietness of spirit go with it, and real happiness; only we must have faith. Abraham found in the mountain a place where he could intercede with God, while Lot was saying, “I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take me and I die.” Unbelief always looks at the place of faith as the most awful thing possible— all darkness. The Lord give us to know what it is to live the life which we live “by the faith of the Son of God!”

11 The critical reading in Jude 1, is “beloved in God the Father.”—Ed.

Our Pilgrimage, Priesthood, And Suffering

1 Peter 2

Peter looks on the Christian as one redeemed and set out on his pilgrimage on his way to the inheritance. Having redemption, the forgiveness of sins, knowing they are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, they were reminded that there was an inheritance kept for them, ready to be revealed, and they set out on the journey as pilgrims and strangers here. This is very precious, especially when we see Christ before us in it. None was so thoroughly a pilgrim and stranger as Christ, and He says of the disciples, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” His life becomes our example. This path to glory, following in His footsteps, is founded on redemption being fully accomplished. This is very different from the truth, brought out in another place, of our being “seated in heavenly places in Christ.” This we have in Ephesians.

In the beginning of chapter 2 there are some things I desire to notice. Chapter 1:17 speaks of passing the time of your sojourning here in fear. This is not heaven; there is no fear in heaven: but when I talk of sojourning here, I have cause to fear. The saints know at what a price they have been redeemed out of the world. Then go and act as those redeemed.

Verse 21. “Who by him do believe in God.” Many souls believe in Christ, but hardly know what it is to believe in God by Him: it is to get a knowledge of what God

Himself is in Christ. It is not any knowledge of salvation through interest in Christ's blood, but to know God's thoughts in connection with His Son. There is not only His goodness, but great depth in it: for He thought of me before I thought of Him. He takes every-day interest in me; He is going to conform me to the image of His Son, the Firstborn among many brethren. The soul confides in God: "that your faith and hope may be in God" (not in Christ, which is true too). But I believe in God by means of Christ. I do not think of Him as a Judge, but as a Saviour God. I have come in spirit to God and would walk with Him: as of Israel, God says, He brought them on eagles' wings to Himself. Thus we are put into relationship with God, who has begotten us again in Christ raised up from the dead out of the whole scene. Flesh is all gone: "the grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away" (v. 24)—the people as well as the nations. Take any— all—flesh: it is entirely worthless. It seems hard to say it is gone when we pass through all the bustle and vanity of the world; but to faith it is done with already. New life is received through the incorruptible seed of the word. We are set in a new place—going through a world we do not belong to, as pilgrims and strangers. Christ is our pattern.

In chapter 2 we first find what we are as priests in a double way.

Verse 4. Christ came down from God, and He must be disallowed of men. Everything seen in Christ was the perfect reflexion of God; and we who are now seen before God in Christ have therefore all Christ's perfectness in His eyes. We are "living stones," having the very same nature and life within: here is the first thing noticed. We are built up "a spiritual house, an holy

priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Our function is to be constantly worshipping God. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." We are before God in the holy place— "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Aaron's priesthood shews it in a figure. None but a priest had a right to go before God at all. We are a consecrated people—yea, a priesthood—having "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10 alludes to this consecration of the priests, sprinkled with blood. Offering up "spiritual sacrifices" is our service (I speak not now of intercession for others), the consequence of being born of God and consecrated to Him. We are spiritual and not mere carnal priests, and have something spiritual to offer up. It is an immense and very distinct privilege of all Christians, and this now. God owns no other priests, but all saints are priests—it extends to every believer in the world. There is no true priesthood distinct from this, save that of Christ for us. The priest is one brought nigh by sacrifice, bringing that which brings nigh.

"Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious," etc. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious [or, is the preciousness]. This is sometimes looked at as an experience of feeling; but what is here meant shews the contrast between a believer and an unbeliever. Though "precious" to the believer, He is a "stone of stumbling" to the "disobedient," appointed not to disobey, but, being disobedient, to stumble at the word.

Verse 9 calls "that ye should shew forth the praises [virtues, excellencies] of him," etc. This is not offering sacrifices; it is rather the Melchizedec pattern than the

Aaronic. When Christ takes His place as Melchizedec, He will lead the praises of the people, and it will be the manifestation of His excellence and the praise will be made good by what He is. Here, if all the saints were what they should be, His praise would be manifested. When we see Him, we shall be like Him, and His praise will be shewn. There is the priesthood of worship, as being brought nigh; there is the shewing forth of His worth as a kingly priesthood: this is the kingly part. In Revelation 4 the twenty-four elders, referring to the full courses of priests, shew forth His praises in glory. There is displayed glory in them, a wonderful testimony to the efficacy of the work of Christ. There is the throne of judgment set, and the twenty-four crowned elders sitting in peace, associated with Him in the judgment. Their position shews the completeness of the work that has set us to shew forth His praises. Then they prostrate themselves before God, and that is worship. In the judgments they are associated with Him; when His praise is sounded, they worship. Worship is the highest display of what God has done and is, shewn out. It goes out to God and owns what He is. There is this double blessing come with a royal priesthood.

Shewing forth the praises of Him thus does not mean preaching the gospel. Peter speaks of what they were as a royal priesthood, and going in as a holy priesthood. Shewing forth His praises is down here, and does not carry with it so much the stamp of thanksgiving, gratitude, but it equally takes in the thought of redemption. We are brought into “marvellous light” to shew forth that light. While Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. Now we have to shew forth His light. We have an interested heart in it—the interest

of those who have been and are the objects of His love. “Return to thine own house and shew how great things God hath done for thee.” Called out of darkness into His marvellous light, we stand before the world as witnesses for God. In the first, the priest belongs to the holy place, as going in to worship God. In the second, on the other hand, he is called to shew forth His praises to the world. A priest is consecrated as well as redeemed. So we now worship, and have to shew forth Him who has called us. We know Him by what He has been to us and done for us. We “are not of the world.” Looking at Christ as specially gone in and as coming out, we follow Him in spirit going in, and anticipate His coming forth by now shewing forth His praises. He sets the saints to do first what He will do Himself perfectly. The church has failed. He set it to shew forth His praise. What has broken down He, however, will accomplish Himself in power, when He comes forth in glory. This gives a peculiarly distinct character to our call. He said, “I have sent them into the world.” Were they not in the world? Not in the fullest, truest sense, for they were by grace taken out of the world. They were a peculiar people “that they should shew forth.” Of Israel God said, “This people have I formed for myself”— a peculiar people to Himself; they for earth and we for heaven. This gives a distinct character to the walk, which should speak of Him who has set them so to live. Why can we do this and that? Because He has done this and that for us. Our position and ways should speak for Him.

The “marvellous light” goes with sin all put away, and not a spot left on us. Our whole business in the world (in going through labour and toil, it may be), the one thing to do is to shew forth the praises of Him who has called

us thus. The blind man thought it wonderful; if they could not see, yet He had opened his eyes. It gives us a deep responsibility to be put in such a place. Begotten again by Christ's resurrection, we are not men in the world; as redeemed persons we are, of course, born again, but to be a holy priesthood near Him, so as to worship Him, and a royal priesthood to shew forth His praises. There are also the joys and privileges of the heart right with God through Christ and His work.

But what have they to do in the world? "I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them." That is a part of Christ too. Now we see what it is to be a witness for Christ—the world hates them.

Verse 20. "If ye do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." What would the world say to this? What! let every one trample on you? The world trampled on Christ. I am not speaking of this country or any other in particular, but, in the world all over, oppression, misery, discontent, are going on. I am not of the world, though I may mourn over it. To see men devouring widows' houses is a terrible thing, especially under religious pretexts: but we have not to set things to rights. We have a peculiar place as Christians. We have immense privileges and consequent position in the world. "If ye do well, and suffer for it, and take it patiently," etc. This is Christ reproduced in His members. These are the praises of God shewn forth by them, not lights in the world. One may as a Christian go through the world very quietly in a general way; but if there is the contrary, and one takes from me my coat, shall I not give him my cloak also? If I have lost my coat and kept Christ's character, I see nothing to regret. The effect of being put into the world as a peculiar people,

begotten again, redeemed, priests holy and royal, is to present His character in the world; and the measure is according to our faith. The sufferings of Christ went much farther than any little we may suffer. “When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” These sufferings of Christ give another character to all I may have to go through. When Christ is before me, I have another object, another motive. The early Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Why? Because it was for Christ’s sake. We have very little of this in England, more in some other countries. Christ being stamped upon all characterises our shewing forth what He is. We have a natural sense of righteousness, quite contrary to the spirit shewn in Christ which we have to follow.

There are two very distinct kinds of suffering that Christ endured. In redemption Christ suffered. See chap. 3:9. If you suffer, let it not be for sins. Christ has done that for you. “He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.” Do not talk of suffering for sin; that is not what a Christian has to do. Here is the complete contrast of Christ’s suffering and the Christian’s. Christ suffered alone in that, never to have a follower. He stood alone that there might never be an atom of wrath for us. From whom did He suffer this? From God. Christ suffered for sin from Him. He drank that dreadful cup at His hands; and the effect of Christ’s suffering for sin from God is that all judgment is passed from them who believe. They have no fellowship in the cup of wrath. Their sins were therein, and that was all from them. The ark in the midst of Jordan typifies this. When I come to the other character of His sufferings, it was for righteousness’ sake, and for love. Walking through the world and up to

the cross, He suffered dreadfully from man, the contradiction of sinners, etc. There were “dogs,” and “strong bulls of Bashan” staring upon Him at the last. He suffered from those around closing in upon Him. Even on the cross He had this kind of suffering as well as the others. Men were instruments of Satan to bring all kinds of suffering on Christ.

Suffering for righteousness’ sake and for His name’s sake are different. One person may suffer for a good conscience, and another may suffer martyrdom for preaching Christ. This last is for His name’s sake. These two kinds of suffering are distinguished in the sermon on the Mount, and also here in chapters 3 and 4; that which is for His name’s sake is a higher kind than for righteousness’ sake. Christ was the light, and they hated the light. He was hated for His goodness and for the activity of His love also. Through His active life Christ had no suffering from God. When suffering from God, “the hour” was come. It was at the close He was under the judgment: and unmingled grace is the result. On the other hand, His sufferings from man for righteousness will be followed by judgment. “Let their table become a snare.” Compare Psalm 69 with Psalm 22.

Christ is an example to us in His suffering from men. I am partaker of His sufferings. He suffered from the unbelief of those around Him. “He sighed deeply in his spirit,” mentioned on one occasion, “because of the hardness of their heart,” seeing how this wretched world goes on deceiving itself: we ought to feel it too. He suffered also perfectly with the feeling of a man. “Reproach hath broken my heart.” “They may tell all my bones.” “They look and stare upon me.” Hanged up as a malefactor before the world, He felt it all; and the more

refined the feeling, the more acutely His disciple's unfaithfulness was felt by Him. It was love to Peter brought him back.

The nature of man does not like to be reviled now for preaching the gospel or righteous ways. "Unto you it is given," Phil. 1. We do not ordinarily think of it as a gift at all, we do not like it. But Christ bore our sins, "that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness," even to the laying down our life. There should be no limit to suffering in the service of love. There is no suffering to get into the position, but suffering because of being in it.

This makes very clear the distinction between responsibility and grace. Duties flow from a relationship that exists already. If a man is legal, he expects to get something for his suffering. Grace teaches me that I am always to act as a child, because I am one. The believer is what he has to praise Him for. "We are made the righteousness of God in Christ." Therefore I can go and speak of it. Because of my lot in the blessing, I can go and shew forth His praises. What a blessing to carry the consciousness of what God is through this world!

In prayer I have not only to ask for things, but to realise the presence of Him to whom I speak. The power of prayer is gone, if I lose the sense of seeing Him by faith. Prayer is not only asking right things, but having the sense of the Person there. If I have not that, I lose the sense of His love and of being heard. We are brought into His "marvellous light," by which we are to test everything we do. Let us suffer for doing well. This is not easy unless Christ and the power of grace are dwelling in our hearts.

The word of God presents various relations—for instance, the bride of Christ, and brethren one with another. Affections and duties too belong to each relationship. Again, the Christian can be viewed as having to say to God while walking on the earth. Or the church may be collectively looked at as the fulness of Christ; we are thus members of His body; we are identified with Him in heavenly places (this position being revealed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven). In Colossians 1 the apostle speaks of his being minister of the church, “to fulfil the word of God.” The word of God was completed when the church was brought out. All the truth of God was then.revealed. It was looked at as needing nothing to be added. It had been given partially before; then all had come out.

There is the individual position of a child of God, wanting daily supplies from God, as His child. He loves His child, caresses His child, chastens His child; and then His patience and help are exercised over us. But we cannot lightly speak of His patience towards Christ’s body as such. In Ephesians we have both aspects of our position, the individual and the collective, as in the first and last parts of chapter i. Hence we may observe that Christ is not Priest to His body, for viewed as united to Him, it is perfea. Ephesians does not speak of this, for when priesthood is the subject, as in Hebrews, it is not the doctrine of the church which is brought out. We are regarded individually in respect of need and weakness. There is abundant sweetness in knowing that He takes cognisance of all our wants and failings. In Hebrews it is said, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest.” We are not said to be seated there, as in Ephesians we are seated in Christ in heavenly places. In 1 Peter 1 we are

said to be begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; it is the ground of our setting forth on this pilgrimage of which Peter speaks, “strangers and pilgrims.” We have to do with God and we have to do with the Father. God does not give up His claims as God because He is our Father, but deals with us as God in those things that relate to His claims as such. Christ walked in the perfectness of a man with God, and as a Son with the Father: through redemption He has brought us into the same position.

Never as priests have we to do with the Father. The near place we have as to God is priesthood: we are priests to God. Christ is not a Priest between us and the Father. We have an Advocate with the Father. In chapter 2:5 the holy priesthood alludes to Aaron; in verse 9 the royal priesthood refers to Melchizedec.

The high priest went into the holiest alone, the law “having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” There was an analogy, but rather contrast than exact similarity. The Lord Jesus, the great High Priest entered within the veil. But as to Israel, there is no priest to them until He comes out, as no priest witnessed to Israel of the acceptance of the sacrifice till Aaron came out on the day of atonement. So with Christ. He will come out to them: in the meantime, as a nation, they are maintained, kept, but must wait. For us it is different. He is gone in for believers. He Himself is not come out, but the Holy Ghost has already, and we know by virtue of this the sacrifice accepted. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more “is witnessed by the Holy Ghost; so “by whose stripes ye are healed.” All the saints of God know Christ gone in and the Holy Ghost come out.

In Hebrews 10:12 Christ is seen sitting in contrast to Stephen. He does not sit as it were till Israel has formally rejected the testimony, when the cry of Stephen reached His ear. He took His place, sitting down until His enemies are made His footstool, after their refusal to hear the Holy Ghost's testimony. Stephen being received by Christ in heaven, Israel as Israel must wait outside.

The consequence of Christ's priesthood is that He makes us priests. He has entered in once into the holy place. That relates to Himself, and He makes us children with the Father and priests to God. He has the pre-eminence of course. The moment the least thought of a priesthood comes in between us and God, the truth of Christianity is gone. There is only now the priesthood of all believers. We are priests by virtue of the competency to enter the holiest of all. There is as much liberty for us to enter into the holiest as Christ Himself. To deny the priesthood of all believers is to say that all saints cannot enter into the holiest by virtue of that blood. Israel could not go in because of that blood, and therefore they needed priests: but now the veil is rent and the way into the holiest is open. His death made all the difference as to our right to enter. It is the contrast of theirs.

In Hebrews 10:22 the allusion is to the priests who were washed with water and sprinkled with blood before they were anointed. Christ has made us all priests to God, and with that we have the title to offer praise, "spiritual sacrifices to God." We go directly to God. In another character, again, there is the same principle: "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you," John 16. Going to God through priests was Jewish, this is Christian.

We get into a happy condition of soul founded on the work Christ has done: exercises (not legal) of soul with God begin, as going within the veil. We are all priests: then whom are we to go for? We go together—we are a holy priesthood. In a certain sense, the priest if he sinned was to have an offering presented for him by another priest—Christ the Priest. The priest offered burnt-offering and the fat of the peace-offerings for a sweet savour, without thought of sin in these, but representing worship. Zacharias in Luke 1 was burning incense within, while the people were without. On the great day of atonement the priest, as a guilty person, confessed the sins of the people. Christ on the cross stood for His people, as their substitute or representative priest. After that, when the blood was carried in, the priestly office began.

There is no veil now: we go in, whether presenting worship, praise, etc. Christ is gone in for us. I have nothing to do to offer for myself; I have an abiding title to offer sacrifice. What sacrifice? Praise, thanksgiving. Why? The only sacrifice fit for my place. I can praise God for His own glory as well as for my own blessing; but I cannot be in the holiest and mourn. If I am hindered in going in through failure, I mourn, and there is the working of His Spirit to restore the communion, but there cannot be worship, which is offered in the Holy Ghost. There is no veil that ever hides God at all now. My feet may have to be washed before I can go in rightly; John 13. We are not fitted for worship if our feet are unclean. There is the power of the Holy Ghost needed for that, and then His work is to tell us we are unclean— not to set us worshipping when we are unclean, but to make us wash. Christ, the Advocate with

the Father, the High Priest over the house of God, washes the feet for the sanctuary. We have not ceased to be priests, but are unfitted for priestly work when we have failed; we are bathed, but we need the feet washed. There must be cleansing from all defilement, according to the purity of the place we are brought into. We can intercede for others. Not only are there burnt offerings, the food of God in the offering; there is another kind of offering for the saints, supposing failure in others. There is the spirit of intercession for one another, and not only offering sacrifices ourselves.

The blood has been put on the mercy-seat. We stand in its abiding (not renewed) efficacy. When we fail, it is not its renewed efficacy that we know. When did that blood lose its efficacy? Never. He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The application of the word, called the "washing of water," by the power of the Holy Ghost to judge us and to restore us and bring us back, is what we want. This is shewn, in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, in the "red heifer." The red heifer had been burnt long before; and they were to mix water with the ashes, so bringing the sacrifice to remembrance. The heart is brought back to remember what was done. The blood of Christ never can be repeated in its application.

Thus in verse 5 the holy priesthood is within the rent veil. The next thing (v. 9) is "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (Melchizedec). The nation of Israel will be a kingdom of priests compared with other nations. When Christ displays His Melchizedec priesthood, He comes forth as royal priest. He has it now, as we know by faith; but when He comes out He will be seen as Priest on His throne. The counsels of God for Christ in connection with the earth will be fulfilled. Christ will come out with

all the glory He has taken in heaven and all will be in communion with the display of His glory. He will reign as a king, and everything will be cut off that is contrary to His glory; Lev. 9. Meanwhile we have this to do; we are set to shew forth His praises who has brought us into His marvellous light. We do it together and as individuals. It will make us suffer now.

Moses and Aaron came out, the fire shewing acceptance. It will be perfectly fulfilled in the world to come. Our privilege is to go in as worshipping priests in the holy place, and coming out of it to shew forth His praises in the world. In all this we find the office of the great High Priest to meet us— "find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4), this "need" being the consciousness of our inability to do anything.

All enjoyed privileges make us humble, because they bring us into the presence of One so infinitely above us. Theoretical knowledge only puffs up. All the praise in our hearts before God should flow from the Spirit, and this will bring us into the consciousness of being in the sympathy of those there— God and Christ. Knowing God as my Father, and going to Him with the knowledge of His countenance smiling upon me are very different: the one may exist without the other. Conscious acquaintance with the thoughts of those who are there (God and Christ in the holiest) is our privilege.

Are You Brought To God?

1 Peter 3:10-18

The apostle leads us to expect suffering. There will be more or less of it; for though called to “inherit a blessing,” it is through suffering here. This passage shews out the result of God’s government, but, besides that, it shews that we are brought to God. This is the great central truth. Christ “once suffered for sins … that he might bring us to God.” There is little doctrine laid down in the epistles of Peter, but strong and vivid bringing out of fundamental truths. At the end of 2 Peter we have God’s government of all this present scene; and things that the world is trusting in are all to be consumed; for indeed “the world and all that is therein will be burned up.” There is not a single shelter here to be trusted to: all is going to be rolled up as a garment. Peter does not here dwell upon what was done for believers by Christ at His first coming, but on God’s government closing in the terrible judgment. Are we brought to God?

Verse 10. The moral government of God is not brought to an issue, and cannot be while grace is going on, but the principles of it exist. For example, a quiet, peaceful, upright man would be better off than a turbulent man, etc. “What a man sows that will he reap” even now. It is not that everything gets its just recompense now—quite the contrary; but there are certain consequences a man will suffer for his deeds. There cannot be in this world now the full final expression of God’s government, because sin has come in; and if He were to act in judgment, He would cut it all off; but as a general thing

the principle is true— “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous … but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil”; and behind and within it all there is something more. His own power and grace are at work in the gathering out of souls to form His church. In the millennium evil will not be allowed, the sinner will be cut off. There is a secret exercise of this principle now. “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.” There is the working of sin and evil; but, though the terror of the wicked is here, “be not afraid.” The only thing is to have the single eye and serve with a good conscience; but if you do, you will find plenty to oppose you. “Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled,” “sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary.” In spite of the blessedness of a peaceful walk, there may be the whole power of Satan brought out against you; but you have the whole power of God: therefore “be not afraid.”

There are two characters of suffering noticed.by the Lord in the sermon on the Mount, as here by Peter— suffering for righteousness’ sake, and suffering for Christ’s sake. The effect of being a Christian is to have a conscience exercised to know what is right for him as such: he walks in God’s presence, and therefore in the light; he has his will thwarted. Thus many things in the world, he finds, will not do for him as walking in the path of righteousness; the world will not have this scrupulousness; and therefore trial comes from them for the believer. His hopes and joys being elsewhere, his treasure and his heart are elsewhere. “Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness’ sake.” Then the Christian must expect to suffer for Christ. And “blessed are ye

when men shall revile you," etc., for my sake. When God becomes the object and motive, he takes suffering as a natural portion. Then it comes to be a question of testimony for God to those-who are not with God; that is a different thing from suffering for conscience' sake, or righteousness' sake.

In chapter 4:13, 14, it is Christ's sufferings, and Christ's glory. The same Spirit that makes me partaker of the suffering, makes me also partaker of the glory. I should be a witness of His power through the Holy Ghost, a witness for Christ, and not only keeping a good conscience. As a witness for Christ, in being a vessel of His testimony, you share the glory He is in.

Peter does not speak of the church's place. As in the church, we are all partakers alike of glory according to the gift of grace, we are all predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. But here it is as individuals, and the glory is put before them as the reward of suffering. An energy of love ever goes out if the Spirit of Christ is really there. I cannot see a person perishing, and not feel it. The spirit of love cannot look upon perishing sinners, and not care for them. This becomes an occasion of suffering.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." God must have His right place in our hearts in both these things; giving God in my heart His true character is sanctifying Him. In whose heart has God this perfect place of power and love? I do not mean in activity, that is according to gift, but in the heart. Where is the heart that keeps itself entirely for God, that is filled with God's love and holiness? All that is in the world, pleasure, vanity, etc., robs God of His glory in us. God is not then sanctified by

us, and this is the secret of our weakness. Could you say to-day—yesterday—that God has had His right place in your hearts? What is the consequence? It ought to be a bad conscience. Ought I to forget my forgetfulness? I shall find it out in weakness, if I do not find it in confession. Power for testifying for God is not there, if I have been talking idleness or vanity. If I turn to anything for God, as if my whole heart were in it, I am in danger; I do not sanctify the Lord in my heart. There may not be insincerity or hypocrisy in it, but the lack of the sanctifying the Lord; and when He has not the place in us' that makes us happy and that gives us power (for the joy of the Lord is strength), there is not the blessing flowing out to others. We want the practical power of the God that loves us, working in our hearts. What a thing this supposes! If I do not know God, I cannot sanctify Him. It is as being brought to Him I can sanctify Him. The thought of getting to God when I get to heaven, supposes that I have not come to Him now. All we have been speaking of flows out of giving God the place He really has. We are to sanctify the Lord because He is there, trusting in that love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Why is the conduct of one man different from another man's? One is without God, and the other has Him as a present spring of delight and strength, love, comfort—this is a total, immense, and infinite change. What a thing to be without God as regards the soul! Immortal beings without God! having faculty, intelligence, sagacity, but without God! Human affection is lovely in the creature, but it is not God. The objeas of affection may come in between the creature and God, even what He has created in us; for blessing may be an occasion of idolatry.

It is not responsibility here. My leaning on a friend is not responsibility, my being happy with a friend is not responsibility. If I drink when I am thirsty, it is not responsibility; but God is there, when I drink of the living water which Christ gives me. He makes these affections to flow out to Himself, necessarily and divinely. He is working upon me, communicating to me in the sovereignty of His grace: therefore it is not responsibility. If God then can communicate Himself in our hearts, what a well of water is springing up! I have got trouble, but what is that? I have got that, yea, Him, to give me joy in the trouble, which the trouble cannot touch. I have a spring within and a sanctuary around me. If there is such blessedness in God being sanctified and enjoyed by us, perhaps some of you say, I know nothing about it. I do not speak of enjoyment now; but where a man is a believer, it is not a question of whether he has the relationship of grace, but whether he has failed in it. If I am unfaithful in this love, and unhappy in the consciousness of having done so, it is because I really have it. The thing he has to enjoy is what is in God Himself, and that is His own love. If we believe what God communicates to the soul, by dwelling in us, “we know and believe the love that God hath to us.” A person may say well—I do not know, I cannot speak of the present, but I hope to get to God. The questioning how a man is to get it is very solemn and a sure sign that He is not there.

“That you may be able to give an answer to every man,” etc. It is not you suffering for sins; but if the will of God be so, it is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing; but do not suppose you are suffering for your sins: Christ has done that for you. If you suffer for

righteousness' sake, it is all well, but for sins—Christ has done it for you, having left you nothing to suffer for them.

How mighty this inward purpose of God! This one act brings a man to God. Christ suffered all His life long, but from whom? Man. But there at the end, the centre of all this, by the cross, we are brought to God Himself. God is in a man's heart or He is not. But the suffering for sins Christ bore was from God Himself. Here we get the purpose of God, not His government'; and notwithstanding such a death, all the wrath of God, all the power of Satan, all the consequences of sin brought to bear upon Christ on the cross (this was suffering for sin), He did it in respect of what man was, and in respect of what God was, and it was to bring them together. All that was in God was fully brought out. His love brought out suffering, wrath, etc. All that my heart must be rightly exercised about met there. I could not go to God without God knowing what my heart is; and (all the difference of good and evil being to Him) can He know the evil and be indifferent to it? Can He say it is no matter? Impossible! It would be unholiness in Him. Could He see all the levity, ill-humour, wilfulness, indifference in the presence of His cross and be indifferent? What is He to do with it? What is He to do with you? He must put sin away, and He must deal with it in the perfectness of His love and holiness. We have turned God into a Judge by our sins, and I find myself in the presence of the God whom I dreaded. He has put away the sin from my conscience, put His love in my heart, given me to delight in holiness. He who was just suffered for the unjust; and now, being brought to God, there is nothing in Him, with whom I have to do, but

what I have been made acquainted with (not His glory yet, of course). I am the sinner He has been engaged about. He has made Himself known to me by what He has done. I know God. What a home I have! Its spring is the love in God's heart, and it has brought me back to the source of that love. I am brought home to the enjoyment of His love, and am partaker of His nature.

After this I need not say that there are all the exercises of heart in consequence, conflict with evil, etc.; but I can testify to sinners "God so loved the world." How do you know this? it may be said. I have tasted it. Thus we are fellow-workers with God. We have the immense privilege, according to the sphere given us, of testifying of the love that has saved us. But if I have not this love in my heart, how can I testify of it to others? If I say to one who is weary, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," says Christ, you will turn to me and say, Have you got rest? A person may warn another, and be exercised himself; but he cannot testify to the truth of deliverance. Could you go and say, He has received me? I can say He has received me, and none viler. Now if you have not got God, you have your sins, your will, your responsibility—but not God. Why did Christ suffer for sins? It was because you were away from God. Now have you the consciousness of having been away from God, and are you, like the prodigal, brought back? If not, it is very solemn. You have loved vanity, you have loved your pleasures, you have loved yourself, and have not God; not wilfully opposing, perhaps, but in the ignorance of unbelief, you are without God—the God of love.

If you have not yet come to God by the cross, may He give you to see it, that you may walk in the spirit of

blessing, and sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, living a life of communion with God, and bringing forth the fruit of communion in ways according to it, till you come to the full enjoyment of eternal blessing in the Father’s house on high!

Grace And Government

2 Peter 1

We were seeing a little lately the place of the glorified Man in heaven, and of those associated with Him in living union, the heavenly position of the saints; but in Peter's Epistle that subject is not touched. Saints are looked at as saved ones, of course; but the subject is the difficulties that accompany their condition, with the hope of being in the glory.

Peter takes up the saints as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, God Himself being their governor, yet not displaying His government as among the Jews. Still He is watching over them and caring for them. "Every hair of their head is numbered." Nothing is allowed really to harm them, although they may have to suffer; and "if for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." Thus it is not only as saved ones that saints are looked at here, but as under God as their governor: His ways towards His children are brought out. Peter does just hint that there is something beyond, for those set in association with Christ; but the main thing is divine moral government. In the close of this Epistle we find the end of all things glanced at, when the heavens shall be dissolved and the elements melt with fervent heat," the whole scene closed, and the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness looked for.

But what the Apostle is occupied with is the thought of God governing His children in the midst of this world's system, a system of evil without a proof in it that He is the governor. When Jesus, came, the thought of many a heart was, that He would reign in righteousness,

knowing that God would not clear the guilty nor let the wicked go unpunished. Israel was set up as a present scene of God's government; but, instead of peace reigning, Christ was called to suffer.

The only righteous man, the alone One who could have met the claims of justice, was condemned by injustice on the one side and by righteousness on the other. Righteousness and peace had not kissed each other, but the contrary. It was doing well and suffering for it. And this aspect—the one in which Christ was seen on earth—is what we see Christians contemplated in here. They are looked at, in a double character, as suffering. It may be for righteousness' or conscience' sake, or for Christ's sake in other ways. Sufferings may come upon us through our ordinary occupations, the daily routine of business, or the actings of every-day life.

The Christian cannot do as the world does. It is more consequence to me as a believer to live Christ than all else besides. The Christian cannot resist evil, nor assert his rights, nor maintain his place in the world. It is more important to me to keep clothed in Christ's character than to wear any other mantle. The Lord Jesus does allow His saints to suffer. Their portion is in heaven. Suffering is good for them. Their salvation is perfectly accomplished. They are united to Christ. Is their suffering essential to salvation? No, salvation is Christ's work and outside the acts of the Holy Ghost altogether, who convicts of sin and bears witness of God's righteousness. The Holy Ghost afterwards operates on the new nature—the Christ within; and practically exhibiting Him will bring on suffering. "For me to live is Christ." Not only do I desire to be in the place where He is, as Zebedee's children did, but to live out what He is.

All the exercises of my heart, all my desire for God's government to be displayed in power, give way to the longings for the affections of Christ. And now He is in heaven, my one aim should be to manifest Him.

So we read in 1 Peter 2, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God," etc. It is not the spirit of love yet. Again in chapter 3:10-14 the great principle is brought out. In chapter 4:12-17 we are not to think it strange if we have reproach and sufferings for Christ's sake, but to be glad with exceeding joy. Of course, none of us should suffer as evil doers. God will govern His children. Judgment must begin at the house of God. He will have His house clear. Indeed, strictly speaking, it is the only place God judges in; for He has committed all judgment to the Son. If the righteous are scarcely—that is, with difficulty—saved (it was with difficulty, but Christ overcame it), God never gives up what He is. He is the holy Father, and, when He saves sinners in sovereign grace, He makes them what He is. He will maintain His character. I may deserve chastisement and God may meet me in grace; but He will deliver me from my sin. He cannot allow evil, neither could Christ. He ever dealt with men according to their ways and the truth of their condition, while meeting them constantly in grace. It is true He could say, I am your perfect salvation, but it was on the ground of total ruin as the sinner's part.

The heart of God would give us everything: and the title to all is—we are in Christ, and He in us. You cannot say you have done a single thing perfectly, if there remains any part to be done. Salvation is fully wrought. It would be imperfect if there was one thing to be added. Christ keeps nothing back. He came to reveal the Father, and

the Father He did reveal. “I have declared unto them thy name.” “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” “I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Language is exhausted in trying to maintain us in the place we are called to. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the risen Christ. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We are sharers with Him in all His honour and glory, save that which is peculiar to His Godhead, while He always has the pre-eminence. God truly loves us. Not a sinner is saved, but therein the ways and dealings of God are displayed.

In John 15 the Christian is taken up as a branch in the vine. The word is, “Abide in me.” It is not, I abide in you that you may bring forth fruit; but “If ye abide in me.” He does always abide in us—that we know. But if I abide in Christ, I have the present enjoyment of the Father’s love, and bring forth fruit to the glory of His name. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He does not say He will be our friend—this He ever was; but “Ye are my friends.” Now, my dealing with my friend is after an order entirely different from what it is with my servant. I go and tell out my heart to my friend. Abraham was called “the friend of God”; and God says, “Shall I keep back from Abraham the thing I am going to do? “He tells and acts out His heart before His friend. This was what Christ did. In everything His end was to tell out the Father to those He called friends.

All Christians have their sins forgiven them. There is no uncertainty about that. The grace of God has brought salvation. The Father sent the Son. To be saved and to be a Christian is the same thing. Some will say, I know all men are called Christians; but am I a real Christian?

See Acts 13:38, 39. Exercises of heart in that state never get beyond the desire to know if I am a Christian. I believe, one says, that God sent His Son to save sinners; but I do not know that I am saved. What nonsense it is! “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” Now all such exercises of heart, though they may be well enough in their way, will only prove just this—that I have nothing whatever to stand upon. If I have conflict, it shews there is evil, and evil cannot stand before the holiness of God.

Where, then, is my hope? “Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” There is nothing God does not do for me. The very thing that brings me into His presence without sin and without fear is that which He has done for me in Christ. In 1 John 2 we have three classes of Christians addressed. The “little children “of verses 12, 13, are quite distinct. The former (v. 12) embraces all Christians —the latter only babes, or young, immature saints. All Christians are forgiven—all needed the blood of Christ. The babes rest on it as much as the fathers. It is not what they think of it that is the comfort, but what God’s thoughts are about it. It is through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son I get to the Father. And what is the Father? —what is God? He is perfect love. I see Him at the well of Samaria—taking up children—weeping at the grave of Lazarus. In Him there is no evil—no hatred; never rejecting one who comes—never condemning the self-condemned—“I judge no man.” The Father was perfectly displayed in the Son. How can I make known to you what my Father is but by telling you what I have known Him to be—by living Him before you? This was

what Christ ever did; and it is what we who have the Spirit of adoption should be doing.

In John 8:19 we hear Christ say, “If ye had known me, ye should have known the Father also.” He came not only to bring light, but “the light of life.” If He heals the sick, or restores sight to the blind, the moment He touches them, there is light and life shewn in grace. If He is the Good Shepherd, He is the first out. He goes before the sheep; John 10:4. He not only shews us God as the light, but He unfolds the Father. The babes in Christ have these two things—the new nature and the Spirit of adoption. So have the young men, and it is only in the energy of this Spirit they can overcome the world. When the fathers are addressed, it is “because ye have known him, who is from the beginning,” and that is all he has got to say. It is not their experience he has to speak of, but Christ: He is the object, and He is the title to all blessing. If my failures grieve me (and they ought), my comfort is that Christ is not changed.

Even a revelation does not fit us for conflict. This we see in Peter. When he had a revelation from the Father of the very truth or confession on which Christ was about to build His church, in the self-same chapter he is treated as Satan! The flesh in Peter was not broken. The object before him was not Christ; he was not practically occupied with Him. If I come to Christ, I rest upon the love and power of One who has overcome. He has been tempted and knows how to comfort. I may have to suffer —He had. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. Our ways, too, may cause God to deal with us now (i Peter i:17), for holiness the holy God must have. But if we are walking with the Lord, He will only bless. Suffering for Christ’s sake, is a position of

honour and favour; Phil. 1:29. God cannot ever brook evil in His house. The ark and Dagon cannot dwell together. God will vindicate Himself. If there is an Achan in the camp, it must be known. No matter how bad things are around. God is still God. Compare the days of Solomon with those of Elijah. Was Solomon more to God than Elijah? No. The ark was once in the land of the Philistines, but God will not give up what He is, neither will He give up the objects of His love. If we do evil, His grace may meet us; but His love must deliver us from evil. If we are walking with Him, either as an assembly or as individuals, He will only communicate His love. The Father will discipline His children; if needs be, He will chasten them; but come what will, Christ is not changed.

In the chapter before us, the first thing we see is that those who have obtained like precious faith have all things that pertain to life and godliness, and are called to glory and virtue. It is too often the case, that the conflict takes place when Christ has not power in the soul; then we are overcome, for all power is in Him. Therefore, the need of giving all diligence; “add to your faith,” etc. Whilst we are practically exercising these graces, we shall never fall. There will be no room for the flesh, but “there shall be ministered unto you an abundant entrance.” We shall have the kingdom of our Lord in power in our souls. The third thing we have in this chapter, is that Peter had seen the glory and could say he was an eye-witness of His majesty. But did this save him in the hour of temptation? No. He had been sleeping instead of watching, and so lost all power of escape.

In verse 19 we find a sure word of prophecy, a lamp shining in a dark place until daylight dawn. Mark this. The lamp of prophecy shews the children what is coming on the world, the judgment of the quick, etc. And surely in this our day we see these two things (though so contrary the one to the other), men's heart failing them for fear, and yet saying peace and safety. This is an important testimony, to which we do well to take heed. The loving Father has told us of a coming kingdom. Then will shine the broad day, which the world shall see; but the dawn is for those who, through the darkness of the night, are watching. The day-star here is for the saint's heart, not for the earth.

In Revelation 2:26, not only is there a promise to the saint of power over the nations, but "I will give him the morning star." Blessed portion with Christ! Yes, those who have believed on Him who is not seen shall be with Him where He is not seen. I will give him the morning star—a portion with Myself, and in Myself. I will give him Myself above, before I am manifested to the world. So in Revelation 22:16, Christ is the bride's object; and the moment He says, I am the bright and morning star, she, directed by the Spirit, says, Come. "And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The bride is not the water of life, but she has it, and can invite others. It is in Christ for the poorest sinner.

Partaker Of The Divine Nature

2 Peter 1:4

Far from bringing into Godhead, which is incommunicable as supreme, because we are creatures, I do not even accept a common expression from Romanists and others—union with God. But the moral elements of what He is God can communicate in giving us life in Christ. Nature is properly what makes any creature what it is, as “angel,” “man,” “cow,” or anything else. 2 Peter 1:4 is not the simplest and clearest passage to explain the point, because it is properly moral, that is, specially what characterises the Christian as such. The reason I think so is, that it speaks of great and precious promises, which to me mean what John 3 calls “born of water,” and “ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Still it is not separable from the other point, life-giving. But it speaks of promises, and escaping corruptions which are in the world.

This truth of being born again, even Romanists, and also Arminians, and most evangelicals admit and confine themselves to, that is, an action of the Holy Ghost by the word by which man is morally purified. Nay, Wesleyans would say that it may be regained; and even those who do not go so far still hold it as only a purifying of what is. The Wesleyans say that man had body, soul, and spirit before the fall, and after the fall body, soul, and spirit corrupted; that, when one is born again, the corruption is removed; and hence that one may be quite perfect as man, if the corruption be wholly removed. But, without touching on perfection now, this is, to say the least, a

most defective view of the matter. The Lord is a life-giving Spirit; and, operating by the Holy Ghost, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”—not the Spirit, who is God; but one is by His divine power quickened, just as that which is born of the flesh is flesh. I receive spiritually life from Christ, as I receive naturally life from Adam. In this sense Christ is my life. He is eternal life (1 John 1), and “he that hath the Son of God hath life.” It is not I as of the flesh, but Christ lives in me.

Hence, viewed abstractedly as thus born (for so John views things), it is said he cannot sin, because he is born of God. And this life we have in the power of Christ’s resurrection; and it is acted in by the Holy Ghost given to us because of Christ’s work. So after His resurrection, as God breathed into Adam so Christ breathed into His disciples. Through this it is said, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” A great accessory truth that comes in connected with this is, that, Christ having died, I am counted (Col. 3) of God dead as to the flesh, and am to count myself so (Rom. 6), and to realise it (2 Cor. 4), so that only the life of Christ should’ be manifested. This is the point to which my soul clings on the subject, the real communication of life in receiving Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost acting in it in power, created again in Christ Jesus, though the flesh still be there. But I am not in flesh but in Spirit, and am privileged and bound to hold it dead. Of course, this does practically cleanse by and according to the word. One may not be able to explain it physiologically, but it is quite plain in Scripture; and in Spirit the saint will live eternally with God. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit”—partakes of the nature of that of which it is born. It is

holy, loves, and, as in Christ as a man, obeys. In a word it is the reproduction as to its nature of Christ's life. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; the Spirit is life because of righteousness." It is as new a thing as a graft in a wild tree.

As regards using Old Testament facts as figures or types, our imagination is to be held in check, nor can we ever insist on such as doctrine. But there is a passage which may assist the mind on this point, 1 Corinthians 10:11, where the word "ensamples" is types or figures. This gives the principle. Then we must only look to the Holy Ghost and divine guidance to use them soberly and aright.

The shade of different meaning in koinonia and metekos is, I believe, just; but it is a question of adequate observation of its New Testament use in Greek, and any adequate proof would make one abandon it. Koinonoi is really partners in Luke 5, then, metekoi the fact of taking part; but I have no anxiety to insist on this.12 Nature is moral in 2 Peter 1:4, from the force of what is said in the passage. In divine things this is everything, as holiness, love, etc.; but the point to be insisted on is, that there is more than mere moral effect, though there be this— that Christ is for us a life-giving Spirit; as born of flesh involves a like nature.

I do not know whether the question has been met as you wish, for there is no effort to anticipate and answer the objections easily made by unbelief. But I think, if you take the passages, the life-giving [quickening], and Christ being our life will be very plain; and that is what to my mind is so important, though we never know what it really means till we know it as deliverance in power,

the flesh being held as dead, according to Romans 8:2, 3, having passed out of the state described in chapter 7 according to the doctrine of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7.

12 See notes on 1 Corinthians 1:9, in Volume 26, page 203, re “fellowship of his Son.”

Notes On The First Epistle Of John

Chapter 1.

The great leading truth of all this Epistle is what is expressed in verse i, that eternal life has come down—a real positive life. The eternal life that was with the Father actually entered this world in the Person of Christ. The old thing—what the first Adam was—is entirely rejected. It is true, we have both in us as long as we are in the body. But there is the second Man, the Lord from heaven, who has come in, because the first man was turned out. In blessed grace He comes down. And we have seen it, he says, and heard it—the Word of life—that is, in Christ. He was walking about this world, another kind of life altogether. That is what he calls "from the beginning." It was an entirely new thing manifested here below. Wherever there is the fulness of grace brought in, that is, our privileges and relationships, we get the Father and the Son. Of course it is God, but God brought out in these relationships; verses 1-4.

The first thing we have here, in virtue of the life God has given to us, is the fulness of the privileges of the saints in Christ. They have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. But in the next place he brings a second point out, and it is this: If you say you have that kind of fellowship, and walk in darkness, it is all false, because darkness cannot have fellowship with light. If you have perfect grace bringing in divine life—the life that was manifested in the Person of Christ, and then communicated to us, he next says, It is fight. God does not change the holiness of His nature; and therefore the

pretence to have fellowship with it, if we are walking in darkness, is all false.

Connected with this he presents the remedy as regards our state; that is, that Christ cleanses us and makes us fit for the light. And the second thing which comes out in the next chapter is, that when, in our weakness, we have fallen into sin, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Grace has provided for the evil, though there can be no communion with God in it.

First, we have the fulness of the blessing, eternal life in Christ; next its nature and character—God’s light and purity; and then the means by which it is possible that such sinners as we can have all this blessing—first, by the cleansing, and then by the advocacy of Christ.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life.” Christ is looked at in this world as the beginning of everything. It is not that the saints before had not received life from Him above, but the thing itself had never been manifested.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,” etc. It was in a man bodily. It comes by the power of the word now, but they had seen this eternal life in the Person of a Man walking about in this world. Just as we can see natural life in Adam, so we see divine life in Christ. If we look at the life in us, it is united with failure; but I can see and know what the perfectness of the life is by looking at Christ. “For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” There we see and

know it; and our spirituality depends upon the degree in which we realise it. They had seen it as come in flesh, and it is declared unto us; that we may have fellowship with them—and their fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is not merely a person justified before God by the work of Christ, but it is fellowship with God in virtue of a life which was in Him before God —a life perfectly conformed to all that God is.

Looking at the new nature given to us in its holiness, and its love, it is the same thing as that which is in God. He gives me this life that there may be power. He cannot reveal things to me, but it can give me fellowship with God. It is not merely that I am justified before Him, but I have the same thoughts and feelings: He has them in Himself, and, we having them from Him, they are the same. There is fellowship. There are common thoughts and joys and feelings with the Father and the Son, and these we know and have. He has given us the Spirit that there may be power, if the Holy Ghost works in us. All that was perfect in a man's feelings, according to the divine nature, Christ has had. If my soul delights in Christ, and sees the blessedness of what is in Him, do not I know that my Father delights in Him too? He delights in holiness and love, and so do we: this is fellowship. You get fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is the blessedness that I have got. It is not merely the fact that I am accepted, who was once a sinner, but that, Christ having become my life, I get the blessedness of fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The Father loved the Son—the Son loved the Father —and I get their divine affections and have fellowship with them. This is where He brings us; it is perfect blessedness.

Nor is this merely true in heaven. He served His Father upon earth, giving up His will in everything. The life was manifested to us here, not in heaven. Of course, the full blessedness of it will be known in heaven and therefore he says, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is nothing beyond that in heaven itself. Therefore it is, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” That is the blessing He puts us in.

Now he brings in the test, that there may be no self-deception. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” If He manifested this eternal life, He manifested God too. “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” With the thought of this life, He brings in that which tests everything in us too; this is the other side of it. It runs all through this Epistle. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Here it is said, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” The light is the purest thing, and it manifests all else. This was what Christ was— perfect purity, and as such He manifests everything. “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” It is impossible in the nature of things. If there is not the purity of this divine nature that is light in us, there is no fellowship with God. If we say that there is, we lie, and do not the truth. There is no limit short of God Himself. The thing that is revealed is God. You cannot give man light, nor find the light for yourselves. It was in Himself. Now God has been manifest in the flesh, and therefore you have to “walk in the light as he is in the light.” And if we do, “we

have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We have in verse 7 the three parts of our Christian condition, looked at as men walking down here. First, we walk in the light as God is in the light, everything judged according to Him with whom we have fellowship. Next, what the world does not know anything of, "we have fellowship one with another." That is, I have the same divine nature with every Christian—the same Holy Ghost dwells in me; so that there must be fellowship. I meet a perfect stranger travelling, and there may be more communion with him than with one whom I have known all my life, just because the divine life is there. It is a natural thing to the new creature: there is fellowship. But, besides these, I am cleansed— "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." We are in the light as God is in the light; we have fellowship together; and we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then he enters a little more into the practical condition of our own conscience "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." That is where truth in the inward part comes out. The new nature in us judges all the sin that is in us. He does not deny that we have learnt the truth; but if Christ is the truth in me, it must judge all that is of the old man as sin. If a person has only learnt the truth outwardly, he may gloss over all the rest. But if the truth is in us, everything comes out. If I say, I have no sin, looked at as in the flesh, I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me. Yet it is not merely saying that there is sin in me that is the thing. It is when really the heart and conscience are touched, so that I own I personally followed the flesh. It

is not a doctrine then. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” His bearing towards us is gracious and forgiving, and He cleanses us completely.

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” If we pretend not to have sinned, we make Him a liar: it is not merely that the truth is not in us, but I am making God Himself untrue in His word. To say that I have no sin is to deceive myself; but to say I have not sinned is to deny God’s truth even outwardly, because He says all have sinned. I am denying really the whole truth of God.

But these are the two things that are called for; first, to know that the truth is in us; and then to confess our sins. A man may be dreadfully proud, and not like to confess it; but when a person has, through divine grace, got the upper hand, he hates himself instead of excusing his sin, he confesses it, he has got right with God, and God says, I will forgive you; it is all done with. We stand before God in the sense of His favour. But, besides that, we stand before God with the consciousness of being perfectly clear in His sight. If I get into the light, with any dirt upon me, I see it there; if I am in the dark, I see no difference. If we are in the light before God, all is seen. But if I am cleansed and in the light; I only see the more that there is not a spot in me. The two opening verses of chapter 2 are the means of maintaining us in the light.

Chapter 1 takes up these two things: first, the fulness of the blessing in fellowship with the Father and Son; and, secondly, the nature of the fellowship, and then how a sinner can have it—the individual state of soul as

judging and confessing sins, and truth in the inward parts. I cannot say I have no sin and yet I say I am clean before God. There is where people mistake. They want a divine nature, which, instead of pretending to works, judges every thing according to the light. Wherever there is sin on the conscience there cannot be communion, though there is a blessed means of grace that does cleanse. “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” In chapter 2:1, 2, we have the remedy for daily defilement. There it is Christ, not to maintain righteousness, but to restore communion.

Chapter 2.

The two first verses connect themselves as a kind of supplement to the preceding chapter. He had put before them this privilege of fellowship with the Father and the Son, which must be in the light; and there was this perfect remedy, the blood of Christ, which presents us clean in the light. Now he says, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” The object of all this was that they should not sin. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It is not exactly the same thing as in Hebrews, where we find a priest with God, because there the question is of the possibility of our coming to God. There it is making good the truth that we can go to God, and it has that character throughout. But all through the Gospel and Epistle of John he speaks of more than merely going to God as a public worshipper. Here we are much more intimate with Him. It is a different thing that I can go and worship before God and approach Him, or that I am in intimate fellowship with Him. We get into relationship with Him. Whenever he speaks of grace, he speaks of

the Father and Son, and when of light he speaks of God. In John 8, where they are all convicted of sin, it is God. “Before Abraham was, I am.” When he gets to grace, He speaks of being a good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep, and whose voice the sheep know. He says there is as much intimacy between you and Me as between Me and My Father. There is the perfect revelation of love in an intimate relationship like that.

Advocacy here is connected with the Father. Where communion is interrupted, it is restored: we do not cease to be sons and to be accepted. It is not a question here of whether as a sinner I can come to God or not, but of the loss of this intimacy which the least idle word destroys. And this makes it still further plain that accepted persons are spoken of here. It is not a question now of God’s accepting. Not even priesthood has to do with that, still less advocacy with the Father. It supposes that we are nalighty children, and that the freedom of this intimacy is destroyed, and Christ takes the place of Advocate to restore it. Grace works, but there is never any mitigation of sin in itself; it is no allowance of evil.

The ground is thus laid in this remarkable manner. There are two things to consider; our standing in the presence of God, and, on the other hand, the evil which is inconsistent with it. Christ has met both. “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” This never changes. The place which we have with God abides there, because Christ, the righteous One, is there. The perfectly accepted Person is in the presence of God, and God is honoured about the failure. “And he is the propitiation for our sins.” So that the advocacy of Christ with the Father is founded upon this acceptance, first of His Person, and then of His work for us. We are

accepted in the Beloved, and this never changes, because the righteous One always appears in the presence of God for us. And yet the Lord does not allow anything contrary to Himself. Sin is not passed over. “We have an advocate.” And yet if He is the Advocate for these persons who have failed, it is because He is the propitiation for their sins. There is perfect acceptance. Having met all requirements about sin on the cross, we are put in the presence of God in the acceptance of Christ Himself.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” This blood-shedding is put upon the mercy-seat, in virtue of which we can go and preach the gospel to every creature. It does not mean that all are reconciled, but that the testimony of God’s mercy went out not to Jews only, but to every creature in the world. Through this blood we can stand in His presence; but there failure comes to be the question for the conscience of the saint, and then the advocacy of Christ applies.

But now he takes up another subject—the practical tests before men that we have got this life. In the main we may say that love to the brethren, and righteousness or obedience, are the grand tests. This eternal life we have seen in contrast with sin, sustained by the grace of Christ. Now we come to the same life shewn in its fruits down here; and they were calling in question whether they had this life or not. Therefore he gives, in order to keep them in the consciousness and certainty that they had that life, these traits of it, which some of those of high profession had not. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

I would just observe here that throughout this Epistle you will find God and Christ so entirely united in the thought of the apostle, that he speaks of one and then of the other in relation to the same thing Look at the last chapter: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” God is revealed to us in Christ. It may seem confusion, but it brings out the glory of the Person of Christ. So here (v. 28), “And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” He begins with Christ’s appearing, and the same sentence ends with God Himself. So here, with regard to God’s commandments. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” They are Christ’s commandments, and yet they are God’s too.

Next, we are told that “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” A man says he knows God and does not keep His commandments—the truth is not in him, because this life is an obedient life, and if Christ is our life, the principles of Christ’s life are the same in us. If the principle of obedience is not there, life is not there. But this is not all. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him.” This gives a great deal more than the mere fact that he is a liar, if he says he knows God and does not keep His commandments.

Another thing to be remarked is this, that all John's statements are absolute. He never modifies them by bringing in the difficulties or hindrances that we may have in the body. "He that is born of God," he says in chapter 3, "does not commit sin." He is speaking there according to the very essence of the nature. The divine nature cannot sin. It is not a question of progress or degree, but "he cannot sin because he is born of God." "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not," chap. 5. The wicked one touches the Christian often; but he never can touch the divine life: and John always states it in its own proper absoluteness, according to the truth itself. There are plenty of other scriptures that shew our inconsistency. But if the flesh acts, it is not this new life, but you get the measure of it in itself. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected," etc. That is absolute. If I am only saying an idle word, it is not keeping His word.

This is an immensely blessed truth. Because if I was under law and took His word in that way, I should have nothing to do with life. It tells me to love God, and in that I fail. But here the revelation I have of God in Christ is perfect love. The love of God is manifested, and if His word dwells in our hearts, His word is love and His love is perfected in us. "If a man keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." In him—not only towards him. If the word is kept, that word is the power of Christ in us, and that is the perfect love of God enjoyed in the heart. We may fail in keeping it, but the Apostle does not give these kinds of modifications, but the truth in itself; and it is thoroughly true, and experienced in the measure that the word of God is kept

in the heart. The Holy Ghost is the power, but we cannot separate this from the word. He is in us, and we have got that love in our souls—God's love as manifested in Christ. Supposing I am disobedient, I get sin in my heart instead of Christ.

"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him." Now he says we are in Him. We dwell in God. If I say I am in Him, I have got this strength and shelter in Him. Now you must walk as He walked. Christ is my life. Then I must walk like Christ. It is not be as He was; but we are not to walk according to the flesh. Therefore he does not say, You ought to be what Christ was; but "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." If you say you abide in Him, you are there always: you should always walk as He walked. There is never any reason for walking after the flesh. The flesh is in us, but that is no reason why we should walk after it. I am always at liberty to walk spiritually. There is liberty before God as to the walk. If I have got a fleshly nature, a commandment comes contrary to the will of that nature. I want to go into town, and I am ordered off into the country. I do not like it. But supposing I was longing to go into town, and my father says, You must go into town; why then to do the commandment is liberty. So now all the commandments of Christ are according to the nature that I have got already. Christ is my life, and all Christ's words are the expression of that life. And therefore when Christ's words are given to me, they only give me the authority to do what my nature likes to do. All the words of Christ are the expression of what He was. They told out His nature and life and being; and, when we have that

nature, they guide and direct us. Therefore it is real and holy liberty. We ought to walk even as He walked.

“Brethren I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning”; that is, from the beginning of Christ—His manifestation down here.

“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you,” etc. Because they were looking for something new. One thing, he says, I boast of is that it is old, because it is what Christ was when upon the earth. But if you will have something new, it is Christ as pour life by the Holy Ghost now. It is “true in him and in you,” because the darkness is passing and the light now shines. It was true in Him when here below, but now all this truth of the divine nature is as true of you as of Christ. Therefore it is new enough. It is old, because it was in Christ Himself; but it is new, because it is in you, as well as in Christ Himself.

So far we have had the first great principle of the divine life—obedience—walking in righteousness. Now comes the other side: loving the brethren. You are in the light, for God is light. Well then, God is love, and you cannot have one part of God without the other. If you have the light, you must have the love. Christ, when He was here, was the light of the world; but He was love too, and therefore if you have Him as your nature, you will have both. “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” In its very nature and way there is no occasion of stumbling. “But he that hateth his

brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." This is true really in detail; because, if I am walking in hatred to my brethren, I am walking in darkness. But the apostle only gives the principle here. Love is an old thing, because it was in Christ on earth; but it is a new thing, because it is true in Him and in you. "He 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."

We get there what I may call the characteristic tests of Christ our life. One is light—obedience—for no righteousness can be, unless it is obedient. Christ says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Therefore we get this principle of obedient dependence which is righteousness. The other is love. Here then we have, first, as a supplement to the previous chapter, the advocacy of Christ; and then, in the other parts of the Epistle, the tests of this divine life as manifest in obedience and love to the brethren. In the life of Christ Himself all was most wonderfully, perfectly, and blessedly brought out.

This comes in now as breaking in upon the general course of the Epistle, and giving an account of why he wrote, and what he felt in writing. And first we find him speaking to all Christians, whom he calls "My children," and then addressing different classes of Christians, and telling why he wrote to them. It is his heart opening itself out to those to whom he was writing; and then we get some important practical truths.

In verse 12 the word “children” is the same as in verses 1, 28, but different from the “little children “in verses 13, 18. In the former he is speaking of all Christians, and calls them his “children”; whereas, in the other verses, he distinguishes between the young men, fathers, and the little children [babes] (paidia) or the youngest Christians. But in verses 1, 12, 28, the word teknia includes all saints.

“I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake, verse 12.” That is true of all Christians. It is their universal condition. He had said before, “Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” This was not to throw any doubt upon Christians being forgiven, but to stablish them in the truth, inasmuch as he says, “I write unto you children, because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.” This was a settled thing; they were all forgiven, and he wrote unto them because they were forgiven. A person that is not forgiven, the Epistle does not apply to. He takes that ground in writing to them. He says, “I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.” Such was the common condition of all Christians.

But now, when he comes to the different classes of Christians, there is a different character and position given to each of them. “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.” Amongst the children of verse 12 there may be old Christians and babes. The fathers had known “him that is from the beginning.” We have seen before, this means Christ in the world, His Person manifested in flesh. “Ye have known him that is from the beginning.” That is where all experience ends; not in a knowledge of self

merely as being occupied with it, but in such a knowledge as empties us of self, and gives us Christ. When a person is a young Christian, he is occupied with his feelings; it is all fresh and new to him, and it is right enough. He feels such wonderful joy in being forgiven. But, as you grow up, you get more and more emptied of self and occupied with Christ. Christ is this, and Christ that. In verse 14 he only repeats the same thing when writing to the fathers. He has a great deal to add when he writes to the young men, but to the fathers, it is still, "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." We learn our own foolishness and weakness, and so are cast upon Christ, and learn more of the depths of His grace, the perfectness of His Person. All right experience ends in forgetting self and thinking of Christ.

Next, he comes to the young men: "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Having Christ with them, they have got strength in conflict and in service—they have overcome Satan.

Then he says, "I write unto you babes, because ye have known the Father." Here again, we get another remarkable fact as to what he thought about Christians. That is, the babes in Christ—they that were but little children—had the Spirit of adoption. He has no idea of the weakest Christian not knowing that he was a child of God. To know Christ well, in the riches and excellence of His Person, is to be a father in Christ. But the youngest Christian knows that he is a child, and that the Father is his Father. It is like all Christians being forgiven—it is his place as a Christian. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." It is not that you will not find persons doubting. You will find many a

person who, if you ask him whether he is a child of God or not, will think it very humble to doubt about it, but who, in his prayers, cries, “Abba Father,” with all his heart. It is between him and God. Repeating it over again, he has nothing to add to what he has said to the fathers, because all ends in Christ.

With the young men he goes more into detail because of the difficulties of the way, and he brings out the secret of strength for them—the word of God, in the midst of this world, where nothing is owned of God—God’s mind comes into this world, and that is what we want. There is no way in the desert, as it is said in the Old Testament. The word of God shows God’s way in the midst of a world where there is none. Therefore, when they are in the conflict, he says, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” That is the word by which Christ Himself overcame when the wicked one came and offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, He answered by the word —He overcame the wicked one.

Then he warns them: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” These things belong to it. All the glory of this world is not of the Father at all. And the more we look into John, and indeed all through the New Testament scripture, we may see these two great systems brought out plainly. He does not say you do not love Christ. But there is one great system that belongs to the Father, and another that belongs to the world. Every thing belongs to God as

a Creator; but morally all is departed from Him. It was the devil that made this world, looked at as a moral world. God made paradise; and man sinned and got out of it, and then made up this world. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and builded a city, and called it after the name of his son. Then God sent His Son, and they would not have Him, and thus it was a judged world. God has put it fully to the test—without law, under law, and then by His Son; and then He says, It is all judged. But then He has a way of His own, the Father has, and you cannot have both. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. You may be tempted by it, and have to overcome it; but if you love it, the love of the Father is not in you; because He has got a system of His own, and you are going to the other system. It is so all through. In the Gospel we get divine life in the Person of Christ, and in the Epistle this divine life in the persons of Christians. In John 8 you will see the same truth. “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” There is no middle path with God. If they are of this world, they are from beneath; and if they are not of this world, they are from above. He says, I am not of this world; I am from above: because He came from the Father. You are of the world, and therefore from beneath, because it is Satan’s world. So here—if the love of the world is in you, the love of the Father cannot be. There is another divine system, where the love of the Father is displayed, and if you belong to that, you have to covercome the world. It is not of the Father; it does not belong to that system.

Then he adds this: “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Satan’s works cannot last. They are seductive

while they are there, but they cannot last: “but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” We have the same thing in Peter’s Epistle, “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” So here. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”— he that follows that word. The word of God brings all this into us, and that is what we have to follow.

Now he turns to the third class, having given this warning to the young men. For when a Christian is first converted, he would not thank you for the world. But when he has got on a little, the freshness fades; the world gradually eats out his freshness. If he is not careful, if his soul is not full of the things that are not seen, he gradually slips into the world. If he is full of Christ, he does not even see the things around. In chapter 5 John speaks of overcoming the world. There is the loss of all power and spiritual enjoyment, if the spirit of the world comes in: you cannot think of the things which the world suggests and the things of the Father at the same time. If the Holy Ghost is suggesting divine things to me, I have the present consciousness of belonging to all these things.

He turns, in verse 18, to the little children, and he tells them, “It is the last time.” That is a remarkable expression, because eighteen hundred years have gone on since then, and it remains equally true that it is the last time; only the Lord, in His patience, is waiting, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But it is the last time, because the power of evil has come in. When Christ was here, and was rejected, the power of evil was in the world. Then,

when God raised up the church by the presence of the Holy Ghost, while Christ was on high, so that a man was in heaven, and the Holy Ghost in the world; there came power of redemption into the middle of Satan's world. That was not the last time. But now antichrists had come in, and he says, "this is the last time," because even this had failed, and nothing will come after this but judgment. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would not doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

These babes in Christ had broken with the world; they had done with its course. But here was a new kind of evil in the very place of divine power; persons setting up themselves, and abandoning Christ, and this was more dangerous. They had broken with the world, and knew what it was. But here comes in spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. He warns the babes against these enemies of the last times. Thank God, we have the warnings now. The apostle Paul even says, these are the last days, which is stronger still. But there is entire security where Christ is looked to. It is remarkable how he looks at the presence of the Spirit of God in the saints. He may be a babe; but God will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able to bear. There may be the young men, but God gives them discernment; they know not the voice of strangers. These people may come to them with ever so much pretension, but it is not a voice they know. They know the voice of Christ, and they follow Him.

We saw that the babes in Christ knew the Father, and now we find further that these very babes have the divine unction, so that they will be able to judge through divine knowledge. He is pressing upon them their own competence, not as others, in themselves, but as talight of God, to avoid all snares. It is the subtlety of Satan, and therefore he warns the little ones more against it. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” Here he gives us the full character of the antichrist. There were many antichrists, because the spirit of it had come in. Here it is the full character of it. It takes a certain Jewish character, denying Jesus to be the Christ; and it is opposed to Christianity, denying the Father and the Son.

Then he presses another point of immense importance, because people in these days use a great many fashionable words, such as development.

“Let that, therefore,” the apostle says, “abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” It is the Person of Christ. Instead of talking about the church as a body that teaches, I say it is talight.

The thing that is revealed is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that which was from the beginning. But if my soul is resting upon that, the truth about Christ as talight by the Holy Ghost, I am talight of the Father.” That which was from the beginning, which we have

heard, which we have seen with our eyes … of the word of life." And now he says, "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning." It is the Person of Christ that is the great thing, and it was by the revelation of Him that the church itself was formed. It exists in virtue of being talight of God.

The church does not teach—had nothing to do with teaching at all. God may raise up individuals in the church to teach, but the thing pressed upon us is that which we have heard from the beginning. It is a test of divine truth that we hold fast the starting-point—Jesus Christ. This is what tests everything. Where people insist upon the authority of the church, they never have the certainty of being children. If I am talight of God, I shall know what I have got for certain. Faith is always absolutely certain. If I have got the Father, I know that I am a child. I may be a nalighty child, but still I am a child. "If that which ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." He has promised me eternal life, and I shall have it; it is a perfectly settled thing.

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath talight you, ye shall abide in him." There is real divine teaching. God may use an instrument to put it before us; but there is no real faith in the soul except where there is this unction of the Spirit of God. There may be convictions of sin before we get our souls clear

as to being saved. But the moment I am divinely talight the Person of Christ, I say I have got eternal life—the life that God sent into the world.

A babe in Christ being most in danger, he enters into these kinds of warnings; but a person grown up into Christ knew very well where these things came from. What we now might think would be very learned things in Christianity, he says to the babes; but the great thing that marks those that are the most advanced—the fathers—is their knowledge of Christ.

The apostle takes up again in verse 28 all Christians in general, with an exhortation to abide in Him. You have here God in Christ so before the apostle's mind, that he says "Him," without saying who He is. He had been talking about the anointing— "even as it hath talight you, ye shall abide in him." Previously, it was rather God as such spoken of; but "when he shall appear," we know Christ is meant thereby.

"And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." If they did not abide in Him, the apostle had lost all his work. It would have been so far to his shame. You get the same thing in the second epistle (v. 8), "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." It is just what the apostle says to the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 3:12, etc.) If we build upon the foundation, wood, hay, and stubble, the work will be burnt; there will be loss: he is proved to be a bad workman. The apostle here is pressing upon them to abide in Christ, that he may not be ashamed of his work. It is "that we may have confidence and not be ashamed,"

etc.—not that you may have confidence, etc. It is just what you see in the second epistle.

Then he takes up the second great object of the epistle—that communication of the divine nature of Christ, as our life, which gives us the same traits and characters that there are in God Himself— “which thing is true in him and in you.” God is love, and the Christian loves. God is holy, and the Christian is so too. In His almighty power God, of course, is alone. But in what may be called the character of God, inasmuch as we are born of Him, we are like Him. And this divine nature enables us to enjoy God, as well as to be like Him.

Then, again, we see that God and Christ are so absolutely one, that the apostle says, “that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming”; but immediately he adds, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.” We are born of God; yet he would appear to be speaking of the same one that should come —which is Christ. We find the same truth in Daniel 7. The Ancient of days described there is in Revelation 1 the Son of man. We get in Christ what the character and nature of God is in a man as living in this world; and then he shews that it is true of us too, as having the same life. He is righteous; and if a man doeth righteousness, he is born of Him. He has this nature.

Chapter 3.

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” When once you come to grace, we have the Father spoken of again. We are called God’s children because we really are so. “Therefore the world knoweth us not,

because it knew him not." Who? Now by the "Him" is meant Christ. The world knew Him not: it does not know us for the same reason. We have the same life and character that He had. The world cannot recognise and own what is of Christ in us, because it did not recognise it in Christ. It is extremely remarkable and blessed for us to see this Man, the humblest man that ever was, and to find out what He really was, that God really became a man. The Word was God, and was made flesh.

We have got the same life; and when we have found Christ, we know that we have found God in all His blessedness close to us. And the world cannot know us. It does not know God, and cannot know us. You will find persons with a difficulty as to knowing whether it is Christ or God here, because the apostle carefully puts them together.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It has not been seen what we are to be. The apostles saw it for a moment in the transfiguration; but, as to the manifestation of it, it does not yet appear. But being saints of God, having the same life, we know that we shall be like Him. He identifies God with Christ, and in a sense identifies us with Him. His glory is not yet manifested: but we shall be like Him, for "we shall see him as he is" —not as He will be, but as He is now in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. The flesh could not see this and subsist. Daniel fell as one dead, and John too, at the appearing of it. But we shall be like Him, and therefore capable of seeing Him as He is. This is a matter of infinite blessedness. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. If we were only conscious that there was all this blessedness, and yet had the thought, I

am not to be like it, this would not be joy: whereas we are in it with the consciousness that we are the same. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”; that is, in glory as He is at the Father’s right hand, and we shall see Him in that way.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Ours is the hope of being like Him— “that hath this hope in him,” that is, in Christ —the hope of being like Himself. It does not say that he is pure as Christ is pure. But I have got the glory; and as it is mine, and I am going to be like Him, I must be as like Him as I can now. I must purify myself, and He is the measure of it. We are called by the glory to be up to it practically. The apostle says, “I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I have not yet this resurrection from the dead, but I am pursuing it. But when Christ comes, He will change our vile bodies—and then we will have got it. The connection between glory and present walk is striking. As long as we are down here in this corruptible body, there is not a bit of glory. But the Spirit of God applies all this glory to the affections. I long to be like Christ, and therefore I get like Him in spirit. It is like a man that has a bright lamp before him at the end of a long passage. I have not the lamp till I get there, but I get more of it at every step. So with the glory: I have not got it till I am in it; but I get more of it the nearer I move towards Christ.

So in the epistle to the Ephesians Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. He was washing and cleansing it, and would take away all spots. But it was that He might present it to Himself without spot. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and presents them to us, and transforms us into the likeness of Christ. In

Philippians he is speaking of the spiritual effect, by actual resurrection, upon the heart. “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection … if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” It is the actual thing, and he gets it applied to his heart now. “Not as though I had already attained … but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Christ, in grace, had laid hold of him for the glory. Now he sees the glory, and follows after it. It is the glory in resurrection applied to the man’s heart all along the road. So it is here. “Every main that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” This bright and blessed glory fixes the affections and purifies the heart and forms the proper Christian path. It is a sanctifying hope—the soul being occupied with Christ, so that it is kept out of the evil.

He then goes on to another thing. If I go and commit sin, it is the lawlessness of the flesh, and nothing to do with Christ. “Whosoever practiseth sin, practiseth lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” He does his own will in spite of God if he can. Because without the law sin was in the world. It is a kind of background he is making. If you are not purifying yourselves, as Christ is pure, it is the lawlessness of the flesh; it is entirely opposed to Christ. There is no middle path; for there is nothing good in this world. It is either Christ or flesh. Man is fallen and out of paradise, and there is nothing owned at all of man now. God made paradise, and man is out of it; and He made heaven, and man is not in it. But between the two there is nothing that God owns. God never made the world as it is, nor man as he is, that is, not the moral state that the world and man are in. It grew up when God had driven man out from His

presence. Then Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his seed away from God. It must be either “ye are from beneath,” or “I am from above.” “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” If the law, then, is applied to the flesh, of course the flesh transgresses it. “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” There was no sin in Him; and He came to put away sin.

Then he takes in the strongest way the opposition between the two. “In him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” He is taking the two things as opposed in every way. Because, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,” he says to the same persons. But here, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not,” etc. The divine nature cannot sin. The thing that is born of God cannot sin, and that is ourselves so far as we are in Christ. As the apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Of course, that is not sin. The saint is never looked at as in the flesh; but “he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” It is not merely that you are changed, but you are made partakers of the divine nature. “Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” He has got the same nature which walks in the same path.

Christ has died as regards our guilt, and what is spoken of now is the communication of this nature. A man might come and make a great boast of high doctrine, and not do righteousness. Then I say, This is not the divine nature. We have it in Romans 6: “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” You are dead. How

can you be living in sin? Through carelessness you may fall into it, but that is not living in it. In general he takes what the truth is in itself, that we may know it in all its force. “He that practiseth sin is of the devil.” He takes the opposite thing altogether. “For the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not practise sin.” How can he? “For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” It does not say, “he ought not to sin,” but “he cannot.” It is not a question of progress, but of the nature. The nature a man is born of is the nature he has. Take any animal you please, and this is true of it. We are born of God, and we have got that nature, and I say that cannot sin. I have got the treasure in an earthen vessel—that is true. The flesh is there, but the new nature is a sinless nature. It is, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.”

“In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” There are the two traits which shew themselves in a thousand details of life— righteousness, practical righteousness, and love of the brethren. Mere amiable nature you find in dogs and other animals, being animal nature; but the love of the brethren is a divine motive. I love them because they are of God. I have communion in divine things with them. A man may be very unamiable naturally, and yet love the brethren with all his heart; and another may be very amiable, and have no love for them at all. Lower down, he says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It is the great test of the divine nature. It is

the life of Christ which is in us, reproduced in our ways and walk. It is not merely avoiding sin, because there is more in Christ than the absence of sin. There was the manifestation of the divine nature. He was the divine nature walking through this world, and He had special love to the disciples, as we also have special love to the brethren. He was in the world, and as among men, to manifest God in it. And this is what we have always to do —to represent God in this world. “Ye are the epistle of Christ.” People ought to read Christ in you, as they read the ten commandments on the tables of stone. If they read that, they will not read evil. We have the flesh to struggle against, but not to walk after. It is not an effort to try and be like Christ, but that being full of Him it comes out. Therefore He talks of abiding in Him. So “he that eateth me abideth in me.” He has become our life, but He is our life in every-day exercises. We are sent into the world to manifest God. Then come difficulties and hindrances, and if we are not full of Christ, we give way to them; whereas, if we are full of Christ, we manifest Him in them. If not, we shew heat, temper, or some evil thing. But there is no need of living in the old nature. We never can excuse ourselves for living in it, because Christ is ours.

We again see in the first of these verses the proof of what “the beginning” is here. The great thing we have to look to, as regards life, and what that life is, is Christ manifested in this world. “This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” We get Christ very distinctly there as the One who alone could give us the true measure and character of all else: He is the truth. Divine light, such as this, was not till Christ came. He was the faithful witness. Then

you find another thing: there is the evil life or old Adam, and the true life, which is in Christ.

Both principles are at work. In the one there is hatred and his works evil, just as in the other we find love and righteousness. These go together. It began in Cain and Abel and has gone on ever since. Those that are really God's people are hated. Therefore it is said that "he was of that wicked one and slew his brother." "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." It was the spirit and nature of the being departed from God, of which the devil was the spring and the strength. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain who was of that wicked one and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous."

You must not be surprised, therefore, if the world hates you. It is natural to man. In the first place, Satan is the prince of this world; and, besides that, it is the nature of man as he is. We were in death spiritually, and wherever that was the case, the spirit of Satan ruled and governed, arid therefore there was hatred of God's children. But then there is this new life, and "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If a man does not love the brethren, he abides in death. That is where we all are naturally. He is looking at the very principle of life. If I only find a sign that it is a wild apple-tree, I know what the tree is. On the other hand, get the life of Christ, and the fruit answers to it. It is not a change of human nature as it is, because this abides in death. But the new life that comes

is a life that bears its own fruit, just as that which is grafted into a tree. What sprouts up from the old stock is what came from the nature of the tree before. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” He has not this good graft. It is a clear case.

Then he rises up to the source of it. “Hereby perceive we love.” What is this love? How can I tell it? In that He laid down His life for us. And if Christ is really my life, He will be the same thing in spirit in me, as He was Himself. Christ kept the law because He was born under it. But the law calls upon man to love God and his neighbour, and that Christ did. But, besides that, He was the manifestation of God’s love to man, and specially to His disciples, when they did not love God. This is what we are to be. Christ, who was the activity of His love, laid down His life. We perceive what the love of God is by this. But you ought to manifest the same thing. It is an immense privilege. Not only am I required to do certain things, but I am called upon to be a witness of God in a world that is without Him. And there is no limit to it. I ought to go as far as Christ went. And there have been some that have done this to death. Many martyrs have laid down their lives for Christ. “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Besides the immense privilege, it is an essential truth. We have to manifest God in this world, because Christ is in us. That is, if we are children of God, there is communion with the source of it, and then there should be the display of it in our walk—the epistle of Christ known and read of all men.

“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? “We

have another mark there in the dwelling of the love of God. It is not merely love to God, because it is the spirit in which a person walks himself towards his brethren. It is the power of this divine nature dwelling in us which will shew itself in love to God and man. The love of God dwelling in us is the way of God Himself, who through the Spirit thereby brings His love into us. It is not God's love to us, but it is the power of that love working in us, and therefore it will soon shew itself to others. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

Now he looks to the effect of walking with God, as giving, not the knowledge of-forgiveness, but confidence. He wrote to them because they were all forgiven; but if I want to have my heart assured before God, I must walk in this way. If my intercourse with God causes my heart to condemn me, you cannot call it confidence. If I am not walking according to God, I must either get away from Him, or if I find myself in His presence, His Spirit is constantly reproaching me, and that is not confidence.

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." He knows a great deal about me that I do not know myself. If a child has got a bad conscience, he sneaks about, if his father is coming; but if not, he runs to meet him and throws himself into his arms. But he cannot have that kind of confidence, if his heart reproaches him. That is what we have always to look for: to be with God, and in entire confidence with Him—no thought behind that perhaps he has something against us, not as to condemnation, but as to present confidence. How far it goes, the entire full counting

upon God—counting upon His present activity for us! It is not only a question of the day of judgment, but it is the present dealing of the soul with God, and of God for the soul. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” In chapter 5 it is said, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We are brought into a present confident spirit with God, so that we expect everything good from Him. If a child is going on nalightily, he cannot go on in confidence. He may say, My father loves me, but he is going to give me a whipping. But when the heart is all right, the child expects everything that flows from his father’s love. So here, “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” This has nothing to do with acceptance, but with the every-day outflowing of the Father’s kindness, so that the child counts upon it. It is the terrible effect of looking at acceptance and forgiveness as the end of the Christian’s course, that this confidence is almost unknown. The apostle began with forgiveness: “Your sins are forgiven you, for his name’s sake”; and now he is speaking of the confidence of the heart towards God. You get this in John 14:23: “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him,” etc. This is not the grace that saves. In the epistle John says, “We love him, because he first loved us.” The Lord says, “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” He is speaking of the present exercise of this love to Christ.

It is a great thing to say, I have only to ask according to God’s will, and I am sure to get it. He loves us in such a

way that I can ask nothing without an answer. I want power and I get it directly. I want some hindrance removed out of the way, and it is removed directly. I may ask my father here for something, and he may tell me, I cannot do it; I cannot attend to you. But this is never the case with God. You can ask nothing, according to His will, without getting it. In a right path I have the whole power of God at my disposal. I may see mountains before me—all Satan's power. But never mind. If you are walking right, "ask what you will, and it shall be done for you." You have thorough present confidence in God. He is never too busy to hear us. All that we can come about is ours. "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments," etc. It is the direct government of God with our souls. This is where the question, between us and God, right and wrong, comes in. As regards our responsibility as men, we were ruined. Now we are saved, and God's dealings meet us on that ground, and then He delights to do everything for us. It is not what we will, but "whatsoever we ask." It is the will of the new nature, that is, obedience really. In that path of obedience God always heard Christ, for He was obedient, and God hears us; He puts us, in this life of Christ, into the same place as Christ.

"And this is his commandment that we should believe-on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." He comes now to another most important point. Not merely that there is life, but that God by His Spirit dwells in us. There is power of communion as well as life. God dwells with Him who is

love. It is not merely that I am redeemed. But as it was said of Israel, “They shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them”; so it is said of us, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” Christ was the obedient One, and God dwelt in Him; and he who is an obedient one now, God dwells in him. Christ said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” In us it is only derivatively by His Spirit, but still He dwells in us. In the obedient man God dwells as in Christ Himself. “And hereby know we that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” That is, it is the presence of the Holy Ghost with us that gives us the consciousness that God dwells with us. He does not add in this latter part of the verse that we dwell in Him; but simply that the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost was and is, that we know that God abides in us.

Chapter 4.

Then he warns them against false spirits; verses 1-6. Every spirit is not the Holy Ghost. Many false prophets are in the world. The saints must beware. The question is not, whether a man be converted; but whether he who speaks speaks by God’s Spirit or a demon. The touchstone is the confession of Jesus come in the flesh. He who is guided of God confesses Jesus Christ Himself so come (not merely that He is come). To confess His coming is to recognise a truth; to confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh is to own the Person and lordship of Jesus. Once a demon is discerned, it is important to treat it as a demon: otherwise your sword is broken in your hand. To yield to human considerations, to play the amiable under such circumstances, will find you

powerless against Satan. It is not to have communion with God in His thoughts of Satan. How precious is the word before such dangers! Holding it fast, with uprightness and humility, nothing will stumble us. God is faithful, and will guard the feeblest of His own. But outside this submission to God and His word, no matter what may be the beauty of a man's sentiments, or his ability, he will sooner or later fall under the power of the enemy.

But we come to a new point here, verses 7-16. Besides the life of Christ, there is the dwelling of God in us and of us in God. This was fully manifested in Christ, and the more we think of that, the more we shall see that the new life we have is a dependent life. Our Lord Himself said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live." Therefore we see He was a man praying always—leaning on His Father. For though He was God, He never used this to take a false position as man; but He took the place of dependence. And it is where He puts us—in the place of dependence, and therefore the place of power from above. It is not a question of sincerity, but of that lowliness which is the sense of dependence and looks for help and power from another.

What a privilege and motive for holiness, that God dwells in us! And when we want to glorify God the presence of His Spirit is the power. How distinctly God has come into close communion with us, and brought us into intimacy with Himself by forgiving us and saving us and giving us a life in which we walk with Him! It is a life of constant trial here, but of having Himself by the Holy Ghost as our power dwelling in us as we walk through the world. And this is what we have to see to—

that the life of the saint should be developed according to Christ. And it is there that daily experience comes in, and we find our weakness if we are not looking to Christ.

Another great fact, brought in at the close of what we last saw, was the giving of the Holy Ghost. In verse 1 of this chapter, the apostle drops that to distinguish between spirits, not merely evil men. But there is a much greater action of Satan going on in the church of God than we are apt to suppose; and if we do not treat it as such, there is no power. If we come to terms with it, we cannot have power, because God cannot come to terms with Satan.

Then there is another thing in verse 6: “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” Receiving the apostles’ teaching is one of the tests of knowing God. “He that is not of God heareth not us.” A person that does not listen to the Scriptures as such is not of God at all.

He comes now, with the additional fact of the Holy Ghost being given, to the third part—love of the brethren—and shews you how deep its source goes. It is not merely obligation, or righteousness, but the very nature of God Himself, what He is, as Christ is the pattern of human righteousness. He goes to the very nature of God Himself as such. “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God.” It comes from Him, having its source in Himself. “Love is of God.” Because we have got His nature, we can say that “every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” But there I stop. It is a course of righteousness. But now I say, “every one that

loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It is not merely duty that I do; it is the true nature itself that I have. If a person has this nature, he has that of God. John is not speaking of mere natural affections: these you have in the brute beasts. But it is a question of the divine nature. That which marks divine love is, that it thought of us while we were yet sinners. It is above evil. Where sin abounded grace has much more abounded. He that loves knows God. That is a great thing to say. I know what a man is because I am a man. An animal cannot tell what I am, because he has not my nature. In that way, when we love, we have the nature of God—we know what God is. There may be a great deal to learn, but still we have got the nature, and therefore know what that nature is. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." If that new nature is in me, I enjoy it; I have a nature capable of enjoying it. Every nature enjoys what is suitable to it. If we have the divine nature, we enjoy God. We know Him in the way of enjoyment of that which belongs to our very nature.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." If I have it not, I do not know Him, because that is what He is. It is an immense truth, as regards the saints, that I know God. I have got the nature that enjoys God: and that is what our everlasting enjoyment will be.

"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." The apostle turns outside to get the proofs of this love. He is not looking inwards, as others do. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." If I want to know divine love, God's love, I do not look within; because "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved

us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is another thing here which shews the perfectness of this love—it had no motive. It is what God was. 'If we love them that love us, what reward have we?' The manifestation of this love has a double character here. First, the Son is sent to be the propitiation for our sins; He loved us when we were guilty and defiled. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," etc. God's love to us has its proof in this—when there was nothing at all in us to bring—when there was not a movement in us towards God, there was in God toward us. We had no spiritual life, but we were guilty, looked at as born of Adam. Therefore this love is a perfect love. It has no motive in us, and, therefore, is perfect in itself; and it is exercised towards us according to our need. Here we have the proof of this love. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." How he draws the practical conclusion! If God has so loved me, I ought to love the brethren. I ought to get above all the disagreeable things and untowardness, because God loved me when I was as untoward as possible.

Now we come to another thing. It is God Himself present. Not merely have I got the divine nature, but God is present in a very remarkable way. "No man hath seen God at any time." How can I know and love a being that I have never seen? "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The Apostle Paul expresses it in a different way. "The love of God," he says, "is shed abroad in our hearts." Now, what makes it so remarkable here? If we look at John 1:18, it is said there, "No man hath seen God at any time." How can I know and love a person I have never seen? "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,

he hath declared him." That is, in the Gospel, which is to bring Christ before us, I find the sense to be this: Well, you have not seen God, and yet you have; because He who was the very delight of the Father—who is in the bosom of the Father—the immediate and closest object of the Father's delight—He has declared Him. Therefore I do know Him. It is the answer to the difficulty, that no man ever saw God. Christ has made Him known to me. Here, in the Epistle, it is, "no man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." That which is revealed in Christ is brought directly into our own hearts, because the Holy Ghost is in us. When Christ was in the world, it was the Son casting out devils and doing mighty works. And yet He said, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Now, by the Spirit, He says, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He makes God dwelling in us the answer here to not seeing God; as Christ being in the world was then the answer to not seeing God. Having washed us in the blood of the Lamb, He comes and dwells in us. We have a knowledge of God in that way. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." It is not merely that the nature is there, but God is there. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." This is the way we have the consciousness that we dwell in God, because, as God dwells in us, and He is infinite, we have the consciousness of dwelling in God. He is our home: we dwell in Him. He is our abode. It is the presence pf the Holy Ghost that gives the consciousness of God's being there.

Still he turns back to objective truth. "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the

Saviour of the world." I have God within me, and have the knowledge of that love. How did He prove it to me? By sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world. The proof of it is that which has been done without me—not anything within me. A person might say, But I have not got that. Then I say, You.have got nothing. If you say, That is too high for me: I cannot speak of God as dwelling in me; then I answer, You are not a Christian at all. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." He does speak of the blessed consciousness of it as our portion, but then he declares that it is the truth" as to every Christian; and therefore if I am not enjoying it, there is something that is hindering me. If we had the Queen in the house, and did not trouble ourselves about her, we should have no enjoyment of the honour and privilege of having such a guest. And we may be going on in such a way as to have no consciousness of God's being in us. It shews a habit of living without intercourse with the God who dwells in us. The Christian has a life from God, which lives with God. He says therefore, after having spoken of this, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." That is the kind of character he gives of a Christian: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." There is no uncertainty. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God," etc. It is the very nature of God.

Now he goes on. We have seen the love manifested when we were mere sinners, when we were guilty and dead. This was the starting-point with us. We were spiritually dead: there was not a single movement in our hearts towards God. And then God loved us. But we had a

natural life from Adam, and therefore were guilty; and then God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Then the next thing is, that we dwell in God and He in us: we have this blessed communion by His being in our hearts. Then he comes to the third thing in verse 17. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.” Now it is not merely that He has loved me when I was a sinner, and that I enjoy Him in communion, but that all fear for the future is taken away entirely. I get boldness for the day of judgment; that is a different thing.

It is blessed love that Christ came into the world for such. sinners as we. But then there is the day of judgment. When I think of the love, I am all happy; but when I think of the judgment, my conscience is not quite easy. Though the heart may have tasted the love, the conscience not being quite clear, when I think of judgment I am not quite happy. This is what is provided for here. “As he is, so are we in this world.” The love was shewn in visiting us when we were sinners; it is enjoyed in communion; but it is completed in this, that I am in Christ, and that Christ must condemn Himself in the day of judgment, if He condemns me, because as He is, so am I in this world. I am glorified before I get there. He changes this vile body and makes it like to His glorious body. When I am before the judgment-seat, I am in this changed and glorified body; I am like my Judge. If He is my righteousness, as He is so I am now; because it is Christ’s work, and Christ’s work is finished, and Christ is appearing in heaven for me. And though I have exercises and trials of heart, yet, ‘As he is, so am I in this world.’ There love is perfected.

God Himself can do nothing more blessed than to make me like Christ in His presence. There is an end of judgment practically as an object of dread, because I am as clear as my Judge. He judges by His own righteousness, and that is my righteousness: I am that. I am united to Him, and, in that sense, am the same as Himself. There love is made perfect, that I may have boldness in the day of judgment. There has love been shewn, and it makes me miserable if my heart does not answer to it. I have not got boldness in the day of judgment: There is a judgment, and in order that love should be perfect in our hearts, there must be no dread of judgment. In order to have all its perfectness, I must have boldness in the day of judgment, and that I have by being as Christ is. This is true now. It is not that we have got the glory yet; but it is true as having Him for my life, and being united to Him. Now he draws the conclusion at once. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” Fear is all gone. If I am dreading my Father, I cannot enjoy His love—there is torment in that. Love casts out fear. There is nothing to fear if God loves me perfectly, and does nothing but love me. That is what the Lord Jesus says: “I have declared thy name unto them and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” And so again He says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” The same peace that He had Himself He has given unto us. He was not dreading His Father. He had ineffable peace and delight. Well, “As he is, so are we in this world.” Then comes, as a consequence of knowing this love, “We love him, because he first loved us.” That is the fruit and consequence in our hearts. All this love which He has shewn to us has been in us and is perfected with us. “We love him because he first loved

us.” The heart turns back in thankfulness and love to Him.

But now, as through this Epistle, the apostle brings a kind of counter-test. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” If His image in the saints does not draw out any affections, you do not really love Him. You may say you do, but it is not true. We find running all through the Epistle, this kind of counter-test. Another remarkable thing we see here. Even love itself does not get out of the place of obedience in its exercise. “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” However blessed may be the workings of the divine nature in us, it is always in the shape of obedience. This was true even of Christ. Speaking of His own death, where His perfectness was brought out fully, He says, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do.” It was still the commandment, as well as love. So love makes us serve and love the brethren, and yet it is obedience. Whatever is not obedience is not Christ. It is not a commandment against our nature, because we delight in doing what God commands. Still it is obedience, although it is the obedience of a joyful nature that has pleasure in obeying; and that, through God’s dwelling in us and revealing Himself in that very way, in this nature in our souls.

It brings the position of the Christian to a wonderful point— his actual condition in the way of connection with God. It is not merely that the Holy Ghost dwells in

us in the way of power (this would be a proof of the Holy Ghost's, that is, of God's, being in us, yet it would not prove that we are in God), but that we dwell in Him. When we think what kind of enjoyment and privileges we have here, what foolish creatures we are not to realise God more and to enjoy Him! "The diligent soul," it is said, "shall be made fat."

Chapter 5.

There is a kind of summing up in this chapter of who these are: not what they are, but who they are, and what that is in which they have part. It was loving the brethren, for instance, we were seeing in a previous chapter. Now comes the inquiry, not who is my neighbour, but who is my brother? "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." It is not now a spiritual or moral test to see whether the love is real, but we get those who are the children of God, and then "everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." That is, if it is really this divine love, I shall love those that are born of God. If it is for the parent's sake, I shall love all the children, and this is the way in which it is put here.

But in verse 2 he gives a counter-proof that it is genuine. I know that I love God by loving the children of God; but I know that it is really loving them if I love God and keep His commandments. If I love them as His children, I shall love Himself. It runs all through this Epistle, a kind of countercheck which is of the greatest use. If it is the Holy Spirit, it is the Spirit of truth too. I have thus the means of checking one thing by another. I might seem to

be loving God's children very much, while it may be only a party feeling. But if I love God, I love all for His sake. Anything else may be merely a feeling of human nature. It is the bringing God in which sets all right. In 2 Peter it is said, Add to brotherly love, love. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. If I love them as God's children, it is because I love Him that begat them. It takes them all in, but it always takes Him in, and therefore it is a question of obedience. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

The great difficulty is the world; but faith vanquishes it. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." There is a nature we have received which belongs to a system which is not of the world at all. "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Ye are from beneath, I am from above." This world, as a system, is of the devil— not of God at all. All that is in it, "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The Father is the head, and source, and blessedness of a great system to which the world is entirely opposed: and therefore when the Son came into the world, the world rejected Him, and this has put the world, as a tested world, in perfect antagonism to the Father. We always find that it is the flesh against the Spirit, the world against the Father, and the devil against the Son. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is truth which sanctifies. The difficulty is the world. We look on the things that are seen, and not on the things

that are not seen, and therefore we are weak. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith.

It is not merely a nature that is given to us, but as creatures we must have an object for this nature and this is the Lord. I must have the true object, and therefore, “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” He is occupied with something. When I find that the One whom the world has spit upon and crucified is the Son of God, I say such is what the world is. And therefore when my faith really rests upon Jesus as this despised One, the Son of God, I have done with the world; I overcome it as an enemy.

There we have the short account of these saints. They are born of God: they are a set of people that belong to Him as those that are alive; they live in another world that belongs to the Father. He then speaks of the spirit and power in which Christ came, that by which we are connected with this scene of blessedness that belongs to the Father. “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” This goes back to a most vital principle that we have had all through the Epistle. If it had been by water only, John the Baptist came by water. The word of God, if only applied to man as a child of Adam, could not purify him. Christ coming into the world by that put man to the test; and man was God’s enemy, and, therefore, there was no mending him at all. It then became a question of redemption, of blood, as well as water, and that life was in the Son; not in the first Adam, but in the Second. “This is he that came by water and blood.”

There is a cleansing, as we know; but this is the effect of redemption on the new life. It was out of a dead Christ that the cleansing came. A living Christ coming into the world presents Himself to man to see whether any link could be formed between God and man. But then was man finally condemned,.and death comes in. It was always so. There is no life in us. “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” And that is the reason why He says you must eat the flesh and drink the blood. If you do not take Him as a dead Christ, you have nothing, for that cleansing came out of a dead Christ. It is death to the old thing, and a new life entirely is brought in.

Then there comes another blessed truth. We have a dead Christ, now alive for evermore; and next we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. But this is all as belonging to a new world. “There are three that bear witness—the Spirit, the water, and the blood.” We have three witnesses, the Spirit bearing testimony; the water, the cleansing power; and the blood, the expiatory power; and these all agree in one. There is no cleansing of the old nature, but there is a new nature given. “God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” It is not by mending the old Adam, but it is life in the Son. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” There is no life belonging to the old man, it is a rejected thing, and there will not be two Adams in heaven. Here is the Son, and those that have life in the Son. God began working out this since the fall, but the full truth of it was brought out when Christ was risen.

Then there is another point in connection with the truth, and that is, the knowledge of it. “He that believeth on

the Son of God hath the witness in himself," because we have got Christ, through the Spirit of Christ in us. Therefore I know that I have eternal life—that I am a child of God. We have got this blessed consciousness and comfort. The work has been wrought, the blood is shed, and, besides that, I cry, Abba, Father, through the Spirit that dwells in me. That is, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." He has got the thing; in a word, he has Christ.

The fault of the unbeliever is not that he has not the blessing, but that he makes God a liar. God has given an adequate witness about His Son; and "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar." And therefore a person rejecting the gospel is rejecting God's testimony about His Son. The witness was sufficient. We read of many who believed on His name. But they did not overcome the world, because there was no real faith. Jesus did not commit Himself to them.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." It is of all importance to see that it is not a mending of the nature that we have already, but the giving to us one that we had not before, in receiving Christ as our life. And all the rest is accomplished. The Spirit is the Holy Ghost present in the world. The water came out of Christ's side as well as the blood. Water cleanses what already exists. The water is the washing by the word— but not without the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the application of the word by the Holy Ghost. But besides that, the water gives the idea of the washing by the word; and therefore he says we are born of water and the Spirit.

One thing remains^-the present confidence that we have with God. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, ye that believe on the name of the Son of God.” And then there comes every-day confidence. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We are really reconciled to God. It is not an uncertain condition with God, but we are at home with Him. We have confidence in Him. It is not merely the fact that we have been saved, but we have present confidence. “And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

But there is another privilege we have—that of intercession for others. And now, too, we get just a hint at the dealings of God in the way of government with a man that, is saved. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death.” In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, there was a sin unto death. There is a constant dealing of God in government with His children, when if the sin be not of that character as unto death (it may go on to it), it is a question of discipline. There is many a sickness that is a discipline of God in some shape or another—positive discipline, which, if the heart were bowed to God about it, would be for good.

Chastenings are not always for actual faults. In Job it is said (chap. 33:18, 19), “He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is

chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain"; and that we find from verse 17 is for the purpose of hiding pride from man. Then in chapter 36 the chastening is for positive faults (v. 9). "Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." There was a positive discipline of God. It is not merely here that there is this discipline, and that if there is a "messenger with him, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness, that there he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit," etc.

But now, as a Christian, you are competent yourself to be a messenger. The Christian having the title of intercession, and walking with God, he has this access to God to be heard in whatever he asks. When then you see a brother sin, and come under the discipline of God you go and be to him this messenger, one among a thousand. It is a matter of discipline and chastening for sin: and if this intercession be used, he will be restored. It supposes a person walking with God to be able to be this interpreter.

"We know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not." The man is living after the flesh, if he is giving way to sin. The new nature sinneth not. If he sins at all, therefore, it must be because he is acting in the flesh. If we walk in the Spirit, Satan has no power over us at all. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." He sums up all in these two verses.

“The whole world lieth in wickedness,” and “we are of God.” We blink at things that are so plain sometimes, in order to save a little bit of the world. But “we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” God being revealed in Christ, and we being in Christ, we have got our place in a scene outside the world altogether.

We have here, too, a remarkable witness to the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. “We are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” It is an immense comfort; because, when I have found Christ, I have God Himself. I have found Him; I know Him; and I know what He is to me. “He that hath the Son hath the Father also.”

Notes On The Second Epistle Of John

What specially characterises the Epistle is the connection of the truth with the manifestation of love. Both the second and third Epistles are occupied with the receiving of these who are going about preaching. The third Epistle commends those who went forth for Christ's sake, to the love of the faithful, who in receiving such, became fellow-helpers to the truth.

Here John warns this lady against receiving certain persons that did not bring the truth. He had pressed extremely the walking in love in the first Epistle. And so here too he says, "I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." Then he takes these two guards of true charity: one is the truth and the other is obedience— just what Christ was when He was in the world. He was love come into the world, the witness and testimony of love, and He was the truth, and He was the obedient man. His love to His Father was shewn in His obeying Him in all things. He was the truth in shewing out everything just as it was. Besides, He came down to do the will of Him who sent Him.

John takes up these three great principles here. Love—divine charity—is insisted on, but it is always the truth, because it is Christ; and if it is not in the truth, it is denying Christ: it is saying there can be love in nature. The third thing is this obedience to the commandments of Christ. Such is the business of a Christian obeying Christ, with truth in the heart, and love as the spring of all. And that is just Christ. You cannot separate them.

The flesh may put on the appearance of a thing; it may put on a great show of love; but it is not truth and obedience, it is not Christ.

Here it is a question of conscience with anyone. It is not an ecclesiastical question, but of a woman if so called on. It is a matter of personal conscience with every saint, the question of the individual receiving Christ in His members and of refusing whatsoever denies Christ. And this is the means of judging of it: “For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.” The apostle loved the lady and her children, but it was for the truth’s sake. Where there was not that, there could be no divine love.

In the next verse, again, we have “from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.” Now he brings in the obedience: it is a commandment from the Father. He will have the Son honoured, even as Himself.

“And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.” Just as Christ walked after the commandments of God because He loved Him. As He said (John 14:31), “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” So it is with those that follow Him. “This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

Then he adds, “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the

flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." If this divine love came down in a man, what was it to deny that? Christ came as a man. It could not be a mere man come in the flesh. This could not be said of a mere human being. If a man say, I am come in the flesh, I should ask, What else could you come in? That is what you are: you are a mere man. But whosoever shall "confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh, this is a deceiver and an antichrist." Perfect Man, He is infinitely more.

"Look to yourselves." If they had all departed away, his work would have been burnt with fire. And therefore he says, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." The reward of labour in that sense is for the work that he has done in the souls of others. As it is said of the Lord Jesus, "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied"; so we in our little measure receive it.

Now we have a little more. After having spoken about these deceivers, he adds, "Whosoever goeth forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." If you have not got the true Christ, you have not God at all. That is the first great broad principle. All through John, when he is speaking of relationship, it is the Son; but if of nature, it is God, not the Father. In John 8 it is God; and Jesus takes that place— "Before Abraham was, I am." There may be the rejection of the truth, and then I have not God in any; I am outside the whole scene in which this grace is displayed. I have not the doctrine of Christ, that is, the truth as to Christ; I have not got God at all. "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." He gets the whole unfolding of this unspeakable grace. It is the perfect

revelation of God in its own blessedness within itself, not outside, but you have God inside; and you have got here all blessedness, in which the Father loves the Son and has given the Son for us; you have got both the Father and the Son. “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” … “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” He has not communion with God, because God’s nature is light.

You have, firstly, the great fact of not having God at all; a man is absolutely without God if he has not Christ. Then, secondly, when he unfolds the truth, it is the Father and the Son. He urges decision upon these saints. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” To do so would be encouraging and helping him; it is to tamper with my own conscience, because I am allowing something to be Christ which is a false one, and the deepest dishonour to God. If I shew this appearance of love where the truth is not, it is not Christ at all; it is denying Him, and saying that what is false is as good as what is true. It is helping the Antichrist and not the Christ. “Him that biddeth him God speed” (that is, literally salutes him on going away), “is partaker of his evil deeds.” It was a sign of recognition and companionship.

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.” I get there another thing, that is, the kind of affection which should reign among the saints. It was not a sort of mere abstract love; but there was gladness in seeing them, real comfort in it, and rejoicing to see them doing well.

The Holy Ghost always encourages this activity of love, however strong He may be for the truth. Christ has come into the world: the one point round which souls can rally and find God in grace. When anything unsettles that, there is no resource at all. If Satan cannot do anything by persecution, he tries to unsettle souls about the truth in Christ. He is a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour; that is persecution. But he is not always a roaring lion. When he comes in as a serpent (that is, when he steals along, and does not roar at all), it is a great deal more dangerous. A person is tried by his violence and rage; but it is far more serious when we have to withstand the wiles of the devil. Still, wherever Christ is held to simply, all is simple. Here it is the case of a lady. It is personal faith that clings to Christ for His own sake. The person may not be wise enough to set the world right, but there is something that faith clings to. I must have Christ. The secret of all is the individual personal faith that holds fast to Christ and His truth. It is a wonderful mercy to have that which is a test of everything, and a proof of Christ's love. To have a clear and distinct object this carries me through, according to God's mind, this is what Christ walked in; and if we hold fast to Christ, it is always true.

Notes On The Third Epistle Of John

We have here the same great principle in general that we saw in the Second Epistle—that is, loving the truth. Only there John was warning against any one that transgressed the doctrine of Christ, and here he is rather encouraging gracious ways and liberality towards those that were going about with the truth.

There is here the kindness that works among Christians. He desires that Gaius might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. This Gaius received the brethren that went about preaching the word, and Diotrephes was jealous of them. He not only refused to receive the brethren himself, but hindered those that would. There was resistance to the free witness to God rendered by these persons going about. “Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” They went out freely, trusting the Lord, and Diotrephes would not have such things. So he not only would not receive them himself, but if other people did, he forbade them, and cast them out of the church. The Apostle writes to strengthen Gaius in the spirit of hearty welcome in receiving them.

With Diotrephes it was love of prominence, a fleshly desire in him, and this even rose so high that he was speaking against the apostle. Still, the main point that the apostle dwells on, in writing to Gaius, is that he was in the truth. It is remarkable in John that, while he speaks of love, he always guards it in the most definite way by what he calls “the truth.” Real charity is in God Himself. He is love, and wherever love is real, it must be guaided by the truth as it is in Jesus, or it is not of God.

Therefore, before he commends Gaius for his love and hospitality to the brethren, he says, “I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.” This is the first thing he dwells upon, before he even speaks of what he does to the brethren and to strangers.

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and that strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well; because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” Gaius was evidently a gracious man, hospitable to these strangers. “We ought therefore to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.” It is a remarkable expression— “the truth.” “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” Christ is the truth. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Whatever was not Christ was nature, and this was not the truth, and you never could be able otherwise to discern good and evil.

Indeed Christ is “the truth.” If we speak of the truth, we mean that it is a person speaking exactly what is true about anything. Christ tells us the truth about God. Satan takes very fair forms, as, in the case with Peter, when he said, in reference to the sufferings of Christ, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” But Christ says, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me,” etc. He told the truth about that. It looked a very fair gracious speech; but it was really denying all that He had to do, and Christ tells the truth

about it. And so about man. Who would have suspected that man could have done such things as he did when Christ was here? There you get the truth about man; all his evil was brought out; it was not fully detected till Christ came. So, too, I do not know what sin is till I see it in the cross of Christ. And just the same about righteousness. Christ is the truth. Whether it is God or man or Satan, or righteousness or sin, the truth about everything is in Christ; and if we have Christ, we have the truth. When we have to discern our way in the midst of good and evil, we do not know the truth unless we have got Christ. The truth is in Him: it is not in me.

The moment that I have Christ, and that I judge according to His feelings and thoughts, I am able to discern sin. It may take a very fair form—perhaps the loving your father or mother; but still the truth detects everything. God has shewn Himself to be love, rising above all evil; but still it is always “the truth.” If He rises above the sin, He shews also what the sin is. It is of immense importance to hold fast Christ, else we do not know what the truth is. Satan is the father of lies, and no lie is of the truth. With the apostle, we see that it was his joy to get this truth sharper than any two-edged sword, sparing nothing in himself. It was his joy to see his children walking in the truth. Then, when the truth is settled, the outflow of love is beautiful. “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church.” There you find the love coming out beautifully. The moment it is settled in Christ as the truth so that our own heart is judged, then God is free to act. The moment I have got the truth—Christ, then, freed from self—this divine love begins to act in its

right channel. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” God has a peculiar love to His own, but He is gracious and kind towards even the very sparrows—makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

“Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.” They were these preachers going about. “Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” They were casting themselves upon God.

“Demetrius had good report of all men, and of the truth itself.” John looks at “the truth” as a thing standing in the world, and going through a great service in conflict. Demetrius is witnessed to by the truth: the gospel itself bore him witness. The gospel or truth is personified. If a man is hated for the truth’s sake, we say that it is the truth that is hated. The gospel is love in the truth, and this working in the world. That is the substance of this Epistle: first, the truth; then, the working of love and grace, which becomes a fellow-helper to the truth. Then he says that there were these persons coming into the church, who were setting up to have a high place in it. They did not even receive the apostle. But that did not take away the apostle’s power. “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth.”

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” We have seen the truth first, and then grace to the brethren and to others in general. If you do good, you are of God. It is not the question of mere evil; but “he that doeth good is of God.” It is the

active service of love. God does not do evil—that is clear; but He does good. “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record; and we know that our record is true.” Demetrius was one of those who were going about in this way whom Diotrephes would not have, and one that the apostle encourages Gaius to receive.

It is an interesting thing to see not merely great doctrines in Scripture, but all the interior of what was at work even then. We are apt to see things upon stilts. Things were going on just then as they are now. There were some going about preaching the truth, and some did not like to receive them. We see thus the interior of Christianity going on, whereas we generally think it was something extraordinary; instead of being just the same struggling with good and evil, in principle the same kind of thing that is going on now. The apostle was left to watch over the declension of the church, and to give us the warnings that were needed all through.

It is a wonderful thing to know that “the truth “has come into the world. It is not merely that certain things are true, but the truth itself has come. I have got that which is God’s own truth, in the midst of men’s thoughts and confusions. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” We have seen here these two things: the truth which has come and tested everything; and then grace towards the brethren and these strangers, according to this truth. It is a great thing to have what links us up with Christ, which is to abide for ever. This world is all passing away, and man’s breath goes forth. “He returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” But we have the truth in the midst of it all. The word of our God abides for ever. Holding peacefully fast by that, we have got, by

grace, what we know is everlasting. Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Fellowship With The Father And The Son

1 John 1

The great purpose of God, in all His dealings in grace, is to bring us—and to bring us individually too—into fellowship with Himself. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father.” Thus we have the full knowledge of God, as far as it can be known by men, and that in full communion with Himself: not in the way of creation—that is, not merely as creatures, but in “union”; and we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost that there may be power; “we dwell in him and he in us.” There cannot be anything more intimate.

It is not knowledge or science that has anything to do with this; for if it be but the human mind working on the things of God, it is but that “high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” Babes in Christ have possession of these things, they have not to seek for them, they are in possession of them, though of course they have to ripen in acquaintance with them. Knowledge itself, mere knowledge, puffs up; but, being brought low, the Spirit of God can act upon the soul and give knowledge in communion with God.

Although the Epistle of John is very abstract, yet it is abstract about things that the very feeblest saint knows in Christ. God is brought down to our nature, for God can come down to us in our weakness in Christ. The difference between the writings of Paul and John is this, that Paul unfolds to us the counsels of God in creation—the counsels of God towards the Jews (there are various

developments of Christ's Person, as in Hebrews and Colossians); but John may be called more abstract, because he speaks of the nature of God Himself. The purpose and object of God is to bring us into full fellowship with Himself.

There are three things I would here notice. First, the work of God by which we can stand in His presence perfectly free from any question of sin, so that we can enjoy all that God is. Second, justification by faith and acceptance in the Beloved—the perfect cleansing of the conscience, knowing we are accepted so as to be able to be before Him in perfect peace. Thud, the new birth, commonly called regeneration. There must be a new nature capable of affections towards God. An orphan who never knew a father has the affections of a child, is capable of loving a father, and is often very unhappy because without the object towards whom those affections would naturally flow. So the capacity to love God is that which we get by, being partakers of the divine nature. The Holy Ghost is that which gives us competency to enjoy these things. We have an unction from the Holy One given to us, to enable us to enjoy what God has given to us. There must be our standing in the presence of God without our conscience being at work at all; a nature capable of enjoying God—a new nature; and power to walk in that new nature, which is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us.

The thing brought especially before us is what that is we are to enjoy: the nature of the thing brought down to the understanding of a poor sinner; and that tries the conscience, just as it moves the affections. God is light, and if I am brought into the blessedness of what God is, it must put the conscience to the test; and I ask, am I

standing in it? If I am capable of it, then I enjoy all the blessedness of standing in the light, and am in a position to test all that pretends to possess this character. “God is light.” He is bringing this home to the hearts of the saints. And this must be by presenting Christ Himself. There was, at the time this Epistle was written, a great deal made of development, and He wants to bring them back to the truth. Science, so called, had got in. The character of apostolic teaching was to bring them back “earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.” “That which was from the beginning.” My soul ought to know Christ better every day. The moment I get “God manifest in the flesh,” I cannot know anything out of Him, but that which is false. The question of knowledge is to give place to Christ. If I get there, nothing can shake me. I am in Christ. “These things write we unto you that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” Do you believe on the Son? Then rest there.

Verse I. First, it was from the beginning; second, it was a real substantial Person they had known familiarly, not a doctrine; that is the blessed secret of all. If they have Christ, then they have all that the Father has, all that is revealed of Him: and they cannot go from that without being wrong. They have got eternal life, the perfect revelation of God—the power of life in Christ. This is what is presented to us as the full enjoyment and the safeguard of the saint. It is ours, though that which was with the Father, yet was so near to us; not union, but so near to us that nothing could be so near as Christ Himself. Instead of wanting anything between myself and Christ, it is revealed to me, so that nothing could be

so near to me as Christ Himself. This is the eternal life that was with the Father.

And it is as we study the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall have affections established towards Him, which nothing can break. The poor woman who was a sinner had such confidence in Him that she had come to Him, and loved Him; but the secret of our joy is to know the love of Christ to us; and then we have confidence in Him, understanding that God has come so near as to reveal Himself, and inspire confidence. The more we go out and study Christ—the more we penetrate into His ways—the more we learn the depth of all these riches in Him, the more is His divine fulness revealed to us. If it is His taking little children up in His arms, I see in it what God's character is. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Having truth thus revealed in a Person, I get it for the humblest, lowest, poorest, sinner, because it is a personal act of our Lord Jesus Christ. "That which was from the beginning." And now, mark, this "Word of life," while it shews what God was in Christ, shews it communicated to us; and everything, true or false, is tested by this. So he asks, "Is there love? "No. Then it is not of God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." This is now what John teaches, he brings me up to the object —what God was. "That which we have seen with our eyes"; "God is light"; "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin"; the communication of life to the Christian; the height of the source of the life communicated to us. But in the Gospel of John you will find, "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," "which thing is true in him and in you." "An old commandment which was from the beginning"; now a new commandment, become true in Him and in you. He

called it a new commandment, though an old one—a simple truth that Christ Himself is become our life, “that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal bodies.” If a poor sinner is converted, he has the life communicated from Jesus up there, which comes down to the lowest need in us; and yet how high it rises!

This Gospel begins before creation. Genesis begins with creation, and gives the scene in which all is to be acted; but John gives Him who created, and states the pre-existence of God. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth,” “thou art the same”—we get Christ before the creation, and then in creation. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” and became the source of life; and we receive our life from Him who existed, before all worlds, from everlasting. We receive our new nature from Him, and are united to Him who was before the world, and who created the world. This has a double effect (if right with God), lifting our hearts up in ten thousand thousand thanks, while it manifests the life of Jesus. The least thing manifests the life of Jesus. Whatever does not manifest Him is of the world; whatever is not the manifestation of the life of Christ in our souls, it is sin. And do not think that a hardship. No; rejoice in it. I would have your hearts enlarged; as the apostle says, “be ye also enlarged.” Oh to have Christ so before the eye as to be able to judge everything in His light! Do not think it is great learning; no, there may be the lust of the mind as well as the lust of the flesh; but if in communion with God, we discern all things.

I call your minds back to see the way we received the life; it was in the humblest and simplest way. He who came into the world to save sinners, He has made us

vessels of His fulness. Thus we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and display it. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The effect is, we have the Father and the Son, and we have nothing more to seek. I have the Father and the Son. Can I get truth outside the Father and the Son? I may have more to learn. If a man is on the ocean, there may be a great deal he has to discover of it, but he has not to get there; he says, I am there. So I am in the truth. I have got a great deal to learn; but I am in the Father and the Son, and I am in the truth. I do not want to seek it if I am in it. I have the very eternal God in whom I dwell—I have come to the Father. When there is a consciousness of this, O what comfort and what peace! It not only guards us from evils without, but it gives spiritual rest within. If I am striving to get something, I have no communion. If I want to get to the sovereign, when I am in His presence already, I have no communion; and if I am not brought up there, I cannot have the sense of what the conscience ought to be in God’s presence. The joy is, that our fellowship is with the Father, and not that of getting there.

“These things write we unto you that your joy may be full.” There is where God brings the saint if there is humbleness. And if there is not humbleness, we shall slip. When we lose the sense of God’s presence, the sense of it, I say (because we are always in His presence in truth), we are at the point to sin. My natural character or flesh will shew itself if I am out of His presence. There is such a thing as the saint’s dwelling in the conscious presence of God without fear. If there is anything between me and God, my conscience will be at work; but when the Spirit is not grieved, the soul is in

the presence of God for joy; learning holiness, it is true, but in joy, because occupied in communion instead of in detection; and that is a great thing. There is such a thing as being in His presence without the conscience having to be exercised, and in perfect joy. “My peace I give unto you.” What was that peace? There were no vagabond affections— there could not be, and so there was full peace of heart with God. Christ was divinely perfect—all His affections always in tune with God. Now, through the grace and power of God, we may be brought to that, Christ having been revealed to the soul, the world is cast out, and Christ is everything, and there is perfect joy. This is often what our experience is after conversion, but afterwards the love to Christ grows less fervent—the world creeps in little by little, and we have less joy.

There are three things which characterise a Christian. First, “he is in the light as God is in the light.” Now God had said to Israel, “I will dwell in the thick darkness”; and at Sinai told them to keep off; “for if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned.” There was a great deal of good there, but He was in His pavilion of darkness, not seen. God acted towards Israel, but did not shew Himself. Now the veil is rent from top to bottom, and all is light. It is the very nature of the truth we are in, that God is now manifestly revealed, and he that is come in through the veil stands in the light of God’s holiness, perfect purity in itself, and it shews everything that is not so. Second, “Fellowship one with another.” We are there together, and all have fellowship by the same Holy Ghost dwelling in all. Third, We can be there because “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” The more thoroughly in the light, the more

it is seen that there is no spot on us through that blood. This could not be said of a Jew; but now the righteousness of God is set forth, and we are brought into the light as He is in the light. Is this a thing that makes you unhappy, or gives you joy of heart? If we are true of heart, we shall be glad of the light to detect the darkness in us. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” We do not want to escape from the light, but to be searched by it—not with a pretension that we have no sin, but the consciousness that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. For the effect of being in the light is, that we confess our sins. “In whose spirit there is no guile.” There are two things there, the confession and the love.

Verses 1-4 are that there may be no deception. Then in verse 5, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Now that is the test when Christ is known in the presence of God: there is no question about sin. How came I there? I came through the blood—then I have got peace. If I am reasoning about God, this is another thing; but if we have got there, we got there through the blood, and this gives peace, a peace which is never lost. There is a peace which may be lost: happy at first, while fresh from conversion, and all is easy and smooth with us, our hearts attracted by the grace of Christ; but if failure comes in, conscience is awakened, sin alarms, and we lose our peace, so that we do not know where we are. Until we have apprehended that we are brought to God —where we never could be brought if there remained a

spot of sin upon us—we cannot know settled peace in our souls, as spoken of in Hebrews, “no more conscience of sin”; and that is enduring peace. The power of the affections of the new nature forms a link of fellowship with God; and only as we keep in the light, shall we know the practical enjoyment of it. We must be in the light that evil thoughts may be shut out, so that we may have fellowship with God. In how many things, in our intercourse with one another or with the world, self comes in and is not judged by us! There is a practical consciousness in the Christian that he cannot go on without God, and he judges, waits, and confesses, trusting in God, and thus his heart is kept calm and in peace.

There are two things. First, The manifestation of the eternal life—for it has been manifested to us. Second, We are partakers of it, I have fellowship with the Father and the Son. He has communicated to us that nature, so that we can delight in His fellowship.

The Lord give us to keep ourselves in the love of God—in His presence, in the light, detecting everything that is not of Him, judging it, and thus to be in the enjoyment of His love.

If our hearts were as simple as the word of God, our perception of its truths would be as simple and as easy. But it is not so. In a certain sense it could not be so; nor ought it to be so, till our hearts and thoughts are brought into subjection to God’s thoughts. There will be no simplicity till the conscience is purged; because, till the soul is brought to God, all is confusion and darkness on account of sin. In partial and dimmer light there is often terror, because everything is confused. So when

the conscience is at work, until we are brought to set to our seal that God is true, and learn that all our thoughts perish, all our ways are foolishness, terror and confusion reign in the soul. But when brought to this, our hearts become as simple as the word. It is a great matter to have the heart exercised. God would have, and will have, the mind and conscience exercised. But till our thoughts are brought into subjection to God's thoughts—our own thoughts utterly set aside—we cannot have blessed and happy thoughts of God. When our thoughts flow in the current of God's thoughts—when His thoughts become ours—it is blessed in every sense. The conscience is blessed, the heart is blessed; and you go on cheerfully. Not so when God speaks, and we begin to reason; setting up our thoughts against, or mingling them with, God's revelation. That is not simplicity. Till the soul is bowed to receive God's thoughts you cannot, and ought not, to have perfect peace. I have sin in me; how then can I have peace? Here is the difficulty. For, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If the revelation of God in Christ shines into me, I cannot say, "I have no sin." What follows? "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Here, then, I find how I can have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Christ the Advocate with the Father, maintains us in the communion we are apt to lose. This is the great secret which breaks down human pride—entire subjection to God's thoughts. If God has given a revelation, and I am not subject to it, it is unbelief and rebellion. God says, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." If I say, "I have done this or that, and God cannot forget; He knows all, and He must remember"; I am found reasoning, and not submitting to God's thoughts. I am concluding what

God must be, from what I find in myself, consequent on the light which has shined in.

How then can I have peace? God does not mean us to take up things lightly, without exercise of soul. When the light of God shines into the conscience, sin is felt, and seen too, where it never was seen before. God shines in, and I find darkness. God cannot have to do with darkness. I find that in me which God cannot accept. How can God accept me?

I am always glad to see a conscience exercised thus. It is all useful to convict of sin. It is good for the light to probe to the bottom of the heart. It is awful to think what the human heart is—I do not mean in the gross forms of evil. There is something in the selfishness, the cold calculating reasoning of man's heart, worse than all the sins one could enumerate— yes, even of the decent man who keeps his character! Is there one single motive which governs your heart, decent and sober as you are, which governed Christ? Is there one feeling in your breast which was in Christ? Not one. What governs men? Selfishness. Not so Christ. There was no selfishness in Christ. In Him all was love. Love it was that brought Him down. Love gave Him energy when hungry and weary at the well. Love carried Him on, one constant unfailing stream of love. Never was He betrayed into anything contrary to it. Deserted, abandoned, betrayed, still there was one unwearying action of love. Selfishness can feel love. It is even lovely to man's mind, though he is the very opposite of it. Yet some are amiable and beautiful characters. But how do they use their amiability? To attract to self! self governs man. Selfishness need not be put into him; it is there. All is sin from beginning to end—all self. Whatever be the

form it takes, ii is vanity. Is it not true of every one that will read this, that some personal gratification, perhaps some little bit of dress, has more power to occupy the thoughts, than the agony of Christ? Not that He would have us always occupied with that; He would have us occupied with His Person and glory.

When I want to prove, then, is that we cannot think badly enough of what our hearts are. It is well that we should know it, for we cannot have the truth without in some measure judging the root and principle of evil within. But then have we any power to remedy the evil? No, none. But when brought to God, happily we get miserable about it. When there are desires after truth, I hope, because I see some goodness in God; but hope is dashed by seeing some evil in myself. That is not simplicity. It is judging God by some sort of knowledge of what I am. It may be true and righteous; but it is law. The principle of law is, that God is towards man according to what man is towards God. It is the principle which conscience always will act on; for according to conscience it is right. The evil is not in this, but in the fact that I am not brought to total despair. The light has not yet broken down the will, so as to make me cry out, “I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes.”

Beloved friends, if I take the ground of expecting anything from God, in virtue of what I am towards Him, all is over! there is nothing but condemnation. God is holy, and I am not. God is righteous, and I am a sinner. The end of all these exercises of soul is to make you cry out, “I am vile,” and that is all. God is holy, and I am not. He is holy, and must be holy, and ought to be holy. Would you have Him lower Himself down to what you are? No, never. I may tremble before Him when I think of it, but I

would not have it otherwise. No person quickened into the divine nature could deliberately wish God to come down from His holiness, to spare one sin; because he has learnt by that same nature to hate sin. My heart has tasted a little of love in God Himself; for He cannot reveal Himself without revealing love. The law shews man what he ought to be, but does not shew what God is. It says, love God, and it shews me that I ought to love, but does not tell me who or what the God is I am to love. Job said, if I could but find Him! However distracted and broken to pieces under the hand of God, he felt that if he could only find Him, he would love Him. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!” Flesh is always under the law. Realising by faith the precious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, then all is easy, all is peace. Flesh comes in and troubles, and the soul is down; and it is up and down; and the evil is that the soul gets habituated to such alternations, and not to walking in communion with God.

To think that God is going to condemn me is not fellowship with His thoughts. What is fellowship? Common thoughts together; common feelings, affections, objects; one heart, one mind. Thus we have fellowship with God! How wonderful! Fellowship with the Father and the Son. How so? Why; what have I received, if I have not received God’s thoughts? Does not the Father delight in the Son? and do not I delight in that there is all beauty and perfectness in Him? Do not I delight in a soul being converted? Is it not your delight that Christ should be perfectly honoured and glorified? and is it not God’s too? If God’s thoughts are the spring of our thoughts, can we wonder that our joy should be full? The Holy Ghost gives thoughts, and our hearts are

too narrow to take them in in all their fulness and power; but our joy is full, nay so full that it runs over. It is not that we are not inconsistent to the end. The peace and rest that we get is, that there is no modification, no change, in God Himself.

If we say there is this or that inconsistency in me, and how can such as I look to God, and begin questioning, we get back to law—to judging by my own good-for-nothing heart of what God is. Would I have you indifferent to sins? No! but I would you had so settled and constant a judgment of the flesh, as vile and cannot please God, as to give yourself entirely up. Many of us have to learn this by detail—by failing, and failing, and failing. It is better to learn it by a ray of light shot from God's credited word—to believe, from His report that, from the first shoot it puts forth from the earth to the last fruit it bears, it is the old tree, and will never bring forth anything but wild grapes. A hard lesson this, but a true one. Are your hearts brought to say, in God's presence, I know that "I am carnal, sold under sin?" Have you come to this point, to accept the entire judgment of God against yourself? Terrible! But you must get there to know more full blessedness. Have you ever sat down satisfied to know that the self that is sitting there cannot please God? When it comes to that I give up all thoughts of judging God by what lam; for then He could only cast me out of His presence! I am not looking to gain eternal life. I cannot; I have failed. Where then shall I find that which I so desperately want? Why in this was manifested the love of God (v. 2). Himself is manifested.

The life you want is come by another. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." You are just the opposite to Jesus.

How did you find that out? Jesus is manifested, the eternal life which came down from the Father, to you, because you could never have got your heart up to it. If Christ is not my life, where is it? Is Christ my life? Yes! and what a life I have. It makes me see sin in me—true. But if I have the sin, have I an imperfect life? A life which, perhaps, God cannot be pleased with? No; it is given from God, because I am mere sin. God sent His Son that I might live through Him. It is God's free gift. Where is responsibility then? As regards getting, there is none. It is in the using! Do I weaken responsibility? Nay, I give it all its force. If you are under the law, you are either weakening its authority (for if I say God is merciful and will give a reprieve, I destroy the law), or you established the law, proving its utter condemnation, and that you are dead through it—a lost sinner—alive by the life of Christ.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v. 5). God comes in as light. Sin is darkness. Light has no fellowship with darkness. Light being come in, we must so stand in the presence of God that, in the full light of His holiness, no spot at all is seen in us. Do you walk thus in the light? It is a real thing. The walk is what a man really is. Can you stand in the light, as God is in it without a veil between, walking, not according to the light, but in the light? Have you ever walked in such sort, knowing, without an effort in your conscience, that you are in the presence of God? If not, how have you been walking—going on for a few brief years? Whither you know not—in the awful folly of the human heart—in a constant state of moral madness! Have you ever had it all told out in your conscience,

alone with God, all that you ever did? A long tale!" That is what you have done, that is what you have thought, and I saw it all! Would you like thus to be told out, alone with God, the things that perhaps were not done before men, just proving that you thought more of man than of God? Is it all going to sink into oblivion? Have you thus been manifested to God, as the apostle speaks?

Here is a message—mark who brings it! A message by Christ. To bring me to Christ—to God—to judge? No! But to bring me to One who has come to put away all that He has made manifest! I breathe again: what a comfort! I can desire now that everything should be known, everything I have even thought of, because it is to Him who came to put it all away—not to hide, nor excuse, but to put it all away. The Son of God has died for it all. It is God putting my sin away, instead of putting me away. I am in the light, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. I get the witness of God Himself, God who is light. If He does not shew a spot in me, who will? Do I say, there is no spot in my nature? No. But it does not depend on what I am; it depends on God, in whose light I am. The God who manifests me tells me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin! God has loved me perfectly. How do I know that? Because of what I am? No: I know it from what God is, and from what He has done; and my soul rests in constant, perfect, undisturbed peace; for God has revealed Himself to be what He is, and has revealed what He has done, in that Christ died; and what He has done never can change—He never changes. It is in the power of an accomplished salvation that the soul rests, and not on anything that is yet to be done; so that there can be no change. The blood of Christ alone blots out my sin. If

Christ did not do it perfectly, when will it be done? But He has done it. “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” When faith, by divine teaching, has laid hold on this, faith does not change either. “The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins.”

One word at the close on that which is important to us all— communion or fellowship. Is communion never interrupted? Yes! But God’s love is not interrupted, nor my confidence, though my communion may often be; for God cannot have communion with a single sin—with an idle trifling thought— so that, when such come into the mind, we cannot have communion. What is the resource then? The answer is given in chapter 2:1, “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It is not here the Mediator with God, but the Advocate with the Father. Communion with the Father has been interrupted. Advocacy is founded on two points: that He, the righteous One is in God’s presence, and that He has made propitiation for us. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and we lose it through sin or folly. Christ comes in as the Advocate, and the Spirit of Christ works according to advocacy, and restores communion, brings us back to fellowship with the Father and the Son. Here is the remedy for daily failure. Our position is fellowship with the Father and the Son.

“That our joy may be full.” Have you been brought to this? He has made peace. Have you got it? Take no rest till you have it. Tolerate no sin; but see that God has put it all away by the blood of the cross. God forbid there should be any levity about sin. Nothing is so impossible

as that God can brook sin. But He can put it away. Have you, by faith, attained this rest, rest in that eternal life which came by the shed blood, never to be shed again? Beloved friends, only be sure of this, that God is love; that in all His ways with you, He is love, and He would have you happy. You cannot be happy in evil. Because He is love, He would bring us to know this love and find therein our rest. Aye, and He would have us reckon on Him as regards our failures. I have sin in me, and I have no strength save in Him. If I cannot, or do not, go to Him when there is sin and failure, where am I to go for strength? Moses said, Exodus 34:9, “If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.” Could you go up with the stiffneckedness you have without God? “Go with us,” says Moses, “because it is a stiffnecked people.” You will never get the victory over sin, nor indeed properly judge it, unless you have God with you. Christ can give us to hate the sin and strengthen us against the thing we hate. God is love. I know it in Christ, and I have Him against the evil that would hinder me—the thing I feared would be too much for me. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

It is a great mercy that God has not left us in the dark as to our state before Him. Now men, by nature, have a notion of judgment. Even the heathen have this; and much of the Christianity of the present day is little more. Men try to conduct themselves in such sort as to stand in judgment, tempered perhaps by mercy. They confound

what is never confounded in the word of God—judgment and mercy.

Now Christ did not come to leave men there; He did not die to leave men there. He came to put men in a totally different condition. If the Son of man came into the world and died, it must have been for some great purpose. He brought down into this world the whole light of grace and truth—all that was needed to change the whole relation of a man to God; He came with it.

In verse 3 we get the object of writing this scripture, that we may have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It speaks of such an entire putting away of sin, and such a knowledge of God's thoughts about the Father and the Son as that we may have fellowship with them. What a wonderful thing! Not a mere natural thought of judgment, but companionship of heart with the Father and the Son. Does this leave any uncertainty as to our state at the great day? No. He is not to have fellowship and intimate friendship with us and then condemn us. No. There is such a cleansing as that all that could hinder this fellowship is for ever put away.

Mark how far a man's thought is from that naturally. He says, I have not this fellowship, this joy: God is in heaven and I on the earth. Well, if it is so, you have not got the good of the gospel. If you have not fellowship with the Father, you are not thinking about Him at all, or else you are dreading Him. You have not fellowship, you cannot have fellowship, if you feel criminal before Him. It is anything but fellowship. The will is not broken down when there is dread. But how is this? Why! is not your heart given to pleasure, to money? Are you not after the

flesh, after things which are quite contrary to God, and contrary to fellowship with God? “The carnal mind is enmity to God.” This is our state naturally, and what the word of God calls darkness; not merely being in the dark, but darkness itself, just as God is light. It is in you that the evil is. There is the insensibility of a drunkard; but besides this, there is the fact that he loves to gratify a vile lust. “Ye were sometimes darkness.”

And what is this darkness? Corruption of nature. Compare yourself with Christ. He is the pattern of what is good. Are you not just the very opposite? How came you to be so? All the objects for which you are living are just the opposite of that for which Christ was living. You are living for pleasure, for money, for fame, and for a thousand other things, while He was ever living unto God. I am not speaking of your outward life, but of your motives. All that is governing your life is the opposite of what governed Christ. Suppose a person brought up in filth from his youth; he does not know that it is filth. He has got accustomed to it; and why? Because his heart is as filthy as his clothes or his house.

Now we are so accustomed to sin that we do not see it to be sin. What does that prove? Just that we love it. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” The rejection of Jesus is the proof of it. You may say that, if you had lived then, you would not have done as they did, you would not reject Him. Are you sure of that? What are you doing now? Do you see any beauty in Him? Do you see one bit of darkness in yourself? When He is brought in testimony before you, you do not see beauty in Him. That is darkness. We love our lusts, and we do not love

the Lord Jesus Christ. That is our state. Christ is not the thing that governs and possesses our hearts day by day. If so, how can we have fellowship? “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” But you are darkness, and how can you have fellowship with Him? You are darkness in your conduct, in your will, and in your judgment; for your judgment is governed by your will, your motives, desires, etc. He is holiness itself, “light,” which is pure and which manifests everything. But if He manifests everything in you, how then can you have fellowship with Him?

Now this is a message of what God is, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” He cannot give up His light, He cannot have fellowship with darkness; and it would not be a blessing if He did. But it is a message brought down here. It is not in heaven, but here that we have the message, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” If you call yourself a Christian, you are saying that you have fellowship with Him; but if you are walking in darkness you are deceiving yourself. This is a fearful thing. God is so totally out of men’s minds, that they have not the sense that they have got away from Him. God is light. There cannot be the slightest communion with darkness. God cannot undo Himself, and destroy His own holiness to have fellowship with darkness. You are deceiving yourself.

Now there is another thing; “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” God will not leave you away from Himself. If He makes you happy, it is in Himself. Now this is what

natural conscience dreads—to be in God's presence. God, as He is, without modifying one bit of His holiness, puts us there in the light. Then I am in the light as God is in the light. This was in Christ. What do we see in Christ? Holiness in every thought. Israel undertook to obey God under terror, Christ in love. Men undertake this as Israel did, under terror of judgment. Men do undertake to do God's will in view of judgment. Now Christ said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." That is what Israel undertook, and we know how they failed. That is what men are doing—undertaking to have to do with God in prospect of judgment. God dealt with Israel so to prove that they could not do it. But that is what Christ did in grace. So when He came on earth He was all obedience and love. Christ comes, and what do we find in all His ways? Separation from evil. He kept evil outside of Him in passing through it. He touched the leper and was undefiled. He was love; He never did anything but love. He was the living expression of the holiness and love of God in the midst of sin.

When the truth of that is brought into the conscience, when I see that I have slighted the Christ, and preferred idle vanities to Him, how it shews me what I am! When I see the love of Christ, does not that come and say, "O you are a wretch to prefer a bit of dress to Christ, to take anything when Christ is disliked for it! "And when thus brought into the light, in the presence of God, we judge ourselves. I judge rightly what I am, and what I have been doing, all the while I have been in darkness. I must, of course, see the light; therefore it is by faith. Not that I may realise all, but yet I judge all in God's presence and hate myself. And it is just when we begin to think that God does not hate us that we begin to hate

ourselves. When the spirituality of the law comes, we hate sin, but dread the consequences; but when the light of Christ comes, we hate sin through and through, and there is humbleness. I hate sin and abhor myself. Now, there is a real moral change. I am brought into the true light. O what a difference when a man is brought to God; not in terror which makes him run away, nor in full peace, but yet to a God who, in love, has brought me into His presence to shew me what I am. Then, I repeat, it is getting into the light. There is distress at first, but so much the better, for the heart is set right.

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Here is something more than hating sin. We are in the light. God will not enfeeble that light so as to allow one shade of darkness. He loves us so much as not to dim one ray of His glory, but He is doing that which will make us happy in it. Instead of allowing sin, He cleanses it away.

If walking in the light as He is in the light, how do I get there? Not in Christ’s life merely, for I need His death. There the light was more shewn than in His life. There God is shewn to be intolerant of all sin. God Himself has marked there, in the cross, that He cannot tolerate sin. And if Christ was holiness Himself, it shews more clearly the fearfulness of sin put upon Him. If God and Christ are to settle the question of sin between them, they must do it according to the perfection of their own knowledge of it. There light and sin met. Light is turned into judgment against sin. Light did meet the sin, and in judgment. Where are we to get the fruit of this? Now take the cross; there He was giving Himself up, all that He was for us. There never was a time in which Light and love came out so as on the cross—the perfection of

Light, because of obedience; of love, because of giving up of self. Never was there such obedience as when Christ was made sin. All is brought to the same focus, that I may see Light and love in Christ. Why all this? That the blood of Jesus Christ His Son may cleanse us from all sin.

Now that I am brought into the Light, what do I see? Sin on me? No, I see it was laid on Christ. I see Light dealing with sin on Him. When I learn the extent of sin, then I learn the extent of love. When brought into the Light as God is— in the cross, I see that Christ has put my sins away; and my being in the Light it is that enables me to see it. When I come to see sin in its fulness, I see that it is on Christ. And now there is not merely the cleansing of my conscience, but peace with God. It is in the Light. I am in the Light, as God is in the Light; and the very thing that brings me to see sin, brings me to see sin put away. I know too that God is love, and here I have peace. Then we get truth in the inward parts. If I confess sin—own all sin as such, that is truth in the inward parts. See Psalm 32. So we are brought in the consciousness of forgiveness into the presence of God; and there I know I am cleansed according to God's mind. Then I learn God's love. In Isaiah 43 God says, "Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." What then? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake."

Now this is the message that "God is light." He cannot change; you must. The place where this takes place is the cross. The message is God's perfect love. God, in love to your souls, has not waited till judgment to tell you what sin is, but has told it out in Christ as in His

sight, and He has done so in putting it away. Hence the fearful guilt of despising such grace.

The special point in what we have before us here, as I may say in all the writings of John, is such a manifestation of the Father in the Son as should bring us into fellowship and association with both. We have difficulties: there is the holy nature and character of God, and our state. He first puts this blessed thought and purpose of God, giving us fellowship with the Father and the Son, and then goes on to shew where the difficulty lies.

As Christians we have a new nature and capacity of enjoying God, as born of God, a divine nature— "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"; and we have the power of the Holy Ghost. Evil nature has some special delight; and so the divine nature in us delights in divine things. If this were simply so, all would be very simple; but the flesh is there. Yet it is true for all that, that we should never have had the same kind of fellowship with the Father and the Son if we had not these exercises with other things that are not the Father and the Son. We have to go through temptation; but all this brings out the love and thoughtfulness of God about us that we never should have learned if we were not what we are. Man in Eden would be in innocence, thanking God and enjoying himself; but we have had Christ, that is, God revealing Himself fully in grace above all the sin. It was natural to God, if I may so speak, to love creation, but something more than natural, when God in sovereign grace commends His love to us when we are sinners. There I find what rises above all my thoughts of simple goodness; One absolutely holy, not merely good, but a perfectly holy nature dealing with one that is evil. That

is infinite goodness, and yet it brings us in this increased knowledge of what God is to where there has been no evil at all.

This revelation makes us know God as we never could have known Him otherwise. The angels delight to look into it, but it applies to the affections of our hearts as applied to ourselves; for He does not take hold of angels but of the seed of Abraham. I get then the Lord Jesus Christ becoming a man, shewing His holiness where sin was—not where sin never could enter—and then the patience and the goodness of the love, the perfect revelation of the Father. He could say, “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.” “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Even if we take the highest character of this, we have the Father’s delight in the Son Himself revealed to us, and we are brought into it in Christ, the very thing that should occupy us. He puts us, by the love that sought us while sinners, into this love; we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son; it is there that we are and thus so blessedly brought in.

I see a Man (one who is God over all, but still a man) the object of the Father’s delight, and the One who had His delight in the Father. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” And “I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” It is all sovereign grace towards me, it is true, but redemption has brought us thus (Christ having become our life) into the apprehension of all these delights; so that, while we are brought to the dust as to ourselves, it brings us to

full joy. And when God revealed Himself thus, He does not say “this is my beloved Son, you ought to love Him,” but “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”— “I love Him.” He reveals His own affections to the Son. When we come to the death of the Lord Jesus, “now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.” I see the sinless One, in the very place of sin where He was made sin, perfect in love to His Father and perfect in obedience. I say, was there ever anything like it? This perfect One, perfect in dependence when as a victim forsaken of God, perfect in His love, perfect in obedience: everything was tested to the uttermost— “the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” When I see all this, my soul as taught of God adoringly delights in it, humbled to the dust as to ourselves, still looking at the perfectness of this wondrous One. I suppose the soul has had peace, sin all gone; then Christ is the blessed object of my soul, and I learn the kind of feelings I never should have otherwise known. He could say “therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life,” and I say therefore do I love Him. I have got the thought of the Father about Him. It is not merely that my sins are put away; but by the Father thus revealing all His thoughts and ways in Christ as He has, my soul in looking at Christ sees all this perfectness, enough to draw out the affections of the Father because of His perfectness of love to Him and obedience. He has set Him at His own right hand in glory; I sit down to gaze at Him, and see infinite perfectness. The Father could not but delight in, and love Him; and as taught of God I have fellowship with the Father in the very most blessed objects of His affections, the closest fullest object of His love. He has centred all my affections; as it is said in the Epistle to

the Ephesians, “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” —even to angels and principalities and powers in the heavens.

It is there where a soul is brought, when there is peace of heart—not merely of conscience—but peace of heart through the Holy Ghost, when peace of conscience has nothing to do with it. If my affections are concentrated on the object of the Father’s whole delight, I know the infiniteness of the object, and this gives peace of heart. Through sovereign grace I have my delight in Him. My affections are feeble and weak; but still if they are centred on this object, I am at the infiniteness of the source of delight. He is the Father’s constant delight. His delight was to do His Father’s will—His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. With Him I have all things i the object is there; with Him I know the Father. I have His Father my Father, His God my God. I have the Spirit of adoption whereby I cry, Abba Father. The affections flow out according to the new nature and the Spirit of Christ. It is not supposing that our affections are adequate: they never are even in human things, but they can be concentrated—not let out to other things. We are finite: the object is infinite; confidence grows in the apprehension of it.

We are brought then in this new nature and the power of the Holy Ghost—the Father has brought me—into the very same place and title and name that Christ is in. “Behold what mariner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we. the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him

as he is." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The soul goes on in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It cannot be otherwise if you merely take the truth, because it is the Holy Ghost that is the spring of the affections and thoughts, and He cannot give us different ones from those of the Father and the Son. For though the Holy Ghost is down here and working in us, He brings down the things that belong there and communicates them to us.

When I speak of my need as a sinner, it is not fellowship; I must come as a sinner to the cross, wanting to be cleansed, and justified. This brings me into that; but I must come as a sinner, I must come by my conscience, though my heart may be attracted by the Lord Jesus; if my conscience is not reached, nothing is done. His holy love, not mine, attracts me; but if I come into God's presence, He is light, and my conscience is reached. If I anon with joy receive the gospel, there is no root, though there may be sincerity at the moment; where love works, it always brings light, because God is love as well as light, and the love gives me confidence to come into the light when I find I am a sinner.

You will always find these two things where a soul has to do with God: you cannot have confidence without finding out both. Why did the woman that was a sinner come into the Pharisee's house? Because the love of Christ was in her heart. It is the same with every soul. God is both light and love. He has really revealed Christ to us, and I have confidence. The righteousness of God against sin is revealed and love to the sinner. We walk in the light as God is in the light. It is the only way we can go to God; I cannot come but through the cross of Christ.

Then, when I am come, I find in passing through the veil, there is not a morsel of sin left on me in the sight of God. I am fit for the light, and then I come to enjoy God's way in it. I have this side in coming to God, I want the cross; but then when I pass through, I am reconciled to God, and begin to learn His thoughts—to look on the cross from God's side. I come to Him, and there I see all the wondrous blessedness of what God is, and therefore my heart can adore, being in peace. Having come, I have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

First is brought out simply and absolutely that as such he that is born of God cannot sin. Christ is his life: sin cannot touch it— "he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." But it gives us what our portion, our place is. If I only get a mixed condition, I cannot have God's complacency in it. It is in complacency and fellowship: our proper life is proper fellowship, and that in divine complacency. Our proper divine life is fellowship with the Father and with the Son. It is not a question of being able to stand before God in righteousness; that is the claim of His holiness and righteousness, not fellowship. If it be a question of righteousness, He is estimating in a judicial way what is before Him. And, Christ being before Him, it is all settled. But here it is the full joy that should be ours in this fellowship, and that by the perfect blessed revelation of the eternal life which was with the Father.

"For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us: that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us." We have seen all

that is in the Father's heart close to ourselves in a man (v. i). "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father"—He was constantly before us, and we looking on Him.

Here I get this blessed object before me, this eternal life come down to me in which the Father has been perfectly revealed, revealed in Him so that that which is my life reveals the Father. It is a wonderful blessedness, a truly blessed joy. That which perfectly reveals the Father and represents Him has come down here in my nature. Therefore the apostle so insists on it—we have heard Him, we have seen Him with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. There is what he first presents; "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

Now comes the other side, the grace having been all brought out. This is that which was from the beginning (mark the word); now what does he reveal? He has a message, "that God is light," which is, that He is absolute purity, and reveals everything. This is what light does, it makes all things manifest. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all"—no mixture. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." It is the nature of God in its purity, applied as a test of communion. This is the message that Christ has brought, that God is light. And we walk in the light—that is, in the thorough knowledge of God. Darkness is no knowledge of God at all. If I take the world, the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. That is, man's heart was the very opposite of God's. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "If we walk in the light"—here

it is not merely according to the light, but “in the light,” that is, the full revelation of God, though of course we ought to walk accordingly.

Now mark another point of importance. It is an entirely new thing that is given to us; it is that which was “from the beginning.” It is not as in the Gospel— “in the beginning”; because the Word is before the creation. In the beginning God created; but before this Christ was there and had no beginning: when nothing was created He was—that is where the Gospel begins. But here we have got a question of associating man with God in a new standing, that is, in grace, and this is what was “from the beginning.” The old man is set aside; it is a new start-point, God’s Son, still a man. He is the First-born, the man of God’s delight and God’s counsels; others are brought into the place by grace. But the cross has come in and closed the history of man as a lost sinner, and begun the history of the accepted man—that is, of Christ. “Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning”—it is Christ. The law and the prophets were before Him, but are all entirely set aside for faith; and, Christ taking the place of everything, I have got that which was from the beginning. “Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; it was then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Therefore the angels say “glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men,” Luke 2.

Now, dealing in detail as to this fellowship with God, God is light; where therefore there is growth, if there is a thing in which the flesh is active, this comes to the light. The Person with whom I have fellowship is light;

the light detects if my conscience is right. I cannot have fellowship really without my conscience being brought into the Light. He unfolds this both as to the nature, and as to the acting of it. We have to walk in the light as God is in the light. We could not have got it in Adam, blessed and happy and peaceful as he was; but here I have got it. Christ is the revelation of God in light; and if I am made partaker of the divine nature, it is in the last Adam. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” Darkness does not comprehend light, but Light that is of the same nature does.

“But if we walk in the light”; for mark here that it is not now the law. Do not call the law light. In the law I get the measure of what man ought to be, and therefore God says, “I dwell in the thick darkness.” Christ meets it for us; but when I have got this new nature, this Light that comes down from heaven, it is not what a man ought to be, but what is fit to be in the Light as God is. Thus you cannot go back to innocence. Here I am, a lost sinner, and now I have found God revealed in Christ, the light of the world. This brings me in through the rent veil, and I must be fit for God’s presence in glory.

Thus it is in John 13. In the chapter before “the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” It is the third character in which He is presented in these chapters—as Son of man. The Greeks come up, and He says, “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” Then in chapter 13, “He riseth from supper and laid aside his garment and took a towel and girded himself.” What was the meaning of that? “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”—I cannot sit with you as your companion: I cannot go on; I am going

to my Father, and I must have you fit to be there. You are going through the world and will pick up dirt, and I cannot have it. He is shewing this, that it is not now any return to a condition of man, responsible as man, but to walk in the light, even as God is in the light. If I am not fit for that, I cannot be with God at all. There is where the difficulties come in. It is not the question—can I answer to God? No, I cannot. The veil is rent now: the question is, Have you got such a new condition and standing that you can be in the light with God, where the flesh cannot be? There is where He puts us.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” There is no selfishness there. Suppose I enjoy the love of God, do you think bringing another in makes it less? No; you enjoy the light, and it is not a bit the less for others. In human things, if I have a loaf and another comes in to share it, there is only half a loaf left for me. In divine things we have fellowship one with another, and there is no diminution.

Then I come to the third point. Here I am in the light as God is, in this blessed fellowship, “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is not ‘has cleansed’ or ‘will cleanse,’ but very simply an abstract statement; just as when I say ‘ that medicine cures the ague,’ I am talking of its nature. I have to do with God in the light as He is in the light. I have got this blessed knowledge, that the light has come out through the cross, and I am as white as snow. The thing that let out the light made me fit for it. Thus there are these three great elements of my condition— in the light as God is, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” I cannot say the flesh is not there (it is not sinning), but the existence of sin in the flesh does not give a bad conscience. My conscience is bad (I mean practically) if I let the sin, the flesh, act. The old man in its nature is always there. In the cross of Christ I have what meets the case—our old man is crucified with Him, and I have to reckon it dead; but still there it is in itself too truly.

Then I get the next step. Suppose it does act— “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is not “if we confess our sin” —I have nothing to do with confessing sin. People will confess their sin, not their sins; for the heart is deceitful enough to excuse the sins by admitting sin in the flesh. I admit the flesh is there; but why did not you keep it down in the power of Christ so as not to let it act? Therefore it is we have to confess our sins: and mark, we have to walk with that. When he speaks of sin (v. 8), it is the present tense; I never can say I have no sin: but when of sins it is, “if we say that we have not sinned” (v. 10). I ought not to be sinning; I may be thinking of the blessedness of Christ. If so, I am not sinning; my mind may be occupied with Him. But if I say that I have not sinned, I make God a liar, because He declares all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Here I get the distinction.

It is surprising that people do not see the difference between ‘sin’ and ‘sins.’ Peter speaks of sinning, that is, of the lust that comes when the flesh is active; but when I come to Paul and John, they speak of the nature of the flesh, of sin in the flesh. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: if we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Observe in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not communion exactly which is the main object of the teaching there. Here it is, and therefore I get the Father and the Son, the highest expression of it. In Hebrews I enter into the holiest. It is a question of whether I can approach God who is holy and righteous, and does not give up His holiness and righteousness because He is love; and there I get this, that I am perfected for ever (the words "for ever" meamng not merely for eternity, but what is uninterrupted). As Christ is always at the right hand of God, so we are uninterruptedly before God. There is never a moment that the believer is not the righteousness of God as standing in Christ. Therefore priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews does not apply to sins. What it does apply to is this:—I am perfected for ever and He who is my righteousness, by whom I am perfected for ever, has sat down at the right hand of God. But I am here walking in this world, where I cannot take a step without mercy and grace to help. I have difficulties and trials; I go to the throne of God and get help in time of need. The thing in Hebrews is whether I can go as a mere sinner into God's presence. Yes, the veil is rent, and the Person that put away my sins is sitting there. He is my witness that I am perfect—"for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"—a perfection that never changes, for He is sitting there for me, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He is sitting there because He has nothing more to do. There are these two points in the Epistle: having by Himself purged our sins, *He sat down; and, being perfected for ever, I am walking on

this earth with temptation, but He is always getting grace to help me through this world of difficulty and contradiction of sinners. There is a daily dependence on grace to help me to walk a holy life, without a question of my being perfect before God, and the constant supply of grace through Christ who is there.

Now here the question is raised of how I can have fellowship with the light, where, if I have for a moment a thought not spiritual or charitable, it is sin. The instant I come to fellowship or cornmunion, if I let my own thoughts come in, it is gone. The smallest thing interrupts communion; even supposing I recollect myself, yet for the moment it is gone. The holy God cannot have communion with that which is unholy. Now I get what Christ is as the Advocate: “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.” What is the ground of it? Jesus Christ the righteous. The righteous One is there, my righteousness is always there (as in the Hebrews). Thus not a question of imputation arises, but of communion. I cannot bear the thought that I should grieve the Spirit of God and turn Him into a reprover, instead of communicating the joy of God to me, the One that gives me fellowship with the Father. The moment that is all settled, Jesus Christ the righteous One is there, and He is the propitiation for my sins, I must not have one thought that is inconsistent with the place. But what makes me find it out? My Advocate has been there about it to bring my soul back into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, which had been entirely interrupted: but the righteousness has not been interrupted. Therefore he says “an Advocate with the Father,” and does not talk about God in that

sense, because it is a question of communion with the Father, not of righteousness.

Thus I have got grace acting, not the law; no question of imputation, but no allowance of sin at all as a matter of holiness. It does not put me back to the law, nor its righteousness; but Christ being Advocate for me there, and the Spirit of God in me to act in my conscience, it brings me into utter humiliation before God, and restores the communion of my soul. Some chastening or other comes. But there is not the smallest allowance of anything that hinders communion, nor the smallest imputation of sins. It is the maintenance of communion practically, or the restoration of it when broken, with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; while the righteousness and propitiation remain, so that it is advocacy, not imputation.

We must walk in the light as God is in the light. Nothing unfit for God is tolerated. There is propitiation, there is provision of grace if we sin. As to imputation, all is settled, perfected for ever. But we are to walk worthily of God who has called us unto His kingdom and glory, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Now let me ask, do we really believe we are called to fellowship of that kind? How is it in our hearts? I am sure there is growth in this fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Is this where our souls live? It is what we are called to. It is not saying we have no sin. The sin is there, but in the power of Christ dwelling in us we are called into this fellowship. The power is there, so that I have no excuse for letting in anything that will interrupt communion. We do, when careless about prayer or something of the sort; but there is no excuse for it. Our place is to walk in

fellowship with the Father and the Son always. If we do fail, we have the Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and, as with poor Peter, He restores us. Do you suppose that the work of Christ has not put you in the light as God is, that there is not the perfecting us for ever? There is grace for you to walk aright. It is not saying I am weak: if we always said that, we should get the strength we wanted.

The Lord give us to have the blessed consciousness, that we have been reconciled to God as revealed in Christ, loved as Christ is loved, and called to walk in the sense of this, so that there is the constant dependence on Christ, the constant supply of grace to depend on, the constant testimony to the One we are dependent on.

It is not saying, I am perfected and that is all about it. You have to go through a world of temptation. When Israel was redeemed, they had to go through the wilderness: there is where all the “ifs” come in. If I am in Christ, there is no “if” at all. But I am walking through the wilderness with that which keeps me constantly dependent. I have the revelation of Christ’s power. We are kept by the power of God, and we are kept because we want to be kept; I need this power every moment, there is all necessity for it.

I know this power, and there ought to be this blessed dependence on God. He does not raise the question of righteousness in it, but puts me in this place, and then leaves me to go through the world to have the senses exercised to discern both good and evil. If I do fail, there is my Advocate with the Father, to restore my soul. Unceasing grace and unceasing dependence are the true ground.

The Lord give us the distinct and full sense that the work of Christ has perfected us for ever, and then that you are brought by it into the presence of God in light, and know every instant dependence on the grace of Christ, and constant grace to be dependent on.

The Positiveness Of Life In Christ

1 John 3:1-10

If we weigh the state of the church, we shall find a great deal of what is negative in the Christian life, and contentedness with what is negative. For example, a man sees sin, he takes for granted that there must be sin in him, and it is true and well that he should know it, provided it be not working; he sees the blood of Christ, and is happy. If his flesh is kept in check as to positive sin, and the blood of Christ is seen, he is content. That is what I call negative—a person settling in himself that sin is, and is met by the cross of Christ. It is not as speaking lightly of the cross that I say this. There is nothing like the cross. God Himself is glorified by it. The glory we can have with Christ, but on the cross He was alone.

This condition flows greatly from all that is of nature not having been judged, and the heart then occupied with Christ. When there is a positive life in exercise which attaches itself to Him, and sees the excellency in Him, it never can be satisfied without seeking to have and be that which it sees in Him. Being free from sin—freed, if you please (for when this word is used in Scripture it refers to slavery), there is the positive activity of delighting in Christ. The heart is so far delivered from sin as to delight positively in Christ.

John takes up a positive active life, in the activity of which he supposes the Christian lives, and which has joys and delights of its own. “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold, what manner of

love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God!”

I get the nature of which we are made partakers shewn from the life which is lived. If He is righteous, we know that every one who doeth righteousness has the manifested character of that nature, is born of Him. Where has it come from? From God. I recognise this relationship of a child by the nature that is manifested. The apostle is not merely thinking of what we are in the title of righteousness, but of whom we are born—whence we draw our life. Hence it is that he says in verse 9, “cannot sin,” for it is the nature of God in which we live as born again. He takes the truth up, as he does on every subject, in its own absoluteness, without modifying it by the contradictory principle in us. But the result of the possession of this life is brought in in remarkable terms. We are born of God, but the life which we have received is that eternal life which was manifested in Christ; chap, i:1-3. Hence he says, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be,” no one has seen the glory, “but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” We shall be like Him; it is from the blessed consciousness of this, and the object thus set before us, that the activity of this life now flows. “And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself” (he does not say is pure, but) “even as he is pure.” That is, the measure and standard which he has before his soul is Christ as its object.

How different this is from the negative state, occupied with sin, perhaps thinking how I shall get rid of it! I am a child of Adam is the thought of such an one; no, I say, I am a child of God. If we are sufficiently emptied of self to have Christ before us in this double way, as the life in

which we live, and the object for which we live, then the affections are associated with the object we like; and He is not merely object but life. The power of the life is exactly in the measure in which Christ is the object. There is where a Christian is happy. His soul's affections are set free and occupied with Christ. He is the One we love and delight in, and we want to be like Him and with Him. If your heart is dragging through the world, and you are trying to get as free from all the spots as you can, you cannot be happy. This positive life is real liberty of heart, and that is what happiness means. He purifies himself as He is pure.

If I am not living this fife of Christ, the old lawless thing is active. When there is not the activity of divine life, there is not merely failure in this, but there is the activity of the Adam life, and it is always lawless. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and whosoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood abides in Christ and Christ in him; that is, if I am eating Christ and occupied with Christ, I do not commit sin, nor is my mind living in the sphere in which it has power. If you are not abiding in Him, you will get down to the other state I have spoken of, the mere avoiding of positive evil, while living in the sphere of thought in which flesh can find itself at home, while the spiritual affections are dull and inactive. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." I am in Christ on the same footing of righteousness, as to my walk down here, that He is, as partaker of the same nature and looking forward to a perfect conformity to Him. We have a positive life in itself, which is itself. There is this positive life in connection with Christ who is our life, and this life lives entirely on Him. "I am crucified with Christ,

nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that 1 live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," etc. This is the way it lives. It has these two traits— practical righteousness, and love of the brethren.

A word on the way the soul gets into this living on Christ and with Him. I do not believe you can ever do that until you get free in your conscience. Till then you cannot get beyond this negative conflict with sin, which avoids the evil the new life sees and judges. If I have the new life, I find the sin in me; and if I have not the consciousness of divine righteousness, I cannot delight in Christ as set free; that is, I must think of the sin. Is not God holy? And have not I sins? not merely guilt, but sins in my members? Yes; then "he that committeth sin is of the devil." Well, I commit sin, and hence I am afraid. That is, the workings of flesh come back on my conscience, and I must be occupied with self. The soul is not discharged from self as the ground of its standing before God, though there be divinely given, self-humbling conviction of sin, enough to be cast over on divine righteousness in Christ. It has not been brought to see that the case is perfectly hopeless and then to be cast over entirely on Christ. When brought to this, I am taken out of flesh by this work of redemption in Christ, so that I am made the righteousness of God in Him, and I do not look at myself to know if I am righteous before God.

What a contrast between that kind of negative life, with the head just above water and which says, I am alive, so I ought to be thankful, and this positive joyful life which goes out in active energy after Christ! But in order to this the staff of confidence in self must be snapped. If your hearts are with the world, this is not living on

Christ. You have these difficulties because you are inclined to them and nourish what is the seat of them by continually letting your heart move on in the sphere where Christ is not. Christ Himself is not enough your object. There is surely grace enough in Him to help, when He is looked to, and His strength is made perfect in weakness.

The Love Of God, The Love Of Saints, And Overcoming The World

1 John 4 and 5

God’s love, in contrast with man’s is distinguished by this, that while man must have something to drew out his love (as it is said, “For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to usward, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”), God’s love is without motive, there being nothing attractive in the object that draws it out. “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” God’s love sees no good in us. The brightest proof of God’s love and man’s enmity was seen in the cross: they met there, and thus shewed the superiority of God’s love; as Jethro says, “In the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them.” Verse 9 sets out the open manifestation of His love to us while we were yet sinners. We learn His purposes and counsels about us as saints, in the second place, in verse 17— “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.” This is a very different thing from His first visiting us in our sins. “Herein is love with us made perfect.” The perfectness of God’s love towards His saints is seen in the bringing them to be like Christ Himself. The sovereign grace of God puts the saint into the same place as Christ, that we may have the same kind of fellowship with the Father that Christ had. So in John 14 the Lord says, “My peace I give unto you”—that is, the peace He had with His Father— “not as the world giveth give I unto you.”

The world has the character of a benefactor; and that it sometimes gives generously I do not deny. But then it is by helping a man as he is, out of the resources which it has, which may be all very well; yet, while helping him, it is only taking care of itself. But it is evidently a different thing here; for Christ takes us clean out of our condition, putting us into the same relationship with the Father as Himself. The world cannot give in this way. There is no guarding anything for self in Christ's unjealous love, but in us there is. Therefore He could say, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." His delight was to shew that the Father loved them as He loved Him. "The glory thou hast given me I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Jesus not only loves them Himself, but He will have it known by the world that they are loved by the Father as He Himself is loved. Can there be anything more disinterested than this (although the word "disinterested" fails to give the full meaning)? Still all this is guarded, for Christ ever keeps His place as the eternal Son of God. At the mount of transfiguration, the moment there is the question of putting Moses and Elias on an equality with Jesus, they both disappear, for when Peter said, Let us make three tabernacles, one for Moses and one for Elias, as well as one for the Lord, while he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and instantly the glorified men vanished. "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him." It is not said "hear them," but "hear him." "And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."

If Christ, in His wondrous grace, reveals Moses and Elias as His companions and associates in the glory, the

moment Peter, in his foolishness, gives utterance to the thought that would place them on an equality with Christ, they must both vanish from the scene. It does not say, as the Father loved them, but as “he has loved me” (as a man). For however Christ may bring us unto the same place with Himself, He abides the object of homage and honour, even as the Father. If we elevate ourselves to an equality with Christ, immediately we set ourselves above Him. And it is ever the case thus with flesh. But the more a saint enters into his elevation, as being brought by grace into the same place with Christ, the more he adores Christ as God over all, blessed for evermore. This is ever to be borne in mind.

The thought in verse 17, “as he is, so are we in this world,” is that the saints are in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness: “We are made the righteousness of God in him.” If I have life, it is a divine eternal life: “when Christ who is our life shall appear.” If I have glory, it is the same glory: “the glory thou hast given me, I have given them.” If we have an inheritance, we are “joint-heirs with Christ”; if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ: “Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”

The love is the most difficult thing for us to enter into, but the Lord would have our hearts enjoying it. All that we have in Christ is brought out in this passage, in the general expression, “as he is, so are we.” It is the thought and purpose of God’s grace to bless us not only by Christ, but with Christ. Christ could not be satisfied unless it was so, we being the fruit and travail of His soul: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me”: again, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

The Father's love is seen in giving His Son for us, and the Son's love in His giving Himself for us, and thus bringing us into His perfect place.

Some Christians do not give this verse 17 all its power; they refer it simply to our position before God respecting the day of judgment. Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it, for where there is a question about judgment there can be no boldness. There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father. I cannot get the affections in full play if I think God is going to judge me; but I have the Spirit of adoption, and if I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for it; for God is my Father, and will not judge (save as a Father, now for my correction, by the way). Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of the spiritual affections in me; and we ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it; but it is evident that, if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

Then observe another thing—there is a great difference between spiritual desires and spiritual affections, although they both have the same root. The spiritual desires, if the relationship which would meet them be not known, only produce sorrow. Take an orphan, for instance, in a family where the parent's love to the children is witnessed every day, the sorrowful experience would be, O, that I too had a father! The child who has its parent has the same desires; the relationship existing of parent and child, it knows the joy and gladness which flows from such relationship. So also that we may have joy and gladness as the children of God, we must have the consciousness of the relationship

in which we stand to God. It is not merely that we have a divine nature which gives us spiritual desires, but we must also have the consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought by the power of what Christ has done. It is clear there never could be a question between Christ and His Father as to the daily and hourly enjoyment of the consciousness of His Father's love: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So also He says, "My peace I give unto you." Again he says, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." The Father's delight was in Christ, and He knew it in the daily enjoyment of it. And now, "as he is, so are we in this world."

While Christ lays the ground of our relationship by being the propitiation for our sins and the source of our life, yet it is not by Christ's righteousness that I get "boldness." I must be righteous, of course; I cannot have boldness without it; but besides this there is another character God has towards me—that of a Father—and I have another character towards God, as a child. I have not only righteousness, but I am a son. And here I should notice the defectiveness of some of our hymns which call Christ our brother. We never find in Scripture that Christ is called our Elder Brother. In the fulness of His grace He is not ashamed to own and call us His brethren. My father is a man, but I do not call him a man; it would shew a want of filial reverence in me if I did. In nothing is the power of the Spirit of God more shewn in the child of God than the suitableness of his expressions and feelings towards God. If we are really enjoying our place of infinite privilege, the Source and Giver of our privilege will maintain His own proper place in our hearts.

When we are in the mount of God, it always humbles; although when a saint gets down again, he may be proud of having been there: he is never so when there. Paul was not puffed up when he was caught up into the third heavens; but after he had been there, he needed the thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

“As he is, so are we in this world,” not only in the same standing as to acceptance with God in Christ, but we are brought by the communication of His life into the same relationship as Himself. While in the beginning of the epistle the foundation is laid deep and wide in the blood which cleanses fully, still the grand subject of the epistle is the place into which we are brought. “Herein is love with us made perfect.” If my heart has seized the truth that God as a Father is acting in grace towards me, there is no place for fear. If I have fear I fly to Him, instead of being afraid of Him. If I sin, I fly to Him to pardon it. I could not in my sin fly to my judge, but I have confidence in my Father’s love, and I fly to Him because “perfect love casteth out fear.” The proof of God’s love is that He has given His Son; the perfection of it is, that we are as He is; and fear is cast out even in view of judgment. But if we ask how this came to pass, the answer is, “We love him because he first loved us” (v. 19). There we are brought back to the simplest principles: we love God because He first loved us. We did not come to God because of His loveliness; “we love him because he first loved us.” We do not come in by loving God (this we do after), but we come in as sinners, as debtors to His grace; and then, having come in, so finding God to be what He is—love meeting us in our every need—then we love Him.

Verse 20. Here is a check upon man's deceitful heart: if a man does not love his brother, he cannot love God. Wherever the divine nature is, it is attractive to one born of God.

Verse 21. We have another important principle in this verse: whatever the energy of the divine life in me, it always will have the character of obedience. While there was in Christ the devotedness of love, there was also obedience. We are to love the brethren as being led by the energy of the Spirit, but I am to love them in the path of holy obedience. There is nothing so humble as obedience, and love never takes us out of the place of obedience. The Lord Jesus said, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." When Lazarus was sick, and they sent to Jesus, He abode two days in the same place where He was, because He had no word from His Father; and so, if I have any little service to do for my brother, it must be as in the path of obedience to the word of God. This is what Satan tried to get the Lord out of in the wilderness. Oh, says Satan, have your own will, if it is only in ever so little a bit, by making these stones into bread, now you are hungry. No, the Lord says, it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but," etc. Here we get a countercheck even to the workings of the divine nature, for if it is not a command, it is not of God, and we are here to obey.

Chapter 5.

Verse 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ." Here we get the link between God and the family. When any one is born of God, he is my brother. If the question is asked, Who is my brother? How am I to know my brother? Every one that is born of God is my brother. I

may have to sorrow over him sometimes, but still he is my brother, because I am related to him by the same divine nature. It is of great importance to remember this in the present day, because, when the Holy Ghost really acts, there will be a constant tendency to follow different courses. There has been an awakening from the dead mass around by the power of the Spirit. There are glimmerings of light: mere stones would be motionless, but there is life; therefore the moving power would lead in different directions, because of what we are. If we were all subject to the Spirit of God, we should all go one way. There is another thing also to be observed—we are not at the beginning of Christianity, but at the dark end, and escaping as it were by different roads. The very fact of the operation of the Spirit would be to produce perfect unity if we were subject, but we are not so.

The remedy for this is for the heart to be in close fellowship with Christ; and in proportion as this is the case, will love for all saints be there. To the same extent as Christ is valued will the saint be valued. In proportion as Christ's thoughts about His saints are known to me, will all saints be in my thoughts. I do not know Christ's love aright if one saint is left out; as it is said in Ephesians 3:18, "Ye … may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, and to know the love of Christ." Only can I enter into this in any measure when I embrace all saints. If I should leave one out, I leave out part of Christ's heart. In Colossians we have "your love to all saints"; and in that epistle we have the fulness of the Head; in Ephesians, the fulness of the body. God's grace working in me makes every one born of God the object of my

affections. I cannot go every way at once, and a real difficulty arises how to walk in fidelity to Christ, and in love to the brethren, so as not to let the affections get into a loose and general way. I cannot be loving God without loving all the children of God. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (v. 2). Now men would say that is reasoning in a circle, but there is in it a deeply practical check against the evil of my own heart. If I love the Father, I shall love the children for the Father’s sake, and not lead them into wrong paths, because this would displease and grieve the Father. If I should lead them into anything wrong, I should prove that I do not love them for the Father’s sake, but for my own pleasure and comfort. If you truly love them, you at the same time love God and keep His commandments. If I knew that a member of Christ’s body is going wrong, does this make me cease to love him? No; but because he is going wrong my soul is more deeply in affection, going out after him, as being one with Christ. To be able to love the brethren faithfully we must keep close to Christ.

Again, we have another counter-check: if one comes to me with a vast amount of truth without holiness, or if there be a great show of holiness and truth be absent, neither is of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Satan never touches that which is born of God; he cannot touch it.

Worldliness is a terrible hindrance to the saint. The world is opposed to the Father, as the flesh opposes the Spirit, and the devil opposes Christ.

The difficulty lies in not maintaining nearness to Christ, which the world would come in and hinder. Then I am

open to all sorts of error, for I shall not like the trouble to be right if I am not near Christ. It is very troublesome and disagreeable sometimes to have to do with saints: one will not give up this thing, and another that; and if we are at a distance from Christ, we shall be ready to give them up, and shall not take the pains to get them right when they are wrong. So Moses said, when in a wrong spirit, “Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?”

So Paul says, “My little children, for whom I travail in birth,” etc. You have got off the right ground, and I must have you, as it were, born again. I am travailing over again for you, that you may be right, because you belong to Christ. When Paul looked at them in confusion, as they were, away from Christ, he could only say, “I stand in doubt of you”; but when he looks at them as in Christ, he can say, “I have confidence in you through the Lord.”

Faith not only sees Christ in the glory, but sees also the connection between the glory of Christ and the saints, and it is that which enables one to get on. So Moses said of Israel, not only God was their God, but they are “thy people.” The real hindrance is the world. See Gehazi in the king’s court: his heart had drawn in the spirit of the world, and he was able to entertain the world with the mighty actings of the Spirit. The world will be entertained, and it will be entertained with religion if it cannot get anything else. All that I know of the world’s path,” spirit, affections, and conduct is, that it has crucified my Lord; not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose it was but yesterday that you had seen Pontius Pilate the governor, the chief priests and elders, putting Christ to

death, would you feel happy to-day in holding communion with them? The stain of Christ's blood is as fresh in God's sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed since makes no difference in its moral guilt.

The question then is, Am I to get under the power of this world, or am I to overcome it (in my heart I mean)? When Christ was down here, in all the beauty and attractive grace in which God the Father could delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment of common interest or feeling drawing them to Him. The world in all its classes— rulers, priests, Pharisees, and the multitude—have all been associated in hanging the Son of God upon a gibbet. Such is the world's heart. If I have seen the glory of Christ's Person, and see that He is the very Son of God who came down and was turned out by the world, can I be happy with it? The link between the natural thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart, so that in all kinds of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts me eye, and my eye affects my heart.

Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children, for instance: do I want them to get on well in the world? must I have good places for them in it? Nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on with God unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ. Christ must be everything. Look at Abraham's history: he sojourned in a strange country where he had not a place so much as to set his foot on. So we are not of the world; and this is

the test of our affections, for as we are not at once taken out of the evil, we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, That is true of the heathen world. Yes, but it is not true of the heathen world only. Although it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out, it was true before. God had spoken by His servants and prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But Him they crucified, thus proving that Satan was the master of man. So the Lord said, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart be kept near to Christ. I shall not want the world if Christ is in my heart. If my delight is in that in which God delights, that is, in Christ, then I can overcome. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God the Father.

What! must I do everything to Christ? Oh, that very question proves a heart away from Christ, shewing it bondage for you to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to scorn the world in the least, for God’s grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome—that which my heart is in danger of being led by.

The three points we have looked to, then, have been—first, perfect love with us. There is not merely the manifestation of God’s love to the saint, but association with Christ’s life, putting us into relationship with God.

Secondly, love to every saint; but we are to love them as God’s children, and keep ourselves in the exercise of love to God and keeping His commandments. Thirdly, we are to overcome the world. The heart, resting on, looking to, eating, feeding on, Christ, gets the consciousness of what the world is, and it overcomes. The Lord keep us in humble dependence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us; His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

The Three Who Are Witnessing: “The Spirit, And The Water, And The Blood.”

1 John 5:6-21

In the preceding verses the question between God and the world is brought to an issue; for the Son of God having been seen in the world, and in the world and by the world crucified —thus putting the world to the test— God could do nothing in the world in the hope of finding good in it, after it had crucified His Son. Jesus had to say, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” Having hung God’s Son on the cross, it is plain that this act cut the world off from all possible association with God, and thus the world has become a thing to be overcome by the saint, as the apostle says (v. 5), “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” But he then adds, “This is he that came by water and blood.”

That is, he now presents the character and value of the cross, “He came by water and blood.” The water and the blood are as a witness on God’s part, or the testimony that God gives; for it should be observed that the words, “witness,” “record,” and “testimony,” are all the same word in the original.

You may remark here, that “This is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” This is the thing witnessed. This is the record (or testimony) that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is not in the first Adam, but in His Son; not in man, nor by his works, nor by any means

whatever, but it is God's gift. "He hath given," and though we possess the life, it is not properly and intrinsically in us, but in His Son. When we are quickened, the life is not looked at as in us; for Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is therefore immutable. If Christ's life, indeed, can in any way be annulled or set aside, then can the life in us be so likewise, and not otherwise. If Christ can die, so can we; but if death has no more dominion over Him, no more has it over us. And this it is that gives the amazing value and most blessed character of this life, namely, that its spring and source is in Christ. It is given to the Son to have life in Himself; John 5:26. And thus He becomes, through grace, our life. For example, my finger has life, my natural life, flowing through it; but the seat of fife is not there. My finger may be cut off, though I am not here supposing that a member of Christ can be cut off (which is impossible); but if my finger be cut off, the life still remains in my body, the seat of life not being in my finger. My finger was as much alive as the rest of my body, but the seat of life was not there. The seat of life is in Christ. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." Hence all the character of the life and all the communion flows from the blessed truth— "in his Son." The character of this life is nearness to God. Christ Himself is my life. It is of the last importance for the strength and comfort of our souls, and for all blessed delight in God, clearly to understand what our life is; for our thoughts on regeneration are necessarily altogether imperfect until we apprehend that it is a real life which we have, a life associating us with God's Son, a fife not possessed before, and in virtue of which we get communion with the Father, who has given us eternal life—not in us, but "in his Son."

We get brought out in various testimonies what Christ is to us, as in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, where the apostle, speaking of the offscouring of the earth, says, “Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” And so here we get a corresponding testimony brought out in these three, witnesses, the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

In John 19:34 it is recorded that “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.” The blood and the water flowed from a dead Christ. Hence we see how manifestly the link between the natural man and God is broken, and broken for ever! For “in that he died, he died unto sin once.” All that Christ could have blessed in nature is now entirely and for ever gone; and if there is to be any blessing now, it must be in a new nature, and through a dead Christ; as also all connection and association with God. Expiation, purity, life, can alone be had through a dead Christ. It is a dead Christ that must purify me if I am to be purified; for it was from a dead Christ that the water (the symbol of cleansing) flowed. Until the death of Christ, God was dealing with nature, to see (or rather to teach us, for He knew what it was) if any good thing could come out of nature. But the cross proved—God’s rejected Son proved—that it was not possible that any good thing could come out of nature. Man is not merely a sinner driven out of paradise, as we know Adam was; but man’s state now results not only from his being turned out of God’s presence because of sin, but from the will and energy of his evil nature, which has cast God out of His own world.

The cross shews that man's nature is utterly incapable of being acted on by any motive whatever which could set it right. This is very humbling, yet very blessed. Heaven will not do; earth will not do; the law will not do. I have yet one thing in heaven—My beloved Son: I will send Him. It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But no. The determination of man's will is to have the world without God. This is what man wants. He will not have God in any sense. Here it is brought to a climax; and the very worst display of Christendom will be just this. If any of you should be seeking pleasure in the world, you know you do not want to find God there; for if you did, it would upset it all. Thus are you saying in spirit, "Let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours." You may not have lifted up your hand to slay God's Son, but you have turned Him out of your heart. Man's great abilities will be much more developed in the day that is just approaching than they have ever yet been, in trying to make the world go on thoroughly well without God. When was there ever a time when everything was going on so well, as men speak, such unity among nations as now, or such drawing out of resources? The cry is, "Peace, peace," by the energies and working of man's will without God. Man looks for progress in the philosophy, commerce, politics, and comfort of this world, but still there is in his heart a dread of the consequences of the progress of this self-will. Thus is fulfilled the apparent paradox of Scripture, the cry of peace combined with "men's hearts failing them for fear." Now men would say this is a contradiction, but it is not; for while men are building up commerce and arts and science in the energy of self-will, who is there among them that would undertake to answer for the state of any nation in three years' time,

or for even a much shorter period? Man is afraid of the working of self-will in his neighbour, though he likes to exert it in himself. But the Christian has learned that the question as to the world is settled in the rejection of Christ. At that moment it was all over with the world.

The question between God and man is settled as to man himself; for not only is man turned out of paradise, but when God's Son came, they crucified Him, and now grace comes in; and the Christian goes outside the world to get, in God's rejected Son, the life which is to be had in Him alone. This is God's record that He has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Amidst all this turmoil and trouble where shall 1 get peace? The moment I see a pierced Christ, I have that which expiates and purifies. All this is not a theory, not a doctrine merely, but a reality; for the moment my conscience begins to work, I find that by nature I am separate from God; that my carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not only the world that has crucified God's Son, but my sins pierced Him. This is an individual thing, for this is how individual souls are brought into the blessing. When I have real faith in what God's word tells me about my own evil, then the question arises, What am I to do? All that which makes me a mere moral man declares that I could have nothing to do with God; but through a pierced Christ I have three witnesses that I can have to do with God. The highest act of insolence that it was possible for man to do against God brought out the very thing that put guilt away, even the blood and water flowing from Christ's pierced side. Suppose it was but yesterday that I wielded the spear against Jesus, the very act that brought out my enmity brought that which put it away. I

cannot estimate sin aright until I see the water and blood flowing out of the pierced side of Christ, putting it away. But then I must be brought to the consciousness that I in spirit was there; my enmity to God did it; my sins pierced Him. It was thus God addressed the Jews, telling them that they had killed the heir; that is, their hearts had consented to it. Those Jews whom Peter addressed, saying, “Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,” had not actually murdered the Prince of life. They had not held the spear any more than you did; but in the same spirit they refused Christ a place in their hearts; and it is thus God deals with the world. His question with the world is, “What have you done with my Son?” As with Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” And the only answer they can give is, “We have slain him.”

The moment the Messiah was rejected, that moment all title to the promises was lost to the Jews. All hope of salvation —everything is now gone from them as a people; and now, if they would get blessing, they must come in as sinners, and have their sins put away by the blood that flowed from the pierced side of their Messiah. Now then, as all title on the part of man to anything is gone, God is giving eternal life. God must direct the heart away from itself (except to the sense of its sinfulness) to Christ. Have I estimated my own sin as the murderer of Christ? Well, the blood has put the sin away; for the blood has cleansed the man who held the spear that pierced His side. We are nothing but sin; well, Christ was made sin for us, and through a dead Christ we get the blood as a witness that our sins are all put away; the blood being a witness of the perfect expiation of all sin. Christ “hath put away sin by the sacrifice of

himself." Here, however, it is not looking at the part man took in it, but at what Christ came into the world for, and which He accomplished.

There is, however, the water as well as the blood, and what is that? The water cleanses as the blood expiates: "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." While the blood expiates, the water cleanses. The water bears witness to the same life-giving power. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Spirit of God is the source of life and the power of the word, and gives life. Practically the word is the instrument, the incorruptible seed; and it is also a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and it is that by which God's thoughts are communicated to us. And it is out of the pierced side of Christ that these testimonies of God flow, thus writing death upon every production of nature. For it is not a modifying of the nature which now exists that the cross brings in, but the counting everything outside Christ to be dead, as there is not a thought, lust, or desire about the world upon which Christ does not write death; and thus it is that we get altogether new affections, "dead unto sin, but alive unto God," through the life in His Son. And the real character of purifying is this writing death upon everything that flows not from a pierced Christ. The water is the purification, but the purification is through a dead Christ. Christ all His life through was the pattern in man of what man ought to be; but our participating in this could only be by the cleansing of His death.

But there is a third thing—we have not only the blood which expiates, and the water which purifies, through which we are dead to sin, but He has obtained for us the

Spirit, the presence of the Holy Ghost, as the power of the word. It may, perhaps, be objected, I do not find myself thus dead to sin and purified. But you have a hatred to sin, which is a proof of your having died to it. And “In that Christ died, he died unto sin once, so likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin”; for God ever treats us according to what He has really given us, treating us as though we had realised it all. So in John, the Lord says, “and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Now they did know Him who was truly the way to the Father, yet Thomas objected and said, “We know not the way,” because they had never realised it. The instant I believe in Jesus, I am called on to reckon myself dead. I am never told to die, but I am told to mortify my members that are upon the earth. But I am never told to die. A man under the law will be trying to die with all his might, but he will never succeed. A Christian is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God, and therefore he mortifies his members which are upon the earth, as living in the power of the life he has in the Son of God.

Observe, he does not speak of our life being on the earth, for that is above with Christ in God; therefore he treats us as dead, but our members which are upon the earth we are to mortify. He never tells us to kill ourselves, but faith takes God’s testimony as true, therefore I say I am dead, and because J am dead, I have to mortify my members, being as dead to the earth as Christ was, for I have God telling me that I am dead through believing. This is most practical as to peace of soul, for the moment I believe in Christ, I am delivered from all these things. I am not seeking to die, for I have the secret of power, and count myself dead. There is a

practical difficulty as to the water, for how can I say I am washed, if I still find myself to be dirty? But I can say I am dead with Christ, for I shall never succeed in killing myself. The moment that I believe in Christ, all that He has done as a Saviour is mine, and God appropriates and applies it to me. I may have failed to realise it, but the treasure is put into my possession.

Some souls often say, I believe all the value and efficacy of Christ's work, but I cannot apply it. And who asks you to do so? It is God who applies it, and He has applied it to you, if you believe in its value and efficacy. The moment we believe in Christ we have the Holy Ghost as bearing witness, "He shall take of mine and shew it unto you." Just as the Son came down to do God's will, and then ascended up again into heaven, so, at the Son's ascension, the Holy Ghost came down as a Person on the earth; for the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as being now on earth, and it is this which gives the true and peculiar character of the church of God. And here we get the third witness in the Spirit of truth coming down to earth. The moment I believe, I am sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. All that I can produce of God's good fruits as a Christian is in consequence of being sealed by the Holy Ghost. Redemption being perfectly accomplished, then the Holy Ghost comes down in Person, so that the position of the church on earth is between these two things, the redemption made, and the glory in prospect, as the Holy Ghost comes down between the church's redemption and the church's glory.

The knowledge of being dead with Christ gives me a pure heart as being myself dead to nature, sin, the world, and law. By the blood I get perfect peace and a

good conscience; and then the Holy Ghost comes down from God; thus we have perfect peace with God, having God's own witness. Well, then, I have left the whole scene; I have done with nature altogether; my sins are all gone, the blood has put them away, and I am now dead unto sin and alive unto God. The cross, the wounds of Christ, are the door by which I entered, and the presence of the Holy Ghost is the power by which I enjoy the fruits of it. As we have seen, the witnesses of God on the earth are three—the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one; "for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

The heart is constantly looking for God to give it a testimony about itself; but God is giving a testimony about His Son, and not about what we are; if God were to give a testimony about us, it must be about our sin and unbelief of heart. But no; and it is of great importance in this day of infidelity to see that if God gives a testimony, it is about His Son, and what He is to the sinner. If you believe that, you will get peace.

If I am going about to get a standing before God on the ground of my holiness, this would be self-righteousness, and of course I shall not get a witness from God as to that. But if my soul takes its stand with God, on the testimony God has given to His Son, then I get the witness in myself: when I have got this faith, I have got the thing in my own soul. For instance, look at Paul before Agrippa: "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He was so thoroughly conscious that the Christ in his soul was the Christ in heaven, and he was so happy in this consciousness, that he wished the whole company were

like himself (except the bonds), having Christ, and a well of water springing up within. That which makes heaven to be a heaven to the saint is just this, that he finds the same Christ in heaven that he has in his own soul; and all the subtleties of infidelity cannot touch the soul that possesses Christ thus within. No reasoning of an infidel can shake my confidence if I am happy in Christ; for if a man came to tell me there was no Christ, when my soul was happy in Him, I should not believe him. There may be no intellectual or logical proof on my part, but there will be, to a certain extent, a moral testimony in the happiness of my soul, and the warmth of my affections being centred in Christ. I have often found how much it tells with men of all conditions to assure them that I am perfectly happy in Christ, and quite sure of going to heaven. Are you so? they say; I only wish I could say it. It would not be a proof to an infidel, his merely seeing you were happy; but it comes home to the heart of man, as there is a craving in man's heart that will never be met till he gets Christ there; for man is never happy without Christ, whatever he may say.

"He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar." The sin of men is in making God a liar, when they do not believe the record God has given of His Son; for men do quarrel with you when you tell them you know that you are saved. They say, How can you know that? which is just as much as saying that God is not capable of communicating any blessing to man. It is calling God's wisdom in question, as well as His power, in the testimony of His mercy and grace. This is what I have felt in the great question about the Bible. It is not whether it is the people's right to have the Bible, but it is questioning God's right in giving it. The treason is in

keeping away God's message from His servants. It is not merely the servants' right to have the message, but it is God's right in giving it that is called in question, as it is interfering with God's right of communicating His thoughts in His word. Whenever God gives a revelation, man is responsible to receive it. God has given a witness in which He reveals the glory of His Son; and when man calls in question that word, he is disputing with God in the testimony of His grace as to what He is.

Who can explain the riddle of this miserable world without Christ? Go into the alleys and lanes of this vast city, and see the woe and degradation even in this best and most civilised of countries, and learn there what sin does. In the drawing-room you may philosophise about it, but it is not in a drawing-room that you will learn what the world is. But when you tell me that it was because of all this sin and wretchedness that God's Son came down into this world to put the sin away, then I can understand it; and God gives eternal life, not life for a moment, or a life we can sin away, as Adam's, but eternal life, which is above and beyond sin altogether; being in His Son, and therefore as near to God as can be. "This life is in his Son," who was ever the subject of His Father's delight; for when down here God could not be silent in His expression of joy, "This is my beloved Son."

And God, in giving me eternal life, has also given me a nature and capacity to enjoy Him for ever. I am brought into an association with God, a relationship to God, and an enjoyment of God, which the angels know not, although holy in their nature, and exalted. We are thus brought near that we might know the love of Christ

which passeth knowledge, that ye may be “filled with all the fulness of God.”

In what a wondrous place we are set, if we could but be purged, not from gross sins, but from the vanity and earthliness that fills our minds, to enter into all our blessedness, and the association which we have thus with God, the very same which Christ has! He has borne the wrath of God for our sins, that this full cup of blessing might be given to us. In all this God would have simplicity of heart. A man may talk about many things, but knowledge apart from Christ will never do; but if we possess Christ within, Satan can never touch us; and if he comes, he will find Christ there, who has overcome him. It is a sweet and blessed thing, that any saint, though born but yesterday, has all in Christ that I have. And if one says, But I am such a great sinner, well, the blood has put that away, and settled that question for ever.

“And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” There is a confidence in God that applies itself to all the details of life through which I may be called to pass. This is the confidence we have in Him: His ear being ever open to us, we have what we ask for, when we ask according to God’s will. How wondrous is this, that God’s ear is ever open to us, for surely we should not desire to ask for anything contrary to His will! “And if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” I am so made to know the love that, if I ask, I shall have. If I am really in earnest to do God’s will, to preach the gospel, for instance, and there are hindrances in the way—Satan in the way—I have only to ask, and I have all God’s power

at my disposal, His ear being open to me. If you know what conflict and difficulty are, what a blessing is this, to have God's ear open to you, and to know, if you are doing God's will, you will always succeed in doing His will.

"There is a sin unto death, I do not say ye shall pray for it." Temporal death is here intended as chastening in the way of God's government. "There is a sin not unto death." And if there be real intercession, God will forgive us; James 5:14, 15. If you ask me what the sin unto death is, it may be any sin; it may be the telling of a lie, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. (Peter does not pray for them.) See also the case of Stephen, when he said, "Lay not this sin to their charge." And in Corinthians, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The horribly confused state of the church causes the government to be kept more in the hands of God; and from the saints' incompetency to walk in the power of the Spirit, they are necessarily more thrown on the Lord, whose faithfulness to us will not allow our sins to go unjudged. "He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous."

May we be so walking in the power of holiness, that we may not be struggling with sin under His correcting hand; may we be walking in full communion with His grace! Amen.

Notes On The First Epistle Of John

The leading subject of the First Epistle of John is the life of God manifested upon earth in the Person of the Son, and communicated to man by Him—this life being the basis of intercourse between man and God. The exposition of this blessed subject is accompanied by numerous unfoldings occupying a large place in this Epistle; still the fundamental subject is— “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

The whole doctrine of the Epistle is set forth in chapter 1, and verses 1, 2 of chapter 2. These three consectutive truths are found there; namely, divine life communicated to man, and our introduction into communion with the Father and the Son, in virtue of that life (chap. 1:1-4); the nature of the God with whom we are in communion (chap. 1:5-10); and the means ordered by God for maintaining us in communion. Chap. 2:1, 2.

In the portion contained between chapter 2:3, and chapter 3:23, John considers the experimental and practical proof of the reality of the life in us. From chapter 3:24 to chapter 4:21 he unfolds the extent of our privilege as recipients of life, and enjoying communion with God, the privilege of God dwelling in us, and of us in Him. Lastly, in chapter 5 he considers the subject in its connection with the testimony of God and faith.

Various elucidations and observations on the subject of antichrists and false teachers are scattered throughout the whole Epistle; warning against the Gnostics, who at that time were undermining the faith of the saints.

Chapter 1.

Verses 1-4. The fulness of the grace which is in Christ: the Son has brought us that eternal life which was with the Father. There is a complete exposition of this truth in these few verses, a general statement introductory to the Epistle.

Verse 1. “That which was from the beginning … which we have seen with our eyes … and our hands have handled of the Word of life.” It is the testimony of eye-witnesses, the apostle’s language suited to the circumstances of the saints, who were at that time threatened by the heresy of the Gnostics. These latter laid claim to development; they said. The Gospels have given us the truth in germ, and now we possess the development of it. Not so, replies the apostle of God, we possess that which was in the beginning, and it is great and perfect enough to admit of no development. The heretics denied also that the Christ had come in flesh. John affirms the contrary in saying: we have seen Him and have handled Him.

Verse 2. This verse is parenthetical. “The life was manifested” in the Person of the Son come in flesh. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” The life manifested in Christ is an object for faith. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath the Son hath also the Father.” This is the objective side on which this truth is first presented. But it has also its subjective side: the life, which has been manifested here below by the Son, abides in us who have believed. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

Let us remark that the life has not in us an independent and isolated existence. Far from leaving us in such a

state, it introduces us into communion with the Father. But, besides, this life is Christ Himself; Christ, who is in heaven, is also in us. Certainly there are effects of this life which are confined to our individuality, regeneration for instance, and other such blessings. But the life itself assumes in us a different existence, and, by its link with the source that produced it, presents something larger. The source of the life is Christ; the stream is in us, and the stream is not severed from the source. If a man said, speaking of his hand, “It lives,” it would signify that his hand had an existence independently of the rest of his body. Doubtless the hand lives, but it lives by the life which animates the whole being to which it belongs.

“We shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” The apostles possessed this life by direct communication; the saints receive it by the testimony borne to this life. “That ye also may have fellowship with us” signifies that you may participate in the things which we, who have seen the Lord, enjoy. “And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The saints to whom these things are said knew already communion with the Father. John desired that they should enjoy their privilege, and therefore he brought it again before their notice. God has not only given us life, but it is His will that every kind of intercourse should exist between Himself and His children.

“Our fellowship.” In virtue of the fact that we have life, we have the same affections, the same sentiments, the same thoughts as the Father and the Son. Jesus imparted to His disciples all the communications by which the Father testified His love to the Son. These blessed communications are also our portion, and we

enjoy them in direct relation with the Father and the Son.

Verses 5-10. Here we approach a second general truth. It being our privilege to enjoy communion with the Father and the Son, what is the God with whom we are in communion? For an answer we read this message: “God is light.” The God who has brought us into communion with Himself is the holy God. Such is His nature. Here we notice that when John speaks of God in connection with the work of grace, he uses the expression, “the Father and the Son”; when he speaks of His nature, he says “God.”

Verse 5. “This then is the message.” The apostles, who looked upon the life in the Son and declared it for the blessing and joy of the saints, have also heard the message whereby God reveals that He is light, and they declare that also. “God is light.” The life which we have received and by which we have entered into communion with the Father and the Son, has emanated from God who is light, and by this life we are placed in that light.

Verse 6. In this verse and those following, John confirms by contrasts the truths he has just put forth, and submits them to a counter-proof. In the grace whereby He introduces us into His communion, God gives up none of His attributes, none of His rights. “God is light,” and if we walk in darkness there is no communion between us and Him. To pretend to have fellowship with Him whilst walking in darkness is to fail of the truth of God, and to lie.

Verse 7. But if we walk in the light, we realise blessed communion. In order to enjoy it we must walk in the light, and not merely according to the light. Being in the

light we are with God, and there is no place for sin there; and besides the light reveals sin and judges it. “We have fellowship one with another “signifies our mutual communion. “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” By the existence of sin there is a difficulty to communion as a real thing; but the blood of Christ has removed this difficulty, it answers before God for the condition of man. To be cleansed from all sin is to be conscious of being without spot before God, in virtue of the blood of Christ. This spiritual state of the saints only exists through the gospel. Under law the worshippers retained a conscience of sins; the ineffectual offerings of bulls and of goats could give them no other standing. But ours is very different and far better. We possess that infinite grace which, through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, places us with a purged conscience in the light of the presence of God, with a capacity for enjoying the fellowship of one another also God.

Is the child of God sprinkled by blood several times? No, for the sprinkling of the blood upon the believer answers to the shedding of blood accomplished once for all before God, neither is repeated. It is important that the Christian should hold fast a true sense of the value of the blood of Christ offered once. Otherwise we sink into Jewish elements, and for every failure we seek a fresh sprinkling. Now this is precisely the state which the apostle contrasts with the conscience perfected by the blood of Christ; Heb. 10:14. “The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sin,” Heb. 10:2.

Verse 7 sets forth the state of the Christian with regard to purity, even as verses 2 and 3 do with regard to communion with God. Set in the light by the cleansing

blood of Christ, and abiding there we are in communion with the saints; but communion has been first formed with the Father and the Son by the life we received in the Son.

Verse 8. “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves.” The light requires that we should confess what we are in our nature. To say that we have no sin is not only ignoring a truth but also deceiving ourselves. In such a case the truth is not in us, for if Christ who is the truth dwells in us, we must know that we carry about a sinful nature.

Verses 9, 10. The light also requires that we should confess the truth as to our actions. If we deny that we have sinned, which is equivalent to denying that sin is in the world, we are not converted, and in that case the word is not in us. “He is faithful and just.” He cannot fail to answer to that attitude of grace which He has taken towards us.

Chapter 2.

Verses 1, 2 are the third general truth. In these two verses John sets forth the means whereby we can remain in communion with Him who is light. He consequently presents the advocacy of Jesus. Although in our present state we are not altogether beyond sin, for it is still in our nature and, alas! shews itself too often in our conduct, yet grace provides the means for maintaining us in communion with God or for restoring us when it is disturbed. It reconciles our weakness with the perfect position in which we are set to enjoy fellowship with God. Jesus Christ the righteous intercedes for us.

Verse 1. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” The intercession of Christ is looked at more particularly in this connection, as the result of that grace which lifts us up when we have fallen, although that intercession also serves to keep us from falling. Has sin shewn itself in our walk? Far from undergoing the misfortune of remaining under the effect of our sin, we experience through the intercession of Jesus that gracious help, which sets us again before God, perhaps broken-hearted, still before God to whom we confess our sin. Our confession of sin is made to God, not to Jesus in order that He may intercede. His intercession in our behalf always goes on; it precedes us in our return to God. Therefore John does not say, If any man repent, we have an advocate; but he says, “If any man sin,” for repentance in us in itself the result of the intercession of Jesus.

The forgiveness of God restores our soul to the enjoyment of His communion. This effect of the grace of God to us answers to the sprinkling of water upon defiled persons under the law. We have been sprinkled by blood once, and it is on that account that the sprinkling of water can avail to cleanse us. “An advocate” is a defender, one who takes up our cause, and exercises for us the office of protector. The care of the Roman patricians for their clients would give an idea of this office. By granting us a defender God has shewn that He cannot pass over sin with indifference. His fellowship and sin cannot go together.

“With the Father.” John does not say with God, because he is treating of our communion, and not of the mediation which maintains us in the presence of God. This latter subject belongs more especially to the Epistle

to the Hebrews. “Jesus Christ the righteous.” The basis of our standing before God is not altered by our fall. Righteousness abides before God, the righteous One is there for us. But there is more.

Verse 2. “He is the propitiation for our sins.” Thus all that is necessary, as an answer to God for us sinners, is found in Jesus. He, who in His own Person is righteousness itself and who, when here below, made propitiation for our sins, is in the presence of God; and He intervenes for us by an intercession founded upon righteousness and propitiation, this double basis of our salvation. Otherwise it would be impossible for God to look upon a creature who has sinned. The words, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world,” appear to be spoken to souls who have not yet peace. Are they addressed to Christians? Yes, it is to Christians that John writes these things; only in speaking thus he has no particular state of soul in view.

John gives us in this Epistle an expose of great principles which he lays down absolutely, leaving aside all details of application. Doubtless experience brings in various modifications; still they in no wise affect the original force of these principles. For instance, I say, Our meeting room is open to every one, anybody may enter it. But here is a man who cannot enter because he is lame. Will the exception to be made in his case alter what I have said? No. So is it also with divine things. If we only possessed the great principles of the truth of God in the measure of their application to man, we should never really possess them at all. It is indispensable to discern this absolute way of setting forth the truth of God in order to understand the Epistle

of John. “Not for ours only.” Ours are the sins of us, Jews. Such I believe to be the sense of this word “ours,” according to a passage in his third Epistle (v. 8), in which John identifies himself with the Jews.

This verse 2 concludes the exposition of the general truths which constitute the Epistle. In what follows we shall find a development of experimental proofs of these truths, with a view to shew what are the evidences of the reality of divine life in the saints. Two proofs are adduced, namely, love and righteousness. But before considering these, John presents another practical feature, namely, obedience, which also proceeds from the divine life in us, and which is necessary to our intercourse with God.

Verses 3, 4. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” If purity is required from man, when it is a question of the nature of the God he is in communion with, obedience marks our position in the presence of His sovereign majesty. The submission of man is due to God because He is sovereign. The grace, which has brought us back to Him and made us happy, has, at the same time, set us in a state of dependence upon Him, which dependence is expressed by obedience. There are certain commandments to be kept, and our obedience to them testifies that we know God. Jesus, in whom is seen the perfect Man, walked in entire dependence upon God. His life was not only activity in good, but above all things was characterised by obedience; He was subject to another, even His Father. God alone does what is good without obeying.

“His commandments” are not the tables of the law, but the various communications by which the Lord has shewn the perfection of His divine Person. The words, the precepts, and commandments which emanated from His mouth, were the expression of the life manifested by Him here below, and they become the light which now directs that life in us. The law says, “This do and thou shalt live.” On this footing no one has obeyed: but Christ, who was the life, obeyed. Being in Christ through grace we inherit this position; we receive from Him a life freely given, which places us and leads us in the path of obedience. Christ who obeyed is our life. What He was upon earth directs His life in us. His commandments are based upon the life which He has given us.

Verses 5, 6. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.”13 There is something further than keeping His commandments, there is also keeping His word, and the divine communications in the latter case go beyond the former. Having spoken of the blessing which accompanies obedience to the Lord’s commandments, John next shews the extent of the blessing when it is a question of answering to greater communications. By His word God leads us into the thoughts of His love. And as in Jesus, the impulses of the heart were in harmony with the thoughts of the Father, so also in our case, through the life which He has given us, we find ourselves so very near to God that we know His will and His good pleasure. Blessed fruits of the divine sap circulate in us. Sweet and glorious blessing, in which is unfolded for the redeemed of the Lord the greatness of their joy in the knowledge of God!

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” It does not say, ought to be what he was, but “ought to walk even as he walked.” We could not be what Jesus was, but He has left us an example and we follow in His steps.

This verse presents a peculiarity which is also found in other passages of the Epistle. “Abideth in him” means “abideth in God,” “walk even as he walked” means “as Christ walked.” John uses the words, “he,” “him,” without much attention to the reciprocity of terms. He so sees in Christ the expression of God Himself, for Christ is God manifest in the flesh, that he can use the same word for both without confusion.

Abide in him—God. As is the case with visible things that our impressions are formed by the circumstances in which we are found, so is it in spiritual matters, as to our abiding in God. For instance, if we inhabit a damp house, we soon feel it; but if in an agreeable residence, we feel it also. We are in God even as the chick is in its egg. These pictures but feebly set forth our grand privilege of abiding in God. Yes; He is our hiding-place, and there we taste the joys of divine affections.

Verses 7, 8. We have already seen something about the commandments of Christ; here are some further unfoldings given in view of seducers. The commandments which we receive from him is old and new at the same: old, because it is the “life which was with the Father,” “that which was from the beginning”; new, because the life, which was in Christ, has been communicated to us in time, “which thing is true in him and in you.” In this old and new commandment we have the foundation and development of all that is good. It is

not addressed to us as from without by a Christ witnessing for God on the earth, but it is the action of a new life which he has put within us; it is a commandment hanging upon the union of life, sentiments, and habits, manifested in Jesus, and common to the family of God. Yet it is a commandment having for us all the authority of divine will; we are to be filled with the will of God. “The true light now shineth.” The gospel reveals God; the law and the ordinances, and the whole of that system in which God remained concealed, have been eclipsed by its light.

As we have already noticed, above and beyond all its other effects, the divine life in man stamps upon him a character of obedience. But love and righteousness are the proper activity of that life which is the nature of God Himself. The life was manifested in Jesus in both those characters, and they are reproduced in us. The presence or absence of these features marks the two families, that of God, and that of the adversary.14 Verses 9-11. The love of the brethren. This love is the proof that we possess divine life. It dwells in light. There is no agreement between the light and sentiments opposed to this love.

Verses 12-27. These verses form a parenthesis in which John addresses communications to the saints, suited to the various degrees of the development of life in them. In this address John sees the saints divided into three classes, and he designates them as fathers, young men, and little children.

Verse 12. Before touching upon these three classes, the apostle puts forth a communication addressed to them all: “I write unto you, children, because your sins are

forgiven you for his name's sake." Evidently John is writing, on behalf of God, to persons that are accepted in grace. Unless man has entered into this condition of grace, God has no relationship with him. We also gather from this that the forgiveness of sins is the portion of the Christian, independently of all progress in spiritual life.

"Children" (teknia) is an endearing term used by John to the saints; spoken also by our Lord when He said, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." Mark 10:24. This expression runs through the whole Epistle. But in verses 13 and 18, where the moral classes are referred to, the words "little children "are represented by the word paidia which occurs only in these two verses. John speaks twice to each of the three classes.

Verse 13. In the first instance he briefly states what belongs to each of them. Verses 14-27: Here he enters into developments.

"Fathers." By this designation John points out that state of soul in which Christ is everything. Christ is known as He is, as He was manifested from the beginning, and in Him a blessed portion is possessed. It is the fruit of Christian experience. The time comes when the deceptions of life have vanished, and when the world has nothing attractive to the eye. The knowledge of Him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, fills and possesses the soul. To such John writes the same thing twice, "Fathers, I have written to you, because ye have known him that is from the beginning," v. 13, 14. There is nothing else to say to those to whom Christ is everything. The conflicts that the young man sustains

result in bringing him also into this state of soul when Christ will be everything to him.

“Young men.” This is the stage in which the spiritual life puts forth its energy against the world. For them a struggle has commenced, and conflicts are sustained, but they will be followed by the soul’s rest in Christ. John says to them, “Ye have overcome the wicked one. Ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you.” The secret of their strength was in their immediate dependence upon Him who is strong, and the word was the instrument by which this strength was exercised. But we see (v. 15-17), it will not do to lay down the weapons before the battle is over. The apostle adds, “Love not the world… all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” When mentioning the elements of the world, John says, “is not of the Father”; he could have equally said, “is not of Christ”; but he says “of the Father,” in order to go back to the source of all. Christ is of the Father, the world is not.

“Little children.” It is the earliest state, infancy of Christian life. At this first stage of spiritual life the Father is known, the Spirit of adoption has been received, and there is consciousness of being a child of God— “One God, the Father,” 1 Cor. 8:6. Such is the first ray of light received by faith after reconciliation with God. In verse 13 John says to these little children, “Ye have known the Father.” But in verses 18-27 he puts them on their guard against the antichrists.

It would not be judged wise, in our days, to be speaking of the antichrists to babes in the faith. Later on, one might think, would be a better time to speak to them of prophecy and of the antichrists. Certainly, if it were only a question of theories, and indeed, in that case, better never to speak of them at all. But the word of God is practical, in prophecy as in everything else. It treats of the antichrists as a matter affecting the walk of the saints. The antichrists have come! let the saints discern them and avoid them.

Verse 18. “As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time.” The existence of antichrists marks the last days of Christianity and proves their commencement in John’s time.

On the subject of the Antichrist, the apostle adds in verse 22, “that he denieth that Jesus is the Christ … denieth the Father and the Son.” These are two aspects of apostasy in which we see Antichrist; first, uniting with Jewish unbelief, secondly, rejecting Christianity. The word gives the Antichrist an essentially religious character; the testimony of the prophets agrees with the New Testament on this point. It is also important to note this word in verse 23, “Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father,” for many who reject Christ pretend not to reject the Father.

Verses 20, 21. It is touching to see the way in which John proceeds in endeavouring to shelter the babes in the faith from the danger of the seducers. Their weak condition claimed this aid; but, in rendering it, John’s first care is to remind them of what they are through

grace: You have been anointed by the Holy Ghost, you know the truth.

Verse 24. More than this, he reminds them of the first truths of the gospel, and urges them to hold to them as to a sheet-anchor. “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.”

Verse 27. And again, whilst teaching them he adds, “But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.” As a servant of God, and being also led to it by Christian affection, he bestows his care on them; still the saints, yea even babes in the faith, are responsible to keep themselves from evil, seeing they are sealed of the Holy Ghost, and John desires not to weaken that responsibility. “As the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”15 “Ye shall abide in it” would be as correct, and indeed more grammatical; still I believe we should read “in him.”

Verse 28. John resumes the thread interrupted from verse 12, and brings us again to the experimental proofs of divine life in us. It yet remains to speak of righteousness as a proof of this life, and then to present further unfoldings upon these proofs combined. Verse 28 serves as a connecting link. “And now, children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” To abide in Christ is to be continually drawing one’s strength from Him, depending upon Him, and remaining faithful to him. See John 15. “That… we may not be ashamed.” It

is we, the apostles. This interpretation of the passage is justified by a quotation from the second Epistle (v. 8), “Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” The apostles laboured to maintain the work they had wrought, and of which they would reap the fruits in the day of Christ. This thought of the result of their labours in the glory was familiar to the apostle. Paul says: “That I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain,” Phil. 2:16.

Verse 29 and chapter 3:1-9 present righteousness. “Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” John reasons thus, As the fruits of life are there, necessarily the life must be there also.

Chapter 3.

Verses 1, 2. From the words “born of him “in the previous verse, John draws the conclusion that we are children of God, and enumerates some of our privileges as such. “Born of him “; then we are His children! “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons [children] of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not… it doth not yet appear what we shall be… when he shall appear, we shall be like him,” etc. “It knew him not” signifies knew not Christ, although the commencement of the sentence speaks of the Father. It is the same language as in Revelation 22:3, “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.” John says, “his face,” in the singular, yet he is speaking of God and of the Lamb.

“We shall be like him.” Our likeness to Christ then is the result of a present privilege, that of having life in Christ, as Paul expresses it when saying, “Christ, who is our life.” We shall be like Christ, but such as He is now with the Father. In the same way our privilege of seeing Him will be seeing Him as He is now.16 Surely we shall reign with Him, but we shall receive neither the special glory, nor the attributes proper to the Son of man, for they belong to Jesus only.

Verses 3-6. Christ Himself is the measure of the Christian’s sanctification. The hope of seeing Jesus in His glory makes us desire to be like Him now. “Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. In him is no sin … whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.” Thus our hope is linked with practical righteousness.

Verse 4. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.” The true version reads: “Whosoever practiseth sin, practiseth also lawlessness.” “Transgresseth also the law,” and “committeth iniquity,” render the Greek imperfectly. If it were said, “practiseth lawlessness,” it would be nearer the Greek, which is lawlessness.

Verses 7, 8. Let us notice the different manner in which John speaks of him who practises righteousness and of him who practises sin. Of the first he says that he “is righteous, even as he [Christ] is righteous.” This indicates the state of a person owing to the possession of a nature received, and consequently an abiding state. Of the second, John says: “Is of the devil,” which signifies, he receives his disposition from the wicked one. The enemy may exert an action upon man, but he

cannot impart himself. God alone can communicate His nature. We are “partakers of the divine nature.”

Verse 9. “Whosoever is born of God doth not practise sin.” In interpreting this passage some make the words “commit sin,” mean “live in sin,” but this weakens its bearing. These words have reference to something absolute, to the nature of Christ within us. So John does not say, That which, but” whosoever is born of God,” thereby meaning a being and not a thing, and that being does not practise sin. Doubtless not to practise sin is the characteristic of the child of God. The Christian does not live in sin, and this because he has a holy nature which spiritually constitutes the individual.

Verses 10-18. To complete the subject we now get some developments upon the two great principles combined; righteousness and love. The two leading features of the child of God are that he practiseth righteousness and loveth his brother. By contrast, he that practiseth not righteousness and loveth not his brother is not of God. “His brother.” Has one, who is not born of God, a brother? Here again we must follow abstractions. The principles remain, although there may not be all the elements of application.

Verse 12. The opposite of the child of God is seen in Cain. He slew his brother (evidence of his hatred), and wherefore? because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.

Verses 13-15 are application. The brethren—and by this word John designates all the children of God—are hated by the world, even as Abel was hated by Cain. On their part there is love, and this love is the proof that they have passed from death to life.

Verse 16. But love is seen in and learnt from Christ. We know love through Him who has been the most complete proof of the love of God, for moved by this love Christ gave Himself.

Verses 16-18 are application. The love of Christ in us should lead us even to lay down our lives for the brethren. It can also shew itself by lesser actions, and can lead us to make our brethren partakers with us of any of this world's goods that we may possess.

Verses 19-23. As obedience introduced the subject of the proofs that we are partakers of divine life, so now it concludes this also. In loving the brethren we not only have evidence that we are of the truth, but we assure our hearts before God, love being the keeping of the commandment which we have received to love one another (v. 23). And more, being obedient to His commandment, whatsoever we ask, we receive.

Verse 19. "Assure our hearts before him." The subject in hand is evidently a question of liberty with God, and not of salvation or condemnation.

Verse 20. "God is greater than our heart." He knows us better than, we know ourselves. Immediately our heart allows something that cannot stand before God, our communion and liberty with Him suffer. Now sometimes we know not where to discover what has unsettled our intercourse with God. What has done it? After a little searching we shall discover that our hearts are tolerating some elements of evil which God sees and will not allow.

Verse 22. "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him." This truth appertains to the absolute principles of the new man, for our prayers are not always answered. On one

occasion Paul prayed three times and was not heard. But the prayer of the new man is always according to Christ who could say to His Father: “Thou nearest me always.” Verse 22 supposes such a prayer as we address to God when we are walking in His ways; and not that which bursts from the heart when we find ourselves in exceptional circumstances. We can understand why, in Gethsemane, Jesus requested that He might not have to drink the cup which involved the hiding of God’s face.

Verse 23. “His commandment” signifies both the commandment of God and the commandment of Christ; for God it is who has given us the command to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,” and Christ that to “love one another.” This is another instance of the way in which John speaks without distinguishing between God and Christ. The exposition of the experimental proofs of divine life in us are concluded with this verse.

Verse 24. We now enter upon a new subject. Two great privileges of the saints, expressed by John in these words, “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him,” correspond to the obedience which maintains our hearts in a state of liberty before God.

Here, as in other passages which we have already looked at, the word he is indefinite; it applies to God and to Christ indiscriminately. Abide in Him may mean, abide in God, or abide in Christ. Still by the light which chapter 4 sheds upon the subject, we can see that these words signify rather, that we abide in God, and God abides in us. This expresses the immensity of the grace which God has given us in granting us life and a place in communion with Himself.

To abide in God is, as we remarked in chapter 2, the privilege of resting on the bosom of God Himself, there tasting divine affections; a privilege alas! too little enjoyed by our souls, for we know not how at all times to fall back upon God in order to escape from the dearth of the wilderness. We enjoy communion with the Father and the Son; but we have more, we abide in God.

God abiding in us indicates a different blessing from that of our abiding in God. God abides in us through the communication of His nature. He is Himself thus the element of our being. “He has given us of his Spirit,” chap. 4:13. We have received the life manifested by the Son in this world, and the received Spirit is God Himself in us.

This last privilege is now mentioned for the first time in this Epistle, and in speaking it, John gives the proof of its reality in these words: “And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” Although he has just mentioned two privileges, he only adduces the proof of the latter, which is introductory to the former, and which is the subject he is about to unfold.

Chapter 4.

Verses 1-6. Here, before pursuing the subject, John stops again to point out the seducers. In the preceding chapter (v. 24) he has spoken of the gift of the Spirit of God, but there are also false spirits, and it is well to put the saints on their guard against them.

Verse 1. “Try the spirits.” The thing to be judged according to this exhortation, is not whether a man is convened, but whether a man who prophesies is

speaking by the Spirit of God or by a spirit of demons. How are we to know the false spirits? Here is the touchstone.

Verses 2, 3. “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” By this test we discern the Spirit which is of God, and that which is not of God. A man who prophesies by the Spirit of God also confesses Jesus Christ come in the flesh. He not merely confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh, but he confesses Jesus Himself—the Jesus who came in flesh. To confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is to acknowledge a truth; to confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is to acknowledge the Person and lordship of Jesus.

It is not uncommon for the agents of the enemy, when putting forth false doctrines, to make use of the word of God, although they despise it. They quote it when it suits their purpose,17 and when it is inconvenient they despise and neglect it. All error proceeds from the devil, and he uses every agency to cause it to spread. And yet, although all error comes from him, it does not suffice that a doctrine be false to decide that he who puts it forth speaks by an evil spirit. In cases where there has been evidence that a demon was speaking, besides the excitement of the speaker, there has been an astonishing promptness of effect, and a wonderful power of persuasion.18 Alas! the flesh is always ready to give an ear to Satan, but it resists the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Besides, when the Holy Ghost works in man, He proceeds by appropriating the truth to the individual; and this result is not obtained very promptly.

As soon as the demon is discerned, there is but one course— to treat the demon as a demon. If this course be adopted, he will be found powerless before the name of Jesus; but if we resort to any other way, if we yield to human considerations, if we are amiable with the agents of the enemy, we shall soon find ourselves in weakness before Satan: God not being able to be with us in the course we have chosen.

In the presence of these dangers how precious is the word of God to faith! It is the word which enlightens us that we may discern the adversary and error, and which shews us the path which God has marked out for faithfulness in such circumstances. Let us cleave to His word, with an upright heart, walking in lowliness before the Lord; and nothing can cause us to stumble on our way: God is faithful, He keeps His own, He will keep the youngest and the weakest. But without this submission to God and to His word, whatever beautiful sentiments we may express, or whatever clever method we may adopt, we shall have to feel the power of the enemy.

Verse 6. “We are of God” (we, the apostles); “he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us, hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” The words of the apostles are authoritative. Those to whom these delegates of the Lord spoke were under the responsibility of receiving the word, because it came from an apostle. The refusal to submit would shew that the person was of the world, and following the spirit of error. Our responsibility is the same, for we possess the epistles written by the apostles. Having given these words of warning and teaching respecting the spirits, John resumes the subject commenced in chapter 3:24.

Verses 7-12. “God dwelling in us” is a privilege which derives all its value from the love of God in which we share.

Verses 7, 8. “Let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God… for God is love.” The source of love is in God only, it is God Himself. But through infinite grace this love finds room in a human heart and renders it capable of loving. It is no question here of human affections, but of the love of God, the presence of which in the heart of a man proves that the man is born of God and knows God. How immense is the privilege which raises us thus to the blessing which belongs to the nature of a God of love!

Among the number of blessings which have fallen to our lot, there are several of a kind different from the one we have just spoken of; for instance, those which flow from the counsels of God; the portion of the church as united to Christ, the inheritance promised to the saints, blessings which are unfolded in Paul’s epistles. But in the Epistle of John we get an order of privileges more connected with the Person of God Himself—with His nature, of which by grace we are partakers.

Verses 9-12. God has manifested His love by sending His only-begotten Son through whom He has given us life, found a propitiation for us, and by whom He has revealed Himself in love. These verses set forth the Christian privileges brought by Jesus at His first coming. Here are some details.

Verses 9, 10. The love of God which now moves in our souls was first shewn by acts outside us. It wrought in our behalf when as yet there was nothing but sin in us.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Thus our privilege of feeling our hearts filled with the love of God flows from the love God had for us when we were but sinners; and this love has become ours by the possession of an object outside ourselves. If with respect to this privilege, we had only the subjective side, that is, the love in us, it would be pure mysticism; but there is also the objective side, the love of God for us. Thus there is no room for that self-worship which is such a strong characteristic of religious sentimentalism.

Verses 11, 12, are blessed effects of the presence and action of the love of God in us. Thereby God Himself dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. To what glorious truths does this link us! We read in the Gospel of John, chapter 1:18, “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 in this verse of the Epistle, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” The same Christ who revealed God in the world dwells in the saints in whom He also reveals God. Such is the privilege of those whose life Christ is. “His love is perfected in us.” When love is in exercise in the intercourse of saints, God has His place in this intercourse; He is there, for He Himself is love. And if God is present producing His love in others, it is a perfected love.

Verse 13. “Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” As in

chapter 3:24, so again in this verse we find the two privileges joined together: our dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us. “Of his spirit.” God has communicated His nature to us, He dwells in us. The church as a body is also the dwelling-place of God, on account of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost in the body. The church, being the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost, is highly blessed. This is not the place to unfold that blessing, pleasant as it would be to do so. Only for the sake of the subject now under consideration let us remark that the Holy Ghost manifested His presence in the church at the beginning by various signs; there were gifts of healings, of tongues, and other workings which all contributed to the glory of the presence of God in the midst of His saints. These glorious manifestations were not hindered by the presence of any even if unconverted.19 But when we learn from John that God dwells in us and that we know this privilege because God hath given us of His Spirit, we have a very different blessing before us; one that is inherent to the divine nature in us, a privilege which is inseparable from conversion, since it is conversion itself in its very essence.

We dwell in God and God dwells in us; this is the order of these privileges in our spiritual experience. Being conscious by the Spirit that we dwell in God, we thereby know that God dwells in us. It is the order followed in verse 13 which we are now considering. But when these privileges are looked upon in connection with the testimony of God and with divine operations, they are reversed: God dwells in us and we in Him. This is the subject set forth in the two following verses.

Verses 14, 15. “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” God gives us to believe the testimony and at the same time takes up His abode in us; this is one of the first of blessings on which others are built up. Thus as a simple result of this grace we dwell in God, we have our refuge in Him, we taste of His peace, His joy, and His rest.

When John says, “whosoever shall confess,” he sees life in its earliest fruits, and he finds in these another proof of God’s dwelling in us and of our dwelling in Him. What privileges we possess by faith! We have drawn from that fulness, from that ocean of life; and, after having received for ourselves, we become channels of communication to others.

Verse 16 is a summary of the preceding verses: “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us”; it is privilege of faith. “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him”; it is experimental blessing.

Verse 17. Read “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” Having given the proofs of the love of God for us, and having shewn that we have known and believed His love, John, in this verse, seeks to shew the immense blessing which the love of God sheds upon us. His love, which was manifested by the gift of the Son, is perfected in the grace which makes us to be such as Jesus is. We are “as he is” by the fact of having in us the life of Jesus glorified. The life which shone forth in Jesus when He came out of the grave (after having exhausted the

judgment of God, abolished sin, and conquered death), divine life in man has been communicated to us, and it places us before God in the same standing as that of Jesus Himself.

It is not an imputed privilege; the love of God which constitutes it is a love that is perfected in us. We have received from God this life against which there is no judgment, for it is divine, and we have received it through Him who went under the judgment in our stead. Such is the love of God perfected in us. The effect of this grace is to give our souls full confidence as to the day of judgment. Evidently there could not be a place for us in that day more excellent than that of finding ourselves in the same position as the judge Himself. Verse 18. Again, what sentiments become ours in our daily life! No more fear; the love of God perfected in us has cast it out.

Verses 19-21. John puts the reality of the love of God in us to a counter-test: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” The proof that our love is really of God is in this; that we love the brethren, not on account of the satisfaction found in so doing, but because they are of God. We cannot love a person without taking an interest in his children. But suppose the case of a father having three sons; I love two of them, this does not testify that I love their father, for if I did, I should love the three sons. These principles which act as counter-proofs are very useful; we often need their test.

Chapter 5.

Verse 1. Brotherly love being established, the question arises: Who is my brother? We get for an answer,

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” This is a brother, we owe him love.

Verse 2. But brotherly love is also in its turn submitted to a counter-test: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” Let us notice that love of the brethren, which was adduced as a proof of our love to God in chapter 4:20, is now the point to be proved. This is what the schoolmen would term reasoning in a vicious circle; but life and love are beyond their sphere. True love is accompanied by obedience. The love which leads us to love the children of God, for God’s sake, could not love them and at the same time incite them to things which displease their Father. Would it be love to a man to set his children an example of disobedience? It would be loving neither him nor his children. Disobedience is never love. Christ, who is perfect love, also shewed perfect obedience.

Verses 4, 5. But here is an obstacle; the world renders obedience difficult. When we feel its influence, the commandments of God seem grievous. But, on the other hand, love escapes that influence and remains obedient. Thus love is in conflict with the world, but faith is there to help. “This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Unspeakable mystery of the knowledge of Jesus! a crucified One is the Son of God! Faith knows this Saviour rejected by the world, and clings to Him. The name of Jesus has an all-powerful attraction for faith; and finding a blessed portion in Jesus it joyfully accepts the place of the Saviour here below. What can the world do against the faith that sees things thus? It is not

astonishing that faith in Jesus should be in conflict with the world; for if a crucified one be the Son of God, what an overthrow of the order of things in belonging to this world! But this rejected One has overcome the world and faith shares in His victory.

Verses 6-12. Up to this point of the epistle we have had to consider the great principles of the truth concerning life. Before ending John here touches upon the question of the testimony of God to which the communication of this life to sinners corresponds. We have first the witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

Verse 6. “This is he who came by (dia) water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by (en) water only, but by (en) water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness.” The testimony of the water and of the blood is twice expressed in this verse, but with a different Greek preposition each time. He came by (dia) water and blood; and then He came in (en) water and blood; that is to say, in the power of the water and of the blood. The former of these expressions (dia) indicates the character in which Jesus came here below; the latter (en), the power displayed by Him according to that character. Jesus came in a character of purification and expiation: “by water and blood.” He has wrought according to that character, and has accomplished purification and expiation in water and blood. Although the water and the blood both express the death of Christ, they set forth two results of that death. We are cleansed by the water of death (sanctification), and we are also cleansed by blood (justification). From this it follows that, the death of Christ giving its character and value to our sanctification, we reckon ourselves dead to sin even as Christ died for sin. I do not know if we pay sufficient

heed to this purifying power of the death of Christ, whereby we are freed from the power of sin now.

“And it is the Spirit that beareth witness.” The Spirit of God, present here below, is also a witness of the grace of life which is in Jesus. But it is in virtue of the death of Christ that the Holy Ghost has come down. Thus purification, expiation, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are privileges which exist for us only in virtue of a dead Christ.

Verses 7, 8 omit a portion of these two verses, and read, “For there are three that bear record, the Spirit and the water and the blood: and these three agree in one.”20 Three witnesses, but only one testimony.

Verses 9, 10. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself”; for God imparts life to him who believes. As to the witness, we find again the two things which we have noticed throughout the Epistle: the internal and the external, the subjective and the objective side, experience and faith. Christ, who is the object of the testimony in the world, dwells in the saints. We thus understand how the witness of God is greater than that of men.

Verses 11,12. After becoming acquainted with the witnesses, we learn what their testimony is. It is this: “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Life was not in the first Adam; it is in Jesus only, but it comes to us through death; this the three witnesses—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—affirm.

Verse 13. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”21 I am not writing to you, says John, to bring you the blessings of the testimony of God,

as though you were not in possession of them, but to remind you that you have them, in order that you may be forearmed against the false teachers when they call your privileges in question.

Verses 14, 15. “If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us.” Our souls are sometimes much exercised before God as to prayer; for God, who in His goodness grants us all things that are good for us, reserves to Himself the choice, the means, and the time. However we have the comfort of knowing that God always hears us. He is not absent nor too high to listen to our prayers. But more than this: “we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” What mercy! God is willing to hear the requests which such feeble creatures as ourselves send up to Him. God perhaps does not answer at once. This exercise of patience is blessed to our souls, and is often more salutary than an immediate answer. It acts upon our intercourse with God, it moulds it, and teaches us dependence. It is well for us to know that we should not pray with the idea of dictating to God. But the faith which has prayed nevertheless feels sure that God has heard, and this confidence consoles and sustains.

Verses 16, 17. What is this sin unto death? It is sin, but sin aggravated by particular circumstances. The sin of Ananias was a lie which the surrounding circumstances rendered more serious. Every sin may become a sin unto death.

Verses 18, 20. These three verses comprise the great principles of the Epistle. They form a sort of conclusion. But here, as in the body of the Epistle, John expresses himself in a way calculated to sustain faith in spite of the

sowers of doubts. “We know,” says he, what? We know what is the life which we have received from God. We know that the wicked one is in the world. We know that the Son of God is come, that He is true and that we are in Him. Yes! on all these points we know where we are. It is a last shaft which, in concluding, John levels at the corrupters of the faith. Verse 19. “For the whole world lieth in wickedness,” read “The whole world lieth in the wicked one.”

Verse 20. Notice the chain of thoughts in this verse. The Son has come and has given us to know God as “him that is true.” We are in Him that is true because we are in His Son Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ is God Himself, the true God. He is also eternal life.

Verse 21. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” that is, from all that might come in between you and God.

Note.

The grace administered through John’s ministry appertains to the individual blessing of saints. It is the communication of divine life to man, a blessing which exists at all times, and which belongs to the saints, whatever may be the state of God’s people. This apostle is not occupied with the church, with that which as a whole, forms the body of Christ. This mystery was entrusted to Paul.

Compared with John, the apostle of the Gentiles is seen in different circumstances. Paul, being a chosen vessel for that work of sovereign grace, which by the power of the Holy Ghost, gathers a church here below composed of Jews and Gentiles, united in one body to Christ in

heaven, manifested extraordinary energy which was crowned with success. But the testing time came, Paul was imprisoned, his ministry was cut short, all forsook him. Disaffection appeared, and later on the unity was broken. The decline, which commenced then, has continued and increased until our days.

What will be the end of it? The word holds out no hope of a return here below to the first state of blessing. The tares which have been sown in the field must remain until the harvest. But if there is no hope of restoration for the system, yet the grace of fife remains and is not inactive. This life, the revelation and the resources of which were the chief object of John's ministry, still flows on; and it may be said that it is by means of this life that the Lord has intervened when all was about to fail in Christianity.

13 Here we notice another example of those absolute principles which are found in the Epistle of John, "In him verily is the love of God perfected." Perhaps there is no one in the state of soul indicated by the words, "keepeth his word;" nevertheless the principle remains: "the love of God perfected in us "is what corresponds to such a state.

14 Far from being an occasion of doubt for the saints, these characteristic features are, on the contrary, a reason for confidence. John used them, firstly, to reassure the simple, in whom some had endeavoured to instil doubts, secondly, to help to the discovery of seducers and to convict them of falsehood. For instance, a man makes a great display of knowledge, but he lacks the love of the brethren. By this we know that he is in darkness, and we avoid him.

15 John goes farther in his second Epistle; he there exhorts not to receive the bearers of false doctrine. He still refers to the same class of individuals, that is, those who denied Christ come in flesh. He describes them as not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. This is the evil the saints had to contend with. There might be erroneous elements mixed with the faith of some persons, and whilst being a cause for vigilance and care on the part of those who are with them, this need not hinder their walking together. But if anyone sins against “the doctrine of Christ,” that is to say, against the doctrine which concerns Christ Himself, and which is the basis of the faith, he is not to be received.v 16 This point raises the question whether we shall see God in the brightness of His essential glory. The scripture answers: “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” In another place speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, it says, “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light [lamp] thereof.” It follows from this that it is outside the inaccessible light that the God of glory reveals Himself to man, and that this revelation is made through Jesus.

17 All heretics conceal their doctrines. In our days we have had proofs of this in the Irvingites and Mormons. It seems almost incredible that there should be any being on earth who could accept the absurdities of these latter. What success is to be attained over man by pandering to his flesh, and what a solemn example of Satan’s power!

18 This was the case among the Irvingites.

19 Hebrews 6:4, 5.

20 Several words included in verses 7 and 8 are not to be found in most MSS, and are not admitted in the best Greek editions of the New Testament. We follow these editions. These are the words to be suppressed: “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth.”

21 Several editions of the New Testament, upon the authority of the principal manuscripts, reject the words we have omitted at the end of this verse; namely, “And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Epistle Of Jude

The point in the Epistle of Jude is departure from original standing, and contains strong warning to us in the last days. It is not the same as 2 Peter, where you see the angels judged for having sinned. In Jude it is apostasy: “They kept not their first estate.” In 1 Peter we get the judgment of God’s people (the house of chap. 4). It is the government of God exercised towards His people. In 2 Peter it is His government exercised against wickedness. The general character of apostasy is Cain, of ecclesiastical error Balaam, of gainsaying Korah. The mention of these things is meant to be a warning, and an admonition—“crept in” practically abusing the grace of God. He warns against such; v. 12.

Why is mercy introduced here? v. 2. Because they needed the mercy, they were no longer addressed as the church, but as individuals. In all the closing writings of the New Testament, the church is looked at as a thing judged (that is, the professing thing on earth). God is judging it as contrary to His mind. If God’s judgment is on the church, I cannot look” to it for judgment; its judgment is worth nothing to me. He was going to write to them about the common salvation, but was obliged to write on this particular subject, because they were in danger. We have lost what he was going to write, but we have gained what he did write by the guidance of the Spirit. If the first estate is not kept, there may be long patience, but there is no remedy. And when God comes in to judge, He always goes back to the first departure from the original standing. Thus Stephen, when speaking of the departure and sin of Israel, goes back to

the golden calf, their first departure; Acts 7. We must go back to the original to judge the present state. “I planted wholly a right seed.” Verse 4 shews the character is suited the enemy to take at a particular time. Those who had “crept in unawares “are those on whom the Lord will execute judgment when He comes. Enoch prophesied of these; v. 14, 15. The same set of people who in the apostle’s days were coming in, the Lord will judge.

They deny the only Lord (despot, Master). The same word is used in 2 Peter 2:1,” denying the Lord that bought them.” He bought the world, just as Joseph bought up all the land of Egypt and the persons too for Pharaoh—like a slave bought. I will not know you apart from your master. It has nothing to do with redemption. It is His claim over them, but these “crept in unawares,” and refuse to admit His claim.

As to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered” this would be rather defending the faith which we have than attacking that which is false. If I see the mischief coming in, I stand out against it, setting my face as a flint. There is no good in your raising the devil if you cannot lay him. There is no use in your meddling with evil if you are not called of God to do so.

“Once delivered,” that is, I must go back to the beginning, to the original faith as it was delivered. In these days it is all-important to inquire what was from the beginning. You have certainly got what is in the New Testament, what was in the beginning. If I abide in that, I abide in the Father and in the Son; 1 John 2:25. Verses 14, 15, Enoch’s prophecy, the first testimony of God. Here we find that God had from His first testimony

contemplated the apostasy of the church; just as in Deuteronomy 32 at the commencement of Israel's history, He foretells what the end would be. At the starting-point the apostasy was thought of. It strengthens faith to see this. I am not surprised at any evil that may come in. I am not looking at what He has put out of His hand, but at that which is in His heart. The tendency of the path all around was to shake faith. "Will ye also go away? "A person never sees beyond what he is. He cannot judge beyond the moral state he is in. A person may have light as to mere knowledge, but not as to their judgment of things arounds.

There is responsibility as to being clean in your walk. "Contend earnestly" for it. It may be in stating the truth — not only to teach but to convince gainsayers, v. 11. In Cain we get the first principles of apostasy, natural religion and evil, the world and hatred to that which is true. In Balaam we get religion for gain, selling his services for reward, and fornication (seducing God's people), and idols. In Korah we get open rebellion, the full apostasy, the denial of Christ in His titles as Priest and King. Cain is the man in whose family the world was set up with a natural false worship. The Balaam and Korah forms of evil are going on both together. With Cain it was the utter blindness toward God. What answers to the gainsaying of Korah now? It is open infidelity, such as we find in Colenso and the Oxford "Essays and Reviews." The error of Balaam for reward. Balaam's was religious seduction, taking the name of the Lord, and the real inspiration comes from the devil. "Stand here while I meet [the Lord] yonder." The words, "the Lord" are introduced by the translators. He was really going to seek enchantments, as we learn from

Numbers 24:1. He was professing to get his inspiration from the Lord, whilst really inspired by the devil.

In Balaam we get him selling what he really received from God to the devil for reward. Jezebel is the principle of national religion. Jezebel had no business with Israel at all. It is the Jezebel character of evil rather than that of Balaam now. “For reward “is the point here. We get the other in Pergamos; Rev. 2. He had a certain and remarkable knowledge of Jehovah, but could not do what he liked—an awfully wicked man—with the love of reward, power, and gifts. “Feast with you, Feeding themselves,” etc. They like the credit of being with God’s children. Those who had crept in were feasting themselves at their feasts of charity, like those against whom the apostle warns the Philippians, “whose god is their belly.” Another thing which characterised them was the absence of all conscience, “feeding themselves without fear.” Compare Ezekiel 28, the prince of Tyre. Conscience is always awake when we have to do with God. It may be sometimes reproved, but it is always awake.

Verse 19. Without God’s Spirit. “These be they who separate themselves. They are like the Pharisees. “Stand by thyself. Come not near me, for I am holier than thou,” Isa. 45:5. The word “Pharisee “means “separatist.” Here they are those who had crept in. In 1 John 2 the antichrists are distinguished by having gone out.

Verse 20. That which characterises the faith amidst all the evil is that it is a “most holy faith.” “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” The great difference between those who were really saints and those who had crept in was having the Spirit; the others were described as “sensual

[natural], having not the Spirit." The presence of the Holy Ghost in the saints is what characterises the Christian state and the Christian church in this dispensation. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "He that is spiritual discerneth all things." We do not make half enough of the fact that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. No Spirit, there is no life, nor spiritual understanding. Prayer is not only dependence, but expressed dependence, absolute confidence too. "In everything by prayer … let your requests be made known unto God." It may be perhaps foolish requests. It is the emptying out of the heart to God. It does not say that you will receive all your request, but that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It is another thing to go and talk with Him about His interests.

There is another thing needed—absolute confidence in God, asking in the name of Jesus, being in the current. If the words dwell in us, we shall ask aright. Moses says to God, "You brought Israel out. What will You do for Your great name? "Until the Lord Jesus comes the state will be evil. The last bit of the hill is the steepest: but climb, never mind, and "as thy day so shall thy strength be." The days in which we live are perilous times, but the Lord is just as sufficient for perilous times as any other time. The power of the Spirit is always accompanied by a sense of weakness and difficulty, and therefore the need of mercy. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It is here the mercy needed along all the path, mercy reaching to the end and carrying us into everlasting life. It is not the same as Philippians 3— looking for the Saviour, that is, actual

dehverance. Peter speaks of the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. “Building up yourselves” is individual here. It is not building the church, but individuals.

Again, He says, “Keep yourselves in the love of God “practically. It is one thing to know the love of God as a general truth—” God so loved the world “; but it is another thing to know myself as the special object of it. It is knowing myself as the special object of it that I get here. We get the two things in Ephesians 1:4, 5. In verse 4 it is the general truth that we should be “holy and without blame before him in love.” In verse 5 the special thing is,” Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself.” We get the same thing of the love of Christ. He “loved me and gave himself for me.” Verses 22, 23. It is a man who will not let an evil in to hinder the enjoyment of divine love. When a man is ensnared, “have compassion”; but if he goes on recklessly without conscience, have “fear.”

Verse 24. There is a power able to keep the saints above circumstances. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only (wise) God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Fauldess as to our walk, our life. He is able to keep one. “Exceeding joy?” Yes. We must not lose sight of that, that there is a power efficient to keep us from falling. We are apt to get into Romans 7 as a practical state. There is an evil nature and it will out. “That ye may not do,” etc. The Spirit hinders you from living after the flesh; v. 23. “Saving saints.” He sees the saints in conflict, but above the circumstances. A saint above circumstances knows

how to abound and to be hungry. We do not realise sufficiently that the power is there to keep us from falling—in all things more than conquerors, that is, over circumstances.

It is a great thing to have the inward consciousness of the love of God, that I walk in the perfect consciousness that God loves me. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,” etc. It is power as regards my walk, that I have the present and immediate consciousness that God loves me. I get a double character of His love—His nature. And all that He does flows from love. But it is another thing to be the personal object of His love. “He loved us and washed us.” “Loved me and gave himself for me.” God’s love was manifested, and that in His general character. He might have had servants, but that would not satisfy Him.

If you have the character of Antichrist in the Epistles of John, you get the opposite element in Jude. “They went out from us.” It is open apostasy. Denying the Father and the Son is anti-Christian; denying that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22) is apostate Judaism. This is not the case with Jude. There I see, not the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but Christendom—Christians looked at as general profession, and the corruption is in that. They “crept in” (v. 4), not “went out”; 1 John 2:19. They not only denied the Master, but turned His grace into lasciviousness; v. 4.

“To convince all that are ungodly among them,” v. 15. Even when He executes judgment, it is still “among them”; every character of evil is taken up to. the very end. Enoch prophesies of these who have “crept in.” They denied the character of Christianity, without open

apostasy; as in Philippians, they were “enemies of the cross of Christ.” The judgment is on those who have got in, though of course there will be a judgment on others.

“Denying the only Master” (despotes) (v. 4) is the comparison of a master who has bought a slave in the market that will not own him. The earliest evil bears its fruits to the end—they ought to have been purged out, but, as a fact, they remain to the end. Cain is natural religion; Balaam, ecclesiastical corruption; and Korah, opposition to Christ’s royalty and priesthood. We have to look not only for open infidelity, but to moral persons moving on amidst Christendom and “gainsaying.”

“Looking for the mercy” (v. 21) is striking. You cannot get into an evil that you do not find Christ for you in it; you cannot give up your Isaac without getting him in resurrection. If in trial we look to God, we receive fresh revelations. The disciples gave Him up as a living Christ, and they got Him as a glorified Christ. The mercy throws the soul on the patient goodness of Christ, and of this goodness, if we are spared the evil, we are the expression. If I feel that I belong to a system that has all gone wrong, I feel myself cast on the mercy of God. Do not get out of the place where the sense of divine love can keep you in the sense of divine holiness. See 1 Thess. 3:12, 13. If I walk with God, there must be holiness. Christ Himself is the perfection of good in the midst of evil. Elijah goes to heaven in the midst of apostate Israel. In that case we have an Elisha. This mercy keeps the tone of the heart right. There must be Teal faithfulness, not pretension; but we must be looking on to the end, when things will be right; but now things are gone so wrong that I want mercy at every step.

One single beautiful word I would add. “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Christ has come of a woman and come under law, He has come into a place of ruin where the law has made transgressors. The Pharisees separate themselves (v. 19); they set themselves up.

On The Apocalypse

The first thing I find in the Apocalypse is that this revelation was not committed to the church as being in its normal relationship with the Head of the house. Just as we have distinguished in prophecy these two cases, that in which the people were acknowledged of God, and that in which they were not; so we have as regards the Apocalypse something like the latter of these two cases. It is a man who receives the communication of it, not the body. There is, however, a slight difference, on account of the seven churches. It is not an internal communication, a communication of grace (an ecclesiastical communication, as one might say, in the good sense of the word); but it is a prophetical communication concerning a certain time.

Verse 4. It is not properly the Trinity, for in that case there would be the Father. Verse 6. One sees here the position of the church in this governmental order of God, which characterises the Apocalypse. In verse 13 it is “a Son of man,” not the Son of Man: it is to express the character in which He shews Himself. He is servant here; yet not absolutely, for He was clothed with a garment down to the foot. It was not tucked up for service, and His girdle is not brought down so as to strengthen the loins. He wears it about the breast like a girdle of righteousness. Then in verse 14 He is “Jehovah.”

Verse 16. We have His power in authority, authority over that which acts in power as administering in the church. All that have authority He holds in His hand. They are not administrators as gifts; it is rather as government.

Verse 17. John fell at His feet as dead. It is a man who receives a glorious vision, as a prophet (Daniel). Verse 18. “I am the first and the last” (Jehovah). “I am he that liveth and was dead.” He had passed through the state where sin had reduced man. Verse 19 gives us the division of the Apocalypse.

Verse 20. “The angels”; they are the administrative representatives. If as head of the state I had before me the representatives of a dozen towns, I could, according to the case, address one of them and say to him, How is it that such a thing should take place in such or such a locality? They are mystical administrative representatives of the church. It is not that angels go and come from the church to God; it is the idea of angels, without saying that they are persons. The “angel of Jehovah “is an expression to signify that mysterious representation of God when it is not He Himself. For the rest, it is a difficult expression to define rightly.

Ephesus. Chapter 2:1-7. Here is Christ in His general character—chief and inspector. It seems to me pretty clear that the seven churches are the moral history of the church from the time of John until the end. First, this number seven shews that it forms a whole. If it is a complete idea, it cannot be the aggregate of the church at that time, because they are totally different states. The Lord could not say at the same time, as if to the general church, “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,” and “Thou hast kept the word of my patience.” Then, if it were only a question of those seven churches, it is incredible that He holds the seven stars, as a whole, in His hand, and that He only thinks of seven churches when there were thousands in the world; v. 12. The stream still runs, but the spring had dried up. Christ

in these epistles, we see, will not bear with anything short of the primitive state of the church: it is that which He had set up Himself in forming the church. If they do not return, the Lord will take away the candlestick; and we find very little of repentance in the history of the seven churches. From the very first, judgment is pronounced on the church; only we have the different phases through which it passes to arrive there.

Smyrna. Verses 8-11. “Some of you.” Although it has to do with an angel, He will not speak as leaving all the responsibility on one only. It is instructive to see that the Lord, who has all power, allows Satan to act, and is content with saying (as judge), “Be thou faithful unto death.” We do not find here the communications according to grace, nor that care which belongs to priesthood. They are left simply in their own responsibility. There would be no chastisement, if there were not a cause. There surely was at Smyrna a certain decline, which was the occasion for it; for the persecution, which is first for the sake of Christ, is often also a correction, as we see in Hebrews 12:4, 5. As for myself, I do not make up a theory of a gradual decline. God may, for a moment, stop the outward evil, as in the time of Josiah, although the evil continues underneath, and works in an underground way. He maintains responsibility so as to bring one to feel the need of resting upon Him. What does “overcoming “mean in these passages? I answer, To hold fast, in spite of the flesh and Satan.

Pergamos. Verses 12-17. Now Christ explains the word. He here again judges within. But it is not merely a moral judgment. He begins to exercise judgment on one part of the church (perhaps as in the case of Ananias and

Sapphira), for there was yet much good in the church. But it is the church itself judged in a portion of its members. “Thou hast there them … I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Verses 15, 16. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is a doctrine which sanctions evil deeds in the church. It suffices to know what is said about this in the word.

Now however that the church is found where Satan’s seat is, there must be a seal for heaven. The church was losing its heavenly character; then Jesus encourages this character. It is an exhortation to be heavenly, particularly addressed to individuals. When all is heavenly, there is no need of that exhortation. The manna is not that which is necessary in this world, but the enjoyment of Christ, known in heaven, as having been in humiliation. It is, in a word, a heavenly character in intimacy with Jesus, for the manna which is offered is a hidden manna; and the name on the stone is a name that no one knows but he that receives it. This epistle is clear enough to my mind, to enable me to apply it to the time of Constantine.

Thyatira. “The Son of God” —this is a new title, distinct, outside of the vision. It is necessary that Christ should separate Himself somewhat from the church. He isolates Himself a little in His Person, because the church has so lost its characteristic features that He cannot really own it. It is this new title which causes the change in the order of the promise and of the warning. The result of it is, that those who had faith were much more faithful. Hence He distinguishes the conquerors in a more particular manner; and, not being able hopefully to occupy Himself with the improvement of the church, He speaks of His coming as the sole object of hope. The

church, as such, is clean set aside. The church is, by nature, a remnant; but that character was so totally lost in Thyatira, that it was needful to form again a remnant. With the churches which follow (save that He has the seven spirits and the seven stars, that is to say, all that suffices for the church, whatever may come) Jesus never takes a revealed character, because the church has lost the character in which He can be in its midst, as church. The church must therefore by special faith lay hold on Him, of that which He is for the circumstances in which it is found, because the character which He takes is not His natural character (one may say) even in judgment.

He finds His delight in owning the good which was found there. Verse 22. “I will cast her into a bed”; Jezebel is an adulterous woman. In hell she will have her bed! There are children born of her prostitution, and the Lord will kill them with death (by judgment). Her children are those who draw their faith from her: the thing must be understood morally (thus Bossuet); but there are servants of His who commit fornication with her (Fenelon, for instance, and many others). Verse 24. “But unto you I say,” he distinguishes a remnant very plainly. “I will put upon you none other burden”; the Lord would add nothing more. He only asked that they should be faithful in keeping themselves from Jezebel. In truth, it is already a great thing to keep oneself from Popery. Since that, indeed, there have been other communications from the Lord.

Verse 26. “To him will I give power over the nations.” He is coming; then when He has come, He will give authority to this little remnant who have been faithful in the midst of the nations. He gives the morning star; this is the portion of the church, to have its part with Christ

before He comes. Having traced the failure with Jezebel, it is the coming of the Lord which is the only answer to faith.

These churches are never the energy of God, which produces the effect—the blessing; but they are the state which results from it, when the effect is produced, and God confides it to the responsibility of man. God forms the church; after that He declares the responsibility of the church. It is quite simple. Does Christ judge what God has done? Surely not.

We can divide the seven churches into two categories: firstly, the first four; secondly, the last three. As to the first four, all is ended with Thyatira. God works anew in Sardis. He recommences, so to speak, and all terminates with Laodicea. Now when God has wrought, He brings man into what He has done, with the responsibility of maintaining it. If man fails therein, if he spoils it or allows it to be spoilt, God rejects all that is spoilt. This is what has happened for the church. God wrought to establish a testimony for His Son; man, who was placed in that testimony, has failed in it, as Ephesus in its first love, etc.; then the state of things becomes so bad that God rejects it, without abandoning His mode of action. He recommences at Sardis according to the same principle; but at Laodicea the Son, to whom testimony was to be rendered, is outside: then all is spued out.

Verse 27. See Revelation 18:20. We do not get here the relationship of the church: but that which is governmental and of judgment. It is always the case in the Revelation. Judgment is not our habitual thought; but there are cases where one feels that the righteousness of God is a good thing. In Thyatira, the

evil is complete; it is no longer corruption only. Hence, when the evil takes the character of an adversary, it is a thought according to God to bring in judgment.

There is a connection between Thyatira and the Babylon of chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation, although there are also in these chapters other elements. Then the Lord distinguishes the remnant in the plainest manner by saying, “To you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira.” If one commits fornication with Jezebel, there is indeed danger of throwing oneself into the depths of Satan and of going through the experience of these and not of the depths of God.

“The morning star “is the coming of Jesus preceding His manifestation to the world. Peter goes up to the point where Paul begins. He speaks of prophecy as pointing out the evil things, the events. He warns me; whereas the morning star is Christ Himself, my hope, outside of all other things, turning my eye towards the dawn of day. For me the coming of Christ is not prophecy, because the coming of Christ is my own proper hope. I am as it were in a dome which has no opening but at the summit, so that I am in immediate connection with Christ in heaven, and a stranger to all the rest. Peter limits his doctrine to what he saw. He saw the Lord up to the moment when the cloud concealed Him from their eyes.

Sardis. Chapter 3:1. We have here a beginning again. The Lord presents Himself in an already revealed character, the seven stars, and in a new character, the seven spirits—not the seven spirits which are before His throne. It is what suffices for all times, where the church is found. The “seven spirits” shew fulness of action; the

“seven stars” are fulness of power in government. Whilst going through the experience of our weakness, we ought not to forget that there is, even now, in Christ, all that is needed in order to work with blessing and effect.

“Thou hast a name that thou livest” (renown). It was not merely negative, for there was enough to deserve renown among men. The Lord distinguishes persons from things; but He judges persons according to things, “the things which remain,” the good which remained, whether people or things. I see here that, whatever be the state of failure, God expects that the works will be complete, according to the light which He has given. Protestantism will be judged according to the light which was given at the Reformation, and not according to what it is now. In practice this remark is important, because it happens that men lose the light soon after it is given; and yet God judges according to the light which was given. So it is no reason for saying, I did not know it. It often happens that when all has been lost, one pretends to have all, by retaining the reputation which had been acquired when all was possessed. This is the case in Thyatira.

We find here, moreover, a very solemn thing. It is that Sardis is threatened with the same judgment as the world. Although recognised as the church, and although ir had a name that it lived, this professing church is threatened to undergo the woe which is declared in 1 Thessalonians 5 as not to come upon Christians. Sardis is not the remnant of Thyatira, because, after all, that remnant would be dead whilst having a name that it lived, and that of those chosen ones a very small number would be walking with the Lord. It would thus be a very poor remnant, and it would be sad enough to belong to

it. One must always remember that these churches, such as they are pointed out, are not the energy of God which wrought the thing, when, after it is done, God confides it to responsibility.

There is yet another remark to make on these last three churches. It is this: the coming of Christ is foremost, whether as a hope or in judgment for the conscience, because there was no longer either hope or means of putting the church in its right position. It is no longer a question of seeking to put Protestantism in its ecclesiastical state. No: “I will come on thee as a thief.” Save the fact that He has the seven stars, none of the characters which Jesus takes after this belong to the revelation given of Him in chapter 1. If, for my part, I rest upon Christ now, I must lay hold of Him in a special character, according to the need in which I find myself. The book of life is the book of citizenship: one is registered therein—one has the right to fight. It is a great thing to walk with the Lord; but save the fact that they had failed, I do not find much here—little relationship with the Lord, little intimacy. All is corrupted. They are faithful, it is true; they keep themselves from that corruption, but there is little speciality. They escape from this worldliness— “They have not defiled their garments”; all is negative. Protestantism has hardly the sense that one is in relationship with God, and that there are many things to know in Him; there is but little spiritual exercise. Protestantism is insipid; it has not the idea of a God who is present. In verse 4 read “But thou hast a few names.”

Philadelphia. Chapter 3:7. Here one is quite outside this class of titles; one is not ecclesiastically but morally outside the characters which He takes, when He has in

view all the church. Verse 7. We have in these titles the “holy,” and the “true,” as well as the power which holds the door open for us, that we may attend to His service.

Some say, In keeping such or such a position I keep a door open for myself. Well! I find here, that it is Christ alone who has the keys. In verse 8 it is very touching, that without being able to say anything more, He says, “I know thy works.” He thus turns away the attention from the works to direct it on the path which He has opened for working still. Although there was very little, it was already a great deal, for there was but little strength. It is no longer some of those violent ones who take the kingdom by force, but Christ, who has the key, holds the door open before these feeble ones, and this suffices. If there was much strength, it would surely be more remarkable; but when with little strength one is faithful notwithstanding, this is the beauty of faithfulness.

Verse 9. Historically, they were Jews who tormented the Christians; it may be that at the end, these Jews will be found again and do the same thing. One may understand by “Jews,” people of their character (namely, some assembly constituted on Jewish principles, a pretension to be the people of God by natural descent, whether race or principles, etc.). This expression— “I will make them,” etc.—is very vague; it may be thus understood, that, without being joined to them, they will own that the Philadelphians are the remnant that God loves. In verse 10 we have the reason, the wherefore of the blessing: “Thou hast kept the word of my patience.” It is not only that we wait for Him, but that we wait as He waits. One keeps the word of that patience, and that word forms the affections and the conduct.

“The hour of temptation.” A temptation is coming, which will try all the dwellers upon the earth. We must not confound the temptation with the tribulation; the latter is more peculiar to Judea; it is Jacob’s trouble; Jer. 30:7. But here, although this temptation embraces the whole habitable world, Philadelphia is not found there, so that it is neither in the great temptation, nor in the great tribulation. In verse 11 mark well, that there is here a very positive revelation of His coming, and that it is not the same here as for Sardis, to which the threat is addressed of being overtaken as by a thief. The contrast with Sardis is remarkable enough. If we are keeping the word of His patience, though weak, we shall be kept out of the hour of temptation. First, all Jewish character is set aside; secondly, one is identified with Jesus in His awaiting.

Verse 12. The promise has for me a very touching form.; He says, “My,” “My.” In this address, we see Christ found again on the earth; He was there found with little strength; He suffered from the Jews; the porter opened to Him the door; John 10. So it is here. That is why the figures are rather Jewish. At the same time we find the church also. There are the great moral elements of Christ and the church, although there is not the power displayed in judgment before the world. As to the characters which Christ takes, in these three churches, there is this to notice: in Sardis, the church; in Philadelphia, David and the kingdom; in Laodicea, the world. We can understand His resuming successively these characters for the end.

Laodicea. Chapter 3:14. That which Jesus essentially is in Himself; not however as a character available for the church in holiness and truth. If the church fails, He

takes His range in His own personal character, more independently of what the church is. He is the "beginning" of all things, always, in Himself; He is that, come what may. When the church was the manifestation of Himself to the world, He was something for it; at least, as motive in conduct. Here the church does no longer respond to Him; then He takes, in Himself, every character in testimony: "The Amen," in whom every promise is secured; "the faithful witness," etc. That which is wanting to the church, He is that in Himself—"the beginning of the creation of God," the beginning of all things. Christ is that which corresponds to the primitive idea that was in God's mind before all things. The Greek word arkel means the beginning in theory, and the end in practice. The main thought in building a house is to have a roof; but, in practice, a roof is the last thing that is made. The word "principle "comes nearest to the sense; but it does not give all the idea of the Greek. These titles lead us to follow the setting aside of the church.

Verse 15. They did not see this faithful and true witness; therefore they are content with a miserable state, which is nothing at all as testimony. They are so far off, that they do not perceive what they are come to, and they think themselves rich. For them it is not worth while to be hot or cold for Jesus; it is complete thoughtlessness and indifference. "And thou knowest not that thou art … the miserable." Until the church is spued out He does not cease to counsel. As to the characters which Christ takes here, it is not as saying that He will act towards Laodicea according to these titles; but He prepares the spirit of the church to know that those things will be accomplished in Him; it is what He will do, when He

accomplishes His promises, etc. In this manner, Laodicea follows a line, after the church is gone, to lead to the throne from which comes forth the judgments in the following chapters. “I counsel thee to buy,” because it is always a question of responsibility.

Verse 20. There is so much apathy, that the Lord contented Himself with knocking at the door. Verse 21: “To him that overcometh,” who will have overcome that indifferentism. It is, indeed, something to open the door to be saved, and to ascend the throne. When there is indifference for so precious an object, truly it is sad. “On my throne.” It has been said that it is the highest promise; for my part it seems to me that it is the promise which is most simply necessary; it is the minimum of the reward, because one must either reign or not be there at all. At Sardis, repentance is proposed to the church; the promise is conditional for the whole. At Laodicea, the invitation is individual.

In these churches, we have the moral character; but the manner in which that ends in judgment is not said. For my part, I do not occupy myself with the ruined house, which is going to fall; I take away the stones, because I know that the Lord is coming to fetch that which belongs to Him. The action of the Spirit among Protestants, rather than among Papists, is to me a sign of the approach of the judgments, because God is acting in that which is outside the original church. That makes me understand the blessing of being like Jonathan, who, having gone forward in simple faith, repelled the enemies of Israel without participating in the follies of Saul. It may be that, in the Roman states, popery will extend its sway over all, whilst in other states, Germany,

Holland, England, etc., Protestantism will end by being merely a negative state of things without importance.

This quite naturally leads to the throne. Christ has said His last word in the church: it is a question now of the introduction of the Firstborn into the world.

Chapter 4. Here Christ is no longer seen on the earth, in the midst of the candlesticks; He is no longer occupied with them. He is now seen in heaven. All is over with the church down here. Verse 2: “A throne.” It is not Christ in the church, nor at Jerusalem, but in heaven. The church ought to have been, on the earth, an adequate witness of the ways of God, making God known; but if it has failed in this, God makes Himself known. He Himself accomplishes His objects. Verse 3: “A rainbow.” It is neither in relationship with the church nor with the Jews, but with the creation—postdiluvian relationship.

Verse 4: “Four and twenty thrones.” A throne is the royal seat of authority and government. Those four and twenty elders are kings. Here are only thrones and crowns. It is not the church as the bride; yet the church is formed there. There is nothing said either of the character of priest. The main thought is a throne: we are there before a throne. These four and twenty are reigning ones. Verse 5: “Seven lamps of fire,” which bring to light and judge what does not suit the throne. “Thunderings” mean majesty in government, manifested in a fearful manner. Verse 6: “A sea of glass” is solidified purity. One needed to be pure to be there. It is what one must be to be there. It is also the remembrance of what was done for those who are there; but it would be rather in chapter 15, that the sea might present this idea of

remembrance. “Four living creatures” are the active qualities of God; they are the principles of His authority.

In the symbols, we must know how to set aside the thought of the creatures themselves, so as only to see the ideas. This is what is important in a symbol, that it is a grouping together of moral qualities by means of one being or several, thus forming a picture which gives us a complete idea of God in the thing symbolised. Thus with the beast, it is hardly possible to understand the symmetrical arrangement of seven heads and ten horns; whereas, we understand easily seven forms of government for the beast, and his power represented by ten kings. “Full of eyes” (v. 8) is the absolute sagacity to see everywhere. As to the cherubim, the idea that I have is, that they are the symbol of God’s judicial government. God put a cherubim “to keep the way of the tree of life.” They are four heads of creation, just as one sees their classes for the earth in Genesis 2:20. They celebrate the Creator-God, the governor of the world, the God of the Old Testament; what He is outside Christianity, consequently for the world, whether the world or Israel; the Almighty, Jehovah, the coming One, the God who is coming, as He is the God who was. At the same time these names are mentioned in one of the epistles to the Corinthians; 2 Cor. 6:18. The God who is the Almighty, the Jehovah, would be the Father of Christians.

Verse 9: it is a question of the creation here. Such is the subject of chapter 4. It is the creation which gives glory to God; there is neither redemption, nor anything else. In verse 11 read, “for thy will,” for thy good pleasure. It is God the Creator, governor, on the throne, with all that appertains to the supreme throne. “Four and twenty” is

twice the administrative perfection in man—a double testimony. “Seven” is a prime number that has no factor; this number is more abstract, and rises higher as a symbol. “Twelve” is the number which is most capable of subdivision. When it is a question of the action of man, it is always twelve.

Chapter 5. Books were then rolls. When there was much matter, they were written on within and on the back. In this one, which had seven seals, each turn was sealed at the head of the roll. Verse 5: you will always find that it is the elders who have divine intelligence; they are the explainers. We find here the Jewish power of government. “Root of David” is just to say, where the government of God is to be placed; Christ is the source of it. “Seven horns” and “seven eyes”; it is still for government, because they are “the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” There is something to learn in the history of these eyes. In? Chronicles 16:9, they “run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” This is providence in general. In Zechariah 3:9, they are on the stone laid in Jerusalem. In Zechariah 4:10, these same eyes, being established in Jerusalem, “run to and fro through the whole earth”; it is a providence which originates in God’s intention of putting the throne in Zion. Lastly here, in Revelation 5, before being in Zion, the eyes are in the horns of the Lamb on high.

Verse 8. According to the grammatical order, it is only the elders who have harps and vials; but one can hardly insist as to this. It is the prayers of the saints, and not of the priests; the idea is Jewish. It is as in Luke 1, at the time when Zechariah offered the incense, all the people were outside praying. Verse 9 is literally, “and they sing.” Read rather, “thou hast bought [people]… Thou

hast made them kings… and they reign." All scholars suppress the "us." It is not difficult to understand, because the priests present the prayers of the saints. As to these saints on the earth, God has made them kings and priests. There was no doubt that the four and twenty elders were kings and priests; but that which was so beautiful to celebrate was, that those suffering ones, left behind awhile, were also kings and priests. There is a slight difference of reading as to "reign," or "will reign"; for my part, I think it is rather "will reign." The church is there, but not alone: all the saints of the Old Testament are there also. Verse 11 and following; it is not only creation which this multitude of angels celebrate, it is also redemption. It is only the elders who say "for thou," etc. (v. 9). They have the divine intelligence which lays hold of the reason why Christ was humbled. It is the same as to the creation; chap. 4:11. Whereas, the angels merely celebrate the glory of God, without saying why God has done the things.

Chapter 6. The first four seals are the providential history of what God will do, when the moment comes to introduce the Firstborn into the world. Then, in the general government of His providence, God does certain things, by which He begins to put down man. It is the beginning of the ways of God, when He is going to introduce His Firstborn into the world. There is, first of all, the first start, which seems an apparent victory, then all sorts of chastisements, which press upon men, without breaking them dpwn. Verse 9, they are those who have before suffered from the hand of man. "The souls are," as if to say, I saw them living, although they were put to death. Their souls were under the altar, as a sacrifice to God for His cause. (The same re-appears in

chapter 20, where they are seen to be raised from the dead.) But it is the idea that they have been put to death. They received white robes, to shew that they are pure and approved of God. What they ask for is not resurrection, but vengeance. Verse 17, we must carefully mark that it is not God who says, “the great day of his wrath is come”; it is the frightened men who say so at that moment; but later, when the day is come, they are not frightened about it. Verses 12-17: this earthquake is not the same as in Matthew 24. At the fifth seal, after the scene of the souls under the altar, there is a certain period not mentioned here, during which there are still some put to death. This would be the place of the great tribulation which follows the abomination standing in the holy place; Matt. 24:15-28. Then, at the sixth seal, a shaking, which is not yet the end; but after which come other things noticed farther on in the Apocalypse.

Chapter 7. Here again we have twelve (twelve multiplied by twelve). They are the spared ones of Israel. This is much more general. It is all the spared ones of Israel. Verses 9-17: this is the passage of the Apocalypse, which is the most difficult to class. God will help us, I trust. Here I do not find intelligence. I find still that they celebrate salvation coming from God, such as He is in His government. God (and the Lamb on the earth) is the one who spared them. It is an elder who has the intelligence of what concerns this multitude. We have seen Israel in the first part of this chapter: now we have Gentiles. I find in these saved ones neither intelligence of redemption, nor the Father, nor that joy which finds in God its happiness. They are relieved. It is an almost negative blessing. “They shall hunger no more,” etc. I

find nothing here of what is characteristic for the church. They are Gentiles, who go through the time of trial pointed out to Philadelphia. Are they in heaven or on the earth? At all events, they are before the throne, and not on thrones. Their position is altogether inferior to that of the church. Their religion is that of the Apocalypse; their relation with God is according to the Apocalyptic form. They are neither in relationship with the Father, nor with the throne on the earth.

Chapter 8. In verses 3-5, the effect of intercession in this case is to bring down judgment. There is something of mystery here. The saints begin to interest themselves about this. We have much more of the imagery of the temple. “The fire of the altar,” the judgment of God which Christ suffered, is turned against the earth. That which had been a burnt-offering to God of a sweet savour becomes against man his very judgment. These are not only acts of providence, but religious dealings in connection with the world. The Jewish principle of the relationship of God is with the world. If there is evil, God will avenge it; Psalm 20. The opening of the seals brings out the counsels of God, whilst the trumpets announce God in judgment. As there is a throne in heaven before it is established in Zion, so before there is a temple where God receives His worship, the saints on the earth are in relationship with the temple of God in heaven. Since it is a question of introducing the Firstborn into the world, God shews Himself more and more distinctly under a Jewish character.

In the first four trumpets the judgment is limited to the third part of the things smitten. It is all that is organised on the earth, beginning by the lowest. The sources of refreshment and the authorities are smitten completely

for a third part. First trumpet is a third part of the eminent persons and all prosperity. Second trumpet is some great power, which God employs in judgment, in causing to fall into the mass of the people (the sea). Third trumpet is the star, some power, acting as light, which corrupts the principles of the peoples and influences for evil. It is not only human power; it is something higher (as for instance the star of Napoleon). The “rivers “represent peoples, the “waters” moral influences. The peoples moving under certain principles become the rivers. Fourth trumpet is the governmental powers are smitten: they are in darkness, at least for a third part.

Chapter 9. Now we have not only men smitten in their circumstances; but those who cling to the earth are smitten in their persons in a direct manner. Fifth trumpet is a power, especially Satanic, which comes out of the bottomless pit and finishes the corrupting of all wisdom of government. A star of heaven ought never to be on the earth. Mahomet is an instance of this. He was a man of extraordinary power put by Satan in movement to spread a moral influence, which vitiates the atmosphere one breathes. In verse 3 are “locusts.” There are agents, a whole army, which spring from this principle.

Verse 6. Men tormented by the devil will seek death. They will suffer in two ways, morally and physically, being prepared unto battle. There is an appearance of dignity, of royal righteousness; but when they turn round, one sees that they are subject to something (hair). At the same time they will do harm. They have the teeth of lions. God gives the name of their head in two languages, perhaps because the scene takes place

in the East; and for a Hebrew he would be Abaddon, and for a Greek Apollyon. Sixth trumpet—we are in the East since the fifth trumpet, it seems to me. Here we are near the Euphrates. It is a terrible invasion. It is much more an armed attack than a moral influence (the influence of the tail, so to speak); not but that there is equally that. Verse 19. The men that escape repent neither of their idolatry, nor of their wickedness. The influences of the last form of evil, for the last judgments in the East, prepare themselves on every side, because Jerusalem is about to become the centre.

Remark that up to the end of chapter 11 we have the general history; afterwards we have that which is more specially relative to the beast and to the apostasy. Therefore it was necessary to mark the place in the general history, and it is this we have in the parenthesis of chapters 10 and 11 up to verse 13.

What we have in chapters 8 and 9 is the preparation to arrive at the last form of evil. God chastens men in order to stop them, and it would be a mercy if they would listen. One must notice, moreover, that until now it is these wicked men who are smitten, and not as yet the saints, although there may be persecutions as at all times.

Chapter 10. “Clothed with a cloud” is an appearance of divine majesty. “A rainbow” is again the covenant with the creation. “His face was as it were the sun”—supreme majesty; “his feet as pillars of fire”—the firmness of judgment. He descends from heaven to take possession of the earth, by placing His feet, one on the earth, the other on the sea. Verses 3, 4: “Seven thunders” —the perfection of God’s intervention in His judgment,

answering to the voice of the angel. God keeps sealed those things which John then sees; He will not allow John to write. God allows things to be spoken, in order to shew that all His power must intervene to answer this cry of Christ; but He will only reveal what is in relationship with that which is an object of veneration in the world; Christianity, Judaism, and consequently the apostasy. With His feet, Christ takes possession of all, China, America, etc.: but it is not His will to occupy us with it here. In verse 6 read, “That there should be no longer delay.” The “Little book” means not the ways of providence in the world hidden, but the relation of the servants with what takes place in the world, the persecuted servants.

Chapter 11. This chapter is properly the summing up of the “little book,” the development of which will take place in the following chapters. “Measure”: the book takes Jewish forms here (this had not taken place before) and owns those who can really offer worship to God, or enter into the interior of the temple. The prophetic Spirit, announcing that a judgment is going to take place, takes and puts the individual in relationship with God according to the principles of His government. We are in the last week, and commence the history of the things which enter into the sphere of the last prophets. Up to this the things did not distinctly come out in this way; but now here we are in the week of Daniel. In verse 2 this measuring indicates that God owns what belongs to Him (property is measured by a line). In Matthew 24 the Lord leaves everything vague until the last half-week, at least as to the period. It is from the time of the abomination in the holy place that all is determined. For the last half-week, there is nothing

doubtful to my mind. As to Zechariah 10, 14, chapter 10 gives the last attack, and chapter 14 the first. It is evident enough to me that, the first time, Jerusalem is taken, and that the second time, the Lord being there and the remnant in force, the enemies do not succeed.

Verse 4. The two witnesses stand before the God, not of heaven, but of all the earth. It is not a candlestick before the Lord of the earth; it is an adequate testimony to the state of Israel according to God— "two witnesses." God will also be in the midst of the remnant, without owning the people. In Zechariah we see everything in order. There is a candlestick and two olive trees, which furnish oil for the candlestick. Here it is two candlesticks and two olive trees. How can you arrange them so as to make a whole? In the "two," I do not go beyond the idea that it is an adequate testimony.

Verses 5, 6. We find again here the power of Elias and of Moses. It is the proof that God takes up anew His relationships with His people, but in a sovereign manner, by means of the prophets as of old, when they were in Egypt or separated from the temple, as in the time of Elijah. This is always what God does when His people are in disorder and He returns to His relationship with them. One sees again here that His relationships with His people are at the same time relationships and non-relationships, because nothing is in order (a proof by the way, that the first half-week is viewed vaguely and might well belong at the same time both to the mission of Jesus and to the testimony of the end until the abomination of the desolation). The witnesses shut the heavens; they have authority over the waters and over the earth. The three things which we have seen to be objects of the judgment (chap. 8) are now in their power.

Verse 7. It is not only that the holy city is trodden under foot, but besides that, Satan destroys the testimony of God on the earth. All then is in the hands of the wicked one. Verse 8. Read “the great street of the city.” “The city” is not Babylon, but Jerusalem. Verse 10. What ferocious joy of man, when they had put to death the witnesses of God! “They that dwell upon the earth” are those who are settled there, morally as well as otherwise. Verses 11-13: we see that after their testimony there is a series of events. Verse 13: there is extreme fear; but they had not received the testimony, for they give glory to the God of heaven. Here the sixth trumpet is finished. It goes up to the death of the two witnesses.

The seventh trumpet is probably the end of the last half-week. There is nothing said here of what happens; only, when it has sounded, they celebrate in heaven the victory, because the trumpet has sounded for the end; chap. 10:7. Chapter 11 terminates the Apocalypse; for in the seventh trumpet they celebrate the result of all, up to the judgment of the dead and the everlasting kingdom.

In chapter u the prophet makes the beast to ascend out of the bottomless pit without developing its history. Now he begins afresh, and although it is a fresh taking up of the thing, at the same time it is, as it were, the sequel. Having given the history of the world in general, he reserved the beast for a particular history; but when he comes to that, he takes his sources in heaven (that is, from Satan).

It will be noticed that chapters 12-14 go together. In chapter 12 we have the great elements, the bringing on

the scene the principal actors, and all that relates directly to the power of Satan; in chapter 13 the instruments of that power in the world. Chapter 14 gives the ways of God, who intervenes in the midst of all that.

Chapter 12:1: “Clothed with the sun” is with supreme power. Verse 10: it is the beginning of the kingdom—not that it is yet established on the earth;22 but because he who hinders is cast out from heaven. His power, although not yet destroyed, is thrown into a more limited circle. It is no longer an influence from heaven. Satan on the earth is obliged to shew himself such as he is. As long as he is in heaven, he can exercise a deceitful influence; once upon the earth, he is obliged to unmask himself. “Our brethren” are those who on earth were yet aspiring to heaven. The church is already in heaven.

Chapter 13. Here we are in history. The beast rises out of the sea, not out of the bottomless pit, because it is a question of the history of the instruments, and not of the sources of power. It resembles the characters of the first three beasts of Daniel 7; and it is the fourth. It is (v. 3) a resurrection-beast; it is important to notice this in order to recognise it. Verse 5: “Continue forty and two months”; God will permit him to act during that time. It always seems to me that the “little horn” of Daniel 7 resembles this first beast much more than the second. Verse 8: “All that dwell upon the earth”; one must always distinguish them in the moral character of being settled down here, in contrast with those who by faith belong to heaven. Verse 10: God will not have force and violence; He will have the patience of faith.

Verse n: “Another beast.” Christianity is not the Lamb; for the Lamb is Christ personally. I have an idea that it is

a power of the earth, a power which rises up from among the Jews, when all is organised, when the first beast is already there. The word “earth” is one to which one must pay great attention, in order to have the interpretation, because in Hebrew and Greek it means the organised earth, or else Judea. See this second case in Isaiah 24.

It had “two horns,” so as to resemble “a lamb.” For my part, I think that it is a false Christ in Judea, who will be the Messiah of the Jews and the agent of the Roman empire to persuade the Jews to submit to the beast.

Verse 13. Here he is acting as a prophet, and giving signs or wonders, as a proof that he is sent by Jehovah. Is it not said in 2 Thessalonians 2 that he owns no God? The answer is “Yes”; but the difficulty is completely removed by the testimony of Daniel 11, where we see that he does not “regard any god”; while at the same time he honours his god Mauzzim. Outwardly before the Jews, he will have a god; inwardly, he has none. In 2 Thessalonians 2 it is, to my mind, religious and moral.

Chapter 14 is the intervention of God in the midst of all these things. “An hundred forty and four thousand” are those who have suffered with Christ from the hands of the wicked Jews, like the remnant with David. Before the temple is built the true David reigns in Zion, and those who have suffered with Him reign with Him. They have a share in of heaven. They are not in heaven; but they sing the song of heaven. I do not know whether they are raised from the dead or changed. There are seven things in this chapter: verse 1, first; verse 6, second; verse 8, third; verse 9, fourth; verse 13, fifth; verse 14, sixth; and verse 17, seventh.

In the fifth section—the time when one ceases to be put to death for the Lord—it is “the dead,” particularly their character the diers, so to speak. This is the close of martyrdom. The diers in the Lord are blessed from that moment; they enter into the blessing which they have been waiting for. Hence it is finished—nothing remains but the coming of the Son of man. They are blessed from this time. I do not say that they die from henceforth. In the sixth it is the harvest or judgment where distinction is made; in the ninth, the vintage, where everything is trodden down. At His coming, He smites everywhere; but where all has not been against Him (“the isles”), He distinguishes; whilst in Edom, where the gathering together of the wicked ones takes place, all is trodden down.

Chapters 15, 16 are altogether separate. It is the wrath of God. This is not the same as the wrath of the Lamb. It is God acting in public government, and not Christ executing judgment in person. At the same time, it is unmingled judgment, because the saints who suffered under the beast are not ingathered and in glory.

Chapter 16 is the vials. We have here, as for the trumpets, the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun: the sun becomes more scorching. Men would have this beast: they must know what it is. Fifth vial: the throne of the beast is the object. Sixth vial: the Euphrates is dried up. All the sources of prosperity are smitten. The plagues fall upon the men who worship the beast and did not repent. Also the sixth vial prepares the last great catastrophe. Verse 13: “The dragon” is the open energy and hostility of Satan; “the beast” is the Roman empire in its state of blasphemy, having again come up out of the bottomless pit; and “the false prophet “is he who

pretended to be the sent one of God. In verse 16 we find ourselves again with Hebrew landmarks—Armageddon. It is, as in Judges 5, the gathering together of the kings to make war against God.

Verses 16, 18. “In the air”; because it is universal. What a solemn word— “It is done!” We have not yet the judgment of the beast. Up to this it is only what happens around; the judgment of the beast is another thing. “The earth “is where they have not received “the love of the truth”; then God sends them “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” They unite with the rebellion of men under the government of God, and undergo direct judgment. They are smitten alive; whereas “the nations,” where Christianity has not had its seat, undergo the judgment in a less terrible manner. The Apocalypse brings us to the point where the apostasy of the church has led the world; it is an apostate concentration. It ends in this way on the earth. On the other hand, this book shews us also the end of all things for good by the rapture of the saints to heaven. To sum it all up, blessing is on high, judgment below.

Chapters 17, 18. It is not the beast in its particular history, but now its relationship with the harlot.

Chapter 17:1. “Upon many waters” means by the side of the waters. She has direct power over the beast, and her influence extends even over nations. Verse 3: For the Spirit this world is a wilderness. The beast has the royal colour, but the harlot is much more adorned. Verse 5: “Abominations of the earth” are idols. It is a mystery; it is not a clear thing, as if it were a city. If there were Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, it would not be a mystery. One must seek here one or more characters. She is the

cause of every persecution, and of all the blood which has been shed. Verse 8: The beast reappears with a diabolical character. Verse 9: “Mountains”are seats of authority in stability.

Verse 11. This eighth king is the beast itself; but it is, at the same time, one of the old forms which reappears (consuls, decemvirs, emperors—one knows not what; but it is “of the seven”. Verse 12: “They reign for the same time with the beast.” The ten horns belong to the beast; they are not the barbarians of the middle ages. Verse 17 means the horns, which destroy the harlot, not the “kings of the earth,” for they lament; chap. 18:9. We have here the end of Christendom; Christianity had ceased before this. These horns are indeed kings; but they are powers and kings at the same time. If the king falls, the power—the people—is always there.

Chapter 18:4-6. Two things are said to the saints: first, to come out of Babylon in order not to partake of her sins, nor of her judgment; secondly, to smite her. This warning, though placed in the account after the judgment of Babel, is addressed to the saints before the judgment.

Chapter 19:10. We must distinguish the prophetic Spirit from the Spirit sent from heaven. In the first case, it is the Spirit who declares things beforehand; in the second, it is the Spirit given after a work accomplished in redemption, as a seal of that work. This is important to distinguish, because the testimony of Jesus is not always the gospel.

From verse 11 to chapter 20:3 is the warrior judgment. What follows is rather the sessional judgment. Verse 11. The armies which accompany Him are the saints. Chap.

17:14: As to “heaven opened,” it is interesting to remark that, until Christ, heaven could not be opened. We find four times heaven opened in the New Testament. Firstly, at the time of the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21, 22); secondly, during the days of the Son of man, according to John 1:52 (this will be fully accomplished in the millennium; but already on the earth, His Person called for that, Luke 22:43); thirdly, at the death of Stephen, for the reception on high of the redeemed man; fourthly, in judgment. Rev. 19:15. “Out of his mouth”; “the word that I have spoken” to you, “the same shall judge,” etc. Verse 20. Those are the two which go first into the lake of fire. Others will be cast in somewhat later; Matt. 25.

Chapter 20. As for Satan, he is cast into the bottomless pit, because he is again to come out and deceive the nations afresh. In verse 4, besides the general expression, which says that they are on thrones, there are two classes named. Otherwise it might have been feared that these persons, those of the last half-week, the last raised from the dead, would not be found with the others; they are introduced here, in order that we may see their place. Christ, who comes like lightning, does not pass away like lightning. He sits down to judge. In verses 7-9, it is to be remarked that the saints do not suffer; there is a complete separation. That which belongs to God is gathered to the Lord who is there; but when “the camp of the saints “is surrounded, fire comes down out of heaven.

Verse 10. Satan, once cast down, never goes up again to heaven. In verse 11, “I saw a great white throne”; it is always sessional; but Christ is alone. There are no other thrones here, because it is a question of the dead; we shall not judge the dead. One must, moreover, pay

attention to this, that Christ does not come for the judgment of the dead. He is already there when the moment arrives. Verse 13. This is to say, that all the rest of the dead were there.

Chapter 21:1-8. These verses continue the history. The Lamb is not named in these eight verses; it is not a mediatorial system. It is God “all in all.”

In chapter 21:9, we go back a little. It is one of the seven angels who shews the New Jerusalem to John. This remark may shew that we have not here a continuation of the history. There is also the contrast of the two cities. It needs a measure of spirituality to lay hold of the figures here. The city descended out of heaven; the origin of the church is heavenly. It is always twelve, because it is always a question of men, though it be in glory. “Gold” is divine righteousness. One sees the meaning of this symbol by the mercy-seat of gold which received the blood. As to “precious stones,” I do not know whether I could explain more than the light of God diversified in His saints; as, for instance, the light of the sun in a prism. God is light; and the church is the perfect prism, in which the light of God brings out in detail all the beauties of His glory. I find this varied expression of the perfection of God, first in the creature (or creation); secondly, in Christ, in the priesthood; thirdly, in glory for the church. It is God’s essential perfection, not manifesting itself essentially, but in a centre which shews its various beauties. All these figures furnish us with real ideas, which it is good to lay hold of. This is made very evident by the fact, that this varied glory has its history in creation, in grace, and in glory. The “gates” are twelve pearls; the beauty of the church appears directly. There was no temple therein:

God is the temple of it; His proper glory insures His majesty. The city has God Himself for its light; but the city is itself the light of the nations; v. 23, 24. In verse 26, they bring their gifts “to” it, and not “into” it. Instead of each one worshipping his net (Hab. 1:16), they will own the God of glory, honouring Him and presenting to Him their gifts (in His city on this earth), as of old they offered oblations to Jehovah before His altar on the earth.

Chapter 22:3. All the ripe fruit which the life of Christ produces we eat of in heaven; all that is manifested (the leaves) will be administered in grace and healing on the earth. On the earth now, the church should be the manifestation of all this glory.

In this chapter there are three times “I come quickly.” Verse 7 is a warning for those who are in connection with the things said in this book—those who are found in the circumstances to which the prophecy applies. Verse 12. This is much more general; the consequence will be universal. In verse 16 Jesus no longer prophesies; He introduces Himself afresh. Then as soon as He announces Himself in His character for the church, namely, His Person and His coming, the cry of the bride is—“Come.” This (v. 17) is the complete picture of the church in the absence of Christ. Four things are there: first, the Holy Ghost; secondly, the bride waiting for Christ, knowing what He is for it; thirdly some weak ones, who have not yet entered into the affections of the bride, but at the same time belonging to Christ, and therefore invited to join their voices to its own. Fourthly and lastly, the church, the depositary of living waters, possessing the Holy Spirit in the absence of Christ,

invites those from without to come and quench their thirst.

22 There is progress in the return of the Jews to God. First, they acknowledge their sad state and ask for deliverance in acknowledging that the nations cannot deliver, and that one must lean upon God. To this God responds. Secondly, they judge their sins between themselves and God; then the impression is much deeper. (Psa. 130. De profundis.) God responds to this also. These make two interventions of God in the restoring of His people.

Outline Of The Revelation

Let us look a little at the different forms of evil in connection with the Revelation.

When we go beyond the seven churches, we find the government of the world, but we see the government put into the hands of the Lamb that was slain. The book, we know, is divided into three parts; chap. I:19. Firstly, “The things which thou hast seen,” that is, the personal glory of Christ; not merely in His deity, nor His humanity, but in the character of judgment, as seen in chapter 1. Secondly, “The things which are” —the seven churches—His judgment of the seven churches as given in chapters 2 and 3. Thirdly, “The things which shall be hereafter” (or, after these). There we see God’s judgment and government of the world.

In chapter 1 we find the divine attributes in One who is Man. There is a full description of the Lord Jesus, not as girded for priestly service, but “clothed with a garment down to his foot”; here it is priestly judgment. The “golden girdle” is divine righteousness. “His head and his hairs were white like wool,” the Ancient of days; Dan. 7:9. “His eyes a flame of fire “are divine unsparing scrutiny; “His feet like unto fine brass,” earthly judgment; “His voice as the sound of many waters,” His majesty; “His countenance as the sun,” supreme light; “The first and the last,” Jehovah; “He that liveth and was dead,” the risen man. We see Him with certain divine attributes, and executing judgment as the Son of man. There is something similar in chapters 7 and 10 of Daniel. You get Him as Jehovah, and as One risen from

the dead, as the risen Man walking among the candlesticks.

The seven churches (chaps. 2, 3) then existing are looked at as those which Christ judges, though they present to us the whole history of the church until the coming of the Lord. They are thus given that there might be nothing to hinder their looking for the immediate coming of the Lord. It is the same in Matthew 25. The virgins who go to sleep are the same that wake; and the servants who receive the talents are the same the Lord reckons with at His coming, though ages and generations have passed away from the time of the church going to sleep, and the time of the going forth of the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” When the Spirit of God speaks of the Bridegroom tarrying, He speaks of the present state of things existing unto the end. We see seven subsisting churches, and there is no form of evil can come in that is not provided for. In Jerusalem was found the blood of all the prophets; in Babylon (chap. 17) the blood of all the saints. We at the close have all the responsibility. The vision and the blessing was from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come. “Who is” is the immutable being of God. Thus time is brought in in connection with Him who is eternal — the coming One—who is, was, and is coming.

In chapter 4 we see a throne set in heaven, and the four living creatures surrounding it. The throne of Daniel 7 is a partial development; but it is not simply the throne in that character here. We have cherubim as well as seraphim. What is the difference? The cherubim are connected with present judgment on the earth; they are the seat of God’s judicial power on earth. The seraphim covered their faces, crying, “Holy, holy, holy.” They are

connected with God revealed, so as to bring man as man into His presence. In Isaiah 6 we find the seraphim. Here we see government in respect to the holiness of God's nature, not so much His revealed ways. God comes out according to His nature. Anything not according to that nature I cannot have. We find the incompatability of God's nature with sin—the contrariety of an unholy nature with a holy Being. The living creatures here are cherubim, the attributes of God and the heads of creation— cattle, beasts of the field, birds, and man. The lion was the symbol of strength; the calf, firmness; man, intelligence; the eagle, swiftness of judgment. The seraphim in Isaiah 6 have nothing to do with grace, only with judgment. The coal of fire is grace, but burning grace. Cherubim are the government of God on earth; seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy." The living creatures here illustrate the cherubic character: Holy, holy, holy, the seraphic character; the seven Spirits of God the attributive character. The seven lamps are the seven Spirits; they are in connection with God's government of the earth, and similar to Isaiah 11, "the spirit of wisdom," etc. The rainbow (v. 3) is God's covenant with creation. You find judgment, but not yet the Lord till the next chapter. The living creatures in Ezekiel 1 are the attributes of God, the pillars of the throne. "The Lord reigneth … he sitteth between the cherubims," Psa. 99:1. Man made gods of the attributes to worship.

In chapter 5 the angels are seen as a distinct set outside. In chapter 4 are no angels at all—the living creatures may be angels; in chapter 5 they are the heavenly saints. We perhaps get here the transfer of power from angels to men, according to Hebrews 2. The

coming age is not to be under angels, but under man. The Lamb's taking the book is the beginning in a certain way of the coming age. All through the old dispensation God was dealing with man through angels— "the law was given by the disposition of angels"; now they are displaced by man, their power transferred to the heavenly saints. The four living creatures are only used as symbols, just as the beast of chapter 17 has seven heads and ten horns; if taken literally, where would you put the ten horns on seven heads? They have tried to put them in pictures, and they have made a mess of it.

The beasts and elders worship together. The beasts celebrate, but do not worship. You see the beasts and elders separate in chapter 4. The angels never give a reason for their worship; the saints always do, for they have the mind and thoughts of God. Theirs is an intelligent—a "reasonable service."

God has been pleased to use certain agents, according to these attributes, of which the beasts are the symbols. He has used angels, He will use saints. Earthly saints will not reign over the earth, they are reigned over—a royal nation in a certain sense. The beasts have more the governmental character, the elders are worshippers. Both represent the church in chapter 5; they may perhaps include the Old Testament saints too. The elders are characterised by their intelligence in the mind of God. In chapter 5:10, the words us and we should be them and they—it refers to the remnant. Their song mentions the two classes—themselves the heavenly saints, and the remnant. "Redeemed or bought," "made them." He is worthy, for He has purchased us. It is not here so much His character as the Redeemer making atonement that is seen, but rather what we find in

Philippians 2—the humbled Man set upon the throne—the effect of His death for Him, and not for us. Through death He got into this place. It is His title to take the government of the earth.

Verse 6. The seven horns and the seven eyes represent the perfection of power and the perfection of intelligence. The “eyes” are the exercise of divine intelligence in the government of the earth. (See 2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10.) In the lion (v. 5), we have the symbol of power, in the lamb (v. 6) of redemption, in the seven spirits we get the Holy Ghost as governing. They are sent out into all the earth, the divine perfection of government in the earth. The eyes in chapter 4 are all-seeing; in chapter 5 perfection in government; in chapter 4:8 internal spiritual perception; in chapter 5 all is looked at as in order, both in the heavens and the earth, the effect of the Lamb’s taking the book. There is no reign in chapter 4.

The church has the spiritual intelligence now which is necessary to the government of the earth, but is not yet in the place to exercise the power. We have an unction from the Holy One and know all things. You cannot go beyond that. We do not need any fresh endowment. Of course there is the new body and the glory which we have not got. Our bodies belong to the first creation. I belong to the new creation. The church will have no more power of discernment in the glory than now. The perfect thing is not yet come; 1 Cor. 13. There are always the two things (for instance, in John, we have everlasting life as a present possession; in Romans 6:22, “the end everlasting life”). So in Romans we have justification and righteousness as a present thing, whilst in Philippians 3 it is something future. This is because,

although we belong to the new creation, we are still in the old as to the body. As regards the new man, it realises everything in heaven. As to our body, we realise that we are groaning on earth. They are priests in chapter 5, but not acting in chapter 4. That is preparatory, a sort of programme to the soul of all the things that were to come out after. The throne is set, but not yet acting. God's holiness is celebrated.

You have the throne set in heaven, not in Jerusalem. God is seen in heaven and directly I see the character of things in Him. When Christ comes to the world, He comes as God, not as the Messiah. In the first three Gospels He comes as Messiah, presenting Himself to man's responsibility. They are summed up in John 1:11: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Then in John we have Him as God manifest in flesh. The Son came to reveal the Father. So we find John full of election. We have the character of John's Gospel in that verse, "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world," chap. 16:28. If He comes as God, He must necessarily come to the world as the sphere of His acting, not to the Jews only. "I came into the world." He leaves the world and goes to the Father. Whenever you put an interpretation upon a scripture, you go wrong. One of the old fathers has well said, "He reads the scriptures well who brings back a sense from it, but does not take one to it." In chapters 4, 5, the elders are the administrative power by which the attributes of God are displayed.

In Revelation 6, at the opening of the fifth seal, we find the souls of martyrs under the altar. They cry for judgment, not rest. Then as the answer to their prayer we have a mighty shaking at the opening of the sixth

seal, so that the kings, the great men, etc., think in their terror that the end is come (but they are mistaken).

Chapter 7. Before the other judgments are poured out, the Lord takes care to number His people. We have in this chapter God's people on earth: first, the Jews, then the Gentiles. These are those who go through the tribulation. They are the results of the everlasting gospel going out to the Gentiles after the church has been taken up. These saints, after the church is gone, are living in earthly circumstances and have the highest kind of comfort you can have. These saints are in a better case than the millennial ones, but not in so good an one as the elder saints. Saints have so got down to earth in their hopes that they have taken this as belonging to them, thanking God that He is coming down to them to wipe away their tears, instead of rising up to God beyond the place where tears are. The church is up in heaven. Where does this multitude come from? They are those who are living on the earth, for they serve God day and night in His temple, whilst in the New Jerusalem there is no temple. The everlasting gospel bears something of the character of John the Baptist's. Connected with judgment, they are warned. The number of the Jews here (one hundred and forty-four thousand) is a mystic number—it is that of human perfection—a thousand times over of each tribe (seven the highest indivisible number, perfection in unity, God's perfect number; twelve is the lowest number divisible by four different numbers). We find these Jews in Matthew 25 spoken of as the Lord's brethren. We have the heavenly saints in the same chapter as the virgins and the servants. These are not altogether the same as the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter 14.

Some of them are killed during the tribulation and get their places in heaven. White robes—token of acceptance and righteousness—are given to the slain remnant. The Gentiles seen in chapter 7 are those who have gone through the tribulation and therefore have a higher place of blessing than those born during the millennium. The great tribulation is not the same as Jacob's trial; the former is connected with the whole earth, whilst the latter only applies to Israel. They may be going on at the same time.

We may just look at the connection of Psalms 93-100 with this period. Psalm 93, the Lord reigneth—general idea; Psalm 94, the cry of the remnant of Israel and the question asked, Is He going to have the throne together with Antichrist? (v. 20); Psalm 95, the last summons to Israel; Psalm 96, the everlasting gospel to the heathen; Psalm 97, He is actually coming; Psalm 98, He is come; Psalm 99, He is sitting between the cherubim; Psalm 100, all the Gentiles, the nations are summoned to come up and worship. Here we get what the reign of Solomon is a type of.

Chapter 8. Here we find the answers to the prayers of the saints (chap. 6:10), the angel having given efficacy to their prayers by offering them up with incense on the golden altar before the throne and now the judgments are poured out. The angel here is Christ. When the heavenly saints act as priests, they do not pray at all; chap. 5:8, 9. When Christ is the priest, as here, He adds incense to the prayers. In chapter 5 the prayers are the incense. At the opening of the seventh seal we see more special judgments. First, there is silence, a lull after the terrible sixth, and no action. Then we come to the trumpets. In chapter 8 are the first four judgments, and

these are more specially on states and circumstances (they are the western judgments); in chapter 9 the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are specially upon man, people are attacked; these are the eastern judgments, the third part of man being slain. The fifth falls on the apostate Jews who had not the seal of God on their foreheads; chap. 9:4. It is the wrath of God here that is poured out, not that of the Lamb. God is about to bring the Only-begotten into the world again, and in this chapter He is clearing the ground. His title as the slain Lamb is owned in chapter 5, but we do not get His acting in judgment till we come to chapter 19. The action here is all angelic.

Chapters 10 and 11 are parenthetical; chaps. 12, 13 and 14 are connected; chaps. 15-18 form an appendix. The whole book closes at chapter 11:18. It brings us down to the judgment of the dead, at the end of the millennium, which you get more fully gone into in chapter 20. The last verse of chapter 11 belongs to chapter 12. It goes on beyond the millennium into the eternal state. Then follows an appendix, chapters 12-20 going more into detail right on to the final scene in the last two chapters. In chapter 10 you again find Christ under the figure of an angel. Before the sounding of the last trumpet, He brings in a little book which unfolds all the rest; chap. 11. In chapter 10:6, “that there should be time no longer” —the real force of the word here is, “that there should be no more delay” but the mystery of God should be finished at the sounding of the seventh angel.

Chapter 11:2. The holy city is trodden under foot of the Gentiles forty-two months. This is the second half of the last of the seventy weeks of Daniel. We only find the last half of the week spoken of in Revelation. The whole

week is spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. First, you have seven weeks— these were historical; then sixty-two weeks are added, bringing us “unto Messiah the Prince.” “After these things [it does not say how long] Messiah is cut off.” The first half of the remaining week we find is the ministry of Christ which lasted three years and a half. Then the Messiah is cut off. So now to faith there is only the last half of the week to come. But the apostate nation, not owning the period of Christ’s ministry, “confirms the covenant” with Antichrist for the whole week. They go on flourishing till the middle of the week. Then Antichrist breaks his covenant with them, and their judgment follows, and Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles for “forty and two months.” They refused Him who came in His Father’s name, and will receive him who comes in his own name. In Daniel 7:25 it is the times and laws, and not the saints, that are given into his hand. In the first book of Psalms we see the experience of the remnant during the first half-week, and that is why we find more of the experience of the Lord Jesus here than in all the other Psalms. In the half-week of the Lord’s ministry the remnant received Him, the nation did not. When under Antichrist the nation again go through the first half-week, it will be the converse, the nation receive him and the remnant do not. In the Gospels by Matthew and Mark we have only the last tribulation, whilst in Luke is also seen the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Luke says nothing of the abomination of desolation set up. We find from Revelation 11:1-3 that true worship and true testimony are maintained during the whole of this time of one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Time is never counted except in connection with the Jews. The church belongs to heaven, and time is not reckoned in

connection with it. There is no date mentioned in Revelation till you come to the last half-week (v. 9, probably literal days). When the church is caught up, there will be apostasy. We see in 2 Thessalonians 2 that those who received not the love of the truth that they might be saved are given up to believe a lie. So to Christendom it is the same thing whether Christ comes, or does not come; if the truth is rejected, they die in their sins. Revelation 11 takes us on to the last scene of judgment—that of the dead, which takes place after the millennium: this finishes the book. Thus the beast, Babylon, and then the appendix (chapters 11:19, and chaps. 12, 13 and 14) go together.

You are in the dark place, but you have the Lord's candle, namely, prophecy, and you do well to take heed to it.

In chapter 11:19 we see the ark of God's testament in His temple. Come what may, there is security for Israel. He has given a heavenly security to the covenant on earth. The word of prophecy is not to draw, but to drive us out of the world. The best thing is to have a heavenly Christ to draw us out, but it is good to have the word of prophecy to let us know what is coming on the world.

The church is not spoken of here (chap. 12); she forms the body of the one new man, the man-child caught up to God and His throne. The woman includes all the twelve tribes clothed with supreme authority, and complete government about her head. Seven is the highest indivisible number, twelve the most divisible number (a circle and a cube). The man-child is taken up to God and His throne, the woman is left to persecution.

James addresses all the twelve tribes, though ten seem to have been lost sight of.

In chapter 13 we get the instruments of Satan: the Roman beast in his last form, and the second beast, which I believe to Antichrist. In chapter 12 we had an anti-priest, “the accuser of our brethren, which accused them before our God day and night.” In chapter 13 we see an anti-king and anti-prophet. The true King and Prophet was rejected; so now they get a false king and a false prophet. He takes these two earthly characters, now he can no longer exercise the former.

In chapter 14 we get the result of God’s dealings during this period—one hundred and forty-four thousand associated with Christ on earth. It is “His Father,” never the Father relating to the saints. They are associated with Christ in His royal place upon earth. They are those who have been specially faithful; they learn the heavenly song though they are not in heaven, and they have His comfort. They have shared Christ’s rejection, and now they have a place of special blessing. Special blessing is always the result of special sorrow. They are the firstfruits for God and the Lamb on the earth, as we are the firstfruits for heaven. It is too late to go to heaven unless they are killed. They learn the song that is sung there, and accompany Him in His rejection. Whoever belongs to Him out of all the nations you find in chapter 7.

Chapters 15, 16. Now we come to a new wonder. The others in chapter 14 end with the winepress of the wrath of God. Chapter 15 begins before the end of chapter 14. There are seven different testimonies in chapter 14.

Corruption is centred in Babylon, power in the beast. God destroys Babylon, not the Lamb.

An inward quickening is never treated of in Scripture as salvation; the idea of regeneration has been lost. Cornelius was quickened beyond a doubt, but was told to send for Peter to hear "words whereby he might be saved." We get the two things in Romans 10: "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Salvation is here the result not merely of believing, but also of confessing. Peter, in Acts 2 exhorts those who were pricked to the heart by the word spoken to "save" themselves from that untoward generation. Lydia was a worshipper of God before the visit of Paul to Philippi. Salvation is not the Holy Ghost's work, but the work of Christ. I cannot say a man is saved unless his conscience is purged. The church has lost the thought of being saved. People think it is enough to be born anew. Regeneration is confounded with having life. If we look at Israel, they are not spoken of as saved till they were across the Red Sea. Salvation is connected with actual deliverance. When the blood was on the doorpost, they were free from the judgment. There God was known as a Judge; as a Saviour at the Red Sea— "Stand still and see the salvation of God."

In result, salvation always includes the body. "Believe— be saved," Eph., chaps. 1, 2). "By grace are ye saved." I should say a quickened soul was safe, but not saved. Israel was safe under the shelter of the blood, though they had not then seen "the salvation of God"—full deliverance from Egypt. A man has not to be saved unless he is lost. You could not say in that sense, that a Jew, before the rejection of Christ, was totally lost; that

is, he was under probation. It is no longer so now that man is in a probationary state. Not only is he a sinner, but the cross of Christ proves him to be totally lost. Man thus proved to be lost is in a position to be totally saved — “delivered from this present evil world.” I was in the flesh, but now I am in Christ. If a soul were only quickened and not saved, he would not belong to the church at the coming of the Lord. I know this is impossible, because, as the apostle says, “He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” You are not united by faith, or by life, but by the Holy Ghost. “In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” Eph. 1. People are now taught to hope that they have life. I meet two different persons, and I ask both whether they are the children of God. I get the same reply from each, “I hope so”; but if I hear them at their prayers, I find there the different state of their souls. Whilst one, having the Spirit of adoption, is crying “Abba, Father,” the language of the other is “Lord, have mercy.”

“Regeneration,” as the word is used in the New Testament, is not the same as being born again. The word is only used twice; Matthew 19, where it is in connection with the millennium: and in Titus 3, with baptism. It is more connected with salvation than quickening. A desire after holiness would be one evidence of a quickened soul. I do not say he is saved; Scripture does not say so. If one has been set free, one never gets into uncertainty. “Forgotten that he was purged from his old sins,” is speaking of practice. For instance, my child runs out in the street and gets dirty, and I say to him, “You have forgotten that I washed you just before you went out.” A person may be very clear

and have little godliness. I would far rather see a person in real distress of soul, as in Romans 7 than knowing himself saved, and taking it coolly without any exercise of conscience. It is not till after Israel had passed the Red Sea and seen the salvation of God, that we get the song of deliverance. What is the meaning of the word of the Lord to Zacchaeus: “This day is salvation come to this house”? Christ was Himself the salvation of God. As Simeon says, “mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Zacchaeus now receives Him joyfully. He had been full of his good works before, giving half of his goods to the poor, etc.; he was just telling the Saviour what he was doing before. Jesus seeks and saves the lost.

In chapter 17 we have Babylon and the two beasts.

Chapter 18, the judgment of Babylon, “in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain on the earth.” She is corrupt religion, most hateful to God, like Jerusalem which the Lord held guilty in His day of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from Abel downward.

Chapter 19. The marriage of the Lamb comes after the judgment of Babylon. Here we have not God destroying corruption, but the Lamb Himself taking the power.

In chapters 20, and 21:5 is seen the final scene, till, according to 1 Corinthians 15, “God is all in all.”

Chapter 21:8 entirely closes the history of the book. A description follows (from chap. 21:9) of the New Jerusalem; then warnings. In the end we get again the relationship of the church to Christ, as at the beginning of chapter 1. At the presentation of Himself, she says, “Unto him that loved us,” etc. Here, in chapter 22:16, He presents Himself as the Root and the Offspring of

David, the bright and morning star. The bride immediately with the Spirit answers, Come. We have three invitations in this verse: first, as to the Bridegroom, she invites Him to come; second, she turns to the other saints—those who have heard and received the word are invited to join in the cry, and say, “come”; third, she turns to the world and invites the thirsty to come and drink freely of the water of life. We see the bride under different names, the assembly and the body in Ephesians; and holy city, and the new and holy Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Were Abraham, etc., not in the church? Some think they may be of the city, but not of the body.

Would you make a third sphere then for the Old Testament saints? There may be twenty spheres. Look at Hebrews 12:22-24: there we see several spheres. First, we are “come unto Mount Zion” (that is, the hundred and forty-four thousand in the land (Rev. 14)—here we have royal grace upon earth); secondly, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; thirdly, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly; fourthly, and to the church of the first-born which are written in heaven; fifthly, and to God the Judge of all; sixthly, and to the spirits of just men made perfect (that is, the Old Testament saints, Heb. 11:40); seventhly, and to Jesus the mediator, etc.; eighthly, and to the blood, etc. You find out the different divisions by noticing where the word and is used. We have the ascending scale, then the descending. He begins with earth and goes higher and higher till he arrives at God the Judge of all at the top, and then descends to earth again. The blood of sprinkling is connected with the new covenant of God and the earth. I suppose that Abraham,

etc., looked for the blessing that accompanied that state of things. Having got nothing on earth, he looked up for the eternal city.

[End Of Expository—Vol. 7.]

Notes From Lectures On The Epistle To The Hebrews

Chapter 1.

The Spirit of God in this epistle distinguishes between the way in which God spoke, or dealt, in time past and now. So in Romans 3 the apostle speaks of Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." There he applies the death of Christ to the sins committed before He came. The day of atonement in Israel was for the putting away of past sins. He had been bearing with them all the year, and then when the sacrifice came on that day, the sin was all put away and all bright in the presence of God. There is the day of atonement yet to come for Israel as a nation, when in their land. Then the other part was "to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him," etc. This is for the present time. By ascending before God on high, He establishes a present righteousness—all sins forgiven and we made the righteousness of God in Christ. Romans 3:25 gives it historically, for the sins of all who were saved in the Old Testament times are put away by this sacrifice; but we may apply it immediately, and see that not only our past sins are put away, but we stand in righteousness for the present.

Verse 1. "God who at sundry times," etc. That was before the time came for the revelation of Himself. Messages were sent through others. They had communications from God, for He spake to them

through the prophets: but now we have the manifestation of Himself. The Son of God has now come. “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” Thus the word is so exalted. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” His name up to that time was exalted. He had made Himself known to Abraham as the Lord Almighty, telling him to trust His power, when he had to walk up and down as a stranger, with none to take care of him. Then again He was made known to Nebuchadnezzar as the most High God, higher than any of the gods of the nations; and to Abraham too He was called thus, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings. He will take it again when the kingdom comes. Then, again, He was known by the name Jehovah— “I am” —the practical force of which is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” All these names were glorious; but the word He has magnified above all. The word is that which tells all that God is— holiness, love, wisdom, etc. His word expresses His thoughts and feelings; it is the revelation of Himself. God speaks by Christ. Everything that Christ did was the manifestation of God. Who could heal the leper but God? “I will, be thou clean,” are His words. Who could raise the dead but God? “Lazarus, come forth!” “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me,” John 17:8. He has committed His words to us, to be the vessels of His testimony according to our measure. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”

We are not only brought to God now, but to God revealing Himself, God manifest in the flesh. Christ came declaring the Father. “Believe me that I am in the Father … or else believe me for the very works’ sake.”

What a blessed place we have in Christ, having Him as the revelation of God to us! The mind of God is brought before us in Christ. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.” This is what makes Scripture so precious. It is indeed the written word, but the revelation of God. “No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” You have got the mind of God in writing, and there it is stable and imperishable—in contrast to traditions merely handed down from one to another. There cannot be the church speaking, without Scripture. If the church can say anything, itself, then Christ’s words go for nothing. I have another master over me. I am speaking of authority now, not of gift, which, of course, there is in the church for the bringing out of truth. But authority in the church trenches on the lordship of Christ over His house. It is a great thing to treasure in our souls that we have this revelation of God in Christ; and the beginning of the next chapter takes us up on the ground of possessing it. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” These were Jews to whom the apostle was writing, and they had heard the Lord Himself speak, and afterwards His apostles; and that is the reason why Paul did not put his name to this as to other epistles, when inditing them. You Jews hear what God Himself has said to you. You have heard Him. Thus, the apostle only confirmed what He had said. It is blessed thus to see how Paul drops his own apostleship (he was not, it is true, the apostle of the circumcision), and only speaks of the twelve who confirmed Christ’s own words.

In this chapter we have first the glory of Christ shewn in His being “heir of all things.” He was the Son of the

Father, and the everlasting Father, by virtue of His own power; and He will take everything. He will inherit all things. If a Son, we may say, then an Heir; for it is even said of us, “If children, then heirs.” All that is the Father’s is His. “He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” Psalm 8 is alluded to in chapter 2, when in the counsels of God it is appointed that as a Man He should take all things; but in this chapter we have this same One as the Son of God and “heir of all things”; and for this glorious reason, He “made the worlds.” In Colossians we have it—they “were created by him and for him.” There it is His title over creation, but as “the image of the invisible God, the first-born,” etc. So here it is “heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” He is distinguished from God the Father—the right hand of His power. By wisdom He planned and by power He wrought. Christ is that wisdom and that power.

Verse 3. “The express image of his person.” Christ was the outshining of God’s glory. This is more than testimony made by the prophets in other ages. John 12:38-41, in connection with Isaiah 6, shews the shining out of His glory very remarkably. See also Genesis 1:26, 27 in connection with this word, “the express image of his person.”

“Upholding all things,” etc. Of course this is a divine act. Who could keep the universe going? How could it all go on without God, so that not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him? How could it be without Him who made it? Though He has established the order of all things, it is He who is keeping it all going. The one actually acting and possessing all is Christ. We see His glory in all this.

Another divine work there is spoken of in His having "purged our sins "; and it is just as much a divine act to purge our sins as to create a world, and in one sense far more difficult, because sin is so hateful to God. It would be easy enough for Him to create another world out of nothing. He could look at His creation and say it was all "very good"; but He is so holy, He cannot look upon sin. Therefore there is something He must take away, and He does come to put sins away. We have sinned against God, and it is impossible for any to forgive the sin but the person sinned against. We have sinned against God, not man primarily, and man cannot forgive sins. This is another reason why God should be the only One who can forgive sins.

Mark another thing. He must purge before He can forgive. In passing through this world, man has to pass over a great deal, and get through as well as he can: but God cannot do this. He "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Then if God is to have anything to do with us, He must purge sin. There is this dreadful necessity, that God should be occupied with our sins; and He had love enough and power enough to do it. If He passed it over, He would have to give up His holiness. Therefore there was this moral necessity of His holiness, that if He is to have any such poor sinners in His presence, He must cleanse us. So there must also be the feet-washing, if we are to have part with Christ.

"When he had by himself purged our sins"—it must be by Himself. No one could help Him in it; angels could have nothing to do in it, though they were sent to minister to Him when engaged in the work. Man could not, for man can do no more than his duty; if he did more, it would be wrong. It must be a divine work to

purge away sin. There is a divine necessity upon God to do it—and that by Himself, because He could not allow sin. This is how I am purged. Because He could not bear sin, He must take it away Himself, and “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” It is a work that has been done: not anything that He will do, and may do—not something yet to be done. It is done, and He has sat down. We then no longer have a prophet coming to tell us He will do it, but there is the testimony of the Holy Ghost that it has been done.

“The brightness of God’s glory,” it is said, not the Father’s. Sin is connected with God as its judge, not with the Father. He “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” The whole work is accomplished and so perfectly done that He can take His own place again, and with the blessed difference, that He goes back as a Man, which He never was before. Stephen saw Him as the “Son of man,” standing on the right hand of God. Here He has “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” He has taken our sins, and yet is on the right hand of the throne of God. This shews that the righteousness wrought out was so perfect and divine, that though He has taken our sins, He could sit down on the throne of God, and not soil it. He had a right, of course, on the ground of His divine Person; but there is more than that here. Divine righteousness is presented to God, as an accomplished thing, just as the divine Son was manifested to man when He came down amongst us. It is all divine glory throughout.

Psalm 2, “Kiss the Son,” etc. Blessed is the man who trusteth in God: but cursed the man who trusteth in man; Jer. 17. We find in the prophets certain traits in mystery, as it were, to display the divine Person of the

One who was coming in humiliation. See Isaiah 50:3-5. The same glorious Person who said, “I clothe the heavens with blackness,” etc., says, “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious,” etc. In Daniel 7 again, see verse 13— “the Son of man,” brought before “the Ancient of days,” and in verse 22, He is giving out Himself to be “the Ancient of days,” Heb. 1:7. “Who maketh his angels spirits,” etc., but He does not say make when speaking of the Son. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” See Psalm 45:1-7; Heb. 1:9. He whose throne is for ever and ever has been put to the test; and He loved righteousness and hated iniquity while amongst us, and has brought us up as His fellows out of our iniquity. See the contrast in the connection in which “fellows” is mentioned here, and in Zechariah 13:7, where Jehovah speaks of the man, His fellow, who has been “wounded in the house of his friends.”

Thus we see the glory of Christ shining through the Old Testament continually, but in this chapter it is fully brought out. He is owned as God, though a man, and glorified above all others.

Verses 10, 11, etc. See Psalm 102:24. “Thy years are throughout,” etc., is in answer to verse 23, and first clause of verse 24. This is still more pointed and precise. Jesus, in His humiliation, breathes out His broken heart to Jehovah. The Psalm anticipates the rebuilding of Zion. If so, where would this smitten Messiah be? If cut off in the midst of His day, how could He be there? God’s answer is, that He, the holy sufferer, is Jehovah, the creator and disposer of all things. What a testimony to His unchangeable deity!

This is the time of grace, when those who are to be His companions in the glory are being gathered out (His fellows, v. 9).

Verse 13. Angels have a very blessed place and office, but it is never said to them, “Sit on my right hand,” etc., but Jehovah did say so to the man, Christ Jesus. He has His own place there.

What a blessed Saviour we have! The Lord Himself has come and taken up our cause. The One whom we look to, and lean upon as a Saviour, is the Lord Jehovah.

Then, besides the glory of His Person, there is the other blessed truth, essential to our peace, to see what a wonderful salvation we have: our sins completely purged away! There is a wonderful and divine glory in this salvation, and divine and ineffable love—the love of One who is not like an angel who could only do His work when told.

Our souls are thus called to worship Him who clothes the heavens with blackness, who indeed made all things, even Jesus, the Son of God.

Chapter 2.

The first four verses of this chapter are an exhortation founded on the preceding one. Observe, this epistle does not begin with an apostolic address, as the others do; but Paul puts himself entirely among these Jewish believers, and speaks of Christ as their Apostle, not himself; and throughout he is unfolding all the riches of Christ, to keep them from sliding back into Judaism. Though the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, yet is Paul the one used to these Hebrew believers. In chapter

1:1, 2, God hath “spoken to us”; that is, Paul puts himself among them. In the Hebrews the church is not addressed as such, but the saints individually—not in their aspect of oneness with Christ. Even in the Epistle to the Romans it is said, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified”; but here we get Him only “crowned with glory and honour.” Further, I would remark, as it is not of union with Christ of which the apostle speaks here, responsibility is pressed; continual “ifs” and warnings flow from this. These warnings do not one whit touch the final perseverance of the saints, as the doctrine is called; though I would rather say, the perseverance of God, His faithfulness, for He it is who keeps us to the end. “If you continue” does not throw a doubt on your continuance. The quickening work of the Spirit of God is scarcely referred to in this epistle, save in one or two cases. In chapter 2:2, “The word spoken by angels” means the law given at Sinai. In these verses the whole Jewish nation is addressed, while those only who had faith would receive the warning. And I would notice that the warnings of God are not merely against sin, but not to let slip truth, etc. Christ came into the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them, but they added to their rebellion of heart by rejecting Him who came to warn them. Neglecting salvation is despising it. By the rejection of Christ the Jews bound their sins upon them. To have broken the law was bad enough, but to reject grace was worse; and these first four verses press this upon them.

God’s purpose for man (v. 5, and following) is to set him over everything, but that purpose is still unfulfilled. “The world to come” is not heaven, for that does exist now; but it is the habitable earth to come, not this earth in its

present state. The Jews expected a new order of things; they looked for blessing and peace, and they were right, for so it will be. The present world is in subjection to angels. God's hand is not seen directly, but His angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Everything in this world, however mercifully ordered in providence, is a proof of sin—the clothes we wear, the houses we five in, etc. All this was not God's purpose. He is not, as I said, now acting directly. He permits and overrules, but He draws His own people from the world (delivering us "from this present evil world"), and then teaches them to walk through it as not of it. He protects us through His angels; they are His ministers in His providential dealings; v. 6. But it is a Man who is to be set over the world to come. Once (in Adam) dominion was committed to man, but he lost it; v. 8, etc. God's purpose, that is, His order of things, is not thereby touched. Now we see Jesus crowned, and when we are, then all things will be accomplished. The Head is now glorified, and the members are down here in suffering. Christ is sitting at God's right hand, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

Take Psalm 2 and compare it with Psalm 8. God says, "Yet have I set my king upon the holy hill of Zion." Christ is come, and is not yet set there as king. Now Psalm 8 shews that, though rejected as Messiah, Jesus took the place of Son of man. So when Peter confesses Him as the Christ, Jesus charges him straitly not to tell any, for the "Son of man [His title in Psalm 8] must suffer many things," etc. Sin must be put away before God could set up His kingdom. We are now passing through that order or state of things which is not yet put under Jesus. Christ has gone through this very world,

and been tempted, before He took His place as Priest, that He might succour them that are tempted. This is not sin, for we do not want sympathy in sin, but help and power to get out of and overcome it, and all this we have in Him. He went perfectly through reproach and tribulation. All that Satan could do to stop Him in His godly course, Satan did; but all was in vain. The Lord "resisted unto blood." We need to pray God for help to judge sin, each in himself. Sympathy in distress and suffering is another thing, and this we have, as well as forgiveness.

I began by saying there were two things—the purpose and the ways of God. Now, the latter it is our privilege to trace, while the former remains still unaccomplished. Instead of being merely Son of David, Christ is Son of man. He takes possession in our nature—not, of course, in the state in which it is in us, but still in our very nature. Now, as to the ways of God, we get these in verse 10: "By the grace of God he tasted death," etc. Mark this well—our sin brings us to the same place which, by the grace of God, He took. Perfect grace and perfect obedience we find in Him. When Christ came, as in Psalm 40, to do the will of God, God's majesty needed to be vindicated; and I would say unhesitatingly that God's truth, His righteousness, His love, His majesty, were all vindicated by the death of Christ—aye, far more than they would have been had we all died. In anticipation of this He said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" His love could not fully flow forth till then. In the words, "It became him," I find the character of God; while in the expression, "many sons," I find the objects of His love. He could not bring us to glory in our

sins. We get Christ taking up the cause of this remnant; and where, historically, did He begin?

It was in John's baptism that He outwardly identified Himself with His people, that is, with the sanctified ones; v. n. See Psalm 16:2, 3. His association was with the saints; and there cannot be a step in the divine life in which Christ does not go along with us. Christ, in all that He is, is with us in the smallest fibre of divine life, from the repentance which is at the beginning. Not, of course, that He had aught to repent; yet His heart is with us in it. This is as true now, as it will be when manifested in glory; v. 16. There was no union of Christ with the flesh. The associates of Christ are the excellent of the earth; while in grace one of His sweetest titles was "the friend of the publicans and sinners."

Verse 12 is a quotation from Psalm 22:22, where Jesus in resurrection takes the place of leader of the praise of His brethren. Our songs should therefore ever accord with His. He has passed through death for us; and if our worship express uncertainty and doubt instead of joy and assurance in the sense of accomplished redemption, there can be no harmony, but discord, with the mind of heaven.

Verse 13 is quoted from Psalm 16, where, as also elsewhere, Christ on earth takes the place of the dependent Man. He is specially thus described in Luke's Gospel, where it is so frequently recorded that He prayed. Again, "Behold, I and the children," etc. This passage from Isaiah 8:18 is particularly applicable to these Hebrew believers. While waiting for Israel, He and His disciples are for signs.

In verse 14 we find the consequence of His association with us. In these latter verses we have these two things: He took our nature that He might die; and also that He might go through temptation. We were alive under death; then Christ comes, and He takes upon Him all the power of Satan and death, and destroys thus him that had the power of death. By His death He made propitiation for sin. The feelings of His soul, and the temptations of Satan, were before His actual death, in the garden of Gethsemane, where His language was, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." This was because of Satan's power; for He said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." But all this He went through, as part of His appointed sufferings. In the first three Gospels we have His cry in Gethsemane. In John we have His remembrance of His mother, and His other cries ("I thirst!" and "It is finished!") on the cross; and this is in character with that Gospel in which His divine aspect is given. After the conflict with Satan was over, Christ took up the cup from His Father's hand. They who were sent to secure Him had no power against Him, for they all fell back; but He gave Himself up. Satan pressed the cup upon Him, but He took it from the hand of His Father.

As regards temptation, I shall hope to speak more about it another time. I would only now say that succouring is not dying instead of me; but now that I am going through this world I need succour. The ark in Jordan was like Christ preceding us through the waters of death, which to Him overflowed its banks, while we follow dry-shod. For what is dying to the Christian? It is passing away from all sorrow into the presence of the Lord—the happiest moment in a Christian's existence.

Chapter 3.

The first tide of our Lord in this chapter is connected with the first part of the epistle; the second, namely, the priesthood, refers to what follows afterwards. In chapter 1 also we have His qualification for being the Apostle; in chapter 2, His qualification for the Priesthood. He was the Divine Messenger for the testimony He was to bring to earth; and He is gone up on high to exercise His Priesthood on behalf of a needy people down here where He has been. “God manifest in flesh justified in the Spirit … received up in glory,” referring to His having come down here and become man. He must be in the holy place in order to carry on His work as Priest; but He must be a man. Therefore what He was on earth fitted Him, as it were, for this work. There is a third character connected with Christ brought out in this third chapter; Christ set “over his own house.”

In this epistle we do not get the unity of the body at all; we get a Mediator speaking to God for us and speaking from God to us: “Let us hold fast the profession,” etc. If He spoke of the unity of the body, that is inseparable; there is one Holy Ghost uniting the members to the Head— “ye in me, and I in you.” It is not so here. Therefore profession is spoken of, and the possibility of that being not true profession; yet assuming it might be sincere, “we are persuaded better things of you,” etc. (chap. 6). There might be all these privileges, and no fruit, but falling away. These Hebrews had made a public profession of having embraced Christ, and received a heavenly calling. In speaking of the body of Christ, we know it is perfect—no possibility of a false member getting in; but in a living congregation I may address them as hoping they are all saints, but the end proves.

No man can tell the end, whether they will all persevere; but if there is life, we know they will.

“Apostle of our profession”—it could not be said Apostle of life. We never can understand this epistle properly, unless we get hold of this truth. In Ephesians, where the body is more the subject, I do not get such an expression as this, “that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.”

The character of this epistle not being understood is the reason many souls are tried and exercised by passages they find in it. They are addressed with the possibility of their not having life, and so not continuing to the end. The church supposes a body in heaven. “Heavenly calling” does not necessarily imply that, because they are called to heaven, they are part of the body of Christ. The kingdom and the body are different. “Head over all things to the church” is wider, too, than the kingdom. Kingdom implies a king; a body implies a head. The church is precious to God. Everything that Christ has, I have; the same life, the same righteousness, the same glory. If my hand is hurt, I say it is I who am hurt. Paul was converted by this truth, “Why persecutest thou me?” It shews what grace has done for us—taken us out of ourselves. The body of Christ shews out the fulness of redemption, and the purpose of God respecting it. But another aspect of the people of God is that they are down here in infirmity, but having this heavenly calling. In this condition I need One in heaven; and there is not an infirmity, a need, a sorrow, an ache, an anxiety, but it draws out sympathy and help from Christ. This draws out my affections to Him. But before the priesthood is taken up, Moses is spoken of as a type: “Christ Jesus, faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was

faithful in all his house." The house is the place where God dwells; and there is another thing here—the Head of the house administering it.

God has met His people according to the need in which they were. In Egypt they need redemption, and He comes to redeem. In the wilderness they were dwelling in tents, and He would have a tent too. In getting into the land they wanted One to bring them in, and there is the captain of the Lord's host. Then, when they are in the land, He builds His palace, His temple. There is rest. We are not come to the temple yet—we have not rest: we get the tabernacle now, and "there remaineth a rest." There was a temple existing when these Hebrews were addressed, but that was not for us.

The temple is a dwelling for God. There never was a dwelling-place for God until redemption came in. Scripture never speaks of man getting back to innocency, or the image of God. God did not dwell with Adam; though in the cool of the day He came to walk with him. Neither did He dwell with Abraham. "The earth hath he given to the children of men" — "the heavens are the Lord's." But when redemption comes in, God is forming something for Himself. Thus, in Exodus 15:13, "habitation" refers to what they had in the wilderness (Exod. 29:44-46), but verse 17 to the rest at the end.

There were visits to Abraham (Abraham will dwell in heaven), but God could not have a habitation among men until He had made known redemption to them. The nature and character of God require it. Love is God's character: to enjoy God I must be with Him. Holiness is His nature. We are made sons of God ("the servant

abideth not in the house for ever," etc.). In the divine nature communicated to us, we are capable of being at home in that house of God, and redemption gives the title.

The individual Christian is a temple now; but the temporary provisional thing is God dwelling with us. The full blessed thing is our dwelling with God; John 14. I go not away to be alone there, but to have you there. "I go to prepare a place for you." In verse 23 the Father and the Son make their abode with us till we are taken to abide with them. God's having a house, as a general thought, is the consequence of redemption. Here in Hebrews it is rather alluded to as to administration than dwelling. "Habitation of God," is the present thing; "temple" is future in Ephesians 2. It is spoken of in a larger and more vague way in Hebrews, because here it takes in profession. He that built all things is God. In one sense creation is His house; in another, Christ has passed through the heavens, as High Priest, into the heaven of heavens (through the two veils, as is represented in the type), into the holiest. In a third sense the body professing Christianity is His house, "whose house are we," etc.—the saints. There may be hypocrites amongst them; but they "are builded together for an habitation of God," etc. Christ administers in it, as Son over His own house. Moses was but servant in the building. There is immense comfort for us in this; first, because it is perfectly governed; second, when we look at the house, we may see all sorts of failures coming in; but though all may be failure, the One who administers in the house cannot fail. Therefore, though all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, Paul could say, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," etc. There is One whom

nothing escapes. Anyone who has a real care for the church of God, need never distrust. Paul, in looking at the Galatians, sees so much wrong that he does not know what to think of them: he changes his voice towards them. Ye that are under the law, hear the law. But in the next chapter he says, “I have confidence in you through the Lord.” Christ is over His own house. Two things follow then. He will turn everything to blessing—Paul in prison, etc.; and there is present good too. When all the joints and bands do not act as they ought, the immediate ministry of Christ is more experienced. Christ connects everything with His glory; and faith connects the glory of the Lord with the people of the Lord. Moses did so. Faith does not only say, the Lord is glorious, and He will provide the means for His own glory; but it sees the means for it. Moses said, “Spare the people,” when with God; and when he came down amongst them, he “cut off the people,” because he was alive to God’s glory (in the matter of the calf in the camp).

We have to count upon Christ for the church, not upon itself. Thus Paul, when tried by Nero, passes sentence as it were upon himself (Phil. 1:23-25); he settles it that he shall be acquitted. Why? Because he sees it is more needful for them—one single church. It was divine teaching and faith in exercise which made him to judge thus.

There is failure on the part of the church down here as to responsibility, but Christ has perfect authority in His church, and He has interest in it. We have not to make rules for the church; it is the Master must govern the house, not the servants. There is one Master, and that is Christ. He is over the church, and not the church over

Him. “Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence,” etc. Ah! people say, don’t you be too confident, because there is an “if.” But, I ask, what have you got? What he presses is, that you should not let it go. Is that to be used to hinder my having the confidence? What did they believe? That Christ was come—a heavenly Saviour to them, and this far better than an earthly one. Do not give up that. There is a fear of giving up that confidence, not of.their being too confident. What am I to distrust? Myself? Oh! I cannot distrust myself too much. But is it Christ you distrust? Will His eye ever grow dim, or His heart grow cold? Will He leave off interceding? A proof that I am a real stone in the house is that I hold fast the confidence, etc. Those high priests under the old dispensation were continually standing; but He has sat down, because the work is all done. They needed for every sin a new sacrifice: sin was never put away. They needed a fresh absolution from the priest every time sin came up. Now, He says, “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” If you are under law, it is another thing; you have not got the confidence. If you talk of distrust, what do you distrust? If you trust in man at all, it is a proof you do not see that you are lost. If you give up confidence in yourself, and say, I am lost already, it is another thing. No one that has really come to redemption, has in the substance of his soul confidence in himself; and no Christian will say, you ought to distrust Christ. Our privilege is to have confidence in Christ as a rock under our feet, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His righteousness has brought Christ into the glory as a man, and the same righteousness will bring me in.

Does another person say, I do not know whether I have a portion in it? You are under the law: God may be ploughing up your soul—exercising it for good; but you have not been brought to accept the righteousness of God. The soul in this state has not accepted the righteousness of God for it, instead of ours for Him. You are still depending on your own heart for comfort and assurance. It is a very serious thing to get the soul so empty of everything that it has only to accept what God can give. It is an awful thing to find oneself in God's presence, with nothing to say or to present. You never get love to Christ until you are saved; and it is the work of God's Spirit. The prodigal found what he was by what his father was. Did the prodigal doubt his interest when the father was on his neck?

The remainder of this chapter takes up the people of Israel— the professing people in the wilderness. They did not get into the land, but their carcases fell in the wilderness. It is speaking of them on the road. The "to-day" quoted from Psalm 115 never closes for Israel, till God has taken up the remnant at the end of His dealings with them, after the church is gone up to heaven.

Verse 14. "Partakers" is the same word as that translated "fellows" in chapter 1. You are fellows of Christ if you are of this company. This place with the fellows is yours if you go on to the end. This kind of statement does not touch the security of the saints. Both Calvinists and Arminians might say, He will reach heaven, if he holds fast to the end. The certainty of salvation is the certainty of faith, and not that which excludes dependence upon God for every moment. I have no doubt that God will keep every one of His saints to the end; but we have to run the race to obtain eternal

glory. Holding fast the faithfulness of God, it is important, along with this, to keep up the plain sense of passages such as the present, which act on the conscience as warning by the way. There is no uncertainty, but there is the working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, personal Christianity is distinguished from preaching to others. It is not a question of the work, but of the person being a castaway, and this means disapproved or reprobate, that is, not a Christian. Compare 2 Cor. 13. In Romans 2 eternal life is spoken of as the result of a course which pleases God. No doubt, His grace gives the power; but it is the result of a fruit-bearing course. In a word, it is equally true that I have eternal life, and that I am going on to eternal life. God sees it as one existence, but we have to separate it in time. Walk that road, and you will have what is at the end of it. This does not interfere with the other truth, that God will keep His own, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. Our Father says as it were, That is my child, and I watch him all the way, and take care to keep him in it.

Chapter 4.

The word of God is connected with the apostleship; chap. 3:1. In the last verses the priesthood of Christ is the subject. These are the two means of our being carried through the wilderness—the word of God, and priesthood of Christ. Israel were treated as a people brought out of Egypt, but liable to fall by the way. So the warning to these Hebrews (chap. 4:1), “as to seeming to come short;” the word is softened. In chapter 3 we have seen them addressed as a body brought out under the

name of Christ, but admitting the possibility of hypocrites among them.

There are two distinct things connected with the people — redemption, and being carried on when brought out into the wilderness.

The Epistles to the Hebrews and to the Philippians both address saints as in the wilderness. In Philippians it is more personal experience that is spoken of, for example, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer.” In both it is as passing through the wilderness, and not yet in the rest.

Verse 1. We have “His rest.” Not merely rest, but God’s rest: and this makes all the difference. It is not merely as tired ones, and glad to rest: we are going into the rest of God. There is an allusion to creation when God saw all that He had made very good. He delighted in it, and rested. Spiritual labour now is not rest, nor the worry and plague of sin. God will rest in His love; Zeph. 3:17. How could He rest here? Not till He sees all those He loves perfectly happy. How can He rest where sin is? Holiness cannot rest where sin is. Love cannot rest where sorrow is. He rested from His works in the first creation, because it was all very good; but when sin came in, His rest was broken. He must work again. God finds rest where everything is according to His own heart. He is completely satisfied in the exercise of His love.

When conflict and labour are over, we shall get into the rest in which He is. That is the promise. “A promise being left us of entering into his rest” —God’s own rest. If affections have not their object, they are not at rest. They will have this then, and we shall be like Him. There

will be also comparative rest, even for this poor creation, by-and-by.

These Hebrews who are addressed, are compared to the Jews who came out of Egypt, some of whom fell; but he says, “We are persuaded better things of you,” ye “are not of them that draw back into perdition.” What had they got? Their Messiah on earth? No. He was gone, and they were left strangers as to what was here below, and not having reached heaven either. That is what every Christian is: the state of his heart is another thing.

Verse 2. “Gospel preached.” We have glad tidings preached to us as well as they. The apostle is speaking of the character of those who go in (heaven, God’s rest, the promise for us, as Canaan was for Israel). Unbelievers do not go into rest—believers do. That is the door they go in by.

As to God’s creation, there is not rest for them in it—it is not come for them. “If they shall enter,” etc. This means they shall not, but God did not make the rest for no one to enter. He begins again; v. 7. David came five or six hundred years after Moses, and in Psalm 95 he says, “To-day after so long a time,” etc. If they did not get into the rest by Joshua, there “remaineth a rest to the people of God.” That is not come at all yet. It is to be under the new covenant, when Christ comes, the Messiah according to their own scriptures.

“He that is entered into his rest hath also ceased from his own works,” not only from sin. When God ceased, it was not from sin, but from labour. Godly works are not rest. God rests in Christ. I have ceased from my works, as regards my conscience, because I have ceased from works for justification. I have not ceased from godly

works—that rest is not come yet. Labouring to enter in here does not mean as to justification. “There remaineth a rest.” We have the former, but there is more we wait for.

The two means of carrying us through, spoken of before, are the word applied by the Spirit, and the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We never get union with Christ spoken of here; there is no discerning, judging, etc., connected with that; but as Christians in the wilderness there is, and the intercession of Christ is needed; as distinct, separate Christians going through the world, beset with snares on every hand, we are addressed.

It is remarkable how the word of God is made to be the revelation of God Himself. “The word of God is quick and powerful, manifest in his sight.” Whose sight? The word of God, the revelation of Christ. He is called the word of God— “God manifest in the flesh.” He was the divine life — the perfection of all divine motives in a man in this world. The word of God brings the application of God’s nature. All that He is, is applied to us in going through this world. That begins by our being begotten by the word—born again, of incorruptible seed—the divine nature imparted, which cannot sin because born of God. Then all the motives and intentions of the heart have to be displayed by this word. The written word is the expression of God’s mind down here. Divine perfectness, as expressed in the life of Christ in the written word, is applied to us. What selfishness was there in Christ? I do not now refer to His going about doing good, but as to the feelings and motives of His heart. How much has self been our motive? Not like Christ. It is not gross sins that are spoken of here, but “thoughts and intents of the heart.” How much self through the day!

In John 17 our Lord says, “I sanctify myself.” Christ set apart as the perfection of man—Christ, a model man, if I may so speak—all that God approves in a man was seen in Christ. The same should be seen in us. “Sanctify them through thy truth.” The word applied to us in all this path, in motives, thoughts, and feelings, is for this purpose. Christ was not only doing good; He walked in love, and He says to us, “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself,” “forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.” What comes down from God goes up to Him. Self may enter in our doing good; but only what is of a sweet savour goes up to God— “an offering to God.” What is not done exclusively in the power of divine love, in the sense of an offering, is spoiled—self has come in.

“Dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” God has created natural affections, but how much self and idolatry come in! Self-will, too, and self-gratification, how awfully it comes in! That is soul, and not spirit. The word of God comes in, and knows how to divide between soul and spirit, what looks like the same thing, the very same affections, as far as man sees. What a mass of corruption! Can we have communion with God when self comes in? How powerless Christians are now—you, and I, and everyone. There is grace, blessed be God! but, in a certain sense, how low we are! “I will give myself unto prayer,” said one. All blessing comes from the immediateness of a man’s life with God. There are rivers of living water. How are you to get them? “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,” and “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” A man must drink for himself first, before there can be rivers, etc. In the time of the prophets they had a message, “Thus saith

the Lord," and then had to inquire the meaning of the prophecy, but with us, we drink first ourselves. We are so connected with Christ, that we have it ourselves from Him before communicating it to others.

What would make us fall in the wilderness? The flesh. It has no communion with God; flesh in saints, as well as in others, is bad. What would make us fall is flesh—the unjudged "thoughts and intents of the heart." The word of God comes and judges all that is of nature in us, after He has brought us out of Egypt. According to the new nature, everything is judged. Everything in Christ is applied to the motives and intents of our hearts—everything is judged according to God Himself. The word is a sword—not healing, but most unrelenting in its character. It detects poor flesh, shews it up, and marks its thoughts, intents, will, or lust. All is sifted. But are there no infirmities? Yes. But whenever the will and intent is at work, the word of God comes as a lancet to cut it all away. For infirmities, weaknesses, not will, we have a high priest, who was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin.

This is beautifully expressed in a figure in the Old Testament. There was water wanted: the rock was smitten, and the water flowed. (There are resources in Christ Himself, the smitten rock, for us; but besides, for us there is the water, a well in us.) They were also tried all through the wilderness. The two-edged sword was wanted. There were murmurings. They must be turned back. God turns back with them. How did they get through? What was on Moses' part (for he was like the apostle here), set forth? How was he to get rid of their murmurings? The rock has not to be smitten again. The rods must be put in. There are leaves, buds, blossoms on

Aaron's—life out of death—living priesthood. Then go and speak to the rock. Suppose God had only executed judgment! How would they have got through the wilderness? There was the living priesthood come in; grace in the shape of priesthood. That carries us through; and all the infirmities, and even failures, when they are committed, are met by Him who has passed through the heavens, etc.

There is not the least mercy on the flesh. This is judged by the word. Moses, the meekest man, failed in that. Abraham, who had been taught God's almightiness, goes down to Egypt, and fails through fear. God glorified Himself. He glorified Himself at the rock in the wilderness, but Moses did not glorify Him, and he was shut out of the land.

Verse 14. There are things mentioned, very important, about the priesthood. 1st, The priesthood is exercised in heaven, where we need it; it is the place where God is. When it was an earthly calling, the priesthood was on earth. Ours is a heavenly calling, and Christ, our high priest, has passed through the heavens. Another important part is, Christ in no sense has any of these infirmities while He is exercising the priesthood for us. He has passed through all the course in holiness, obedience, and sanctity. When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them. He walks the sheep's path, and they follow Him. Christ went through all these exercises of a godly man (for example, wanting bread, and being tempted to make it, but not yielding to it). Everything that a saint can want as a saint, Christ went through before in perfection. There is the example of perfectness in Him, in the sheep's path; but that was not the time of His priestly work. He has passed through the

road, and now can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

In Hebrews we have, as another brother has remarked, more of contrast than comparison. The veil in the tabernacle, and the priesthood of Israel all in a contrasted state to that in which we have them. Our high priest is not compassed with infirmity. Mark the consequence of that: His being in heaven, He brings all the perfectness of the thought and feeling of the place He is in to bear on us. I have these infirmities and difficulties, and He helps me up into all the perfectness of the heavenly places where He is. This is just what we want. He can shew a path, and feel what a path is of passing through this world, and bear the hearts down here clean up into heaven.

People often think of priesthood as a means of getting justified; but then God has the character of a judge in their eyes. They are afraid to go straight to God, and not knowing grace and redemption, they think of enlisting Christ on their behalf. This is all wrong. Many a soul has done it in ignorance and infirmity, and God meets it there, but it is to mistake our place as Christians. Does our getting the intercession of Christ depend upon our going to get it? It is when I have got away from God—when not going to Him—I have an advocate with the Father. Again, Christ prayed for Peter before He committed the sin. It is the living grace of Christ in all our need—His thought for us, or we should never be brought back. It was when Peter had committed the sin that He looked on him. Even when we have committed faults His grace thus comes in. It is in heaven He is doing it: then how can we have to say to Him if we have not righteousness? The reason I can go is because my

justification is settled. He has given me the title of going into heaven in virtue of what He is, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” and what He has done. Our place is in the light as God is in the light— sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Our walk on earth is not always up to this. Our title is always the same, but our walk not. Then what is to be done? I am within the veil, and not in a condition to go there at all. The priesthood of Christ is there to reconcile this discrepancy between our position in heaven, and our walk down here. Jesus Christ is the righteous one: and the righteousness I have in Him is the title I have to the place. The priestly work restores me to the communion of the place where I am in righteousness. It is immediately connected with the perfectness of His own walk down here and the place where He now is.

Satan came to Him, when here, and found nothing. He ought to find nothing in us, but he does. I do not want to spare the flesh; then there is the word of God for that. But in all the feelings down here, as He said, “reproach hath broken my heart.” In Gethsemane He was in an agony and prayed the more earnestly. He had the heart of a man; and all that the heart of man can go through, He went through but in communion with His Father, no failure possible. “Apart from sin,” is better than “yet without sin,” because there was no sin in Him inwardly any more than outwardly. In all these feelings He is now touched for us.

Verse 16. “Come boldly to the throne of grace.” This is going straight to God, not to the priest. It is to the “throne of grace.” We want mercy; we are poor weak things, and need mercy; in failure we need mercy; as pilgrims we are always needing mercy. What mercy was

shewn to the Israelites in the wilderness! their garments not getting old; God even caring for the clothes on their backs! Think of the mercy that would not let their feet swell! Then, when they wanted a way, Oh! says God, I will go before with the ark to find out a way. That was not the place for the ark at all. It was appointed to be in the midst of the camp, but God would meet them in their need. They want spies to go and see the land for them; fools that we are to want to know what is before us. They had to encounter the Amorites, high walls, giants. A land that devours the inhabitant, is their account of it, even with the grapes on their shoulders. Just like us on the way to heaven. They cannot stand these difficulties. We are as grass-hoppers, say they; but the real question is what God is.

As saints we are weaker than the world, and ought to be: but when waiting on God, what is that? When they have not confidence in God, they find fault with the land itself. What a wonderful God He is! He says, If you will not go into Canaan you must stay in the wilderness; and He turns them, and turns back with them. It is grace, but the throne of grace. God governs: it is a throne. He will not let a single thing pass. See the people at Kibroth-hataavah! In case of accusation from the enemy, as Balaam, there is not chastening, but He says, “I have not seen iniquity in Jacob.” The moment it is a question between God’s people and the enemy’s accusation, He will not allow a word against them; but when there is an Achan in the camp, He judges. Why? Because He is there. It is a throne. If you are not victorious, there is sin.

We may come boldly to the throne, etc. Still it is a throne (not a mediator), but all grace. If I go to the throne,

instead of the throne coming to me, so to speak, it is all grace: I get help. I never can go to the throne of grace without finding mercy. He may send chastening, but it is a throne of grace and all mercy— “grace to help in every time of need.” If you have a will, He will break it; if a need, He will help you. Do you feel that you can always go boldly, even when you have failed? humbled, of course, and at all times humble, but humbled when you have failed.

Chapter 5.

Perfection here means the state of a full-grown man. There is much, and, in a certain sense, more, contrast than similarity in the allusion in Hebrews to the Old Testament types. We are now in a different position; those things which went before were only a shadow, instead of their giving us a distinct perception of our position. While they were figures, they did not disclose what we have at the present time. We have boldness to enter into the holiest; with them, the veil was there to separate them from it. In this passage it is important to see the contrast. Christ is the High Priest. “Every high priest taken from among men [though He was not taken from men, I need not say] … can have compassion on the ignorant … for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” Here is contrast, though the general image is taken up. They had infirmity, and had to offer for themselves as well as for the people. If we do not see this, we may make great blunders in drawing these analogies. Absolute analogy in them would draw us away from the truth. There are certain landmarks of truth that guard the soul, for example, the atonement. The priesthood of Christ is in heaven. It has to be

exercised as a continual thing in the place where we worship. We worship in spirit in heaven, and there we want our priest. Those sacrifices were the memorial of sin; we have no more conscience of sins. The priest is there, once for all, in virtue of the sacrifice made once and for ever. While in point of fact we fail, our place is always Christ in heaven. When communion is interrupted, priesthood removes the hindrance.

Observe the dignity of the person called to this office: “Thou art my Son.” The glory of His Person is owned in order to His priesthood. “This day have I begotten thee,” v. 5. He was as really a man as any of us, without the sinful part of it. He was like neither Adam nor us exactly. Adam had no “knowledge of good and evil “; Christ had —God has. But now men have the knowledge of good and evil, and, with it, sin. Christ was born of a woman, but in a miraculous way. The spring was sinless, and yet He had the knowledge of good and evil.

We cannot fathom who He was. Our hearts should not go and scrutinise the Person of Christ, as though we could know it all. No human being can understand the union of God and Man in His Person— “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” All that is revealed we may know; we may learn a great deal about Him. The Father we know: “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.” We know Him to be holy; we know Him to be love, etc. But when I attempt to fathom the union of God and man—no man can. We know Christ is God, and we know He is man—perfect man, apart from sin; and if He is not God, what is He to me? What difference between Him and another man? Christ came in flesh. Every feeling that I have (save sin) He had. The quotation here from Psalm 2,

“This day have I begotten thee,” does not refer to His eternal Sonship, but to His being born into the world in humiliation. He is called to be high priest. He has this calling as a man, not as being taken from men. The glory of His Person comes first. Looked at in the flesh He was begotten of God; with us, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” But He in His very nature is associated with God, and associated with man. He is the “daysman that can lay his hand upon us both,” Job 9. I may fancy myself clean when away from God; but when I come before God, I know He will “plunge me in the ditch,” etc. “Let not his fear terrify me.” God takes away the fear through Christ. Christ was perfect holiness, and He was ready for everything. His lowliness was perfect; fear is taken away by Him; He is even as a man, the holy One—on that side He lays hold on God, and on the other He lays His hand on us; thus on both He is the daysman to lay His hand upon us both.

The priest in Israel had to take offerings to cleanse himself. Christ is fitted in Himself without that. Aaron alone was anointed without blood; his sons after the sacrifice.

As to office, there is in Christ perfect competency. He is the Son, and therefore fit for God. He is Man, and so fitted for me. I am not speaking of His sacrifice, but of His Person. “This day have I begotten thee”; there is His Person. Then comes the office, “called of God an high priest, after the order of Melchisedec,” without beginning of days, etc., not like man with descent from one to another, “but after the power of an endless fife,” without genealogies. These great principles are thus laid down concerning His Person and office—the Son and a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Before He takes

the office, there is another qualification necessary. Here would be a difficulty (not in the earthly priesthood, for it was connected with the earthly tabernacle, and earthly worship, but) now it is in a heavenly place, and the worship is in heaven. Then the priesthood must be in heaven. He could not have experience of infirmity there. What must He do? He goes through all first.

Priesthood supposes a people reconciled to God. There was the day of atonement, and daily priestly offices went on with the reconciliation for the year. The day of atonement laid the foundation for the priesthood for the year. Then on that day the high priest represented the whole people—laid his hand on the scapegoat in order to their reconciliation (this was not the continued office); which Christ did on the cross, as the victim and the representative. He gave His own blood. He suffered as well as represented the people, and then He went within the veil, in virtue of the reconciliation He has made. One of these goats was Jehovah's lot (the other was the people's), and the blood was put on the mercy-seat. There was no confession of sins in that. Christ's blood being on the mercy-seat is the ground on which mercy is proclaimed to all the world, even to the vilest sinner in the world. But suppose a person comes and says, "I find sin is working in me: how can I come to God?" I say, Christ has borne your sins; He has represented you there, confessing your sins on His own head; and God has condemned sin in the flesh, in Christ. A person is often more troubled at the present working of sin in him than at all the sins past; but I say to that person, God has condemned the sin in Christ. God's character has been glorified, majesty, righteousness, love—all vindicated on the cross. God's truth is vindicated. He

said, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die,” and Christ dies instead. Then when I get my conscience exercised, it is not enough to see God has been glorified in the death of Christ; I feel my own sins before God. Then I see that He has confessed my sins; and now, as Priest on high, He maintains me in the power of the reconciliation made.

Before He made the sacrifice, He had gone the path the sheep trod. It was before He began to represent His people— “who in the days of his flesh”—a past thing, before He exercised His priesthood. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them” in the paths of temptation, sorrow, difficulty. Therefore it is said of Him, “the author and finisher of faith,” not our faith there. We go through our small portion of exercise of faith; He went through everything. Moses refused the treasures in Egypt; Christ refused the whole world. Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country”; Christ was a stranger in the whole world. In all His path we see Him not screening Himself by His divine power, but bearing everything that a human heart could bear. There is not a trial but He felt it. If I speak of a convicted conscience, this is another thing. He did bear what caused that; but it was in our stead on the cross. In a still deeper way He took*it all upon Himself. What entire dependence! “Prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death,” etc. Especially in Gethsemane did He realise the full power of what He came to meet. In His walk we are to follow Him, to “walk as he walked.” But in Gethsemane it is another thing—He was alone there.

There are three parts in Christ's life. In the beginning He was tempted, first, to satisfy His own hunger, and then with all the vanities of this world, but He would not have them, He did not come for that. The next thing was more subtle; the answer He gave, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"—thou shalt not try the Lord. Tempting is not trusting. When the people tempted the Lord, they went up to the mountain to see if God would help them. Christ would not take these things from Satan's hands. He bound the strong man, and he departs for a season; then Christ goes on spoiling his goods—healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. A power had come in grace, perfectly able to deliver this world from the power of Satan, to deliver us as to the consequences of sin—all the misery and wretchedness here.

But there was something deeper; man had hatred to God — they would not have Him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." They entreated Him to depart out of their coasts in one place. For His love He received enmity. This world would have been a delivered place, if they would have had Him, but they would not; and man profits by the occasion of God's humbling Himself so as to be within man's reach, by seeking to get rid of Him! That brings out another point. Having taken up the people, He must take consequences. Satan says, if you do not give me my rights over them, you must suffer. Satan comes and uses all the power he has over man to deter Christ from going through. In the garden of Gethsemane, He calls it "the power of darkness," and says, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye and watch," etc., but they could not watch with Him, they went fast asleep. As Satan has power in death, He brings it over Christ. Does Christ go back? No; but being

in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly; He does not defend Himself. He might have driven away Satan, but He would not have delivered us if He had. No other cup did He ever ask to be taken away; but He could not be under the wrath of God, and not feel it. He was heard because of His fear. He went down into the depth where Satan had full power over His soul. He was in an agony, in conflict, but there was perfect obedience and dependence, “Not my will, but thine be done”; only He was crying the more earnestly to God, and then let His soul go into the depth under Satan’s power. If He had not given Himself up, they would have gone away who came to take Him; they went backward and fell to the ground. Again He presents Himself to them, “I am Jesus of Nazareth. If ye seek me, let these go their way.” He puts Himself forward into the gap. He goes to the cross; and there, before He gives up His soul to His Father, He has drunk that cup; then His soul re-enters the presence of His Father. Having gone through Satan’s power in death (“this is your hour and the power of darkness”), He goes forward; God raises Him from the dead, and gives Him a place in glory. He is the glorified Man, as the second Man—perfect. Stephen saw Him as “the Son of man “on the right hand of God.

Now we might suppose that He had come to the end of His service, after humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death as the servant. What more? See John 13. He is going to be just as much the servant as ever!

Three things we have seen connected with His priesthood, besides His Person. He has walked the same path we have to tread, only unfailingly, through it all, and even unto death. That is one thing. He understands

the path. When there is sin, He dies. In His living, holiness is seen. The second thing is in making propitiation for the sins of the people— blood is presented. Thirdly, He is a perfect Man in the presence of God. I have thus the path trodden, sin atoned for, and a living Man in the presence of God—an Advocate, Jesus Christ, the righteous. The foundation is not altered, righteousness remains. He has made propitiation for our sins. He has gone through all the trials of the way, and is proclaimed or saluted ("declared") of God an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The trial is gone through, and the work is wrought out before He enters in, and He is in perfect righteousness in the presence of God. Aaron's order was not Christ's order at all. Christ's is Melchisedec's order; but the analogy is according to Aaron.

Verse 10. What was Melchisedec's order? Blessing. He blessed Abraham from God, and God from Abraham. When the full time of blessing is come for heaven and earth, He will have it as Melchisedec had it. It will be praise and power. We have the taste of it now; 1 Pet. 2:9. When we are with Christ in glory, we shall shew forth His praises. While He is within the veil, not yet come out, He does not publicly take this title; outward blessing is not come. Why? Is He indifferent? slack concerning His promise? No; but if He put all this evil down by judgment, men must perish: but He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. While Christ is within the veil, the operation of the Spirit is going on, gathering in poor sinners. He has the title now, but not display. It is, therefore, after the analogy of Aaron. We enter with Him in spirit, there to offer up spiritual sacrifices. The display of power is not come,

but we are within the veil: therefore the apostle presses them to go on unto perfection, full stature growth. What is my measure of a perfect man? In one sense, Adam was a very imperfect man, and what he had in innocence, he soon lost at any rate (imperfect, therefore, in the sense of being able to lose it); and certainly man is not perfect now in the Adam state. Where, then, is perfection? In the Man in heaven. I have it in the knowledge of my position now in Christ, not in fact there myself yet, but in Him; and we are to "bear the image of the heavenly"; in that sense perfect. The Father has set Him at His right hand. Then, suppose I have the knowledge of that, I am called to walk as such. Then why perfect? Because I have fellowship with Him, association with Him where He is.

Does any Christian say, "I am at the foot of the cross?" Christ is not at the foot of the cross. The cross puts a man in heaven. Christ is in heaven. You have not come to Him yet. You are labouring about in the thoughts of your own heart, and have not followed Him in faith to where He is, if you are at the foot of the cross. How do I see the effect of the cross now? By being in heaven. I have come in through this rent veil. (The person is not to be despised who is there; but you have not come in by the cross through the veil, if you are at the foot of the cross.) If you were inside the veil, you would know yourself worse—not one good thing in flesh. It is precious to see a soul exercised even in that way, as the prodigal son in the far country; but he had not come to his father then, he had not found out where he was. There was a mixture of self, not knowing his father, and talking about being a hired servant. It is not humility, as people think, to be away from God, saying, Depart from

me, for I am a sinful man, as Peter. Is insensibility to God's goodness humility? The prodigal could not dictate and prescribe when his father was on his neck; he had no business to be in the house at all as a hired servant. It is not humility. It is a mixture of self with the knowledge of having got away from God. Where will you put yourself? You must take Christ's place or none. That is what is meant by perfect here. There is but one way of coming in; it is by Christ who is in the glory. We have no title to any other place. How is Christ there? Not in virtue of His high priesthood, but He is there in virtue of the offering for sin for us. "I have glorified thee on the earth." "Father, glorify thy Son." That is the reason the apostle speaks of the gospel of the glory. Christ is in heaven, the witness of the perfectness of the work that He has done; v. 13, 14. Milk is fit for a babe, and strong meat for a full-grown man; that is all that is meant. Do not let us look for a place the godly Jew had, but the place Christ has. Then he goes on warning them, if they are only on this Jewish ground.

On the cross Christ was drinking the cup; in Gethsemane He was anticipating it. Death and judgment are gone now; Christ cannot die again. The victory is complete. Sins are put away, and He is gone into heaven in consequence; and that victory is ours.

Nothing seemed to be a greater burden on the heart of Paul than to keep the saints up to their privileges. They saw Christ had died for them (and this had not the power over them it ought to have had), but they were risen with Him also; they were in Christ in heavenly places, within the veil; and how were they realising that?— "Are become such as have need of milk." There is a great deal of love in the heart when first converted.

And there is another thing. When first converted, all these things are easier to understand than when more used to hearing them, and the world comes in. When there is freshness in the heart, the understanding goes with it. Great force is in that word “become” (chap. 5:12) here. See the state they were in (Heb. 10) when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had “a better and an enduring substance.” Because they knew they had substance in heaven, they were willing to sacrifice what was here. When Christ had not that place in the heart, they were not willing to give up those things, and the understanding of the heavenly things would be dulled too. Freshness of affection and intelligence go together. When it is bright sunshine, things at a distance are easily seen. If it is dark, there is more difficulty. In the day one may walk through the streets without thinking about the way—one knows it; but at night one has to look and think which way. Just so with spiritual things; there is less spring, less apprehension, less- clearness when our hearts are not happy. My judgment is clear when my affections are warm. Motives that acted before cease to be motives when my heart is right. I can count all dross and dung, when force is given to my affections. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age”; not to persons who have made a great progress, but persons of full age. There were things hard to be uttered, because they were dull of hearing. The freshness of affection being lost was the secret of all this. It is serious to think that freshness of affection and intelligence we may lose; but “to him that hath shall

more be given." There are good and evil to be discerned; therefore I spoke of finding the way.

Chapter 6.

Take this in connection with the beginning of the next chapter, "Therefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ," etc., instead of wasting your time with what has passed away, go on to the full revelation of Christ; be at home there, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. We cannot separate the knowledge of good and evil from the knowledge of Christ. When I come to separate between them of myself, how can I? How can I walk as He walked, without Him? I cannot do it. "In him." What is that? "Ye in me." Where is Christ? In heaven; then I am there too. My affections should be there too; my hope is to be thoroughly identified with Him. The portion I have is what He has— life, righteousness, glory: all my associations are with Himself. There is the difference between the word of the beginning of Christ and the full perfection— "being made perfect" (chap. 5:9) or glorified. He went through the experience down here, and then went into heaven to be Priest, because our blessings, associations, etc., are all above, perfect up there, not down here. He had not reached that point of the counsels of God in glory when down here. Now He is there, and He has associated me with Himself in that place. I can see Christ has been through this world so as to sympathise with us in all our sorrows and difficulties. He has borne my sins; and where is He now? In heaven; and I am there too in spirit, and He will bring me there in fact. Where He is is His "being made perfect." The work is done, and now He is shewing me the effect of that—shewing me the walk

belonging to the righteousness He has wrought out. He has taken my heart, and associated me with Himself; and He says that is the “perfection” for me to go on to. Where did Paul see Christ? In glory. If he had known Christ after the flesh before, he did not know Him so now (that was the beginning when on earth); but now he knew Him in heaven: and this great truth was revealed to him, that all the saints on earth were as Christ.

Paul had been a hater of Christ, having sought to root out His name from the earth; he had gone on in sin—if not a breaker of the law, a rejecter of Christ when on earth, and, more than that, he had resisted the Holy Ghost, refused the testimony by the Holy Ghost given in mercy to those people for whom Christ interceded on the cross. They stoned Stephen who bore witness, and Saul was helping in it. He was “chief of sinners,” because wasting the church of God. He discovered the carnal mind to be enmity against God, not subject to God; he proved it in his own experience, and now he found there were saints not in that state—those quickened with Christ, and associated with Christ in glory. “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” They were not associated with the first Adam, but with the second Man, in Christ; this was their position. These people whom he had been persecuting were Christ. What broke him down was seeing Christ in glory, and all these associated with Him. Now he learns that he is dead to law, dead to flesh. The Christ I want to win is a glorified Christ. To win Christ may cost me my life. Never mind. That is my object. As to the first Adam, he was “weighed in the balance, and found wanting”: I am out of it; not in the flesh, but in Christ. The old thing is entirely past; the Christian is crucified to the world, etc.; dead and risen

again, having another object. He is alive from the dead, because Christ is; he is “accepted in the beloved”; he has the consciousness that this work of Christ put him into a new place (not glorified yet in the body): this was the “perfection.” What was the state of his affections then? “That I may win Christ” was his desire. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” This was his object. His mind was full of it.

The Holy Ghost has come down to bring all these things to our remembrance. Believers are united to Christ (it is never said Christ was united to man) in glory. Then the apostle was living by the power of the Holy Ghost. What a trial for him to see these people going back to their “first principles,” “repentance from dead works, faith toward God … eternal judgments”—all true! but if you stop there, you stop short of a glorified Christ. “Who hath bewitched you? “he says to the Galatians. He says of himself, “I know a man in Christ,” and his spirit is broken to find the saints resting with things on earth about Christ. The Holy Ghost was come out to make them partakers of a heavenly calling; to associate them in heart and mind with Christ, and to shew them things to separate them from the world; not only to keep them from evil, though that is true too. They had a temple standing then, where Christ Himself had been. Why should they have left it if Christ had not judged the flesh? The middle wall had been put up; how should they dare break it down, if God had not done it? If God had not said, “I will not have to say to flesh any more,” how could they dare leave the camp, and go outside? Christ glorified is the end of all the “first principles,” and we have to go through the world strangers and pilgrims.

The only thing God ever owned in religion was Jewish. It had to do with the flesh. That is gone by the cross; all is crucified: your life, your home, your associations, are all in Christ. The doctrine of the beginning of Christ was not that. What do I find when Christ is on earth? He is speaking then of judgment to come, which they believe. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead; baptisms, which mean washings, etc. All these they had then, they formed a worldly religion, and were sanctioned by God until the cross. The Messiah coming on earth was the beginning; but now I leave that; I do not deny these things—they are all true— but I have other things. Saul might have been the brightest saint going under the old things, but not knowing Christ. But suppose persons got into the heavenly thing, being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, having "tasted the good word of God," and then gave it up, what could they do then? Suppose they had received it all in their minds, and then gave it up: what else was there for them? There might have been a going on from faith in a humbled Christ to a glorified Christ, but there is nothing beyond.

There is nothing of life signified here in their being partakers of the Holy Ghost. It brings very strongly before us the actual presence of the Holy Ghost, and power through Him; a very different thing from life; and what, notwithstanding, we are in want of knowing. We must have that besides life. Being born of the Spirit, there is power for us through the presence of a person, who may act in another without his having life. There may be light in the soul, without the smallest trace of life. In the case of Balaam, we read the Spirit of God came upon him: he had to see the blessedness of God's

people, and speak of it. He had light, but there was sleep on his soul, and he has to say, “I shall see him, but not now.” That was the opposite to having life. You see a man close to life, seeing all the blessing of it, but not having it. Now, if all the heavenly blessing is seen and rejected, what else could there be?

“Tasted the good word of God”—Simon Magus is an example of this.

“Powers of the world to come,” or miracles, putting down Satan’s power. In the future day this power will gain the victory over all Satan’s power. Simon Magus wanted this power when he saw it.

“Impossible, if they shall fall away … seeing they have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh,” etc. The nation of Israel had crucified Him—they did not know what they were doing. Now these knew what they were doing. The Holy Ghost had poured forth the light, and now they did it for themselves. It was not ignorance, it was will. There are some who anon with joy receive the word—the very thing that proves there is nothing in it. They would have it in joy, and give it away in tribulation. The word of God does not always give joy. When it comes in and reaches the conscience, and breaks up the fallow ground, and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart, that is not joy. It racks the heart when it is to profit, but it is for life and health. Here is not merely the joy of hearing about it, but having tasted of the good word about a glorified heavenly Christ. It is not quickening that is spoken of here. Moses was quickened, but he was not baptised with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost did not come till Pentecost. He made the house shake where they were assembled, but that was not for

giving life. Power is a different thing from giving life. Those already quickened were to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. There were manifestations of God through these things, tongues, etc., anticipative of setting up of the kingdom.

It is after salvation is given, after the soul is born of God, the Holy Ghost comes to the believer as a seal, an earnest, an unction. I might get a taste of the power without being sealed; but as a believer I have the seal, am broken down in myself, not only "with joy" receiving it. I am a sinner—no good in me. It is a direct question between my soul and God; not like Simon Magus, believing the miracles that he did. Before I was converted, I believed there was Christ as much as I do now. When Christ was on earth, there were those who saw the miracles, and went home again. But when the Spirit of God works in the heart, He shews what we are, and makes us submit to God's righteousness. It ploughs up the whole soul and being of a man—makes him submit to the righteousness of God—shews him his place in the risen Christ—shews him that all is his. That is a different thing from merely seeing it. If you have rejected these glorious things, there is nothing else for you. If you will not have Christ, there is nothing else. Here this warning is in connection with the Holy Spirit in chapter 10. It is connected with the sacrifice. Then what follows shews no change supposed in the man. "The earth which drinketh in the rain … receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected," etc. The ground is just the same—the rain comes upon it, but it brings forth briers. So in men, there may be nothing in them to produce fruit. The

result of life is seen in fruit, not power. The dumb ass might speak; but this was power, not spiritual life.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation,” v. 9. There is the work of love here; then there is life. Perhaps there is only a little bit of fruit; but the tree is not dead if there is any fruit— “things that accompany salvation,” not power merely—not joy merely; that might be without a divine nature. But “though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Judas could cast out demons as well as the rest, but Christ says to His disciples, Rejoice not because the demons are subject to you, but rather rejoice that “your names are written in heaven.”

The connection of your heart with Christ, the consciousness of God having written your name in heaven, is the blessed thing. Here was fruit; love of the brethren was there—the divine nature was there, and the “full assurance of hope to the end “is the thing desired. We may look for that.

When the seed fell into stony places, it sprang up rapidly; there was no root. When the word does not reach the conscience, there is no root, no life, and therefore no fruit. You might weep over Christ, and have no life, like the women going out of Jerusalem. Flesh could go all that length without divine life. There might be working of miracles, without knowing or being known of Him. One atom of brokenness of spirit is better than filling all London with miracles.

Verse 6. The nominal church of God is just in this state. There is to be falling away, and they are to be broken off; prophesied of in Romans 11, to be cut off, if they do

not continue in His goodness. The apostasy will come, and no renewing them again unto repentance.

Now a little word for ourselves—what we have got in Christ. We have heavenly things, we are associated with Christ in heaven; “because I live, ye shall live also.” I have all in Christ. He is my life, my righteousness, before God. Then God rests with delight in me, because in Christ. What place have I in Christ? In heaven, and He has given me the Holy Spirit to know it and enjoy it, so that my soul rests on it as the testimony of God. God cannot lie. Abraham got a promise, and he believed in it; an oath, and he believed it. I have more than that. I believe He has performed it. I have a righteousness now in the presence of God; and we have more in hope, namely, the glory that belongs to His righteousness. I have life, righteousness, the Holy Ghost as the seal, and more, the Forerunner is gone in, and the Holy Ghost gives me the consciousness of my union with Him; not merely the fact that sin is put away. We have the Spirit in virtue of the righteousness. The Holy Ghost has come to tell me I am in that Christ. What is the practical consequence? If the glory He has is mine, I am going after Him. Then all in the world is dross and dung.

“They might have had opportunity to have returned”: that is, where faith is exercised and put to the test. You who have known the Lord some time have had opportunity to have returned, how has it been with you? A stone left on the ground gradually sinks in. There is constantly a tendency in present things to press down the affections—not open sin, but duties, and nothing is a greater snare than duties. We have one duty, that is to serve Christ. On the side of God, it is all bright.

Chapter 7.

The apostle, being now on the ground of priesthood, shews the excellency of the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, and uses it to bring back these Hebrews from that which was after the “carnal commandment” to that which was “after the power of an endless life.”

The order of the priesthood is according to Melchisedec, but after the analogy of Aaron—not yet come out from the holiest. Arguments are drawn from Scripture to shew that this priesthood is far more excellent than that of Aaron. One point of importance is its being another—“after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest”: that implied the setting aside of the other. Directly the Aaronic priesthood is gone, the whole system connected with it is gone: for that was the keystone. According to their own scriptures, there was to be another, and now that is come. And wherever Christ is concerned, the Spirit immediately bursts into all the beauty and excellency of it.

Genesis 14 and Psalm no. These scriptures bring us greatly into the history of Melchisedec. They are all we have about him, shewing us the mystery of his person and glory. The people, when Christ was on earth, could not understand His being David’s Son and David’s Lord. In Psalm no:4, it is Jehovah, and not in verse 7. “He shall drink of the brook in the way”; in humbling Himself He shall have His head lifted up.

The history of Abraham is remarkably interesting in Genesis 13 and 14—his having entirely done with the world, while Lot, in a selfish way, liked the world, and chose the world when he was a believer. Abraham does not this; he gives up the world in the power of faith. Lot

was under the world: Abraham had complete power over the world because he had given it up. He would not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet. And then God says, “I am thy shield,” etc. He had God. Giving up the world, he had victory over it, and has God for his shield.

It is after victory that Melchisedec comes out to meet him. In the future day this will be seen in Christ coming out to His people; it applies to ourselves in a heavenly way now. “Priest of the most high God.” In that word, all the peculiar character of Melchisedec comes out. Abraham had overcome by faith. He knew God by faith. Now He is made known to him as “possessor of heaven and earth.” The Gentile powers broken, God rules and does what He pleases; and Nebuchadnezzar gives Him the title of “Most High God.” He takes to Himself His great power and reigns as Most High. This is not the name known to Abraham’s faith; which was Shaddai. “I am the Almighty God; walk before me,” etc. Abraham was called to walk before God, and He suffered no man to do him wrong in passing through the world. Jehovah, the one true God, brought His people into relationship with Himself— all the rest were false gods. We have the relationship of Father in contrast with these; but all these names are for faith to own. Most High is another thing; Possessor, etc.; “to reconcile all things to himself” (Col. 1), and “to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,” Eph. 1. He will be the possessor of heaven and earth. Melchisedec-priest, in this character of priest of the Most High, He has gained the full victory over the power of the world. The Heir of promise is the great victor; Psalm 91. He who has got the secret of who this Most High is (never the Father’s name in Hebrews; it is

the “throne of grace” spoken of) shall have the blessings of Abraham’s God. So Hezekiah, taunted by the enemy, with “hath any of the gods of the nations delivered out of my hand?” 2 Kings 18:33. I will have Jehovah the God of Israel, now despised, but He will overcome amidst the gods of the nations; Psa. 91:2. No secret now in His name; v. 9. And He says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,” Luke 4:11, 12. Tempting God is trying whether He is as good as His word— to see whether it is true. Thou shalt not put God to the test. The knowledge of the Most High as Jehovah is Israel’s God; v. 9. When Christ has taken His real power, He will be Melchisedec-priest: at least He will be Priest on His throne. The counsel of peace, as regards this earth, is between Jehovah and this Priest on His throne— “righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Aaron was never a king.

Melchisedec brought bread and wine after the victory. There is no thought of a sacrifice to secure blessing while living a life of faith; but he brings forth refreshment for the victor, bread and wine, eucharistic, accompanied with thanksgiving: bread, the symbol of that which strengthens; and wine, of that which refreshes the heart of man. The people on earth are fully brought into blessing. Melchisedec blessed the Most High God on the part of Abraham, and blessed Abraham on the part of God.

The earthly priesthood takes the character of joy and gladness on the victory being obtained. Melchisedec was king of Salem, and king of righteousness. This says nothing about divine righteousness; it is righteousness established. He rules according to it—righteousness looking down from heaven—righteousness in His person, and mercy shewn to those who do not deserve it. “A king

shall reign in righteousness." "A man shall be as an hiding-place, and a covert from the tempest," "righteousness and peace have kissed each other"; righteousness is the character of the rule, and the effect of it is peace. We have it now in a higher way, a divine way. We have it in our souls; but it is to be on earth, in Melchisedec, king of righteousness and king of peace. In Psalm no Christ is sitting at God's right hand, and we connected with Him during the time He is sitting there—"until" His enemies are made His footstool. His people will be willing in the day of His power; we, through grace, are made willing now; v. 3. "Thou hast the dew of thy youth"; all the new generations of Israel when the fresh blessing comes in on the earth (a figure, of course). He will come in power, and rule over His enemies—He will judge the heathen. "He shall drink of the brook in the way," that is, willing to get the refreshment by the way, being perfectly dependent. "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me"; and this is rewarded with exaltation. Looked at as His title, it is after the power of an endless life; but not exercised according to that yet. When "righteousness and peace have kissed each other," it will be. It was necessary that the atonement should have been made. The Jews had rejected promise just the same as law, and now they must come freely, through His grace, like any poor sinner.

But there is more as to dispensation; there is the question of the new covenant. We have to see what our part is in this; the new makes the other old. That old covenant was made at Sinai; it was addressed to man in the flesh, making a claim upon him. The new covenant is on the ground of the law being put into the heart, and

forgiveness given. The new covenant was made with Israel and Judah. Have we nothing to do with it? I do not say that. His blood has been shed. “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many.” All that God had to do to bring the Jews in was done: their bringing in is suspended because of unbelief. Then what do we get? He was minister of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. We have the law in our hearts, and forgiveness. We have all the blessings of the new covenant— God’s part all thoroughly laid. We have Christ in whose heart the law was hid; not the letter, that was made with Israel and Judah, though they are now outside. Then another thing: I am one with the Mediator of the new covenant. I am, as part of the church, a member of His body (that is not brought out here, but while He is gone in—not seen in the Aaron character), I am associated with Him. He has shed the blood on which it is all founded. He is gone to make good that part which is in heaven, and meanwhile I am connected with Him. I have the effect of the blood. He is there on the throne, a proof of its being accepted. He is the forerunner in the glory I am going into. He is a priest for ever, while I am here in infirmity. He is a priest, different from those priests who died, “after the power of an endless life.” While He sits waiting till His enemies are made His footstool, He has done everything for His friends, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost to associate us with Him in heaven, and maintain us in communion till He comes out. There is no figure of the temple used here: it is all the tabernacle in the wilderness. He who is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec is gone in. There was provided some better thing for us, and we get this heavenly association with Him.

In Hebrews 7 the superiority of His priesthood is shewn; v. 3. “Continually” is surely one great thing for us, which is insisted on much. The constancy of our position comes out in chapters 9 and 10. The meaning of it is without any interruption, not only for ever. Aaron’s priesthood could be broken up—pass from one man to another, but this is an untransmissible priesthood. It has the stamp of eternity on it in its very nature; so the value of His blood is for ever: continuous or perpetually is the force. What do we find in the state of souls generally now? Is their peace continuous? or are they, when conscious of failure, wanting to be sprinkled again? The Jew wanted a sacrifice for every sin; but with us there is one sacrifice uninterrupted in its efficacy—not broken in upon. The priesthood goes on continually. We fail, and there is the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. It is after the power of an endless life—not like Aaron’s, nor in the temple—but in the “true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Always there, untransmissibly, “to the uttermost,” right through. “He ever liveth to make intercession.”

Melchisedec was a man, no doubt, like any other—a mysterious personage appearing on the scene without an origin known. Whose son was he? All kinds of suppositions without any conclusion. Why? Because Scripture leaves us in the dark. As a Priest, Christ was without genealogy—not as a man. His mother is known. Again, He was not to be cast off at a certain age, as those priests were. He continueth ever. “Made like unto the Son of God” —only as a Priest. Royalty is connected with the priesthood. Abraham paying tithes to Melchisedec is another important point. God had given them Aaronic priesthood, promises, etc.; but there was

something greater, something behind, which was above and beyond all this. Levi paid tithes in Abraham, shewing the superiority of Melchisedec to Levi; v. 9, 10. They must give it all up as applying to Aaron.

Verses 18-20 give the secret of the whole thing. There was the disannulling of what went before, because not perfect, and the bringing in of a better hope. “Did “is better left out. What is the result of that? We draw nigh to God; v. 19. Did the Jews do this? No. “Now we see not yet all things put under him”; but we have a better thing; “we draw nigh to God.” Perfect atonement has been made— the veil is rent—the High Priest in heaven: and when He comes forth, we shall come with Him.

There is a time for the true Melchisedec when He shall come in glory. To be sitting on God’s own throne is the highest thing. Now He is sitting on God’s right hand in all the fulness and brightness of His glory; and while there, we get all our associations with Him—dead with Him, etc. And when He appears, we shall appear with Him. We may take it as to our union and our association with Him in priesthood: He is the High Priest, and we are priests. The Holy Ghost, being sent down, associates us with Him, while He is in heaven. We could not receive the Holy Ghost until Jesus was glorified. Then, having perfect righteousness, we are seated in Him.

Verse 25. “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” We do not come to Him (the Priest), but He goes to God for us, and we go to God by Him. As Lord, we came to Him; but as Priest, not. He intercedes, and brings us back when we have failed. He is watching always—thinking of us when we are not thinking of Him.

Verse 26. “For such an High Priest became us,” etc. Why this? It became us! The Jews had worship on earth; we go higher than the heavens. Our priest is there, on the right hand of God. That stamps the character of our worship. “Higher than the heavens” is the place of our worship. In the fullest sense He sanctified Himself (John 17) when He went up on high. Instead of a priest joined with us in the place of sin or its consequences (which could not be—He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, but bore the sin on the cross) He is taking our hearts out of the present world to the scene where He is. The thing that fits Christ for the exercise of His priesthood is, that He can take me where sin is not. He has borne my sins. Sin was not put away under the Jewish service; but such is not the character of our relationship with God. We are dead—dead to sin; you cannot connect it with your place on earth. He is gone “higher than the heavens.” We have no other connection with God than that in Christ, out of the flesh (not physically, of course, for we have the treasure in earthen vessels). Christ made “higher than the heavens” “became us.” There is a great deal in the world that is undermining this. Men say we are not dead to sin, and are associating themselves, not dead, with Christ. This is all false. If not dead, I have no associations with Christ at all. The veil is rent, sin is put away—sin in the flesh is condemned—we are dead. I see more and more daily of the danger and conflict there is in connection with this, and the effort to bring our association with Christ down to flesh. He is risen. We have association with Christ in heaven. Our citizenship is there. Most blessed comfort for us it is, that all I have to go through here, Christ has gone through. He passed through all, “tempted like as we are, without sin.” “He ever liveth to make

intercession for us," while our hearts are associated with Him through the power of the Holy Ghost.

There are two great foundation principles connected with our coming unto God by Christ: ist. The place, as giving the character of His priesthood; and 2ndly, the non-repetition of the sacrifice. "Such an high priest became us," etc. Our place of meeting with God is above the heavens, and the questions of—can I come? how can I come?—are met by His priestly work being carried on there, where we meet with God. He first came down to us in the place where we are as sinners; but in our going to God it must be in the place where He is. The place of the priest was the holy place, under the Jewish order; but with us there is no veil between us and the holiest. God is light. We walk in the light. We must therefore be able to draw near according to the light in which He is. The presence of God is purity itself, and the power of purity.

God has first visited us as enemies. He did not wait for us to go up to heaven; but when we go to Him as worshippers, being partakers of the heavenly calling, we are higher than the heavens. Our intercourse with God is in the sanctuary, in the light where He is; and a high priest is needed for this, who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

The Jews had priests who had infirmity; but in going into the holiest, we could not go in by these. There must be One able to maintain us in the place where divine righteousness has set us. The priest must be holy, harmless, and separate from sinners; that is, the work is carried on out of the region where sin is going on, the

work of Christ on the cross having brought us there. He is separate from sinners (as to His own state, morally, He was always a Nazarite, but) He has set Himself apart as a Nazarite in connection with us. He is there where the worship goes on.

Failures are measured by the place where we are. Of Israel it was said to the priests, “ye shall bear the iniquity of the holy things.” We are all priests—there is no separate caste of priests—and all our faults and failings are measured by the place we are in. The place to which we belong, and where our worship is carried on, and where our Priest is, is out of the reach of sin. When we are there in fact, we shall be able to let our thoughts and feelings free; we shall not want our consciences then. Now we must watch everything down here; but there is full liberty with God, there may be the freest, fullest letting forth of every thought and feeling with Him.

The other thing different in our High Priest from those high priests, is that He offered up Himself once, not for His own sins, but for His people’s—for the church and Israel’s. He has done it fully, finally, and once for all; it cannot be repeated. Once for ever constitutes the full character of the sacrifice of Christ. This gives us a very distinct place. Brought into the light as God is in the light, where sacrifice never can be made again, a Priest is there, by virtue of an unalterable condition, in the presence of God. If Christ has not borne away our sins, they never will be. His blood was shed, not sprinkled only. If once you have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ, has anything taken it off? Has the blood ever lost its value? I cannot talk of being sprinkled again, if the blood has not lost its value. I may have my feet washed

with water for renewal of communion; but as to the person, it is never even washed with water again, though the feet may often need cleansing.

There were three cases of blood-sprinkling in Israel: the covenant, the leper, and the priest. The covenant was sprinkled once for all: it was never renewed, but is set aside by a better. The leper was sprinkled once, not again, and the priest. There was no replacing of the power of that blood. “If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, … the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This does not change at all: it is heavenly in its character, cleansing and fitting for God in light; and it is everlasting in its efficacy. It is a new place where we are set, and set for ever.

Let me stop a moment to ask you, How far have you forgotten this? how far are you on Jewish ground? It is connected with “the full assurance of faith.” We must be clean before we are there, as God is in the light. It is a different place altogether from that in which the question would arise as to what my state is. How do I get there? By the cross. But if I come by the cross, am I defiled or undefiled? I am brought into God’s presence, and cannot be there without having been cleansed. Christ came to us in our sins, or else there would be no hope; but it is by virtue of His blood we go to God. How do you go—cleansed or uncleansed? Do we not know whether we are cleansed or not? We may be ignorant of ourselves, but we know whether we are cleansed or not. The way we get into His presence is by being cleansed. This is quite different from the standing of those whose walk was on earth—finding a sin and getting it cleansed, finding a sin and getting it cleansed. The fruits of the light are such and such things. If we are made children

of light, it is not to diminish the light, but to judge everything by it. Such is the effect of our being there.

Chapter 8.

“Set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” Why so? Because if we have nothing more to be done, Christ has nothing more to do. (I speak not of the priestly work, but of bearing away sins.) He has set down— He is resting, having nothing more to do; chap. 10. The offering has been made, and cannot be repeated; chap. 8:3. The whole of the priesthood is carried on in heaven itself. The offering was another thing. The offerer brought the victim, the priest received the blood and carried it in. On the day of atonement there was another thing: the priest had to go through the whole thing by himself—not carrying on the work of intercession, but that of representing the people. Christ took this place. He could say, “mine iniquities,” etc.; for He bore our sins. We can never speak of bearing our sins; He, the sinless One, bore them for us. He was the victim, and at the same time, the confessor, owning all the sins. Then, as priestly work, He carries in the blood, having offered Himself without spot to God (the burnt offering in that sense). He was “made sin.” He offered Himself freely up, and the sins were laid on Him; first He takes that dreadful cup, then goes and sprinkles that place. His priesthood is entirely in heaven.19 The tabernacle was upon earth; there was the court of the tabernacle, and inside the court was out of the world, and not inside heaven. He was lifted up (John 12) to draw all men unto Him.

Rejected by the Jews, He was held up by God—the dead Christ, to be the attractive centre for the whole world.

As coming in His service and mission on earth, He was coming among the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but when I see the crucified Christ, this is for the sinner, and then I get perfect love for the sinner and atonement for the sin—perfect grace. Then He goes by virtue of that blood through the rent veil into the holy place; and I come there in spirit into the very presence of God—not on earth. Those things were the example and shadow of heavenly things, and our place now is in the holiest of all.

No place is found for the first covenant. Be it remarked, that there is often great confusion about the covenant of grace and law. The law was given at Sinai. All the promises were given without condition—unqualified. When the people came out of Egypt, it was different. The accomplishment of the promise then depended on their obedience; and there was an end of the whole thing, because they could not keep it. Why did God bring in such a principle as this? With the promise, no question was raised of righteousness; but when law was given, there was something required of man: and the effect of this question being raised was to bring out sin directly. Why did the law come in? Because we are excessively proud creatures, we think we can do a great deal.

The law was not a transcript of God, but of what man ought to be; and when applied as a test to man, it brought out the evil there. Given to a sinner to tell him what he ought to be, it was too late—he had failed already: the golden calf was made before they received the words of the law. Christ, instead of requiring righteousness from man, bears the sins and works out the righteousness. It is much more than what the law requires that we have in Christ. The law never required

a man to lay down his life—much less the Son of God to lay down His life. He glorified God in the place where He had been dishonoured, not only in a righteous walk upon earth, but God was glorified in Him.

Suppose God had swept away man for sin, in righteousness, where would have been the love? If He had only pased over the sins, without judging them, where would have been righteousness? There was infinite and unspeakable love to poor sinners, and infinite righteousness towards God. The whole ground of the Sinai covenant is gone—we are dead under it: it can go no farther. Law puts man under responsibility. Are you standing on your responsibility? You are lost if you are.

It is the whole question of the two trees in the garden of Eden—life and responsibility. Christ, as a man, takes that of good and evil, and dies under it. He puts Himself under the one and gives us the other, for He is life.

Thus, in chapter 8, there is an entirely new covenant, and the new makes the first old. In the letter, it is made with the house of Israel. But, besides, there is grace: not, I do not remember them, “but their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” I will never remember them any more. That is our place. A covenant made with man, as man, is certain ruin, because his righteousness is required, his keeping it is called in question. But here God says, “I will put my laws into their mind,” etc. If man is under the old covenant, he is under an “if.” If under the new, there is no “if.” This covenant of the letter is made with Israel, not with us; but we get the benefit of it. “This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many.” This was putting away

the breach of all obligation by death. Israel not accepting the blessing, God brought out the church, and the Mediator of the covenant went on high. We are associated with the Mediator. It will be made good to Israel by-and-by. Paul was the minister of it in the spirit; but he could not be as to the letter. They will need no minister of it, because every one will know it, when God writes it on their hearts; the thing is done—God will be their minister (reverently), when writing it on their hearts. We have it not in the letter, but in the spirit of it, and so have all the value of it, because the way we get it is that the Mediator of it becomes our life—we are forgiven our sins—we are associated with the Mediator. He is our life, and we have all the blessings of the new covenant within the veil. We have all the blessings, for the very reason that it is not executed with the people for whom it was made.

Now the question arises, How far are we standing on this ground? has your faith got hold of this fact that Christ has settled every question against us, and gone in because our sins are borne away? The true light now shines: this could not be said while there was a veil and an earthly priesthood.

Can you stand in God’s presence without a veil, and knowing that the more the light shines upon you, the more evident that you are without a spot upon you?

Chapter 9.

In the preceding chapter, the apostle has touched on a very important point, which, as regarded the Hebrews (and, indeed, any of us) was a most absorbing one: I allude to the two covenants. The first covenant made at Sinai had a very distinct character, namely, requiring

man’s righteousness, and therefore it gendered “to bondage.”

What distinguished the law as a covenant was, that, instead of promise, it was blessing held out on the ground of obedience. The distinctive character of the ten commandments was, that they required obedience. This must be or must not be; there is no question of a new nature. Now, we are told, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is not a question of how he gets holiness: the holy nature will desire to obey, but it is a different thing from the righteousness of obedience. God’s nature is holy. I do not speak of God’s obedience—it is His nature, and we must have the new nature to be holy. The law shewed God holy, but the condition of the law was, “If ye shall obey my voice.” The promises of God are connected under the law with the obedience of man. That covenant is now altogether put away. We are called to obedience, and we are sanctified unto obedience, but this is different from being under conditions. The new covenant has made the former old. God brings in a new one, not according to the covenant He made with them when He brought them out of Egypt.

In chapter 9 it may be said that the apostle is pressing what the conditions of the new covenant are. If the old had been perfect, God would not have brought in a new one. God will not let man have blessing on that ground, and why? The reason is that He has tried man and found him unable to bring forth anything good. If it is to be on the ground of my righteousness, I cannot have the blessing at all. Man must be convinced there is no good in himself. Man could never place himself on that ground but as maintaining the pride of the human heart that pretends to be able to gain it. The principle of

requiring something from man is entirely set aside, and those who know God's principle, know that it is only in the pride of the natural heart that man could take blessing in that way.

Unless grace, and simply grace, lays new ground, there is no hope whatever. God has brought in a new thing. He had marked out in the provision of bulls and goats, etc., another way of getting blessing. There must be coming to God by cleansing from sin, instead of on the ground of being clean. It was impossible for any such things to take away sins. There was no relieving the conscience by these ceremonial observances, which were but shadows, and not the very image of the things to come. Besides the day of atonement, there were continual sacrifices needed to keep them clean; but there was no coming to God (saving in the sense in which He says, "I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself"). Christ died, the Just for the unjust, to "bring us to God." In the tabernacle service there was no coming near by the people or even by the priests. Nadab and Abihu took strange fire and offered that not taken from the burnt offering. Then God said, Ye shall not come at all times, etc.; but there was the great day of atonement, and the high priest even could only go in on that day with the clouds of incense.

There was no revelation of God whatever at that time: there was revelation from God, but not of God. He said, "I dwell in the thick darkness." Moses could go into God's presence without a veil. When he came out, he put a veil on his face; but when he went in, he took the veil off. Moses, as mediator—type of Christ—represented the nation before God, but then the figure dropped; and we find Aaron could only go in once a year. His work was

done behind the veil. God could give revelations of Himself to them, but never were their consciences in the presence of God. There was an unrent veil between God and the people and the priests also.

This is very important to notice, because of the principle brought out in the contrast of our portion and the Jews'. We are in the presence of God, and we are always there (that is the Christian ground): they never were. Daily cleansing is needed with us, too; but still, we are always in the presence of God. This is very little realised by the people of God now. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light," etc. The work is done once for all, and we are brought nigh by virtue of that work; and if we are not there through that work, we never can get there. I am speaking of God looking for atonement, and our standing in the presence of God, not the children with the Father. Our feelings may be varying from day to day, but our standing before God never changes in Christ. And if we reject this one sacrifice for sin, there is no other.

Verse 3, etc. Within the second veil none could enter. God's reason for it is, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." The object of the veil was to shew that the people could not come to God. He could give them laws, punish them if they broke them, enable them to look to Him; but they could not come near. If it is a question of being in His presence, I must come where He is. In His presence sin is not measured by transgression, but by what God is— "in the light as he is in the light." "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." God's people are now brought into His presence in the light, and always there; it is where God has placed them by

faith—not a question of their feeling. As long as the first tabernacle was yet standing, this was not made manifest at all: God was hiding Himself. Directly the veil was gone. He must have let in the Gentiles as well as the Jews; but the very nature of the sacrifices shut out the thought of one eternal redemption. The repetition of them shewed that sin was there, or they would not have been repeated. The one sacrifice for sins having been made shews the sins to be entirely borne away. The nature of those sacrifices was never to reveal God, and never to have the conscience perfect.

There is another practical thing to be noticed here. He does not merely say sin is put away, but the conscience is perfect; no more conscience of sins (not sinning); that is the same as a perfect conscience. We all have a conscience of sinning; but if I have a conscience of sin, I cannot come to God, but am like Adam hiding from Him. What we have here is not only sin put away in the presence of God, but put away from the conscience too. Many own the former, but think they need repeated forgiveness, repeated cleansing with blood. How could sin be put away? It could not be but by the suffering of Christ. Must Christ, then, suffer again?

There was piety in the Old Testament, and piety is a blessed thing, but there was never a purged conscience. We never find in the most pious persons under the law the sense of being in the presence of God. The high priest must go once a year within the veil with clouds of incense; but now the holiest is made manifest, the veil being rent from top to bottom, and the conscience as perfect as the light in which we stand.

Verse 7. Under the old covenant, it was only “the errors of the people” that were forgiven. Now God takes up the spring of a man altogether. The old covenant dealt with man on the ground of obedience; now God is bringing the sinner himself into a new condition before Him. The old covenant was a partial remedy with the declaration that they could not come into God’s presence. While this kept up a testimony for God, now a new thing is brought out, not to patch up the old thing—that was the old even in its remedial character; but now it is the bringing in a new thing entirely—giving a new nature in Christ. The Jewish system provided no remedy for great sins (“keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins”); it was a provision for the old man without seeing God, instead of bringing man perfect, in a new nature, into the presence of God.

Verse 10. Certain things were imposed on them until the time of reformation. Christ came “an High Priest of good things to come.” What does that refer to? Some may find a difficulty as to whether “to come” refers to what was future for the Jews, while that tabernacle was standing, or to what is now future. I believe both. All was new in Christ. It was to come on a new foundation. The basis is laid for the entire and perfect reconciliation of man with God.

Romans 3. God declares His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, etc. Righteousness was never revealed under the law—God bore with things, but there was no declaration of righteousness. Now it is “to declare his righteousness.” Righteousness was revealed when the atonement was made. Directly it is other ground than promise given to those walking by faith, as Abraham, there is no coming into the presence of God,

The old covenant goes on the old ground; the new covenant goes on new ground. The work of Christ and the blood of Christ are not provision for the sins of the old man, but for the perfecting of the conscience of the new man to set him in the presence of God. We could not be in the presence of God with one spot upon us; we are brought into heaven itself. He is gone in once into the holy place (v. 12), not gone in to come out again and go in; but by virtue of His own blood He is gone in once. God looking upon the blood cannot see sin. It is not a question of my value of that blood, but the conscience rests on the value God finds in it. “When I see the blood I will pass over.” My heart wants to value it more, but the question is, how could I be in the presence of God with a spot upon me? God looks on that blood, and if He looks on the blood, He cannot look on the sin; if He did, it would not value the blood. Where is the blood? It has been presented to God, not to man, and God has accepted it. Impossible that God can impute sin to a believer; it would be slighting the blood of Christ.

Another thing is, it is for ever and ever done. What is faith? It is thinking as God thinks. If I say Christ is gone in once with His own blood, does He ever cease to be there? Then I cannot cease to be perfect; Christ has either done the work for ever or not at all. Another word gives it such power too, “having obtained eternal redemption,” and it is “once for all.” How long is it to last? For ever. There is not only cleansing, but redemption. He has taken me up out of where I was, into the presence of God—appropriated me in the presence of God for ever. Has He taken me up in an unclean state? While the veil was there, I could not be taken into God’s presence; but now it is a question of the work of

Christ bringing me there. Has He brought me there in an unfit state? Impossible! He has “obtained eternal redemption for us,” “who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.” We get here, first, His own perfect will in it. He offered Himself; not only says, “Lo I come “but, here filled with the Spirit, He offers Himself up. Christ having become a man, He was obedient in all things; but another thing was, He came to offer sacrifice. As a victim, He was man, spotless man, and the giving Himself up as a sacrifice was His own act; through the eternal Spirit He did it. It is not here the point of sins being laid upon Him, but the giving Himself up for the whole question of good and evil to be settled on Him in God’s presence. He gave Himself up for God to do what He would with Him, to make Him a curse if He would; and He was made a curse; yet it was His own will to come into that place.

It was redemption man needed (v. 12), not only a little cleansing. Redemption was being taken out of the condition in which we were. God’s glory needed to be vindicated where God had been dishonoured. Here was man in rebellion, and in ruin as well as rebellion, under Satan, and He (Christ) must suffer, for God to be glorified—He offered Himself up. Here it was by the power of the Eternal Spirit. There was divine energy in the Man, not mere feeling, etc., and it was “without spot,” when He was tried even unto death. He became a burnt offering, and this was a sweet savour to God. Every movement of His will was pure, purity in all His thoughts, and acts, and there was the unhesitating giving up of Himself to be made even that hateful thing, sin. He would be made sin, made a curse, even unto death; He offered Himself up without reserve. “He was

made sin for us"; but He gave Himself up for it: therefore it was a sweet savour. None of the sin offerings were a sweet savour to God: the word used for consuming them is not the same as in the burnt offering. For the sin offering, it was merely a word used signifying burning; in the other it means a sweet savour. It not being imposed upon Him, but His offering Himself up, made it this. All through His life He knew no sin, but on the cross the sin was laid upon Him, and He went through death for it. It led to death—its wages. Therefore we read of the blood, "How much more shall the blood of Christ," etc. Two things there are, the person offering Himself, and the proof of His death for sin; blood being the proof of death. There is a cleansing, a purging, daily; but this is with water, and not for forgiveness before God: the Father forgiving is another thing. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." How clearly this shews that if it is not done by this, it never can be; the blood never can be shed again. "Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Here, again, we come back to the conscience. "How much more shall the blood of Christ," etc. So we hear of "eternal inheritance" (v. 14, 15); there is perpetuity spoken of again, too.

In verse 13 two things have been alluded to, and not indiscriminately: the great day of atonement, when bulls and goats were offered; and the red heifer, which was for daily cleansing for communion. This was one thing; the other was done once a year, for then it was repeated year by year continually. The blood of the victim was taken into the holy place, and the body burnt outside. This was significant of Judaism done with. Israel was the camp. They had a fleshly religion—flesh in connection

with God; and it could never answer. It was appointed to prove man. Here the blood was carried in, as the scape-goat took away the sins confessed over it into the wilderness. Thus the sins were gone. Now our position is having a place inside the veil by the blood, and sin gone. That is our place shewn thus in the type. The “heifer” was for sprinkling the unclean— not with blood, but with water and something connected with it, namely, the ashes of the heifer. A heifer was to be taken that had never borne the yoke; and a clean man was to slay the heifer, and sprinkle the blood seven times, always in the presence of God. Its value always is in the presence of God. But a defiled person, even through touching death, could not go there. The ashes were to be taken with the running water, shewing the sin all consumed in the sacrifice offered long ago. The things we have failed about are the very things Christ died for; and the Spirit brings to the conscience the sense of that defilement for which Christ died, and which He put away. This makes me feel the sin much more, while it makes me see it has all been put away. It is not so much the question of guilt, but of the terrible nature of sin that occupies me. It is the re-sprinkling with water, not blood; because the re-sprinkling with the blood would call in question its permanent value. The Spirit brings to my conscience and heart the value of Christ’s death, and so communion is restored, which is hindered by a sinful thought, etc.

Two instances we have of sprinkling with blood once for all—in the priest and the leper; the whole walk and thoughts consecrated to God according to the value of Christ’s blood. But that never loses its value. If I do not walk according to the value of it, the Spirit of God brings to my remembrance that my sin brought Christ to ashes.

This gives a much deeper sense of the sin. We find out that we have allowed ourselves to be carried away by that which brought God's wrath out, and for which Christ agonised.

"To serve the living God." Under the old covenant, obedience was required from man in his Adam-nature; a veil was before God, and man outside—and he must stay outside. The sacrifices made a temporary provision for intercourse with God, but there was no coming to God. Christ, as High Priest of good things to come, brings the new man into the presence of God for ever. The veil is rent, and there is a risen Person with cleansing power in the presence of God. Such is the perfectness of the place in which we are set, and every inconsistency is judged according to it.

Verses 16, 17. The word "testament" is rightly used in these two verses. It facilitates the understanding of the passage to see this. Excepting these two verses, read always "covenant."

Thus we find a common event brought in as an illustration of Christ's death. He left us all the blessing in dying—it came into complete force directly. We are freed once for all through His death. There is no alteration of it. The blessings of the new covenant became available or valid after His death.

The first must become old if there is to be a new one: the bringing in of the new one involves dying. In this Epistle we get very little of the humiliation part of Christ's work. In the first chapter it is introduced in connection with His divine Person, who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." The purging of our sins is

spoken of by the way, and then we hear of His glory on high. The blessedness of Christ's sacrifice, Christ exalted, and having honour put upon Him, are more the subjects in Hebrews. There are three aspects in which the value of Christ's blood is here seen. First, it was the seal of the covenant, connected with its dedication to God. That was also done in connection with the covenant with Abraham; Gen. 15. A person, binding himself to death in the most solemn way, passes through the pieces of the sacrifice. It was the seal of the covenant. Second, it is purifying. Third, the blood is for remission.

First, the enjoining or sanction to it given by the blood. Another thing closely connected with that was consecration by blood. Blood was sprinkled on the leper for cleansing, and on the priest for consecration. The covenant sealed, and the people bound to it by blood, and the leper and the priest, are the three cases in which persons are sprinkled. There must be blood, the power of death brought in, or there was entire separation from God. The wonderful efficacy of the blood of Christ is that it brought in death; those separated from God are brought back by His death. "You who were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ." The blood was the figure of the life taken. When blood was taken, the whole being of man was given up, and the agony of Christ's soul on the cross was the separation from God. "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The consequences of it are most important to us. Man with all his perverse will, all his sin, where is it all, if he is dead? It is all gone, if he is dead. "He that is dead, is freed from sin." There is an absolute cessation of the whole will and being in which he was, as a sinner. Christ has taken that place for me.

Cain and Abel, as far as appearance went, were equally likely to get the blessing, but in the one was no faith. He did not own that death had come in between man and God. As long as man is seeking good from himself, he does not see himself dead. Are you seeking a dead man or a living man? You are seeking fruit from a living man, and not owning you are dead, if you are seeking fruit from yourself. I cannot search to see whether dead or not, if dead. Abel came by slain beasts to God. He had faith. We do not know how he learnt it, but death came in, and man was clothed in skins of animals. That is, in figure, what makes our peace. “He that is dead is freed from sin.” There was nothing done for man while Christ was alive, as to the putting away of sin. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” All that was proved by it was, that man in his natural state could not be reconciled to God.

The first covenant was not made without the sprinkling of blood, but it threw back the man behind death. If you do not obey, all is lost; Jer. 34:16-20. If they did not obey, they must die; because they promised obedience and sealed the promise by being sprinkled with the blood. In the case of Abraham, God made a promise to him, and sealed it by passing between the pieces, by death. The question was raised by the law of righteousness among living men. There were various figures which intimated the necessity of death coming in, but obedience was the rule, and consequently all was failure. Yet the principle was brought out all through— there must be blood. Now, under grace we see the whole putting away of sin. If we had died, judgment must have come on us. Christ coming into it, and bearing the judgment for us, we are free from the whole thing.

When God gave the covenant, He gave it this sanction—the sprinkling of blood. Aaron himself alone, was not sprinkled with blood, typical of Christ, who needed not to be consecrated with blood Himself, but brought blood in for others.

Then you get the sprinkling of vessels—not for forgiveness, but for cleansing. “Almost all things under the law are purged with blood” (not all things are purified with blood), because there is a purifying with water not connected with blood-shedding. Out of His side came blood and water, representing the effectual grace of expiation and purifying. You could not have man morally purified without death; you must have death. Out of a dead Christ the water flows. Water signifies cleansing by the Spirit with the word. But there must be death—not the cleansing of the living old man; the old man is put to death—I do not own him alive, but there is something belonging to you (your members on the earth) to be mortified and kept in death. The ground is laid for purifying by the blood of the heifer, which was sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle; but water is the figure used for cleansing, namely, “washing of water by the word.” “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Reckon yourselves to be dead and to have the power of life in Christ. I have neither life nor righteousness outside of Christ. I have nothing without Him. If I look for water to purify, or anything, it must be by death I get it; then there must be faith. If I look at myself as a living man in the world, I find my will working; then I am not really dead. If I set myself to inquire, I am not walking in faith. I am told to reckon myself dead—that is faith. You cannot mortify your members till you can say, I am dead.

If the old man is not dead, it is sin. There was no putting away of sin but by death itself—taking life. “Without shedding of blood is no remission”—not sprinkling here: you must have the applying the punishment to the One who takes the sin. In the remission of sins is involved the whole of God’s character, majesty, glory. If God does not deal with sin as sin, there is no righteousness—it is indifference. There must be suffering for the sin; then as to death, I am clear of it.

Remission is not connected with sprinkling. This is important in a twofold way. First, there was actual suffering under the consequences of sin; and, second, this could be but once. It was done once for all, and if the forgiveness of my sins is not perfect thereby, it never can be accomplished. It will never be done again. We learn more and more the value of the blood; but the work of Christ on the cross has a perfect value, into which the angels desire to look. The thing by which I have remission never can be done again. When I speak of water, it has its importance only so far as it washes (there is washing and sprinkling spoken of); but not so with the blood; this had to be presented to God, the offended Judge. The efficacy of the blood is outside ourselves. As regards the man, he is cleansed once for all, but still that is connected with the man. That is not all; the blood has an efficacy in itself, as being the judgment for sin, and tells the tale to God that the judgment is passed over, the sin gone. God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over.” That makes the entire full distinction from personal application in cleansing. There is a special value in it for man, because a man when cleansed does not like to get dirty, while one not cleansed does not mind it. True, that as to the water

when once regenerated by the word, it is done for ever—once for all; but there is besides the constant cleansing of the feet needed. There is no presenting of blood afresh to God—no fresh "shedding of blood." There is increase of spiritual search needed by us to know more of the value of the blood, but there is no fresh searching needed by God for Him to know its value.

Verse 21, etc. Three things were done on the day of atonement. Blood was put on the mercy-seat, representing Christ gone into heaven, the ground on which we can preach to all the world. That was connected with Jehovah's lot. His death glorified God, whether one or a thousand are saved. All was in utter confusion by sin. What kind of world is this? Where is righteousness? Where is love? What folly there is in infidelity! How can men solve the riddle of all the misery we see around without God? Where is the goodness of God to be seen? How can it be attempted to be explained without Christ? Indifference to sin is not love. Men try to persuade themselves God will be indifferent to sin. When I see God's judgment for sin on Christ, I get at the centre of God's heart—righteousness is satisfied, and, what is more, God can rest in His love. And if you come as a sinner to God, and rest in Christ, it is a matter of the glory of God to see you there because of the blood.

"The heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices." Satan and his angels are there and cleansing is needed. This purging is not remission. God must have His house cleansed as well as His people made righteous. Compare Colossians 1. On the people's lot, the scapegoat, the particular sins of the people were confessed. This was substitution, v. 26. And there is perpetual value in the

sacrifice. He once suffered. This suffering was not the mere fact of death. The agony of His soul when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” was far deeper than the suffering of the separation of soul and body. Death was looked at as the wages of sin; God’s wrath was poured out on Him against the sin. (Death to Christ was not merely going out of the body into paradise.) This never can be done again. He has gone in once into the holy place. If He went in often, He must have suffered often. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down.” This does not mean for ever and ever, but unremittingly He is sitting at the right hand of God. I never can stand in the presence of God, but through the sacrifice of Christ, and that is never remitted. He has put sin away; why should He suffer again? He has put it away according to the glory of God. “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared.” This may appear strange, seeing that so much of the world’s history has gone on since Christ’s coming: but it does not mean chronologically, but the closing in of the ages.

Up to that time God had been trying men as living men in the world. That is ended—man is not alive now (I speak of man morally, as judged by God); therefore it is said to the Colossians, “Why as though alive in the world?” Man has been tried as to life, and now the fig-tree is cut down. Did it bear fruit? No! and it was cut down. The fig-tree represented the Jewish nation, in whom God made trial of men under the best circumstances. “What have I not done to my vineyard?” Christ came looking for fruit from the fig-tree, and finding none, He said, Cut it down; let no fruit grow on thee for ever. The “time for figs was not yet”; the fruit-

bearing time not come. God, as it were, said, “they will reverence my Son.” No! then there is no fruit from man for ever. Man, looked at as in flesh, is under the sentence of death. “When we were yet without strength … Christ died for the ungodly.” Man is not only ungodly, but without power to get out of that state. Christ must close the history of the old man, by bearing the sin, and must bring in a new thing. Then God makes a feast and invites to the Supper; when they not only refuse the Son, but they refuse the Supper.

Man has been fully tried; and now, if there is to be blessing, it must not be on the ground of responsibility, but wholly of grace, by the second Adam, Rom. 5. If I believe this, I find out the truth about the old man by little and little. At first we only see gross sins perhaps. “But what is to be done when I find I can do nothing,” you say. Own you are undone. “In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.”

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Death is like the policeman to bring us up to the judgment. Then (v. 28) we have the counterpart of this in grace. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,” “and to them that look for him,” all believers, “will he appear … without sin.” What does that mean? As to His own Person, He was without sin the first time; but now the same One comes back—what for? To deal about the sins? No! That He has done the first time: and now, apart from that entirely, He comes to receive them to Himself. For those who trust in His first coming, and look for His second, there is nothing but blessing. There is a work done in us to make us sharers in that which has been done outside us; but this is the question of the work done for us, outside of

ourselves altogether. What had I to do with the cross of Christ? The hatred that killed Him, and the sins that He bore, are all that sinners had to do in it. Therefore there can never come a shade upon the love of God in the cross of Christ. It is perfect.

Chapter 10.

The practical conclusion is drawn in this chapter of what is brought out in chapter 9—the unity of the sacrifice; one offering by which the foundation is laid for the new covenant.

Instead of finding a man turned out of paradise on earth because of sin, it is now the second Man gone into the paradise of God in divine righteousness—gone in by virtue of a new title, which man never had before. The consequence is, when He comes again in glory, He has nothing to do with sin. He came once for sin; but when He comes the second time, it will be without any question of sin, to complete the salvation wrought out already. When He returns, it is to bring man into the full blessedness He is in Himself. “To them that look for him, shall he appear,” etc.; not only for the church, but it is open for the remnant when He appears to the earth.20 The effect on the conscience of His offering for sin is shewn in chapter 10. It is not only a statement of facts there. My sin might be put away and I not know it; but Christianity shews us how the conscience is purged, not only the sins put away. If the conscience is purged, there is nothing between me and God. I have the full deliverance from all consequences of sin, and a title to glory, by virtue of the new thing. But what is my present state? My conscience perfectly purged. That the law could not tell us. It could never make the comers

thereunto perfect. That was reserved as a witness for the gospel when the work was done. When a man is in the presence of God, the full effect on the conscience is known. There must be a repetition of sacrifice while the sin was outstanding. There was always a question of sin between God and His people under the law.

Israel in the last day will get salvation by virtue of the sacrifice; they will be blessed by Him from heaven; their thoughts will rest on Christ coming on earth to them. He will bring them blessing where they are, but not take them to heaven. That is not our case at all. We are with Him while He is in heaven. The Holy Ghost has come out in consequence of His being gone in. There was no blood taken within the veil, and the sacrifice not taken without the camp, until after the sin of Nadab and Abihu. After that Aaron was not to go at all times into the holiest, but once a year, to sprinkle the blood on the mercy-seat. The veil was not rent then; but sin being brought out, the blood must be taken in. The witness of acceptance for Israel is when He comes out. They cannot have it while He is within. We are associated with Him in heaven by the Holy Ghost coming out and making us know the value of His sacrifice. He will come and receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be. We are to be associated with Him there.

Up to His death it could not be: God would have put aside the law if the fulness of blessing had been brought in; and the law was given to His own people, not to the Gentiles. The result of Christ's work is, that my constant state in the presence of God is the conscience purged. There is not a revelation, a prophet needed for that. The worshippers, once purged, have "no more conscience of sins." How many Christians there are who do not know

they have no more conscience of sins! If you do not, you do not know the virtue of Christ's sacrifice. Are you going to be in heaven with sin upon you? You cannot be there in sins. The old state was that of men living on earth—falling, getting cleansed, and falling again. That is your condition, unless you are in heaven by virtue of that one sacrifice, without sin. The believer is introduced there in Christ—into these heavenly places, cleansed from sin (I am not speaking of what he is as a man on earth, but in Christ). Are you there? That is the question. Are you in the holiest as to your conscience, heart, and spirit, with "no more conscience of sins"; "in the light as he is in the light"; with no remembrance of sin before God? There is remembrance of sins under the law; but here "no more conscience of sins." Christ has not only entered within the veil, because there is no veil now, but I am in heaven by the veil being rent. What is the rending of the veil? The death of Christ. I must get there by His death because of my sins. I go in through that which takes them away. I am there without them. Remark how God takes up all this as His matter. The whole is done, without us, by God. The thing is done by Him, and the revelation of what is done is by Him too. It is God's work, and it is according to the truth of God.

There were three things needed. If I was full of sin, some one was needed to think about me; some one was needed to do the thing required; and then one to tell me the effect. "By the which will we are sanctified." The work of the Spirit in applying the work of Christ, is not spoken of here. But there is, 1st, The will of God— "By which will," etc. 2nd, The work whereby it is done— "By the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ, once for all." Before I was born, it was once for all done. Did I do it?

No! “By the obedience of one, many were made righteous.” It was by the offering of the body of Christ once for all. 3rd, There is the knowledge of it given to me. Without this my conscience is not purged. I must be justified by faith: this is my knowing it, not God’s knowing it. Here he says, “The Holy Ghost is a witness to us.” This is the ground of the conscience being purged; it is not the quickening here: we have pardon after we are quickened. Peter speaks of being “sanctified unto obedience,” etc.; we are renewed to obedience. It is His (God’s) work to quicken my conscience, but, besides that, there is the testimony by the Holy Ghost. The thing is settled, and it is not a light thing. We adore Him for it. He says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” But you say, I sin to-day, to-morrow, etc. God says, “I remember” no more. If there is sin, what can put it away? There is no more offering for sin. If it is not put away, how can it ever be done? If He does remember them, there is no hope for me, because Christ will not die again, and “without shedding of blood is no remission.” It is very important for the conscience to get into the presence of God, and know our whole condition as to sin there. Looked at as a Christian, there is no sin, for this one reason, that Christ has been in the condition in which I was. By virtue of His being in it and dying, the condition has ceased to exist, and He is gone a Man into heaven by virtue of the condition having ceased. God has said to Him, “Sit on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” For the sacrifices provided for men in the flesh, there is substituted this one sacrifice of Christ.

Verse 5. “A body hast thou prepared me.” Christ came once for all into the place of obedience to put aside all

the other appointments. He took ears as a servant. Whatever man did in offering sacrifices, he could not get out of the condition in which he was. Another comes in. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. They brought of their voluntary will under the first; that was man. But in the second all is of God's will, and it is obedience to that. As soon as Christ has the body prepared, it is not His will at all. It was in the counsels of God long before. "In the volume of the book it is written of me," etc. There was the free-willing of Christ in heaven to give Himself. He undertakes the whole thing. Then when in it, He goes through all in obedience. "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." There is perfect love to His Father, and perfect obedience at the same time. There is God's will in all its perfectness—Christ offering Himself to be the obedient One; and I have not only the fact in purpose but all the value of a divine Being giving Himself up. "Lo, I come to do thy will." He is in the place of obedience.

"Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not.... Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Here I find the will of man altogether set aside. The will of man is wickedness, the principle of sin. A will independent of God is the very principle of sin. At the first, the will of man was disobedience to God. Christ had a free will, because He was God; but when in the servant's place, He had no will. The horrid pride of man forgets that his independence of God, his will not being moved by the will of God, is rebellion against Him, and that is our natural state. All but obedience to the will of another is sin. We forget we are creatures. Christ came to do God's

will, never His own. This would-be independence of man (for, after all, men are the slaves of Satan) is entirely set aside by another Man coming in. He has to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. Every will of His was crossed. There was not a single thing to which He could turn in which obedience was not suffering. He suffered from God, too, for the sins of man. He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit. When tested by Satan's shewing Him good and evil, He gave Himself up (becoming specially the burnt-offering from the time of the conflict in Gethsemane). The first order of things is gone entirely. If I could have righteousness by the law, I would not have it, Paul says, because I have a better—the righteousness of God. If there could have been any righteousness by the law, there was an end to it now. A new thing is brought in.

Verse n. "Every priest standeth daily," etc. They were always standing, because sin was always there to be put away. What they did to put it away never accomplished anything. They were dealing with offerings for men in the flesh, and they never did anything. But He has sat down. There was a righteousness fit to sit down on the throne of God, and there is where we are. It is on the throne Christ sits for ever. He is not rising up, like the other priests. The sacrifice was completed and He sits for ever. It does not mean eternally but continuously. The other sacrifices could not have this effect; but now His being there is the proof there is no interruption. The punctuation in some Bibles, makes no sense of it. It cannot be one sacrifice for sins for ever. He is sitting, never having to get up again, because the value of the sacrifice is uninterrupted in the presence of God, and the Holy Ghost comes out to shew me the result of it.

The person who had the sins must be shut out of heaven; then Christ is shut out, if they are not gone, for He took them. But the Holy Ghost is the witness that He is there. If you are reasoning about it, saying, My sins are forgiven to-day, but to-morrow what I may do may be remembered against me, you are away from God. In the presence of God this is my whole condition, without my sins. In the presence of God, I am either a condemned sinner, or I have a purged conscience. Away from God we may reason. In His presence there may be awful distress for a moment, but faith brings into the condition of a purged conscience.

Verse 13. “From henceforth expecting.” This is the patience of Christ. The conscience has nothing to do with the waiting. Righteousness has nothing to wait for; conscience has nothing to wait for. All is done. He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Not merely are those sanctified, sanctified by God, but He has perfected them; they are perfectly set apart, perfected by God by the very thing He has set them apart by. Then such can say, I am perfect for God, and my heart is happy with Him, because I am perfect before Him. It is so settled with Him that we are thoroughly perfected, that He can sit there quietly. Heb. 10:12.

Now the Holy Ghost declares it all to me shewing me the practical consequences: “where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” The blood is presented to God, and it abides in unalterable efficacy. This makes nothing, not only of the gross superstitions connected with professing Christianity, but of all forms and ordinances by which men think to attain anything before God. If we are not abidingly as in the presence of God with a purged conscience, we have not got hold of the

truth of God about it. When we realise this is our place, we have a different estimate of sin; evil is detected, and we know it can have no place, and the good is more understood in the presence of God; sin is judged in a much deeper way, than when there is merely terror and uncertainty.

Verse 19. “Boldness to enter into the holiest.” This going through the veil is altogether ours. We know it is rent by the perfect love of God, and we go into the presence of God through the veil. The way is made manifest. We go where Christ is gone; the holiness that rent the veil has put away the sin. Verse 21: “having an high priest,” etc. We do not go creeping in all alone; the High Priest who has done the work is there before us. I cannot go within the veil without finding Him there. The apostle is following Jewish figures, becoming a Jew to Jews. There were other priests besides the great High Priest. Instead of, like the Jewish priests, offering incense outside, we go within. There was the washing of the priests, as for us. The anointing is not in question here, but the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water. So, in substance, it will be for Israel by-and-by.

Verse 22. “Let us draw near,” etc. The next thing, verse 23, is, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith,” etc. The exhortation is to be in communion within, and not to be attracted by the world without, ordinances, etc., to which they were in danger of going back. Then (v. 24) I am to think of others, walk in the power of the fruits of the Spirit; and (v. 25) not only to have love to individuals, but to remember the assembly. Christ would praise in the midst of the congregation. A person may say, I am very happy in staying at home; but this will not do. To go to the assembly often brings persecution.

The “day” spoken of here is not the catching up of the church, but the appearing. The more the day approaches, the greater the difficulty of assembling ourselves; but the exhortation is to be found assembling as plain evident Christians. It is not said to hear a sermon, but assembling ourselves. The way of God’s working is not only to make Christians, but to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad. This is not to be fulfilled in the millennium. There will be different nations then, though they will come up to worship; and in the Old Testament times there was one particular nation, but no gathering together in one—it applies now. Church authority is not what is meant. It is not faith, but assembling ourselves together is faith. Not of man’s will, but Christ’s, who, through His death, has a church or assembly that is not of the world, and that is manifested by our assembling together.

Verse 26. If you say, “I give up this assembling to Christ” —there is none other sacrifice for sin but that He has made. If you trample under foot the blood of that sacrifice, knowing what it is (I do not say being regenerated), but giving it up wilfully, your portion is the same as adversaries. A person who sees truth and gives it up, is always more bitter than any—he is an adversary. If they chose sin instead of Christ, there was no more sacrifice. It is a case of openly abandoning the Lord for your own will in sin; not failure nor disobedience, but apostasy.

We see throughout this epistle the importance of the place in which we are set, and the responsibility of walk according to it. Christ is ever in the presence of God for us. Consequently, our title is to enter there boldly; our

place never changes, though sin, of course, hinders fellowship till it is confessed.

Chapter 11.

We have already seen in this epistle that the Hebrews, instead of walking by faith, were in danger of turning back to the things they could see—things suited to them as men in the flesh, such as ordinances and objects of outward importance, of which the Jewish system was full. But Christians were called out of these; God was leading away from them. The constant tendency of all our hearts is to go back. It is a shame for Gentiles to take up with those shadows; in a measure it was natural for the Jews, because they had had the beggarly elements appointed for them to observe. Now there was something better. They were waiting for Christ to come again, and it is said to them, “He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” In this epistle we do not have the place of the church, the body of Christ, brought out at all; in that connection the Lord comes and takes her to Himself. “I go to prepare a place for you,” etc. Here, as pilgrims, there is responsibility before us, and we look for His appearing. In church character the hope is to be with Him. Here it is the heavenly calling and priesthood between us and God.

The apostle goes on in our chapter to shew the power of faith. It is not a definition, but a description of its effects. It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Perfect certainty of realisation is the effect of faith. The definition of faith is that it “sets to its seal that God is true.” It remains that, what we hope for, we with patience wait for. The promise is just as certain as if we had the fulfilment of it.

We do not see it. If we saw it we should not hope for it, but we realise things not seen. This is the power of faith in the soul.

In this chapter we have faith in its active character—the working of faith when it is there. The thing that produces faith is the Spirit of God bringing home the word with power; and when the soul sees anything of Christ, it cannot rest satisfied without more. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,” is the reception of truth in the soul. Then there follows the practical effect in the walk of the believer. There is a great deal of method in this chapter, more than appears at first sight; for it is not man’s method, but God’s. The divine mind is always at work according to the measure of divine love. Directly you get the clue to the divine mind, you get beauty and order. Thus, in Exodus, we have the account of the things for the tabernacle, and then the priests, and then again the utensils. The human mind sees nothing but disorder in all this; but when the object of the shadow is known, the most perfect order comes out.

Faith here is spoken of in connection with creation. That nothing could come out of nothing is man’s wisdom! The philosopher could never of himself have found out how “the worlds were framed,” etc. Creation is absolutely unknown by reason. “By faith we understand,” but man’s way of accounting for it led to pantheism, atheism, etc. Now men have got some knowledge of it from the Bible; but without Scripture it never could be known simply or certainly.

In the next exemplar of faith we see the ground on which man could be in relationship with God: in Abel, the faith that brought a sacrifice; in Enoch, that which

led to walking with God, and the power of life in his translation. In verse 7, it is faith connected with God in government, and the consequent judgment of the world; in the next example we have that kind of faith that reckons on promise. It takes the promise of God, is satisfied with it, gives up everything, and gets nothing. All that flesh clings to is to be given up. These Jews had to do that. If I have nothing to do with earth I am a heavenly man. If I have nothing on earth, I am not an earthly man. God is not ashamed to be called the God of one whose heart and portion are in heaven; but He would be of one whose heart is on earth. This is the faith that gives character, heavenly character, v. 8-22.

Then you have the faith that counts on God, the active energy of fife—not merely character, but energy; not so much the giving up as the active energy of the new principle in the soul. This is from verses 23-31. But the getting into the land is passed over, the rest promised is in heaven. They have possession of the land. It is different from passing the Red Sea and the wilderness.

From verse 32 come out all the various difficulties and traits of faith in which individuals had to stand against the professing people of God. This is a more difficult thing than any. If you want to live a life of faith, you must often live without Christians. People have to go alone with God and no one else, and if not, they must bring in unbelief to hinder them. Communion of saints is a happy thing, but there are times when you must act alone. Jonathan acted in faith, but Saul’s folly spoiled the whole thing. We need the faith that reckons on God, let the people do what they like. This is not so brilliant an action of faith, but it is very valuable. A person who goes to preach in a heathen place knows what he has to

do. His difficulty is not nearly so great as that of a Christian with the world, which professes to be Christian. If not very near to Christ, a man cannot discern what is the world and what is of Christ.

Verses 37, 38. They had to take what portion they could get here, and they died without receiving the promises, “God having provided some better thing for us,” etc. The beginning of chapter 12 is founded on this. The chastening there is connected with the trials of faith; the chastening is against the flesh; v. 2. Our attention is taken off all the other examples of faith in chapter 11, and the eye is to be fixed on Him who has gone through all. “Looking unto Jesus.” “Looking away” is the force of the expression. “He is set down on the right hand,” etc. Of the Abrahams, Isaacs, Josephs, Moses, etc., we read, they “received not the promises,” but of Christ it is not said, He has not, for He has. He “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He has the reward; and another thing, He has gone all the way, bearing mockery, scourging, etc. He has trodden every bit of the path of faith. The others had each their trial in a particular way, but the encouragement for faith now is that He has sat down, having run it all. David has not his reward yet. All these are not made perfect yet, but Christ is. Christianity was not brought in then. They were not brought into resurrection glory. There were others to be brought into a better thing. Jesus was the beginner and finisher of faith, and He has the reward.

It is well that we should see what the character of the reward is. Reward is never the motive for conduct; there would be no room for love in that; but it acts as an encouragement, when we are in the path which love has

brought into, and encompassed with difficulties and trials.

These Hebrews were going back to the expectation of a Messiah they could see. They are reminded that none of those in whom they boasted did see what they waited for. “These all died in faith, not having received,” etc. You want a visible Messiah; but none of these you glory in got what they waited for. With a Jew this was an unanswerable argument. The elders got nothing but by faith. So with us. What have we but what we have by faith?

Without going into the details of chapter 11, we have, first, the creation; then, respecting sacrifice, “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” One thing to remark here is, how faith meets all cases since sin came in. It has nothing to do with innocence. Innocence does not need faith. When there was enjoyment all around, there was no need of faith. It was when sin came in that faith is known—a most blessed ordering of God; for it brings to us all that is required—righteousness, life, shelter in the judgment of the world. It can wander in a strange country, and bring in a living energy to overcome. It brings in God for enjoyment—communion—want of communion giving the sense of sin, and bringing back. It is the positive bringing in of God when sin had turned out of His presence. It takes out of flesh to God. It brings God in; or, rather, God brings Himself in His word and Spirit. There is no condition in which you cannot have it. The first thing we want it for is for righteousness.

Abel was a sinner; faith brings into a better place than innocency. I can enjoy nothing rightly according to flesh;

but the moment I get hold of God, I am out of those things, and am connected with Him. When they were in the land, the occasion for faith dropped through, except where special need brought it out.

When sin had shut us out from God, righteousness is possessed by faith. “He obtained witness that he was righteous.” Cain, before his heart was laid bare, was a very decent man; he was labouring in the sweat of his brow, and then went to worship God. What would you have better? It was this very thing that shewed he had not a single right thought about God. He thought he could worship God as comfortably as ever. Cain really carried to God the proof of the curse—just what the natural man does. What we find in Abel was entirely different: he brings in death; he takes a firstling of the flock, a slain beast, by which he acknowledges he is under the effect of sin, not merely outwardly. He brings blood to God—a sacrifice—a slain sacrifice—the only way. He acknowledges by it, he is a sinner, and lost unless the death of another comes in. He comes to God with a sacrifice, and this declares, I am lost without. This passage is so clear as to righteousness— “he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” This is not only that righteousness is in Christ; He is my righteousness—I am “made the righteousness of God in him.” Abel obtained a witness that he was righteous, not that God was righteous. Not merely that God had given the sacrifice, but there are the actings of God in the man. God provided the sacrifice, but faith acts in bringing it to God. “God testifying of his gifts.” It is full of blessing. I have the witness that I am righteous. This is not experience.

I do not want a testimony for what I experience. I want a testimony that delivers me from the things I am occupied about in myself, when I am suffering from them. I get it from God's gift that is perfect. I am "accepted in the beloved." You say, There is something about myself I cannot get over. Remember, the testimony of the Holy Ghost in us is the contrary of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to us. In me He takes notice of every fault that is not righteousness; but the testimony to us is, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If a person brings a note to me, he does not ask what I am. In bringing Christ to God, I bring perfection. This is a peculiar figure of Christ, the sacrifice of Abel. Christ made Himself our neighbour: Israel slew Him. They have the mark on them, having cast off Christ. But He is the sacrifice through which they will be restored. Faith says, I go to God by the sacrifice.

In Enoch, life has come in, as well as righteousness. Christ is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony that he pleased God. In the Old Testament it is said he walked with God. If we are reconciled to God, we can walk with Him. Then the life is manifested in walk, and the power of that life is that he does not die at all. Christ said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." So those who are alive when He comes will not die. We may not die. We shall not all sleep. The "wages of sin" for faith are entirely done away. Enoch is not found, for God took him—he is not touched by death at all. That which is the power of death is done away. Another thing accompanying this is, that "before his

translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. Here I get life before death. That we have as a present thing, and if the Lord comes, we shall not die. His long-suffering is the reason of His not coming. Walking with God, we have the testimony that we please God. It is peace, comfort—joy of the favour in which we stand. The Spirit of God, instead of reproving us, brings the light of God's favour streaming in upon our souls. Glory we now see, through a glass darkly; but it is a real truth that the Holy Ghost is in us, and if we are walking with God, He makes us happy in His favour. Not merely I have done right in this or that; I do not think of myself at all, but of God.

If I care only for what natural conscience says, I do not get God's mind at all. That does not touch what God is at all, but what man is; it is saying that man may exalt himself— has responsibility to himself; but believing God is a great deal more, for it acknowledges responsibility to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder," etc. It is coming to Another that is spoken of. Do I come to a person I am with? In coming, I think of what He is—what God thinks of a thing. We have to do with Him in a living way by faith. He is one who takes notice of everything. If you apply this practically at any moment, what a difference it will make! We are called to judge everything in the light. What do I mind about difficulties, if I know I am pleasing God? Such an one does not despise any; because, thinking about God, he goes from strength to strength. Intercourse with God shews him more of God's mind—he sees what God is doing. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If he fail, there will be distress, thus walking with Him, because he has lost the

thing he delights in. If accustomed to walk carelessly, he does not notice it. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” If there is diligence in seeking Him, there is the reward.

Verse 7. If Enoch’s case is that of exceptional translation, like the church, Noah, like the Jewish remnant of the last days, is found in the place on which judgment was coming, and warned of things not seen as yet (besides being a preacher of righteousness, as we hear elsewhere), is moved with fear, and prepares an ark. His is the prophetic spirit; the world is condemned, and himself becomes heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He accepted God’s testimony with the provided means of escape, and thus inherited that righteousness on which the new world is founded. Thus we have had faith in creation, faith in sacrifice, walking with God and testimony.

From verse 8 to 16 we have, not the great principles of human relationship with God from first to last, as in the preceding verses, but the faith which goes and keeps out as a pilgrim, with all the strength given for fulfilling the promises. And as these realised strangership on earth through faith, lived and died in faith, not in the possession of what was promised, so God regarded them with special favour, is not ashamed to be called their God, and will exceed their hopes of heavenly things. Further, we come (v. 17-22) to the faith that sacrifices the thing which apparently accomplishes the promise, to receive it from God alone, or confides, spite of all that tends to destroy confidence.

The preceding is rather faith’s patience, as what follows is its energy. Thus faith in the history of Moses (v. 23-27)

abides firm in the face of the utmost difficulties. Moreover, not providence, but faith, should regulate the believer. Again, we may observe in the next verses (28-31), that faith uses the means God appoints; which nature either refuses, or can only meddle with to its own ruin. But if the Egyptians were swallowed up—the type of those who, of themselves, think to pass through death and judgment, the harlot Rahab identifies herself by faith with the spies and the people of God, before a blow was struck on this side Jordan, and thus escaped the destruction which fell on self-confident Jericho.

Then follow statements of the actings and sufferings of faith all through the history of Israel after the conquest of Canaan, not detailed as before, but general; but all, like the patriarchs, without receiving the fulfilment of the promise. This was one grand lesson for the Hebrew Christians.

Besides, they were to bear in mind (v. 40) that God has provided some better thing for us. They are to be perfected, as well as we, in resurrection glory; but there are special privileges for the saints who are now being called— “for us.”

Chapter 12.

Two things are the effect of being in the presence of God — alarm of conscience, and encouragement. The presence of God keeps the conscience thoroughly alive, but it is strengthened to look above the evil while seeing the character of it.

God brings us into His presence to judge all that is contrary to Him and to strengthen us against it, and that is encouraging. He delights in us, and He delights in

conforming us to Himself; thus grace comes in so blessedly, making us partake of His nature. It is of what He is He would have us partakers, not merely partakers of holiness, but of His holiness. He does not say, You must be holy, that is, it does not come out in that form: but He communicates the holiness—His own nature. See the contrast of grace and law. Does not God require holiness in His presence? That is true, but it is law. Grace means, that He delights to give it.

Separation from evil and power of good is the character stamped on all God's dealings down here—chastenings, etc. We have the secret of His ways and dealings, if we are near enough to Him to see. The Hebrews were declining in spirituality; therefore they had not the key to understand His ways. The hairs of our head are all numbered. When once the heart has hold of that, it must apprehend that it is of God's grace that He is so occupied with us. It is a wonderful check on will to know that He is so occupied. As in Job it is said "He openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."

We have seen the apostle had named all the worthies in chapter n; but then he says "looking unto Jesus." Christ had run the whole course through, the others only a little bit of it. He despised the shame and has sat down; He has reached the end, having gone through the whole course of trouble and difficulty.

Verses 3, 4. Addressing them, he says, You are set here in God's behalf in the place where sin is, to get the better of it. We are all set here in a witness of divine good in the midst of evil in this world, and that with a

power greater than the power of this world. Greater is He that is for us that he that is against us. We are called to be the epistle of Christ—to glorify God in all circumstances; not to be apostles.

We fail here and we fail there; but we are set according to His will here or there in this world to manifest Christ in it, and not merely to do the work.

In saying this, one immense truth is supposed, namely, that we have this life. Another is, that all questions between us and God are settled; then, whether we eat and drink, or whatsoever we do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. To use His name I must be authorised by Him.

All questions connected with us as sons of Adam are entirely done with. “Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though alive?” etc.; Col. 2. You are not alive in the world at all; “reckon yourselves dead.” That is the reason we are freed from the law. We are dead; and the law cannot have authority over our dead man. This position in which we are set as bearing witness, and all God’s dealings with us, go on this ground—we are born of God. This is more than receiving life in nature. We do not read of being born of God as creatures, but as a Christian I am born of God. The effect of the communication of this life is having done with all the old life; we have a life “hid with Christ in God.” All is settled; not only we have the nature, but perfect peace. “My peace I leave with you” —Christ’s peace. No cloud of any sorrow was on Him. He has cleansed us to be without spot, and His righteousness is ours.

We having this nature, born of God, which has to be manifested (and alas! we find in nature many hindrances — temper, etc.), God sets about to do it for us, when we fail to resist “striving against sin,” by chastenings, etc. We are set in the place of children and we must look to what God’s thoughts are about us. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” I get the discipline, or chastenings, that God sends to those He loves. There is my will to be broken, perhaps, and tendencies to be found out in myself that I did not know of before, to humble me. I become exercised about good and evil. He hates the evil and loves the good, and is breaking us down, subduing the evil, wearing it out, etc. He is bringing us nearer to Himself. God is educating us as children. Sometimes when we do not see what He is doing, we get the blessing. Will works in us; He comes in to smash the will; and we see afterwards that we have got the blessing through it.

A babe does foolish things which perhaps we may be amused at, but it has not been taught better. A Christian is like a babe, to be trained and instructed. God’s patience in taking such pains with us should cheer us. It is strange to talk of affliction cheering us; but if our wills are broken, that is a good thing.

There are various ways in which as saints we get tried (though we live in great quietness: there might be more persecution if there was more faithfulness); but through all circumstances God is threading our way, occupying Himself with us, our particular characters, etc., to break us down and instruct us. What we want is to realise that God loves us so much—we are of such value to God (more surely than many sparrows) as that He should take much pains to make us “partakers of his holiness.”

We are apt not to believe the activity of His love. Some trouble comes on us; God has been watching us individually for years, weeks, etc., watching us to bring this trouble which He sees needed.

It is of the greatest importance that there should be the consciousness of God's constant dealing with us in love. We are of that family, belonging to Him, God's family, and not of the world; therefore He deals with us as sons. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards," etc. This is all to encourage. Encouragement is given, founded on the bond of grace between us and God. Then He gives us this blessed privilege of being the witness for God in this world. Everything that makes the condition of the heart better is good, and all is grounded on grace. Therefore it is said, "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God"—"lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you," etc. Why does He press this? No profane or impure person! Oh, because we are come to God. Grace puts us in His presence, makes us partakers of His holiness; then He says, "looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace," etc., that is, should lose this entire confidence in God's love. This is the present practical enjoyment of what God is for you. If you lose that, you fail. There is nothing that links up the heart with God but grace. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace."

Walk in the sanctuary of His presence. You are not come to the terrible mountain Sinai; but having come to the perfect grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, take care how you walk. Grace must be the character of our walk; v. 22. This is true blessedness. There is no hindrance of evil by terror. The effect of the fire from Sinai was that

they “entreated the word should not be spoken to them any more.” Was that getting on with God? We are not to terrify people by our lives. We may Warn them if needful and use the law to hammer at people’s hard consciences —all is well in its place; but we cannot be a witness in our walk of this. We are come to a different thing. We may speak of the law, but that is not where we are.

Now we must be living witnesses of what we are, and where we are. We are come unto Mount Zion, which represents grace. This is the result, speaking of the place we are brought to. It is to God. He speaks of what will be on this earth, and that is as it were looking down. Zion came at the end of the whole course of responsibility. As to the law, the result was, “Ichabod,” for the ark was in the enemies’ hand. The only link with God was broken. Then God came in and chose David, of the tribe of Judah—not Joseph (which was significant of a full tide of blessing in nature). The Jebusites conquered and gone, David founded the temple on Mount Zion. See 2 Samuel 5:7, and 6:16, 17. This was a new link with God in grace when responsibihty was ended.

But this is not nearly all: the whole of the heavenly, and of the earthly part is spoken of here. Now we have something more—that which was in the purpose of God, which man never had before in any way. God is glorifying Himself in a way angels never thought of. We are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem—to heaven. Then, when there, we find ourselves in the whole company of angels— the universal company of heaven; then “the church of the first-born”—a special assembly registered in heaven. We are that—not merely creatures as the angels are, but

those registered in heaven, as having this special privilege—an assembly whom God has identified with Christ, the First-born. It is remarkable how they are singled out here. In the general muster, He cannot let them pass without distinguishing the “church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” We are come to that; it is all the grand result. These are all sitting around Him. Then there is another characteristic of the scene, “to God the Judge of all.”

There is Zion on earth, the heavenly Jerusalem above, the general company of angels, and the church of the first-born; then God Himself, and in the way of government, “the judge of all”; then the “spirits of just men made perfect,” saints of the Old Testament in the character grace had given them, “or just men.” They had run their course and they are there. Then begins what is connected with the earthly part— looking at the effect. We are come “to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.” We are not come to the new covenant, but to Jesus the Mediator of it. I am associated with Him who is the Mediator; that is a higher thing than if merely come to the covenant. He will make this new covenant with Israel on earth. But there is added “And to the blood of sprinkling.” The earth will be benefited by the shedding of the blood of Christ: it cries peace instead of vengeance, as Abel’s did.

Having come to the Mediator, I am come to the prospect of all the blessedness for earth. It is sweet to know earth will have it, but ours is the better part. We are to be a witness of whence we are. We come from heaven. In spirit it is true now. What is true in spirit is more real and palpable than what we see. What is passing in our hearts and minds is more what we are really, than what

our bodies are occupied in. Christ was a carpenter (as really as any other carpenter), but that was not what He was. So with us, we are brought into all these things with God. Then the thing is to be always a witness of the place to which He has called us in grace. We are come; then we have God dealing with us in respect of this place to which He has brought us.

Do you say, this trial or that is enough to discourage me? But no; it is God who is bringing you into it and God is with you in the place, dealing with you in grace, according to the place He has brought you into.

In the midst of the company of heaven, one company is singled out—that is, ourselves. Surely this is enough to make us humble.

Chapter 13.

The closing exhortations—that is, of our chapter—are full of importance, and are, as might be expected from all previously seen, in view of the path in this world proper to the saints, who have Christ appearing in the presence of God for them. They do not, consequently, rise to the height of the communications in Ephesians; for the subject throughout has been the heavenly calling, rather than the mystery of Christ and the church.

Brotherly love is to continue spite of obstacles. Hospitality is not to be forgotten, if we would fare like Abraham. Prisoners and the ill-used are to be borne in mind, considering ourselves and our own circumstances. Marriage is to be honoured and purity sought in or out of that state. Our conduct is to be without avarice, contented with what we have; for God will be true to His

word of unfailing care, even as to these things; so that we say boldly, “The Lord is my helper and I will not fear. What shall man do to me?”

The Holy Ghost then tells the saints (v. 7) to remember their leaders who had spoken God’s word to them, the issue of whose conversation was worthy of all consideration and their faith to be imitated. They were gone; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Let them not, then, be carried away by various and strange doctrines. Grace is that which establishes the heart, not meats by which those who walked in them were not profited. It is a mistake to think that Christians have no altar: they have one, whereof those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat. That is, the Jews have lost their place of privilege, which now belongs in an infinitely more blessed way to such as have Jesus. As in Him, so in us, the extremes of shame here and glory above are found to meet. It was not so with Israel. They had the camp, and they could not draw within the veil. And yet even they had the most striking type of another state of things. “For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” Christians now must bear the cross, waiting for heaven with Christ. All middle ground is gone with the old covenant. But if we wait for glory, not the less but the rather should we praise continually, offering by Jesus to God the fruit of the lips which confess His name, and

not forgetting sacrifices of doing good and communication.

Further, we are called to obey our leaders and to submit ourselves; for “they watch over your souls as those that shall give account.” It is not that they are to give account of the souls of others, but of their own conduct in respect of others. Obedience on the part of those watched over would be much for these guides, that they might do their work with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for the saints.

The apostle asks their prayers, which he could with a good conscience, occupied with the work of grace, and not the weakness and failure of a careless walk. Moreover, he besought it of them, that he might be the sooner restored to them.

And how blessed and suited to their need and comfort is his concluding prayer! “The God of peace that brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in [virtue of] the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work to do his will, doing in you that which is pleasing before him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

The name of Paul does not appear at the close any more than at the commencement; and this for obvious reasons in a letter to saints of the circumcision. But who else would have so spoken of Timothy? The writer was in Italy, and sends the salutation of such as were there. The apostolic under-current is apparent to a spiritual mind.

[End Of Expository—Vol. 6.]

19 There was then on earth, while the Spirit was unfolding the heavenly priesthood to the Hebrews, another priesthood, no longer recognised of God, but going on. Its movement was one of transition; the object was not only to shew the actual heavenly privileges of the saints, but to invite them to go forth without the camp. Afterwards came the fall of Jerusalem, when the events themselves spoke to the same effect. Only we can see that the Hebrew believers are treated with great address in this epistle; for the sole conclusion which yet appears is that the promise of a new covenant declares the first antiquated and ready to be done away. We know, from elsewhere, that the cross had, in principle, abolished the old covenant, and that the blood of Jesus laid the basis of the new covenant.

20 The words do not express the fulness of the church's hope, which is, the being with Him. This alludes more to the appearing; but it expresses the hope of both, as pilgrims down here.